

Interview with Michelle Pehlman

November 29, 2014

Birdsboro, Pennsylvania

START OF INTERVIEW

Katie Smith (KS): My name is Katie Smith and I am interviewing Michelle Pehlman on November 29, 2014 in Birdsboro Pennsylvania. What's your name?

Michelle Pehlman (MP): Michelle Pehlman

KS: Okay. And how old are you?

MP: I am forty-nine.

KS: I don't like that question. And what is your birthday?

MP: March 3rd, 1965.

KS: It is November 29th, 2014?

MP: Yes, Saturday the 29th.

KS: Oh, and where do you live? Did I already say that?

MP: Birdsboro, Pennsylvania.

KS: Alright. So where, let's just do more general since you've moved several places, where have you lived?

MP: In my life? Where have I lived? In Trinidad I was born, so I lived there for a while. Then we moved St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands and I went all up to eighth grade. When it was time to go to ninth grade I moved to Riverside, California and we lived there for several years. And when I went to college I went to Oklahoma for four years. In-between there, we spent about nine months in Mississippi and also visited Canada, Venezuela, I think that's it. We did spend a weekend in Puerto Rico. [Laughs] All the memories. And I've been living in....ooh! And I did live in Maryland up until 1999. From '89 to '99 and in '99 I moved here after I got married to John.

KS: Inaudible Alright, how _____

MP: Oh gosh. I don't remember exactly. Because, well, that's an interesting question because while my parents were living in Trinidad they sent me to school in St. Croix...No no no. I'm sorry. While my parents were living in St. Croix, because they had to move from Trinidad to St. Croix, they sent me back to Trinidad for school. And so I would say, and the schools weren't as they are here with grades, they're different. So when I left Trinidad and came to live with them they put me in the second grade at a Catholic School in St. Croix.

KS: Okay

MP: Answer: I was a child.

KS: How old were you when you moved to California?

MP: 1979, what would have that been? I was, California...just getting into the ninth grade. It was the second semester and they stuck me in the ninth grade. So that's about how old I was, about 14 or 15.

KS: Did your whole family move to all those places together or disperse kind of? [really inaudible]

MP: We all moved together. The only time we were separated, my dad didn't come, was when we traveled to Canada and Venezuela and because of immigration problems, we got stuck in Venezuela for about 9 months.

KS: Oh my gosh.

MP: But it was fun, I didn't have to go to school. (Laughs)

KS: Would you want to talk about that for a moment?

MP: Oh sure. I learned the Venezuelan National Anthem. We had family in Venezuela in Caracas and Maracaibo. And we stayed with them, and we visited them. And I had a chance to just experience the Venezuelan culture and the Spanish side of my family. So I learned, I went to school a couple of times with my cousins in a Spanish school. And I learned the national anthem, and I was also in a parade. There was some kind of celebration, we were also in a parade and we had costumes and we were dressed up as Indians. The most fun in Venezuela was how they celebrate Christmas, and that's instead of being one big thing it's a whole month, two, or three. Starts in September, and there's all kinds of music and food and celebration going on. So that was nine months was a lot of fun and once I came back to St. Croix they stuck me in the class where I belong anyway, so it was as though I hadn't missed any school at all. They stuck me, I've never been to fourth grade, so when I came back they put me in fifth grade with the rest of my classmates.

KS: Oh my god. Did it work out okay?

MP: Oh yes, yes.

KS: Why did you get stuck in Venezuela?

MP: I don't know the whole story, but my mom deals with immigration and she was the one who took care of it. There were probably some personal issues between her and my dad. But there was something wrong with the paperwork and we couldn't get it worked out to come back.

KS: Okay. What jobs did your parents have?

MP: My mom, when she moved to the island she worked in the hotel. And eventually got into accounting, and she's just retired from accounting now, but she might be going back as a retiree for the State of California in Sacramento. And my dad worked mostly with his hands, he was a welder when he worked, and he's also retired.

KS: What is your education level?

MP: Well as of right now I'm working on my Masters and hope to be done this month. [Laughs] So this is the most education I have received. I should be finishing my thesis by next Wednesday, and I have to defend it on the 10th and walk on the 13th.

KS: What's your major in?

MP: English Studies

KS: Okay. Then what do you remember from Trinidad? Just in general, your overall. ____ it was like there?

MP: In general? Oh. It was fun. As a little child I ran around the neighborhood and played with all the neighborhood kids and climbed the guava trees and went to my cousin's to take the goats down to the river, and they caught shrimp in the river and they brought it home to cook. And I learned a lot of Indian songs from the movies. I just, it was a lot of fun and I felt, very free. And that's how I always picture it, was as free. Not restricted with rules and parents and. [Laughs]

KS: What were like popular past times, sporting events or like activities or clubs or other things?

MP: For children?

KS: For anybody.

MP: Well they like Cricket down there. The things I remember our family doing a lot was eating, and celebrating with food and dancing. And we did karaoke long before they had karaoke, we would play records and sing the songs, sing the words to them. [laughs] So that was, I think music was a big part of our life. Music and making food and celebrating with people.

KS: Yeah. What kind of food ____?

MP: Food? Oh my gosh. Well a lot of my family are really good cooks, so they make different kinds of curry, different kinds of sauces. My dad loves teriyaki and could eat it every day, you know teriyaki beef, teriyaki chicken and he loves rice. So we steamed a lot of rice in the rice cooker. But finally, my mom and I came to a point where we said we gotta have something else. And we branched out into pasta, and spinach [laughs]. But yeah, they enjoy a lot of different kinds of foods, sauces. And even the Indian foods, the curries and the roti that they make. And there's something called bake-way, it's flour and it's made like a cake and flat, you can roast it on the oven in this roasting thing or you can make them smaller and fry them so. And then there is something called Calla-loo that's very creole, made with spinach. Kind of like the gumbo that you have in the States, Louisiana. So we had a variety of foods, some of them were from the Indian part of the family, from the creole, from the Spanish, from the Chinese. So we had a lot of different kinds of flavors to enjoy growing up. Dumplings, I forgot that.

KS: What was the housing like?

MP: The housing?

KS: Yeah _____ people lived in a house together - _____

MP: Oh yeah. That's very different from most American families. When I went to school in Trinidad I lived with my aunt and uncle and my cousins. And back then my aunt didn't have, this was back before she had her new house built. So we, as a child I remember we'd get up and walk downstairs and you

would shower with the rainwater that was gathered in the barrels. It was really, really cold I couldn't ____ _____. And at that time she also had a, at night you would go in the whatcha-ma-call-it...I guess you'd call it a chamber pot. But you had that under the bed, then during the day you would walk to the outhouse, if it was night you would walk with your little lantern but she did get plumbing. And in St. Croix when we lived with my family we also had cousins that would come and live with us and they would basically live with us until they got on their feet and got jobs. So at one point we had many cousins, I don't remember how many. I know we had two that stayed with us for a while, a long time. And then my grandparents from my mother's side lived with us also. My grandmother and my mom's stepfather until they passed away. My grandma would visit, like spend a few months with her other children, like in Canada go for six months, or relatives in Venezuela go for another six months. So she would see all of her grandchildren you know. But we always had a big home so that when I got married and lived with just one person it felt really strange.

KS: Why did you leave Trinidad? _____?

MP: In 1979 there was Hurricane David and also my mom had gotten into selling World Book Encyclopedias. So she was a salesperson for a while, I forgot that. My mom's really good talking to people and selling them things, and she's a great entertainer. So there was a point where she worked for World Book Encyclopedia and got to travel and she saw, she won prizes she did so well so she saw California, Chicago, the Bahamas, Dominican Republic, all these places. And when it came time that she was thinking about moving, her boss helped her move to California. So that's how we moved. I even had the uniform, I was going to go a school called St. Dunstan's on the Island, because it was the ninth grade I had my uniform bought and everything, but we left in the middle of the hurricane and came to the states.

KS: Would you talk about the hurricane a bit?

MP: What I remember is that there was lots of water and the waves were really huge in Puerto Rico, and there was some crazy people going out there surfing. But our, we lived in a big trailer. It was really nice. But it was above ground, so our home was not destroyed but a lot of the shopping areas were devastated, there was a lot of flooding. So it was pretty bad for some other people. That's all I remember. And we basically packed up and the church helped us, the Church of the Nazarene helped us and my mom's boss to move to Riverside, California.

KS: How was your first winter [inaudible ?]

MP: Gosh, I honestly don't remember that.

KS: it must not have been too bad.

MP: No, yeah. The only thing I remember is my mom bought us these huge winter coats because we had never experienced colder weather. So we had a really, really thick, sturdy winter coats to prepare us for the weather. And then they came with scarves, and I still have the scarf but I gave away the coat because it was so thick and bulky and it just looked ridiculous, you know? It was so over-done.

KS: Did you ____ ____ _____?

MP: I think so! [laughs] ____ ____ it was so funny. Yeah.

KS: How did the transition _____ like _____ like how did that _____

MP: I wrote some of that up in the paper I'm giving you. For my parents, it was the worst because even though we lived in the Virgin Islands, US Territory for a while, we had not experienced that full blast of being in the states. Because it was the first time my family was told that we came from a third-world country, it was the first time we had experienced racism of any kind. And mostly to them, because in 1979 they went to Denny's and were refused service. My parents are both half Chinese but my mom's light skinned with straight hair, my dad's darker skin with curly hair and he had tattoos on his arm. So he never got a good reception where he went. The worst thing that happened that they told me was when they went to search for a house to rent for the family, they were turned down and my mom had to go by herself to finally get a house for us. So, it was pretty bad back then. And they were... They didn't deal with it very well and they were often depressed about that, but my mom, because of her education skills was always able to find work as an accountant. And my dad had the harder time and, because he is the more sensitive of the two. He would always quit his job, start a job and quit it because somebody said something to him. So for me being the oldest child in a Chinese family there was a lot of pressure to do well in school, and I think because my family were depressed, my dad was always depressed. I was depressed before I realized that I was. But... I feel that my faith helped me to get through that time and I also wrote poetry, some of them were very dark. I don't have that in there, but yeah, there's a poem called *Ignorance* and it's started, the first line is: "Dark where dark as dark can be/ Darker than hell/ So dark as she/ Mother of hatred and war within/ Sister of sin" And I read that in my freshman year of highschool. But I think my faith, my faith in God really helped me to get through that time period. Because I stayed in the church and no one in my family didn't feel like going. I always got a ride, and yeah. And so highschool I think was a very dark period for me.

KS: Okay. Alright two follow up: One, how was transferring into the school system here?

MP: Oh I forgot about that. Yeah. When I came to the States and I visited high school I hated it and then I stayed home two days and didn't want to go back. And I think the difference is definitely culture because where I came from, I had always gone to private schools and the atmosphere was always very respectful to teachers and adults. We'd always say "Good Morning Mr. So-and-so!" And you know, have prayer and it was very, the _____ was very, we were expected to behave well and to listen. And the first day of high school they put me in a freshman class and the kids were jumping up and down and yelling at the teacher and it was so chaotic, I just hated it. So, because we looked at the private schools for two days but California was very expensive and the schooling was more expensive than in the islands. So after two days we decided sitting with a Guidance Counselor, go back to high school, public high school. And this was all for first time I had been to public school so that was a big change. And so what they decided was they were going to put me in the advanced class, so once I got in with more studious students is that I would be getting Algebra and some A.P. classes. I was with students who wanted to study so it was a better experience for me and then I just kind of dove into all of the opportunities that I had on an academic level. Like they had essay contests and speech and I also got involved in sports. But once I found some outlets, I was a better student and I enjoyed my high school years a little bit more.

KS: And then do you want to talk about like Church clubs _____

MP: Um in high school? Yes. Amazingly enough, even in the public school, we had a Christian Club and we were allowed to meet just like the Spanish Club, they didn't. My friends and I were

involved in a lot of those clubs, we started some of them [;augh]. There's a club called the Academy Club I started and every time I call back my high school I ask if it's still there, and they tell me yes. So I don't know if that's true or not. But we started a club... ____ ____ _____. We started a club to encourage students to go to college and we would bring in speakers. Especially students from the high school who had graduated and went to college to come back and to talk to those kids and encourage us in our academic life. ____ ____ We had the Christian club at church which was called the Fish Club and we met at lunch time, basically I think it was for bible study and the advisor for the Christian Club was also the Spanish Club advisor. And she sold chocolates and things. There was a ten o'clock break we had in high school before lunch and she sold candies and chocolate bars and things like that to, as a fundraiser to help the activities of the Christian Club. I was also involved in youth group and our youth group had, it was choreography. We did musicals and we would travel in the summer. So we would spend the whole year singing and practicing the songs and learning the new steps for each musical. And throughout the year we would perform in the churches and local places, and then in the summer we would take a trip and do a tour and travel throughout California, like northern California and what-not, and do our musicals. So the youth group had me very involved. We couldn't afford for all of us to be in it, so all of us would travel, so two of my sisters were also involved. But when it came time for the tour the first year I went and I think one of my sisters was able to go another year. So the youth group was very important in my life at that time because it would give me the support that I wasn't getting at home or for necessarily from the culture. I mean my high school was very supporting in giving me opportunities, but the church really helped me, and I think that my classmates at school really helped me to deal with that difference in culture.

KS: Was there a large community of people from the Virgin Islands or Trinidad ____ _____?

MP: There is, yes. Our family and my mom has a lot of friends up there, my parents had a lot of friends. But I think what helped me, the people from Trinidad, they're ethnically mixed. So it helped me in the culture there and in the high school, was I was surrounded with people of different nationalities. So my high school friends were from Thailand, from Dominican Republic, from Mexico. And we also had people I knew, like acquaintances from South America, they weren't the better students. I didn't hang with them. [laughs] And where else? Yeah. So my high school was very diversified and that helped me and then my small circle of friends were also people who were like me, who weren't born here but whose parents came from another country. And most of them, all of them spoke English better than their parents, that type of thing. So they helped me and I think we were a support to each other.

KS: Okay so what kind of jobs have you had? _____

MP: Oh Lord! Jobs. Let's see. When I was a college student I worked several jobs I sewed, I worked at a Subway Sandwich Shop. And minimum wage at the time was \$3.83. So I did that. That was in between, I had started grad school. I had started an MBA program in 1988 or '87, right after I graduated and that lasted for about a semester because I was really, really bored. And at the time I was really impatient and I couldn't wait to get to the classes like Entrepreneurship instead of just beginning with your Marketing and your Economics, yuck-yuck, and those beginning classes. So now I feel I have grown in maturity and patience to actually sit through classes that I'm studying something I love, that's different. So Subway Sandwich Shop was one job. I think a couple of summers I had jobs like working with kids, summer camp, counseling. I had two semesters I did that in college, two summer semesters working with kids in California. And another summer I did selling credit cards, applications. Just standing in front of the mall and go, "Come get your credit cards!" And I would help people with the applications. After college I did a lot of office work so I got a lot of administrative experience as a temp for Kelly's, and that was interesting. I also worked as a Spanish

teacher for two years at a Catholic School in downtown Baltimore, the school has since been torn down. But I started teaching the kids, pre-K through eighth grade Spanish. And that was a lot of fun, just using music and literature and sharing the culture with them. Now I work in the business office at University of Valley Forge. And I've been there 15 years now, December will be fifteen and a half years. Basically taking money, doing financial transactions, and while I've been there I've been able to share my love of literature by doing my literature and poetry readings. Like, we did a group, a discussion group for one semester. Just typically supporting them with different things, outreaches

KS: I know you said that your parents dealt with discrimination when they came over here originally, did you have to deal with that _____

MP: Well, yeah. In college I had to deal with that some more, but I think college was more helpful. And it was friendly because there was a lot of international students at RU. And that helped me to see how they were dealing with it. And it was also in college where I told myself that my Chinese background was going to be my heritage, and that it was up to me to see what my culture was. So I kind of put that into perspective, and I said if I ever have kids, I'll let them do whatever, and that I'll put that in the background. And that my ethnicity wasn't going to dictate what my future was going to be, because in my family there's a huge pressure to be a doctor, which was in my family. But also to study, to pursue, what do you call them? The white collar professions? In addition to being a doctor, I could have been a lawyer, an attorney, an accountant- those kind of professions were kind looked on as professional. So if you had any artistic inclinations, you were encouraged to just put that on the side and let that just be a hobby. And so I feel I've dealt with a lot more adjustments. You know, there was a time in college where I said, most of my struggles in college had to do with the pressure coming from my family and they're not dealing with it well, and me having a hard time reconciling what I call the overwhelming new world. So in college I did come to a point where I became suicidal and just wanted to end everything, but at the end of that time period I thought it was better just to start over. So I needed a break from my family and from all of that pressure, so I moved to Baltimore in 1989 and I feel like the Lord helped me to do that, to just kind of get my strength together and start over. And so I think when we have supportive people with us helping us along the way, that helps me too. So I feel like my faith helped me and during the time I was in Baltimore I stayed with three girls who were Christians, and one of them was a friend from college, so she was a good help. A very strong person, and she was studying counseling at the time also. And now she just finished her masters from, I'm not sure. She's living in Canada. But she had her, I'm sorry. She just got her PhD., she got her masters from John's Hopkins, she was studying counseling and now she's doing science research and still a Christian. So people like that helped me along the way, and my Church, I had counseling through them after college. And, just that I feel I've had more people in my life who've helped me to get through some tough times. And that's one of the things that I've learned through my experience is that my culture had taught me to be isolated, that you don't tell people, you don't talk to Americans about your family situation or history. And what I learned after all of that, because at the end of my personal crisis I felt very abandoned by my family and what I had learned was that I needed to have a, how do you say, to acquire friendships, to develop friendships so that when I came to a time of crisis, I had people to turn to. And that became a valley and has been a valley to me since it's been. And these people don't have to be like me or part of my culture. They can be strong people who think like me, do you know what I mean? I could see past the ethnicity, and that was one of the bigger things I have learned through my experience.

KS: Yeah, I wanted to ask a little bit _____ college _____

MP: Oral Robert's University in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I went to a seminar when I was a high school student and at that point I was thinking, I really wanted to go to the East Coast but I was too scared

to do it all myself. And none of my sisters wanted to come with me, they all wanted to stay in California. So I came out to a seminar weekend at OR-U as a high school student and I was sold, so that I attended college there starting in 1983.

KS: Okay. So you and your ____ ____

MP: Yes. Yes.

KS: So citizenship? _____ that process works?

MP: Oh yes, yes yes. Since we were children, when we moved to the Virgin Islands, my parents had applied for citizenship in 1979. So we became naturalized through them, and that's how that worked. But we didn't have to study for the test, and back then it was a lot easier than it now, anyway. Plus, my mom worked with immigration people and she knew the laws. Right now she knows the immigration laws for California, so she can help other people naturalize, except now it's very, it's a lot more difficult. And you have to go back and forth and retry naturalizing, a certain waiting period of time plus you have to travel back and forth, you know, six months here, six months there. That type of thing.

KS: So _____

MP: Yes, yes.

KS: _____ -

MP: Oh definitely, yes. It was, I might be wrong, it was either '79 or '74, but it was definitely easier because in the islands there's a lot less red-tape. And you can go through processes a lot quicker, so it was definitely more-easier, and the ____ process has changed now, it was definitely more easier back then.

KS: - _____

MP: There were, but I don't know which agencies they were.

KS: ____ ____ pronounced social-economic-political changes _ _____

MP: I think I needed that question ____ time.

KS: _____

MP: Changes in my life or changes in the culture?

KS: I think like in the culture.

MP: Let me read that, which one is that? A more pronounced sense ____ since arriving? I don't know. [Laughs]

KS: ____ ____ moved to California _____

MP: Yeah, I remember Reagan, you know. [Laughs] A lot of California Governors, I mean Jerry Brown was Governor at one point ____ ____ was Governor. That's something I'll have to think about, I guess, because there was so much internal working on myself that, yeah. I'll have to think of that.

KS: Is there anything in the US that reminds you _____

MP: When I go to Shady Maple and I see a bunch of people, a bunch of ethnic people, then I feel like I'm at home. Because I went to, often to the Shady Maple grocery store, and there were Indians, Mexicans, and white Americans, and just that potpourri of people, I felt I was at home. So situations like that, that remind me of home and even California. Because you'd go to Costco's in California and just see, and when I go back to California I see all kinds of people shopping together, Arabs and, you don't see a lot of them out here. And in Maryland you had ethnic people but they were all separated into their little ethnic pockets like there's Little Italy, and the little Italian people live there, and you know all the different ethnicities lived, you know, segregated. So what reminds me of home is when I go into a place and I see a mixture of people eating or shopping together. I'm like Whew! I'm in heaven!

KS: Was there anything you remember being weird about the US?

MP: I'll probably have to think about that. Well, not when I got here, but like I said when I got married and I had to live with my husband in one house by ourselves. That was strange, because I mean he has extended family too but they don't live together. You know, he has family across the street and down the road, his grandparents live and his aunts and uncles live next door. And they play together, but in our situation we lived together in the same house. So that's one thing that sticks out as strange that I could think about when I first came. I mean, well the schooling was disastrous, I thought. And I had wanted to join drama club but I went into the room and the kids were screaming and jumping up and acting crazy. So I joined the Speech Club instead! [Laughs] _____ stuff like, those are my first impressions: these American kids are crazy and they're disrespectful and they're loud and they don't sit still. You know? I was like, oh my gosh! So those are my first impressions.

KS: Is there anybody that you're keeping in contact with from Trinidad or the Virgin Islands or Venezuela _____

MP: Yeah, we have family in Venezuela. Well the neat thing about my family in Venezuela is most of them have moved to Florida, so they're closer. On Facebook, I now have my cousins from Venezuela, I have a friend from high school from California, she's still there and she's married. And some of her experience were similar to mine I that when we graduated we just kind of, there was a point where we just got crazy. And we won't talk about that on tape. [laughs] But I think one difference in our culture is that we were so confined and sheltered that they didn't teach us how to enjoy or appreciate our independence and what you gotta ____ one _____. Okay.

KS: _____.

MP: I'm not aware of all of them, but I think they're very complicated, and I think the whole immigration system needs fixing. Now some of my friends would disagree with me but I feel like if we have some kind of, what do you call it, what is the word? Amnesty program, I think that the people who are working should get the first consideration. Like the families who are working and contributing to society and taxes should be looked on more favorably than the people that are doing drugs. I mean those people could be sent back, should be sent back. I think when we consider who to take in, it should be the more productive people, and not the ones destroying their culture.

KS: Is there anything that you would like to outline _____ like miscellaneous topics?

MP: I can't think of anything. We've covered a lot so, yeah.

KS: I think the one think, that's another thing _____ - what kind of music _____

MP: Between that? A few different kinds. My parents loved a lot of songs from the 70s, like Andy Williams, Perry Coumo, you know, love story, those kinds of songs. So I learned a lot of that music. I mean I can sing a lot of that by heart just by knowing the words. Engelbert Humperdink, that was the era that they just loved those songs, but we also had the Indian songs like I said, on a record. And I learned a lot of them from the Indian movies I saw, and I could sing them for you, but maybe another time. [Laughs] Um, what other? That's mostly... _____

KS: _____ language differences _____

MP: Yes, oh yes. Well, we grew up speaking English but we could also speak a little Spanish. My mom and my grandmother spoke more Spanish, speak more Spanish than I do. But we also grew up hearing broken French in the house, but that was the language my mom and my grandmother used to talk about us, so they never taught it to us. We were smart, and we picked up a few words here and there, so we knew when they were saying that one child was jealous of the other, and we knew when they were saying somebody's watching somebody. So they would talk to each other and we picked it up. The other languages I grew up hearing, I had friends on Curacao and Aruba so I grew up hearing Papiamentu, and what else? You also would hear broken French. The Islands, most of the language of the Caribbean are English, French, broken French, Spanish, and like I said Papiamentu. So when I went to OR-U and saw a guy from Aruba I could say " _____ " and the response would be " *Baste-bol.* " But that's the only thing I learned in that language

KS: _____

MP: A lot of them are in California, I have a sister in Baltimore. One sister in Baltimore, so my other sisters and my brother are in California, my parents are in California in Sacramento. I have some cousins here on the East Coast, some distant relatives like in the New York/New Jersey area, and a whole bunch of more family in Florida, both from my mom's side and my dad's side, and they're mostly like cousins.

KS: _____

MP: Yeah, so I have one sister in Baltimore. There's five of us, one sister in Baltimore, three other sisters in California and my baby brother in California.

KS: What do they do? _____

MP: What do they do? The sister after me, she's like a free-living kind of person and she just started being a truck-driver, [laughs] and living with my parents. So we're glad she's working, and we're not sure it's the best career for her. The sister after her, she is working in pharmaceutical sales, for a while she was an engineering major and she had quit but she just finished her degree in business. And working pharmaceutical sales and she also finished a degree as a masseuse therapist, so she's in Baltimore and that's what she's doing. She's making some good money. Sister after her is doing her boards for something in the medical field, like medical assistants kind of thing. Like to do blood work or to do, to work in a Doctor's office. But she is very interested in nutrition, so I'm not sure where she'll end up but right now she's working on the boards for that. And my brother, wait wait, he's a volunteer fireman on the side and oh gosh, he works for the state. I'm not exactly sure what he does.

KS: _____

MP: Oh god.

KS: I know

MP: Wow. I...I The Virgin Islands. I was a child, so I don't remember what my expectations were.. But both the Trinidad and the Virgin islands were very pleasant experiences. I mean, on the Virgin Islands you went to the beach almost every day. It was fun times, so that the memories are very pleasant, I'm not sure what my expectations were.

KS: Were there any expectations _____

MP: Yeah, I'm not sure what we expected, but we were surprised to see, to be treated how we were treated. We...we, that was, racism was never a part of our concept of life so it was very hard confronting that. And just being seen as different, you know? We...in the islands you grew up with all different kinds of people, and you get along, I mean, if you have a fight with someone, it's going to be because they are a different color. Do you know what I mean? And then when we had styles, like clothing styles: for example, Rastafarians are usually seen as black, but you could have a Chinese Rastafarian, you could have an Indian Rastafarians. Do you know what I mean? So a lot of things on the islands criss-cross and connect, and there were so many people of mixed cultures, so maybe the biggest thing it was to see was people act differently towards others, and not everybody gets along, and that something as small as color makes a big difference for some people on how they treat you or how they perceive you. Like, you know, that they think less than you.

KS: Could you real quick, you mentioned the clothing?__ _____

MP: It was the 80s, so not really. I think the styles are different. But you know, that was...I think we adapted really well to clothing over there. That was never an issue.

KS: Anything else?

MP: No I think we covered plenty.

KS: _____

END OF RECORDING

END OF INTERVIEW