

Tulane Talking to New Orleans Project
Betty Coldman Interviewed by Caroline Lind
November 13th 2009
Transcribed by Caroline Lind

(0:48)

CL This is Tulane Talkin over New Orleans¹. I am Caroline Lind. It is November Friday the 13th 2009. I am at _____, New Orleans, Louisiana 70113 and the phone number is _____, I'm sorry, _____. And your full name please?

BC Rosemary Coldman.

CL And do you have any nickname's?

BC Betty. My middle name. They like to call me Betty by my middle name. Nickname, Mrs. B for the club.

CL For the Prince of Wales?

BC Lady Wales. I'm a ...I'm, there's a Prince of Wales and a Lady Wales. I'm a Lady Wales. And, it's Mrs. B.

CL Mrs. B.

BC Mm hmm.

CL Are they're other Mrs. B's, or just you?

BC Just me.

CL Just you. And, place and date of birth.

BC Eleven, twenty-nine, forty-four. New Orleans, Louisiana.

CL And what neighborhood?

BC The lower nine I grew up in.

CL And then when did you decide to move over here?

BC Well, because of the hurricane. I'm only here until they finish building my house in the Lower Nine. So I'm just temporarily here.

¹ I misspoke during the interview. This should be "Tulane Talkin' to New Orleans."

CL And, then you decided to stay, basically?

BC Yeah, here, yeah, like I said, they're still working on my house so I have no choice but to stay here yeah.

CL Ok so ...

BC Yeah I'm here for a little. What do you mean, here in the house, or here in the city? Which you mean?

CL Oh no, in the house.

BC Yeah, yeah, ok yeah.

CL When is the construction going to be completed?

BC They started already, so I'm looking like ... I thought by November for Thanksgiving, but I think it's gonna be Christmas. Yeah, I'm looking forward to it.

CL Well, I hope it comes sooner. So, your parents names, where they're from.

BC My mom is Estelle Gorner (sp) and she's from Ponchatoula, Louisiana. And, my dad was Eddie Joe Bell (sp) and he was from St. Louis, Missouri.

CL And how did they meet?

BC I don't know. I don't know. Cuz, they were separated by the time I was about two. So, I don't know. But I did have a step father that raised me. That's my dad. That's more my dad and he's from Amite, Louisiana, and they met in a barroom when I was about maybe three years old. In a club, so they been ... we'll they're dead now, but they was together ever since.

CL And they moved to New Orleans?

BC They was here in New Orleans when they meet, they were here.

CL Ponchatoula sounds nice, strawberries.

BC Yea, Strawberry Fest ...

CL And what were their careers?

BC Well, my mom was a homemaker, and my dad used to work in the Sewage and Water Board.

CL And, are you an only child?

BC I had a brother, yeah an older brother. He's ten years older than me.

CL Oh wow.

BC Mm hmm.

CL And, what about your grandparents?

BC I only know of one grandparent, that's my grandmother. My mom's mother and her name was Ophelia Short. She died many years ago. That's the only grandparent that I knew of ... was her.

CL Did she come live in New Orleans with you guys? Or ...

BC Well, she was here. I knew she was living in Ponchatoula and then she moved to New Orleans sometime like in the ... I guess in the forties and she stayed in, as a matter of fact, she was the first one in the lower Ninth Ward that built down there. My mom always, my dad always stayed uptown up around this area. Yea but she never lived with us but she came to the city, you know, with her children.

CL And what did she do?

BC A homemaker.

CL And tell me about your current family members, your son ...

BC That's Lee, that's my youngest son. And I have an older son, Tyrone Coldman, and I have a daughter Shona (sp) Coldman, Shona (sp) Jackson.

CL How old are they?

BC Tyrone is forty-five, Shona (sp) is forty-two and Lee is thirty-eight.

CL And do they ...where do they live? Within the home or do they live in...

BC Well, Lee lives with me in the home. Tyrone, he and his wife live together. And my daughter Shona (sp) lives in Los Angeles, California.

CL Do you have any grandchildren?

BC Oh yes.

CL Care to name and give ages?

BC Oh man. If I could remember that I...my oldest grandchild is Chistele (sp) Foster, she's twenty-six... but I was ... his name was Arthur Jackson but he's twenty-one. And, I have Tyrone Landry he's twenty-one cuz they like the same age, by different parents. And I have Learanny (sp) she ... she's nineteen. I have Devante (sp) he's seventeen. I got Givanna (sp) Landry, she's twenty... twenty years old. Oh man, who did I miss? I have so many of 'em. (laughs)

CL Any great grandchildren?

BC Yes. I have J'wan (sp) Landry. Zilea Lan (sp) ... Jilea (sp) Foster. I have Malique (sp) Landry. Ja'nai (sp) Landry and Orlando Jackson. I got six of 'em yeah. I got ... I got a lot of grandkids but I just can't recall their names right now.

(6:07)

CL Do you watch all of them at the same time?

BC You know not really because Givanna (sp) children ... she has three, that's Malique (sp), J'wan (sp) and Ja'nai (sp). Now they're over here a lot because they like grew up around me. Nisha, Aronisha (sp), she has a little boy, that's my great grandson, I didn't name him, his name is ... that boy name, I call him "po-po," cuz he's got a hard name. Lacavian (sp) is his name. She comes here every now and then cuz she lives on Avenue Louisiana, so she comes over every now and then. But those three little kids, they're still over here all the time.

CL Do you like having them over?

BC Oh I love it. I love it, when they not here, this house is like so dead. I love it, they keep you alive. You know?

CL That's great. So what do you do?

BC I work at the Marriot. I've been there twenty, it will be twenty-one years in April.

CL And do you have any other special skills. Like carpentry, sewing?

BC No, just.... really I don't have any skills. No more then working ... doing my job thing... you know ... I wanted to ... like with the club, I do a lot of running the business, do a lot of stuff for them. You know like keep up the accounts and stuff. I like doing stuff like secretary work. I can say that. You know. But, ah you know I said I don't have no skills, I really don't have no.

CL What about singing or dancing?

BC Yea, yea the second line, no I don't have any skills.

CL I'm sure you do.

BC I ... I bet I just haven't used mine...I don't like to cook... so that's not a skill. I used to love to party and you know, go out and stuff. But not anymore. But that's something... I don't have a skill.

CL What about your interest or hobbies?

BC I love to read. Oh I love to read. Yes and sleep.

CL What kind of books are you reading right now?

BC All kind, any kind. It's just ... as long as they're interesting. I love 'em. I like a lot of... really a lot about people's lives ... you know ... like a biography of someone. I like to read about what they background was, what they did, how they came up. You know. I like that.

CL What was the last one you read?

BC Oh, Courtney... oh .. with that ... oh ...it was recent. Can't think of the name now .. she, she plays a ... Angela Bassett. Angela Bassett, yeah. Yeah that's the last one, that was a while since I read. I mean... I didn't even know she was married to the guy that plays on TV...on a, on the movie ... anyway ...

CL I don't know,

BC Anyway I, I ... I watch it everyday and I can't. I guess cuz I'm talking to this mike I'm forgetting. I know. I can't think of it.

CL But you're really interested in reading and just... all that ... getting knowledge from books ...

BC Yeah, and I like, I love ... I read the bible, you know cuz I'm into church and outside there a lot. I do a lot of reading the bible. But yeah, that's my, that's my hobby, reading. And the other one like I said, sleeping.

CL I remember when I called you last weekend, you were busy with the church. Do you have a large role in your church?

BC Ah yes, I'm the director of new members. All the new people that come in church, I have to you know, keep up with them, call 'em, let 'em know what's happening in the church and make sure they're still coming to church every Sunday so... Yeah, and then we had our pastor anniversary, so we was busy with that trying to make sure everything, you know, was right, you know. So yeah, so I do a lot in church. Yeah, I love church.

CL Which church do you attend?

BC Reaping the Harvest Full Gospel Baptist Church in the lower Ninth Ward. Pastor Troy Lawrence is my pastor.

CL Do you guys do any singing or celebration activities?

BC Mm hmm, every year we have the new member's ministry, have a musical every year. And we have people from different churches and some people that love to sing come over and give us a little, you know, do a, give a, do a musical at our church. So yeah we do.

CL Is it at a certain time of the year or?

BC Well the new members ministries at a certain time of the year, but each ministry in the church, they do, they can have little things going on in they ministry that they do. But yeah in my, the ministry I'm in, is just once a year that I do it.

CL And you really enjoy that?

BC Oh, I love it.

CL Is your entire family part of it?

BC No, no just me.

CL Just ... not your children?

BC No. Every now and then they'll go to church and my granddaughter, Givanna (sp), she goes into church a lot, but the kids, they're getting there I guess, they'll get there eventually.

CL How often do you go?

BC Every Sunday. Every Sunday church. Every Wednesday bible study. And then I go to bible study on Mondays with this lady that have it at her house. When I'm off I go over there too and do bible studies, with, you know, do bible study with her too. But every Sunday I'm in church.

CL Do you get a lot of new members to come and join?

BC Yeah, we do, we do, our church is growing cuz we like ... when the hurricane came, it messed us up, so we had to rebuild and all the members that we had before the hurricane, were scattered all over. But they're slowly coming back and then were getting newer members, you know, so the church is getting real packed now.

(11:19)

CL So they're recommending people and just word of mouth?

BC Word of mouth, word of mouth, that's what's happening. And then like, my pastor know a lot of people. You know, and he run across people and go, ok come on, you gotta go join, come, not join but come to church and check us out, you know. And then most times they'll come once or twice and then they join. It's good, I love it.

CL So I guess some people in your family go to church, if not your church, but do they have special talents? Your children, your grandchildren?

BC He loves to play basketball (Lee). My oldest son is a sports fanatic. All he do is sit in front of the TV on Sundays and watch all kind, all types of sports all day. And he like, on Saturday he does a lot of cutting grass and lawn mowing. He does a lot of that. And my daughter, in California, she's another me. Reading and sleeping.

CL Oh your daughter's in California?

BC Mm hmm, my daughter, yea.

CL What's she doing out there?

BC She's just, she's a homemaker. Well, I mean, she's working at a store. You know but they, she really doesn't ... all she really does is go to work, come home, go to sleep. You know, like I said, she does a lot of reading. And her and her husband do go, they into church also, cuz he's a pastor. And you know, they go like to, out to dinner or something like that. But that's about it. She don't do too much.

CL What about your grandkids? Do they like to sing, dance?

BC Oh yes, I have one, J'wan (sp). The whole time she's over here, she's doing, she likes to do ballet. She loves ballet. And she's always up there dancing and showing her stuff. Now she doing little cheering and she got a little sister, Ja'nai (sp), But Ja'nai (sp) is two. So she's following her. She can't really talk that good now. But she's following her and she's trying to do same thing J'wan (sp) does, so, yea when they over here, that's why I say, it's real active. Its very ... they ... they're just constantly chattering. Going, going, going.

CL I'd love to see that.

BC You'd probably go, ok shut 'em up (laughs).

- CL So, what about school? Where did you go to school?
- BC I went to ... I graduated from Booker T. Washington. You know, I went to school uptown. I lived in the Ninth Ward, but I went to school up there. They call it uptown.
- CL How was it getting to school?
- BC On the school bus. On the school bus. And when I wasn't on the school bus, then sometimes my uncle would bring me to school in his car. Or you got to catch the bus. You know, cuz it wasn't that hard, just one, two buses and you're here. That was back then.
- CL And past high school?
- BC Hmm?
- CL Did you have schooling past high school as well? Or like college?
- BC No, no just high school, cuz when I, once I got close to getting out of high school, I got pregnant with my oldest son so, that was a wrap. Which it, it couldn't of have, it shouldn't have been a wrap, but then that just stopped everything.
- CL And what about your children?
- BC They, now he (Lee) finished high school. My oldest son went as far as the tenth grade. And my daughter, she finished high school at like a GED type thing.
- CL And your grandkids are in all grades of school?
- BC Mm hmm. Oh yea and my J'wan (sp), she's oh, she's got... she's doing so good. She's real... she's in the first grade and she's at a second grades level. You know, she's doing real good. And now the rest of them like in nursery. So you know.
- CL Do you think you're going to pass on your passion for reading to your grandkids?
- BC Yea, J'wan (sp) likes to read now. You know, she loves to read. J'wan (sp) she's always, cuz I guess with me ... and she loves when she sees my bible. She says, grandmother I can read the bible. I go, oh yeah. You know, yeah she's going love to read. I don't know about the other two little ones. You know, but she is, she loves to read ... loves to write. She'll sit down and write you a little letter. You know. Yeah, she's real good, but I think, every day they're around me, they'll probably, cuz like, like most times when I ,when I tell them, ok, quiet time,

grandma wanna do something with our books. Then they'll watch their cartoons. You know, and let me read. But otherwise, they may, I don't know.

CL Do you ever read, sit down and read with her? Or let her read to you?

BC Yeah, I do. Cuz that's, well the school she goes to, they recommend that. You know, like the twenty minutes of reading a night. You know, for homework. So she'll bring... they'll give 'em books to bring home and I'll sit down and read them with her, and she'll say grandma, you know, she don't understand they things, she'll come ask me. Which ... one time she was staying here all the time, you know she's staying with her mom now, but at one time she was here, and it was nice cuz I was able to help her with her homework and read with her, you know, but now that she's with her mom. I don't get to do that too much anymore.

CL Do you think your grandkids love coming over here, spending time?

BC Oh yes, yes they do, they do. And what they ... they think I'm rich. Cuz when they come over, they go, grandma we going to McDonalds we gonna go to Wal-Mart, and we gonna go to the teddy, the build-a-teddy, you know they always want to do something. When I have it, I do it, you know, I go with them and do things with them. But they love being over here. They really do. That's why I told my son to tell her, I'm having an interview so don't bring the kids over right now. (laughs)

(16:05)

CL So are you planning on having a big Thanksgiving?

BC No, my son, my oldest son, he's doing it. So we're going over to his house. Yeah, he's going to do it. I don't, I don't, you know, I say if I was in my house, if they had built my home, I was gonna have my first Thanksgiving there, but since they didn't, I'll have my first big dinner for Christmas. Cuz I'm hoping it's done by then and it should be. But we going by my son for dinner so ...

CL How many people is he expecting?

BC I don't know. I know his gran... J'wan (sp) ... Givanna (sp) is his daughter, with the three grandkids, and my son and myself and he probably invited some of his family, his wife's people over. So I don't really know how many, you know, who's going over.

CL Big family. I don't have a big family. I guess other than the Prince of Wales and your church. Do you have membership in any other organizations?

BC No, no.

CL And, I guess we'll start talking about Prince of Wales. How long have you been a member?

BC Since 19 ... 1995 was when the ladies came out. You know we apart, we together, but at one time, in 1995 was the Lady Wales, we was by our ... not say, by ourselves, we paraded with them on their day, but we had our own club and we did our own thing and they did their own thing. But we joined together about maybe three years ago. We got together and we do it all, all in the same, all in one big group.

CL Was there a reason for coming together?

BC Well, you know, yeah because, that when we first started out as the Lady Wales, was a lot of ladies, of us, you know, it was like four about, it started off about seven ladies and we started building. But then as they start, you know, things, to be honest with you, before Katrina it was big, but after Katrina everybody wasn't coming back to the city. So it was just Phyllis and myself that was the Lady Wales, so it was like there was too much for us to do on our own so we just joined the guys. It was me Phyllis and Tasha (sp). So we got with the guys and just, you know, we've just been with them ever since.

CL So, how did you hear of the Prince of Wales? Was it a family tradition?

BC Yea, well my girlfriend Linda, her brother and her family has been in the Wales for years, they go way back. And her brother Lonzo (sp), was the prince, head of the Prince of Wales, the president and his sister Linda, you know, I said I know of the Prince of Wales through her. You know, so...

CL So she encouraged you to join?

BC Oh yeah, she encouraged ... she was really ... it's so weird because we was at a club called Eddie, and that's where the Prince of Wales used to hang out at one time and then they had, there was a, there was some ladies that was, the Lady Wales way back in the day, they were older ladies, but I guess they died, not died but just that the club died off. And they were saying let us get us a Lady Wales club together, you know. And so we was just sitting in the bar talking and that's how it started you know. We just all got together and started saying, you know, we going to be big, try to get us a club together called the Lady Wales. So ...

CL So you were one of the original creators?

BC Mm hmm. Mm hmm

CL And you said this started in what year?

BC 1995.

CL So before this, were ladies part of the Prince of Wales?

BC No, no.

CL So how did you kind of talk to the Prince of Wales to make this happen?

BC Well you know, we was, when we became Lady Wales, we was on they charter. You know, so we paraded with them under they charter. So it was like we had our band, they had they band and we just all ... like say if they wore red, we wore red. Sometimes we did the opposite. If they wore gold and black we might wear black and gold you know. But we all paraded the same day. But like I said, we had our functions was different for a while you know, but then after the hurricane we got together you know. And I like being with them as one. Because, you know, we all get together and do things together, you know, so ... whereas, when we was the Lady Wales, they did like say, when we gave a dance, then it was the Lady Wales dance. If the Prince of Wales gave a dance, it was the Prince of Wales dance. You know we didn't partic ... we participated but we didn't have anything to do with it, but now we all one, so when we give a dance it's the Lady Wales and Prince of Wales. But yea, they let us came in, in 1995. They let us come in as far as parading with them. You know, so it was ... it was good. I like that, I like that.

CL You like the change?

BC Oh yes. Yeah I do. I enjoy being with them, cuz they all family. You know, we're like one big family. We have our little differences, but we don't, its not no bad thing, you know.

CL Are any of your family members involved?

BC No, no just me.

CL Do you want any of your kids, or grandkids to get involved?

BC My granddaughter, Givanna (sp), she paraded with us one year, but she really didn't get in... but see her, Givanna (sp), she's from that second, that part of the Prince of Wales family that grew up, you know, that have always had the members. Not members, the family in the Prince of Wales, she's from that, from that culture, but said no, she don't wanna join the club, she just go out when we parade and just parade out there with us, but she don't wanna actually get in the club.

CL So what is the part where there's, I guess the, the queen. Cuz I went to the parade and I saw, maybe it was the princess, somebody wearing a giant crown ... is that the queen?

(21:02)

BC That's the queen, the queen yeah. We started doing the queen. I guess about ... this year should be our, our fourth queen if I'm not mistaken. So we've probably been doing, we started doing it about maybe four years ago. If I'm not mistaken. But yeah, the one with the big 'ole crown, yea that's the queen. In fact the ladies come and ask if, you know, they can be the queen. And what we do, we give 'em, you know, let 'em know how much it is to come in and be the queen and what they have to do. They have to do a certain amount of stuff to help, you know, to be a queen. You know, so, and um, they just, you know, they just let 'em in. Most times its always just one person who'll come and ask, come ask, we never had like say two or three of 'em, we had, make up our mind which one we wanted you know. But, it's always every year someone say I would like to be your queen this year and they say ok, and they let 'em know what they have to do and, you know...

CL So that's pretty new? The queen?

BC Yeah, yeah the queen is new. Its not, they haven't been doing that, that I know of ... when I joined in '95, they wasn't having queens like I said, just about maybe ... If I could, I know ... this is maybe our fifth queen that we've had. So, maybe in the last five years we've been having queens.

CL What do you think about it?

BC I like it. Yeah I like it, cuz it do, it give a little something more to the club. You know, something elegant to the club. Yeah, I like it.

CL So are you still president of the Ladies?

BC Mm hmm.

CL So what are your responsibilities?

BC Just, once we all vote in club, once we, anything that we do, we all vote on it, you know, the Monday night vote, but I normally do, and Alvin, he's the president of the Prince of Wales. We normally do, is just keep it going and making sure the club is standing on and everybody's doing what they're supposed to do. You know, just keeping things in order. That's all.

CL How often do you guys meet?

BC Twice a month, the first and third Fridays of the month.

CL And how often do you parade?

BC We pray every, you said pray? ...

CL Mm mm.

BC We pray before the meeting and we pray after the meeting. That's a must. That's why we go to church on a Sunday, when we parade, we always go to church and have them pray over us. You know, we got to keep God in the plan. We got to keep him in the plan. Yea.

CL And, also in addition to that, how often do you parade? ... parade?

BC Parade?

CL Ah-ah.

BC Once a year.

CL Oh, once a year?

BC Yeah.

CL But do you also tag along to Jazz Fest as well? ... and Mardi Gras?

BC Yeah. I do the Jazz Fest. We do the ... the only thing we really parade in is the street parade and the Jazz Fest. Now sometimes, Joe and them, the guys, they may get together and go do little functions, little gigs and things that people actually come to. But mostly we just do the, the two parades. Jazz Fest and the regular parade.

CL And, how do you decide on the colors to wear?

BC Well, you know, we vote on that. You know, somebody will come up with a color and if everybody like it, they go yeah we'll go with it. Cuz like this year, Alvin came with the color for the suits and this lady at work had this beautiful olive shoe. It was so pretty. So I brought it to the club. I said you know this might go good with the colors we have, you know, and they go ok yeah, we'll go with olive and green, so everybody decided that's what we want to wear. So we always vote on it. Somebody bring a color up and usually it's Alvin. You know, the president of the Prince of Wales. I bring it cuz he's like a sharp dresser, he can, you know, dress in all kinds of nice colors so he usually brings the color up and we all decide oh yea that sounds pretty good. And that's how we go about it.

CL And, what about the band that plays? I think it was Dirty Dozen this year?

BC No, we had, no honey we had the Stoog... what did we have this year? The Stooges ... oh we had the Stooges this year. But we normally have the Hot Eight for the street parade.

CL Oh ok.

BC Yea, we usually have them, but they had some kind of function out of town, so we had to get another ... now in the Jazz Fest we usually have the band you just called ...

CL The Dirty Dozen.

BC Yea, them or ... I forget ... it's not a ... it's a known band, it's not a real famous band. But they give us a band to play with us while we out there in Jazz Fest.

CL So, if one wanted to become a member, is it difficult to get accepted?

BC No, mm mm. All you have to do is come and say you would like to join and we let you know what the fee is and you know every month, what month you have to pay your dues and we have rules and regulations. You know, this is the rules we go by, and if you can go by these rules, then you're welcome.

CL Do you happen to know how the club got its name? Any stories behind that?

BC You know, Joe ... somebody was tell ... Bruce, he's another one that's been in the club for many man ... not him, his family, and he was telling me about, there was like scotch bottle. And it was, I think, a J.B. bottle? And that's how they got, they said look at this name on the bottle and that's how they got their name, but I always thought, until he told me that, he just told me this year, this year before the parade how it got, how they got their name, I always thought because they was going by the Prince of Wales all in ... you know the Prince of Wales in another coun ... that um... what's that where they, where they have the guards at the, at the, what's that city? Scotland? No.

CL Oh, London?

BC London, I thought it was ... they got the name from the Prince of Wales out there. I didn't know they had gotten it off a bottle. Of a liquor bottle.

(26:08)

CL Oh yeah, he came to class and told us about that.

BC Yeah, I just found out about that this year. Yeah.

CL Had you heard of any other stories? Or just Bruce 's?

- BC No, not anything that I can think of.
- CL Do you believe it?
- BC I don't know. Because he's the first one that ever told us that. So I don't know. You know, I really don't know. I mean it sounds like it could be like, sounds possible. You know, and I never really looked at the bottle, a bottle to see if they had anything that says Prince of Wales on it. But, I ... I don't know. I guess if he said it maybe so... like I said, his family been in it for yea ...when they first started Prince of Wales. His family was in that. His ancestors, you know so ...
- CL Do you know a lot of other members whose families have been in the Prince of Wales for really a long amount of time?
- BC The lan... I know... like I said Linda, the one that started when we started. Her, her grandfather was in it. And the ones that's in the club right now, that I can think of is Bruce. Bruce is the only one really in the club right now that I can think about that their blood lines from way back ... and was a Prince of Wales.
- CL Everybody else is relatively new?
- BC Yes, yes oh yes.
- CL And also you talked about, how the Lady Wales and Prince of Wales combined. Has membership for Lady Wales increased since Katrina?
- BC Mm hmm. Yeah.
- CL Do you think you helped with that?
- BC Well no, I don't think, I think we all did. Its just that, you know, what happens, when we come out every year and once they see us they say, man ya'll so pretty we gonna join the club. You know. And then they'll start coming in like that. But yeah, because when we came back from the hurricane it was just three of us. And its ...five of us now. Let me see, is it five? Phyllis, myself ... that's five ladies now. Yeah, and then matter of fact we having a meeting tonight and some old lady supposed to come join tonight. So we goin be a little more ladies then we had. But it's very easy to get in. Very easy.
- CL And, in your own words, what is the purpose of the club?
- BC Oh man, it's all about having fun, a business club. It's just a culture. And it's really about being with good people, you know, doing things together with good people. You know, and what I love about the club is like everybody's so sweet. You know. It's so nice. You know, and on that day. We call it, that's our day,

you just feel so proud, you know. Worked a whole year to come to this point. You know. You know, you done gave dances and raised raffles, did raffle tickets, you know. So you can be pretty for that day. And I just love it. I'll be sixty-five years old this month. And I don't intend to stop doing it until ... the man up there say, ok Betty its time to sit down (laughs). But I love it, I love it. You know, and it's a culture it's a culture that's been way, I mean, just, you know, it's been going on for years. You know, I love it. And like I said, it's a business and it's a pleasure.

CL Bruce called it sweet and sassy. That's how he described it. Would you say the same thing?

BC Yeah, I could say, yea sweet and sassy. You could say that. It is. Yes I love it, I love it. I just, I just do and I mean I don't go to all the other parades every Sunday because I'm... if, if they have one, like they pass by my house, I'll go stand on the corner. But I don't go every Sunday, but I do love the jazz, I love the second lines. You know, I do love 'em. But I just don't go. And then like a lot of, a lot of times I'm working. So I can't go. But yea I love the second line. Now you know, what's so funny, before I got into the club I didn't even know how to dance second line. I still don't know how to do like the real good ones do, but I didn't know how to second line, you know, and they say you just get out here and just start doing anything. Just throw your hands up. Its just, not that no certain dance. You know. But I do, I love it.

CL So what do you think the club has ... being a part of the club has taught you, just to let loose and have more fun and ...

BC Let loose and have fun and then like I ... we do a lot of things too like last year for the community we, for Christmas, we bought toys for the kids in the community in the Twelfth Ward. You know and it's taught me that ...how to be pleasant with people. How, you know, how you can show your love to people, you know, because everybody have different personalities. Everybody in that club have a different personality. It teach you patience. I'll tell you that. You have to have patience because we all got our different personalities, we're not gonna all agree on everything, you know. But it, and it taught me how to grow as far as having patience. Because at one time I didn't tolerate, I didn't have any patience, but you have to have patience. You know. And then the love of the club, the love of the people, you know, we get along. I got me, somebody might get mad and say something crazy, before the meetings over we be all laughing, hugging and kissing, you know its' not, nothing no body holding nothing against anybody. You know so ... but the club has taught me patience. You have to have it. Especially with grown ups. You know.

CL So have you made friendships in the club that are going to last?

BC Yeah, with Phyllis. Phyllis and I are real tight. Matter of fact, all of 'em, of the guys. Me and the guys, we real close, you know, cuz I been knowing 'em. They been in the club, the Prince of Wales been in so long, I know all of 'em. You know, the only few new ones in these that just came in, but they still friends. You know. And like the girls, the two new ladies that joined, I didn't know anything about them until they joined. But you know I'm close to 'em. But me and Phyllis are real tight cuz Phyllis been in the club since the second year that the Lady Wales started. You know she started in '96. So she's been with me since, you know, since then so that's about the closest one I can say I'm, you know, that I'm real close in the club. Yea.

(31:42)

CL And, how did you think the parade went this year?

BC Oh I thought it was wonderful. It was nice, beautiful. It was beautiful.

CL How is it to dance the entire route? Do you get tired?

BC (sighs) Well really, I don't dance the entire route. But there, Alvin and Phyllis, they do. By the time you get to your last point, you are tired you are really tired. You know because it's like a four hour thing. You know, you walking and dancing for four hours. So when I did stay on the street and dance ... by the time I got to the destination, my feet was hurting they was, I was, I was tired, I was sweaty, I was hungry, I was thirsty. Yeah, you be wore out, you know. But it's a good feeling, you know. It's not like, oh man. It's just like, man we did that, you know, we did that. So it's a good feeling, it is.

CL So how do you keep your energy high and try not to overheat as you're walking?

BC Water, you know water. And as far as energy, that music. That music keep you going. I would hear that da-da da. Look like is just perks you up. You know, but mostly me, I do a lot of drinking water, you know. When I'm going ... most of 'em drink water, they may have they little drinks too, to keep them, to perk them up a little bit, you know. But I try to keep cool with water. And I when I get too hot I'll get in the car and ride a little bit then I'll get out and try to second line some more.

CL How did your, how did your shoes look like at the end of the parade?

BC Well, you know what, this year I didn't, I had to take my shoe off because my shoe for some reason, you know leather stretch... and what I didn't do, I didn't put any socks on this year with them. So they kinda got to big for me, so I had to take 'em off. But at the end they be in good condition. Cuz normally when we get out, what we do with our shoes, we put a half sole and we put a little heel so we can't mess up the um ... you know cuz the street will mess 'em up, you know

- like rubbing (sound of rubbing hands together). So we always fix our shoes where the streets won't really mess 'em up so, but these, I guess when I got to Tipitinas, when my shoes came off. You know, and I have like little slippers I wear, you know, so I just wear them, you know, went home in those, you know. We call going home, like going to the last stop. Going in ...
- CL So what happens to all your outfits?
- BC We keep 'em. We keep 'em. I got the two fans. I had three fans and then I got my two umbrellas and then our suits. You know, we could wear those again. You know, so we hold on to 'em. Like the ones before Katrina messed 'em, you know messed 'em up. But yea we keep 'em. We don't get rid of 'em. Cuz I intend to have a Lady Wales museum in my house. One room with nothing but the Lady Wales stuff, the fans, the umbrellas, you know this one room. My Lady Wales room, so we keep 'em.
- CL So you're gonna try and preserve things instead of wearing them? What about the shoes?
- BC Oh no, I wear I wear. Oh yeah, I would. Now see what I do, I wear my stuff to church after, cuz I could wear it to church. So I wear my, well then next year, like I said, this outfit next year be going to church with me and I'll be wearing it to church. You know, cuz mine being a light color I won't wear it in the winter, but we've had dark colors. Like I had a purple, I wear that to church. You know. And I had a blue, I wear that to church. And then I take mines ... I get good use out of mines. Yeah.
- CL That's good. When Bruce came to visit he was wearing his shoes from last year.
- BC That ... with the lizards? Yea, with the eyes.
- CL They were nice, he was getting use out of them. So, what do you think makes a good parade, other than all the energy and music? The people?
- BC The people. The people. The people, they make the good parade. You mean on the street?
- CL Mm hmm.
- BC The people, the people. The ... the... it's just everybody having fun. That's what makes a good parade.
- CL Have you ever seen anything, like maybe some violence during the parade?
- BC No, na ... I know last year, it wasn't nothing to do with the parade, but like farther off the street we got about like Charlie Wright's, somebody had, they had

something going on that they kinda detoured us around. But with the parade, no. That's why we go to church and get praised so God can protect and keep our harm and danger out the way. But no, since I've been in the parade, I have, in, in on the yearly parade, I have never, no I have never seen anything, and if it happened I've never seen it, you know, and I've never heard of it so ...

CL So it's ha ... its usually happy and energetic?

BC Mmmm, yes, yes, yes.

CL No trouble.

BC No trouble, no I guess the police probably, well they would be on top of the streets I mean calling out many things, beating on the, beating on the signs and stuff. But as far as ... but then the people, no.

CL So how does it feel to parade across busy intersections where the traffic has to stop and watch you go by and it doesn't matter what time it is?

(36:22)

BC It feels good. That's my day. I feel like a star. Everything's got to stop for me. Really, I ... It feels good. You know, and then folks get out they car to watch you know. They like that. And especially when folks are from a way that's not from here, they like man what's really goin on? You know, but yeah, yeah it feels good. You know, you're a star that day. It's your day, you the one shiny. You know, not just you by yourself, but that's how I feel. I'm shiny, you know.

CL And when people come and take pictures?

BC I love it. Yeah, I love it. I have so many pictures, I haven't even ... I still got 'em stacked in, in the thing. I said I was gonna do me a book. But I haven't done anything. You can see right now, I'm just at a standstill, just waiting for something to happen down in the Ninth Ward. But yeah, I love taking pictures. I do.

CL So even when you do eventually move back to the Ninth Ward, you're still going to be a part of the Prince of Wales?

BC Oh yes. Yea, I'm a still be a part.

CL You think you're gonna still attend other second lines that pass by?

BC Mm hmm. Like I said, what I might start doing, I won't follow a second line, but like go to a corner and watch 'em when they, you know, just to see 'em. When they pass, because I don't too much walking any more like I used to you know.

- So, but I love to see ‘em cuz everybody’s so pretty. You know, they come out, they so pretty. I haven’t seen a bad second line, somebody coming out that’s not looking good at all. Everybody be so pretty. You know. And what I like about it, it’s not a competition. It’s not like, oh they looked that bad last year, so we got to out do them. They just do their own thing. You know.
- CL So what do you think of the Mardi Gras Indians? Kinda about, you know, who looks prettier, but it’s more like a competition between them.
- BC Yeah, yeah it is. Because they be trying to do the best dressed, you know. But to me they all pretty. You know, they all pretty, but I guess them, with them they feel like, they outfit, they got more designs, and more this, but to me they all ... all. I mean, they, they work so hard on they costume, but to me they come out and they be pretty... I love the colors that they match up together. You know, I just never was into the Indian, you know thing cuz I be, they now that used to scare me cuz they used to be so wild. You know, they used to scare me cuz when I used to go out there and come, they’d be jumping on cars and just I said ooh they kinda wild. But ...
- CL It’s changed.
- BC Yea, it ha ... yeah. Because they stopped stop folks from doing all that on other people cars. Too much things happen for you to be jumping on somebody’s car now. But I’d still like to see ‘em, you know, going, on that, on the day they all out there. Super Sunday. I like to go see ‘em, you know parade. And in the lower Ninth Ward, we had ‘em. We’ve had the parade, you know, there Indians down there. So I didn’t have to come up here to see ‘em cuz we always had our little thing down in the Lower Nine, so but now I have to come, you know I come up here and see ‘em.
- CL Do you remember what specific tribe was down there?
- BC Oh what was that? ... I can’t think the guy that was here that was dead... and I can’t think of the name of that tribe. We used to call the guy Big Red, but that wasn’t the name of the tribe. I can’t even think of the name of the tribe. But they were pretty. And they would get up early. And you would have to... I mean they would be out for six o’clock in the morning. They would get up so early.
- CL Would you get up that early to see them?
- BC Mm hmm. Yeah, waiting for them to come out. So we could take pictures, yeah.
- CL So they made their suits, did ... how... where do you get your suits made?
- BC We have about, you mean as far as the clothes we wear?

- CL The clothes and I guess the fan.
- BC Ok, this guy ... for the ladies, there's a guys called Wardell (sp). He does our fans and our corsage. But we buy our clothes from the boutique shop. But as far as the guys, with the guys they have someone else that do they fans and they, you know, they stuff.
- CL And for the queen?
- BC Well you know this year Wardell (sp) did the queen. The guy that do our fans and stuff. Matter of fact I think he's done all the queens that, that's been in the parade with us. You know, yeah Wardell (sp) Louis. He does all of that.
- CL Do they usually always wear white? Or different colors?
- BC One queen wore diff ... one queen, we, she wore the same color we had that year. I think we had purple. That she wore a purple outfit, that queen. But all of 'em that I can think of been wearing the white.
- CL Do they return, and become members of the Prince of Wales?
- BC No.
- CL Or only become ...
- BC No, no just the queen, yeah.
- CL How do they hear of Prince of Wales?
- BC Well, oh boy, the Prince of Wales been heard of, since so many years ... cuz most of the people that you see that's queen they're from the Twelfth Ward. And that's where Prince of Wales originated. Really out of, from the Twelfth Ward. So that's how, you know, they know about it. And like I said the Twelfth Ward is all families so they, they, they know from there.
- CL And what are the activities of... I guess you kind of touched upon this earlier, but the men versus the women. Even though you guys are together now, but I guess before Katrina ... just the different activities you guys participated in?
- BC We did the dances. We did ... you mean like... we did suppers. You know, we did raffles. We went to other people's dances, you know, they had anything. We do a picnic, they have a picnic that we do in the park every year. You know, picnics and stuff like that. You know we do a lot of different things.
- CL Separate things?

BC Well now we don't. We do it together, you know. Everything we do now is together.

(41:44)

CL And I guess this year is it new to have the lines when you guys are walking?

BC No, you know we have 'em every year, just that it don't be coordinated right. But this year it was coordinated right. But you talking about the ropes?

CL Mm hmm.

BC That is suppose ... that's to keep everybody out, cuz you not ... if you're on the street parade and if you don't have something to separate the people, they be all mixed in and you can't really, you know, do your thing so this year they was really really organized. Where they kept the rope, kept us within the ropes, you know. But we do that every year.

CL Oh every year its been like that?

BC Mm hmm. Every year, yeah. Yeah.

CL With the ropes too?

BC With the ropes, yeah.

CL And where do you guys get ... who holds the ropes?

BC We just, guys in the neighborhood. Like this year my son was in it, you know, they asked, called and asked could he, could he you know do it. And he said yeah. Just guys from the neighborhood, the Twelfth Ward.

CL Do they get tired?

BC Oh yeah because it's hard. He tells me it's kinda hard because they be, you know, you trying to the pull the rope and they be pulling, you know so it is kinda hard for the rope holders, but they hang in there.

CL What do you think of the, the pit stops you take along the way?

BC I like 'em. Cuz we been doing those stops for a long time.

CL So you have really close relationships with ...

BC Yeah, yeah, we been doing like the Sandpiper, Charlie Wright. We been, the first stop we had this year was Tipitina's. We never did stop there, but we stopped at

- Tipitina's this year for a minute. But those, those stops it's always the same since I've been in the, in the club its been the same. We've had others that was added on, but these stops, they're really the regulars.
- CL Do they, do the owners of these clubs ever ask for anything in return? To build relationships with them?
- BC Mm mm, Mm mm, they don't for ask anything. What they normally for us, they'll give us free drinks. You know, we'll get free drinks and stuff from 'em. Just the club, the people in the second line and the, the band members, you know, like the rope holders. They'll give them a free drink a, water, Coke or whatever. But no they don't ask for anything, we just, you know, cuz when we come through, really it's giving 'em business because folks be sittin at the bar waiting for us to come through, so you know, they constantly buying drinks you know so-
- CL Have any clubs denied the Prince of Wales?
- BC Mm mm. Mm mm. No we haven't had one yet.
- CL So how is it going by Commander's Palace?
- BC Oh I loved it, we had to go upstairs. I loved it. It was nice. We went upstairs and talked to a few people. We didn't stay long, we just went up and came down so ... it was nice.
- CL That area is beautiful.
- BC Mm hmm, that restaurant is nice. Yeah
- CL How do you think the city could better support the second line culture, the Prince of Wales?
- BC You know, if they would, would start ... I wanna say helping us. You know funds, because a lot of things we do we have to, we have people giving us some money, giving us funds, they help us. But a lot of things we do, we have to kind of raise the money our self also so you know, a little bit more funds would help. And ... they had, one time they was giving us a lot of beef about there, you know, there was too much hassle goin on with the second line. They was going to stop it, but that, when they stopped doing that, that helped the city because the second line is a culture that goes way way back. You know, when you come to New Orleans you think of the second line, the French Quarter, you know, that's the main things, you know, that makes New Orleans, you know. The Indians, you know so ... if they could just help us, keep us going, you know, keep doing the Jazz Fest you know. Letting us come out there to the Jazz Fest, you know. And anything, like sometime when they have little things going on in New Orleans, you know, call some of the clubs just to go perform so they can show the

newcomers, I mean the people that's in town, the visitors, what we all about. You know so they can help us like that. I mean they do that sometimes, you know with certain clubs, but they should have, each club should get a chance to do that, you know, they have certain clubs that they do it with all the time. Well I feel they could like maybe I say this year, Prince of Wales you guys can go down to the Convention Center and do your little dance for the people and next year somebody else could do it, you know. But if they just continue using us and keeping us in spools (sp), keeping us out there where people can see us, you know that's good.

CL Do you need to get permits?

BC Yes we do. We have to get a permit for police, permit to be, hit the streets, yes we do.

CL Is that ever a problem?

BC Mm mm. Never a problem. As long as you got that money it's never a problem. Yea but it's not a problem and I, this year I was the one that had to go down to the station and, to get the, and pay for the permit, and they're so nice in there. Oh they're so nice. It's not a problem at all. Mm mm.

CL And how 'bout the crowds. Do you think ... you said they're very energetic and people are always really into it. Have the crowds, I mean after Katrina they got smaller, have they increased some?

BC Oh no. They were, when we first came back there wasn't that many, but naw, its , its, they increased, they're getting more and more people. And then people come away and come to town for ... for the second line. So like the Prince of Wales, if you know some people that used to run, used to parade with, you know, behind us, if they in Texas or whatever, they'll come home for that day. You know so yea the crowd has gotten, its still, it's a little bit bigger. Its better then it was after, right after Katrina. It's growing. Like I said everybody's coming back home so ... its' growing. And we've always had a big crowd follow us, always.

(46:51)

CL So what do you hope for the parade next year?

BC Just to keep doing what we doing, you know. Still just enjoying, having fun and lookin pretty.

CL What do you think the colors are going to be?

BC I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. Like I said, we'll probably start deciding that about the end of the year. And we'll start working on it next year so

probably about, sometime in December. We'll probably start thinking about the colors we want, you know, we'll be wearing.

CL Are the suits usually the same kind of style?

BC No it's different

CL Oh you guys ... oh you vote on that

BC Yea it's different. We have something different every year. The style yeah. Well you mean as far as the men and the women?

CL Mm hmm.

BC The colors always close but not the style. You know, we like the man peach, we have peach and we have a little lighter color, a little darker color, but, it'd be the same color but different styles.

CL Do the women ever wear skirts with the suits?

BC You know, we was gonna do that, just the second line, but the ladies did wear their skirts to church. But it's kinda hard to second line in a skirt. You know it's kinda hard so ... you know your stockings are getting ripped, you know, cuz they want this, but they wanted to do was second line 'til we got to Charlie Wright's in our skirts. Cuz Charlie Wright's is just right up here. And we got to Charlie's and changed into the pants. But then they said naw that's okay, cuz they had to put the stockings on. You know, when you, when you second line, if you really really second line, you be wanting to kick your leg up. You can't do that with a skirt so you have to have the pants on. But they did come to church with the skirts on, you know. Took a picture with the skirts and then they took them off, put their pants on. Cuz the suit we got was a three piece suit. You know, I mean a skirts pants suit.

CL I guess that would be the same idea for high heels. That's why they never wear high heels, right?

BC We wear the two inch heels. You know, maybe two and a half as high as we go cuz if you go any higher, you're no. You would have a hard time trying to dance in 'em. The streets are so raggedy. You know, and it's not as ... If they were smooth all the way, but some street's we go down man you can barely walk in flat shoes.

CL What do you of some of the women that come and wear five inch high heels, that, that, that are not necessarily in the, that are not in the Prince of Wales, but are, you know, part of the crowd and walking in those shoes.

- BC I don't know how they make it. I really don't. I look at those ladies out there with those heels and they...some of them march from the beginning to the end. I don't know how they make it in those heels. I don't. But then I guess, I guess I can say I, in a way I do cuz I know back in the days when I used to party, I used to wear high heels and I partied all night. So I guess if you used to it you can do it. I know I couldn't. But if you used to it, you can do it. Cuz I remember the days I could party from twelve to four or five in the morning doing the same heels and they be high, dancing all night. So, they used to it so, but I look at 'em and say oh. And the streets are so bad. That's what I can't see, you know, how they all tore up when they wore 'em, but they make it with 'em. They manage.
- CL Just going a little bit back about Katrina, how well do you think New Orleans is recovering?
- BC Up here it's recovering. The Lower Nine it's not. It's very very slow. Very slow. And I think the reasons because the, well half the people down there haven't gotten their money from Road Home to rebuild. You know, but it's it's, now if this area ... they have to get this together for the tourists so up here they didn't boom real good, but the Lower Ninth Ward is just like ... its just there, you know. Nothing's happening. They have a few people to move back, you know, but it's moving very slow. Very.
- CL But you had your funding, you received funding
- BC I received some, but I've, that's one reason, that's the kinda like a stop, a hold for me right now cuz I'm ready for some more funds to finish building my house, you know, so ... but I received some, yeah, mm hmm.
- CL And what would you like to see, in addition to the construction of your house being finished, just for that area?
- BC I would love to see it back like it was before Katrina, but a better Ninth Ward. You know, and it, it really is going to be a better Ninth Ward because the way they building the house now, you know, the building all the, have you seen Brad Pitt houses?
- CL No.
- BC You know, I don't like 'em, but I'm just saying. They ... everybody's coming back with a better house, so it's gonna be nice when they come back, you know. I'd love to see the way it was before I left, but much better than it is, than it was. You know, like when I say more, a lot, all the people are back. You know, all those little neighborho ... cuz the Ninth Ward is a neighborhood. You know, its like a, a family type thing. Everybody knew each other cuz my Aunt Fin (sp) has been on that Delery Street since I guess in the fifties. You know, she, she and its like everybody knew her, you know. Everybody, all the neighborhoods, they was

nice to each other. It wasn't nothing bad or anything. You know not like the way they try and make it sound. It was a family little town. So I wish it could go back to that. You know, but the homes are a lot better than, you know, than they were.

(51:46)

CL So you're optimistic.

BC I am. They're coming back. They're coming back it's just that, it's just that it's takin a little while, but we coming back. Cuz I'm, I'm going back. Oh, I got to go back. That's my home, I got to go back.

CL Is there anything else that you'd like to say that we haven't covered? About the Prince of Wales?

BC No, just that ... no not really, we covered everything, it's just that I love being in the Prince of Wales, you know. I love my family. You know, matter of fact we having a meeting tonight, and I look forward to those meetings. I really do. Its like I, it's like you looking for something great, great. You know it's just that we all get together, you know, we bring food, we have our little meeting and we eat and we laugh and talk after the meeting. We may have our little drinks or something, you know, and we go home. But I love it and I just wish we could just stay like we are, you know. I mean get, go to another level and better than what we're doing, but I'm just saying staying as a family. Oh yeah, I love my Prince of Wales.

CL Well thank you very much.

BC Ok.

END

(52:49)