RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH PATRICIA GRAHAM

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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BUSHKILL, PENNSYLVANIA

OCTOBER 26, 2015

TRANSCRIPT BY

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Molly Graham: This is an oral history interview with Patricia Graham. The date is Monday, October 26th, and we are in Bushkill, Pennsylvania. The interviewer is Molly Graham. I was worried we skipped over was you went to a year at community college.

Patricia Graham: Yes.

MG: Then a year at Rutgers-Newark.

PG: Yes.

MG: That is where you met Clement Price.

PG: Yes. It's sad. He recently died.

MG: I did not know if there was anything you wanted to add.

PG: Oh, no, I met Clement Price at the community college.

MG: Did he work there?

PG: [Yes]. He taught sociology there, and then he went over to Rutgers-Newark. [Editor's Note: In 1969, Dr. Clement A. Price (1945-2014) began teaching history at Rutgers-Newark, and in 2002, he became a Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor.]

MG: What was his advice to you again about Livingston?

PG: Oh, I didn't like Rutgers-Newark, because mostly I was the only black student in class or there was one other student. After having that experience at Essex County Community College, where professors were very warm and friendly because it was a small school, they knew us all personally, and then just transferring over to Rutgers in Newark, which was a little bit larger, it just felt kind of cold and impersonal. Clem Price was there by that time, when I transferred, so he said, "Well, you might want to try this new campus. Rutgers has a new coed campus in New Brunswick." That's how I got there.

MG: What was Newark like at that time in the post-riot period?

PG: Newark was still a small town. I lived in East Orange, which was even a smaller town, it seemed to me. All the streets were pretty. Everything was green, and people were very friendly. Going to Newark was like going to town, like this was where you went to town to go shopping, and there were still a lot of mixtures of different ethnic people and ethnic stores and shopping. I loved it. There was always activity to do, and there was music. There were always people running for political office that wanted to get college students involved, so we became pretty politically astute, even as students at Essex County when we were always marching for something or another.

MG: Had you participated in any civil rights movement protests or activities before you attended college?

PG: No, I was too young, no. I was a high school kid when a lot of that stuff was going on. We just watched the movement on television, whatever was televised.

MG: Did your course of study change when you transferred to Livingston?

PG: Yes. That's a good question, [laughter] because I was an English major at the community college [and an] English major at Rutgers-Newark. At the time, they required two languages. In middle school in Philly, I studied Russian because we had a teacher that taught us. It was a club. We played chess, and he taught us Russian. I studied Spanish and Italian in high school, because it was a lot of Italian students in the community and neighborhood. Then, when I got to Rutgers in Newark, they said, "Oh, you have to have two languages." They didn't offer Russian or Italian, so I was going to have to take French and continue Spanish. I thought, "No, I can't do another language," so I changed my major. [laughter] I went to Livingston, and they had urban planning. It was urban studies-urban planning, which was a brand new major. It was just a new discipline at that time. I thought anything urban would mean that after college I could get back to Philadelphia and work in the city. [laughter] All of the courses looked interesting, and they really, really were, for urban studies. Then, Livingston started to offer the black studies courses. They didn't have a major as of yet, but I took everything. They started women's studies courses, and I took everything. I think I had a minor in black studies, and I took whatever women's studies courses and participated in the conferences and stuff. Urban studies was a good fit for me.

MG: Yes, you were involved in the first women's history month conference.

PG: Yeah, that Sonia Sanchez [organized].

MG: Did you help organize it?

PG: Well, no, the professors gave us stuff to do, but pretty much the professors organized it. They had workshops for us to attend, and because we were in the classes, we had to attend workshops and be hostesses. It was a wonderful experience.

MG: You had been involved with some women's studies groups on campus.

PG: I was involved in courses that Sonia Sanchez taught, "The Black Woman, Part One" and part two. [laughter]

MG: Was she the professor who would cook dinner for the students?

PG: [Yes]. She offered a class, I guess it was in a dorm, I'm not sure, but it was a room that had a kitchen, and sometimes she would prepare dishes for us because it was a two-hour class. Often, she would invite speakers. Some of her speaker friends were chefs and wrote cookbooks,

like Vertamae Grosvenor. I'll never forget her. Of course, you'd buy the book, you'd get it autographed and the recipes. Some of the dishes that Sonia cooked for us I'm still cooking. I can still make some of those. They're so easy, some fish, healthy, healthy dishes. [Editor's Note: Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor (1937-2016) was a chef, writer and actress who was born in South Carolina, grew up in Philadelphia, and moved to Paris by herself at age nineteen. In 1970, Grosvenor wrote the autobiographical cookbook *Vibration Cooking, or The Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl*, in which she explores Gullah cooking and culture. For three decades, Grosvenor appeared as a commentator on National Public Radio.]

MG: There is something really unique about that. When you share a meal with someone, you connect with them differently. Were you making unique connections with the students in your class?

PG: Oh, my goodness, yes. The other professor, whose name I can't remember, but I know he was West Indian, who taught a black history course, we had to go to New York to do research, to the Schomburg, which was still in the old [library]. Now, I don't know, have you had a chance to go to the Schomburg Library? Oh, Molly. [Editor's Note: In 1926, writer and activist Arturo Alfonso Schomburg donated his collection of materials on African American history, the Diaspora and Africa to the Harlem branch of the New York City Public Library, founding the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.]

MG: I will now.

PG: You have to. It's in Harlem. It's a new building, but I think it's attached to where the old building used to be. It was this old building, you know these old stone buildings, and had all these nooks and crannies, and you're doing your research in there for the day. This professor lived in New York, so the class, maybe there were ten of us in the class, and he said, "Okay, afterwards we're going to my apartment and we're going to prepare a Caribbean dish." I still have the recipe. Now, when you and John come, then I'll make that for you. It's chicken and rice with pineapple and stuff.

MG: Oh, yum.

PG: Each student had something to do in the prep. We were all sous chefs. That was really wonderful for him to do. Then, he came back to the campus with us. I guess it was in the evening or something, but he rode back on the train to make sure we were all back safely to campus.

MG: Was that the "Research Techniques" class?

PG: Yes, thank you, yes.

MG: What was the purpose of that field trip?

PG: The purpose was to go to the Schomburg Library to do the research, because the Shomburg has a collection of African and African American history. It was probably one of the first libraries to have such a large collection of black history. The stuff that we were doing, my paper was on Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana. We couldn't have found that research anyplace [else].

MG: Tell me about that project. It was sort of timely in that when you had finished your research, he had passed away.

PG: Yeah, 1971 or '72, I believe. Yeah, he was in exile. That particular research was, I think the professor guided us and gave us choices of which country, what do you want to learn, and I wanted to know more about Africa and Ghana, which I had heard and met people but had never been there. Plus, [Ghana], during that time, politically, they were in turmoil and going through a lot of changes. I did as much research as I could at Livingston's campus and Rutgers College. Everybody had a unique project that was related to African or African American history, so we all had to go to the Schomburg to do our research. It was just a wonderful experience. We were just in awe to be there in the first place. That would be a great place for you to take one of your classes on a field trip. Today, it's a lot more sophisticated. They show films about different countries. Then, you can get a guided tour of how to do research there. They even offer research scholarships now, because one of my nieces was there for a whole semester on a research fellowship. She was a student at Hampton University down in Virginia, and she got to spend a whole semester in Harlem working there at the Schomburg doing research. It's a wonderful place. [Editor's Note: After leading the movement for independence from Great Britain, Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972) served as the first prime minister and president of Ghana.]

MG: I will put it on my list. It sounded like you got a little emotionally attached to the person you were researching. I was curious if you could say more about that.

PG: Oh, yes. I didn't know much about Kwame Nkrumah, and, doing the research, then I learned about his family, about his life, about growing up in Ghana, what brought him to become interested in leading his country. I don't remember as much of the details now [laughter], but I felt like I was so attached to this person. I like the idea of that kind of in-depth research. I think it also led me to have an interest in reading biographies because now I love to read biographies about people, and I'm sure it must have been because of that. Then, the day that I had to give my [oral presentation], you had to give an oral presentation as well as a paper, I think it might have been during that week or just within a few weeks of giving my paper, he died, and I'm standing there trying to talk about him and I'm tearing up. [laughter] Well, that I won't forget, I remember, because I felt like I knew him, and I grew so attached to that project. As you know yourself, when you're doing any kind of research, you do have to get emotionally involved I think to make the project good and meaningful, and it surely moved me.

MG: Was it also neat to go into Harlem at that time?

PG: Yes, because I had never been to Harlem, oh, yeah. We saw the restaurant [Twenty Two West] where Malcolm X would have lunch. We went to that famous bookstore [African National Memorial Bookstore] in Harlem. We bought some books, we did a lot in one day, I'll

tell you, and cooked dinner. [laughter] It was very exciting to go to Harlem, to answer your question, because at that time there were just mostly [African Americans]. There might have been some Latino people there but not too many. I don't know. I just remember it was like just African American people. The artists, we knew about the artists and the writers in the Harlem Renaissance that we had read about, all the famous people. For us and for me, it was like stepping on to a movie set or something, a place that I had read about where all these creative people had lived and worked. It was very exciting. I don't remember if my professor's apartment was in Harlem or in Manhattan. That, I don't remember. I just remember that it was a nice-sized apartment with a nice-sized kitchen to accommodate these ten to twelve students. He might have lived in Harlem. I'm not sure. Yes, it was a very exciting place to be at that time.

MG: It sounds like you had the kind of relationship with your professors that you were hoping to have and the reason you left Rutgers-Newark.

PG: That's right. I left Rutgers, because I had been spoiled at Essex County by those kinds of relationships. At Essex, the professors would have social things for their students. We had political groups, and we took field trips. So, I thought, "Well, that's what college is." [laughter] Then, I got to Rutgers-Newark and it wasn't, but when I got to Livingston, it was all over again. I felt very, very fortunate to be there, because, as you know, all those artists and writers and musicians and historians. It was amazing walking through the campus every day, seeing these famous people, and them taking time with you. The professors were very down to earth. Some of those relationships I was able to maintain or keep in touch with them after graduation.

MG: Yes, this is skipping ahead a little bit.

PG: Oh, okay.

MG: I was curious if their style influenced you as a professor later on.

PG: Oh, yes, yes. I think I stated in that little interview thing that I did [for the Livingston Alumni Association] I was able to teach courses that related to some of the courses that I had in college. The one course that I really liked "Women of the African Diaspora" that I developed for East Stroudsburg University, it was similar to "Black Woman, Part One" and part two, because the first paper, reaction papers, I had them write lots of reaction papers, and the first paper was "How Am I Like My Mother?" There were males that took "Black Women of the African Diaspora" because their girlfriends said, "Come on, you're going to take this class with me. I want you to learn something about women" or "about me" or something. Then, we had a minor at ESU in women's studies, so then you had different students that were taking the classes. Of course, the students said right away, "I'm nothing like my mother. I can't write this paper. What am I going to say?" but, of course, they were all like their mothers. [laughter]

MG: The kind of people who came as a guest lecturer or speaker or were professors then were really experts in their field. I am thinking of Nikki Giovanni.

PG: Nikki Giovanni was a professor there.

MG: So was Toni Cade Bambara.

PG: Yes, oh, my God, yeah.

MG: Which is incredible.

PG: [Yes]. Isn't it? And Sonia Sanchez, all in one campus, and they were friends. [laughter]

MG: Did you ever think what are they doing in New Jersey?

PG: No, because I knew that Rutgers was a progressive school, and Rutgers was becoming a more diverse university. Livingston College, I was told at the time, it's an experiment. Have you heard that? They were going to put all this cultural stuff there, and it would attract certain students who wanted this life experience. Oh, my God, all I can say is thank you, Rutgers, because it was incredible, an incredible experience, to wake up in the morning, walk out onto the campus, and here you're meeting people from different ethnic backgrounds, different races, and your professors, you didn't have a fear of, "Oh, the professor isn't going to understand me." There were resident directors of different ethnicities and different ages, some younger, some older. Some of the residence directors even had professions that were outside of what they're doing. I remember this one resident director was a professional photographer, and I guess he was doing this resident director work to live and do his photography. Some of them had other [jobs], or they might have been doctoral students. It was just an incredible experience. I loved undergrad school. [laughter]

MG: What about your life outside of the classroom? What were you doing on weekends? Where did you live on campus?

PG: Well, I commuted the first year. I was an only child from my parents' marriage. My mother lived in East Orange, and she was just very protective. Then, I showed her that I was doing very well and [had] good grades, so she let me live on campus. I only lived on campus for one year, and that was my senior year. Before that, she let me have an apartment, get my own apartment, but it was like two blocks from home. It was in Orange, New Jersey. One of my older classmates owned an apartment building, a three-story house. My mother let me get an apartment there, because it was someone she knew. Because I had never had the experience of living on campus, I gave up my apartment, and then I had a lot of courses and I had a double major. I was a secondary education and urban studies major. I had a double major, and I had lots of courses. I was trying to do a lot, so I lived on campus my senior year. It was incredible. Other things I was involved in [were] some political campaigns in my community in East Orange. Some of my mother's friends were running for office, so I got involved in those activities. Also, when I was a senior and a junior, I was a VISTA volunteer. That was when Sargent Shriver, Maria's dad, [laughter] I always refer to him as Maria's dad, started VISTA volunteers to work in the community. I was able to work in East Orange and work at a neighborhood education center and tutor students who had dropped out. That's what I did during my first year of being a VISTA volunteer, so I was kind of busy. [laughter] [Editor's Note:

During the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson, Sargent Shriver served as director of the Office of Economic Opportunity and initiated many programs as part of the administration's War on Poverty. One such program was the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), which was established in 1965 as a domestic counterpart to the Peace Corps. It is now called AmeriCorps VISTA.]

MG: It sounds like it. What would you do for fun?

PG: For fun, on Saturday nights, we would go into New York. The drinking age was eighteen, believe it or not, when I was a college student, in New York but not in New Jersey, so that's the only place we could go to have a drink. There were dance clubs, so we went to the dance clubs and you could have a drink in New York. Jimmy Hendrix was still alive. There was a place in the village [Greenwich Village], we'd go to the village, and they'd say, "Oh, that's his studio up there," or, "He's practicing up there." We went to the theater to see plays like *Hair* because we all dressed like those hippies at the time, so that was like one play I'll never forget. Then, we went to see, at the Fillmore East, we went to see bands like Chicago. I don't think we saw Santana. We might have seen Santana, but groups like that were very popular then. That's what we would do on Saturdays. On Fridays, I remember my roommate and I would always go out. When we got our checks for being VISTA volunteers, then we would go out on Fridays for dinner. We'd treat ourselves. We'd always to go to a Chinese restaurant. [laughter]

MG: Would you ever go to any fraternity parties on the Rutgers campus?

PG: No. That's because during my time in college, fraternities were on the decline. Black fraternities and sororities existed. During that time, they were on the decline because young people were asking for courses. They were asking for, "We want black history courses. We want Latino studies courses." Then, the Vietnam War was going on, so there were other kinds of protests or requests that students were making. Sororities were just a little self-serving to us, and fraternities, because we were a little bit more political [and] interested in the politics of the day.

MG: Yes, you talked a little bit last time about the Black Arts movement and the Black Power movement. Were there also a lot of anti-Vietnam War protests on campus?

PG: Yeah, there were, there were on campus.

MG: Did you participate in any of those?

PG: No, I didn't participate in any of those. I don't know why I didn't. I had an uncle, that's why, because I had an uncle who was in the military, and he was in Vietnam several times. I remember, my uncle, whenever we would see him, whenever he would come home, I was always taught to pray for Uncle George that he's safe. I always thought that whatever he was doing was good because he was one of our family heroes, as far as we were concerned. I didn't participate in any [anti-war protests]. Whenever he would come home, he had not married and had children at that time, so he would always bring me and his other nieces and nephews little

gifts from whatever country, Hawaii or whatever. We saw him and what he was doing in a different light.

MG: You mentioned you also majored in secondary education.

PG: Yes.

MG: What does that entail?

PG: To teach high school and middle school and then the urban studies, the double major, because I thought that I would, after college, be able to go back, this would get me a job in the city. I could teach or I could work in a community agency, like I had been doing when I was a VISTA volunteer. I was trying to prepare myself to have one profession or the other. [laughter] I ended up doing neither of those things.

MG: I thought it was interesting that your husband had worked for the Job Corps.

PG: Oh, yeah, yeah.

MG: Just for a little bit.

PG: Yeah, yeah, that's true, but I didn't know him then. [laughter] I mean, I didn't know him in college.

MG: Right.

PG: Because, you know, he was in Vietnam, my husband.

MG: I was going to ask you about that.

PG: I didn't know him. Yeah, he went to Vietnam.

MG: Was he in the Navy?

PG: Yes, he was in the Navy. I think he might have stopped college maybe in his junior year and went to Vietnam and then came back later and finished up.

MG: The other thing I wanted to ask you about in terms of Livingston was you were in the dance club.

PG: Oh, that was at Essex County College. [laughter]

MG: What would you guys do, just get together and dance?

PG: We did hippie dances to songs like [The 5th Dimension's] "Aquarius" and stuff like that, and we danced in community programs and for fundraisers, that kind of modern dance, which is really fun. At Rutgers, I know they had African dance classes, but some things, because I was a VISTA volunteer, some things like that I couldn't do. I wasn't free until weekends, because I had to work as a VISTA. It was like two days a week some weeks, three days a week some weeks, and I had to drive to the community place where I did the tutoring. Some of those things I didn't do.

MG: Is there anything I forgot to ask you about in terms of Livingston and your experience there?

PG: Well, you asked me about the social life, the classes. Oh, there is another good thing that I loved, and probably now other colleges do it. During exam week, in preparation for exams, they would have, in each dorm, we would have a study room, like on the lower level in the basement or something. Yeah, it was in a basement. They'd have a work-study student as a monitor monitoring the study lounge, and they would have coffee and donuts. Guess what time it would open up. Ten p.m. at night and it would stay open until like one a.m., something like that. Molly, believe this, this was the hip thing to do. You were hip. You had to stay in your own dorm, and my dorm was coed. The guys would come, but you could wear your pajamas. You had to wear a housecoat and pajamas and bedroom slippers and bring your books. They had coffee and pastry, and I think it was free. I don't believe that we paid anything. Then, you're down there studying until one a.m. in the morning. People would ask each other, "Are you going to the late night study," or something, "tonight?" "Oh, yeah, I'll meet you there." It was a very hip thing to do. I wonder if they still do that. [laughter] I doubt it.

MG: It sounds like fun.

PG: It was the most fun thing at night studying, because many students were busy with classes, some students had jobs, I was a VISTA volunteer, and I couldn't always get to the library at two o'clock in the afternoon, so it was ideal. I think in each one of our dorms, they had this late night study. Maybe we paid ten cents, something like that, for the donut and coffee. That was a thing that these professors or administrators, really, they tapped into our psyche somehow. Whoever the resident directors were probably came up with something like this, because they would see students studying late at night. Then, it became an organized activity, and it was hip. Let me see, we talked about the professors and the library. I think aesthetically the campus was always in transition. New stuff was being built. The one student activities center was very nice because it was the place where they would have speakers and musical concerts, like jazz musicians they brought a lot, well-known ones to Rutgers. I saw a lot of well-known jazz musicians. The student activities center was like the hub of activity on the campus, which it should be on any campus. Then, we had our dorms. I don't remember that we had too many administration buildings, but it was always in transition. Another thing that we used to enjoy doing is we could go to Rutgers College, which was all men, or Douglass, all women at the time, and have dinner, and they could come to our campus for dinner. We would, a few times a month, a bunch of us would get dressed up in dresses. When you went to Douglass, you had to look dressed like a proper lady, because they had tablecloths [laughter] and real cutlery. That was the time we

dressed up like ladies. Then, when we picked the nights that we're going to Rutgers College, we dressed sexy because that was the all-boy campus. You could dress, I think you could wear jeans. Now, you know, I'm not really sure. Maybe we didn't wear jeans, but we would always dress nice to go to both campuses and sexy for Rutgers College campus I remember. [laughter] That was a real nice feature that they allowed you to mingle at dinnertime [on] different campuses. You just had to show your ID and stuff. Of course, the kids from the other campuses would come to our affairs at Livingston's campus, because it was coed and they had a lot of social things at Livingston.

MG: I have been interviewing some women who attended Douglass in the 1960s and 1970s, and all of them have said, "I was one of three African American women who attended at the time."

PG: Yeah.

MG: How were the demographics different at Livingston?

PG: Well, there were students from other ethnicities. I remember there were African Americans. There were Latino students. My neighbor was Puerto Rican, the room next door. She would make Puerto Rican coffee, and she would wake up everybody on the floor. The girls lived on one side of the hall, and the men lived on the other side of the hall. We were on the same floor; that was an experiment. I remember there were, you know, I don't know the percentage, but definitely there were more students of color at the Livingston campus than any of the other campuses. I think they went there because of the courses that were being offered and because they were told this was a cultural experiment. We were told who's teaching there, the professors, and they had well-known African American and Latino professionals. One of my urban planning professors, the one about community and something, was a lawyer. He had us doing various kinds of research projects in the community that had to do with the community and the legal systems, any kind of legal issues, we all did research about legal issues. He was a Latino pretty well-known lawyer in New Jersey. I don't know which city he lived in, but he was [from New Jersey]. I think Livingston attracted students from different ethnic backgrounds because of who was teaching there, and people thought that other students from other races and cultures would be there.

MG: What was your graduation day like?

PG: Beautiful, sunny, it was an outdoors graduation, but I don't think they took graduation pictures and a yearbook. I tried to find that out from the current alumni director, and he said he only remembers, I think they have a yearbook from 1974 or something. There were a lot of things that they didn't do that were traditional. Graduation day was beautiful. Our parents and families got to see all of these wonderful professors that we had. I don't remember that we had anything called family day, like all campuses do now. Then, there was a nice reception for the families afterwards. I remember that. My parents had a party for me, but that was back home in East Orange. I remember it was a sad day, because many of us wanted to live and work in New Brunswick. I actually did apply for some jobs in New Brunswick, because we weren't ready to leave. I know several of my classmates thought, "We like it here." It's sort of like, have you

heard of that Penn State effect? Some of the kids that go to college up there at Penn State, it's its own city, as you know. Then, they love it, because they're so involved with the community, and the community is the college. When it's time for you to go sometimes, you're not ready. They don't wean you off properly. [laughter] Rutgers, they treated us so well, we weren't ready to go yet. [laughter] I remember that about graduation.

MG: You went to graduate school that fall.

PG: No. Was it is '73 did I start graduate school? Oh, no, wait, it sure was, because I graduated in '74. I had forgotten that, it was so fast. Yeah, in Philadelphia.

MG: Oh, okay.

PG: Yeah. Antioch College, the main campus is in Yellow Springs, Ohio, but they had a Philadelphia campus, a graduate school of education.

MG: What went into that decision to apply to graduate school?

PG: Well, for some reason I thought whatever I wanted to do, I would need a master's degree, you know, that it was a good idea to get a master's degree, maybe because many of my professors had doctorates and masters, so I always knew that. One of my friends from elementary school, a childhood friend, she had come back from college in Ohio also. She was in college, undergrad, in Ohio. We didn't get a chance to go to college together. Oh, I wanted to ask you a question.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

PG: My elementary school friend Sheila and I decided, "Well, we're going to go to graduate school together," so we investigated. The University of Pennsylvania had a college of social work. She had become an elementary school teacher in Philadelphia. We thought maybe we wanted to do social work, because we both liked helping people and I had my background [as] a VISTA volunteer and urban planning stuff. We went to the University of Pennsylvania, and their program was a two-year program. However, they said, "Well, you cannot work," because they give you work as part of the program. Then, we said, "Okay, forget that program," because Sheila was already an elementary school teacher in Philadelphia, and I had a job working at a residential school for girls. I thought, "I like having a job." I wanted to go to graduate school part time. Then, Temple University, we looked at their grad school, it's so funny how we chose what we did. We thought we'd both do reading, "We'll be reading teachers." [laughter] Temple's program was two years and they give you teaching assignments in certain school districts as part of your [course of study], so you couldn't really keep your job, same thing. Then, there was Antioch, and Antioch had part time. It was designed for people that were teachers, working as teachers. In Philadelphia, that's I guess how they were branching out into other cities. They had counseling and they had special education and they had other teacher ed programs. Sheila chose one of the other teacher ed master's programs, and I chose the counseling because it was in line

with the work that I was currently doing at the residential school for girls and what I had done as an undergrad. That's how I chose my master's degree.

MG: That was the Good Shepherd School where you worked.

PG: Yes.

MG: Tell me about that school. Who were the students?

PG: Oh, the students were adjudicated delinquents. It was a residential school for girls that was run by the nuns, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, [and] was located in Germantown, Pennsylvania. You were doing social work. My title was assistant group leader. I wasn't a leader, because I was just out of undergrad. I worked with students doing small counseling groups. Everything was self-contained. Their classes were right there on the grounds. It was a beautiful setting there. The classes were on the grounds, and then after classes, then we did group activities with them and monitored them in the residential setting. We took field trips. We took them camping, you know, all the social activities in the small group and individual work with students. They had a resident social worker that worked there. It was perfect. Sometimes I had to work on Saturdays, but the nuns, after I started grad school, they adjusted my work schedule to fit my school schedule. They were very, very good to me, those nuns. That desk back there, that antique desk, because I worked at two different schools, [that] was in one of their suburban schools. They had a whole room full of antiques, and I asked, what were they doing, were they having a sale? They said, “Would you like to buy one of these desks?” [from] a roomful of antique desks. I picked that one, and the nun said, "Well, how much money do you have in your pocket?" I had no idea of the value. Well, I only had like three dollars. She said, "Well, give me three dollars for church," or two dollars, whatever, for church. I called up my father, and I told him to borrow uncle's station wagon and come right away and get the desk before they changed their minds. [laughter] That's how I got that antique desk. I'll show you the inside before you leave. [laughter]

MG: What was your coursework like at Antioch?

PG: My master's degree was in counseling, and the coursework was individual counseling, how to do family counseling, group sessions. We also had to participate in a, not an encounter group, but something similar, and they brought us up here to the Poconos at one of the resorts. We were up here for a week, and we had professors that were from Temple University that specialized in leading group therapy kinds of sessions. They divided the classes up. We were divided into small groups of like twenty or so, and we had different group experiences. A lot of it was hands-on, because you had to participate in the group therapy as well. It was all about how to do family therapy [and] choosing a certain philosophy for counseling that you would embrace. Then, we had to follow the techniques of one particular theory of counseling, and we were all trained in this one particular theory. It was called the [Robert] Carkhuff method for counseling. It's a method that I used when I went to work at Widener University after graduating, and I used it here [at] ESU when I was doing counseling.

MG: What does it mean?

PG: Well, the Carkhuff method is a technique for counseling that goes a little beyond, you've heard of Carl Rogers, and you know how you focus on how a person is feeling and focus in on your feelings. The Carkhuff method focuses in on your feelings, how you're feeling, if you were the person getting counseling, but also gives you maybe three other steps to take you past just learning how to express your feelings, but also how to identify the next steps to help yourself advance through the problem. I guess that's a simple way to [explain it]. The basis of it is Rogers, as opposed to Freudian therapy, where you blame everything on your mom and your dad. [laughter] The Carkhuff method is focused on you and your life experiences and your feelings and working through them and learning how to solve problems for yourself. We loved it, because we used to go around identifying each other's feelings and say stuff like, "You feel angry," "You feel sad," "You feel …" [laughter] It's [a] really good [technique]. They had something called the pie chart, which was the P-I-E-[S], where you focus in on the physical, the intellectual, the emotional and the social and looking at the whole person is what they would teach us as part of your counseling. They taught us to use the pie chart, P-I-E-S, as a way of choosing your social friends and maybe even someone you would date to see if you were physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially compatible. If you're only compatible in one area, then that's not a good relationship [for] you, but maybe three areas or two areas, you would know that that's a good way to judge your friends.

MG: I wanted to ask you more about the Good Shepherd School and the girls who were there. What life experiences did they have before they ended up in the school?

PG: Many of them had sad life experiences, because some of them I think had committed some crime. If it was a crime, it might have been something minor. Some of them didn't fit in their communities. I think some were children that might have been in a foster home and didn't fit with the foster family. Then, in the court system, they were delinquents because of things they might have done in their own public schools or in their community. They weren't in jail, but they were adjudicated delinquents so they had to be in this residential setting for maybe two years or so. To help them to go on to their life after, they were earning their high school diplomas, because the nuns were the teachers. They might have had one lay teacher, but the nuns basically were the teachers. They only had a few lay workers also. I was one of four lay workers. I was the only black person, but some of the children were black. I'm sure they felt they needed to have a person of color, because some of those kids were black. They weren't all Catholic, but many of them were Catholic. They had to practice the Catholic faith while they were there. I imagine maybe they were all Catholic, I don't know, but they had to practice the Catholic faith while they were in this residential setting because they had to go to the church and everything.

MG: You grew up in the Baptist church, right?

PG: I grew up as a Baptist, yeah.

MG: Was that a conflict at all?

PG: No, that's a good question. We were both Christians. I respected their religion, and they respected mine. No, it was never a conflict. These nuns were just too sweet. [laughter] They were wonderful people. I didn't attend the Catholic school.

MG: Do any of these young girls stand out to you?

PG: Oh, yeah, there were some. In the evenings, these young girls, after they had done their homework, and that was something that people like me, the assistant group leader, would monitor that they're doing their homework, they [could] have so much time they could watch television. We had to recreate the residential environment like it was their living room, and it was just a small group of girls in each unit. There might have been, I don't know, maybe fifteen girls in my unit of living area. These schools were in mansions, these Catholic residential schools, so we had a lot of space. Some of the girls had talents. I taught them to play chess, because I learned in middle school, so we would have chess classes. They taught me how to crochet. Some evenings, when we were having their family time, we were crocheting blankets for everybody in the family, because the girls taught me how to do that. They were very appreciative of anything that you did for them. Yeah, some of them stuck out. When they finished the residential school, we were hoping that some would go on to college, but I wasn't involved in that aspect of it. Some of them expressed wanting to go to college. They were not from [the] Philadelphia area. They didn't send those girls there, because that would have been their environment. They were from places like Washington, D.C. and Virginia and Maryland, other places.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

PG: Does that answer your question? Some of those girls had to return to their communities. You only hope that things would work out well for them when they returned home. Some of them used to write us little cards and notes once they returned back to their home settings.

MG: Does anything else stand out to you about your graduate education at Antioch, any teachers there?

PG: Oh, they were wonderful. I'm telling you, I had a spoiled education. [laughter] It was a small setting, because it was a branch campus, so it wasn't large. The professors were very attentive to us at Antioch, and you had the feeling that your teachers really wanted you to succeed. They even had their own career center, like your adviser was also your counselor, and we each expressed what kind of experiences we wanted. After getting our master's degree, my goal was always I wanted to become a college counselor. When different announcements would come through the graduate school, our counselor there would direct it to the student who expressed [interest]. There were two jobs, Widener University and East Stroudsburg University, that came through, and I applied for both. Widener interviewed me, which is right outside of the Philadelphia area, Widener interviewed me for two interviews. Back then, you'd come for a first, and if you were in the finalist pool, you'd have to come back for a second. Then, East Stroudsburg called me after Widener had accepted me for the job, so I told the East Stroudsburg

people, "Well, I'm sorry I just accepted [Widener's offer]." I remember the director saying, "Oh, well, okay, we'll probably see you at some of the conferences," not knowing that, lo and behold, in less than three years, I would be coming up here to work, forever. [laughter]

MG: You were an academic counselor at Widener.

PG: Yes, yes.

MG: Did that mean helping students find courses?

PG: At Widener, it was a special program. I don't know, do they have these at Rutgers now? It was an Educational Opportunity Program for students that had to attend the pre-college summer program, and then they were admitted in the fall. That's the program that I was a counselor in at Widener. Also at ESU, in the beginning, that's what I was doing, the same. Yeah, so it was personal counseling, academic advising, and I also had to teach a study skills course in the summer program there at Widener.

MG: Did you enjoy that work?

PG: Oh, that was what I had dreamed of doing. I thought that it would take me many years. I thought you had to work your way up, five years, work in a public school. I got there faster than I thought, so I loved every bit of it. Yes, it was wonderful.

MG: Was it during this time period that you met your husband, or was that later?

PG: I was working at Widener, but I met him because [of] the counselor that was working here at East Stroudsburg. I met her in Chicago at a conference. She invited me to come up, because we were doing similar types of counseling. She said, "Oh, when we get back to Pennsylvania, in the spring, I'm having a conference for counselors," and, "Why don't you come up and stay overnight?" She invited a bunch of us. I said, "Oh, I'll come to the conference, but I'm not staying overnight, because there's nothing to do up there in the Poconos." As a child, did I tell you that I used to come to summer camp here? I knew a little bit about the Poconos. She said, "Oh, no, there are places. We'll go to dinner after the conference, stay over, you and this other counselor from Philadelphia." I thought, "Okay, I'll stay over." I did, and Rick, that's how I met him. He was working here.

MG: He was at East Stroudsburg at the time.

PG: Yeah, he was working in the admissions office. He was one of the people that went out to dinner. Her name was Pat also. [laughter] He was one of the people that went out to dinner with us. Then later, she had a party, and I came back up again. I saw him a second time, and then we started communicating. That's how I met him.

MG: Did that play a role in your decision to come work here then?

PG: Oh, yeah, because he proposed marriage while I was still working at Widener. When he proposed, it's really funny, Molly, he proposed [at] Thanksgiving time, and I thought, "Oh, okay, that would be great, we could get married next spring." In his mind, he was thinking that he would find a job in my area, the Philadelphia area, because Chester was like twenty minutes from Philadelphia, because he had never really lived in a big city. Do you have a napkin?

MG: Yes, it's in my lap, thank you.

PG: That was our plan. He was going to come to the Philadelphia area, and he was going to start looking for a job. Then, all of a sudden, my friend Pat, who had the counseling job here, was offered a job in Minnesota. I think I'll let you take the amount that you might like of this spaghetti salad.

MG: Okay, this is so wonderful.

PG: I'll put it over here. Pat was offered this position. Do you need bread?

MG: No, no, I've got plenty, between the pasta and the Danish. This is so sweet, thank you so much.

PG: Oh, you're welcome. I love your company.

MG: This is fun for me. [laughter] This looks so yummy.

PG: The dean at this university was leaving, at East Stroudsburg, and he offered Pat a position to come to Minnesota with him, to the University of Minnesota, and she would get a good job in administration. Pat called all of her counselor friends and asked us to apply for her position at East Stroudsburg, because she really loved the college and the students. I was dating Rick, but they didn't know that he had proposed. I thought, "Okay, I'll apply, but I'm not going to tell him." She said, "Well, don't tell him," because I didn't want him to think I was just trying to get closer to him by applying for this job at East Stroudsburg. I didn't tell him, based on my friend's advice, "Well, don't tell him." Lo and behold, they called me up for an interview. Then, I have to tell him. He said, "Oh, okay." [laughter] It was funny. I remember him saying, "Well, you have to come for the interview." I didn't even give you a spoon for that.

MG: No, no, it's fine.

PG: They were going to offer me about five thousand dollars more than I was making at Widener, because private schools, as you know, tend to pay less than public schools. He thought, "Well, you have to go for the interview, and if you get the job," he said, "then we'll stay for a few years." [laughter]

MG: How long were you here ultimately?

PG: For thirty-six [years]. [laughter]

MG: You did take a break for your Ph.D.

PG: Yeah, I went part time for my Ph.D. UMass [University of Massachusetts] had a weekend program, where you'd go up there like two weekends a month. That was amazing. That's basically why I chose that school, because it worked out so well.

MG: Well, tell me a little bit more about your husband and his background.

PG: I called him a Renaissance man. He was in Vietnam. Do you need a beverage?

MG: No, I am fine.

PG: He was in Vietnam as a medic in the Navy, so he saw a lot of tragedy. While we were married, he worked as an admissions officer. Then, he taught English at the Job Corps, and then he worked for IBM in sales. Then, he went to the Centers for Disease Control and worked in that field with children's immunization, and I think they liked his background because of being in the service, being a medic. His last job was assistant director of children's immunization in Richmond, Virginia.

MG: Did he move down there?

PG: Yeah, that was his last job down there.

MG: You had started to say earlier that he had proposed around Thanksgiving and you thought maybe you would have a spring wedding, but you got married in January.

PG: Oh, yeah. Shortly after Thanksgiving is when I applied for the job at East Stroudsburg, when my friend was leaving the university and she asked all of her friends in counseling to apply. Just before the Christmas holidays, they called me for an interview, and then within a week or so after that, they offered me the job and said, "We'd like for you to start at the end of January when spring semester starts." My mother was in Jamaica, so I had to call Mommy and say, "Well, they want me to start at this job up there." Of course, during that time, you couldn't come up here and live with your boyfriend. My parents would kill me. Rick and I discussed it, and we said, "Well, okay, let's just change the wedding plans and get married in January." I call my mother. She's in Jamaica visiting family. She said, "Oh, my God, now I have to come home and change the wedding from March to January," and she did. She couldn't get our family church in Jersey in East Orange. She had to have this brand new church, which was much nicer, a branch new church that was round. Then, she had to have the reception at her house, because the hall that she had booked, they couldn't do it in January. We got married on a Saturday, and we didn't go on a honeymoon, because that Monday I had to start work at East Stroudsburg. [laughter] Rick had rented us a house up in Mount Pocono, which I had never seen it. It was so much he had to do by himself. We rented the house. He had moved my furniture, some from Chester and some from Philadelphia from my father's house, some of my stuff, my piano and stuff. We didn't come to our house until Sunday. The water pipes were frozen when we got

there, because it was January and it's up in Mount Pocono in this development, where these chalet-type houses were. The water pipes were frozen. [laughter] We had to spend the first week of marriage living in a hotel. I had to go to work, and I was so sad. Then, my boss said, "Oh, just take some days off. You and Rick, go find another house to rent. Don't keep waiting for that landlord to unthaw the pipes." Then, we found another house to rent, which was cuter than the first one. They were all cute to me, because they were in the mountains. Rick was raised in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. His family is from Carlisle, Pennsylvania and Milton, Pennsylvania, which is up near Bloomsburg. That's where his dad is from. They were from the small towns.

MG: Was your first position the counselor position, counselor-coordinator?

PG: At Widener?

MG: No, at East Stroudsburg.

PG: Yes.

MG: What were you doing?

PG: I was doing similar work that I was doing at Widener, academic and personal counseling with students in a particular program that attended a pre-college program.

MG: Did you expect to make the transition to professor when you started?

PG: Well, yeah, because in all of the Pennsylvania state universities where these Educational Opportunities Programs existed, counselors had faculty rank. That's why I guess the pay was higher than being staff at Widener. When I came here, I was an instructor because I had a master's plus six credits or something. I took some credits at Temple because I was thinking I would get my doctorate there and I took maybe six credits. I was in rank as an instructor for two years, and then I applied to be an assistant professor because all you needed was six credits beyond your master's. You had to be in rank only three years at each level at that time when I was going up the rank, but now they have to be in rank five years.

MG: How did you develop your courses?

PG: Oh, that's a good question. [laughter] Because I was at ESU for a long time, I was very active in the Pennsylvania Counseling Association. I had been president of the Pennsylvania Counseling Association at some point. Multicultural counseling was [a big trend] in the late ‘80s, and [there] was a certification that they were offering to counselors to be able to understand concerns of different ethnicities. That was a big trend. I participated in a lot of professional conferences, and I also got the certificate from the American Counseling Association in multicultural counseling. Then, at one point, I was teaching an adjunct course at the University of Scranton in multicultural counseling. When our president at ESU, East Stroudsburg University, wanted to develop a department that would offer ethnic studies courses and so on, he

asked me to chair the department and be involved in developing the courses. I had one colleague in the department, he was Latino, he was from Chile, and he had been teaching for fifteen years or so in the modern languages department. Then, he developed courses in Latino culture. That was only maybe the last six years of my working at ESU.

MG: What else stands out to you from your career there?

PG: I was always constantly involved in and chaired a few committees that brought diversity programs to campus. Those things are very dear to my heart because I always felt [laughter] like my students here are being cheated. They don't know what my educational background was like. At Rutgers, I was exposed to so much culture, and I always felt that anything that I did was trying to give these students a glimpse of what it was like at Rutgers University for a student to be in the center of cultural activities. What we learned in the classroom and the social things that we were exposed to, it was just wonderful. At ESU, I also had the opportunity to chair a committee called the Frederick Douglass Institute for Intercultural Studies. That was a program that recruited diverse graduate students to ESU and gave them internships and graduate assistantships. By serving on that committee and chairing that committee, we were able to bring speakers and programs. We'd always take a field trip. Every other year, we would go to visit the Frederick Douglass House in Washington, D.C. Have you ever done that?

MG: I will add it to the list. You are going to keep me busy.

PG: Add that to the list.

MG: I am supposed to go to D.C. soon, so I will.

PG: Please go. You can look it up online. It's preserved by the [National Park Service]. It'll just blow your mind. Frederick Douglass had been a slave and then became a wealthy man and a leader and somebody that presidents would consult with. Being a part of the Frederick Douglass Institute and then to be the chair of the committee, for two or three terms I think I did, that was really a good experience. It was awesome. That's why I developed the course, the Frederick Douglass course, to correspond with the institute.

MG: Yes, I was curious about that. What is there about Frederick Douglass that maybe I would not know about? What could you tell me?

PG: Well, I could tell you one thing that might surprise you. Did you know he was also involved in the women's movement? He was a really big supporter of women's issues. Some of the women in the suffragette movement even stayed at his home. When you take the tour, then they'll show you, "Oh, this is where So-and-So slept in this room." He was very involved in not just equal rights for men of color, he was involved in equal rights for women of all colors. His speeches, some of his speeches, Molly, were some of the most beautiful speeches you'll ever read in your life. This one speech, he was invited to, and I can't remember exactly where it was, I've got a lot of stuff upstairs in my study, where he was asked to speak on the Fourth of July. They thought, the people that invited him, "Well, he's a free black man now, and he's probably so

grateful to be free. He's traveled around." He traveled in Europe. He traveled in Ireland. He spoke in Ireland. He spoke in England. At some points, he had to get away. He had to leave the country for a while. I think it's entitled, "What to me is the Fourth of July?" If you get a chance, look that one up. [Editor's Note: On July 5, 1852, Frederick Douglass delivered a speech called "The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro" in Rochester, New York at Corinthian Hall.]

MG: I will.

PG: Oh, my God, that speech just blows your mind. His speeches will make you cry, about freedom and what it means to be a free person and for someone to have a quiet freedom the way he had to. His contemporaries during that time period were also interesting to read about, because they were his friends, Harriet Tubman, those were his friends.

MG: What else about your teaching experience or being up here in the Poconos did we skip over?

PG: The friendships, the lifelong friendships that I've made here. I have friends that are like family here. [You and] John will find that you're going to make friends right there in that community, and sometimes your friends become your family, the people that you're close to. I had thought that when I retire that I would sell this house right away and live in South Carolina part of the time and someplace else in the north, maybe the Philly area part of the time, but that is not so. I'm so attached to [this area]. Some of my friends were my colleagues here, and I still do a lot of social things in the community. When I go away, especially in traveling in other countries, and when I come back, it's like, "Well, I'm home." It took me a while to realize that, because I've lived here longer than any place in my whole life. I did live in Philly until age twelve or thirteen and New Jersey the years in college, and I was born in the South. We lived there for three years. This is where I've lived, and I'm familiar with it. I want to keep this house and stay here for a while and then also my house in South Carolina. That's where I was born and have lots of family. I think this place became my home, and I guess I like it. [laughter] I'm still on committees. Well, just one, yeah, one committee, but it's a golf tournament committee at the college. The new president, we have a new president, the first female president at ESU, I meet with her from time to time. I still go to the basketball games when I'm in town, and, with a few other people, we cook dinner for the basketball team at the end of their season, no matter what kind of season they had. They're an excellent team and they're always winning championships, but that's not why we do it. We do it because we want to. I do that. That's in April, we cook dinner for the team, like a home-cooked meal, and have it off campus at one of the professor's homes that lives near campus. The university named something in my honor the semester I retired. Fraternities and sororities have step shows, so this was the first time they were establishing one through the student affairs program. They named the step show Patricia Graham Annual Step Show. It's been going for three years now. I go back to campus for that also. I have a scholarship at ESU in my mother's name, because my mother was a nurse. When she died in 2000, I established a nursing scholarship in her name, and they always invite me to the nursing pinning ceremony, which is off campus at a restaurant. The nursing pinning ceremony is when they give the nursing scholarship. Those are some of the things that I'm tied to with the university.

MG: You were involved in some other organizations, Planned Parenthood.

PG: Oh, yeah, I was on the board of directors. Well, as you know, being a college professor, you have to serve on community boards, and so I was on a number throughout the years. As you apply for promotion, you have to have all of those things, your service to the community and service on campus also.

MG: Can I ask when your husband passed away and what happened?

PG: Yeah, I don't talk too much about it, but he was ill.

MG: I am sorry.

PG: Thank you. He was young. As far as I'm concerned, he was young.

MG: Yes, that is hard. You were also involved in the Monroe County Children's Art Alliance. Was that another sort of service-oriented job?

PG: That was an alliance that some of the community leaders, like some of the lawyers and businesspeople, established this program to do programming for children, to bring organized children's programs, like puppeteering or plays and children's theater, to Stroudsburg, to Monroe County. They established this program to do that, and I was on that program for a while, on that board.

MG: Then, in the 1990s, you were named president of the Pennsylvania Counseling Association.

PG: [Yes].

MG: That sounds like a big deal.

PG: [Yes]. [laughter] It was. I had been a member since I first got my master's degree in 1974. I was always involved in the Pennsylvania Counseling Association. I was mentored throughout all those years by people that were active members. I had been a member since 1974, and it just seemed like I grew up in that organization. The duties involved [were] chairing the meetings and hosting a conference. The year that I hosted a conference was very exciting for me because one of my mentors was very good friends with the president of the American Counseling Association, who just happened to be a Philadelphian, so he was reachable. We could reach him and say, "Come speak at our conference." I didn't know him personally, but one of my mentors in the state did. We were able to get the president of the American Counseling Association for my conference. [laughter] I always thought I had the best conference. [laughter] You grew up [watching] *Sesame Street*. Well, you would know the woman, Susan, who was the mother, the African American woman, [Loretta Long] was a friend of mine. I met her through a neighbor that lives right here in this development. Susan from *Sesame Street* was a speaker at my

conference. [laughter] To me, it was a joy planning that conference, and I still have the brochure of that conference because the speakers were great. At the end of the conference, that's sort of your final duty of your two years or whatever as president. I was always pleased with that, how my term ended. [laughter]

MG: Did Livingston have reunions over the years?

PG: Yeah, I think.

MG: Did you attend any?

PG: No. I think they just started having Livingston reunions. They would invite you to come to Rutgers stuff, but it's only been a few years that I've noticed because they've reached out to me via email. I'm on the email list; I get everything now. But, no, I'd like to attend. Some of the things that they've had conflicted with Homecoming here, when I was still working, but I do want to go to some of their things.

MG: How did you feel when, I think was in 2006 or 2007, Rutgers enveloped Livingston and it became a campus, not a school?

PG: I don't know. I thought the students were going to miss out somehow. I didn't know how good politically it would have been for the school.

MG: How did you find that portal where you first expressed interest in participating in this project?

PG: Oh, that is so interesting. Through email, the alumni association president reached out to us and asked for alums to develop their personal stories about what they enjoyed about Rutgers and Livingston. I did mine, and then he contacted me and said, "Well, you should be in touch with Molly Graham." I thought maybe she was somebody that he thought I would know. [laughter] He says, "She's doing this history thing. May I refer you to her?" I said, "Oh, okay, go ahead." That's how I got involved in this project.

MG: I have gotten to the end of my questions, but I want to make sure there is not anything we have skipped over or missed or if there is anything else you want to talk to me about.

PG: No, it's just an honor to be asked to participate.

MG: Well, it is really my pleasure, and it has been such a treat to meet you and get to know you and hear all your stories.

PG: Well, thank you, thank you.

MG: You have fed me so well.

PG: It's made me feel more connected to the University.

MG: Good.

PG: When I get the phone calls from the students asking, “Will you make a contribution?” or something, and I think in the past I might have made a small contribution because I went to school there and I contribute to all three schools, and it makes me feel more connected now that I've met you and I've heard about this great project. Plus, your department, I think it's wonderful work. That's really amazing what you're getting to do.

MG: Well, thank you, I think it is amazing when we get to interview people like you.

PG: Thank you so much.

MG: Well, I will turn this off, and I want to thank you for all the time you have given me.

PG: Thank you.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Transcribed by Saskia Kusnecov
Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 3/12/18