

Speaker 1: So, I guess, just start by telling me a little bit about the recipes you chose and why.

Speaker 2: Well, I focused on the gumbo.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: Because the family would get together to put it together, you know, somebody had to pick the shell outta the crab meat. Somebody had to peel the shrimp; "take the dookie out", like my dad used to say.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: And he would make a ... he would [inaudible 00:00:38] the shallots from his front so he could make the seafood [inaudible 00:00:40].

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: Somebody had to chop up the seasoning. Somebody had to slice the sausage and cook the sausage. So, it was like a family activity.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: Kids would be outside playing and ... 'course somebody had - nobody wanted to cut the okra. And cook it. But somebody had to. And it was always easier for all of us to get together and do a part. And then, my dad would do the final thing of assembling all the ingredients.

Speaker 1: Hmm.

Speaker 2: So ... And it was one of the meals that we enjoy. And we don't eat it but maybe three times a year. Usually it's during the holidays 'cause putting a pot of gumbo together sometimes can be really expensive.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: And everybody loved it so, that's why I - and everybody knows gumbo, right?

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: Even though everybody's gumbo recipe is different, you know. And I'm sure if ten people stood at me and gave their recipe -

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: - they'd all be totally different. Of course, you know, we had french bread to go with that.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Okay, what were the other ones?

Speaker 2: The other recipes?

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 2: Well, I ... I chose some recipes that ... I don't know, we're really friendly about our recipes. I don't know where my mother found this recipe. It's a Lemon Lush. And this was something that she'd prepare alone. And it was flour and chopped walnuts, cream cheese, powdered sugar, la crème topping and lemon and fig pudding and pie filling and milk. And it was something that I really like because it was very light and delicious and it wasn't too sweet. And one of the reasons I picked this was ... that was the last thing that my mother prepared before she passed for me because she knew I loved it. And we were getting ready for July the 4th and she passed on July the 3rd. And initially, we couldn't eat it.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: It was almost like, if we ate that, she would be gone.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: So, that - that was the reason why I picked that.

Mirliton is another thing that I chose because I'm the only one who prepares it in the family. My mom showed me how to fix it and I don't think anybody really wants to learn to make it because they want me to do it.

Speaker 1: Hmm.

Speaker 2: And I don't know if you want me to talk about what I put in it or how I prepare it ... But it was strange when I went to New Jersey and lived for ten years ...

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: ... And I was walking around looking for mirliton and nobody knew what I meant by that -

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: - 'Cause it's actually called ... What is it? I thought I put it ... C - Cay - [inaudible 00:04:37] or [inaudible 00:04:41] - I can't remember what it's called, but it's actually called - named something else than mirliton; I really think refers to the finished dish.

Speaker 1: Oh, okay.

Speaker 2: As opposed to the vegetable that you put it.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: But you know how New Orleans people are.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: So ... And I remembered you asking us if anybody dead or alive could prepare something for us, what would it be?

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 2: And for me, it would be my mother's turkey stuffing.

Speaker 1: Mm.

Speaker 2: And her dirty rice with livers. Oh my goodness. Nobody can make it like she does.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 2: So ...

Speaker 1: Now, do you come from a big family?

Speaker 2: It was five of us. Mother, father ... And I'm the oldest of five children.

Speaker 1: Okay. It sounds like there are a lot of family gatherings and ...

Speaker 2: Well, that's the way we were. It would be - it was three sisters that had children.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 2: My last two siblings didn't have any. So, the best thing to do would be go over to Momma on Saturday.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 2: Kids could go outside and play together -

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: - we would go in the kitchen and talk about what was goin' on and prepare dinner. And, you know, that's really ... Used to be the highlight of our week.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: To get together by my mom's.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 2: And pretty much that was it. Plus the kids would play with a few kids in the neighborhood.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: But the family gatherings and the talking and ... just being with each other -

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: Was what we really liked [inaudible 00:06:40].

Speaker 1: Okay. And since your mom passed, are ya'll still - have ya'll relocated that, er?

Speaker 2: No, because ... Well, for a while after she died, we would still get together.

Speaker 1: - Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: But the kids grew up.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: One fifth had moved to California ...

Speaker 1: Mm.

Speaker 2: ... Then my - that's the sister next to me, Claudia. My baby sister moved out there, Patrice. Katrina - I went to Jersey to live for ten years.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: Katrina happens and then we relocated to my sister in Texas - and her daughter.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: My dad and my brother - well, my dad lost his home, so, he moved into an apartment ...

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: So, we're just kinda scattered now.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 2: You know, I had - my daughter had already relocated to Texas.

Speaker 1: Mm.

Speaker 2: You know, she's got married and had children of her own. My son managed to stay here. So we - no, we can't. When holidays come it's just me, my brother and my dad now.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: Yeah. And [inaudible 00:07:53] Father's day is coming and ... my sister is coming in from Texas.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: But, I don't know because now we have a funeral, Saturday. His brother passed.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: So the family's getting smaller and smaller, you know. Those gumbo days and activity days and gatherings ... That's non-existent now.

Speaker 1: Mm. Mokay.

Speaker 2: Sad to say.

Speaker 1: I mean, it - you know - it happens. Especially when the nucleus or the matriarch, you know ... a lot changed in my family when my grandmother passed away because she was the - the person that everybody gathered around. And I see my mom and her sisters doing what they can to reproduce that for the younger generations. But I do wonder, you know, with my cousins and I ... If we will managed to make it as much of a priority as my mom and her sisters do. And if we don't manage to do that together -

Speaker 2: All that's gone.

Speaker 1: Then, that's all - yeah. Then it's all gone.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: So ... So, yeah. It is a matter of ... I's a moment in time and it's something that, at least for a little while, probably felt like it would always just be the way that things were.

Speaker 2: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 1: You know? But, yeah - no. Growing up in my grandma's house was a lot like that.

Speaker 2: Yeah.
And New Orleans is ... We miss that. For the holidays, nobody's on the streets.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: Because everybody's at their mom's or ... Some family.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: You know. I think we're really considered a Catholic city even if you're not Catholic.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: A lot of people will live by a lot of their old habits of seafood always on Friday and...

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: And getting together for the holidays. It's really about family down here.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: You know?

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: So ... It's [inaudible 00:10:02] ... It's hard

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: Really is. There was something else I was gonna say in regards to what you were saying about ... let me just say this as a comparison. We had the five children and then our siblings and then the mates of the siblings ...

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: And we had to set up the Ping-Pong table. That's how many people we had to seat around -

Speaker 1: Oh. Oh, yeah.

Speaker 2: - in the den.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: You know, so everybody could sit down.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: And now it's gone down to three people. Plus, my babies had just passed away two days ago.

Speaker 1: Oh. I'm sorry.

Speaker 2: That was hard. So, moving right along.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: Go ahead.

Speaker 1: So, okay, was going to say, with everybody scattered ... And that sense of ... Oh! I wanted you to say a little bit more about your time in New Jersey and what that was like in terms of trying to, maybe ... I mean, did you find yourself trying to reproduce "home" through cooking?

Speaker 2: That, there, was where you can.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: But, mine ... for instance, when I tried to make the first gumbo, we went to what's called, International Market. And it was this huge, huge building like a Sam's - that's the size. And there were all of these imported foods and they kept the seafood live -

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: - until you ordered it.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: And I said, "Well, I need some blue crabs." And it was an Asian guy. And he said, "How many you want?", and I told him. And he gave me the bag -

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: And I could feel things moving.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: Well we used to find them frozen!

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: They were still alive. Oh my god. Freaked me out. Oysters ... you know, I wanted to buy some oysters to make the dressing -

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: And instead of giving me some nice little small ones, they would be huge oysters that's almost the size of a tongue.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Ahhh! Anyway! The only way I was able to get Tony Chachere's Seasoning - which is what I use in place of salt and pepper ...

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: We went to a restaurant in Pahotcong, New Jersey. And they happened to have Tony Chachere's Seasoning on each table.

Speaker 1: Hmm.

Speaker 2: Now you wouldn't have thought it was a New Orleans scene because it was called it was called Goodfella's. But there was pictures of Mardi Gras sights and the French Quarter.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: And I had to ask the guy after we ate, if there was any way he could sell me a couple of those.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: 'Cause they were selling them up there, of course.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: And he just gave it to me. So, that sort of activated the New Orleans flavoring of my food.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: The markets are ... There's a lot of fresh food that you can buy and I love that. In the Asian markets, in the Indian markets, in the philippino markets ... There was stuff in there I never saw before. I had to really search and look for the things that we cook with because I think I may have ended up going to a chain store like ... oh, what's it called ... but [inaudible 00:13:28] of like a Winn-Dixie ...

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: Can't remember what the name of it is right now ... To find the things that we used; that I was familiar with.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: So, little by little I was able to get it back. As a matter of fact, I think I got better.

Speaker 1: Yeah?

Speaker 2: Always creating some delicious food.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Really. But certain things were really priced really high, like, to get the lumped crab meat.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: But, you know, I made it. And at the same time, people think that you're not going to enjoy the food up there ...

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: There is some awesome food up there.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Delicious food.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: You know, I - I prefer at home ...

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: To eat mine the way that I cook. But I was willing to go out and try all these different types of food out there.

It's good.

Can't get french bread though!

Out the question. You can't get hot sausage patties.

Speaker 1: Oh, yeah.

Speaker 2: Outta the question. You know there's just some things you couldn't find, so ...

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: I'd wait until I'd visit, then I'd get those things.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: But ...

Speaker 1: See, I'm spoiled; my mom would send them to me - or if I came in town, she had a care package ready that I could bring back to Nashville. So, I had my hot sausage and ... you know, like the things that I definitely needed.

Speaker 2: Right, right.

Speaker 1: Um ...

Speaker 2: But it's cool.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: It's culture shock though.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: Serious culture shock. People aren't extremely friendly.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: I find that they ... they kinda hush about things. They stayed in ethnic groups -

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: - like, Mexicans stayed together, the Puerto Ricans stayed together, the Africans, you know, like West Indians ... I became a part of a group of women that lived two blocks from me.

Speaker 1: Hmm.

Speaker 2: One was Dutch/Italian, one was Russian/Italian ...

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: One was from Antiqua ...

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: ... I forgot where the other one ... But, and - oh, and one was Chinese.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: So, we had this real mixture of people -

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: - that got together and found a lot in common.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: So, we used to, once a month, somebody would cook a meal.

Speaker 1: Oh, nice.

Speaker 2: So, I had a chance to eat different kinds of food from different people.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 2: You know, Chinese to Italian. So, it was all cool. It was all cool. I miss my friends up there.

Speaker 1: Nice.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: Okay, well I think ...

Speaker 1: We are recording. I suppose the first question that I would be interested in knowing is just a little bit about your background and specifically your parents, where they came from, where they lived, how they met, any information that you might know about any of those things.

Speaker 2: Okay, I was born in New Orleans. Both of my parents were born in New Orleans. I believe my parents met in high school through my dad's sister, yeah. I pretty much came up in the Uptown area going to public schools. I was the only one of five who went to public schools. My siblings went to Holy Ghost School and from there to their prep. I'm trying to think, I'm trying to connect all of this. I went to ... First of all, I went to Martinez Nursery School, trying to get to some type of chronological order here. It was where my mother wanted to see me go to nursery school. It was in the seventh ward, she grew up in the seventh ward.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: At that time, they were teaching children their prayers in French and different things in French, of course. That's something that is sort of a lost art now because strangely enough, my mother didn't learn French from her mother because they didn't want them to know what they were talking about.

Speaker 1: Oh.

Speaker 2: So they can talk between each other.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: And I find that it's not fair really because you're cutting off part of their culture and discontinuing it, dying. I'm trying to keep mind the thing that you asked me. I said there was five of us, right?

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Speaker 2: I was the oldest. Three sisters and a brother. I was pretty much a quiet, shy kid. I believe that even though we came up in an area where there was a lot of kids, we pretty much were sheltered. We played with each other and maybe one or two kids in the neighborhood. Being sheltered doesn't prepare you for what you run into when you go from, let's say, from adolescence to pre-teens, and from pre-teens to teens. There are other kids that are exposed to other things that you're not exposed to.

I feel like I had a lot to learn about being a black kid at a time when things were, when it was segregated, and sitting behind the bar on the bus and going to [inaudible 00:04:04], which is now Rhodes Funeral Home. We had to sit upstairs, which was really the better seats. You could see the screen. Shopping on Dryades

Street, that's where all the stores were that blacks could go to the grocery store, there was a bowling alley. Places to buy clothes, places to buy appliances. When you go down that street now, none of that is evident. It's all gone.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: But what was amazing was when blacks were able to shop in white stores, the black business just went down because they stopped catering to those places that offered them service in the beginning. That seems to be a trend, unfortunately.

I went back to school, got my Fine Arts degree. I think I find that black folks, when I do an art piece, "Oh, I love that," they don't want to buy it. They want me to give it to them. Most of the people that have bought my work, I'd say 90 percent of the people who have bought my work have all been white people. I don't know why we don't think that what we do is good enough for us. I guess that's something that's been programmed.

I made jewelry at one time. I was in a flea market. People would come over and look, "Oh, that's wonderful." I gave them the price, you're talking about each piece of wire being cut and adding each bead on. No, we want this stuff made in China. I don't know, I got an issue with quality and quantity. Anyway, I'm getting off track. Let's go back to where you want me to be.

Speaker 1: Okay, alright. You were saying that you were kind of ill-prepared for growing up amidst segregation-

Speaker 2: Sheltered.

Speaker 1: And what it would be like to grow up as a black woman in this city.

Speaker 2: Right, right, right.

Speaker 1: What were some of the way that you kind of had a rude awakening about what that experience was like?

Speaker 2: I think that one of the ... I don't remember being personally attacked. I don't know if that was because I stayed in the background, or I stayed out of the way, or didn't put myself in situations where I would be confronted, because I could remember back in '67, that was still the height of it, working at Mason Blanche in sales. Everyone else worked in the janitorial part or moving materials around, things that they sold in store.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: The same thing at [inaudible 00:07:51], being able to work on embedded sportswear. The only black person in the store working in sales. Everybody else who

worked, much older than I was, had been working there for years moving merchandise around, marking clothes down. I don't remember any hard punches. I think that that makes it a little difficult for me to understand what some people went through. You accepted that you went to a separate school, all black school and you were dealing with discipline problems of your own like that. Everybody was fighting and this one didn't like that one, but the actual racial thing, I guess I was never put into that situation where I was confronted.

Nope, that's not true. I started working in the Port of New Orleans. In the Port of New Orleans, you separated the ... [inaudible 00:09:14] were usually black, clerks were white. I started working at the clerk not knowing what I'm really getting myself into because I had a little job before that where I worked at a research program. I was the administrative assistant with a little car, ran the place, and then I went into a situation from having an office of my own and a company car to the wars, dirty, loud, uneducated people, both black and white. Whites eager to either show you disrespect or take it out on you in a way that you've got the worst job.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: Okay. We're talking about this, that's where I felt it, but it didn't take long for that to change. Sometimes it's just a matter of being quiet and doing what you need to do and earning respect without being forceful or aggressive. Aggression brings on aggression. That was where I really felt it because when a person feels intimidated or threatened, I think that's what happened with most whites and blacks. They always had to feel intimidated by, I'm gonna say, our energy. Our eagerness for a better life, for more out of life. Of course, it built up that defenseless energy also that then I'm prepared if you should reject me because that's what you've been doing. Now, I'm going off the track, but that's when I felt it. That's the only time and over the years, there was more of a respect for me and just the opposite started happening. But, that's the worst that I went through. I was in my 20's then.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: '75, back in [inaudible 00:11:49].

Speaker 1: Do you remember there being much of a conversation in your home about race?

Speaker 2: No. My parents didn't discuss that. You saw things on television, but they didn't talk about it. There wasn't ... They didn't prepare you for what could happen to you and explain why.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: I don't know why they didn't. My grandfather was half white, so you're growing up in a house with somebody that looks white, and I'm sure you have. It's just not the same, people asking who's the white person in your house?

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: Who's the white man living in your house? But we weren't drawn to be bigots. They didn't talk about the differences, not when we were little. They really didn't. I guess that's why it doesn't matter to me what color you are.

Speaker 1: And they both had mixed ancestry? Your mom and your dad?

Speaker 2: My mom, her father's French and Italian. That's all I know of. Of my dad's side, the Irish, my dad, his daddy is white. That's why I joined this workshop, is how to find out what was going on. I know it's white, Italian, and French on my mother's side. You know, I guess the people mixing like that. Actually, from what I heard, there was less hatred and anger, and people were all living together, than when they decided, "Oh, we got this integration-segregation thing going on." I mean, people ... It was provoked.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: It was a barrier of hatred that was created by a people who came here.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: Okay so, no. I spoke with my daddy about that one day. I said, "You guys didn't teach us the dislike or hateful example of being judgemental towards anybody." He said, "That's right. Why should we?"

Speaker 1: Right. Did both of them work?

Speaker 2: My mom didn't work until we were all in school. My dad worked in a post office.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: But he was a college graduate, majored in business but couldn't get a job as an accountant.

Speaker 1: Oh, wow.

Speaker 2: He told me the man said, "I wish I could hire you, but then how can I hire you and pay you the same thing and your coworkers, the white folk that are already here, are gonna resent it." He gave up on that. My grandfather was a baker. He worked for Marita Bakery, you probably don't remember that. Marita was Marita bread at one time. My grandmother's father worked there. My great-great grandfather introduced my grandfather to my grandmother. Wait, am I getting it right? Her father introduced them.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: My grandfather worked at the bakery and I guess that's how they met. My grandfather quit his job because the boss wanted him to train a white guy to be over them. Teach him what you know, and then he's gonna be your supervisor, so he quit.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Somehow, I don't know how he managed to open a bakery in the Hollygrove area. Then, he moved from there and he bought a piece of property on Washington, right up to Claiborne, and he built this house. He had an area down there where he had the bakery. He bought the property nextdoor and he built an apartment building there. He had maybe a fourth grade education. How he managed to buy the cumulative properties, get the materials, and build. I don't know what he did.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: Okay, he ran a bakery. I could remember, I would wait in the bakery in the morning, waiting for the Martinez Nursery School to come to pick me up. I'm not giving you any of this in a chronological order-

Speaker 1: It's okay.

Speaker 2: But I can remember my dad complaining about having to work in a bakery.

Speaker 1: Oh, yeah.

Speaker 2: He hated it! To this day, he's 88, he still complains. I could've been outside playing with my friends, but no, I had to work in a bakery. If it weren't for his mom, determined to send him and his siblings to college, they wouldn't have gone because my grandfather wanted them to work there, work in the bakery. They all went to college, they're all college graduates. My uncle taught at Fairview in Texas, my aunt went to California and she taught in Compton. As luck would have it, my grandmother developed really bad asthma, so she couldn't stay here. She went to California.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: That's how my aunt ended up teaching out there. My grandfather closed the bakery and he opened a barber shop.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: All these old memories coming up. I'm trying to think, what else based on what you were talking about. In light of everything, we're gonna fill some air. My siblings, one

ended up going to pharmacy school, going to Xavier in pharmacy and worked for a [inaudible 00:19:45] woman when her daughter was born, and she ended up with septicemia, which is blood poisoning. It was something that happened in the hospital, but I can't remember the name of it. There was like three or four babies that contacted it. There was something contaminated, something or other, in the maternity operating room, and these four babies ended up really sick. Because she had to go to the center room, they had time with her daughter, she had it. They just went back in pharmacy. One would work in the pathology lab at Flint Goodridge. She's in Texas now. My brother worked at the Silver Dollar. He was into photography, he was into electricity and became an electrician for a while.

Anyway, I have one sister who wanted to be an x-ray tech. She was going to Delgado, kept going there. She ended up in California. She was supposed to get married to a guy. I probably should be [inaudible 00:21:04]. But that didn't happen. She's the only sibling that I have that has passed, two years now, my baby sister. Everybody else is still here. Nobody's doing anything really fabulous. We're still trying to exist as a family. Katrina just really changed a whole lot that used to happen when we all had the house.

Speaker 1: Growing up, because there was quite a few of you guys and I'm not sure what the age difference is there, but were you close? As the oldest, did you feel a little bit like you were responsible for everybody?

Speaker 2: In a sense, I did. In a sense, I did. You know, you can become overprotective and sometimes, they can reject you. My sister next to you is like a year and a half younger, and then the sister after her was, I think, two years younger than the second sister. And then there was a break. I'll put it to you like this; 1950, '52, '53, '57, '58. The last two, there was a break with those two. So, the first three, we were really close. We were growing up at the time when Angela Davis was around, and we were black and we were proud, and trying to make the hair as big as you could, that kind of stuff.

One sister, Claudia, went to UNO. At that time, they were trying to get Black Studies, so no. I went there, they were trying to get Black Studies, and it was a time when the buckets were coming out and they were picking up doo-doo because they were protesting. McKisser was the mayor at the time, the governor, I'm sorry. He had this real southern draw on, "Won't you help me ..." Anyway, they sent the cops out because somebody took the flag down, put the flag in a mailbox. That's against the law, right? Why is that against the law?

Speaker 1: I don't know.

Speaker 2: Anyway, it ... But flew the cops out there to arrest students because we were protesting for Black Studies. That was a scary time, scary time. Unfortunately, because I was not exposed to Black Studies, I didn't really realize what they were fighting for. I didn't realize how rich the history was, what blacks have done over the

last two-three hundred years, all the things they have been through, and they were always not giving a crap because it was always somebody white that provided the opportunity, they did the work. Now I know. But back then ... It's a good thing there were other people my age who were aware, who could make other people aware of what we had started going through.

Speaker 1: Okay, and at what point between say, I don't know if it was before college or after that you relocated or moved out of your parent's home and started to establish yourself on your own?

Speaker 2: I was in school and at the time that they were doing all of the fighting and the segregation thing, I stopped going to class because if you were at school and you went to class, they were having it. So, what do I do? Do I go to school, and go to class, and I'll get haggled by the rest of the students. They would interrupt the classes, walk down the halls, and make all kinds of noise. Waste my parent's money or do I drop out until this cools off? That's when I worked ... I dropped out, that's when I worked at Maison Blanche and got to figure out work a semester, then go back to school.

Then, I ended up getting married. That's when I left their house. Had a son, worked at a research program, that's where I worked as an administrative person. Lily, the pharmaceutical foundation, conducted a study. There was a home visit, in-center, and testing that was divided in three parts. What they were trying to find out was under what circumstances do black kids learn best. Testing was a group of kids with parents who went to work and had a little more education. They didn't get any instructions from the center. The in-center, hopefully welfare parents, didn't work or anything. The parents were separated from their children and they talked to parents about early childhood development and they were educated to work with the kids. At that time, Fischer toys were a lot of the better toys to buy your kids. They last longer and they taught some kind of concept. There was the home visit group, where one of the educators would go to parent's house, work with the parent and the child one-on-one. Parents were given a stipend, which in a lot of cases, they wouldn't participate if they weren't getting some kind of money or something for it. That was an interesting program.

There were testers who took the results of the kids who didn't get any instruction from the in-center, they compared them.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: To this day I don't know what the results were. I left to take another job and I don't remember how long it lasted, but people having children who were so ignorant of how to take care of children. Just a simple thing like talk to your child, don't just do things to your child. Speak to them, tell them what you're doing to them so you can encourage the language. Not [inaudible 00:28:40] just because he did something you didn't want him to do. How to potty train the child, to explain to parents you

bathe the kid, not only to get them clean, but to also inspect their bodies. Look at them to see if they have any rashes or anything. I think my son was maybe one year old, so it was enlightening for me too to learn all of these things about being a parent and to learn by the child. The child is not just a little adult.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: That was ... It's amazing how certain things teach a certain important thing about life or where you are at that particular time. That was a good time for me to be there.

Speaker 1: Yeah, sounds like it. Where and how did you meet your husband?

Speaker 2: My husband was teaching school when I was in school.

Speaker 1: Oh, okay.

Speaker 2: He was teaching at David Prep when I was going to Coyne. That's how I became aware of his existence.

Speaker 1: Oh, okay. Alright.

Speaker 2: My sister went to Prep and some kind of way, I don't remember exactly how, and yet they say the things you should remember, I ended up going on a date with him. I don't know if I went to him. He was coaching at Prep too. I think going to the game ... Anyway, ended up dating. But, that really wasn't supposed to be my husband.

Speaker 1: Oh, really?

Speaker 2: The guy that I met in high school ... At that time, I don't know if you remember, no you wouldn't remember. I don't remember the man's name. Ted Parker, Ted Parker used to host a radio show. The black athletes and the major reps, and I guess the cheerleaders too, he would interview them. On the weekend, there would be a show and he would interview basketball players and major reps. I happened to be a majorette at Point Coyne and St. Olaf's basketball team was there.

Let me regroup here. This kid, this kid ... He was a kid then. This guy walks up to be, told me his name and kissed me.

Speaker 1: Whoa.

Speaker 2: Yes, yes. That was the first time I had ever kissed anybody in my whole life. I didn't know this guy. Real quick, I'm gonna find a picture. But anyway, I dated him through high school and it just seems like he didn't have any ambition, what he was gonna do with his life. He ended up in the service after he left high school. No, I'm sorry. He went to SUNO Southern in Baton Rouge, and couldn't stand being away from

me. He wasn't focusing on his grades. St. Olaf had them grouped by the academic abilities and the ball players are not the ones who are in the A classes.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: Okay.

Speaker 1: Not much has changed.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: Oh, this is an old picture of him.

Speaker 2: Yeah, it's old. He's no longer living.

Speaker 1: Oh, okay. Is that a cigarette?

Speaker 2: Yes it is.

Speaker 1: It's very cute.

Speaker 2: He has over at my mom's house for New Year's. Anyway, he died a silent death. Anyway, it just seemed like I wanted somebody who had their head on straight, maybe older than I was, who was smarter than I was, and could lead me. I don't want to say I was looking for a daddy figure, but I wanted somebody with some intelligence. While he was gorgeous and loved me to death, I just didn't see him going anywhere. That's when I started seeing the person that I married, who was working and teaching, and who didn't meet my expectations either.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: But, you know, you find that out later. Anyway, I had to leave him. I divorced him and haven't remarried.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: Lived in Jersey with a guy, that I thought I was gonna marry, for 10 years. That's when I did most of my art. I retired from my job, did a lot of art up there, gained a lot of weight, really did get to see a lot of what ... Never was interested in New York because when I think New York, I'm thinking lots of people, I'm thinking crowds, I'm thinking a hustle. That's really what it amounts to. I see myself in the four corners. I like Colorado, I like New Mexico, I like Arizona. I feel akin to Native Americans, the whole spiritual thing, the crystals, and the chants and all.

New York wasn't what I was at all interested in, but it was where I needed to be at a time in my life when I was a student growing up. It seems like it comes in blocks.

People live in a different way. Their priorities are different ... It's a real hustle. You see people on the subway and everybody's whole family, just sleeping because you had to get out and do the traveling, and all. But I managed to go to a lot of museums that we ended up going to, show my work in New York a few times. It was good, it was good. But then that relationship died because I felt like I was putting more into it than he was. That's not, as far as energy goes, but everything else. I had to leave. I think that's my karma. I'm serious, I should check.

He helped a lot, in a lot of different ways. It happened at a time ... I arrived there in April of 2001, the same year that 9/11 happened. I lived very close to that. I could walk and just, from Jersey, look across the river and see Manhattan burning. It meant that I wasn't here for Katrina. I had just come here that July and Katrina happened that August. That was devastating.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: You know, if I look back you could see the connecting lines to why I met the people I met, why I was where I was at a certain time. I can actually look back and see that. I don't see where I'm going from here-

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: But, that's that.

Speaker 1: You have your son, are there other kids?

Speaker 2: I have a daughter.

Speaker 1: A daughter.

Speaker 2: A daughter who lives in Texas who has four children. Four absolutely gorgeous children, all very intelligent. My oldest grandson is a freshman in college, Beauty Science. He is awesome, they all are. She's a nurse and her husband, exactly what his title is, I don't know. He works at a Jewel Physics Lab and he's a supervisor there.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: He graduated from Xavier School of Engineering and she went back to school in Texas. She dated Ted Baker for a while and then she left. My son has two kids, a daughter and a son. He decided he wanted to do his own thing and he got a dumb truck. At the time, when he had the desire to have that was right after Katrina when there was a lot of building going on. People were talking about how much money they were making and he was looking for quick money. He finally gets to the front with everything kind of looking down, that's kind of what it was. Like I told both my kids, you make your decision and you live by those decisions that you make.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: Everybody's cool, everybody's healthy.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: My mother passed, I didn't mention that, back in '93. It's always been [inaudible 00:39:52] to lose your mom, but after I went back to school and graduated in '93 when I decided I wanted to do art. My daughter was graduating from high school at [inaudible 00:40:04] and she died July 3, 1993. That was that.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: You're not bored yet?

Speaker 1: No. I'm not bored yet. Let me just look at my questionnaire and make sure that I've covered everything.

Speaker 2: I'm gonna mention one more thing that also [inaudible 00:40:38]. Back in '67, when the Saints ... That first year. I was one of the girls that danced for the Saints.

Speaker 1: Oh, yeah?

Speaker 2: The first team-

Speaker 1: You were a Saint-sation?

Speaker 2: It's funny because they changed the name over the years, they changed the costumes over a period of time and now you've got women there. When I was there, it was high school. You were 16 to 21.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: That first year and second year, I was one of the girls.

Speaker 1: Nice.

Speaker 2: Of the 60 girls, there were only 10 blacks, or nine. I think nine. I was one of the ones that always danced every week because we would practice out over the lake front, by the naval base, this big open room. We would practice every week back there. Based on how you did, that's how they decided on which girls would dance that week.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: I always danced and I was always on the 50 yard line.

Speaker 1: Nice. So your only background and your only training was the fact that you were a majorette?

Speaker 2: My aunt was a dance teacher-

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: She, when I was three, I started going at her. That's really where I got my ballet, and my tap, and my modern and jazz right there. You went to dance?

Speaker 1: I did not. I was just thinking about the fact that it just never took. Maybe I was too young or it was the fact that ... I have cousins who grew up dancing and I went to maybe a handful of dance classes. I enjoyed it, but I think that I was really nervous about performing. I always had a bit of performance anxiety, and stage fright, and stuff like that. I thought the point or the goal was always to participate in some kind of end-of-the-year thing. That was enough to make me not want to do it. Between that and my sister deciding that it was too early in the morning for her, my mom was like, "Okay, fine." She didn't make us.

Speaker 2: You were glad too, right?

Speaker 1: Probably. She was my older sister, so whatever she wanted to do, I wanted to do, and vise versa.

Let me think. I did want to ask ... Oh, so I know you lived other places, but have you done much traveling out of the country or anything like that?

Speaker 2: Not out of the country, no. I wanted. California, I had an aunt who lived in Baldwin Hills.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: Another aunt who lived in ... I don't know what port she lived in. My dad's sister lived in ... One of my mother's sisters ... My sister lived out there. I've been to Colorado for vacations. New Mexico, oh God, I love New Mexico. Girl, I love it and Arizona. I've been to Florida. When I was dancing for the Saints, that second year, Nixon was running for president. They wanted the Saints girls to come and dance at the convention when they were people's [inaudible 00:44:30].

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: They shipped us out there to Miami Beach and we danced from hotel to hotel. I'll never forget, we were gonna do a shoot and they had [inaudible 00:44:46]. You probably don't remember him, about seven-something. They were gonna take our

picture when we were holding his hand and girl, all I could do ... When they snapped the picture, it started right now.

Speaker 1: Alright.

Speaker 2: That didn't happen as far as the pictures were concerned. Let me see, I'm trying to think. Finished with the Chicago one, there was this man I met, getting all my personal business. Sickle cell used to have a fundraiser here. This man, whose name I can't even think of right now, was there. Some of his little small stores would participate in the cost. As a result of meeting him, I went to Chicago with this man. What's his name? Richardson was his first name. This guy's an actor, they were making a movie. I was the one who moved fast for that. I've been getting around.

Speaker 1: I guess so.

Speaker 2: That was Chicago. Where else have I gone? I think that's about it because I went to New Mexico about eight times.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: I loved it there. I love Vegas. Last year, I went to Vegas. It is nothing like it was when I went in the '90s.

Speaker 1: Yeah, I haven't been there in a while.

Speaker 2: Oh my God. I don't have an interest in going there now. Back then, you walk and you went from casino to casino. I think the newest hotel when I was there might've been the Mirage. They were working on something with the knights.

Speaker 1: The knights?

Speaker 2: The knights, yeah. The knights on the horses. Anyway, did I go anywhere else? I don't know.

Speaker 1: For the sake of chronology, I did want to know when did you end up going back to school to get your degree in Fine Arts?

Speaker 2: '80-something. Let's say about '84? About that time.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: Around the time of the World's Fair in '84.

Speaker 1: Alright.

Speaker 2: Yeah. I wanted to wait until the kids were old enough and didn't need me all the time for their homework and everything. Plus, I wasn't working at that time. I worked before and so they would get a grant, having the kids and not working. I went to AA's, so I would go when I could, get a couple of classes per semester. I had to have my kids, pick them up and bring them to school and stuff. I worked around their schedule.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: To pick up.

Speaker 1: Okay. How long did that take?

Speaker 2: Let's see. '84 I went. About that ... It was almost 10 years. Let's say nine years because like I said, basically, I was started over.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: Because at that time, when I first started, it was in business. When I went back, I wanted to do Fine Arts. It was starting all over.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Do you have any of the ... I know you said you did some shows when you were in New York. Do you have old pictures or memorabilia from any of your exhibits?

Speaker 2: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Speaker 1: Wow. I would love to see some of that. You have to send me something.

Speaker 2: Okay, alright.

Speaker 1: Yeah, okay. I think for the most part, that's everything that I need. If I think of anything else that I want to ask or fill in any blanks, I will let you know. I'm gonna go ahead and email you the exit survey and really, it'll just be ... I'm trying to get a sense of, because this was the first-