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## McKinney, Todd and McKinney, Stephanie

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Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

Mark Naison (MN): Stephanie could you begin by spelling your name and giving your date of birth?

Stephanie Woods (SW): Sure. S-T-E-P-H-A-N-I-E. Woods, W-O-O-D-S. Date of birth is May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1966.

MN: Todd?

Todd McKinney (TM): Todd McKinney. T-O-D-D, M-C-K-I-N-N-E-Y. August 16, 1968.

MN: Okay we'll start with Stephanie, when did your family first move to the Bronx?

SW: I was born in the Bronx in 1966, right here in Fordham hospital, which is no longer here anymore, but in 1966 I was born and raised in the Bronx, never left.

MN: And what neighborhood was your family living in when you were born?

SW: Crotona Park. Crotona Park North.

MN: What was the exact address?

SW: 739 Crotona Park North, right across the street from the baseball court, the baseball field.

MN: How long did your family live in that building?

SW: It was a private house and I lived there up until, I would say up until I moved in, wow, 1991.

MN: Wow so you saw the fires, the abandonment, the bad times in that neighborhood, because I remember Crotona Park when a lot of the apartment buildings were abandoned alongside. So we'll talk a little bit about that, but, so, you – that's a whole amazing experience plus those were some of the formative years of hip-hop in the Bronx as well. Todd, what was your first Bronx experience?

TM: My first Bronx experience, wow, that's a big one. I would have to say as a child one of my most fond memories are when they would close down Grand Concourse, and most of Concourse

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

so that the they let an ice cream truck and the icy man, couple of clowns and what have you and we would play and ride our bikes all day.

MN: So when did you – you told me you were born in Harlem –

TM: Born in Harlem.

MN: -- And then your family moved to the Bronx?

TM: Yes.

MN: Where did they move to? Which neighborhood?

TM: We moved to 1075 Sheridan Avenue and then after that we moved over to the Concourse.

Moving to the Concourse was my last neighborhood in the Bronx, I didn't stay here all my life, but it was beautiful on the Concourse.

MN: What was the address on the Concourse your family lived at?

TM: 1188.

MN: And what was the cross street?

TM: 167<sup>th</sup>.

MN: Okay so the Sheridan Avenue address, what was the nearest cross street there?

TM: 1075 Sheridan was years ago, maybe, it's not too far from Jerome, I don't recall right now.

MN: But it was, I know where Sheridan is, you were around 167<sup>th</sup> in Concourse area?

TM: Yes.

MN: Okay. Now, is your family originally from the South or the West Indies? Stephanie.

SW: Me? Oh my family is from Harlem, my mother was born and raised in Harlem and my father was born in Danville, Virginia.

MN: So is Virginia and Harlem in your family?

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

TM: My family is from, my mother's side of the family is from the South, a little small town Williamsburg, Virginia. And my father's family is from the Bahamas.

MN: Mixed West Indians [crosstalk]. Stephanie, what are your earliest memories of that Crotona Park neighborhood in the late 60's and early 70's.

SW: Well I would have to say my fondest memories come from my mother, she was out, to this day I call her a hip hop mom because she loves hip hop, she was the first one who introduced me to hip hop. Yeah, my mom, she bought us, me and my sister, the album, the Sugar Hill Gang, and Spoonie Gee It's Yours. Those were our two hip hop albums that we had in our house, so my mother used to always come and get me, especially me, not my sister, and take me to a lot of the street events, like, what did we call them?

TM: Block parties.

SW: Block parties. And she used to take me to the park, because she used to meet all her friends there, and I used to just be around a lot of that.

MN: What elementary school did you go to?

SW: I went to 92 and I was to C.S. 44 where I met Doug E. Fresh, he went to C.S. 44 also.

MN: Where were those schools located, were they –

SW: 92 is on Tremont Avenue and C.S. 44 was on Prospect, between Prospect and Tremont Avenue.

MN: Where did you go to elementary school and junior high?

TM: I went to ABC [Montesury?] and I went to P.S. 110 and the other school I went to, I'm a little flustered right now so I don't recall the name, but my mother worked for the school system in the Bronx so she always placed me in certain schools she wanted me to be in.

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

MN: What sort of music did you hear in your family before hip hop, in other words when – okay you were in born in 196 –

SW: Six.

MN: -- Six, so, 1972 you're six years old, what do you remember hearing in the house?

SW: Marvin Gaye, The Temptations, Fifth Dimension, my mother loved them [laughter].

Straight R&B.

MN: Straight R&B.

SW: And Gospel on Sundays.

MN: And Gospel on Sunday. Did you go to church?

SW: No, not here. I only went to church when I would go down south to visit my grandmother.

MN: What about you, what was the kind of music that you heard in your house?

TM: Wow, I heard everything in my house. My father and his brother owned an after-hours spot.

MN: Oh they did? Woah, okay.

TM: So I heard everything from Joe Cuba to Max Roach to, from Lena Horne, Nina Simone, to the Inkspots to, all the labels, Stain records, PolyGrams, CBS record, every – Bluenotes records and the jazz I heard, with the jazz, was the craziest jazz you ever heard of. With the fusion, when Mark [not sure of this name] came in with his type of jazz, his Spyro Gyra –

MN: Oh yeah, I remember that.

TM: That was almost like hip hop was a form of rap. Rap was on record but before that I remember summer of '76 listening to a mixtape, before it was called a mixtape, on the stoop with my cousin from Washington Avenue. My cousin was Presweet on the trains late '73, '74 and his crew –

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

MN: Spell the name, you said the pre –

TM: Presweet.

MN: How do you spell it?

TM: He spelled it P-R-E-S-W-E-E-T.

MN: So he was a, you know, he did graffiti tags but did really nice ones?

TM: Oh yes, he was one of the kings.

MN: He was one of the graffiti kings. [crosstalk] Okay so everybody knew him?

TM: A lot of people knew sweet and at the time Dezzy Dez was now K Sway was just getting up. You had a lot of people, the IMD's and big other big writers too like Don D and [Zefla?], people like that. But as far as, like I said, the music and the hearing that, I would hear the mixtape, you know, in '76 on the stoop and people would rhyme back and forth you know, at that time it was jiving when the break dancing stuff later on, at that point in time, '76 – '77 they called it "he was goin' off" or he was "boi-in." And boi-in', if that's a word, was just bouncing across the floor getting loose, and that's why we have the anthems, turn it loose, or –

MN: Now you calling it "boi-ing" B-O-I –

TM: Like boing, boing.

MN: Boing! Like B-O-I-N-G, like the jumping rabbit thing.

TM: Yes.

MN: Did you do the dance and stuff, did you do the breaking?

TM: The first thing I did was at age three, it was the closing play turn table and then at age five I explore, and this is the key word, a component set, it wasn't called a DJ set, it was a component set.

MN: Now what year were you born again?

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

TM: I was born in '68.

MN: '68. So you in 1971 and '73 were aware of a DJ?

TM: Yes.

MN: And where did you get exposed to your first DJ?

TM: My father and his brother, and it's an after-hours spot, we had a dog named Troubles and in the '70's the dogs were mostly German Sheppards, and the Doberman pinscher, they hadn't invented Rottweiler's yet [not clear] in mind, so the Rottweiler's and the Pitbulls we hadn't seen those yet. And the dogs were big, I used to try and get on them like little horses, they were vicious dogs but to me they loved me to death so no harm to me. But, in the back in the club my mother used to play bingo on Webster Avenue and I would go to the club and stay in the back –

MN: So tell us where the after-hours club was located.

TM: I'm not exactly sure where that's at because they moved a couple times due to the fires, somewhere between 149<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. They had this place it didn't open up until like 11:30, almost midnight.

MN: Did they have a name for it?

TM: Uncle Larry had it under somebody else's name and I think it was called Lovie's.

MN: Lovie's, okay. So this is an after-hours spot, now what was the crowd like that came to the after-hours spot?

TM: To me the crowd was funny, when you being a child, you got to remember this is the '70's so you talking about stacks, and hats with the buckles on them.

MN: Oh so they're really flamboyant funk outfits with the platform shoes and the hats.

SW: And the bellbottoms.

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

TM: Double-wide pants, right and they were doing dances like the Patty Duke and the Spank, stuff like that and, you know, they would do the Express, Trans-Europe Express, a group from overseas who then provided the sample for 'Plant Rock.'

MN: Was the crowd mixed Black and Latino or was it mostly Black?

TM: I want to say mostly Black, and Latino.

MN: But you did have Latinos at the club?

TM: Oh, yes.

MN: Okay so the Bronx, was that your experience? Was it mixed?

SW: No.

MN: Your neighborhood was mostly a Black crowd?

SW: Yes and then my mom used to hang out at a bar called 'The Band Box' on Prospect Avenue and that was her spot.

MN: Prospect between where and where?

SW: Freeman and Prospect, called 'The Band Box.'

MN: Woah, okay, Freeman – so that's down in Morrisania.

SW: Yes.

MN: And this is in the '70s or the '80s?

SW: The '70s.

MN: The '70s there was a spot called 'The Band Box' down there.

SW: And right across the street was Joe Bo's and it was strictly Black.

MN: Okay that was another bar on Prospect Avenue?

SW: It was right across the street, yes.

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

MN: Wow, okay, and this was in '70s, so you were in a scene where mixed Blacks and Latinos were together and you were in a scene that was more Black than Latino.

SW: Yes.

MN: And it's interesting because you describe the music as including Latin music and jazz, and

–

TM: Well the music in my household was so all over the place because the music was, there's a group in particular, Let's Get It Together was one of their big hits, I'm sorry I don't remember right now. It was one of my favorite groups at that point in time, oh El Cocomotion, El Coco.

MN: El Coco.

TM: Yes, and when I heard that [singing] "Let's get it, get it together" you know I heard that and that loop [sings] it went on for a long time. And when they played, this was later on, when the movie Saturday Night Fever came out, it had the scene and they used this [sings] and it picked up [keeps singing] and I was like, that's the Spanish influence that we heard that was coming out of the South Bronx from like Washington Ave – well not Washington Avenue but the South Bronx.

MN: Down below 149<sup>th</sup> Street by St. Mary's Park that was more Spanish down there. You said your father's family was from Bahamas?

TM: Yes, that's right.

MN: Were you exposed to any of the West Indian music?

TM: Calypso native music was always a happy joyful music so I was exposed to it, but if it was like a chart, my house never stayed on music for so long. Soul music was stayed on a little bit more, Soul music and jazz, the David Porters, the Al Greens, the Barry Whites, the [not sure,

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

someone who knows the music more will recognize it though], people like that, Al Wilson,

[same as above] [and again].

MN: So you like The Stylistics, and those –

TM: The Stylistics, Philippe Wynn, even, you know, Heat Wave and some of the other groups, some people were from rock, Jefferson Airplane, Jefferson Starship, excuse me. And then today shia might be playin' something and it was off The Wall album but it had an interview with Rod Temperton, I love Rod Temperton. He was a white guy that wrote some fly stuff and I was like he never got his just due. Like I feel people, a lot of people, like Patty Austin, never got just due.

MN: What's amazing me, you know, we interview people and you're in the middle of, grew up in the middle of what some people say the worst times in Bronx history. You know, the fires, the abandonment, and you're talking about joy. [crosstalk] But how did the fires affect you? Or as a kid was it not a big deal?

SW: It wasn't a big deal, I didn't even realize we had a problem until I would see some documentaries and go wow.

MN: So you didn't think you were growing up in a difficult situation?

SW: No, not at all. It was fun, just like, Grandmast Flash when you see them doing their video around abandoned buildings –

MN: Yes, in Wild Style it's like everybody's full of joy.

SW: Yes, I'm proud of it, I'm proud to have lived that life.

MN: So, it's funny because some people said in Crotona Park, you know, the lights were broken at night, you know, it wasn't taken care of, but it sounds like that you didn't feel like dangerous or threatened.

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

SW: We didn't know any better so that – I didn't know I was in danger. I would go to a block party and if they started shooting I just thought that was the way it was and we would run and the next day we'd go back out there again.

MN: Interesting.

TM: I always said that, some of the things I said, about my travels and time as a man in life, and times get bad, was tell them I shook the world if anything ever happened to me and before you turn the [snaps fingers] lights out on me is you know, I will love these South Bronx streets and the breaks and the beats. I love the smell of the air, I love the people, I love the bass, I like the Spanish kids when they walk by they out there talking to blacks and everybody, it's just a collage. Just from the pizza parlor to the guy shooting dice it's all relative, it's all congenial, it all makes up one perfect picture and I love it.

MN: Well that's beautiful, that's beautiful, you know because it's interesting, we go all over the world with this research because in a lot of place, in Europe, which are becoming like the Bronx because there are all these immigrants from the Mid East and Africa moving to Berlin and you go into this place called Kreuzberg and to Görlitzer Park and there's graffiti all over and people playing drums and doing hacky-sack and, you know, people barbequing, and people dancing and it's just – man the world is coming to the Bronx in a way.

TM: Oh yeah, I think I know of that, Graffiti Kings magazine shows some graffiti like overseas and some of the walls and even in some of their subways and I was like 'wow, these kids are getting up' I go 'we were getting up' we took pride in it.

MN: Well there's more graffiti in Berlin than there is in the Bronx.

SW: Oh yes.

MN: Where did school fit into all of this? Did your family emphasize education Stephanie?

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

SW: My father did, my mother did, but my father moreso, you know? He wanted to make sure that I went to college and did right. My mom, at that time my mother was strictly, I'd say, hanging out more, she did emphasize school, but not as much as my dad did. He kind of scared me with that, my mother was [inaudible]. My mother just knew I would do well so she didn't really get on me like that.

MN: Did you have a good experience in school, in terms of teachers and –

SW: No. No, I went to Roosevelt. [Laughs]. And Roosevelt, I can honestly say they was more so hanging with us, they were hanging outside with us and sending us to the store for them and the guards, security guards, was sending us to the store. I went right across the street to Roosevelt and I don't recall having no type of mentor or anybody in the school system. Even my guidance counselor didn't talk to me about how important school was.

MN: Did you end up going to college right after high school?

SW: Yes I did. Well, no I didn't graduate high school, I actually got my G.E.D. and I went to college but I didn't have the right pushing, it kind of, well besides my dad, my mom just kind of took it for granted that I was doing what I was supposed to do.

MN: And what about you? Was there an academic atmosphere pushing you to –

TM: Yes, my mother always wanted me to do well and she stayed in my butt, there's no two ways about it. Once my mother and father split, they had a tumultuous relationship, there was a lot of love in the house, lot of love in the household. And I told Stephanie and I tell people that I come from love, outside of saying I come from the Bronx, I come from love. So she was on top of it and when I was graduating high school she wanted me to send me to DeVry. Because it was my mother, my baby sister, and I knew her sending me to DeVry was going to make things very tight in the household and I was working I think two jobs at the time, I started working a third

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

job. I woke up one day after falling asleep for fifteen minutes she walked in and closed the door I said 'Oh mom, I'm late for work, I'm late for work' and she said 'you just came in from work.' I said 'I did, I did, I have another job to go to.' She said 'you want to keep like this? If you don't want to maybe you should enlist in the military,' and I did, I went to the army.

MN: How long were you in for?

TM: Seven years, seven years I stayed in the Airborne, jumped out of planes, doing things for that we can keep our civil liberties and who knows, go to sleep at night, people here.

MN: Did you end up in the Gulf War?

TM: Yes I did.

MN: So how many years were you in the Gulf War?

TM: I was in the first one, Desert Storm, Desert Shield. I wish I could have enlisted in enough time to go to Panama, yes there was a young E-5 from Brooklyn who made that jump, he had to gold star on his wings and I saw his captain salute the sargent because he had a gold star on his wing and I said 'wow, that's power, that's the juice right there' and he was like 'if you can jump over the fence in the yard you can do anything.' [laughter] So we laughed about it and that was it, but yes, I was Desert Storm, Desert Shield. I stayed there for six months the whole time.

MN: When you were first hearing hip hop in the Bronx, how old were you? What was your first jam that you remember going to?

SW: My first jam was in Crotona and I'm, I would have to say it was Lovebug Starski and DJ Supreme, whose name is Tyreke, he changed his name to Supreme, they used to be in Crotona with – they would have strings, like, like we used to play rope. The rope used to be the barricade from the DJ and the crowd and we used to be –

MN: So this was in Crotona Park?

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

SW: This was in Crotona Park.

MN: And how old were you? Ten, eleven?

SW: I was about ten, eleven, yes.

MN: So this is like mid-'70s?

SW: Yes.

MN: Did you know that this was something than, let's say, the R&B you were hearing in your house? Or was it sort of an extension of that?

SW: It was an extension. I didn't think it was anything different because my mom was playing it in the house. When I first heard Sugar Hill Gang, that's when I was like 'what kind of music is this?' but I liked it, you know. And then when I was going in the park it was just a continuation of 'wow this is what I heard' and the rhythm, the beat.

MN: Now when you went to the park did you dance?

SW: Yes. Yes at first we used to just stand around and watch and just watch the DJ, and then after a while everybody just started dancing.

MN: Was the dancing just one per – you know, people by themselves or did you get involved in a crew of people?

SW: I was dancing with my mom.

MN: Oh, okay, so –

SW: Yes, I was dancing with my mom and then as I got older I was able to go with my friends and we would dance in a circle, it was a crew of us. We used to dance to [Bongo?] Rock.

MN: -- Did your crew have the same shirts on?

SW: Yes.

MN: So you have any pictures from those days?

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

SW: I don't. You know, at that age you wasn't thinking about taking pictures. You wasn't –

MN: You didn't know you were making history.

SW: -- I ain't thinking about a camera. No, I wish, to this day I wish I had. Yes. With our point sneakers, our Lee jeans and we used to get our own little t-shirts and put on – my name was ebony, so I had ebony on my shirt, my sister was Lala, she had Lala on the back. That's how we used to do it.

MN: Were there any, you know, at these events B-Boys or B-Girls who were doing what later would be called break dancing?

SW: Yes, oh yes.

MN: And where did – did you know any people who did that like, you know, pretty intensely?

SW: No.

MN: What about you? Did you get – were there any people you knew who would do the B-Boing and –

SW: At that age, excuse me, you talking about at that age?

MN: At that age, at eleven, twelve, thirteen.

SW: No.

TM: Besides watching, my cousins, me trying to make a good effort at it, you know still going off still boing-ing it wasn't [laughter] it wasn't breakdancing at the time.

MN: Boing, boing.

TM: It wasn't break dancing at the time, we used to say 'look at that fly, he did a fly move.'

You know we get a nice takedown, you know. But I would watch the kids, you know, over Washington Avenue or right there in the Polo Grounds or in Colonial in Harlem and they'd have nice moves because being that I was seven years behind everybody. My cousin Troy, God rest

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

his soul, if he was seventeen I was ten and he would take me and sneak me places with him so that's how I got into many jams whether it be Jackson Projects or something on Washington, something on Claremont. And he would tell my mother 'oh I'm just taking him with me to the movies, taking him over to the arcade' or something like that.

MN: It sounds like the housing projects were a major setting for hip hop events, is that your recollection, you were talking about Claremont and Jackson?

TM: There was a lot of things going on over there, I mean my cousins that I hung out with that watched me they lived over on Washington Avenue so that's why I stayed with them a lot.

MN: When did you start DJ-ing for an audience, how old were you?

TM: I'll tell you what it was, I'm going to say it, I'm going to tell you it was in November or December of '75, the DJ –

MN: That was seven years old.

TM: -- went outside to take a smoke and he was smoking something, but I don't know what it was [laughter] he smoked and he had been drinking all night, something brown in his cup, something, I don't know, licorice, looking. And it's about four in the morning, everybody's, you know, twisted as we say now, or drunk, and I said 'let me put the record for him.' I put the record on, the next record on, I picked up my records and paced them out I said 'there's Barry White and here's Mandrill and here's this and his Fencewalk' and later on it became breaks and almost became stuff we danced to. This is hip hop, this is before it was hip hop.

MN: I have vivid memories of Mandrill's Fencewalk.

TM: Oh yes.

MN: [Sings]

TM: And who was it? Jimmy Castor.

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

MN: Oh yes.

TM: And you know I'd put those records and my father – never knew he came in the back and says, I don't know his name, I think it was my Uncle Ray. He said 'where's your Uncle Ray at?' Everybody was my Uncle, all his friends was my uncle so I didn't know whose my real uncle but, I said 'he's outside, he's been outside for about --' 'Okay I'll be right back' and Ray came on and then he walked out the room and go back in the room. 'Okay' looked at me and that was it. That was it, I played records that night.

MN: When you were doing that, was that two turntable at once?

TM: This was two turntables but it was a mixer with knobs on it. It wasn't like today when I use a cross fader and I'm driving on the [not clear] it wasn't nothing like that. It was turn the knob, put it on, and there was a show called WKRPS Cincinatti –

MN: Oh yes.

TM: -- And I used to say 'Oh he has the nicest sound, he has the nicest sound.' But the thing about it I felt was corny was that the record was this far and the turntable extended out another inch or two and I was like 'what is that? Why is it like that?' You know, we had some sherwoods or something it was like that and the best we had in the back was a [Tiak] when somebody wanted to take a break – a reel to reel, excuse me, and that was the digital DVD, not DVD, but CD player at that time. Put that in, that was based at a lot of house parties; you put the six hour reel on and let it play. You could be upstairs, downstairs, in the backyard; you don't have to worry about nothing it just kept going.

MN: Right, that's with the tape deck.

TM: Yes.

MN: Did you – when did you start actually doing parties or outdoor events?

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

TM: Oh boy, I want to say, I was always playing there, I was never the premier or the head DJ, I was always 'he needs a break so let him go ahead and get on and let him do his thing.'

MN: And what did you call your –

TM: Eleven, twelve.

MN: -- What did you call yourself at that time? Did you have a name?

TM: When I was first started dancing I called myself 'The Flash' like the runner, like The Flash. The comic books were a heavy influence, especially with my graffiti.

MN: Okay, so we'll go back to the graffiti but, so you saw yourself as a dancer and a DJ?

TM: Yes so we were – I think as little kids growing up your mother always said 'Do that dance for Gloria and her friends' and you always danced. But the DJ part, I was enamored with the turn tables probably fell in love with those at three.

MN: What about the graffiti? Were you part of a crew or did you do this on your own?

TM: I hung along, I tagged along with – I hung out with my cousins at TR, the TR Nation, Top Ranked Talented Rascals and I did fill-ins for them. You know, just fill-ins, I never did, I never out –

MN: Did they have a reputation outside of the Bronx?

TM: Oh, Presweet was the whole city.

MN: So Presweet was all city and Talented Rascals is a different crew?

TM: Same crew, same crew.

MN: Okay so Presweet was the top of the group –

TM: Right, Presweet, Flasher Rock, G-Ski, Keno, they called him the Baby, these were top people, these were the sergeants.

MN: Were they all from your neighborhood or are they from all over the place?

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

TM: Some of them were from Washington some were from, I want to say maybe, Burnside. I'm not sure where – they were older so.

MN: Which train yards did you work out of? Or did you do this in different spots?

TM: I worked out of the 2 yard sometimes when I was brave enough, and I'll tell you about that. But mostly when I first got my start, my cousin Pre was like you got to start with rooftops and handball courts and he would do the trucks, the Hershey trucks and he would go downtown and hit those. Like forty trucks in one night.

MN: How do you do a truck?

TM: Oh trucks were just tagging. The other ones were pieces and he would get Presweet up and he would hit it and quit it, hit it and quit it all night. Forty trucks.

MN: Okay how do you do a piece on a handball court? Do you do it from the top down or the bottom up, or both?

TM: Well once – it depends on whoever has the book, alright? If you have the book you can go ahead and put your color first and you usually start from the top, that's the best way, to start from the top. I mean you can do it from the bottom.

MN: So how do you get up to the top of the wall?

TM: Oh, ladders.

MN: Oh you have ladders?

TM: Ladders, stepstools, little three-foot ladders. A lot of times it will be somebody on somebody's shoulders. Like I'm a pee-wee so I get onto somebody's shoulders easy.

MN: Interesting, wow.

TM: Not too many ladders on court, but a lot of on somebody's shoulders.

MN: So how old were you when you started tagging?

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

TM: Oh boy, I want to say about fifteen.

MN: And did you ever find yourself in some hairy situations when you were tagging? Either with common trains, or with police?

TM: The one situation, and the only one that I ever needed my cousin for any reason, [not clear] I wanted to write in the winter. But this point I moved out of New York so when I come to New York I'm getting into graffiti as much as I possibly can so I'm trying to make sure that I prove that I'm still as good as you, I'm still from the Bronx, I'm still –

MN: Now where did you go outside New York?

TM: I went to Virginia. I went to a city called Newport News, it was next to Hampton, not far from the beach. And we were in the trains all that time and some dogs got loose, they let the dogs out.

SW: [Laughs]

TM: And I thought that I could stand there and wait and I remember from, I think an issue, sort of rookies that dogs smell and I took off running. And I never forgot I got my JC All-Star coat, it was a nice jacket, had the puffers on it, I got my sleeve ripped by something and after that my mother gave me eighty dollars, a lot of money, to buy a coat and that coat got ripped. I couldn't even tell her that, I had to tell her something else. So from there I was like 'oh boy, that was the last time I needed to be in anybody's train yard.' But a little tagging after that, you know always the guy at school with the digit jean jacket, but for the big boys getting out there, you know, getting their fame all city and really going out, those were the TR, those were Flasher Rocket, Presweet.

MN: When you were DJ-ing did you get to perform at any of the big jams?

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

TM: Yes. Yes, I always got to, you know, fill in. I would actually fill in, in Patterson Projects, Jackson, we did a joint in Mount Vernon, somewhere in Mount Vernon one time. And those were the times I got to go out there and play, Claremont, you know we had Claremont day, I had a chance to go out there and play a couple times. I was always so nervous because at this point in time I'm not living in New York and the DJ in New York was the pinnacle DJ. However, Philly DJ's were always bad at DJ-ing because when they came to New York if you weren't good enough or if you weren't as nice as New York DJ's they would take your stuff. They would take – you wasn't going back to Philly with those 1200s or, at the time they were \$500.

MN: Yes, because when I was talking to Disco Wiz he was always packing when he was, you know.

TM: You always had to have a crew with you, I was too young to pack, but you always had to have a crew with you to make sure you took your stuff home. It was crazy you call a cab, get the van, and get home.

MN: So you had a crew of people whenever you were DJ-ing to make sure you got your stuff back?

TM: When I DJ-ed it was always someone else's equipment, I was just nice enough to get on the rocking tubes.

MN: Did you see yourself as doing this professionally when you were doing it?

TM: I couldn't see myself doing anything else outside of the arts, outside of – and not only graffiti but just painting, or something musical, to either write music or write poetry or something in architecture, I loved the way the brownstones looked.

MN: So you knew this was – how did you eventually, you know, after the military, find a way of creating a career for yourself in the arts?

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

TM: Even in the military I still wrote, I'd say wrote, wrote, a little novice poetry. I still, everytime I get a chance, did mixtapes. I still was into music, if somebody did a song I know what sample that is, still find that I was the sample king at that point in time so I never left it alone. It was like I, this was like, my little brother and I had to watch him, I had to watch to make sure he got home after school, make sure he did his homework. So I never left it alone, but after the military when I became a civilian I started DJ-ing part time, you know start DJ-ing part time wherever I could get in. Most times it was a strip club, which I hated, but once I graduated to people hearing 'oh this guy's nice' to the regular clubs, then that was it, that was it.

MN: So you've been able to be a club DJ for fifteen-odd years and make a decent living from it.

TM: Oh yes, the club worker, they work in malls, universities, I did some work for Molly on the Shore, a couple of universities, Elizabeth City.

MN: You were still living in Virginia at that time?

TM: Yes, living in Virginia and coming home as much as I could.

MN: Oh, so a lot of this was in, you know those are the schools, Elizabeth City is North Carolina, so you had a whole circuit in the South/

TM: Wherever I could get booked at I would go play. I didn't care where it was at because for me, to go outside of where you lived at and DJ was the biggest. If some requested, if someone heard you on a mixtape that you sent to Texas and said 'come out here' oh you were packing up everything you had and going, even if it meant, at the end of the night, you just broke even with your plane ticket, you would go.

MN: Wow. Now what other things did you do to make a living other than the DJ-ing?

TM: I worked in collections. [Laughter] For the collections and I –

SW: Furniture store.

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

TM: Oh yes, furniture store, yes I was a salesman. I was always able to talk to people and then after that I was Homeland Security, which I work for right now.

MN: Now, did you ever, you know, produce mixtapes that you sold out of, you know –

TM: Yes. I did a lot of mixtapes and I sell them outside my basement or studio in my house.

You know that's a rarity to a basement that –

MN: Do you have any of those mixtapes?

TM: I think maybe some relatives may have some, but I don't have any right now to, you know, to offer.

MN: Stephanie, did you move into the music and the arts as you left high school and went into college?

SW: No [laughs]. It's funny I didn't. I actually got deep into hip hop, I'd have to say due to a friend of mine who started organizing a parade, his name is [Kazingbig Bats?] and he organized a hip hop parade out in Brooklyn. And I was an asset because I was from the Bronx so I was able to network with a lot of the originators of hip hop, like the Cold Crush Brothers, Cool Herc. I was the one trying to –

MN: So how long ago was that?

SW: This had to be in 2001.

MN: Okay so in other words you grew up around hip hop, but after that phase passed you went on with your life in other ways?

SW: Right, but I've always loved hip hop.

MN: But what did you do to make a living in the interim?

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

SW: I had a lot of jobs [laughs]. I worked for Cosmo Communications, I worked at Burger King and after I went to Burger King, McDonald's. I worked at Blue Cross for fourteen years, I worked in the World Trade Center. I worked there when it went down, I was going to work.

[Tape malfunction]

MN: When you got involved because you could connect, was this [tape malfunction] promoter or photo – when did the photography come in?

SW: Photography came in just by chance. I actually used to take a lot of pictures and, like, graffiti artists they like to tag their books and have everybody sign their books and tag their books. So I started bringing out my pictures and Fable from [pauses]

TM: Rocksteady.

SW: Rocksteady crew saw my pictures and said 'you need to start doing this professionally, you're good' and I never looked at it that way. I was like 'really?' he said 'yes, you should contact some magazines and get your work in the magazines' and I did, I contacted a few. But, when I found they weren't going to pay me I felt bad because I felt my work was too good to be given away for free so I wound up doing it on a lower scale to hip hop newspaper; four corners, he paid me. Then I started doing some things for Harlem newspaper and I wasn't too proud that it was the Harlem news but the fact that they wanted to give me a stipend for my work, I was like that was more important to me than giving my good work away for free. And Vibe was interested in my work, the editor, I think, at the time was George Pitts. But he told me that they couldn't pay me for my work and I said my work is too good for that and I should've put my work in there but I just wanted some payment for it so that's what happened.

MN: When did the two of you meet and how did you meet?

TM: Okay.

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

SW: That's the story of the stories.

TM: I moved back home to New York -- I was married at one point in time in life so I told my, at the time, ten years ago when I first got married, I told my wife then I said 'if anything ever happens to us I'm going back home, this is where I belong.' I was in Virginia I said back to New York, going back to the Bronx, I said 'I belong there.' As I told you before, I love those streets.

MN: So even down all those years in Virginia the Bronx was still in you?

TM: I was coming home so much that most of my traffic tickets were New York tickets so the insurance company used to question 'do you live in New York or Virginia' 'I'm like I live in Virginia.' But I got divorced and came back home to New York and I was home in New York almost three years and I was just loving hip hop and say I'm going to rebuild myself, get myself together and I did. I got myself together and I was looking for a Mrs. Right, looking for her. And on my list, I had a list --

SW: He had a list.

TM: -- A list. Which is ignorant, I had I list.

SW: I seen the list.

TM: She was everything on the list and more, but I want her to be --

MN: [Laughs] a list of traits.

TM: I wanted her to be God-fearing, respectful, gorgeous, so on so forth. But in the top five things on the list, she had to love hip hop. And I say nobody's going to -- I just 41, I turned 41 a month ago this day, nobody's going to love hip hop, not at my age.

MN: So this is like an eHarmony for hip hop.

SW: It is.

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

TM: So I was going down to Virginia to see my children, to go be with the kids and I didn't go and somebody said 'Grandmaster Flash is at Barnes and Nobles.' I said 'I'm having the worst day of my life, I'm not going anywhere.' So at the last minute I got in the car and I said 'oh my God, I didn't cut my hair yet. I'm not going anywhere I look like a clown. I said you know what, I'm tired, I'm just going see Grandmaster Flash, I love hip hop and I'm tired of looking for women and looking for Mrs. Right and I walk into Barnes and Nobles, I quit, I threw up my hands to bounce and forget it I'm done, I'm done. I walk into Barnes and Nobles, a double set of doors, one set of doors, next set of doors and she was smiling and I was like 'wow, who's that?' I was like that's right, you not on the prowl anymore forget it and I walked in there and I had a camera, the cheapest phone they give you, the free phone. I went to talk a picture with my phone with Flash I said I can't take a picture with me and Flash and so, I don't know if she said 'I'll take it for you' or I said 'would you mind taking a picture?' but I know she had this nice camera and I had this funky looking camera like a gumball machine, I was so embarrassed at the time and she took the picture. In the end, I'm going to skip to the end, in the end she said 'I'll email it to you' and I was like she's so nice, she'll email it to me. She's like here's my number I was thinking here's my number because she thinks he's attractive, he's a nice guy, maybe we could talk sometime. She's just a sweetheart and she has this energy is that she just loves to give you the work. So come to find out later on that oh, I was just being nice, I didn't like you.

SW: I wasn't interested [laughs].

TM: But now we're in love.

SW: It's ironic because at the time I wasn't supposed to go. My daughter, I'm always taking my daughter to these hip hop events and my daughter hates them.

MN: How old is your daughter?

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

SW: At the time she was fourteen and she hates going to these events. She was like ‘mom I’m not going to these, I don’t even know this people, I don’t know these old hip hop heads, I don’t want to go to these gigs no more’ because I been taking her with me since she was a baby. And this is the one time, my daughter’s never been missing, she’s supposed to meet me at the bus, and she was missing, for about an hour and we supposed to be at Barnes and Nobles at seven, I was supposed to meet her at six thirty. And I couldn’t find her and I decided when I did find her I said ‘I’m not going, you pissed me off, let’s go, let’s get in the house.’ And then I said ‘you know what you’re punishment is? You’re going, you’re going, you’re not going to make me suffer.’ So we wind up going to the event to see Grandmaster Flash and that’s how we met. He asked me to take his picture with his little phone and I’m like ‘I’ll take it with my camera and I’ll email it to you.’ I was just being nice. At the time I was involved in a relationship, he was just coming out of a bad marriage and I wasn’t thinking about that.

TM: My bad marriage is almost like three years ago so I was, you know, clean, but when I saw her I was like wow. And here she’s just being nice.

MN: That’s a great story.

SW: The fact that he loves hip hop is really crazy because I love hip hop so much and just like Chris Rock said you tired of defending it, you know with the way hip hop is now. It’s hard to meet adults my age, at least men, or even women more so, who are interested and love hip hop because they look at you like grow up. You know, all my job is like girl you such a groupie, grow up. And I’m like it’s a culture, it’s just like jazz, you know what if they didn’t like rock n’ roll anymore? What about the people who grew up and loved rock n’ roll, so that’s how I feel.

MN: And do you find enough in the culture to nourish you now?

SW: No. If it wasn’t for Jay, if it wasn’t for Jay-Z, who else? We have a few people –

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

TM: But not this few people.

SW: -- that keep me going.

TM: At one point in time I almost left, and I have a love-hate relationship with rap.

MN: Right.

TM: I love hip hop, but a love-hate relationship with rap.

MN: Right.

TM: One point in time I said I'm going to leave rap alone and just stay with hip hop, and I heard this group called Little Brother out of North Carolina and it was Little Brother, [Em Abdum?] and a couple people like that and I was like, they sounded like A Tribe Called Quest meets Common meets just the native tongue sound. It sounded refreshing like they didn't care, it's not the backpack, almost like Buckshot in the early 90's, but without some of the grittiest of the guns. And Buckshot was coming out of Brooklyn so I understand that so he was being true to himself. But he also loved the culture too much, when you hear him in his music or see him in a show and we saw De La Soul just about a month ago, that was hip hop. That was the thing I've always snuck away from and said 'I'm at Mark's house' when really you were at the part. Yeah, that's the thing about, you know, I'm in a record store still getting my fingers all dusty looking for rec – that was the thing I fell in love with.

SW: All the hip hop, all the elements are not there anymore, it's alright. You know if it wasn't for Jay's [Topped with graffiti?] you know, a few heavy hitters, Jay-Z, it would be hard.

MN: Well the one thing is there's amazing stuff going on around the world so the international [crosstalk]

SW: And they appreciate it!

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

MN: Yes and they appreciate it, oh yes, exactly. You have to go to Berlin sometime, the two of you. I'll hook you up with some stuff if you go there because I know a million people.

SW: Wow.

[END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE. BEGIN TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO]

MN: But, you know, it's so interesting because your view of the Bronx and its culture is filled with joy and affirmation and even almost poetically when you were describing all the different elements of this community from the pizza shop to the people sitting on the stoop playing the drums, you know?

TM: Oh yes, my neighbor on the fourth floor named Sylvia, she was Jewish and she would say [imitating her] "Todd-y go to the store for me, get me a Pepsi, or a Rough Childs and a family magazine." And she would give me a quarter, a silver quarter, the most beautiful silver quarter you ever saw. Maybe she polished silver quarters at night. I don't know as a child, and nothing against Jewish people, but when someone would die and they were Jewish they would die with \$60,000 in the mattress I was like oh my god. So I asked Sylvia one day I said 'Ms. Sylvia' and I don't know any better, I should know better 'when you die, is there going to be \$60,000 under your mattress and if so I just want enough money to get a couple of comic books.' [Laughter]. And she laughed at me because at the time I was about Superman, Batman, comic book, play my record, play my record. The music, even when I was in the army even in the desert ever on guard duty, in my head I would have these phones in my mind and you know, I just loved, I just loved the music. Like I sit down with people from all the genres of all ages from people in their twenties now to people in their late forties, fifties, sixties, seventies and we not talking about The Charmels or if we don't talk about, I don't know, Linda Ronstadt or TBG's we not talking about any of that stuff, I talk about music and they like wow you really connected.

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

SW: That's what I said when he talked to me I'm like wow.

MN: Do you have boxes and boxes of record? Like boxes and boxes and boxes and boxes?

TM: Well as I said I just got divorced, I lost 11,000 records.

SW: But there are some crates.

[crosstalk]

TM: I lost records and albums that were like photo albums, I lost every, I lost –

MN: What happened to them? Were they thrown out?

TM: What happened was I moved the things out of the house and put them somewhere for storage but I left them there too long and tried to take care of the kids and maintain that household where I was living at the time, it just didn't work and I lost the records. So I have a few right now, a few classics, and a song comes on the radio right now when [not clear]

SW: I have crates in the living room.

TM: Okay a few crates. Million dollar baby, I'm thinking okay I know what that is, oh that's Loleatta Holloway that's "We're Getting Stronger." Jay-Z has a song right now about New York and when she sings the hook, Alicia Keys whoever it is, sings the hook, you feel that pride you know that [sings]. You're like ah, yeah I feel it.

MN: This is on his new album?

TM: This is his new album.

MN: What is the new album called?

TM: Blueprint what?

SW: Three.

MN: Is it good?

TM: It's pretty good.

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

MN: I love Blueprint the original.

TM: The original one was crazy and the new one, that song New York, whatever it is, he uses a Stacy Lattisaw sample from [crosstalk] that sample. And the samples they don't get body so I –

MN: You can pick up samples in everything.

SW: Like that.

TM: Mad TV a hit, Mad TV the thing for the ad and I said oh, okay, that was a sample Biggie used for this and it was also used for that.

SW: He's a genius.

TM: It doesn't matter to me. A couple of [crosstalk] I'm like some of the biggest songs right now, what's this kid's name, I want to say his name is, it's not Kid Cudi but another one and he has a song "Baby You're the Best."

MN: Drake?

TM: Yeah, baby you're the best I ever had. He's one of the new kids on the block I'm like oh that's "Baby Baby I'm Falling in Love," just a couple seconds of it and he keeps looping it, I'm like okay, nothing new. So she keeps encouraging me to get back into it, at least to production, but next year I want to go back into the club circuit.

SW: He's so talented, has a ear.

MN: Yes, well, you know, have you worked with any MC's or poets and creating beats?

TM: Oh yes, I worked with a guy named [Pick?] from a service, a looping service, I was in that studio one day and I gave him like fifty samples and he said [not clear] what do you usually get paid for it? I was like paid rate, I don't know what happened with that, but you know, and I gave somebody an idea and their friend was a rapper who is famous right now, I said this guy has a voice, but if he sings on a hook people won't take him serious and it will be hot. And later on I

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

heard this certain artist sing who's a producer who became a rapper and he sings on the hooks and he's been with some of the greats, she mentioned one of the greats earlier, so I'm not sure if he used that and I liked this guy so. But, you know, there's a lot of samples I always wanted to use, I kept telling, even in school I said, you know [not clear] I said we should use that. Some years later, years later, I think it was Warren G used it for like Violators or something like that, I was like wow, there's a lot of mids out there. I used to spend days from eight in the morning go to yard sales, digging for records, dusty at night with my baby girl in my arm. Who's now ten.

MN: Do you plan to build a studio in your house?

TM: [Laughs]. I don't plan to build a studio however I plan to be on the back of someone's album cover saying I did this for the love not for the money.

MN: Ah, okay, that's cool. You're doing this, you have a job, you have a career, and this is your love.

TM: Oh yes, I mean I'll do it and I'll leave my job at Homeland Security alone if I could, but I can't. But, you know, when we were first doing it and my cousin, I'm in the bottom end of the first school being under forty-one. The first school of hip hop these guys are fifty and the breakoff is around my age, so I'm the first, first school. But these guys when they were out there, going to the streetlight and they were running after the blackouts, you know when they still into gold and gold came popping. That's because of the rappers gold came popping because after blackouts and –

MN: Okay that's something important, you were there in the Bronx in 1977 for the blackout.

TM: Yes.

MN: What was that like?

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

TM: I had to stay in the house, my mother was, we were in the kitchen, she was cooking something, like some jiffy pop or something I don't know what it was. Jiffy pop was the one that pushed up way before microwave popcorn, like [not clear] And it got dark and my cousin knew a Craig, who was one of the Black Spades, he was a doorman at the time, my father got me a job being a doorman. You know, stay out of trouble, stop being a knucklehead, you be the doorman. He got the job being the doorman and Craig come upstairs 'oh, it's crazy out there.' My uncle's like 'you're in a gang what are you saying?' [Laughter] So I stayed in the house and lo and behold the next day my cousin Bradley, God rest his soul, he came to the house with so many pairs of [Procan?] sneakers and he's like I'm going to order this from [Flight Brothers?] – out of Chicago, a shoe store.

MN: Shoe store.

TM: Oh you remember? Yes. I'm going to order this from Flight Brothers but he had so many pairs of sharkskin pants he was like I got so many pairs of pants that I can't wear no shoes. And we laughed about it and I didn't know [not clear] but my mother was like no you're not getting [not clear] I'll take you to Alexander's on Fordham and get you some shoes and that was it. But I was too young to know but I remember when Time Magazine called the South Bronx America's Beirut in 1983 and my heart hurt. I was heading right for school. At this point in time I just moved down South, my mother's like 'and that's why we left' and I said 'mom, you got to love it ma' and she's like 'love what?'

MN: Wow.

TM: And I had to look at it from outside like wow.

MN: America's Beirut.

TM: They called it America's Beirut.

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

MN: And what about you? Do you remember the blackout in '77?

SW: Oh yes, I was in the store, I was actually buying bread and I dropped the bread and ran out.

[Laughter] That was it but I couldn't go outside.

MN: What was Tremont Avenue like after the blackout was over?

SW: Oh, broken windows, actually there was this store called Zips it was a leather store, still there on Tremont Avenue. My dad had a leather jacket there and he was so upset because he just knew they had robbed it and stole the jacket but everything was busted, windows, it was a mess.

MN: So did you know anybody who got turntable equipment in the blackout?

SW: I wish.

TM: Who did not get a new mixer? That helped DJ's out tremendously. That helped us – I was a little kid so not me, that helped DJ's out tremendously. If it wasn't for the blackouts I mean hip hop would have been, hip hop would have been another five years at its pinnacle.

MN: So you think that it really spread electronic equipment around the Bronx?

TM: Oh yes, oh yes.

MN: Oh wow.

TM: Definitely.

MN: That's an interesting way of looking at it. Now, were you in the Bronx when crack hit?

SW: Of course yes, I never left the Bronx.

MN: So when people talk about crises, they talk about the fires and that period then and the 80's, early 90's the crack era. What are your recollections of that?

SW: Basically just a bad time. Like I remember seeing a lot of girls that I went to school with they just looked so bad. I was afraid of crack, I was afraid of drugs really, it just scared me.

Looking at them they just looked like walking death. And it was yes, I remember seeing girls,

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

mainly the girls because I looked at them like wow remember her, you know she just looked so beat down and it scared me.

MN: And you were in Virginia?

TM: I was in Virginia yes and I would come back home to New York and it would seem like – when it snows it's real pretty that first day, but day three when the buses start splashing the snow is starting to turn to that smut that oil. The trains after they tried to take the graffiti off the trains it would turn to that color of puke, if you will, I mean it was crazy. But I remember my cousin Troy had this girlfriend, she was gorgeous, I used to think she was like a [Lionert Magee?] or a Jane Kennedy or somebody like that and I saw her one day in the street and she was offering herself to people, if you will, and I was like that can't be the same girl.

MN: Wow.

TM: I was like wow this is crazy.

MN: So that's interesting because one of the things people say is that crack was the first drug to hit women as much or more than men.

SW: I think crack was the first drug that I became aware you know, when everybody was getting high you didn't know, you didn't care. But when you saw the crack and women.

MN: Did you see prostitutes along Southern Boulevard during that era?

SW: Yes, prostitutes was everywhere there was a prostitute that when I used to live on Crotona, there was a prostitute that used to always, for some reason, she always used to pass out in front of our house. That was her spot. [Laughter]. Yes, it was weird because I didn't know what she was and she used to come with her little outfit, her little prostitute outfit on and pass out and she used to pee on herself we used to be like wow this is really bad. Yes, but it was really, you could really see it with the women, more so to me than the men.

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

MN: When you look back on your Bronx experience does it make you smile?

SW: Of course.

TM: Everywhere I go around the world people ask me you know, because I've been in the military, where are you from? I'm from the Bronx. And you know what, I'm probably the best of both worlds the Bronx and I lived down south in Virginia so and I lived in North Carolina for a while in the army so I'm proud because somewhere in the world is somebody, and it's in the Bronx, if somebody wears a shirt that says 'Brooklyn' and that's still that covers all of Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, it encompasses this place called New York. There's no – right now somewhere in Israel somebody has a shirt that says Brooklyn on it, or something about New York, not something that says 'Iowa' or 'Ohio' no, they have something on it that says 'the Bronx' or [Laughter].

MN: Right, no I'm from Brooklyn and –

SW: But there's not enough shirts that say the Bronx, Brooklyn is everywhere, Brooklyn, on jackets.

TM: There's some kid somewhere in Asia in that part of the world that talk about Bambatta or the South Bronx or knows the Bronx is where hip hop is from and I love it. I got [not clear] I was that kid in Virginia? 'Where you from?' 'I'm from New York.' 'Oh you from the Bronx, you such, such, such, such.' [Makes sound] I'm the first hit, I'm throwing the first hit, I was a pretty [not clear] I'm a little skinny kid didn't want to get scratched up.

SW: Always had to defend yourself.

TM: And I always had to defend myself. Oh my God, my mother was like 'you have to learn.' I was like 'I don't care, I'm from the Bronx and that's it, that's what it is, that's how we do it.'

MN: That's how we do it, right.

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

SW: My daughter was born and raised uptown, Co-Op city in the Bronx and to this day if you ask her where she's from she'll say Crotona. [Laughter].

MN: Ah she says Crotona, gets more street cred than Co-Op, I'm from Crotona. I've done some interviews who grew up in the hood in Paris and there's some housing in Paris which call themselves the Bronx.

SW: [Laughs]. Wow.

MN: They call their neighborhood the Bronx, it was a way of giving themselves some credibility. Anyway listen, this was amazing and we may be able to put together a DVD with some of the best stories here because I think it really gets across the joy and the pride that you guys have and also that in the midst of all this stuff young people never stopped being creative and optimistic. So are there any things which you would want to say in conclusion about your lives and your experiences that you haven't said. You know, if you would want somebody to look back on your life and your experience what you would want them to take away from it.

SW: Just I'm proud to have lived that life and survived it. I mean my mother was smart enough to give me some of it but keep me sheltered so I wasn't deep into the rough times of the Bronx. I didn't even know we were poor until she tells me later on in life how poor we were, I didn't realize that. And like you said that I noticed the burning down buildings, I love my neighborhood, I love Crotona Park. I love playing with nothing, you know, just go to the park and play with a stick and just jump off the rocks. There were times we used to slide down the rocks.

MN: Those are some big rocks up there.

SW: Yes Crotona, and that was love, that was fun for me. So, just the fact that you're doing this I'm really proud I'm glad I met Annie and I'm glad, I'm proud of what you've been doing and

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

I'm really proud to be a part of it and I was really, really excited about the fact of me and Todd and that we was able to tell our story here because we always felt we had a story to tell about how we love hip hop together.

MN: Wow, and Todd concluding remarks?

TM: I wrote her, I write, and I wrote her something, I wrote something and I want to say something to the effect of I want to see the sunrise with you sitting on the rocks in Crotona, because Crotona has so many boulders and rocks, you know, and I think that touched her heart because she's from Crotona. But, for me, I figure I want somebody to know that my mother and father did the best they could. My mother, when she left my father, that was a wise decision, she's a wise woman. But I'm glad she did give me the experience of the Bronx because in the desert, even in jump school, I remember the day before I first jumped and there were guys playing with their small [not clear] that the army gives you and guys were like I don't know if I can do this, I'm going to call my grandmother, do this do that. I said you know what, I'm from the Bronx, you can't shake me, you can't break me, that's what it is. I'm from the BX son, what it is? [Laughter] And my cousin from Claremont I did, what her daughter did, my cousin from Claremont, I said 'I'm from Claremont' [Laughter]. I'm from Claremont baby, I'm jumping out this plane. I jumped out the plane.

MN: Claremont is the baddest project, it still is.

TM: I was like [sings] even with the sample from [Lecture Company?] and I was like [sings again] I jumped out of the plane like 'yo, I did a fly move, when I get back home they going to know me.' But, I love these streets, I carry it in my heart, and I was in a float parade I said when I said if I died today, and this sounds silly, I said I hope I get hit by a big black Cadillac and you

Interviewee: Stephanie Woods & Todd McKinney

Interviewer: Mark Naison

Date: September 16, 2009

bury me somewhere in the Bronx and there's a picture of me and everybody comes by and says

'I knew him' and they smile. [laughter] And that's a true story, my mother will tell you that.

MN: You can't beat that, what a great ending.

[END OF INTERVIEW]