

9-28-2015

Payne, Patricia & Marilyn Russell

Payne, Patricia & Marilyn Russell. Interview: Bronx African American History Project
Fordham University

Follow this and additional works at: https://fordham.bepress.com/baahp_oralhist

Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Payne, Patricia & Marilyn Russell. Date of Interview Unknown. Interview with the Bronx African American History Project. BAAHP Digital Archive at Fordham.

This Interview is brought to you for free and open access by the Bronx African American History Project at DigitalResearch@Fordham. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of DigitalResearch@Fordham. For more information, please contact considine@fordham.edu.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell
Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith
No Date

Transcriber: Joselina Fay

Mark Naison (MN): The fifty-sixth interview of the Bronx African American History Project. And I am here with Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell, two college professors and administrators who grew up in the Patterson Houses. Since we've interviewed Pat before I wanted to begin by asking Marilyn a little bit about her family. What year did your family move to the Patterson Houses?

Marilyn Russell (MR): Well I believe they moved to the Patterson Houses in 1951, if my memory serves me correctly. It was myself, my mom and dad, and my brother who is a year older than me, he is deceased now. But, we were, I think I was three, he was four. So we moved to the Patterson Houses from Harlem.

MN: Ok, where did they live in Harlem? Do you know?

MR: At that time they were living on Amsterdam Ave. and 141st St., 1644 Amsterdam Ave. to be exact. And I believe at the time the Housing Authority was a way for former Service Personnel to kind of get their feet solid on the ground. You know go into the Housing Authority, save your money up and buy a house.

MN: Right so this was a step up to another step. What sort of work was your father doing when you moved into Patterson?

MR: I heard that my dad was a shipping clerk. I really to this don't, I don't know what a shipping clerk is, I don't know what his doings or responsibilities were.

MN: Did he work for the city or in the private sector?

MR: No he was in the private sector at that time. Yes he was in the private sector and my mom was a stay at home house wife. And like I said it was myself and my brother, and we moved to 414 Morris Ave.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell
Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith
No Date

MN: 414 Morris.

MR: From there, a couple of years later my little brother was born. And at that time I think I was in, you know in elementary school, myself and my brother. My mom stayed home with my little brother, until he got you know to be school age. And basically we would go outside play with our friends. Go on little adventures as we called them, exploring the neighborhood the projects, the perimeters, the area. But we weren't allowed to do a lot of hanging, because they were kind of strict on us. They didn't trust the neighborhood, or trust you know just letting us just be free like we wanted to be. But basically you know we did what we wanted to do. Because my mother's - - he lived so far so you know went out to the neighborhood and got into our little adventures and come home in the evenings. "Oh I was in the park around the corner," and that was about it.

But as I said the project was pretty safe. I remember going to people's houses, I wasn't allowed to but I did. Get on the elevator ride to the thirteenth floor, and this is something that at that time I was maybe five years old. I wouldn't want a five year old right now in 2004 to get on the elevator in a project by themselves, and you know to go and visit a friend or ask a friend to come out. But I did stuff like this at - - because it was a different time. At that time people didn't lock their doors. The neighbors - - people would borrow from each other, if you needed a cup of sugar, or a slice of bread or a cup of rice whatever. And most people were from the South, and people were friendly. It was a different time.

MN: Was your family from the South?

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MR: Yes, both parents were from South Carolina, Saint Mathews, South Carolina to be exact. But they didn't meet each other until they were here in New York. But they were born in the same town.

MN: Right, now did you go back to South Carolina on vacations? Or did they maintain that - - a connection to your home town?

MR: My grandfather lived in South Carolina until he died, in 19 - - wow when did my grandfather die? - 1989 I believe. And that was the first time I went to South Carolina. Very interesting right? But what happened was my mom would go every year and take my little brother. Because he didn't, he would go. And we would say no we don't want to go, we don't want to go down South. Because we thought of the South as what we read, or heard about it. And it just seemed like woods and backwards, and we weren't interested in going down South. So we never wanted to go, and they didn't force us. But most of my, in fact all of my mother's sisters and brothers were here. Her mom died when she was three, her dad remarried. So all of her siblings by her mother and father came to New York. And one by one them four, the other ones, so all of them were here.

MN: So right, now you mentioned going in the elevator. How many stories was your building?

MR: Oh, my building was only six stories. But there was, the projects consisted of about 25 buildings I believe, thirteen-story buildings and six-story buildings.

MN: Alright now was yours a thirteen or a six?

MR: Initially I lived in a six-story when I lived in 291. After my father died they moved us to a smaller apartment in a thirteen-story building.

MN: Right, now did the elevators work pretty well in the early days?

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MR: I never remember the elevator being broke back in those days.

MN: Wow. And was the building kept clean?

MR: So clean that I can still smell the pine they used to clean the hallways.

MN: Right so when you were growing up there were never urine smells in the hallways.

MR: Never, people would never urinate in the hall, never. If you lived in the building you went home into your apartment or you went to a neighbor's apartment. People did not walk off the street and didn't go into the buildings to urinate either way. It was clean you could eat off the hallway.

MN: So this was, you know there was a lot of pride on the part of the families that lived there?

MR: Very much. If my mom spilled, I remember going shopping, and we were coming I think from Pathmark. Pathmark had just opened up a new big store, those Pathmark shops. We were coming home and I think we were unloading, my brother dropped one of the bags. Out rolled like say a bottle of Welch's Grape Juice glass, it went all over the place. I remember my mother going down with the broom and the mop, sweeping up the glass, throwing it in the incinerator, and mopping the hallway. Ok, this is the type of pride that we had back then, she cleaned the hallway. If there was dirt in front of our door, if someone dropped something if there was something sticky stuff, my mom it was nothing for her to go out and mop the hallway.

MN: And you had mentioned before that you know the school you went to PS 18 was multi-racial. And that this was something that you didn't even really think about, because it was something that was part of your childhood.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MR: Yes, in fact in my building there was four apartments in our little side of the hallway. There was the Jameson's in 3D, we were in 3E, there was an Irish couple in 3F, and in 3G there was a Jewish couple. And we played with each other, you didn't think about race, you went to play with whoever was able to come out and play. It wasn't well she - - we didn't think about race. I mean looking back race was never an issue, never.

MN: Now you also had a lot of activities you know organized activities. What were some of the organized activities you participated in in elementary school?

MR: Well there was always after-school programs, always. You go to school, I remember making pot holders and - -

MN: People have talked a lot about what the boys did in the - - if you were a girl what did you do in the PS 18 after-school program?

MR: Made potholders, played knock-hockey, do something with beads or make a bead string necklace, played ping-pong, and that was basically it.

MN: And Pat you have the same recollection, in terms of what you did when you went to the after-school program?

Patricia Payne (PP): In elementary school I never went to an elementary school program, I went home.

MN: You went home.

PP: Yes, but in Junior High School, yes I started to go to PS 18 center.

MR: Right, it wasn't an after-school program like we know of [Crosstalk] it was just after school you went home, you did your homework, and then the school was open to go, and do little activities.

MN: Now who, like if you were doing beads, was anyone supervising you?

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MR: Yes there was always a supervisor. Yes there was always someone working there.

PP: And to teach you how to do it.

MN: Now who was it, was it a woman who was teaching? So you had a woman, sort of break down by gender. A woman worked with the girls and a guy with the guys?

MR: Yes.

MN: Did you, either of you ever play basketball when you were - -

MR: No, never.

MN: Were there any girls who played basketball with boys in those days?

MR: Not really, maybe one or two when we got older. But like growing up very, you didn't see girls playing basketball.

PP: I was a girl - - girl, I didn't even have a scar, not a single scar.

MR: One thing too, you know what Pat do you remember the library? When we would go to the library to - - read stories to us, on I think it was Friday afternoons. I loved that, that was like - -

MN: They had story time at the library?

MR: Story time at the library.

MN: Now where was the library located?

PP: Down on 138th St. [Crosstalk]

MN: Now, what was the cross-street there?

MR: Bergen and 3rd. Is it Bergen? What is that little street?

PP: 3rd and - -

MR: At the precinct is it Bergen Ave?

PP: Brook, is it Brook?

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MN: But there was a public library there and you would go and [crosstalk] Friday

afternoons and they would - -

MR: Read stories, there was also the PAL. Do you know the PAL?

PP: Yes, I was never - -

MN: You were in the house all day.

PP: Anyways, its that my mother couldn't see me. So if, I had to stay within eyeshot of the window.

MN: Eyeshot of the window.

PP: Except when I went to the center.

MR: And then you had to be back at a specific time.

MN: The center, which center was this?

PP: PS 18.

MN: Ok, now where you both involved in the summer day camp program?

PP: I didn't go to any summer day camp.

MN: So you weren't allowed at that either?

PP: I don't know if it was so much that I wasn't allowed. But, what for whatever reason I didn't go.

MN: Now how did you entertain yourself in the house?

PP: Um, well I was an only child. But I always had TV, ever since I could remember I had a TV. And I used to like to watch Captain Kangaroo and stuff like that, because I would learn how to do crafts. And then I would spend, I would spend a lot of time doing crafts on my own. And let me see what else, I liked to read. And I would invite friends

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

over in the building, children from the building to play with me. And we always had to play school, and I always had to be the teacher, and I would send them home. [Laughter].

MN: And that's what you are now.

PP: That's right isn't that interesting?

MN: Now, now when you were playing outside did people divide up by gender? You know when you were in elementary school, did girls try and play in one group and boys in another?

PP: Pretty much, yes.

MN: And what kind of games outside did the girls play?

PP: Hopscotch.

MR: Hopscotch, and ringalivio.

MN: Ringalivio was all girls or that was everybody together? Did you have all girls ringalivio?

MR: Did you have guys ringalivio? You know I don't remember.

PP: Dodge ball.

MR: Dodge ball. - - , we played ... a lot.

PP: Marbles.

MR: Marbles yes.

Mark Smith (MS): What is ringalivio, all these games you are talking about? Cause I have no idea.

PP: You've never heard of hopscotch?

MS: No I've heard of hopscotch and squares, but...

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MR: [Crosstalk] A group of kids playing and - - how do you play ringalivio? I don't remember. I think someone would call out something and then you'd have to run and stop. What was that I don't remember.

PP: I remember ringalivio one, two, three. But I don't remember what the game was.

[Laughter]

MN: I think there was a home base, a home base you had to get to. You got to get to the home base and - -

MR: The person covers their eyes and then they'll say it, and then when they look you have to stop. I don't remember, it was some kind of game we played.

MN: And then did you play capture the flag? Or was that wasn't - -

MR: What is the one where you call, and then two people run out with the same number, and they try to pick something up in the middle of the ground?

MN: Could be yes.

MR: I remember a game like that but guys would play that game, girls wouldn't play that.

MN: And you didn't join in Johnny and the Pony? That was the toughest of all.

MR: No I don't remember that.

MN: You didn't have Johnny and the Pony?

MR: I don't remember that.

MN: You lucked out. Did you do double-dutch?

MR: A lot of double-dutch, a lot of single rope and double-dutch.

PP: Right, and Simon Says.

MR: Oh, and you remember handball? Handball against the wall?

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MN: Now were there any girls that insisted on playing with the boys? That you know, that ran with them, and didn't want to do any girl things?

MR: You know what I remember when my brother, my youngest brother, when he was in elementary school there was some girl. A little girl in my building, that she always hanged on with a couple of guys. And they, she played ball with them. She pretty much, they drew pictures, they did the same type of things.

MN: Now were there things that your mothers were doing that you know when you were young in elementary school, that were sort of shaping your idea of how you know you were supposed to grow up as a girl and a woman?

MR: Cooking, cleaning, sowing, ironing, that is what girls did. They even had home economics, you remember home economics?

PP: Yes.

MR: And we had to learn how to, I made a blouse which...

MN: In home economics, this is in Junior High?

MR: Yes.

MN: Now what about cooking? Were you encouraged to cook from an early age?

MR: Yes, right.

MN: And your brothers weren't?

MR: Nope.

PP: I was taught how to cook when I was five. I made my first full meal chicken, roasted chicken dinner, when I was about seven or eight.

MN: Really a whole dinner?

PP: A whole dinner.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell
Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith
No Date

PP: Vegetables, rice, everything.

MR: My mother had me in the kitchen standing on a stool teaching me how to cut up the potatoes to go into the stew, teaching me how to roll the pie-crust. Everything was made from scratch, there was no packaged, prepackaged food back then. So, everything you know was made from scratch.

MN: Now, were there commentaries about men in the course of these things? You have to do this because men like this? Or it was pretty much - -

MR: I don't think my mother ever said those words. But I think that - - You kind of knew that - -

PP: It wasn't stated, but it was demonstrated. [Laughter]

MN: So you had to serve the men which meant in your case your brothers.

MR: In fact there were certain things that, I remember I used to have to iron the shirts, the clothes. And my brothers didn't iron, but they took out the garbage and I didn't take the garbage out. So there were specific roles that we played and it wasn't stated that girls don't do this but you knew that - -

PP: But you learn by example.

MR: Yes.

MN: Now, were there any things that, you know you were both bright academic. Were you ever told don't show men, boys you are too smart?

MR: No.

PP: No. I don't think we thought that deeply about it. You know they just knew what they, they knew what they knew. But they didn't, I think they took it so much for granted that they didn't think they had to teach it to us.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell
Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith
No Date

MN: Ok, yes.

MR: I think with my mother, and my mother went to one of them school houses. And they were very very poor. And I remember her saying that the teacher would always make her feel bad. Because, he would say oh you are one of those loud kids and you know they don't have pencils and erasers. And she made it her business, to tell me even if you think you know the answer you say it. She wanted me to be different, because she was shy, introverted, and not able to express herself. She didn't know that I was going to be the big mouth of all time.

PP: Exactly. [Laughter]

MR: I was calling out, but I think that she must have instilled this in me at a young age and I just ran with it.

PP: [Laughing]

MR: Now I still you know - -

MS: I had a question about when you were going to friend's apartments and you know when you were six and seven. Did you notice that most of the families, I mean were most of your friends had moms and dads?

MN: Were most of the families two parent families at that time?

PP: Absolutely. I don't remember any, I'd say up until well into Junior High School.

Yes, up until like maybe the ninth grade I don't remember having any friends who didn't have two parents.

MN: Wow.

PP: You know, and except you know like myself. My father had died when I was eight.

But outside of that I don't remember single parent households. Even, a lot of parents

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

may not have been married, ok they were common law. But they were two parent households.

MN: Ok, now that was an interesting question. How did you know who was, did people - -

PP: Because people gossip, you know.

MN: Ok.

PP: Our parents talking [laughter].

MS: You go to someone's house and you don't see their dad around?

PP: No but I am saying the dad would be there, but it would be a common law marriage. They weren't legally married. But there were men in the household.

MS: Now when they were in the house did you see that the mothers were not working?

PP: A lot of cases, in the, back in the, those days most of the women stayed home. I can't I just I don't remember any working women.

MR: I do, yes. You remember Emily and Beverley. Their mom was a buyer I think for Bloomingdales.

PP: Oh. [Laughter]

MR: Remember, the girls. She was a sharp dresser, she was a buyer.

PP: And her daughters were sharp too.

MR: And she was a working woman. You know who else was a working woman? In your building think back, what was her name? She used to sing and she carried a bag. She was the Fuller Brush lady.

PP: Fuller Brush lady, yes she's still there too. She was there when my mother died; I haven't been down there since then. But yes, Ms. Mayfield.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MR: Ms. Mayfield. She was the Fuller Brush lady. There weren't a lot of working women, the men worked women stayed home. You asked a question about when we went to visit...

MS: Yes, I was asking when you went to visit as a kid, did you notice at all you know the parents had two family house, two parent households. And she said that she didn't know of too many that weren't.

MR: There were mostly two parent households, but you know what you never thought about it. Because I mean if someone came to visit my house they would never know I had a father because he...

PP: He'd be at work.

MR: My father, he worked like three jobs. So people never knew that I had a dad.

PP: It was the same thing [Crosstalk].

MR: [Unintelligible] he was not at home, because he was the disciplinarian. "Go in there and deal with your mother." You know so, when he was there we would tip toe. Because it was like, oh shoot he was home. My dad, my friends didn't know who he was.

PP: But you know what I had forgotten, when we met the last time, we were talking about the fathers. And you asked me if the fathers participated you know with the kids. And I have said that I really didn't remember that so much. That I remember that my father used to do things with the boys, but I forgot Mr. Monroe, I mean Mr. Russell did also. Right, he used to...

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MR: I didn't remember that, but when the first Memorial softball game that Arnold put together for my brother. I remember Leonard Gathers and he almost had tears in his eyes. He said you know I remember your father used to get us together and play baseball.

PP: I remember that, I remember that. I had forgotten that.

MR: And I guess he used to take the guys out, he never took me to play anything. But I guess that was my mother's role. But yes, he said your father always used to take us to play. And I said what? But - -

PP: And Mr. Harch too, and I had forgotten about that.

MR: Oh, Mr. Harch.

PP: Mr. Harch used to be involved in the baseball and stuff with the boys.

MN: Yes, you know when I interviewed Ray Harch he mentioned that his father was very involved with that. Now when Alan Jones was writing you know his memoir, one of the things he said is that in his household there was a big emphasis on personal modesty. People, was that something, you didn't see your parents - -

PP: You know what, when I was growing up that wasn't - -

MR: My parents didn't make it? What?

MN: No [Crosstalk].

MR: I am joking, in fact someone said, offered my mother, cause my father and I [Unintelligible] Like they didn't show affection openly, I never saw that. I mean my dad is eighty-one and my dad is seventy-five and I have never seen them kiss.

PP: Really?

MR: I know that they kiss and they had sex because you know they have the children [Laughter]. But, I never saw that openly displayed.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

PP: That would be a clue. [Laughter].

MR: I have never seen any, any of the people I grew up, I never saw that. I don't remember, and if I did I probably said eww what's wrong. You know like if something was wrong with that. Because no I didn't see it.

PP: I can remember seeing my father show affection to my mother. But also you know now that you mentioned it, in my household, and this was very different from the way it was when I was married. My husband was like you know my kids never knew what we looked like without our clothes. But I can remember as a little girl, that you know I would be in the bathroom with my mother you know while she was doing her - - yes. Or I would be in the bathroom and my father would come in and go to the bathroom. You know I'd be in there brushing my teeth and he would go to the bathroom. And I never thought anything of it.

MR: See you know what it depends on how you're raised. My mom's mom died when she was three, so she was kind of like raised by her sisters who probably didn't... And my dad was raised by his grandmother. So we are talking about people that were living back in the day, they didn't - - you know, they didn't show anything in the home.

MN: Right, now what about language? Were people careful not to curse around girls? Or they didn't curse at all?

PP: Yes.

MN: So that was the stuff that Alan Jones' father using, that was not part of your household? That sort of language?

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

PP: My father would say damn. And if he said that you'd better watch out. That was like the curse - - Damn it! We would go oh my god we are in trouble now! But my mother till today, I've never heard her use a bad term, any... or any profanity.

MN: Did you hear it in the street? As when you were children? Or was that something that came later or not even then?

PP: I think maybe later on, but as growing up if we heard a curse word it would be like ooh. I was like ooh, you know. That was just something that people didn't curse.

MN: Did people ever wash their children's mouth out with soap?

MR: I've heard of it.

PP: I've heard of it.

MN: I didn't just hear of it, I had it done to me.

MR: Oh really [Crosstalk].

PP: But that just emphasizes how you know the serious and offensive. [Unintelligible]
[Laughter]

MR: So I've never known anybody. I've heard people- I'm going to wash your mouth out.

MS: How did Church play a role in both your lives? And did you see it being much a part of the community and your upbringing while you were a child?

MR: Interesting, we never went to Church. Growing up we didn't go to Church. I remember when I was about six maybe, I started going to a center. You remember [Unintelligible] Southern Methodist Church Center, 141st St. I don't know how we started going to that center. But it was a night center, Reverend Rogers was the bomb. He said oh wow they had a big gym, and you could play, and they had arts and crafts, a

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

lot of stuff going on. So, I remember everyday mom could I go to Willis Ave, can I go to Willis Ave? And she would say ok, go to Willis Ave. And then finally one day she said you know what I am going to walk over to Willis Ave and see what's going on, and she went over. And I remember that was the beginning of my whole church career. Because she met the Pastor, he was like oh I am so glad to meet you, you have to come on Sunday. Next thing you know my mother was singing in the choir. My little brother was playing the - -

MN: Oh really? This is Willis Ave Methodist Church?

MR: I was in the youth, forget what you call it. But we you know, went around to different churches on Sundays, and that was the beginning of my - -

MN: Was it a multiracial congregation?

MR: Very multiracial congregation. The minister was white, and they were just mixed the whole neighborhood, all different you know.

MN: Right, and was your family church going?

PP: No, well no. My parents weren't churchgoing, but my grandmother was. And I don't know if you recall, when you interviewed me I told you that we had a five room apartment. Because my grandmother lived with us on the weekends, and during the week she did domestic work. And, she was religious. Excuse me, and she was a member of a Baptist Church up on 152nd St between St. Nicholas and the next, I don't know - -

MN: So she went back to Harlem.

PP: So every Sunday, that is where she went to Church. And, I had to go. Now, I had, my mother's sister lived across the street from the church. So a lot of times my grandmother and I, my father would take us to my aunts house and we would spend the

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

night. And then on Sunday my grandmother would take my cousins and myself to church.

MR: I remember your cousin.

PP: You do?

MR: Yes.

PP: Yes Gloria Jean, she was the closest one to my age. And her two older sisters, are the two who used to baby-sit for me, who were friends with the Doo-wopers, the older boys in 414.

MR: Ok, ok.

MN: [Unintelligible] always says that they were very talented, or was he exaggerating?

PP: Very talented, real talented.

MN: Bobo Johnson.

PP: Bobo could sing.

MR: I remember one time you and your cousin went on a country trip. And you went stayed in a lot of hotels and brought keys back from each hotel. And you had a bunch of keys.

PP: You sure it was me?

MR: It was you and your cousin. Someone had taken you like somewhere, and you had gone and stayed in a lot of different hotels that summer. And you took the keys of each hotel, and you had a bunch of keys. And I said Pat where did you get these keys? You said we went and stayed here at this hotel. It was you and your cousin.

PP: I don't remember, that I don't remember.

MR: I remember that. But yes there was a lot of Doo Wop going on.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MN: Right, now when you were starting to reach puberty what were your mothers telling you at that time? Or not too much?

PP: Not to let boys touch me

MR: I was told that clearly.

MN: And what, she was very explicit?

MR: It was like you,

PP: No she wasn't explicit enough to, enough for it to make sense right. I mean it was like, that I should not let boys touch me. Because now you know I was a woman and I could get pregnant. And of course I mean I knew enough to know what she was talking about, but she never explained to me what she was talking about.

MN: But so how, you picked up your knowledge from other kids? From older kids?

MR: The street.

MN: The Street?

MR: Yes.

MR: My mother bought a book. It was made by the makers of the Kotex Pad, called "Growing Up and Liking It". She sent for it, I guess it must have said if you have a daughter you know bla, bla, bla. She mails away for the book, I had to go look in her room and I found the book when I was like nine I read the whole thing. So, at that time in my life, she comes to me and says look read this book. And I looked at the book and I said to myself I already read this. I said ok, and then she said you know just be very careful and don't let boys get near you, you just have to watch yourself. It wasn't, I mean I already I used to talk to my friends' older sisters and they would say oh this and that.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MN: So you had the older girls were schooling the younger ones and giving them advise?

MR: I used to go to, you remember the Roof? Charles and Luis and...

PP: Yes, yes.

MR: I used to get in their house, because I loved talking to older people. And just listening to their conversations, and we would just pick up on their conversations. And that is how I learned my stuff basically from you know older [Unintelligible]. I mean the both of us just - -

MN: So did your mother give you a book and say here read this?

PP: No.

MN: Now at what point did boys start showing interest in girls? Was this in elementary school?

MR: I think in elementary school.

PP: I think in elementary yes. There were girls who used to play hooky in the sixth grade, and have parties in their homes.

MR: And girls and guys would come, and guys would - - I remember it was, we were in...

PP: And some of them would get pregnant.

MR: Yes, I remember in sixth grade, lunch time we went to this guys house, Steven - - I don't know I forget his name.

PP: He was the new kid on the block.

MR: Mother wore a [Unintelligible] I remember one time we went out and we raided the refrigerator I remember eating chicken and doing whatever, mother cooked. And I

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

remember I went into the room and he had this girl that we know, she is a thief now, don't want to say her name. But he had her on the bed, and they were trying to have sex and he was like I can't get it, I can't get it up. And I didn't know what they were talking about, and he was saying can you look and see if I have it right. And I was like, you'd better come on we have to go back to school. I remember leaving her and they didn't come to school that afternoon, and it was like I [Unintelligible] he couldn't even find it or something. [Laughter] You know so along that [Unintelligible] [Laughter]. But he was trying, I guess he saw it on television, I don't know what he saw.

PP: We don't have that television back then.

MR: Well, no, it sure wasn't. It wasn't the television, the fork had to be on the floor one of the, each actor, like the man foot would be one side of the floor. And he would have his body, and the woman would have half her, but they had to have a foot on the floor.

MN: Now did you, when you were in elementary school did people play Spin the Bottle?
Do you remember that?

PP: There were some parties.

MR: Yes, they did.

MN: Cause I remember starting that in fifth grade, and you know.

PP: Yes.

MR: At birthday parties they used to do that.

MN: Now, when did you start hearing people talking about doing it? Or was that, did people use that word in those days?

PP: I think it was around the sixth grade.

MR: Yes sixth grade, probably sixth grade.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MN: So that's when you know people actually started to have sex?

MR: Have sex yes I believe.

MN: And when is the first, and then that is when you started to notice that people were getting pregnant? Were hearing through the grapevine?

PP: I was so naïve, I remember I was hanging out with this girl? She, I went to call her, you know hi you know. And her mother said, oh she's going away to school. Oh when is she coming back? Oh she'll probably be back you know around Christmas. And I remember her coming home, and I remember her telling me my mother had a baby. And I'm like oh, I didn't know about the stomach getting big, I didn't know that part. I did not know, so I thought that that was her little sister. And it wasn't till about - -

[Cell phone ring]

MN: Is that mine, oh one second.

MS: This time period we are talking about six grade, what year was that?

MR: Oh sixty, sixty-one.

MN: So the kids in sixth grade, were basically twelve or thirteen?

PP: Right.

MN: And so, and were people whispering about these things? Or it was something that you didn't talk about?

PP: I didn't, Mark I would be [Unintelligible] with you. I didn't, there, I remember in my building there was a young girl who had a baby. But she was considered kind of on the wild side, and she hung out with this wild guy who didn't go to school. The fact that everybody went to school, and there were these two guys that they lived in your building. You remember Butcher Jakes, Butch yes.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell
Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith
No Date

PP: Yes.

MR: Um, anyway one of the girls in my building was going out with Jakes. And he was considered, he smoked cigarettes, and that was like smoking weed now. Because you didn't smoke cigarettes, because parents smoked but teenagers you didn't smoke cigarettes then. He used to smoke cigarettes and roll the pack up in his shirt. And he was like a bad guy you know. And I remember she started going with him, and I think she got a little out of hand with the mother, no control, and she got pregnant.

MN: And how old was she at the time? Fourteen or Fifteen?

MR: You know what I don't remember. She was, she probably was in like tenth grade, probably in tenth grade. I think she got in Junior High.

MS: It is interesting to me, because people right now always talking about how TV is desensitized kids and getting them thinking about stuff that they shouldn't begin to think. But you guys, you didn't have that in the sixties, there was nothing going on then that would instruct you about sex, you guys were just horny I guess.

MR: Excuse me, no what I think, let me tell you something. It depended on, if you had that, I think that if you give a teenager enough rope they are going to hang themselves with it. We didn't have that rope, there was no play in our rope. Your rope went from here to here. And I shouldn't even say that, because I did, I remember going to ... park and my mother thought that I was around the corner in the little park. I would sneak to [Unintelligible] and skate down that hill, dead man's hill. I remember that, I remember going to the market, I remember going on adventures and my mother thought that - - I could have been in a little boy's house. But I was too afraid, of, I mean my father told me

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

let me tell you something, all he had to do was raise his voice and I was scared straight.

Excuse me, I wasn't taking chances, I was too afraid to reach out there, I was afraid.

PP: I couldn't get pregnant [Unintelligible] [Crosstalk].

PP: But I also, and I was afraid not to do what I was told to do. Because my mother made it very clear that she wasn't having that. But she also used to say, and used to hear us say all the time. To neighbors you know or whatever, when she would be talking about other people who had gotten pregnant, because I also had a cousin who also got pregnant when she was fifteen. And my mother would say stuff like that if, that I could have a baby if I wanted to, and I would take it to school with me. And I mean I knew her well enough to think that she meant it. And I wasn't trying to do that, how embarrassing would that have been. [Laughter]

MR: Yes we were kind of scared of reaching out like that.

PP: But this is a picture of my next-door neighbor who did have a baby when she was fourteen.

MN: Wow.

MS: See what I don't understand is when it comes to inconsistencies. You are saying that there are two parent households, with mothers at home full-time, but yet kids are getting pregnant.

PP: Now I don't know that the people who were getting pregnant were necessarily of the two household family. Because remember initially we were in elementary school, I remember two family households. But when we started to get into Junior High School it started to change.

MN: So this is the early sixties?

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

PP: This is the early sixties, it had started to change. So, I don't know. I am not saying that there is no connection.

MN: Right, ok now was it changing because some of the original families were moving out and the people replacing them were less of the upwardly mobile ambitious - -

PP: I believe so.

MR: Yes, a lot of people, what happened was they started opening up other projects.

And I remember they had projects with three tiers. They had the low-income, the middle-income, and then the upper.

PP: I had forgotten about that.

MR: Remember, [Crosstalk] And now, anyway so what happened was, I remember some people leaving for 14 Morris moving to Dyckman Houses or moving to St Mary's -

-

MN: Those were middle-income?

MR: Yes, because their salaries had gone up.

MN: Right, ok.

MR: So I remember that, and then I said then you start coming in more like public assistance.

MN: Now when you were growing up no one you knew was on public assistance?

MR: They might have been but we didn't know because no one discussed their business. I remember a family across the hall they didn't have a dad. Their mother I remember did domestic work but that was under the table. But she had a public assistance, I found later I didn't know at the time, but she was on public assistance. But you know she had her house looked just like my house. And her kids dressed nice, but she did her side work.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MN: Yes, now were you starting to get aware like in the early Sixties that things were getting different in some way that was negative? Or, how did it, you know how did that manifest itself? Where were the warning signs? Like Alan Jones was talking about - -

MR: Drugs, I remember, but I didn't feel like that was not necessarily a bad thing for the project but just like these particular individuals started using drugs. And I remember helping them, I remember some of them using drugs and I didn't know what it was. You know people would say oh look at that junkie. And I'd say how did they know that they were junkies? But what it was they had a nod, I didn't know about the nod. And I remember one time I was out in the park, in front of your building. That little, in between your building and 2 - - 315? The park.

PP: Yes, it's a basketball court now.

MR: And I remember someone, I don't know if it was like one of the boys or one of them. But the guy, he had OD'd, I remember someone saying he OD'd. I didn't know what OD - -

MN: Now how old were you when this was going on?

MR: I believe I was in high school. I believe I was in like maybe tenth grade, it might have been ninth grade.

MN: And you, what high school were you at?

MR: Central.

MN: And you went to Walton, Right.

PP: Yes.

MR: I remember someone saying oh he's OD'ing. And I'm like, he's OD'ing? But I didn't know what OD'ing meant, they said we had to help him.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell
Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith
No Date

PP: Even in high school?

MR: I didn't know, I didn't know? Maybe I wasn't in high school, maybe I was in ninth grade I don't know. But I didn't know OD meant. All I know is, like let's help him. And we went over to him, and we started [Unintelligible] for milk, and we walked him to the store, and we bought him a thing of milk. And we told him to drink it, he started drinking the milk. And then he went to the curb and he started throwing up. And they said ok he is going to be OK. And I remember wow, and then someone said to me oh he OD'd on drugs. And I said what do you mean? He said well he took too much. But maybe, I don't know maybe I wasn't in high school, maybe I was in junior high school. But I remember that was the first time I heard about drugs hitting Patterson Projects. And the females were using it, you know.

MN: Did it produce fear of robberies? Was that one of the - - not really?

MR: Not at all, not at all.

MN: It was just people nodding out and you heard - -

PP: I had grown up with the fear of drugs, and people who used drugs. Because I remember my parents used to talk about it.

MN: Is this from Harlem?

PP: Yes I think from, you know, I guess, yes it had to be. From you know where they came from and what they heard about people I guess that they used to know. And um, drugs were always painted as a horrible thing to me. I mean I can remember being a very little girl. Because my father died when I was eight, so I am talking about when I was like you know five six years old, hearing them talk about this. And my mother, I mean they talk - - my mother would talk about it with such disdain. And she, I can remember

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

her saying which I don't, until this day I don't know if this is true. But I can remember her saying that you know if I a junky tried to attack you - - because I was always given the impression that if you are around these kind of people that they would force you to do this. And she would say something about, that if you know, I don't remember the context of which she was talking about this. But she was talking about that if you wanted to get away from one, that you had to like cut their vein or something. [Laughter]

MN: Really?

PP: And I can remember, I remember you know hearing her talk about this. But I was always fearful of junkies and drugs.

MR: I remember my dad always said, you'd better not use drugs. I mean he had us afraid too. He would try anything because he just said, you know like their life is gone and it's never going to, they are never going to ever come out of it. And I was afraid, if someone said to me come on let's go smoke this, you know what I mean? I wouldn't you know - -

MN: Now when did you start noticing that maintenance in the building started to become less you know rigorous or when you know things got - - or did that not happened for a long time?

MR: I moved out when I was eighteen.

MN: So what year was that?

MR: Sixty - - no I moved out when it was 1967. 1967, and pretty much I didn't notice a change.

MN: So it looked pretty much like what it did before? With like - - in '67?

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

PP: Not to me. Because I mean I graduated from high school, we graduated in '66. But I had noticed I'd say years before that. You know actually, I think when the population in the projects started to change. Like you talked about how, you know initially it was a place where [End of Tape] - - Lived themselves up after the war. But eventually, when I say eventually I'd say maybe within the next twelve to fifteen years the paradigm had changed. Now, it was a place where people who were destitute you know could have by comparison a decent place to live.

MR: For affordable housing.

PP: Exactly. And I think that that was when the flavor of the place started to change. When they started to bring in people who had no income, who you know were on public assistance, who might have had drinking problems or you know whatever. Then they would have people coming in who didn't live there, who would urinate in the hallways and do those kinds of things.

MN: So you started to see some of that in the 60's, the urine smell in the hallways?

PP: I definitely remember that.

MR: See Pat's building was set up a little differently from my building, Pat lived in a large building. Which the structure of the large building when you came on the elevator to right there, to go into the hallways you had to go around into the stairwells. And the stairwells were separate from the hallways. My building the hallways, the stairwells were right there. So for someone to pee in our building it was kind of hard because people had their doors open, everybody knew each other, we were in and out of each other's houses. And pretty much we had established the set up for the building, for the - - I mean new people coming in, they might have come from a different place. But we

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

pretty much had that building locked down in terms of the old people, we were still there, the Duke's, and the Murphy's, and the Russell's, and the Hallman's. You know like, it was pretty much [Unintelligible] we was there. So even though people started coming in it was a little different with the floor buildings. So I didn't really notice a whole lot of changing in terms of you know, I mean it might have changed a little. But it was pretty much - - while I lived at Patterson it was, I guess I don't know. Maybe I didn't pay that much attention. But I mean there was change of course, but it wasn't to the point of like urination - - that I remember.

PP: But the people in the small buildings did have more camaraderie than the people in the larger buildings. I guess just by the nature of the number that they weren't close.

MN: Now Pat in your last interview you had mentioned certain things that you would come to understand about what you were expecting from a marriage or a relationship with a man. And if you could talk a little more about that, and then Marilyn also.

PP: Yes, like I said it wasn't a spoken rule. But by example I was raised to believe that the man took care of the woman. You know that I was supposed to cook, you know clean, and be a good girl. And I would meet a man who would take care of me. And I would marry him, and we would have kids, and he would pay the bills, and I would do whatever I wanted. [Laughter] And, that is how I thought the world was. And ironically, when I met my husband I was, I must have been about twenty-three. I was about twenty-three when I met my husband. And the night that we met, we met at a Christmas party, at the apartment of one of my co-workers who I was very close - - who I became very close to. And she had this party this night, and my husband shows up. And I was expecting, I had a boyfriend who was supposed to come to the party. And he had gotten the address

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

mixed up and whatever and he never showed up. And my husband came over, and he had, my husband had come with a woman. But he said it was a platonic relationship. And so he and I started talking that night, and I will never forget this. And I am sure that on the subconscious level I was influenced by this. But he said to me that night, you know in our conversation and stuff. He said to me that he was looking for a woman that he could take care of.

MR: Wow.

PP: That is what he said to me.

MN: Is that what you tell people Mark? [Laughter]

MS: I am trying to take care of me. [Laughter]

PP: That is what he said to me. And I am like, that was like right on target, that is what he was supposed to do.

MR: Exactly.

PP: Of course. A year later we got married, eleven months later we got married. And he was never able to take care of me. [Laughter]

MR: But he wanted.

PP: Exactly, and that is probably what kept us together for twenty-two years because I knew he wanted to. But he never did. [Laughter]

MN: And you had the same idea? Or not quite?

MR: You know what, I think that that is how it was supposed to be. But there were a lot of things that I saw in my mom that I didn't like, and I did not want to repeat. And I kept saying to myself I am going to change this, I am going to make this different. Because my dad took my mother everywhere by car, she never drove. As soon as I could get

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

behind the wheel of a car I wanted to know how to drive. There were things that she just didn't do that I said I want to do. And I got married and yes I did marry someone that could take care of me. He had a decent job, he worked at the Post Office. I said oh this is good, he can you know take care of me, and we got married. But the thing is, I was so not my mother. I had the big mouth, my mother was quiet, we were opposites. So everything that she stood for and the glue that held her marriage together was what made me go in a different direction. Because I just could not be complacent, I could not be quiet, I just couldn't do a lot of things that my mom did. I mean I said I'd [Unintelligible] I didn't. Like I said I drove the car, I nailed the picture up on the wall, things that my mother just didn't do I did.

MN: Now were both of you brought up to expect to go to college? Was that part of your-

-

MR: No.

PP: I was.

MN: You were?

MR: I wasn't no.

MN: Now did you go directly to college from high school?

MR: No I didn't. When I got out of high school I got married, and I moved out. And I said I want to do exactly what I want to do and I don't care what no one says. And I did, I liked to hang out and I did, I liked to sleep late and I did. I did all the things that I wanted to do, I did me. And then I decided later on I wanted to go to college because I knew that that was the way to a better life. And so I mean my parents didn't push the college thing on me.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

PP: So you didn't have to work when you got married?

MR: No.

PP: Oh.

MR: I didn't have to work.

PP: See my husband was an assistant manager at a bank in Harlem, and I still had to work. [Laughing] I mean we couldn't afford to live like I wanted to live and not work, you know, so I continued.

MN: Now you know, at what point did both of you sort of become intellectuals who began to look back and make sense of all this? Was this something that was always there? Or was there sort of an epiphany where you said I want to understand all of this. I wasn't exactly given the tools to - -

PP: For me it was only about ten years ago. It was about ten years ago, about, it was after my husband and I got divorced which was about 1994.

MR: I don't, when I look back you know - - when I think about my life, and my life has taken a turn just recently. Because my dad had a stroke and he is now unable to do the things that he used to, is accustomed to doing. And so I've become kind of caretaker, thrust into the role. Not really wanting the role, but knowing that it- -

MN: Is he living in your house?

MR: He lives in my building, now he does fulltime. And so I am very much a part of that. And so when I look back at the relationship with him and my mom, and her quiet complacent, who is now not like that ok. That's just it, it's the same thing, my mother is not the quiet sweet lady that she was. She is still sweet but she's not quiet, and she voices her opinion I think you know, she is now starting to lash out and say how she feels. I said

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

oh, now we have this stroke and he's not you know - - I mean he can walk, he can talk, he can balance his check book. He just can't drive his car anymore, things that he is accustomed to doing he can't do. So um I am just starting to really think about my role back then, my role as a mom, you know just coming into myself as a grandmother, I'm a grandmother now. And when I look back I say, well I know I've come a long way and I don't know. I didn't give it much thought, but now I am thinking more about it.

MS: I had a question, we didn't really talk about high schools. What - -

MR: Got to talk about high schools?

MN: No, but if you, go ahead.

MS: I was going to ask from an academic standpoint, you said you went to two high schools. I haven't heard any mention of the other interviews, what were the two?

PP: Walton, I went to Walton.

MR: I went to Central.

MS: Ok, and those were both public schools.

PP: Yes.

MN: Yes, well Vicky Archibald went to Walton. Which, and Pat you said this was a real, you know well run place.

PP: Walton, well I meant to bring the yearbook. Walton was like a private school then. It had the principle was like a headmistress ok. And she wore these beautiful silk suits, and heels everyday. And the floors were hardwood floors, well actually not, they were parquet floors, and they always had a high gloss. And that place, there was no hanging out in the hallways; we weren't allowed to leave the buildings. Once you got in in the morning, you were in that building until you got dismissed at three o'clock. We had to

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

have lunch in the building. So either you had to bring it, buy it, or get it free. But it had to happen in the cafeteria. And for me it was a wonderful experience, because I kind of got to see the other side. And at the time I didn't know it was the other side, that was all I knew. But based on my experiences then, I found that that was really really an opportunity that I will cherish. I will always cherish that now.

MN: So it was, that was an experience where your intellectual abilities and aspirations were recognized?

PP: Um, I would say to some extent yes, yes. And I can remember in the ninth grade I had taken French in junior high school. And in the tenth grade, when I went to high school they put me in French II. And I walked into the classroom and the French teacher was from France, this woman was speaking French 24-7. And I am sitting there, and I am like I did not learn this much last year. [Laughter] And its not going to get there now. So I went down to see my counselor to drop this class. And I am like, I want to drop this class, I want to switch to a commercial program. Because in the commercial program you didn't have to take a language right. I am like, I want to drop this, I want to switch to a commercial program. And she went through my record and she said, and she said young lady I want you to come back here at such-and-such a time, and we will have a discussion. So I go off to my class and she sent my back to class, to my French class. And so I went to see her, and she says, let me tell you something young lady, you are not, I am going to let you drop French for this semester and you'll do study hall. She said, but next semester she said what language do you want to take instead? We had French, Italian, or Spanish. And I am like, well my neighbors [Unintelligible] [Laughter]. And so I chose Spanish. So they let me off for a semester, next semester I had to take Spanish.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

But the thing is is that was such a wonderful thing for me. Because I mean what she said was look you have the ability to do this. I am not going to let you you know deprive yourself of this opportunity. And I am glad because then when I went to the City University for a degree I would have had to take the language anyway. So it worked out.

MN: Now how did you end up at Central Commercial?

MR: I was, I ended up at Central - - when I was in junior high school there was not a lot of career, focus on career. We had a Career Day which was, and actually it was in the auditorium. Do you remember the auditorium?

PP: I don't even remember Career Day.

MR: The Career Day was in the auditorium, and they had I think maybe six or seven people on the stage, a nurse, a secretary, a mechanic. The careers were not a lot, it wasn't a lot to choose from. And I said no I don't want to be a nurse, and so I guess I'll be a secretary.

MN: So you never thought of being a teacher, that being a teacher was in the cards? Or is that - - would not have been attractive to you even if it was made possible?

MR: I didn't want to teach, I did not want to teach. Because I thought about teaching kids, like myself, and didn't want to do that.

PP: She was a challenge.

MN: Really?

PP: Even as a kid I knew that Marilyn was a challenge.

MN: In what way? You mean - -

PP: Yes because she used to like to talk.

MR: Yes I talked.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

PP: And she used to bring candy to school. We weren't supposed to eat candy in school.

[Laughter].

MR: I was a challenge.

MN: She was rebellious?

PP: No she wasn't bad, she wasn't - -

MR: I am going to tell you what I was.

PP: - - Confrontational with teachers, but she was a talker.

MR: Never, I talked.

MR: Let me tell you what happened. When I was in I think second grade they wanted to bus myself and [Unintelligible] to a school in Queens. And my mother was afraid due to the Civil Rights stuff that was going on at the time. And she wouldn't let us get the bus.

I think I was bored, I think I was bored. And like I said I never disrespected my instructors, I never - - but I talked a lot. And I got to, I chewed gum.

MN: Give me an example of what sort of talk. Are you talking dirt?

MR: Talking to my neighbor sitting next to me.

MN: You know, while the teacher is talking you are talking to your neighbor?

MR: Oh, they'd give us something to do, and I 'd finish it and start talking. I think that now that I look back, I think that that is what was happening with me - - and the thing is -

- oh I lost my whole train of thought. So when I got to junior high school I didn't know.

I said I don't want to be a teacher, I don't want to be a nurse. So I said you know what, let me do secretarial things. I went to Central Commercial, which is now Norman

Thomas, you know Norman Thomas High School. That was the school I was, Central

Commercial. And I took short hand, and was going to become a secretary, and it didn't

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

happen. It actually did happen, I worked for a year as a secretary and I hated it. Pat did it for 25 years.

PP: I hated it, you know.

MN: You were a secretary for 25 years?

PP: Yes.

MN: After going - -

PP: Yes, what happened is, so I didn't go to college like traditionally. I mean I went to Bronx Community at night. At that time there was no tuition, it was 25 dollars for your student fee and registration fee. And I started, like right after high school and I had applied at Bronx Community, I had applied at City I think, and Baruch. But what I didn't know was the first school that accepts you is where you got. And I had put Bronx Community first because Sandra Satchel, my best friend, was going to Bronx Community. So I got accepted to Bronx Community. So I went to Bronx Community at night. And until I got married, I think I did night school up until just before I got married. And, I should say, just before I met my husband. And then I had dropped out for a while. And I dropped in and out for years. I didn't get my degree in education until 1985. And in the meantime I had switched from major to major, finally I settled on education. Which took me right back around where I started from.

MR: So, um I forgot where we were. I never wanted to be a teacher. In fact I do teach now because it is part of my obligation to the University. But I am a counselor and interesting, when I found a year book I interviewed someone from the guidance department. Talked about how powerful a program this was, and how important guidance counselors were. And I ended up as a counselor, which is something I like to do.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MN: So your first job at Bronx Community was a counselor? Or was it as an administrator or teacher?

MR: My first job at Bronx Community was working, it came out of the work study program. I started out working as a student aid in the financial aid office.

MN: This is you - - as a student at Bronx?

MR: I started working in the work study program in the financial aid office. That was my job assignment. I mean they could have sent me anywhere, but just happened they sent me to the financial aid office. In working in the financial aid office I liked the pulse, I liked the flavor. So I started involved in learning the different jobs. Although I was not a worker, I was a work study student. After there, going on to Lehman majored in administration, Health administration. And in doing that after I graduated, I would go take some off, just relax. I wasn't going to work, I was just going to take the summer off. The director of financial aid, heard that I was graduating, asked me to come and work for him. I said no why would I work for you. You know I have a degree in administration, you know. He says come back and work part-time, just help me out this summer. And then you can you know make a couple bucks, you'll be off three days, and I did. And from there I wended up staying. And I realized that I was doing counseling because when students were coming in for their application we'd sit down and the counseling process began. And I said to myself, you know I like this. Let me go back and do the masters in counseling. And that is how I got into doing counseling.

MN: Now how did you end up at Monroe College?

PP: Well before I went to Monroe, as I said I got my degree in like '85, in education.

But in the meantime I had since 1964 when I graduated - - I mean from '66 when I

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

graduated from high school I'd started working in offices. And by the time I was nineteen, I was working at Harper and Row. And as a matter of fact I brought a picture from there too. I was working at Harper and Row and that was where I got introduced to electronic word processing. And that led to you know my doing lots and lots of electronic, you know computer work, prior to PC's. And what I found was that that provided me with a substantial amount of income. So I went to school and I did that to make money. And I was married by the time I seriously went back to school to get my degree. And so I would work forty hours in a weekend. From midnight Friday to 8 AM Saturday, from 4 pm Saturday to 8 am Sunday, from 4pm Sunday to 8 am Monday and then I was off for the rest of the week. So I could take classes during the day, and you know take care of my family and take classes during the day and still make \$700 a week. So that was what I did. So then even after I got my undergraduate degree I was invited to teach at a school where I did my practicum in the Bronx, up in District 8. They invited me to come back the next year when I graduated. And I didn't take them up on the offer because I was making so much money doing what I was doing. And you know back then I didn't have the foresight to know that if I had taken them up on that offer then I could be retiring in two years, you know. [Laughing] But um you know I didn't know I was looking at the money. So I continued to do that. But after I got my undergraduate degree, about three or four years later I started to work on my masters. So it was a matter of looking for what I should do my masters in. Now I had a degree in Education, in Elementary Ed. And I had all of this secretarial and electronic computing experience, so it was like ok what should I get my masters in. And I started to look for programs and finally I found the program which was Educational Computing. It was perfect for me

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

because it didn't require all of the math and science that computer science required. So I had to work on my masters in Educational Computing. In the meantime I met someone who was working for a non-profit organization that specialized in teaching teachers how to integrate technology into the curriculum. This was during a time when the New York City Public Schools were getting all of these computers in the classroom. And teachers didn't know what to do with them. So I went to work for them, I worked there for seven years. And things started to change, and in fact I had gotten promoted to the director of program. And things started to change and I really wanted out. So then it was ok like what skills do I have, what can I do. So one day I woke up, got ready for work, and I was like I can't do this today, I cannot do this. I have got to find me a job. So instead of going to work I sat down and updated my resume and wrote letters to about a half-dozen colleges, looking for adjunct work. And sure enough in about a week, a week and a half I started to get responses. Monroe was the one whose next semester started the soonest.

MR: Oooh, so you took that one.

PP: So I went in and interviewed, and did my sample lesson and the director of the evening and weekend division told me that my demonstration was the best they had ever seen. And he gave me an offer, and he said this is what - - this is what I am authorized to offer you. He said but if you want more I will be very happy to walk you across the hall to my boss. And I took what he offered. I said no that's fine I am looking for an opportunity. So I took the job as an adjunct, he gave me all of the classes in that department that were vacant. So I had my day job, which fortunately I was in the public schools so I got off at like three. And I was teaching four nights a week, plus two classes on Saturday. A month later, I get a call from the President's Office. I was on vacation,

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

winter break, and I get a call at home about three thirty in the afternoon from the Assistant to the President of Monroe. And she said there is a position becoming available and you were recommended for it. And Mr Jerome said that if you would be interested he would like you to come in so he could meet you. And I went in we met and eventually within the next four months I was offered the position of Chair of the department I was working in, because my boss retired. So anyways, I did that for a couple of years and that is not what I want to do, I want to teach. And so now I teach and somebody else is chair.

MR: So you were supposed to be a teacher all along. Could you come back, maybe we could do that full circle and come back.

MN: Ok, I kind of said all that I have to say. Are there any things that you would want to add in terms of looking back? Or you know, things we didn't cover that you would like to talk about?

PP: I want to bring up something, that didn't come to me until after we had talked the last time. But in terms of the social environment ok. We talked about a few of the things, about how women treated men and how men treated women and those kinds of things. But there were other things that I remember from that time. And I am not sure Marilyn, cause you talking as though you were real naïve. [Laughter] But, there were things that I remember.

MR: I was naïve.

PP: I remember lots of those stay at home moms having affairs during the day, while those men were at work.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MR: You know what there was a lot of that going on. But you know what any time - - I remember encountering - - going with someone, someone to meet their mother in a bar. And their mother was with another man. And let me tell you something, I didn't think about it, I didn't think about. You know what I remember going with someone that we just talked about, how cute she was in the pictures. [Laughter]

PP: They used to hang out in bars.

MR: Her mom, [Crosstalk] that bar was on Third Ave.

MN: What was it called?

MR: I don't remember, it was the - - remember that Catholic School right there on Third Ave?

MN: St. Regis?

MR: Not St Regis, it is a girls Catholic, it is still there. There is a girl's school, Third Ave. Ok, you come to Third Avenue 145th St. you start heading up. You know where the block splits, it goes into where Con Edison used to be, District 5 offices - - I can't remember that street.

PP: Cortland?

MR: Cortwell. Ok if you keep straight on Third, somewhere in between there was a bar. There was a bar there, I don't remember the name of it. And I remember it was long. It was not, it was a narrow place, bar, and then you had to almost squeeze past. And I remember going with these kids, and their mother would be in a bar with other men. And you know what, dummy never thought nothing about it.

MN: Now, so where would these, the mothers meet these men?

MR: In the bar.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MN: So they would go [Crosstalk]

PP: Because I knew some who didn't, well I don't know that they hung out in a bar. But I know one in particular, she had definitely one kid for this guy, while her husband worked. And then, possibly the second one also. She had two older kids like around our age, for her husband, and she had these other two younger kids who were definitely for this guy. It was like Thursday was hang out day. And I don't know why I paid attention to this.

MN: So it was Mom's day out?

MR: But you would hear people talking about, absolutely. [Crosstalk] And you would see her go out at about noon, and he would pick her up in a car. What was ironic, the one that stands out the most in my mind is that he and her husband resembled.

MN: But so how did - -

PP: How she ever met them I don't know.

MN: How did you meet? You know.

MR: How did you know?

MN: And who were these guys? Were they living from the projects? Or they were outside?

PP: No, no not from the projects.

MN: Now were there bars which were known as sort of places where shady stuff was going on?

MR: No, I don't think the bars were shady. I think that they were just regular bars.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

PP: There was a bar right across the street on Morris Ave, where Lincoln Hospital is now. In fact I am not sure if it is down that far. But you remember, it was Mr. Lee right, the Muhammed, the Muslim man that had the little candy store.

MN: Right yes.

PP: The bar was right next to that, there was a house in between. [Crosstalk] Oh I never knew the name of - -

MR: My father used to help run that bar.

PP: Really? The Italian bar?

MR: My father - - no it was a - -

PP: I am talking about, it was an Italian.

MR: And it changed over. Remember because - -

PP: Because Ms. Mammy used to live in the house between the bar and the little candy store.

MR: You are talking about right outside of the school. When you come out of the school- -

PP: No, no, no. That was too far down. I am talking about closer to 414. When you crossed the street there was a live chicken market across the street. There was a - -

MN: A live chicken market?

PP: A live chicken market. They used to have a live chicken market, there was a barber shop, and I forget the name of the black man who owned it.

MR: Mr. Johnson. That is what they called him, Abraham Johnson's father.

PP: Abraham's father?

MR: That was Johnson's Barbershop.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

PP: Really because that's not the one, I was thinking about another man. But anyway ok, so anyway all that stuff was there on Morris Ave. across from the front of PS 18. Ok, and then there was Patsy's Delicatessen, if we come back towards where 14 was, there was a bar - - there was a corner ... thing and that is where the Mr. Lee's little candy store ended up. Right next to it was a private house, and Ms Mimmy, little old Italian lady used to live there. And right next to it was this Italian bar. And I know that a lot of the ladies from the projects would go to that bar, in the day time.

MN: In the daytime, so they would go in this Italian bar to drink?

PP: To drink, and probably to meet men.

MR: And let me say something, and the husbands were probably busy off at work.

PP: They were at work.

MN: And the husbands were working two or three jobs.

PP: That's right.

MN: They keep the women you know happy.

PP: And the women were picking men's numbers and drinking beer at the bar. [Laughter]

MR: As long as they would come home and do that dinner thing.

PP: That's right, nobody knew.

MR: And people did not tell, people mind their own business. If you saw somebody doing something it wasn't your business, stay out of it.

PP: I can remember my own mother having a fling. But it wasn't, it was somebody from Harlem. And I don't know how she ever met him. But I do know that he would come to the house sometimes, in the daytime. My father was at work, and my father died when I was eight, so I must have been about five. And I told him.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MR: She probably knew - - you told your dad?

PP: I told him. I was five.

MN: And what did he say?

PP: And he didn't, he didn't take it seriously because I mean I was five years old. And he, I think - - no what I think is, my father loved my mother so much. And I think that he did know that she would do it, and that he didn't want to know. So, you know he never did anything.

MN: Now on the other side were there bars where there was open prostitution? Or that wasn't something that, you grew up not seeing that?

MR: No.

MN: Were there any guys who looked like pimps around Patterson? You didn't grow up with like very visible hustlers?

MR: No, none of that.

PP: No. I don't remember any of that.

MN: When did you first hear the word pimp?

PP: Watching Starsky and Hutch. [Laughter]

MN: So it wasn't something kids talking about. Like, you know guys didn't say I want to be a pimp when I grow up?

MR: I started hearing about pimps when I read Iceburg Slim's book, back in the day.

Do you remember Iceburg Slim?

MN: Yes the book he wrote called Pimp. That was - -

MR: Yes, and Trick Momma, and Trick - - I was reading those books, I loved those books. That was my first reading assignment.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

PP: The best reading I had was the first summer after high school, when I could read anything that I wanted. And that was when you know I read you know about Malcolm X, and I read Dick Gregory's Nigger, and I just read everything that I could put my hands on. And you know in all of that stuff you know they talked about pimps. But I am trying to remember if I remember my cousin talking about that stuff in Harlem. I don't remember, I don't remember. I really don't remember. The other thing is, that a lot of the older women who would have known about that stuff, that I had contact with like my god mothers, cousins who had come up from Tennessee and they would stay with us for a while. And they were you know doing domestic work, and they used hang out in Harlem and stuff when they were off. The thing is is that, I am not even sure - - I think that they were so naïve until - - even after they were in that environment they couldn't even recognize it.

MN: Right ok. Anything else that you want to say Marilyn?

MR: I cant think of anything. I remember just recently I think at one of the reunions there was a young lady who grew up with us. You remember Ronnie, Ronnie Reade she grew up with us? She ... from St Mary's projects, you remember St Mary's people started coming up.

PP: Right, I don't remember...

MR: Anyways she ended up marrying a guy from Patterson, and she ended up moving into 414. And she lives there now and she said to me - - yes Ronnie.

PP: I don't know her.

MR: You got to know her.

PP: I mean if I see her, but I don't remember her.

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

MR: Ok, anyway she was saying to me, yes Mr. so-and-so, that is not his family. His family, his wife lives on this side and in fact she told me that he left her and hooked up with this other family, but that is her husband. And I was, I didn't know who she was talking about, she was like pointing out, and this is somebody from back when we were at Patterson where this man left his wife and kids and moved in with her.

PP: Oh you mean from one building to another?

MR: To another.

PP: Ok I knew some personal situations.

MR: Maybe it was like that.

MN: So it was a little bit of Payton Place in the Patterson. Ok.

MS: I just have a question about politics. Were you or anyone you knew at the time involved in politics at some time? Or did you guys leave it up to - -

MR: No I was - - when I left Patterson when I was old enough to vote, and we didn't political.

MS: So no one, there was no really political awareness?

MR: I mean our parents vote, they voted but you know - -

MS: Strong political activism to change things in the community you didn't see that?

PP: Not strong.

MR: Not while we were there. I remember sit-ins and stuff like that were going on, but that was the 60's. And I remember going to Woolworth one time, my cousin was picketing. But I didn't even know, I went in and bought something and came out, she snatched me what are you doing in there? I said what, and she said, well she said don't you see the picket signs, I didn't know oh I am sorry. She said don't go in there

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

[Unintelligible] you know I remember one time we went to White Castle. And there was a picket sign that they wouldn't hire black waitresses or something like that.

MN: This is the one on Bruckner or up by - -

MR: Bruckner, Bruckner Boulevard and I remember I said oh we can't go to White Castle anymore. But not a lot.

MN: So you didn't grow up seeing many demonstrations or any of that stuff?

MR: Not really, not really. I mean it, demonstrations were just kind of starting when we came of age. So we didn't see a whole lot of that.

MN: Ok.

PP: This was about how political I was. This is about political as I got, my afro.

[Laughter]

MN: Oh that was your afro. [Laughter] Right, free Angela.

MR: Right [Unintelligible] we all had afro's.

MN: You all had afro's.

PP: Jerry's Den was where you could go to get your perm taken out.

MR: Let me see Pat.

MN: Oh that is a great picture.

MR: This is Vicki Archibald right?

PP: No, that was at a fashion show. That was at another fashion show, that one with [Unintelligible] Sutton and them was at a fashion show.

MN: Right now were either of you in the Socialettes, that little - -

MR: The Socialettes, everybody from 414 was in the Socialettes. I don't think anybody from the - - the Socialettes, there was a group of social clubs that got started with Vickie

Interviewees: Patricia Payne and Marilyn Russell

Interviewer: Mark Naison and Mark Smith

No Date

and with the twins Pat and Gloria, Pat too. One died, Pat died, yes Patricia what were their names?

PP: It was Pat and Gloria.

MR: Pat and Gloria, I am trying to think of their last names. You know how we say the whole name in the projects?

PP: Yes.

MR: Anyway it was Avon, Christopher - - remember Christopher, Pat Moore, Elaine.

You know and I used to hang out with the Hormones, and they were pissed at me because I did. So I wasn't in the Socialettes. We was ok, because I couldn't let people tell me who to hang out with, this wasn't happening.

MN: Ok well thank you very much. This was very illuminating; I think this is one of the tapes that most people will want to see, telling the real scoop on all this. But I think it is important to deal with the gender issues and I think this was terrific, so thank you so much. [End of tape]