

Transcriber: Princess Okieme

Tape 1, Side A

Mark Naison: 158th interview with the Bronx African American History Project it is April 21st, 2006 we are at Fordham University with Mary Bailey a retired Nuclear Medicine Technologist. Whose lived in the Bronx much of her life and grew up in Morissania community. So Mary can you tell us a little bit about your family and where they are from and how they came to New York City?

Mary Bailey: They are originally from South Carolina and my mother left when she was either 9 days, 9months, or 9 weeks I don't know which. I came with my parents of course and that's the history.

MN: Was your mother living in Harlem when she came from South Carolina?

Mary Bailey: There is talk of that either Harlem or Philadelphia because I have some uncles who were born n Philadelphia and some born in New York. But she was the only one born in the South.

Mn: How old were you when your family moved to the Bronx?

MB: Probably about 6 I started school in the Bronx.

MN: Where was your family living before they moved to the Bronx?

MB: In Harlem.

MN: Do you know what Address?

MB: I don't know the Address but I think it was 138 Street.

MN: How did they find the Bronx? Did they know other people who lived in the Bronx?

MB: I have no idea.

MN: Were you raised Catholic?

MB: Yes and No. (Laughter) my mother had a beef with the church. So she stopped going so I would kind of. I was Christian and baptized whatever and she stopped going. She stopped going because the school didn't want to take me in. Why they didn't want to take me in school I have no idea, which was St. Augustine's

MN: And where did you first lived when you moved to the Bronx?

MB: We first lived some place on Boston Road but she did not like Boston Road so we moved.

MN: And where was the Second place?

MB: Washington Avenue where I spent most of my life.

MN: And what was the Address

MB: 1350

MN: Is it still there?

MB: No its not there physically but the number is still there because its part of the housing development.

MN: What are your earliest recollections of 1350 Washington Ave?

MB: Well I was about 7 years old I guess. The one big thing that kind of sticks out is that my mother worked at a pickle factory around the corner and so did my neighbors. My neighbors had a daughter. We are still friendly. The daughter was going to be 10 years old and I was about 7. Her mother made her invite me. I didn't want to go because I was a little skinny kid and everybody use to pick on me. So I figured that everyone would pick on me. I was right. But from that point I developed a friendship with the daughter.

MN: There was a pickle factory and what was the name of the company?

MB: Let me think I think it was Shumens. It's now a supermarket. It was 170 and 3rd Ave.

MN: And this was right down the block so it was--

MB: It was around the corner. Actually where I lived was between 169 and 170 and we were smacked dead in the middle of the block.

MN: What was the structure like? How tall was the building?

MB: My building was 6 stories, glass things on the door, and curtains to the door. It was a nice building.

MN: Was there an elevator in the building?

MB: No elevator. It was a walk up. It was marble.

MN: How many people were in your family when you moved to Washington Ave?

MB: My mother, my step father, and myself.

MN: So there were only three of you. Now what did you stepfather do for a living?

MB: He worked for a trucking consumer lithographer's consumer. He was truckers' helper.

MN: Was that also located in the Bronx?

MB: Now was that located in Manhattan.

MN: Now was he also of Southern extraction or is he West Indian?

MB: No. Southern. Florida. He grew up in Jacksonville.

MN: Now in terms of the people who lived on your block were most of them African? American or was it a relatively mixed area?

MB: I would probably say. When I was young I paid no attention. So everybody was everybody. But I notice there were African Americans and there were Jewish people we had a butcher shop and a couple of Grocery stores and we had different things in the area.

MN: What elementary school did you go to?

MB: P.S.2.

MN: And what street was that on?

MB: That was on 3rd Avenue between 169 and 170.

MN: Did you like that school?

MB: I think. I guess so okay.

MN: Okay (laughter)

MB: I never thought about that. I can tell you it was a very old school at the time. When I was about in the 3rd or 4th grade they had a fire and half of the school burned down. And at the time we herd that half of the school was 70 years old and the other half was 45 and were are talking about in 1940 so that was a long time. It was an old school and the teachers were pretty old.

MN: Now were there any teachers that stood out to you one way or the other that made a big impression?

MB: You know really the teacher. Her name was Dorothy Timings. She was actually my first black teacher and I remember she would take the class on trips especially to the Museum and you know they have a section on the birth you know and she didn't mind telling us and explaining. She use to tell us not to say ant cause you don't have...she made an impression on me. Her teaching methods were good. I had her first as a substitute teacher part of the 4th grade and then she became my teacher.

MN: Now how much education did your mother and step father have?

MB: My step father probably had very little. My mother went to probably the 9th or tenth grade of high school.

MN: Was academics stressed in your house? Were you expected to go beyond what your parents did?

MB: I was not pushed but my mom always bought me books. Of course books I didn't want to read. But every Christmas I got books, I got clothes, I got toys. I was the only child so I got lot stuffs. I always got the classics you know. And the only thing that was relating to educational. My mother herself was a great reader. She always read. (So far this is not so bad)

MN: What was the incident that occurred with St. Augustine church the disillusioned your mother?

MB: I don't know exactly what it is so I can only speculate. As I said I had a stepfather so I don't know whether it's because. I know she married him when I was about 7 or 8 years old. So I don't know whether it's because I was you know if it was because it wasn't my father or my color. I just leave it alone.

MN: She wanted you to go to St. Augustine's Elementary School?

MB: She wanted me to go to St. Augustine's when we moved to the Bronx because I was of school age so I went to P.S.63.

MN: They tried to enroll in St. Augustine's?

MB: That's what they told me. yes

MN: So now when your mother had you she wasn't married?

MB: Probably.

MN: So that may have been a factor.

MB: It could be. At that time St. Augustine was mostly Irish.

MN: The school.

MB: The school and probably the Church.

MN: Did you attend the church?

MB: I attended the church off and on and being a child it was a big walk for me to up with her to Franklin Avenue. Sometimes I'd go with my neighbor to the local Baptist church which wasn't for me.

MN: What was the name of the local Baptist Church?

MB: Gethesmau. I can't spell anymore.

MN: Did you ever go to the Catholic Church closest to your house?

MB: That was the closest to my house.

MN: Oh really.

MB: Either way. The other one was Our Lady of Victory which is on Webster Avenue, which is that was close.

MN: Tell me a little about the division in your....

MB: It was my mother you had to understand how my mother was. She didn't mix with everybody and Brook Avenue at the time kids were known for being tough and they steal.

MN: So from your mother's vantage point the Brook Avenue kids were the ones she didn't want you to associate with?

MB: My house was on a hill. I played from there to almost the corner. I use to play with the kids in 2613 in the courthouse of the building. We had what you called a court house. I knew some of the kids in the court house and the other kids....

MN: So there was an idea of a class division in the neighborhood?

MB: Well I wouldn't say that I don't know whether it was my mother or what. My mother was funny. She wanted to know where I was I didn't roam.

MN: She was very protective.

MB: Yes she was very protective of us.

MN: Yeah. I was an only child with protective parents who watched who I played with and what I did very closely.

MB: So they still did you dirty. (Laughter)

MN: So her ides was the Brook Avenue and Webster was kind of off limits.

MB: In fact maybe she didn't know anybody on Webster venue either. I know she had a good friend that lived on 160th. In fact she is still alive.

MN: Now was P.S.2 tracked by reading and math scores things like that.

MB: I guess we took test. But I don't remember you know. I was a fairly good student maybe I remember the teacher in the third grade. She probably didn't like me because she didn't skip me. She graded me on my math. She used to tell my mother that I had holes in my clothes and my mother said my daughter doesn't have holes in her clothes. But um it was okay I didn't get skipped.

MN: Now was music an important part of your household did you mother and stepfather listen to music much?

MB: Yeah they listened but I paid no attention to it. They listened to like Jimmy Rustling. I kind or remember that name.

MN: Mostly Jazz?

MB: You know jazz, they had some Charlie Parker and Billie Estane and somebody named Billy Bird a white guy. I think he was probably a Jazz musician. But they had records but I never paid attention because I wasn't interested.

MN: Now you weren't that interested in music. What about when Doo Wop and things like that?

MB: Well that's a different story. I was actually crazy about the Paragons and Sam Cooke. In fact I had them before I don't know what happen to them. Most of them I had and I tried to remember. I think it was the 5 keys or something I don't remember.

MN: Did you have any music instruction in school?

MB: We had art programs. We had time for art and a time for music. So we listen to music. In Junior High school 55 they had an art class for students who could draw and they had music class.

MN: You went to Junior High school 55.

MB: Which is better known as Benjamin Franklin Junior High School.

MN: Now where is that located?

MB: St. Paul's place on Washington Ave. I have pictures well have a picture a semi picture.

MN: So that was also in walking distance.

MB: All my schools were in walking distance. So I had no problem. My mother took me to school for a long time.

MN: So her hours allowed her?

MB: Well actually my Great Grand mother was still alive my great grandmother would take me to school until one day I said I could go by myself.

MN: Now where did your great Grand mother live?

MB: She lived in the same building but on the top floor.

MN: So how many apartments of your family were in that building?

MB: Two. That much I could answer. Probably three. I'm trying to think of the numbers on the apartment. It was a very well kept building.

MN: What was the neighborhood street like? Were you allowed to play in the street with the other kids?

MB: Yes I was allowed to go down and Play yeah I played with them but I didn't go too far.

MN: What sort of games did you play in the street?

MB: We use to play Red Rover. See we played street games. These kids don't know anything about street games .We played Red Rover and the Grass in the Sally in the alley or something stupid like that. Kicks and can. What's the one when they jump on.....?

MN: Johnny and the pony.

MB: Yeah something like that. See I was very delicate I didn't play things like that I was just about yeah tall so I had to watch. We jumped double dutch, straight rope. We played ball a game called Wall. Do you remember? I don't know if you do. You have a circle and you have the countries and you declare war. I don't know but we use play that was. When we got into Jr. High School we got into hands games.

MN: Did you ever go to the movies? Was that a part of your?

MB: I went to the movies. I went to usually the Fin Way. Fin Way was in Claremont Parkway. And it was on Claremont Parkway.

MN: And about how many blocks was it away from your house?

MB: About four five blocks.

MN: Right and that was the neighborhood theatre?

MB: That was the neighborhood theatre. Sometime I went the opposite direction. I went to King one of those.

MN: Your family ever go up the hill on Boston Road when your family were living down on Washington?

MB: We might have gone up there but I wasn't going up there.

MN: So most of your time was spent in the neighborhood?

MB: In my neighborhood in my little circle of my friends.

MN: Now was the school multiracial or was it mostly African American?

MB: My Junior High School which is really falling apart it was multiracial. It was African American, it was Hispanic. Then it was mostly Puerto Ricans. And then we had some Jewish.

MN: Did people get along with each other pretty well or was there tension?

MB: I don't remember any tension at all .You know.....

MN: Did you grow up with an acute consciousness of racism as a factor?

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MN: No not really. I remember it was a Sunday and we all got dressed we were about 14 years old and we went down to see a movie on Broadway and we stopped in a army shoes and he waited on everybody but us. So we finally walked out and it wasn't until we realized that he wasn't going to wait on us. That was in Manhattan. But here I didn't really notice that. Because one of my good friends was a girl named Margie Night. I was allowed to go to her house and she came to my house. I don't know what happened to her but we were friends. In fact, I have some pictures from 55 and the pictures I have from 55 are of my 9th grade class.

.MN: Actually if you want take them up and hold them up for the camera.

MB: I can't really hold them up because they are falling apart.

MN: Oh! Okay.

MB: I have these are small pictures. It's my two Jr. High and elementary school pictures They really starting to fall apart. This was a 9th grade picture.

MN: Yeah I see what you mean.

MB: This was the picture of the teacher.

MN: And where was this park?

MB: This was Pelham Bay.

MN: You went on a field trip?

MB: There's Roselyn Couric.

MN: And this is from Jr. High School 55.

MN: And what year is that 1952?

MB: That is our graduation Pin and I have.... these are the only pictures I have. This is 55.

MN: Wow and that was like a memory book from 55?

MB: We use to call that the autograph book and I have one from P.S2 also.

MN: Autograph book and people signed?

MB: People sign them. Where is the picture? The picture is usually in the Beginning I found it last night. This is the School.

MN: Wow! It still there? Junior High School 55 on Claremont Park.

MB: Wow! No it's on St. Paul Place and Washington Avenue.

MN: Ok Right.

MB: Yeah and this is the Principal.

MN: Simon Miller. OK!

MB: And this is P.S 2.

MN: And P.S 2 is not there anymore.

MB: No it's gone. That was the old that was in the winter time.

MN: And the Principal was Chef. Now how did you end up going to Theodore Roosevelt High School?

MN: Now you're bringing the racial policy which I didn't realize at the time. I was on my way to meet Colin Powell. He did not know but we would have been in the same class. But I was on my way to Morris and at the last moment they open up Junior High School 55 too. On the corner of Fordham and I ended up there. And I also found out recently that a friend that went to 22 I think some place. It was some place near Boston Road. Oh P.S 10 the same thing happened with them so they were giving. I had no problem.

MN: So you went during a time when there were very few Blacks?

MB: Very few Blacks were there.

MN: Now you went into a career when science was apart of it. Was science an interest of yours in school?

MB: Yeah. In fact, it was a teacher I had in Junior high School Mr. Shea. And he took us to St. Barnabas. The Hospital. St. Barnabas at the time was St. Barnabas Fort Lee and Curable Disease. Something like that. And we went on a field trip there. We went up the stairs and they took blood and stuff. And they took my blood and gave me my blood type. And I said that's interesting. And I always had an interest in science. It was probably my best subject. And I really wanted to be a hematologist or hematologist tech and when I went there I made up my mind that I wanted to do that. But I found out something when I

graduated from Hunter. IT was hard for a black woman to find a job because remember this was the sixties.

MN: Wow so you went to Hunter College. So you went to Roosevelt, to Hunter. So you must have done very well in High School.

MB: I did well.

MN: In those days Hunter was really hard to get into.

MB: Yeah. This was before Open Enrollment.

MN: This was closed enrollment

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MB: If they thought you had the potential and your grades were pretty close and not quite what they wanted they gave you the opportunity. You had to prove yourself. I proved myself and all my friends. The thing is when I went to Roosevelt I did find racism. There was a Math teacher and they give this test. And math use to make me cringe and shutter and. Now I don't have a problem with it well not too much. And he told me you will never do math you'll have to take general math. And I said I don't want to take general math. He told a friend of mine also. And she was an excellent Math student. Well I proved him right and she proved him wrong. So I took it over and proved him wrong because I was just nervous. If I didn't, I would not have ended up with my academic Diploma which is what I wanted because I knew I was going to go to somebody's college.

MN: Now were your parents pushing college or was this something you decided on your own?

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MB: Probably a little bit of both. I mean I know my mother would have gone to college if she could have gone to college. I was always kind of bookish. I just like to read. The only thing I particularly did not like was math. But I liked everything else I did my math and I didn't realize until I got to Hunter that I had teachers who made me afraid of it. You know afraid to make me use my power .You know. But Science was my best like Biology. I majored in Biology and minored in Chemistry. I really thought that I was bright.

MN: Now how did you get to Roosevelt from your apartment?

MB: The third Avenue route.

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MN: You took the train?

MB: Yeah 10 cents.

MN: Ten cents and how long did it take?

MB: About maybe 15 or 20 minutes.

MN: Did a lot of your friends from the neighborhood go to Roosevelt? Did you go like in a group from the neighborhood?

MB: I'm trying to remember. I know Joanne Makims went with me. Joanne went I think I know her sister went the year after. Not too many because I don't know because the school system was a little different. AT P.S. 55 they had 9-1, 9-2, 9-3, 9-4, 9-5 was the borderline. Because 9-3 and 9-4 was the music and art classes. They were usually made up of kids that were kind of smart or suppose to be smart. I was in the worst 9-1 class they ever had.

MN: Right.

MB: I mean we were smart but us just mischievous. And then you had all the other kids and these kids generally went to vocational school.

MN: Now was the tracking in the school did it coincide at all with racial lines were there like more black and Puerto Rican kids in the 9-8 class than the 9-1 class?

MB: It could be but I don't remember.

MN: It wasn't something that leaped out at you?

MB: IT didn't leap out at me. I just figured that they were a little slow. And usually when you got the end 9-9 and the 9-8. One class would be all girls and one class would be all boys because these were the kids who were unruly in school.

MN: So they took the toughest kids and put them together and then if it didn't work they sent them to special schools.

MB: Which was I don't know how fair that was either.

MN: Did you know any kids from your neighborhood who went to the Special schools. I guess they call them the 600 schools?

MB: No not the... they didn't go to the 600 schools they went to the vocational high schools.

MN: What were some of the names of the vocational school that the tough kids went?

MB: I just I didn't say it was for tough kids. I'm just saying kids you know that went to Dodge, Automotive Trades, which is Fashion now I think and they had Central Commercial because that had to do with typewriters and that wasn't my thing. I'm trying to think of some of the other schools. This was a long time ago. You talking about over 50 years ago you know that right.

MN: That's the idea. When you were going to High School was music a big thing? Were a lot of kids like singing in the hallways or that wasn't?

MB: You didn't sing in the hall ways are you kidding! They didn't sing in the hall ways you were out of class.

MN: Right. So the school was pretty disciplined?

MB: Roosevelt was pretty disciplined. But there were one or two instances and there were probably racial incidents. But I was not involved because I was not friendly with everybody else. I had to state my own ground. Because I remember there was some kind of fight and it was between a white girl and a black girl. What happened I don't know? I mean everybody did the same thing. Everybody went not me into the bathroom and smoked.

MN: Was there a particular of style of dress or walking the tough kids like had you know. Like somebody your mother would have disapproved let's say. How did they dress that was different from you?

MB: If somebody had a real tight skirt my mother would say hey who she why is she dressed like that? We dress like with the poodle skirts and the sweaters all backwards and the brocks and stuff. I just remember that.

MN: Now did you go to any dances when you were in High School?

MB: We use to go to St. Paul's.

MN: St. Paul's Episcopal?

MB: St.Paul's Episcopal they use to have dances Friday nights for the local teens you would go up there I think it was a quarter or something and if they played the music. A little social. Not everyone came because these boys I think they were called the Bisquanas they played basketball.

MN: Now the Bisquanas was this like a gang?

MB: No they weren't gangs. As far as I know they weren't gangs. They played basketball they came to dances.

MN: So they were like a social club. Now were there gangs around in the 50's?

MB: There were gangs around but I didn't know any of them?

MN: Were there any examples when gangs would come to your block and cause trouble. Like just show up?

MB: I have to think about that because that's something you know. It wasn't part of me so. It wasn't foremost in my....

MN: So you pretty much you know stayed to yourself. You went to school

MB: I went to school I had friends I guess all of us that grew up together stuck together When we got to High School is when we dispersed we all made other friends and we did other things.

MN: Did the Civil Rights Movement make much of an impression on you when it was going on make much an impression on you?

MB: It made an impression on me but I didn't go down to. By this time I'm working and I was working at NYU I was there for 39 years

MN: So you worked at NYU Medical Center for 39 years?

MB: Yeah.

MN: Wow what was your first job at the Medical Center?

MB: I worked with Medicine.

MN: Now nuclear medicine has been around for 39 years?

MB: It has been around longer than 39 years.

MN: Really so tell me a little about Nuclear Medicine what nuclear medicine is and how you got into it?

MB: OK. Well nuclear medicine is primarily using radio active materials for diagnosis. The patient would be ingested or injected with it. And then we detect using cameras. It is a camera type device and it has evolved over the years. Because I can hear now because I would tap out but usually if I were doing your thyroid I would give you radio active iodine. I would put you under the camera .I would have a picture of your thyroid. And I got into it I had an application at NYU from Hunter on Career day or something and I called the lady up and said I need a job and every place I go they were telling me they had nothing. And she said I have two places. One place she wanted to send me up to

Tuxedo New York I said where is it she said I don't know I said you don't know I said I'm a girl from Washington Avenue and I want the Job. So she said I have one more place and she sent me down to at that time it was called University Hospitals down on 20 street and I saw Doctor Milton Freedman who is very well known in field of Radiation Therapy .I did a little of that on the side when the lady went on vacation and he interviewed me and I knew where the fire was what its function was and whatever and he said I like you. It time I got home I had the job for a grand total of \$75.15 that was my salary.

MN: A week?

MB: A week. Thank God a week.

MN: Now was that less than what a nurse got?

MB: Probably so. I mean back in the day everybody's salary was quite low. Which to me was a good salary because my thing was either start making 100 dollars a week. And I got my training on the job.

MN: Right so you were not trained for this?

MB: Right my degrees are in Biology I had a bachelor not a Masters. I had a bachelor with a major in Biology and a minor in Chemistry. I took one course that they had in clinical pathology which was like blood smear just in case.

MN: Now you were in Hunter in the 60's?

MB: Mostly in the evening sessions.

MN: And what were you doing during the day?

MB: Babysitting. I babysat my sister the kid next door and my cousin.

MN: Wow and this was all in the Washington Avenue area?

MB: In Washington Avenue

MN: Now you were doing this to help your mother out and father?

MB: What happen was my mother came home from the pickle factory during the middle of the day one day and she was very upset because she had a feeling that something was wrong with her child and my sister was about 18 months old at that time. And the babysitter said she wasn't feeling well and my sister was standing in the corner with a dirty diaper and a some food in her mouth and crying. My mother said you not going to get a job you're going to take care of Patty. And I said you're going to pay me? Because I was looking for a job. This is right after High School. And she said I'll pay you. Than I had Pat, I had Ricky, and I had Robin. And they were all within a year. Robin and Patty was something like 18-20 months and the other little girl was like two years old.

MN: And then you enrolled into Hunter?

MB: I was already enrolled in Hunter at night

MN: So how long did it take you to finish Hunter?

MB: It took me seven years because I spend the last year in day. Because I looked at my mother and said you want a college graduate you better let me take classes and you take care of your daughter. Because I'm going to finish. And I graduated in 62.

MN: When you graduated you started looking for jobs in Hospitals?

MB: Yeah because what I was looking for as I said I wanted to do Hematology some sort of hematological work. Because that's what I was interested in. I had gone to all the Hospitals here there and everywhere and nothing happened. She also sent me to some place else and he said that he couldn't use me because he was studying at the lab. So I went back to her and told her that he didn't like me. I then realized that he was setting up a lab but he could have worked with me.

MN: So you think that racism had something to do?

MB: I thought that because it was '62 so that was where my mentality would be and I thought so also.

MN: So what was experience like when you began working in the nuclear medicine area?

MB: It was. It was actually I had. I don't know what we had a Doctor. A Pilipino doctor and I guess I made little mistakes and everybody make mistakes. I had all this math to do and they didn't have calculators so I was doing everything by long hand don't ask me to divide anything. He was trying his best to get me out. When it came time to show me his scanner which was piece of equipment to do the scanning he turned this knob and in walked Doctor Bamwar and he asked me a question and I told him I didn't know. He said I tell you what in three months I will be Doctor's Freedman's assistant and he says I want you to know this machine in and out. I sat down with the book and I taught my self how to do it. And when we came back I was very upset that he didn't ask me. But he still did. And because of him I think I got to where I got to. When it came time for a raise.

MN: So overall you found this a pretty positive work environment?

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MB: I had a pretty positive work environment. You know I could tell when patients came in and they looked at me when they spoke to me on the phone. They were surprised to see me. One of the biggest things that they would ask me is if I knew this physician. And I would say no. so one day I said is he black or something. She looked at me and said oh. I said everyone has been asking me and he actually was. Another sign was one of the nurses. She had been talking to me on the phone talking and talking and then she gets to meet me and she is shocked. I could see it on her face. Oh she said I thought that you were a much larger lady. I said why is it because of my voice she said yeah you sound like you are a big lady. I said yeah right. Possibly I had a good experience there.

MN: Now when did your family move away from Washington Avenue?

MB: 1959 we had to move. And you know the reason why we had to move

MN: They were going to build Claremont Houses.

MB: Right. That was a project that started when I was in Junior High School because they would send questionnaires home and they would ask if they had vermin or whether how many people were in the family how many rooms etc- - Are you okay?

MN: Yeah.

MB: Oh see that's the medical.

MN: I'm just very tired. I was up in Schnectady.

MB: And then around because actually where I lived was called Golden Morris Houses cause they broke it down in sections. They grew the projects there. We moved to the projects.

MN: So you moved into Goulden and Morris.

MB: No. We moved into Melrose.

MN: Oh you moved into Melrose Houses.

MB: We moved into Melrose because by this time my mother wasn't working I was still in college and at that time they had low rent, mid-rent, and high rent. It was either a low rent or mid rent.

MN: And what year did you move into the Melrose Housing?

MB: I think '59.

MN: And what was that like?

MB: You have to remember I was a young adult. I was going to school I was going to work.

MN: Did it seem like it was a fairly clean place

MB: It was clean it was different the next door neighbor was Jewish we had a family down the hall who were Cuban I think they were Hispanic and there was another black family and there was the lady with the five boys that lived directly in front of us.

MN: Now how long did you live in the Melrose Houses?

MB: We lived in the Melrose until I started working which was in 1962. And in 1962 because I started to work the income went up. We moved over to St.Mary's.

MN: Which was middle income?

MB: St. Mary's was higher income we moved there and that was kind of you know you were suppose to be considered somebody.

MN: Okay St.Mary was considered to be a cut above Melrose or Patterson.

MB: A cut or two above Melrose.

MN: And what street on St. Mary's.

MB: We lived on Hallow Avenue - - 550 Hallow Avenue.

MN: How long did you live there?

MB: I lived there until my mother died in 1968. My stepfather died there in 1995.He was sill there.

MN: He was still in the St. Mary's Housing?

MB: In the same two bedroom apartment.

MN: Now what floor were they on.

MB: 10th.

MN: Now we interviewed somebody from the St. Mary's Housing named Shelly Sanderson who's a Spanish teacher at P.S.153 and she said she remembered looking out the window and seeing in the late 60' early 70's the houses in College Avenue burning.

MB: See I wasn't there in the late 60's I don't remember that because we moved there in the late 60's.

MN: Maybe that was in the 70's. So where were you in the 70's in the Bronx?

MB: I was where I am now in the North East Bronx.

MN: The North East Bronx. So you weren't in the South Bronx when the fires and all that stuff started?

MB: No. I don't think so - - no. I mean there was some stuff.

MN: Did you visit people?

MB: No it was a while before I went back and I went back by the 55 and I was kind of shock because Washington Avenue when you got of at Claremont Parkway. It was all whites. When I went back everything was gone you know I'm still kind of shocked.

MN: So the area that was burned was the area which was a little more.

MB: I think it was all they missed the projects.

MN: See the projects stayed up.

MB: Right the projects stayed for the donation I don't know about the people.

MN: what were the Bathgate Ave markets like?

MB: Well let me see now. My mother and I would go to go to the fruit stands well I'm talking about Claremont Parkway and about 173-174 Street.

MN: That's where they were.

MB: Yeah that where they were yeah so you know Claremont Parkway is where you had toy sale called Ginzies. I think there were house near I m trying to visualize it. But Bathgate Ave. then had fruit stands you had clothing stores you had fish markets. I knew somebody who had a fish market. And I said I don't like fish markets. I remember also when I was a kid there was a fish market and they had this big black fish I think they said its mullet and the guy would take a mallet hit the fish on the head you know.

MN: It was a live fish.

MB: Right it was a live fish. I couldn't understand why I said I can't stand that. I can't go into fish markets now.

MN: Now did your family go picnicking in Crotona Park?

MB: My step father used to that's how safe it was. He would take his blanket and his six pack he'd go sleep out in Crotona Park.

MN: He'd go sleep out in Crotona Park in the summer on a blanket with a six pack of beer and sleep in the park. Wow did other people do that too?

MB: Yeah it was safe.

MN: That's amazing so people slept the night if they wanted to.

MB: Yeah if they wanted to.

MN: This was in the 50's.

MB: Yeah this was in the 50's.

MN: And your building, you left your door opened all the time.

MB: Yeah we left our door opened. But then that when things started to change you know.

MN: Was there any point that which you thought the Bronx was getting dangerous?

MB: Before the 60's.

MN: Yeah.

MB: No not really in fact I used to feel kind of safe. Because when I got older I started to going to dances other than St. Paul's we would go down to Hunts Point and it was some place else that.

MN: Embassy Manor.

MB: No it was Savoy Manor. Because the regular Savoy.

MN: Did you ever go to the Hunts Point Palace?

MB: Yeah I said the Hunts Point Palace. Yeah we would go there oh yeah.

MN: Now did you dance to Latin Music.

MB: Oh sure I teathed to Latin music I mean what it is now because it got- -

MN: Who is some of your favorite Latin Artist from back in the day?

MB: I never knew them from Artist because I never remembered.

MN: But you danced Mambo?

MB: Yeah. I used to like Mambo number 5 and I can really remember but all of the Latin music the bop and all that kind of stuff. You were saying about safety I would go to a dance with my friends and of course we take the train home no taxi and when I left them I was the only that was going to go the opposite direction and I walked up and I felt safe and sometimes in fact I ran into this guy he wasn't a nice guy but I went to school in fact he was in both of my pictures and he said what are you doing out here Mary. I said I'm coming from a dance he said "you know you shouldn't be out" and he said "I'll walk you Home" and I never thought of him walking me home. He walked me home I rang the bell and when I got upstairs I yelled back out "I'm upstairs." Did you know I felt safe.

MN: So is there anything that you left out that you would like to put on record?

MB: Like what?

MN: Things that were important to you growing up, memories of your family and the neighborhood and the Bronx.

MB: I guess. What happen to some of the friends I had you know lots of them got married I never got married. A lot of them got married and moved a way and had families but I think on a whole I think most of them did well.

MN: So as a cohort so you think most of them did well professionally?

MB: Did well professionally and some of them in fact I have been friends with over 60 years and she is in Florida now she was an LPN. She started at York vocational school which was supposed to be teaching her nursing I could have told her it wasn't nursing but.

MN: Right a lot of the women went into health careers or education?

MB: Most of my friends went into education health you know. I'm the only one who went into medicine.

MN: Anything else you can think of? Did you ever get serious about like religion when you were a teenager?

MB: Actually I made all of my sacraments at I was a teenager I was about 13-14 years old getting ready to leave 55 and I went for religion instructions And it was by then I knew that the Baptist church particularity that Baptist church because I was a very little girnd I went with my friend and her mother and they passed the basket around they sattod there and counted the money and the minister Reverend j was his name and he said to me he said I have x amount of dollars he said if you are wearing pants that means you are a man put a dollar in the pot. I was 9; 10 years old I said suppose that you don't have a dollar. I said to myself that's not for me. And when I got older I started going back and my mother started going back.

MN: To Saint Augustine's?

MB: She went back to St. Augustine's because my sister came home she came along and by this summer I was in Trenton church.

MN: What was St. Augustine's like when you were there?

MB: You know I didn't do very well. Catholic Church weren't very active then you know. I went to mass and it was okay and I was with father Howl J.Sullivan. He was kind of mean. It's a very beautiful church. I don't know if you have seen it

MN: I have been there several times.

MB: I don't have any pictures but the old church had stained glass.

MN: Oh wow!

MB: And the altar that they have on the side that was part of the main altar. And it was well attended it was mix where else did I go. Then I went to the other church. The Immaculate on 150th street and that was. Wherever I moved there was always a Catholic church and not only that the neighbors were also mixed because when I moved into Melrose there was Our Lady of Pity, St. Aderburg's, Immaculate Conception these were all different churches and these churches had a little bit of everybody.

MN: Right.

MB: Our Lady of Pity was the Italian Church near Morris Avenue. So both the neighborhood and schools were mixed. My sister went to school in Immaculate Conception and I'm still very active in church.

MN: Which church are you a member of?

MB: I am a member of Immaculate Conception on Gun Hill Road the big church.

MN: Near Evander?

MB: Near Evander right and I'm also a part of the Archdiocese. I am what they called Commissioner with the Office of Black Ministry. I was just appointed in September.

MN: Congratulations!

MB: But I'm very active. I do thing with the Gospel Choir I can't sing but I'm there and I'm on the board for the building because they need to get a building for seniors.

MN: Okay well. Thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]