



2-12-2007

Burbridge, Richard and Doris Interview 1

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Interviewees: Richard and Doris Burbridge
Interviewer: Dr. Mark Naison; Bronx, NY

Session #1, 02/12/2007

Transcriber: Mary Maxwell

Dr. Mark Naison (MN): We are here with Richard and Doris Burbridge, who grew up in the Bronx, in the Morrisania section and now live in Queens. And after their professional careers have done extraordinary work in genealogy. Could each of you spell your names for us?

Richard Burbridge (RB): First name is Richard, middle name is Bernard, last name is Burbridge.

Doris Burbridge (DB): My name is Doris, Auerille, DeVonish, Burbridge.

MN: And is this is the first of what I hope will be several interviews with Richard and Doris Burbridge. What I'd like to do is have each of you talk a little bit about how your families came to New York City and then came to the Bronx. So we'll have Richard go first.

RB: My father came to New York in the 1920's, came up from Bluxome, Mississippi. And when you check travel patterns, most people from Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, they go straight north. They go right up the Mississippi River, and using the railroads, they usually wind up in Chicago, Indiana, places like that. And we have a joke in the family, well daddy how come you didn't wind up there? He said I got on the wrong platform. And so he came to New York in the 1920's to join his brother, Simpronious, and then later on he had already met my mother in Bluxome, his home. She came up with her mother and they were married in New York.

MN: Where were they married?

RB: They were married at St. Thomas The Apostle Church in Harlem. On St. Nicholas Ave., and about 118th St. Beautiful church.

MN: What level of education did your father have? How much schooling?

RB: About eighth grade.

MN: And your mother?

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RB: She finished high school and she used to teach in Bluxome, Mississippi at a Catholic Church.

MN: You had mentioned before the interview that your mother's family were Catholic?

RB: Yes.

MN: And they were originally from where?

RB: New Orleans.

MN: So how many siblings did you have?

RB: The oldest was my brother William and my sister, and then myself. We are all two years apart. I'll be 72 this Wednesday and my sister will be 74 in June and my brother 76 in January.

MN: Now, your parents met in Harlem and they got their first apartment there?

RB: No they met in Bluxome. Bluxome, Mississippi.

MN: And then they moved to New York?

RB: Right. Well my father moved to New York, my grandmother told my mother, stick around here with me. Then later they both went up.

MN: And where did, did they all live together? Your father, your mother, and your grandmother?

RB: I believe my father and mother and the children, we lived apart from my grandmother until my mother died. My mother died when I was five years old. So then my grandmother moved in with us.

MN: And how did your family end up coming to the Bronx?

RB: We were living in Harlem and we sort of went by stages. From 114th St. up to about 120th, 121st St. And then we moved up to 154th St. And all along it was just off of 8th Ave., and the adjoining park, Colonial Park and Morningside Park. From what I understand from my father,

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Father Divine, you know the minister of the church at that time, he had a service for finding places. And so he located a place in the Bronx, Home St. off of Union Ave.

MN: And what year was that?

RB: That was about 1941 as far as I can remember. In the storefronts they used to have these placards for the movies. The movie playing was Lake Island; of course I pronounced it Lake *Island*.

[Laughter]

MN: Now you're the first person who mentioned that the Father Divine movement found them their apartment in the Bronx. Now was your family associated with the Father Divine movement? Or just used their - -?

RB: No, my grandmother wouldn't have that.

[Laughter]

RB: You know, use any method, you know to get to where you wanna be. And I think he felt he had enough room, go to the Bronx, because the Bronx was considered like, you know, exotic, you know country.

MN: Doris how did your family come to New York and to the Bronx?

DB: Well, my mother came to New York in 1916 to be with her aunt, her mother's sister. Her mother's sister came to New York in 1911. So my mother came to stay with her and learn and she wanted to be a doctor, but her situation here in New York she couldn't do that so she went to work as a domestic with her aunt. So she stayed there - -.

MN: So where did they come from originally?

DB: Originally my mother was born in the village of Freetown which is on the eastern coast of Antigua in the lesser Antilles. And she took a boat from Antigua to New York, and she came

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through Ellis Island and she had to go through the screening process of Ellis Island. I have her name on the wall there as well, as an immigrant.

MN: How old was she when she arrived?

DB: She was about 16, 17 years old. And she traveled by herself, just with some natives, that came from the village as well, but no blood relatives.

MN: Did she know anybody that was living in New York at the time?

DB: Yes, that was her aunt. That was her only relative. Her mother's sister.

MN: And so the only work she could find was domestic work?

DB: Domestic work, that's what she did. So she had to learn her way around the city, at that time the trolley cars were the means of transportation, and she had to learn apartment living as compared to living in a one-story house in Freetown. So all of these things were all new to her, even the fire escapes on the side of the wall were a phenomena to see for a young lady coming to this country for the first time.

MN: And when did she meet your father?

DB: That I'm trying to work out. Probably in 1919, approximately. Because he came just about the same time also, and I think they met in church. They probably lived in the same area.

MN: What church was this?

DB: Well they were married in the Moravian Church, but when my mother was in Antigua, the main church in the village was a Methodist Church. And when she came to New York a lot of the people from Antigua or from Freetown opened a church in New York, a Methodist Church also. But that information regarding how she met him, I believe it's in the church, from what I have from a cousin.

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

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DB: My father was a jeweler. He used to insert stones into bracelets and bags and things like that, and sometimes he brought work home and my mother used to help him do this type of inserting. My mother learned to play the piano as a recreation, before she came to the United States, so she used to play and they used to sing and play the piano together, it was just sort of a recreational thing for them.

MN: Now when did your parents move to the Bronx?

DB: As far as I know I was born in the Bronx, Boston Rd. I think was the residence at the time of my birth. So it had to be in the '30's. We lived on Boston Rd., 1370 Boston Rd., Brook Ave.

We also lived on 800 Home St. and 986 Union Ave., and 925 Union Ave.

MN: Now what are each of your earliest recollections of the Bronx, Richard?

RB: Well, there was a lot. An empty lot and we used to play ball.

MN: This is near Home St.?

RB: Yes, it was right around the corner and later on, about two years later, we moved right around the corner. Right opposite that lot and we used to play ball from morning until night, until we couldn't see the ball. We used to play softball in there. And also probably going to the park and also the church.

MN: Was that Crotona Park?

RB: Crotona Park.

MN: When you moved to the Bronx, was the neighborhood multiracial or was it mostly black at that time?

RB: It was mostly black, very few whites were left.

MN: This is like 1941, '42?

RB: About there.

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MN: And what school did you go to?

RB: I went to St. Anthony of Padua on 166th St and Prospect Ave.

MN: And was the same thing true of the students in the school as well as the neighborhood?

RB: Yes.

MN: It was a mostly black parish and parish school.

RB: Exactly.

MN: And what about you?

DB: I attended P.S. 23 in the Bronx because we lived on a certain district I had to attend that school. And then when we moved to 925 I had to go to 40.

MN: Junior high school 40?

DB: No not 40. It was near the Woodstock library, right across the street from the Woodstock library. And then from there I went to junior high school 10. And then Theodore Roosevelt High School and then Hunter College in the Bronx.

MN: Now both of you have end up becoming historians and genealogists. How much of a sense of history was there in your families or school environment when you were growing up?

RB: In the school probably none and very little in the family. But I always had a personal love for history.

MN: In St. Anthony Padua, how if at all, was an African-American history - -. Here's a school, the majority of students are African-American, how does this enter into the curriculum if at all?

RB: It didn't. It didn't enter. But they were great teachers. We had Marymount teachers at St. Anthony's. And they really forced you to do your best. And they made home visits.

MN: Home visits?

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RB: Yes. There were three of us going to St. Anthony's, you know, so they knew my grandmother. They knew pops, pops popped in once in a while to church. But yes, they paid home visits.

MN: And you felt that you were really pushed to be your best?

RB: Right. Right yes, because my grandmother, and my father you know, there were on his education, they both knew the value of it.

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

RB: He was a parking lot attendant.

MN: In what neighborhood? Is this in Manhattan?

RB: Originally, he was in Brooklyn. He used to have to travel all the way to Brooklyn from the Bronx. He was one of the few people on the block that had an automobile. So he would drive to work. Because he worked an afternoon to early morning shift.

MN: And did your grandmother work?

RB: For a while she worked as a domestic until my mother passed away and then she lived with us.

MN: Here you have, you know, clearly very intelligent people, working in the service economy. Did they talk about this to you? About you know, we've not been able to achieve what we wanted, but we hope you - -. Was this something that you were aware of?

RB: They wanted us to do better. They wanted us to do better. And they knew that education was the route.

MN: Do you think that there were a lot of families in your neighborhood that felt that way?

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RB: I believe so, I believe so. Because you know it's the old story, in the block there weren't too many buildings. There were about 4 apartment buildings, the rest were private homes.

Everybody knew everybody. If you were going to play hooky, you better do it elsewhere.

[Laughter]

Because people would tell you know? Uh-oh you're not in school? I remember playing hooky once, and it was so frightful.

MN: So this was a really close-knit community?

RB: Definitely so.

MN: And you feel that people - -. There was a lot of ambition for the children?

RB: Yes. And because we were. And because my father was a widower, you know, people sort of took the extra look at us.

MN: How did he afford to send three children to Catholic school?

RB: Very easy. Catholic school gave you an envelope. And I recall seeing the envelopes, \$1 in each envelope for the month.

DB: Really?

RB: Well, they knew our circumstances. The priest knew us, the nuns knew us, that's what - -.

MN: What was the religious experience like there? Was there a young people's mass, or you went to the regular masses?

RB: No, the children, the students at St. Anthony's, we attended the 9 o'clock mass. All the classes attended 9 o'clock mass. Every once in a while for a special occasion, we would attend the 10 o'clock mass, which was, you know the high mass so to speak. But that's when we would go.

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MN: Now the teachers were mostly nuns?

RB: There were nuns. The Marylaurel Order was from the Boston area. And they were actually a missionary. And their role was to go to China and that's where they specialized and they went to China. They would send them from Boston to New York. They would send them to Chinatown, because you know, that's where the Chinese are. But somewhere along the line they said let's send them up to the Bronx. Before we had the Marylaurel sisters, we had the Sisters of Charity and God bless them. Charity was always wanting, they were very strict. They believed in corporal punishment.

MN: So you saw a really big difference between Sisters in Charity?

RB: No doubt about it. Because my brother you know, he really used to go to head with them. And my father, and grandmother, they just couldn't understand it. And when we had the Marylaurel Sisters come, complete change.

MN: What grade were you in, when the Marylaurels replaced the Sisters of Charity?

RB: I was in 4th grade, and I had Sister Mary. Sister Mary was a doll. She was a doll. I was her pet.

MN: And what were the priests like? Were they - -.

RB: The priests were okay. We had, for the majority of my time, we had Father Russell, and he later became a monsignor. While he was at St. Anthony's. He was head of the church but he sort of delegated the work to the nuns and to the other priests. We had Father Van, who was older, and Father Van seemed like he, he sort of took things very easy. If you wanted to go to confession, Father Van was your man.

[Laughter]

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No matter what you told him, okay say ten Hail Marys. And you know, you see a big line for Father Van. And the line moved quickly.

[Laughter]

We had a young fireball named Father Ryan, and he still - -.

MN: He's still around, I know him.

RB: Father Ryan, when you went in there, bring War and Peace. You were gonna be there a while. So nobody went to him. And then we had Father O'Raine who was the youngest priest. And he's the one who married us. He was really, up to date person, and you could talk to him. He didn't carry his collar type. He was fun, he was a fun person.

MN: Now what about your educational and neighborhood experience?

DB: Well, I felt my mother more or less and family encouraged. I was the youngest of seven children so, I saw the value of education because when she came here as I said, she wanted to be a doctor but the opportunities weren't there. Or at least to go back to school, or further her education in this country. So with the insistence of my sisters and brother, I was the first one to graduate from Hunter, from college. And this was a moving experience from my mother when I did graduate.

MN: Now what about your elementary school experience. What were the teachers like? Do you have much of a memory?

DB: Not much of a memory, they did not make much of an impression on me. They, as you said, they never encouraged the black history. All remember of black history was the Civil War and nothing like that was emphasized.

MN: Now was P.S. 23 a racially mixed school, when you were going there?

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DB: Yes, all of the teachers were mostly of Irish background and it's right on the corner of Union Ave. and 167th St.

MN: And no it's a park.

DB: It's a very old school. And it didn't impress me very much. Nothing really, not really no. They did not encourage any black history projects.

MN: Did they encourage your intellectual development?

DB: I was always in the best class. You know they had 1A or 2B. I'm always in the best class, I always got the best out of what the school had to offer really.

MN: What about like the neighborhood, or street games? Did you spend much time in the street or did your mother or family - -.

DB: No, not really. Well, you had the opportunity to have like jump rope and roller-skating and things of that sort. But not too much, we were always inside. She encouraged us to read and learn to play the piano and definitely yes. My brother learned, but he played by ear. But I had piano lessons every week, I had to go to my cousin's house and get instructions from him. So she encouraged that type of thing. And listening, my father had, I didn't know because he had passed away, but my sisters told me that my father encouraged listening to the radio listening to classical music. And things of that sort. So, that's you know - -.

MN: Was there a political environment in your home? You know, current events, issues of the day?

DB: Yes, well when my father was alive, this is all secondhand information, like I said. He was a Garveyite and he believed in the Back to Africa movement and black buying and things of that sort. And he had a uniform and he was a secretary and everything.

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MN: Was there much of a race consciousness in your upbringing? You know in terms of like the way your parents spoke about like the world and your place in it?

DB: They were always political. Yes, definitely, especially with the Garveyite movement. Definitely.

MN: Did they give you a sense of like, you know, what they're teaching you in school is one thing, but there's another story?

DB: Yes, probably, yes. As I look back on it, you go through the motions so to speak in school, but when you come home you learn additional information.

MN: What about you Richard? Was there any alternative perspective to that of the school that you were getting in your home?

RB: Yes, there was because my father came from Mississippi and Mississippi that wasn't your garden spot. Every summer he would ask us, okay it's summer, who's going home for the summer? And we'd all shake our heads, no Dad, no Dad, because we read the newspapers and you know we saw what was happening in Mississippi. And we know that it just wasn't the place. In hindsight, I regret that I didn't go, because I didn't see his brothers, some of his sisters, I didn't see and you know now that I'm involved in genealogy, you know, I lost out a lot.

MN: What about the Bronx? Were you aware of racial discrimination? Or racial barriers growing up? Was this something - -?

DB: We were more or less sheltered. I think we were more or less sheltered in the sense. And we didn't go past this area or that area, there was nothing for us to go over there for or whatever. She went around the corner to do her shopping in the market, during the holidays she would take us downtown to see the show at Rockefeller Center or something like that. So there wasn't any other place for us. We'd visit our family and relative in Harlem and that was our world.

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MN: What about you Richard?

RB: Same thing also. During our time, once you got past, once you got near Grand Concourse, you know that you weren't supposed to be around there too long. You should pass on through.

MN: Were people actually like told by the police when they were on Grand Concourse what are you doing here? Was it that blatant?

RB: No, I wouldn't say so, it was sort of like known you know? When you're sitting in the barbershop, you hear the barber shop tales and stuff like that. So you knew that you didn't go north of Crotona Park. You could go to Crotona Park but you don't go above it.

MN: Don't go near Tremont Ave. or Fordham Rd.

RB: No, you could go to Fordham Rd., just make sure you stayed on that Prospect Ave. bus all the way to Fordham Rd. But nothing overt or anything like that.

MN: You mentioned, you didn't really have to go anywhere. Was Morrisania neighborhood with a lot of amenities?

DB: All-inclusive. Yes, the shopping was there down the block, the Union Ave. Market, everything was there. People all knew her after a while, she got her food shopping, her clothing shopping.

MN: What about movies, entertainment?

DB: Prospect Ave, they had the three theaters on Prospect Ave. The RKO, the Berlin, and Loews, the Jackson, and the Franklin, all of that was on Prospect Ave. for entertainment. Hunt's Point Palace was the place they went for dancing. St. Anthony's Church sometimes had bus outings and so the bus would leave from the church and take you to Long Island to Sunken Meadow or Bear Mountain. Those were the places you went to in the summer, things like that.

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MN: When you're looking back on your childhood, do you feel like, fond memories, does it make you smile? Or you know - -?

DB: Would I like to live it over again? Is it that kind of question?

MN: Well, do you think you had a happy childhood in this environment?

RB: Yes, I'd say yes, definitely. Yes, we enjoyed ourselves. In addition to the movies we had the tower, which was right across from Morris High School. And on Saturdays there was always three movies, one was always a western. You had about five cartoons, you had the boxing matches, you had Alan Queen, the Forerunner. All of those items they were very good. And you had newsreels.

MN: Did you think of yourself as living in, quote, the South Bronx? Or is that a much later concept?

RB: I didn't hear the South Bronx.

MN: That was not a term that was ever used?

RB: Not until I came back from the service in '59. I came back from Germany, that's when I heard of the South Bronx. Though, I must admit, rarely did anyone ever use the phrase, Morrisania.

MN: How did you describe your neighborhood? Or you just didn't?

RB: I was always, along with history I loved maps, and whenever you look at a map of the Bronx, our area just didn't have a name. It didn't have a name; you saw Hunt's Point, then you saw Claremont, the area just below the hub, what do you call it? St. Anne's area, Claremont - -.

MN: A place with no name.

DB: I just said we had the movie theaters, and everything was there for you. You go to other areas like you go to Presbyterian Hospital, Vanderbilt Hospital, I had to go there a couple of

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times so I was able to take the trolley car and ride it and go to another area and see someplace else. Any trips we made with our school or something like that. You didn't have the feeling like this was here and that's there. I didn't get that feeling as a child, no. First of all I was the youngest so I guess I was shielded from everything, and Richard was the youngest in his family.

RB: I wasn't shielded.

DB: He wasn't shielded, okay.

MN: Now did your families still maintain connections with Harlem after they left? Did you go back to visit relatives there.

DB: My cousins lived there because my mother used to go to the Methodist church, that they attended. And most of the people from Antigua went to this particular church in Harlem. So on special holidays, Thanksgiving or Christmas, we would go downtown and spend the day with them.

MN: What about your family Richard? Did you go back much?

RB: No, because the only relative we had was an aunt who lived in Brooklyn. All the other Burbridges were in Bluxome, Mississippi.

MN: Now what junior high school did you go to?

RB: I didn't.

MN: St. Anthony was a 1-8th?

RB: 1-8th.

MN: And you went directly to Morris High School?

RB: Morris High School.

MN: Was there the option of going to Catholic high school?

RB: Yes there was, but I didn't make the grades at those entrance examinations.

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MN: So what was Morris like?

RB: Morris was different. Coming from St. Anthony's which was parochial, and Morris, was more easygoing, my father, my brother, and my sister, they went to Cardinal Hayes, and Cathedral High Schools, respectively. So you know, just because this is public school, you know you still have to give - -.

MN: Were you like less driven then they were?

RB: Probably so. You know what killed me and it's still killing me today, television. Television had just come out in the 1947, when Jackie Robinson - -. Everybody bought TV's, you know and TV just got to me and it still does today.

MN: And you mentioned Jackie Robinson, was that a really big event in people's lives?

DB: My mother never watched baseball until he came into baseball. And she watched in constantly after that. And that was the first time I ever saw her enthusiastic about any type of thing. It fascinated her definitely.

MN: I followed like the role that Joe Lewis played in black communities in the Depression. But Jackie Robinson in your times?

DB: Definitely impressed us.

RB: Well, for us, Joe Lewis was big time. I also did a little boxing my brother did a little boxing.

MN: Where did you do your boxing?

RB: At St. Anthony's.

MN: They had a boxing ring.

RB: Yes. We'd improvise in the lunchroom. This is after-school hours.

MN: It wasn't during lunch?

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RB: No. And sometimes we would go to other churches, we went to St. Charles, we used to go to St. Augustin.

MN: So they had CYO boxing?

RB: It wasn't really CYO, we sort of improvised.

MN: Were you ever tempted to go to PAL and fight golden gloves or - -?

RB: No, after a couple lifts from Elva Bueford, I decided this was not for me. But I loved softball, I love baseball, we played it up in Crotona Park, and we had a team called the Hunt's Point Braves, and they had a league that we played in.

MN: Now when you're in St. Anthony's and growing up in your neighborhood were there any size group of Puerto Ricans in your cohort at this time?

RB: No, I was looking at my graduation picture last night and I think there was only 3 or 4 in my graduating class. They were probably at the time at the other side of Southern Boulevard. You know, over by Hunt's Point.

DB: When I attended junior high school, there were a few in my graduating class. A handful of Puerto Ricans, as well as Hispanic people anyway.

MN: Were there any gangs in the neighborhood when you were coming up? And if so how did that influence your upbringing?

RB: Well there was a gang called the Slicksters.

MN: I've heard of them.

RB: And they operated right next to St. Anthony's. So you always made a quick exit down Prospect Ave. They never tended to bother anyone; we'd see them in action sometimes. They would go to another block or you know.

DB: They used baseball bats and things they didn't use anything - -.

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RB: They were not made of soft material.

MN: Did you feel like under pressure to join a gang?

RB: No.

MN: Did you feel physically afraid going places when you were growing up?

RB: No.

MN: Like to a different block?

DB: No.

RB: I used to be afraid to go to her block.

[Laughter]

RB: I forget the name of them - -.

MN: Is this on Union Ave.?"

RB: Union Ave. from 163rd, to 161st St. You never walked through there. You didn't go there.

But they never seemed to spill over but they seemed to discourage visitors.

MN: What about Morris High School was that considered a tough school, when you were going there?

RB: What do you mean? As far as - -?

MN: Tough in terms of like tough kids, worried about going to and from school, getting beat up in school?

DB: Didn't have that experience no.

RB: No. If someone got beat up they made a nuisance of themselves.

DB: But I never had that fear.

MN: So you basically grew up with much in the way of fear in your surroundings?

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DB: Not in school. You may have one or two people that may want to bully you or they're jealous of you, but that's the impression I look back on. They're jealous of you and what you have. And they tease you and provoke you to get you into a fight. That type of thing.

MN: What about music? Was music a big part of your upbringing and where did the musical influences and experiences come from?

DB: As I said, my mother she had learned to play the piano long before she came to the United States. And we had a big piano in the living room, and it was amazing how we got the piano into the house. They had to lift it through the window of the living room. Into the living room

MN: Where were you living at the time?

DB: I remember that at 925 Union Ave. Yes, I remember them lifting the piano. So I assume they had to - -.

MN: What story were you on?

DB: The 4th floor.

MN: They lifted it through the window?

DB: Through the window, they took the frame out of the window, I guess they hooked it up on the roof, and they carried it into the house through the window. I remember that very clearly and we had a piano then too, when we moved from there. And then I guess we broke it up and didn't bother to take it back out that same way it came in. So that means we had the same piano at the previous address at 986 Union Ave. My mother used to play all the time and encouraged us to learn.

MN: Now what about records? What sort of - -?

DB: Yes, we had records. Classical records, definitely classical records.

MN: So classical music was the big thing?

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DB: Definitely. You'd have to listen to that. But later on my sisters, you know, developed and got there own like jazz and things like that sort.

MN: Now what about the radio? Did you listen to music on the radio?

DB: My mother strangely enough liked to listen to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir every Sunday morning. When I went there for the first time I said, oh I remember this from my childhood. The same songs they sing, and she liked the word and she liked the music I guess they sang. But she didn't have time to bother to go to church. She didn't bother with that. She said she loved to watch Norman Wright.

MN: Now what about your musical background?

RB: Well, we were listening to Harry Dayes, Woody Herman, Duke Ellington, Count Basie. My brother got involved in high school, he went to Cardinal Hayes, and they had classical music. And he used to play the classical music at home, and my sister and I we would go bananas.

MN: What instrument did he play?

RB: The Conga drum.

[Laughter]

MN: Classical conga?

DB: Didn't he play the flute thought?

RB: That was later. That was later. And we used to complain to my father, because this would be on Saturday during the cleaning up of the apartment. And he said if you kept the apartment clean, right and fast you don't have to hear it. And I always associate Brahm 2nd with washing my bedroom window. Because he used to play that one quite often. So my sister and I we got involved with classical music also. But you know we also stayed with the jazz and to this day, all of us are music wise, sort of well-rounded.

Interviewees: Richard and Doris Burbridge

Interviewer: Dr. Mark Naison; Bronx, NY

MN: Were you aware of like, clubs where live music was played in the neighborhood?

RB: Yes,

MN: And what were some of the spots that you know, you were aware of?

RB: The Club 845, and that was - -.

DB: Prospect Ave.

RB: Prospect Ave. about 161st St., right next to Westchester Ave. Prospect Ave. station. And there was another place on Boston Rd. In fact there were two on Boston Rd. One was between [inaudible] and 168th. And then there was a bigger place between 168th and 169th, and I went there several times they featured jazz artists. Especially the jazz organist, because being in the Catholic Church you associate the argument with all this classical music, you know. And then you go there and see them jam, really amazing.

MN: Did you go to any clubs in - -?

DB: When I was older, and able to date then I would go to 845.

MN: Were there any radio shows that you listened to? That you remember as a musical influence.

DB: I remember I liked the Shadow and things like that, those action stories. To be continued next week or something like that. I remember those yes.

MN: Any music shows that made an impression?

RB: Just my brother the Masterwork of the NYC. We heard that, and then later on QXR used to have a program, where they used to interview musicians on Saturdays.

MN: Now what about the singing groups like The Chords, and people like the doowop groups, was that stuff part of your upbringing?

Interviewees: Richard and Doris Burbridge

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DB: That was in the late '50's. College, yes, I remember those groups. You used to hear those on your radio. And I would say well you know, I just listened to them I didn't buy any records, not that many anyway. I used to listen to them on the radio. Saturdays used to come on.

RB: The Peaster Brothers they lived in my area around 168th and Union Ave. so we heard about those groups.

MN: Now, did you have any contact of Morris at the time you were there?

RB: No.

MN: No, just because several students spoke of him as like this very interesting person.

RB: When I first went there, it was Dr. Burnstein, he'd been there a good long time. And the impression that I got was that he was sort of stiff. And his successor, Dr. Freedman, they said he was much more approachable, but at the time I was working and going to school, I didn't have too much time to do any extracurricular things. And so I had no contact with him.

MN: Now, do you have many memories of WWII?

RB: Yes.

MN: And how that affected the neighborhood?

RB: Yes.

DB: I remember WWII with my mother having stamps. They used to have these stamps that you had to take to the supermarket.

MN: Rationing stamps.

DB: Rationing stamps to buy sugar and certain items. I remember that as part of the war. We had a cousin or two in the war and she used to talk about that at the time.

RB: My father, even though he had three children and an elderly mother-in-law and he was 37 years old. He was drafted.

Interviewees: Richard and Doris Burbridge
Interviewer: Dr. Mark Naison; Bronx, NY

MN: He was drafted?

RB: He was drafted. Was he sent overseas? Yes, he was in the South Pacific.

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