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## Ketcham, Malik and Rose

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(Dr. Mark Naison) MN: This is the 61<sup>st</sup> interview of the Bronx African American History Project. We're here today with Dorothy Peco and with Rose Ketcham and Malik Ketcham and we're talking about their experiences living in the Patterson Houses. And I want to start with Dorothy first. When did you first move to the Patterson Houses?

(Dorothy Peco) DP: December 7<sup>th</sup> 1950.

MN: So you were part of the first group of families to move in.

DP: Yes.

MN: And where had you lived before you moved into Patterson?

DP: 214 Lewis Avenue Brooklyn, New York.

MN: So you came from Brooklyn?

DP: Yes.

MN: Did you grow up in Brooklyn?

DP: Yes. Born and raised.

MN: Lewis Avenue would you call that- was the Bed Stuy?

DP: Yes.

MN: And you were born there?

DP: Yes.

MN: And when you moved to Patterson were you married at the time?

DP: Yes.

MN: And it was you, your husband. Did you have any children?

DP: Two.

MN: And what- why did you decide to move into the Patterson houses? What was – what was the family experience there?

DP: I really didn't decide. At that time when you were signed up for housing, what they did would send the people from Brooklyn to the Bronx or Manhattan and vice-versa.

MN: So, you signed up for public housing but now particularly for moving to Patterson?

DP: No.

MN: And was the apartment that you got something that you welcomed getting relative to what you were living in before?

DP: Yes, yes.

MN: What was the appeal - how big an apartment was it?

DP: It was a nice size for a family with two children.

MN: How many bedrooms?

DP: Two.

MN: Two bedrooms and what kind of work was your husband doing at the time?

DP: Postal worker.

MN: And were you working at the time?

DP: At that time no but about five or six years later I worked at the post office too.

MN: And when you were applying for public housing was this something you saw as a good opportunity for your family?

DP: It was a stepping stone, yes, to progress.

MN: Rose, what about your – when did your family move to Patterson?

(Rose Ketcham) RK: We moved the year of 1950.

MN: Also part of the first group.

RK: Yes.

MN: And where had you been living before.

RK: In Corona, Queens. Corona, Queens.

MN: Oh Corona, Queens.

RK: Yes.

MN: And were you also part of a family at that time?

RK: Yes.

MN: It was you, your husband and one child.

RK: And one child [RK and MN in unison]

MN: And did you both move into the same building or no?

RK: 320? Yes.

MN: 320 Morris Avenue. Okay. Now what was the atmosphere like for these first families moving in? What were you – when you saw the place and looked around, what were some of the emotions – that experience of getting a new apartment in a brand new development?

RK: Well, experience, I was very happy because my husband and myself and the one child, we were living in a room and we had put in for housing and when they sent the form, it was for Patterson and we took it.

MN: So you were living in a single room?

RK: Yes.

MN: And what about you in Brooklyn?

DP: I was living with a family.

MN: With another family.

DP: But still I had one room.

MN: Right, so it was getting out of crowding and getting some privacy and getting an opportunity to have an apartment as a family.

DP: Yes.

MN: And were your husbands in the service during World War 2?

RK: Yes.

DP: Yes.

MN: Was it your sense that a lot of fathers in Patterson were former soldiers and that - -

DP: Yes.

MN: And was that part of that experience that this was a lot – a place that veterans who were looking for a place to move up from fairly crowded conditions.

DP: Yes.

MN: How quickly did people get to know one another when they moved in? Were people friendly?

RK: Yes they were very friendly. And all nationalities at the time.

DP: Right all the ethnic groups.

MN: Now how tall was your building, 320?

DP: Thirteen floors.

MN: Oh, so you went into a 13 story building. And how many families were on each floor. So it was eight- so I'm not good at math – but its- so there were over one hundred families in the building and eight on each floor. Were the two of you on the same floor?

RK & DP: No.

MN: What floor were you on Rose?

RK: Eighth floor.

DP: Fifth.

MN: And the fifth floor. When you say there were a lot of different nationalities, what were some of the different groups of people?

RK: On Morris Avenue there was Italians there mostly. And then on Willis Avenue, mostly Irish. And on Alexander was mostly German.

MN: And in the Patterson itself was it predominantly African American and Puerto Rican?

RK: Not in the beginning. In the beginning it was white families, yes, because when they- when they were getting ready to build a project the people who they displaced were given the first opportunity. So that's the reason why a majority of them were white when it opened.

MN: Right. What sort of work did your husband do?

RK: Well he worked for the city as a clerk.

MN: And were you working when you first moved there?

RK: No.

MN: Was this the typical family arrangement where you had a husband in the labor force and the women were staying home with the children?

DP: Yes.

MN: And were most of the household's two parent families in the beginning?

DP: Yes.

MN: In terms of sociability, how old were your children Dorothy when you moved there.

DP: Stephen was two years old and Keith was eight weeks old.

MN: So we're talking baby carriages.

DP: Yes, yes.

MN: And what about your-

RK: Charlie was eight months.

MN: Okay, so, what- you had all these- and you had a lot of young couples with children. The husbands went to work in the morning and where did the mothers then go with the carriages?

RK: Out in the yard. The yard was a playground, yes.

MN: And so there was a whole, like, social scene of young mothers with young children.

RK: Right.

MN: Did people get to know each other quickly? Was that the major area where you met people?

RK: Yes.

MN: Did – what sort – did people then begin, once they got to know each other, like do sharing of - somebody needed to go to the store or somebody would help watch the kids and there was exchanges.

DP: Right, with the children too.

MN: So there was exchanges of child care and things like that. And what in terms of – was this an environment where you felt completely safe in the beginning at all hours of –

DP: Well I did because see, I came from an environment like that in Brooklyn.

MN: Everybody was looking out for each other, and that was the way it works in Bed Stuy and the way it was in your section of Queens. So you were accustomed to this communal and safe environment and people looking out for one another. Did people leave their doors open?

DP: Yes, yes.

MN: So there were people in and out of each others houses - -

DP: Cooking, sewing and baking.

MN: So, there was a lot of good food around?

DP: Oh yes.

MN: [Laughs] Now, were you church members in Brooklyn? Is that a big part of your life in Brooklyn?

DP: In Brooklyn for me.

MN: And what- did you go back to Brooklyn to go to church after you moved to Patterson?

DP: I would continuously go back to see my family and I kept up with their activities there as well as the ones in the Bronx.

MN: Did you end up having a church affiliation in the Bronx?

DP: Yes I did. I belonged – I joined St. Rita's and they had a school. So my children all went to Catholic school.

MN: Now were you Catholic?

DP: Yes.

MN: So your family was Catholic. Now was your family originally from the Caribbean or the South, or from New York?

DP: My father was from Baltimore and my mother from Pennsylvania.



MN: So- and you were brought up as Catholic.

DP: Yes.

MN: So, St. Rita's became a center of the religious as well as school life.

DP: Yes.

MN: Did your family have a church affiliation in the Bronx?

RK: My father did, yes. Epworth Methodist church, its still there. 161<sup>st</sup> street and Morris Avenue. But my children went to Catholic school St. Jerome's.

MN: Wow! So you sent them – and St. Jerome's was located on what –

RK: 138<sup>th</sup> street and Willis Avenue.

MN: And was that a predominately Irish school at that time? And St Rita's was predominately Italian?

RK: Yes. It was in Morris Avenue.

DP: And St. Jerome's was at two buildings. I think it was the Marist Brothers or the Christian Brothers, one of them.

MN: Now was the perception that Catholic schools gave a better education than public school at that time.

RK: Yes, yes.

DP: At that time, yes.

MN: So that was a decision made sort of – give a better opportunity for your children. Now was there much racial tension in the neighborhood when you moved there or any at all? Did you feel any sense of - - that there was inner group tension in the area.

RK: I didn't notice it too much.

MN: What was the shopping like when you first moved there?

RK: We would have to go – for big shopping the first Alexander's there was that ever opened was on 149<sup>th</sup> street. So we used to go down- its called 149<sup>th</sup> Street and Third Avenue- The Hub it was called.

MN: And the Alexander's - what year did the Alexander's. Had it opened when Patterson opened or it opened a little later?

DP: It was there, when we moved it was there already.

MN: And that was a department store?

DP: Yes.

MN: And so that- and what about food shopping? Where did you go for food shopping?

DP: Well if you wanted something like a special kind of fish or anything you went to 116<sup>th</sup> street to the big, big, big markets. That was nice because everybody liked riding the bus and the train.

MN: And what about just like groceries? Would you do that in - -

DP: No there was an –

RK and DP: A and P on 138<sup>th</sup> Street.

DP: -and Willis Avenue.

MN: Oh there was an A and P. So you had excellent shopping and transportation.

RK: Oh, yes. The transportation is still good.

DP: And we had a big beautiful drug store and we had a library.

MN: How far was the library?

DP: Up the street and around the corner, Alexander Avenue.

MN: So basically there was everything as a family you would want.

DP: Right.

MN: When you moved there was the sense among the families that this is a place – a way station to somewhere else, that the goal was eventually to get a house or was it just - - this was people didn't think in those terms this was itself just such a wonderful thing that it seemed like -

DP: It was a stepping stone to move up and we all were aware of that and that's what we wanted.

MN: And that meant a better apartment or a house.

RK and DP: That's right.

MN: So the first generation of people who didn't see this as a permanent - -

RK and DP: Right.

MN: Now when did you start noticing that part of the first families were starting to move out.

RK: Well what happened was there was a cap in housing - - there used to be I don't know whether it's still on, and you could only make a certain amount and you had to get out. Now in those days, as is still now, the white people had more advantages getting jobs. So the white people left. The majority of them we had become friends with them and they told us - - one of them told me: "Rose we don't want to leave but we have to" because they had the better jobs and the income was higher. So it began changing. Of course some of them left because of the racial-

MN: A lot of them left because of their income. They had better opportunities especially the fathers could get construction jobs and – yes.

RK: And so after a while it just changed and that's when the Spanish started coming in – moving in.

MN: So, if you could put a year on this, when – is it in the mid fifties the white families began to move out or is it later?

DP: Later, later, later.

RK: Yes.

MN: Your sense is that the white families were replaced mainly by Spanish families.

RK: And black families. Yes.

MN: Now when did you start noticing that the environment was becoming different in terms of safety or atmosphere to bring up children? Did that take ten years, fifteen years twenty years for you to notice this was - -

[Inaudible answer by either RK or DP]

MN: Fifteen you say. So the mid sixties. So what were the, if you're looking at signs of what began to change, what would you say those were? Was it drugs? Vicki mentioned heroin was the first thing she noticed as a young person. As a parent, as a young parent what did you notice that worried you - - the first thing that made you worry as a parent?

RK: Well we heard about the drugs and you had to sort of keep after them to stay in school, to study. In fact we had to get a tutor for my oldest because he wasn't doing well and he was very bright. And just the usual teenage mischief so to speak.

MN: So the issues were around making sure your children stayed on the straight and narrow path. What were the temptations for kids that you worried about; and at that time were there gangs that were a concern?

DP: It was association. It was association because as apparent you saw that the children that you were raising and what was coming in was two different things.

RK: Right

MN: You began to see that some of the newer families moving in had different standards than the earlier group and their kids were different and therefore represented a different and possibly negative influence. Was that something again you say in the fifties or more in the sixties.

DP: Oh no. The latter sixties going into the seventies.

MN: Now you say the families coming in was this something to do with - - was this that there were more single parent families or was it simply that there were poorer or less disciplined or less optimistic?

PD: I'd say less disciplined. Less discipline. The children had got so that they were doing whatever they wanted. The parents were losing control.

MN: What were some of the signs of parents losing control? Was it like vandalism or was it noise, was it - -

RK: It was vandalism, hanging out in the building breaking different things in the building and the buildings just went down.

MN: In the fifties was the physical plant in the Patterson Houses kept well.

DP: Oh everything was kept well.

MN: So the elevators, the halls - -

DP: Everything was kept beautiful.

MN: - - the lawns.

DP: And not only that the people itself helped to keep it beautiful. We cared, you see, but after that other group, those different groups started coming in everything became relaxed. Throwing the paper, throwing things out the window.

MN: People were throwing things out the windows?

DP: Lack of respect.

MN: Now, again in the fifties did adults feel able to correct other people's children?

DP: Definitely, yes.

MN: And were children brought up to be respectful to all adults, from teachers to neighbors, so there was - - is that what you meant by respect?

DP: Yes.

RK: Right.

MN: Was this something that came primarily from the families you think?

DP & RK: Yes.

MN: This is how we're bringing up our children.

RK: It's the way we were brought up was the way we wanted our children.

MN: If a teacher corrected a child the parent would reinforce it?

DP and RK: Yes.

MN: And that began to erode your thought in the 60's.

DP: Oh yes. The latter part of the 60's.

MN: Did you ever run into situations where a kid was running wild and you corrected them and then the parent said "Don't you talk to my kid." Was that - -

DP: That was outside. We didn't dare say anything. No.

MN: So the parents would defend their kids no matter what?

DP: No matter what they were doing, yes.

MN: And that was a real different - -

DP: Different atmosphere all together.

Malik Ketcham (MK): But I was a different sort of a parent because you said something to me I gave it right back at you. I didn't care who you was. You see?

MN: Now what year did you eventually leave Patterson?

DP: Well, I'm trying to think. I should have written this down [inaudible]. [Inaudible] your father was out and Rob and Stewey were still with me. So it must have been about 1960 something.

MN: Okay so it was in the sixties.

DP: The latter part of the sixties. Bout 1969 I think.

MN: Did you move to this house?

DP: No, I moved here in '65.

MN: To this house.

DP: Yes.

MN: And was this – so you bought this house in 1965?

DP: Yes.

MN: Directly from Patterson? And you moved to - -

RK: And I moved to Mott Haven - - Mott Haven Houses.

MN: Okay was that a house with higher income criteria than Patterson?

RK: Well the thing is I believe they changed the method of having people come in because I don't think that they have a cap on it anymore. I'm not sure. What it is because I had been told where I live some people are paying 700 dollars a month, so what it is, you pay according to your income.

MN: Right now when you moved to the Mott Haven Houses was it safer than what Patterson was?

RK: Yes, yes, but it changed.

MN: And that changed also.

RK: It changed.

MN: So the original generation of families in the 60's began to say we need to leave this because it's not what we had experienced.

RK: And one of the reasons I moved because in 320 there were all four rooms, the whole building and I had three children, two boys and a girl. So I needed one more room.

MN: You got a bigger place, yes. Now Malik did you grow up in Patterson or you were, see this is all - -

MK: When I was born in 1970 Grandma you were already in Mott Haven. So I was in and out. That was Grandma's house.

RK: So he moved in when he was about 14 or 15.

MK: Well then I moved back. We went to - - we were on Sherman Avenue and then we went to Highbridge Projects. Then in '83 when I went to Regis that's when I went back to - - I went and I lived with Grandma.

MN: Did you hear stories about Patterson when growing up? Was this something people talked about like when we moved the Bronx was this wonderful place and public housing was like a dream? Was that something that you had as a memory of the first ten years in a very positive way?

RK: Right, right, positive memories.



DP: I forget to tell you I moved to Mott Haven too.

MN: Oh so you moved to the Mott Haven Houses?

DP: Yes.

MN: And then to here?

DP: Yes.

MN: So after you left Patterson did you go back to visit old friends?

DP: Oh yes.

RK: Yes.

MN: Do you have any friends who still live there?

RK: Yes. In the same building, yes.

MN: In the same building? So there were people who stuck it out through everything. Even when things got bad was there respect - - some level of respect for the older residents so that kids were not going to bother you or rob you?

DO: Yes, they knew our children. [Laughs]

MN: So there was - - the respect didn't go entirely?

DP & RK: No.

MN: Now what was the St. Rita's school experience like? Did you feel that your kids got a good education there?

DP: Yes. A very good education.

MN: That school's gone now, St. Rita's.

MN: St. Jerome's is still there?

RK and DP: Yes.

MN: And were you pleased with the St. Jerome's education?

DP: Oh definitely, definitely.

MN: Now one of the people I've been interviewing, or actually he's been writing a book, Allen Jones. Big Allen Jones, he's now living in Luxembourg. He's a banker in Luxembourg and he's writing a memoir but he went to St. Rita's and he wasn't necessarily the best behaved kid so he remembers being smacked around a little. Was that part of it?

RK: Yes.

DP: But as far as I know, the sisters used to have this, the thing used to hang there.

MN: Like a ruler?

DP: No, it was like a rope and it had knots in it. I forgot what it was called and you had to hold your hands out.

MN: Hold your hands out.

DP: 'Cause I went through that, I went to Catholic school.

MN: Oh, okay.

DP: And you hold your hands out like that when you did something wrong and they'd hit you.

RK: The Brothers in, the Christian Brothers of St. Jerome's had a ruler, and they'd crack it across their butt.

MN: What about high school? Where did your children go from the elementary school; did they go to Catholic high school also?

DP: My daughter went to Cathedral.

MN: Cathedral, right.

DP: She wanted to become a nurse and they didn't have the course, so she went to Jane Adams and then she graduated from there. My son went to - - my older son went to All Hallows and then graduated from there. And Stu the other son went to, what is that famous one on the Concourse?

MN: Cardinal Hayes, the famous [inaudible]

DP: Yes then he graduated from there.

MN: And what about your children?

RK: Mine went to St. Helena's. That was from Scalana. That was Bronx River, all the way up there. Hutchinson River Parkway and Keith went to Power. After that Keith went to Lockport University. The other one went to St. Johns.

MN: When your kids were growing up, this was the Rock and Roll era. Were they involved in all the Doo-Wop and all the singing? Or this was - - they didn't get that involved in all the music stuff. What sports did your children play?

DP: This one here was track.

MN: Track. They got scholarships to track.

RK: Mine were track too. All three.

MN: Oh, okay.

RK: Because I ran and my husband ran.

DP: I ran too.

[Laughter]

MN: So there was a whole family of -

RK: During our time, women weren't recognized. So the only time that we competed was what they called was a field day. Then I used to beat everybody, short as I was.

MN: You know what somebody told me, Viki Archibald was a great runner and some of the people said that if women were encouraged she could have been another Wilma Rudolph.

RK: Well my daughter ran for PAL and my son ran for PAL. My daughter was voted – the dash and she voted the best in the Bronx and so they were treated to an airplane ride, I think to California. And they took a beating but what happened is she didn't, someone beat her, but their relay team won. But that was for the PAL. That's Keith, that's him running down at the bottom.

[Points to picture]

MN: Oh yeah, okay.

[Crosstalk]

RK: Oh yeah, I've got loads of them.

MN: These were the kids from these?

[Crosstalk]

MN: And even the girls-

RK: But I have the medals from my husband-

[Crosstalk]

DP: The boys got it - - I've got drawers and drawers of it.

RK: You try to give them to the kids and they don't want them.

RK: They say, "After you mom."

MN: Yes I know about that. [Laughter] Now did your kids ever feel - - say that there were certain neighborhoods that wasn't safe to go to because of gangs or things like that? What was the places they said, "I've got to watch out for,"?

DP: This one here, Morris Park Avenue.

MN: Okay so that was where the Italians were and that was a tough place for - -

DP: Oh that's up here or down there?

MN: Well, anywhere.

DP: What was that other place?

RK: Van Courtland, over there.

MN: And what about your kids, did they mention any mention any places?

RK: Not really, because Stewey and Rob, they sort of stuck around the neighborhood. But Charlie, my oldest, he could join those neighborhoods. He got along in those neighborhoods.

DP: Just as much, yes.

RK: He got along in those neighborhoods. [Crosstalk] Everyone knew him.

MN: If you were known you were protected.

DP: Yes, nobody bothered us and nobody bothered them either.

MN: Now did you ever hear of the Fordham Baldies? Was that something people talked about down in Patterson?

DP: The What?

MN: The Fordham Baldies, a gang that patrolled Fordham road because a lot of people in Morrisania talked about that. Or is that something that you didn't - did you ever go shopping on Fordham road or that was sort of off the radar - - you know, there's everything that you need - -

RK: When the kids were small I didn't go that far.

DP: We had 149<sup>th</sup> street [Crosstalk]

MN: Right. And that was a very good shopping district.

DP: Yes.

MN: Now, did you ever go to hear live music anywhere in the Bronx or in Harlem when you were - - go to clubs and shows and stuff?

RK: Yes, go to movies and go to dances and stuff like that.

MN: Where were some of the dances you went to?

DP: Rockland Palace, Savoy-

RK: The Savoy.

MN: Were there any places in the Bronx where they had dances that you remember going to?

DP: There was one on Prospect Avenue. What was that on Prospect Avenue?

MN: The Hunts Point Palace? The Boston Road Ballroom? Club 845?

DP: That's it, Club 845.

MN: You went to 845?

DP: That was my hangout. [Laughter]

MN: Okay so tell me about 845.

DP: 845, that was the one on Prospect Avenue?

MN: Yes, right off one hundred- near the L.

DP: Yes, near Fort Apache. Yes that was the place. It was very nice. Because in the afternoon they would have evening like in Small's Paradise, they would have the evening for the ladies,

like free drinks four to six of four to seven or something like that. Then you'd have somebody sitting over there with the band and playing the piano and what not.

MN: Was it mostly Jazz that you were into hearing?

DP: Yes.

MN: Do you remember any of the artists that you listened to? Were there any of the people who were pretty well known?

DP: Oh I can't even think of that guy's name.

MN: Not Thelonius Monk?

DP: Oh I remember him.

MN: Because he lived for a while on Lyman Place when he got burned out of his apartment.

DP: Yes I remember him. I used to hear him downtown. You ever hear of Jacques down in the Village back in the 50s and 60s?

MN: Jacques it was called? I used to go to the Village Gate, the Village Vanguard and the - -

DP: What was the guy's name, what was the guy's name?

MN: Not John Coltrane, Charlie Parker-

DP: The other one with the trumpet.

MN: The trumpet, Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis-

DP: You see him?

DP: Yes.

MN: Now did he ever play in the Bronx?

DP: Yes he did. I don't know where but he played in the Bronx.

MN: So 845 was a really nice spot. So you are a Jazz fan?

DP: Yes.

MN: Were there any other forms of music that you - - did you go hear singers like Jackie Wilson or people like that?

DP and RK: At the Apollo.

MN: At the Apollo. Did either of you get into Latin music?

DP: For a little while when they had Manhattan center. What that Manhattan center on 34<sup>th</sup> street? And then you had Tito Puente and I used to go to some of his programs because you weren't allowed out after 9:00 so they used to have 5:00 on Sundays and you'd go and do your little - - and come on back.

MN: And were there a lot of movies in the Bronx? So it was pretty easy to get to the movie theaters?

DP: We had one, the Paradise on Grand Concourse. And then it was another one.

RK: There was one nearer. Where was that Bergen Avenue? You know where the Hern's used to be?

DP: Yes.

RK: Yes there was one back there but I don't know the name of it. But it's been gone for years. I remember going to one.

MN: Now did you let your kids travel around by public transportation by themselves? What age did you start letting your kids go in the subways or buses by themselves?

DP: They were well into high school.

MN: Malik, do you have any questions here because you should certainly feel free to kick in.



MK: Well I just wanted to ask Grandma - - In Patterson right there when people came out, what was the year that you remember like stop coming out? The year that people were moving away and it was like friends are leaving?

RK: They all really pulled out in the seventies. Even though I was up here I came downtown.

MN: So you used to go down to visit all the time?

RK: Yes. But I only live across - - over. And there's a lady, a blind lady named Vaughn 320. So she calls me sometimes when she- I've been to the building quite often.

MN: And you still go?

RK: Yes.

MN: Now one thing that Nathan talked about was the numbers. Was that an important part in 320 the way it was in 414?

RK: What do you mean by numbers?

MN: Policy.

DP: The number policy.

MN: People playing numbers and stuff or was that - -?

DP: They had it going on in Brooklyn, Bronx, all over. But it was a fun thing I think for them.

MN: Would people describe it as being very non-violent?

DP: There was not violence, there was no violence.

MN: So you didn't worry about crime was not an issue for your families until the 60's.

RK and DP: No, no.

MN: When do you remember the first break-ins taking place in mailboxes or apartments in Patterson. Was that in the 60s?

DP: No. In the 70's.

MN: 70's. So - -

RK: And I think that happened after I moved over to - - yes.

MN: So even in the 60's it held up pretty well?

RK: Yes.

MN: Now are there any things in thinking about it that we have not covered that you would like to say? People you would want to talk about or experiences that made a real impression on you?

DP: Well I had a really good friend that - - you might remember: Dennery?

RK: I remember a Dennery.

DP: Well we were friends for fifty-some-odd years, right. And we kept in contact with and I'd go out to Long Island to see her. And she just passed about two weeks ago. But we were all close, we were all close. And you had Darhonda Nomes, they were there. They lived over on Pelham somewhere. And I happened to go do my taxes last week and I ran into another young lady and she spotted me. Do you remember Terry?

RK: What's the last name?

DP: I don't remember her last name - - she's Italian and she was on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor and she had two boys.

RK: I should have known her, I was on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor.

DP: Yes, you should remember her. She asked about you. And she saw me when I came in and she screamed and hollered. "Oh lord its been fifty-some-odd years. [Inaudible] But all those people were great people. They were wonderful to know and it was wonderful for our children to come in contact with them.

MN: So you felt your children had a wholesome environment, good associations with other children and with families.

DP and RK: Yes, yes.

MN: Hearing this is so contradictory to what everybody says about the Bronx.

DP: The South Bronx.

MN: Yes, and the South Bronx.

RK: What they're talking about is now, what's going on now.

MN: Yes. Or what happened in the 70's when things started burning. You had a situation where the Bronx was known all over the world for fires. People would - -

RK: So many blocks were all unlivable.

MN: Now when you saw that happening, what went through your mind? I was at that time teaching at Fordham and I remember taking the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue L up to work and just watching the Bronx burn every day.

RK: It was disheartening. It was - -

DP: You would say to yourself, what's going on?

RK: Don't these people want anything? Why are you destroying things? What about your children? To me it just didn't make sense.

MN: Are you more optimistic about the Bronx now than you were let's say 20 years ago?

RK: Yes, it's starting to come back because I noticed it - - to take the bus like down 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, and you'd look down the side streets all of the homes that they're building. They're really building up the homes. And you don't see the burned out buildings too much anymore. They either tore them down or rebuilt them.

MN: Now are there like new stores and restaurants opening up yet?

RK: Yes, yes.

MN: Any good places I should know about to eat? [Laughter]

RK: Well those all you can eat places.

MN: Where do you go for all you can eat? [Laughter]

RK: Well they are all over the Bronx. What are they called Malik?

MK: Buffets.

MN: Oh yes the buffets. The place that I found- there are two in Harlem and one in Brooklyn called Manna's.

RK: Yes, yes, I heard one closed.

MN: Really?

RK: One closed because it wasn't making any money.

MN: Now what about the buffets in the Bronx? Which is a - -

DP: I don't think - are they in Harlem? I'm trying to think. The only one I know that it of course the pancake house. They call it the Goomaid. He's doing pretty good. And I just found out that they weigh the food. They never did before. Manna's weighs the food.

MN: Yes Manna's weighs the food.

DP: Manna's weighs the food by but the others pay just ten or twelve dollars and then all you can eat. And they are packed.

MN: Now, so anything else you want to say Rose, about people who you remembered or experiences or - - let me ask something that's interesting because a lot of people say television is

a very negative influence on people today. How important was television part of your household in your children's upbringing?

DP: Well they had to behave and had to do very good in school and that's when they got a treat for television. And that would be on Saturday; "The Wonderama."

RK: The Cartoons. [Laughs]

MN: So it wasn't like it was on every day, seven hours a day.

RK and DP: No, no.

RK: And especially going to Catholic school? Forget it. They had some homework.

MN: So television was a treat not a babysitter.

RK: No not a babysitter, forget it.

MN: Now did you think that was - - that your families were typical at that time in terms of television was something that was allowed in small doses?

RK: I believe so.

MN: What year - - did you get televisions immediately upon arrival or it took a while?

RK: It took a while.

DP: Oh it took good little while.

MN: What year did you first get your first television?

DP: About 1957 - - when was the baseball really - - the Dodgers?

MN: The Dodgers started in - - I think the late fifties were those really - - World Series.

MK: Well they left a '55.

MN: Right.

MK: They left-

[Crosstalk]

DP: Yes, while they were still here so it had to be '53, '54.

MN: So maybe it was '53, '54.

DP: Yes. And the thing - - see the children today that where the problem is - - it's not the grandchildren, it's the grandchildren's children. And the parents have gotten slack and they - - it's more or less, "Well I have to work, I have to - -" Well everybody works.

MN: You thing that the fact that they were stay at home mothers was an important factor in terms of keeping a level of supervision and control?

DP: Yes

RK: Well they - - go ahead.

DP: Yes they did and then when the children did get about say to junior high school or whatever, then most of us took part time jobs.

RK: Right, right. We went to work.

MN: Now, did your children go to the after school center at P.S. 18 and was that an important help, those after school programs?

RK: That and the center.

MN: And they had a center at St. Jerome's also?

DP: No it was a center in Patterson.

MN: There was a center in Patterson. Now where was it? Was it in your building?

DP: It was in 340

MN: Okay. Was this supervised by professional personnel?

DP: Yes and if you had parents too that lend a hand.

MN: So there was supervision from parents but there was also supervision from trained personnel. So there were a lot of things for children to do that were constructive and supervised.

RK: And when I moved to Mott Haven we went to the Mott Haven center and this gentleman volunteered and he taught math and he took math right. When he made his first resume he could put that down and the person was even surprised. You volunteered. I remember you came home and told me - - they asked him "You mean you volunteered?" And you said yes. He volunteered at the Mott Haven center.

MN: Now I'm going to ask this question to Malik. Do you have vivid memories of the beginnings of hip-hop or were you too young?

MK: No I do. I remember, I remember hip-hop pretty well. See - - let me say just a couple of things. The one; its - - I'm glad that we can put on records like the importance and the prevalence of family values. I mean you can see, these were all solid families and they raised solid children, and it's amazing to see that something happened in the mid sixties. Something just changed, right? Now these guys, the parents were getting along with all nationalities. But I want to tell a story that dad told us and when dad went to All Hallows, it was All Hallows Academy. It wasn't All Hallows High School. And it was predominately Irish and dad, even though he was a great athlete, he was a great runner, he used to tell me that every single day for lunchtime he would be the only person, he would sit at a table in the corner and no one, no other student would come and sit by him except the coach. The Coach was the only one because he was such a phenomenal runner that he would interact with him. The rest of the guys would leave him alone.

RK: That's when you've got to get in.

MK: So in the Bronx, it's such an amazing conglomeration of – just the difference in generations tells you a completely different story. These guys were 20-25 mid20's in the 1950's so - - But their experiences were starkly different from those that come in the mid 60's when they're kids are 15 and 16 years old and then just the fabric of familial life just disintegrated, it just disintegrated. I was born in 1970 and then when you talk about the Bronx burning even though, I was still in single digits, I mean I remember the '76 Yankees, the '77 Yankees very vividly - - but I remember those burnt down places used to be our playgrounds. Those houses - - now I think about it and I'm like crazy - - we used to go up these burnt stair cases that could have collapsed at any time.

MN: And these were the houses along the side streets near the Mott Haven houses?

MK: Absolutely.

MN: 'Cause that fully closed that area.

MK: Absolutely. And all up and down near Yankee stadium up near Highbridge, where I actually lived until I came back at 13. But again, back to hip-hop, yes I remember hip-hop pretty well. I mean there were times when the people talk about those jams in the park; those were very real. I remember behind, in Patterson, behind Mott Haven - -

MN: So there was stuff going on in Patterson and Mott Haven.

MK: Sure, sure. And it was really just - - people bringing out speakers and connecting to whatever they could connect to; the lamp post, I mean I don't even remember a lamp post that had the cover on. [Laughter] All the covers were off because the wires were out, that's where people connected, you know? And I don't remember the artists or anything, I just remember people out singing and dancing at that time.



RK: Can I say another thing related to Fordham University?

MN: Sure, sure.

RK: I remember reading - - that area was going down - - and Fordham, they stated in the paper that if they didn't do something with the area that they would - -

MN: Move to Westchester.

RK: Yes. And so then the Bronx would not have an Ivy League college, so now that - - the building that looks like a boat? That's what they built.

MN: Fordham Plaza, that huge, ugly building - - [Laughter] - - to help keep Fordham in the Bronx. Right.

RK: Yes, I remember reading that in the Times.

MN: Well it was - - those were rough days. Malik anything else you want?

MK: You know, I'm just very happy that a project like this is happening, because what we do is we get to counter act the stereotype of the Bronx as burning, or as the Bronx as a hot bed of anarchy and chaos and things like the movie Fort Apache the Bronx, or you know - -

[END TAPE ONE; SIDE ONE, BEGIN TAPE ONE; SIDE TWO]

MN: So you end up living your life with a chip on your shoulder because of the reputation of the Bronx.

MK: Right. We have - - I mean it's almost like family values existed every other place but in the Bronx, but we lived it. There's no way that any of our children succeed without the foundations that our parents and our grandparents have provided. So the deal with ignorance and knuckle heads, where all they heard about the Bronx - - I mean, what you said earlier, I mean all of you: the Bronx is famous for fires. Yes, but the Bronx is also famous for the Yankees and for

the Belmont's and for the Grand Concourse, which is the most beautiful street in New York - -  
and the parks, I mean the Bronx has 25% parks and there's no more beautiful parks than Van  
Courtland and Bronx Park East and - -

MN: And Crotona Park has the very best tennis courts in New York City. They have a  
professional tournament there every summer.

RK: That's right, every year they have their big retirement day. [Crosstalk]

MN: Have you ever been to those?

RK: I've been to it twice.

MN: Yes, because the Archibald's have a big feast there.

[Inaudible] [Crosstalk]

MK: Just that we have the opportunity to - - you know, just to put this on the record. This is our  
living history and it's very real, and you know, we're poised - - I think the Bronx is poised to  
resume it's rightful place as being a hub for New York City, you know being a hub for up and  
coming families, and that's what we've always been about. We have enough space, the Bronx is  
huge in terms of space, but it's always been a breeding ground to help people get foundations  
and to develop and to grow.

MN: And the tradition that you had in Patterson is a great tradition of families working together  
for - - but also supported by a government which provided good youth programs. I mean I don't  
know if kids - - in the 1970's they closed the after school centers in the schools. They took the  
music out of the schools. Do you remember the Eddy Baudimire concerts? Duke said they used  
to have concerts in the school yard, PSA team?

DP: Yes. They did, I think I was up here at that time, but they did, when you said Eddy

Baudimire - -

MN: Yes. Because he was a music teacher, a music teacher in Clark Junior High School who was a professional keyboardist; did six albums.

DP: That's right.

MN: Any other things that you remember or you want to say? I mean again, this is for 200 years.

DP: It's too bad you couldn't get that other bunch, that one from the 70's - - nobody knows where they're at.

RK: Yes, I called around and some of them refused.

DP: Yes, that's the core. That's your bunch.

MN: I do have a group of people from this time. Michael Calendar has a bunch of his friends who grew up there and we're going to find them. So Dorothy, you were saying that a lot of people who moved in from Patterson were moving from very crowded conditions. They had one room in an apartment, or they were living with relatives.

RK: I was living in one room.

MN: Now did any of the families that you know come from the Lequansit Huts that they had for the Military Personnel?

DP: I don't remember that.

RK: I don't think anybody I know - -

DP: They were over by the - - Lequansit Huts - - what was the name of that school? Monroe. Yes, over there by Monroe there were some houses.

DP: I was born and raised in Brooklyn and I stayed there - - from the time I was born, until 1950. Now 1955, all those that were in Bed Stuy were moving over to Crown Heights.

MN: Right.

DP: Right?

MN: Oh yes.

DP: And then after that, because my aunt and them were on Maple St.

MN: Oh Maple St, that was right around - - I grew up on Lefferts and Kingston, right new Wingate High School.

DP: I meant to say Crown - - Montgomery St?

MN: Montgomery St.

DP: They went to Montgomery St and after they left Montgomery St in the 70's they went to Maple St.

MN: Which is a little south of Montgomery, and that's near King's County High School.

DP: Okay, that's where they are now. What's the arch there?

MN: Grand Army Plaza.

DP: And some of them back there.

MN: Right that neighborhood which is becoming - -

[END OF INTERVIEW]