

Talking to New Orleans

Interviewer: Katherine Bell

Interviewee: Donna Pierre

Date: 11.16.09

Transcribed by Katherine Bell

(0:02)

KB All right this is Tulane, "Talking to New Orleans". I'm Katherine Bell.

DP Don't you have to have that thing on your ears?

KB It doesn't have to be on, that was just to test it out. It's all good to go now.

DP Now is I'm talking to you or I'm talking in here?

KB Try to aim like you're talking into this, but don't worry about it, you know, be comfortable. Cuz it can pick up all over the place. Yeah, you're fine.

KB So we are at _____ in Metairie and I am interviewing Donna ...what is your last name?

DP Pierre. (spells) Pi-e-r-r-e.

KB P-i-e-r-r-e. Alright. And we're going to talk about the Prince of Wales second line.

DP Mmm hmmm.

KB Okay. So, how did you get involved in the second line?

DP That's something I been doing like - when I was little with my mom. She was like in the second line, in the same club about...some years ago. And-

KB How long ago?

DP Oooh, since I was about twelve. That was a loooooong time.

KB Yeah, right.

DP And, um. It was just something. Well, I was in it when I was a kid. And then, you know, as you grow up, you don't get away from it but you got other things to do. And then after I raised my kids now I want to get back into it again. So my grandkids can see what I was doing, so.

KB How long have you been it, now?

DP This is going on my second year. So I came back to it.

KB And you were saying your granddaughter was in it. Is this the first time that she marched?

DP Yeah, this was her first time.

KB Did she like it?

DP She loved it. Yeah, she walked the whole time.

KB Wow. She's only four?

DP Four years old. She walked the whole time.

KB Kids have so much energy though. Maybe it didn't seem that way.

DP I wasn't – I was tired. But she wasn't.

KB She was walking and dancing too.

DP She enjoyed it. She can't wait till next year to do it again.

KB Oh, cool. And what's her name?

DP Amiriea. Amiriea Smith.

KB How do you spell that?

DP A-M-I-R-I-E-A.

KB Smith.

DP Four years old.

KB All right. So you said your mom was in this growing up.

DP My mom was in it. It has to have been like about the...maybe the 80's, the early, late seventies, maybe the early eighties, into the nineties. Yeah.

KB So, did you live on Metairie growing up and she was in it or did you live over by -?

DP Uh uh. I lived in the city. I always lived in Uptown, what was called the 12th ward. That's between Louisiana and Napoleon area. And that's where the

- original started from. So, yeah. My mom was like one of the original. She was the secretary.
- KB Oh, really?
- DP So, she was like the original, when the ladies started the second line.
- KB So, first there was the men....
- DP Uh huh. The Prince of Wales.
- KB See, I don't really know. So there was the Prince of Wales. And then, how much later after that did the ladies start?
- DP Well, the ladies started like...it had to have been maybe three years later. But much later when they got they own...established they own name.
- KB And what were they called? The Ladies of Wales?
- DP Uh huh. They always had the Ladies of Wales but they wasn't like 'stablished like the men's Wales..... And then, much later that's when the ladies, like fifteen years down, when the ladies got they names, you know. But they always had they wives and stuff with 'em on the second line."
- KB So how did your mom get involved in it? Did she have friends in it?
- DP It was like a neighborhood thing.
- KB And she was like, ladies, we need to get in on this.
- DP Yeah, it was like a lady thing and the men was like.... I guess...When I was coming up,'cause I'm 48. When I was coming up, you know, it was like a little barroom thing. You go to your little club and had a group of people. Then, that Sunday, you know it was I guess it was like saving money. Like we do now. To make this big day. It wasn't like as big as it's now. It was a neighborhood thing—we went from Louisiana to Napoleon. It was like go to barrooms to clubs. That what it was. We went to different clubs. Well, we just called them barrooms at that time.
- KB You called the clubs barrooms?
- DP Yeah, it was the barrooms. Today you know we say clubs but at that time it was barrooms. You just walked to this barroom, you have a little time there, you go to the next one. Just went from one to the next.
- KB How often did you do it?

DP Just once a year. It's called a anniversary. Like... when you have a wedding anniversary. You know, when you go out. You save money till this certain day. Then that's – that's how you say, this is my anniversary. Instead of saying a second line, it's like “a anniversary”. It's the club anniversary.

KB So, do you still call it that, or is it like we're gonna have a second line?

(5:10)

DP No, we say we're having a second line group.

KB Okay, but that's still what it is.

DP But I mean but then it'd be every year in October we'd do it. Instead of saying this the first year or your third year you'd this is our second line day. But it's really your anniversary day. You got me?

KB Yeah, I think I got it. So when you were a kid what were the costumes and the outfits like? Were they as crazy as they are now? Did they still spend all that time getting them ready?

DP Now – well, at that time it was more like sewing. The peoples more sewed their suits together. Cuz, in New Orleans you can go to stores and people was making suits. There was like tailors and he made all the people clothes. You went to the tailor and got your suit made. And you went to the shoe store and got your shoes. They had this place where we was going. Danneel? I'm not familiar with the street. It was like a big area. Dryades. That's the name of it. Dryades. Now they call it Cassaheely or something. But the original name was Dryades Street, and everybody went there and got they stuff. BUT – the second line was- we didn't have feathers at that time. Everybody had umbrellas. So you decorated the umbrellas.

KB Everybody, the men and the women?

DP Yeah, we had umbrellas then. Well, we still do it so if you noticed the first half of our parade everybody had feathers and then the second half everybody came out with umbrellas.

KB I remember you guys stopped at a house.

DP And then we came out with the umbrellas. So we was combining the old and the new together.

KB I like the umbrellas.

DP Uh huh. Me too.

KB I mean, the feathers are cool. You can put the feathers on the umbrellas but...

DP And everybody made they own different umbrellas so they had a different design.

KB Were they still color-coordinated like they are now?

DP You talking about now? Today?

KB No, I mean back in the day when they used the umbrellas. It was all the same?

DP Always the same umbrella

KB So how do they pick the colors every year?

DP Well, they pick the- well, like, it's a group thing. You vote for, everybody bring different colors, and they vote what colors that they gonna go with. And the 'jority win.

KB And you try not to repeat 'em?

DP Right, well you try to – some clubs do it, every ten year, they'll come out with their first color. So, say they have all different colors but then every ten year they come back with their first color. It might be a whole different design but it's those first two colors.

KB So what are the main colors?

DP Oooh, I really don't know. Matter of fact. No – this my second year. But the year before then, I was a maid in the second line. I'll have to show you my pictures.

KB Ok, yeah, I'll have to see these!

DP The colors was blue. Like, all different color blues. It was all different color blues.

KB Oh! Okay. I think I saw some. What are those called, the banner things that go across? Someone showed me some of those from the year before and it was two different shades of blue.

DP Yeah, all color blue? Yeah, every ten years it would be the same colors. So it was the 80th anniversary. So every ten years it'll be that color blue. They was celebrating the 80th anniversary. I was a maid that year.

KB So, what's a maid?

DP They pick the queen and the queen pick her court. So you see the queen and you saw the people that was in front of the queen. Well, she pick those people to be in her court. Well, those are the maids.

KB So the queen was a friend of yours?

DP The year I rode? It was my sister.

KB Oh! I met her. Just for a second. She was all dressed up?

DP Uh huh. That was Shirley.

KB And she had her little goblet with the sequins on it.

DP Uh huh, That Shirley. And she had all those colors on her?

KB Yeah, she was so cute. And I was like, look at you and she said "I was the queen last year".

DP And she had the colors on her? That's my sister, Shirley. She was the queen ...2008.

KB I have her on tape so if I make a movie, she'll be on it.

DP Yup, she had on the colors and stuff that we had. That's my sister Shirley. She was queen of that year, 2008. 'Cause it's 2009. Yeah. So, she was the queen and I was like one of the girls in the court with the other girls. So you have the queen and she picks her court.

KB How does the queen get to become Queen?

DP Picked?

KB Yeah, how does she get picked?

DP Well, what we do, well all of the clubs when they get ready to pick the queen. Everybody like, write in – ok – you come and, you say you want to run for queen. And then they pick the queen like that. A lot of people, you can be from anywhere and say you want to run for queen and if your name comes up, then you the queen. And then they tell you the rules and stuff of our club and everybody has they rules of the club and how they do.

(10:17)

KB So, what are the rules for the queen?

DP Not too much, I noticed that!

KB I mean, you just wave and stuff.

DP That's all you do! You just wave. And you go to functions. Every time we give to functions you come and you represent us.

KB Oh, ok. So they have to do it all year.

DP Yeah, they do a yearly thing too. It's like you come, you bring maybe one or your two maids, whatever. You have parties, and go to different other people functions. You come and represent us as, you know, the queen of that year who comin in to ride.

KB What kinds of functions do you guys.....

DP Give? Well we goes to the uh, what is that? We give dances, we give dances, bus rides. Now bus rides you might go to different clubs. You'll ride way in, a different 'nother parish to a club and you pay to get to that club. And when you get there you drink and have fun and bring you back.

KB So it's just all fun and games.

DP It's a drinking club!

KB It's a social club. It's a drinking club!

DP We're like a drinking club!

DP Well, not really, because we do the thing at the Jazz Festival. We have the Jazz Festival. We goes there we have, we fully dressed and we do the second line. You know for the Jazz Festival and stuff. Yeah, that was cool, Yeah, I likeded that. So you dress up, and-

KB Now do you wear the same thing that you wore for the anniversary? You wear the same colors and everything.

DP Uh huh. You wear it to the different functions they have and then every year we change it to another one. So every October you'll see us in a different outfit.

KB So, how many times do you think you wear that outfit?

DP 'Bout, I think maybe three times. To a different functions. The catch to it - they do a lot of other functions but everybody don't have to go to everything. So you

might go, they might pick you to go to some functions and then somebody else go to other functions.

KB But you have to go to the Jazz Fest.

DP Yeah, we goes to the jazz fest. I like the Jazz Fest. We all goes to the Jazz Fest. But everybody don't perform, so, but everybody come as a group.

KB Alright. So, I noticed the women were wearing suits kind of like the men's...has it always been like that?

DP Well, everybody wear the same color and everybody combine -all the colors combine together. So, yeah. We started out that morning – that's when y'all didn't see us – We was at the church, We start out in a church thanking god for this day and asking him for grace to go over us. But, we have skirts on.

KB For the church service?

DP Yeah, we had the skirts. And then we change into the pants. Well you saw us in the pants. Well, we came out in the skirts and then we went and took a lot of pictures and then we started the route. So it's like a whole day. We gets up early in the morning, and you know, we goes to the church and then we goes to _____, we take the big picture as a club, as a group and everything and then we goes to the club where we start out the route.

KB Do you always start at Rockbottom?

DP That's our, yeah, that's our home. We call it our clubhouse.

KB How did that get started?

DP That's one of the original clubs in the 12th Ward because that's where this club started at.

KB Like, you used to have your meetings in the Rockbottom Club?

DP Yeah. Or houses. Mm hmmm. Yeah. Like at the time when the club first started, like when my mom was in it, the club would be upstairs, the barroom downstairs. The club where you go have your meeting was upstairs and then you come downstairs when it's over. And if you notice the house where the queen and stuff came out of, if you walked around the cornder, yeah. When you walked around the cornder and the house the queen was at?

KB And it had a big sign on it?

DP That's the original house where the people who started, the man and the lady who started the Prince of Wales and Lady Wales, the presidents. What you call the president. They the original people. They lived in that house.

KB So you would always start at Rock Bottom and then go to that house.

DP That's where you pick up your ladies at. When my mom was secondlining...the ladies didn't come out of the club. They would walk around the corner to pick up the ladies. And at that time they didn't have queens and maids. All the ladies, the Prince of Wales, was the ladies. And they didn't walk like we do now. They wasn't secondlining. They would ride like in a horse and carriage. Yeah, they ride in cars or horse and carriage they didn't did the, you know, the dancing.

KB That's the whole fun part!

DP I know. Tell you what.

KB I would be glad they switched it!

DP Yup!when my mom was in it. They didn't, they rode. You had the top cars...you had the cars or you had the horse and carriage and all the ladies in there, you know. Now, we not up, we wanna get...we wanna second line.

(15:30)

KB I don't blame you!

KB Do you know why Rockbottom is called Rockbottom? Do you have any idea? I always, like, see that place and I'm like "What is going on there?"

DP It's. The. Bottom. Because it's by the river.

KB That's what I figured, because it's all the way down there.

DP Because you right there by the river. So I guess when they picked that name it was the right name.

KB I guess you can't really get much lower.

DP Can't go no farther – but – down!

KB But in the water.

DP But, it's been there for a long time, since I was a kid.

KB It looks like it has.

DP It has been there a long time.

KB Do you know the names of the people who started the Prince of Wales? You were saying, that live in that house?

DP Yeah...Miss Eloise and...her husband...what was his name? They last name was Parker. Miss Eloise Parker and what was her husband name....and I can't think of his name right off hand.

KB I know I saw it, written on that banner, and I took a picture of it too.

DP It was the Parkers, I know that. My sister Shirley, she know a lot about them. She could tell you about the people names. We was raised up with them but with time you really forget. Jimmy Parker? I think his name was Jimmy.

KB How does your sister Shirley know him? Just 'cause she just—

DP We was raised up in the area. From, from little, you know. She was mostly like on the - you know how you have the sister who's like always out there. And I was like the little church girl.

KB Is she older than you?

DP Yeah.

KB How much older?

DP About two years, I think, older. She about two, two or three.

KB So, she was out there causing trouble.

DP Yeah! You know I was like the little church person, stay in house. She was like, the person who like to go out front. But this year, I have me, my sister Shirley marchin, my sister Julia and my niece gonna march this year. So there's four people. And I think Shirley's grandkids, she got two girls and my grand daughter.So this year we're gonna have more girls, more little girls. 'Cause when you in as a Lady Wales, you bring your kids in, Little Wales bringin them up.

KB Do you have a daughter?

DP (nods her head)

KB Is she interested in joining it?

DP Nah. She's in college. She doesn't have time for it.

KB And it's expensive, too, right?

DP Yes, Oh yes it is. 'cause it's a club thing. You pay year – you pay monthly you know to parade for that year. And it's worth it. It's definitely worth it. 'Cause just think about it if, well, I'm not a person who goes out a lot. So if I was going out, I would be spending like 50 dollars weekly. I can just save that money and give it to the club and then second line on that day.

KB And it's worth it for you, to do that?

DP Uh huh.

KB Because it's tradition.

DP 'Cause people comes out and it's tradition you know to see it. It's pretty. It's nice. Yup.

KB Do you feel like you have to do it because your family did it?

DP Uh uh.

KB You just do it because...

DP Because I want to do it. I don't do nothing because of what my family do. Mmm mmm. No. I do it because it's something to do in New Orleans that – you know? -we used to doing and it's something to keep the young people to know, you know, your roots and stuff. This is like a celebration to us. This is how they celebrate. They anniversary or whatever. For they club. And it just got bigger and people just...

KB Because this is what New Orleans is. People wouldn't do this

DP - somewhere else! They like - what are ya'll doing? Like Mardi Gras. I love to ride the float. Oh! I'm the captain of my float too.

KB Oh, really!

DP I'ma have to show you the pictures...

KB Yeah, I want to see these pictures.

DP Yeah, Mardi Gras and the second line, stuff other states don't do. So when people come to our state and they like, ya'll do all that? You know, right. I be trying to stay into the stuff with I'm born and raised in. That's all I saw when I was

coming up. So you do it. It's like I wanna do this at least one time. When I brought my float, I wanna ride one time. You're like, I just wanted to see it and then you get hooked to it. You're like, I wanna ride every year! (laughs)

KB How long have you been riding the float in Mardi Gras?

(20:00)

DP Five years. I'm going on my sixth year. Of my own float. My own family float, with my family cause we mostly have the 'jority of family and some friends.

KB Do you come from a big family?

DP Uh huh. I came from a family of nine. Four girls and five boys.

KB WHOA! That is big! Where are you? Are you in middle? Are you the youngest?

DP No. I'm between...I'm more closer to the younger ones. I'm down at that end almost. The third to the end. That's me.

KB Ok, so you're the sixth? No, the seventh?

DP No, no, no. I'm more like the 8th. I think I'm the 8th kid. I think I'm about the 8th. My mom had a kid but he passed on. His name was CJ.

DP [PHONE INTERRUPTION] I'm gonna have to call you back – I'm on the air!

KB They're like what does that mean, what is she talking about?

DP Yeah...I'm down there at the bottom. I got a sister and a brother under me. There really was ten kids but nine living kids. I'ma say it like that it was ten kids but nine living kids 'cause he died as a little kid. But I mean you know I always hear my mom talk about him so he was a little baby.

KB But you don't really remember him.

DP He was gone by the time I got here.

KB Is the rest of your family still in New Orleans?

DP We in the area. My sister Julia live Downtown. My sister Shirley live Uptown. I have a sister live in St. John Parish. A brother live in St John Parish. A brother live in Kenner. I live in Metairie. The other one's out of town.

KB Do they come out for the second line?

DP Yeah, for the second line? Everyone who lives in Louisiana comes to the second line. Now, when my sister Shirley was queen, everybody was *something* in the second line. You know...I'm gonna show you all the pictures. If you wasn't a driver, you was in the second line and you did something. It was like, her family was her court. It was like our day to shine. It was coming back. But for Mardi Gras, the whole family from everywhere we come back and ride as a big family.

KB Oh, of course. Everybody wants to come to New Orleans for Mardi Gras! Especially if you're family and you're from here. Now is anyone else in your family involved in any floats in Mardi Gras or do they play music or do anything like that?

DP What, the float? What you talking bout the float?

KB Well, you were saying you were the captain....does anybody else do anything?

DP Well, there's five of us is captains. Well, there's five of us on the float. And then everybody else in the family. So you have the other captain, co-captain, the secretary, the engineering...

KB The what?

DP The engineering.

KB I've never heard of that. What do they do?

DP The engineering. That's my brother in law Jerry. He just makes sure the float is working right and everything.

KB He's like the technical guy.

DP His job is just to make sure the float is working right.

KB Because you don't want to get halfway through the parade and then

DP We break down or something. Yeah, he's the engineering thing. And then the last person is the...wait – the captain, first – something – I forgot.

KB The treasurer?

DP No, this is like – you was the captain but now your turn is gone. My sister Shirley, she was like a captain for like two years. Well, the family was supposed to start everybody takes two years to be captain so you know what to do but (hands up and down – slap) it looks like I'm going to be still in here.

KB Nobody else is stepping in, taking over?

- DP It's a lot of work to do. Lotta work! I mean, it's fun but there's a lot of work to do. And then with me being in a club, you know I'm like, it's like I'm splitting my time.
- KB What do you have to do to get ready for Mardi Gras? I'm sure there's just a long list...
- DP Starting like next month I have to cut out letters for the float. Run around, get a theme for the float. Well, we picked our theme between the five captains...the owners. What we do every year, right after Carnival, we all write what we want to make the theme to be, put it in a hat. Whatever theme come up that's the theme, that I work with, the whole year.
- KB What's your theme for this year? Or is it a secret?
- DP This year, what the theme is, it's going to be Mardi Gras Money Train. The Mardi Gras Money Train.
- KB So, are you going to put dollar bills? And dollar signs all over it?
- DP Uh huh. All over the float. We on the train. It's a money train. And we dressed up like we on the train, youwith the train clothes.

(25:16)

- KB With the conductor hat and things like that....
- DP Uh huh with the hat made into the money.
- KB Oh, that's really creative, I like that.
- DP It's like a whole year thing I think about doing. Oh, I'm getting it together. That's for 2010. That's around the corner, isn't it, it's coming up February.
- KB So do you get all the grandkids and everybody together to help you out?
- DP Uh huh, the whole family. We start working with our float, would be like the end of January. Maybe two weeks. According on how Mardi Gras fall we normally do like a whole month thing, every weekend we gets out there. Wash it down one week. And fried fish and chicken and all that while we working. And then the next week we might paint it all up, just paint it up. Then, the closer we get to the Carnival when we start decorating and everything. So we start decorating the weekend of Mardi Gras. What would be that Saturday and Sunday and maybe that Monday finish it up. Cause you know Tuesday is Mardi Gras. But we give a

- Mardi Gas party that Saturday before Mardi Gras. We give a Mardi Gras party. And it gon' be at the Rockbottom! Cuz that's our home!
- KB That's so cool that you guys do that. Such a great thing to do with your family. To hang out together. To have a project.
- DP Yeah, and get the little ones to notice what to do as they get to be older hopefully they keep. 'Cause my mom loveded Mardi Gras so instead of we celebrate Christmas as a whole like as a big holiday or Thanksgiving, Mardi Gras when we all come home. Wherever you are you come home for Mardi Gras. You know like normal Christmas everybody come home, Thanksgiving everybody come home. Well since my mom's not here anymore...we all celebrate Mardi Gras, we all come home for Mardi Gras. Wherever you at – you know. It's like Michigan, Oklahoma...my oldest brother he's in Syracuse, New York. Everybody comes home for Mardi Gras. Cuz that was her big day. And the grandkids and great-grandkids, everybody gets on the float. And you ride the whole day. Get on about six in the morning, and you outta there about six in the evening.
- KB I'll be looking for you guys. Mardi Gras Money Tree.
- DP Yup, that's us. Money Train, that's us. Gonna be rollin and blowin.
- KB How many do you think there are of you guys all together? Like 50? 100?
- DP Who rides the float? We have about 44 of us who rides the float, that's adults with children. Last year there was 44 of us rode, yeah. So it'll be good to see everybody who comes down and participate and stuff like that. But it's nice. It be nice. Looking forward for that! I'll be tired but...it pays off at the end just to see your people. And friends holler at you. It's like- one person holler your name, everybody's hollerin' your name. You like, where they at? There's so many people you're like, where is they at? So you come up to that float and holler "Donna!, you know, I interviewed you" then I will remember you. Cause I'm in the back. I'm always in the back. So, you can always see me, I'm in the back.
- KB Keeping an eye on everybody?
- DP That's mostly what I do. I sits in the back to make sure because everybody really enjoying themselves but you gots one person really looking over everything. And that's me. I'm sitting back there and I'm eyein' ball because you got a grownup throwing the - she not watching the little ones. She wantin' to stand and throw. I'm like - "Ay! Sit down! Stay on your knees! So you got to watch the kids – Uh! Sit down! You got to make sure they one their knees.
- KB Is there a rail around it?

DP Uh huh. It's a float, and it have benches in it. If you're real little, we got you tied onto the float. But the bigger ones, they can get on they knees. It don't come no higher than like here for a child.

KB Ok. They're not going anywhere.

DP Right, they're not going anywherere. It's mostly family but there's some friends on the float too, close friends. You ride one time, you wanna ride again. It's really nice.

(30:10)

KB Cool, so I was going to ask you about the....you were telling that you go to church before you do the second line? How did that get started?

DP Well, Ok, this what they do. You go to church, have a sermon. I guess they just asking God to ...to watch over them while they're out there. You have to put God somewhere, put God in it. So, most everybody's Baptist, in the club. Maybe some of them Catholic, but not too many. So you goes to church. The church comes from being in the South, where everybody went to church on Sunday. When I was a kid, everybody went. You start out Sunday, of going to church and that's what it is. You go to church and the preacher pray over them, ask God to cover them and then you go out there and enjoy yourself.

KB Do you think all second lines do that?

DP I don't know if all second lines do that but I know we do.

KB What church do you go to?

DP Well.... Aucelet. I think the church is Aucelet. They ...goes to a little bitty church in the 13th ward. Like same surrounding area. And they have a little service and stuff. And then everybody go take their pictures while they're all in the same area.

KB And then you start with the fun part.

DP And then you start with the fun part! It's the second line, you come stepping out there like it's your day to shine.

KB Do you have any, do you remember any crazy events happening at a second line when you were a kid? Anything especially out of control?

DP Nope. Uh huh.

KB Just all good times?

DP Just – just - Just all good times. I always liked it because it was a fun thing and it was a family thing too. I came from out the 12th ward. Wassup - everybody had at 9 kids or more. I didn't know nobody had less than nine kids. I don't know how they made but they did. Everybody had a lot of kids. And everybody know everybody. And it was like a little thing like we from the 12 and 13th ward, the 11th or 12th 13th ward and you walked around and you know everybody, and they had their little group then maybe the next section had theirs, their little thing.

KB So it was a lot of fun?

DP It was a lot of fun. And you just partied all day. That was it.

KB And for a little kid I would imagine it's just-

DP Now when I was a kid when they had the second line and they stopped at the clubs, you know the adults went in there. The kids outside, you know your mom brought you some chips from out there, cold drinks and stuff. Just being around and everybody for a little while, that was nice. So, I liked it.

KB How do you think it went this year?

DP Oh, it was really nice. The weather played a big part.

KB Yeah, the weather was great.

DP The weather was great. Wasn't so hot. 'Cause when it's hot, those clothes be HOT!

KB I bet.

DP But it was really nice this year. Everything just falled in place. I think when you once you put God in front of everything, everything just falls in place. And it's been nice.

KB And the route that you guys took, do you guys always stop at the same places? Like, do you always stop at the Sandpiper? Or is it switched up every year?

DP Yeah, they stopped there. 'Cause when I was the maid we did, yeah. So they make the route so it can come back to the Rock Bottom again. You start there and the route goes back there.

KB Do you usually stop at Commander's?

DP This was the first year that they went in there. They always just like passed it. That was the route, where it would pass. But this year they stopped there.

KB Yeah, they stopped there for a while.

DP Yeah. So this was the first year that they stopped there.

KB Did you guys go into Commander's or just hang out?

DP Oh, I was sitting in the car by that time. I was tired! I don't remember, I was tired. But I think they might have did because we did sit a while, I was tired. My feet hurt.

KB I think we were there for a while.

DP Yeah, so I think they did. 'Cause I was tired this year, I was tired. By the time we got there I was tired. I was sitting in the car.

KB That was the first second line I had ever been to, so I was like, all excited still at that point, but I can imagine if you were dancing the whole time, that does get tiring.

KB Did you want to show me your pictures?

DP This is some of the pictures from when my sister Shirley was Queen. That's my grandbaby.

(35:32)

KB She is so precious.

DP That's my grandbaby. That's when Shirley was the Queen. '08.

KB I like the hats.

DP That's me and my daughter. We look like twins, but that's my daughter.

KB You really do.

DP That's my daughter.

KB And what's your daughter's name?

DP Ebony.

KB Ebony. Does she live here?

DP Mm hmm.

KB And you said she goes to college?

DP Mm hmm. She go to UNO.

KB Cool.

DP And this Shirley.

KB That is the cutest little carriage.

DP Uh huh. So when you the queen, you pick whatever you want to ride in.

KB Where did she get this thing?

DP There's a place in the French Quarter.

KB Like do you rent it out?

DP Uh huh. You dress it up, and they bring it to you.

KB She looks like a little kid.

DP And this must be the colors that you saw, from last year.

KB Yeah, I like this blue.

DP And that's the house I was telling you about, the people goes and pick up the queen.

KB The Parkers. So the Queen, do they get ready at this house?

DP The Queen do, and everybody else comes there already dressed.

KB And the Parkers still live there?

DP Uh uh. She passed on. The lady, and the man. But the daughter, who, I guess she rent it out or whatever, yeah. So they resigning it from the storm and stuff.

KB But they still let people come. I mean, whoever's living there now, still is part of the whole thing.

DP Yeah, because you already really dressed. She just really needs to stay in the front room 'till they come out, 'till they come and getcha. Yeah. But that's me, my daughter and my grandbaby.

KB You guys are cute. So cute with the little suit on. So she was only 3 here? She's tall.

DP Yeah, she's gonna be tall like her dad.

KB So cute. What do you call these things?

DP That's a fan. I made those last year for the second line.

KB Really? How long did that take?

DP Doesn't take that long.

KB Just glue everything on there?

DP Yeah, and that's Shirley comin out the house.

KB She looks like a teenager going to prom. That's crazy.

DP And that's one of the guys in it.

KB What's his name?

DP That's Noland.

KB I remember seeing him.

DP Uh huh. And that's one of the little girls from that year. She was in it last year too. Notice I take a lot of pictures. I like taking pictures.

KB Everybody likes taking pictures. I love these hats, they're so cute. I think the maids get to wear more fun outfits than the ladies.

DP Yup. See but that's the banner, you know.

KB That, they use the same banner every year.

DP Right, every year.

KB How many ladies are there, now? I think I noticed three.

DP We have five ladies, but this year look like we might have a little more ladies. This year we just have five. Look like we might have ten ladies.

KB Wow, cool. Were there five marching this year?

DP Mm hmm.

KB Ok, I don't know where I was.

DP Yup, five of us.

KB Oh, William Jimmy Parker. Good thing you take a lot of pictures.

DP That was the original people.

KB Now this car, does it just follow along for people to ride in?

DP No, this the car me and my daughter, a guy in Kenner, he rode us here and this was what he have on his car.

KB This year, or the last?

DP 2008. This when I was a maid. He rode us in his car. That was her court.

KB That's all the maids and the ladies.

DP Yeah the picture, the light didn't show. But yeah, that was all the ladies. And then that's the kids. That's Shirley's granddaughters.

KB Do they have a name, are they called like the princesses or something?

DP No, they Lil' Wales. They makin their way up to be ladies. And that's some more of the family. You know she had everybody, the family was in it, holding the banner.

KB They're looking sharp, with their gloves.

DP Yeah, they hold the banner for the Queen.

(40:15)

KB So Shirley got to pick out here carriage and everything.

DP Uh huh, everything. She'll tell you like what the uniforms, and those are all the family children.

KB Cool. It's a lot more kids than there were this year.

DP Uh uh, this the year when Shirley was in, this everybody in her court.

KB Oh ok, so they were riding in cars.

DP Yeah, the little ones, the ones in here, the white, rode in the cars. The other ones just walked with the sign, ringing bells, letting you know the Queen coming. And this year pictures I don't have yet. I don't have those, my daughter have a few of them on her camera, but I don't know where her camera at right now. But I'm waiting for the club, too, to give us the picture, with everybody on it.

KB The official picture.

DP Yeah. But this my float right here, my Mardi Gras float. This the first year, the first year we ever road.

KB So what is the theme going on here?

DP Just family, Mardi Gras family.

KB That is huge.

DP That's just the family in the float. Each year, you see both sides of the float. You take pictures. This the next year, that's the other side. You always take pictures of both sides of the float.

KB And this is the year before that- the "Inmates of Mardi Gras". That's a great theme!

DP We was dressed up like we was prisoners. It was kinda cold that year, not too many came to ride. But yeah, that's the next year, the opposite side of the float. That's the other side. You see both sides of the float. And then another year.

KB The "Graduates of Mardi Gras".

DP That's when we had the cap.

KB In Mardi Gras colors.

DP The cap like, you know, the cap and gown.

KB I don't know what that thing is called, but. Very cool.

DP Opposite side.

KB God, you have a huge family.

DP And then this another year.

KB The Red Carpet. That's cute.

DP So it's like these people stepping out to the ball and stuff. So we draw the little people on there and it looks like they stepping out from their houses, you know, like you going out, you stepping out.

KB Who made the little people? Did you do that?

DP My son. My son mostly do a lot of the drawing for us.

KB So how many kids do you have?

DP I have three. I have two sons both of 'em in the service. I have a son, he overseas in South Korea and my other son, he's in Oklahoma at Fort Sill. And my daughter who's in college. And that's this year. That's the opposite side of the float. That's this year.

KB What is with the stuffed animals hanging here? Are these your mascots?

DP Uh-uh, that's just the people's stuff to throw.

KB Ohhhh, ok. So this is at the very beginning.

DP Uh huh, this is like the line-up where you go in there and you get into the line-up.

KB I can't really tell if you guys are wearing cowboy hats?

DP Uh huh.

KB Ok I see, and the kerchief or whatever. Bandanna.

DP The bandanna.

(44:00)

(0:06)

DP So this year for Halloween, we went to a Halloween party, me and my cousin dressed up from our club for Mardi Gras. That's how we lookeded.

KB That's your cowboy outfits. And fake guns.

DP Now these are my babies who was riding my float.

KB Wow. Look at those little cowboys and cowgirls. Yeah see that would be so much fun to do with your family. That's a great tradition.

DP Mmm hmm.

KB Awesome. Well thanks for showing me those. I don't know if I have any more questions. Is there anything else you'd like to say about the Prince of Wales, or?

DP I like the Prince of Wales. (laughs)

KB I know you do.

DP And the Lady Wales. It's really a good organization to be in. You know, I mean, everybody has they ups and down. You come to meeting fussing sometimes. BUT – once at the end, you know, it all comes together. Every time at meeting it's not great, you know, because somebody gonna do some fussin'. But we there to put one thing together and that's what we do. Yep, I like it.

KB And at the end it all comes together.

DP Yeah, it comes together at the end.

KB Oh, I was gonna ask you one thing....After Hurricane Katrina, did Prince of Wales pick it right back up the next year?

DP Yup. Just start right back again. They didn't parade that year because of the storm but the following year they started back up again.

KB Was it as big? Or....was there... less people that year?

DP Talking about come out to the route? It wasn't so big, but, because you know a lot of people were still coming back...and people who made it back – well, it's something to do on a Sunday sides hitting a nail with a hammer, you know, trying to get your house back together. OVERLAP Let's take a break! Go out to the second line.

KB Were there as many people in the Prince of W club right away or, did they, were some people still not living in the city the next year?

DP Yeah, I don't think a lot of them - You'll have to ask them, I wasn't in the club then. But I was here for the storm. I didn't leave. I stayed right here in Louisiana.

KB Right here in the city? Or where? Right here in this apartment?

DP No, I was living in 205, the next building.

KB But pretty much right here.

DP Uh huh.

KB How was it?

DP Well, the day of the storm, well, it was - I wouldn't want to be here again but – it rained really really hard and the wind was, it sounded like a train, the wind sounded like a train was coming through. And I was looking out the window – you see that big BINGO hall over there? Well, it was like if somebody was just taking the nails out of the roof over there. The wind was just that strong. Where you, where stuff was just throwing around. And wasn't really scary...like, I really thought it was like when the rain- it came. It was five families left on this street and everybody know who was goin' to be here. And this a big block and if you notice, if you go further down the numbers get higher. And it was like five families left and everybody know who was here.

KB So you can check on each other.

DP Right. Five families. And it rained and it poured and the roof- I was living upstairs at the time in the next building- and the little roof came loose. Just a little piece and I'm like fussin' – I can't wait to see the landlord and tell him bout my roof but when the rain stopped and everybody went outside and I saw some houses didn't have NO roofs!

KB And you stopped fussing!

DP I thanked God for my little roof. And we went there and patched it up. We stayed here like about five to six days before we left. 'Cause my daughter have asthma and she had just had the baby. So...

KB Really?

DP Myra came in March and the storm came, you know, in September. September?

KB August?

DP It was like the end of August, beginning of September.

KB I think you're right. So she was tiny.

DP It was up in that area. And after a while, you think about it, it was hot. But it was like a few families left. We ate everyday. We went outside. You can tell we is from New Orleans – we barbecued every day outside! OVERLAP. We brought the food outside and the water was, well- we not in the city, we on the outskirts of the city. The water was really low. After a while...

(5:18)

KB And you were on the second floor, so it's not like you had to worry about the water coming in.

DP And what we did, the cars what was left here – Sorry – but we hotwired y'all car so we could get some light. To make sure we got some lights in the building.

KB How did you do that?

DP I dunno. Ask them guys! So we had the cars facing on the yard there, we turned them around to face here so we can see what was going on in your alley.

KB Because you had no electricity...?

DP No, the lights had went out then. So, every day we like got up, washed up, you know you had the kids. The kids didn't really know what was going on, they just figure – Some days! They thought it was like camping out. "We'll sleep outside tonight, on the balcony, and the porches".

KB Did you have running water here?

DP Yeah, we had running water here 'cause we not from the main part of the city. We didn't even know that the city was getting flooded. I found out the city was getting flooded when we left and went to Baton Rouge. Cuz after five or six days then you use common sense, it's time to go. It don't look like nothing coming on, she's a baby, it's getting hot. So we left. Once we got to Baton Rouge, by my brother, and we looking at the news we like Damn! New Orleans! It's like a hop and a skip from here! It's tored up!

KB So, for five or six days you had no idea? You didn't see the news? That's crazy.

DP Nothing! We didn't see no news or anything. And we didn't know it was like....Dat! I mean, you heard something on the radio, barely. Because the stations was going off so you really didn't hear nothing. And I mean....GOD, you know? So we stayed in Baton Rouge about maybe a week, then left and came back to St. John's Parish, back up- to my sister Elenore's house. She had went to Texas with her job, from the nursing home, so she went to Texas and we stayed in her house. And then when they say you can come back to the Parish. They was letting so many people in but you had to get back out at a certain time.....we came back, check the house. But our house was good. I mean, like I said, my daughter's roof was leakin' but we tacked it up before we left and when we came back after the second storm...it was just the wind hitting it and it was just like everything went into the plasket. So thank God I ain't lost nothing but her bedroom. That was it. Just her room because that room was where the hole was at and when the next storm came it just brought it down into it.

KB So, you went from here to Baton Rouge and then to St. John Parish. How long did you stay there?

DP In St John Parish? It must have been about two weeks or something 2-3 weeks. And we came back home and– I wanted to come back home cuz I'm homesick. I ain't goin too far. We came back home and all the lights was back on and the water Everything in our parish was back on but it was just the groceries, when we wanted to go get groceries we had to go so far – back up the highway. But it was okay, cuz as soon as I got back I went right back to work. Well, not at my job, it was still closed. But I started working at the hospital in the city at Touro Infirmary.

KB How was that?

DP Scary! Half of the nights we had to stay there. Because nothing in New Orleans. When it got dark, it got dark! But, I enjoyed it, I worked at the hospital, putting the hospital back together. And I don't think I ever want to do that again but! (laughs). Comin home at night time! Thank god I got them big ol' lights on my car! OVERLAP

KB I can't imagine driving though NO with no lights! That would be so creepy.

DP It's like, if I hit something, I'm sorry, but I'm not goin' to stop and find out! But we had to get gas and everything. Everything you had to get was in this parish if you had to go to New Orleans. Every day we left to go work, me and my daughter, we left to go to work, and we had to make sure everything, that gas and everything was always filled because coming out wasn't really nothing there. Wasn't too many stores. Everything you had to go to St. Roes from Metairie up the highway.

(10:05)

KB Were people in the city asking you to bring them stuff?

DP Yeah, like every day. Yeah, you get a list. Oh, you goin to the sto'? You get a list – bring me this, bring me that! Everybody was like, oh what are you doin' there? You comin back? Why are you going back home? But everybody see, don't know - Metairie, Kenner, we got hit but not as hard as the city. Nothing didn't break. The canal didn't come this way. But I didn't...I stayed right here. Then I left bout Christmas time, right after Christmas. I think it was after Christmas to go see my son. He was in Florida. I went to see my son in Florida. And my other son, he was in Oklahoma. But I ain't stayed long. And then I come back home. And everybody like, you going home? Like, yeah? 'Cause I live in Metairie, I don't live in New Orleans.

KB I don't think people realize that, it's close – but it's not...

DP It's not that close! But out here the wind tore us up more than the water. So a lot of the houses got tore up with the wind than the water itself. Now in certain areas it did. But I live in a higher area, not the river. See you got the river over there and the lake at that end, so I'm in like the higher part. And then there's a good highway right here. Stay on this highway! Tell you one thing, it was a lot of jobs. If you wanted a job after the storm, you had one. Unless you just didn't want one. They had people, had signs everywhere. So me and my daughter, we was making the change. We was working everywhere. Trying to get it! Trying to get it! But besides that I don't think I'd want to do it again, go through it again. The city got tore up but we didn't. We got tore up in certain areas. But, you know it wouldn't be something I think I would wanna do again. But if I have to, I have to.

KB I mean, you never know.

DP Right. What if all of a sudden the weather change on us, you know.

KB I'm from Florida and it's like, if you want to live here, you gotta deal with it.

DP But besides that. Everybody like – did you see dead people every day? I'm like, NO, I didn't see no dead people! No! Touro is, you know– it's in a high area, you know. A lot of that stuff was further back, but the water, I guess, came up in certain– I don't know, but to me it looks like we're in a bowl...I would think at the river, there would have been more water...I know we in the bowl so maybe I must be on the top of the bowl or something I don't know. But if they say to leave, I don't know, I would have to figure it out. It's a chance you have to take, you know. I think I would leave. Say – go! See ya'll! Come back. I left, we had a storm here and I left, came back, nothing had happened. Just sittin' on the highway that makes you mad. Make you want to turn back around and come home.

KB Yeah, after you done that a couple of times, you're like, well I'm not leaving this time

DP Light blink off and it come back on. But just to get away, I think I would. But next time something comes I think I would leave. Just to get away for a while and den come back. But traveling far, I'm not a long distance traveler. I gets tired quick. So...

KB You like to be home.

DP Like to be home. Everybody I know is here. Everybody buried is here. So I don't have nothin' really to go too far for. My mom is, right up the street at the graveyard.

KB Oh really? What graveyard is she buried at?

DP Air Providence. This home. Everybody here. Your mom your grandma up there. I don't think I can make home nowhere else. I think I can adjust to another place but it still wouldn't be like here. You know, getting up on a Sunday and okay - I'm used to going to the lakefront or the park or the zoo area. They might not have all that stuff. And I gotta go drinking. Some places you can't go drinking on the weekends.

KB I would not want to live in one of those places.

DP Can't drink! I'm used to place you can drink 24 hours, anytime of the night! We party late. They like, what time....In OK, take them. Everything closes at 2 00. OVERLAP 2 00!! I start getting dressed at 11 30, 11 40 I'm walking outta my do'...I need to go somewhere where when I feel like coming home, I'm a come home. .

(15:38)

KB If you're going to go out I don't think they should be kicking you out when they want.

DP I like to come in when the sun maybe coming up. I'm going out when it's almost morning anyways.

KB Yeah, New Orleans is one of a kind.

DP I love here. Nuh uh, no....And its boring in some places on Sundays. It's like nothing to do. There something to do, here, always. There's something to do and something to go to. A baby shower. A wedding reception. Something is going on in Louisiana. We party for everything...we party when somebody passed on. We party, we just party. That's all. You _____, we throwing a party. You getting a divorce, we having a party! Your momma pass on, we having a party! That's just Louisiana.

KB That's how people are.

DP Parties and suppers. That's what we do here.

KB Eat. And Drink.

DP Girl, what you want? You want some gumbo? You know. That's what we do here, we eat. I know, my family who is away from here, who married people from far away, they come here, they like that's what you do here, you cook? That's all we do, baby, come on in. You cook. Call me like a week ahead, let me know you're coming, 'cause I will cook some gumbo and food that I don't really cook all the time. Unless family comes in town, I make everything.

KB Because you gotta make a bunch of food.

DP Right. I don't cook all the time but when family comes in town I love to cook. When family around, I cook. When no family around – don't cook, folks! My grandbaby- macaroni and cheese, that's what she wants, that's what she gets. Let somebody say they coming home, I'm cooking everything. I'm getting ready to cook, I'm going to the store, I'm cooking meals up. Oh, you want some candy, I'll make some candy and everything. That's just because I like to cook. And I'm the type of person, when I cook, I'm heavy handed. I cook for a lot of people. I cook for people who want to eat.

KB You don't want to cook for just one or two people.

DP My daughter, she's very picky eating at times. She loves Popeyes, she can't go anywhere without her Popeyes. Let somebody call and say they coming home. Like my son Raymond. He call and say him with some of his friends from the service coming and I'm cooking. I'm a cook something different and all day, different dishes from here. Because I love to cook.

KB You love to cook when there's someone who's gonna to appreciate it.

DP Yeah, when they come and eat the food. But not – I don't worry about cooking. I love to cook. I can't bake. But I can cook.

KB That's how I am! I always forget about things when I'm baking them.

DP I don't know about baking but I can cook. Ask anybody – I can throw down when it comes to cooking. Holiday coming up – oh, I can cook. Christmas – make sure y'all put that down. My favorite dish is a lasagna. It's a seafood lasagna. It's something nobody cook but me. It's something I made up for my family.

KB What's it got in it?

DP Have all kinds of seafood in it.

KB Shrimp and crab?

DP Uh huh, shrimp, crab and crawfish. A little brown meat. So if you're down here for Christmas, look me up. But only time I make it is once a year every Christmas.

KB You make a huge batch of it?

DP Yeah, and everybody like...lasagna? You have to taste this lasagna. It's not a regular lasagna. I started it in the late eighties, when, you know you cook

Thanksgiving dinner you turn around a few days later and it's Christmas and I didn't want to cook the same thing, what I just had cooked. So I'm like ok, I cooked the ham, the next holiday I cooked the turkey. It gonna be one or the other. And so one day I was cooking, and I don't know, I had a little of everything left, whatever I was supposed to put in the gumbo, said I got all this macaronis here. What I'm gonna do, is I made lasagna, and I been making it ever since.

KB Because everyone loved it probably.

DP Everyone loves it! And it's like, everybody's like, you can't cook it for Mardi Gras? And I'm like uh uh, just for Christmas. So if you come home for Christmas, I will have it.

KB Do you do a big thing for Thanksgiving?

(20:20)

DP Not really, no, because my family, we have a calendar for the year. And every holiday- because my family is so big we each can take a holiday. And that's the best thing for us. So every holiday is at somebody's house and everybody brings a dish to that person's house

KB And there's so many of you, you only have to bring like one dish.

DP Yeah, that's what we do. Because the family, just the ones who here in Louisiana, it's just that big. And instead of the same person having the family all the time, we don't do it like that. From the beginning of the year, somebody have some kind of holiday. We always cook – I'm always cooking something to have at home. Cuz you go out, you come back home you want to have something to eat. So I cook something. So I'm always at Christmas, I always cook a big meal. Even I go out to whoever have the holiday, but I always still have something at home. I tell everybody make sure you have something so when you get to your own house. Because you think about it, my kids not little no more, but when they was little, you go out to your mom's house, you have all this food there and then you get home and they like "Mom, I'm hungry". I'm like "you didn't eat when you was at Grandma's?" But you had all your cousins and everybody you wanted to play with, you're not really hungry. But as soon as you get home, "Mom, I'm hungry". "You hungry? All that food?" From now on I will cook before I leave, so when I get back y'all will have something to eat.

KB Smart.

DP Time on and I'm like, I will cook something. It might not be so big, but it's gonna be something. So I tell everybody when you go out, have something, you know, something to come back to, 'cause you're gonna be hungry. You know? You eat all the food, you're talking to everybody and you're enjoying yourself, you might

be eating a little food but you're not really thinking, I got nothing in that kitchen to snack on. You bring a plate home, and half the time you're eating it while you're driving.

KB Or the kids eat it and it's gone.

DP It's gone. So, have something to come back home to, but don't forget, Christmas, to look me up.

KB Alright. I don't know if I'm gonna be here for Christmas, but if I am, don't be surprised if I come knocking on your door.

DP Now if you come after three you might don't catch me 'cause I'll be gone. But if you come early, I'll be home. I don't normally leave my house until late in the evening 'cause you know my grandkids, I'll have Christmas and stuff here with them. And then we go out to the family, whoever have it. Our family gets together late in the evenings, gives everybody a chance to be with their own family, and then everybody comes together. Big family somewhere, at somebody's house, 'cause we don't go to no hall. Sit down anywhere you sit, just take a seat. It's more fun to have stuff at the family house than at like a big hall, yeah. You understand me, don't act like you don't know. So it be everywhere. And we party when we all together, you know. You talking about old times and everybody sitting around laughing. They're like you did this – you used to do that. And the little ones, they startin' to get big now. So my sisters, they kids, my sisters got kids – it's getting around to the 4th generation of the family now. So it's time for the nieces to do the cooking, instead of the sisters. Right, so we don't cook, like, talking about it. So my sister's daughter, if she ever get a house- I hope she ever get one, so we can go to her house. I understand you're still in school, wanna be a schoolteacher, but ok. But try to get the house, so we can go to her house, you know. Now, it's like, my nieces they have they houses. So now we goes to their house. We still got to cook for them cuz they don't know what they're doin'. We got to break y'all in. Instead of comin to our house now we go to your house. Might have to come there two, three days before the holiday to cook for ya. Show you what to do for that day, you know? Make sure, girl, that you cook that dressing right, 'cause family coming over. Family coming over. Make sure them cakes bake right.

KB One day they'll get it right and then you can just relax.

(25:31)

DP Yeah. By that time, my grandkids will be cooking, I guess.

KB You'll be teaching them

- DP That's Louisiana, that's it. When I was a kid, Christmas was like, you go from house to house, everybody. You ate at your own house and then soon you go to your friend's house and you know you're not hungry and your friend's mama say "Come and get a plate!"
- KB You can't say no.
- DP You can't say no. Then you go to the next friends house, just to see what toy they got and they - Come and get something to eat!" "Ok, but I think I had some gumbo already" "What you say!" "Miss, I'm comin', I'm comin'" (laughs) That's just here. I like Louisiana. I'll go to other states. But I don't think it's nothing - I don't have fun with anybody. I enjoy staying here. We have our ups and downs and different other stuff but it's home. Every other state have they good parts and bad parts. But family wise - this a good place. To me, it's a good place. I love the city but I left the city like 20... - my daughter is 23, I left the city 22 years ago.
- KB Well, it's so close you can always go-
- DP Yeah - I go to party there, then... everything and then come back home. To rest. I don't go OUT here. So, you know, I lives here. When I get ready to go out - everything in the city. Ask me about the city. Here, I live here and I work here, that's it. I go out in the city.
- KB Why did you decide to leave the city?
- DP I left the city once my kids got ready to go to school and the education was much better out here than the city. At that time.
- KB Is it still the same way?
- DP No, now you have different schools, you have different people running the schools. It's not just one person running all of the schools. At that time you just had one school. Now...you can pick and choose. At that time you just had one school. Then you had everything under the school board and now they have different...charter schools and school of the arts. OVERLAP. Yeah, so I left the city when my babies was getting ready for school age. To give them a better education. So we moved to the parish here so they can get a much better education at that time. They could get a much better education at that time.
- DP So, I got three kids graduated. To be a single parents.
- KB Good job.

DP Three. Kids. Graduated. My two sons came in the top ten in they class. My oldest son was the what do you call it? The valedictorian? Or the *kingdoctorian*, whatever you call them.

KB Wow. Is he the one in South Korea?

DP Yup. South Korea right now. Wait, North Korea. And my other son he's in the service too, in Oklahoma. And my daughter in college.

KB And she's going to be a school teacher?

DP Yup, she's going to teach K - 3rd grade or Pre K – 3rd grade.

KB That's a fun age!

DP She's going to be in that school stuff. She loves children. I can't be a school teacher....no way. I'll tell him off – they'd come home with a different word every day. Well, Miss Donna said...! Naahh baby.

KB Yeah, I tried that schoolteacher thing for a couple of years and it didn't work out for me. So I know how you feel.

KB Well, cool! Thank you so much for your time. I got like an education. I learned all kinds of stuff.

DP But I like it here. If you ever want to make home here, go right ahead.

KB I' m tempted.

DP I know you like the food, so-

KB Mmm hmmm. Who doesn't?

DP We have some good food here. But you ain't had no food till I cooked it. So make sure you make it down some day. Is you gonna cook? I like to cook for people. I love cooking. My sons- I got to know a lot of people come from out of town...you know the people that ride the bicycles? The Mormons?

KB Mm hmm. And they knock on your door?

DP My sons, they used to like the Mormons, and go to they church and then they'd bring them home and every time they come, I'd cook for them. And when they left, they told their friends. Y'all go there. She like to cook! I'm just a friendly person, so. That's justLouisiana – I think, the people in the south.

KB That's how you grew up.

DP Yeah, somebody stop you and say “You know where this skreet at?” If I know where that skreet at, I almost put you at the house. You know, you go down here, then you go three blocks, then you see that big sign – don’t pass it up, turn. When I’m finished with you, I almost got you at they door. And where to go at. Just where to go. Boy, I know there’s other states you go to and you ask them about a street and “I dunno”. What do you mean you don’t know? You born and raised here and you don’t know?

(30:56)

KB Or they say, it’s down there but they don’t help you out, really.

DP And that’s just me. If somebody asks me something and if I know where it’s at, or where to go, I try to tell you where to go and where not to go, you know? ‘Cause if I’m somewhere or my children’s somewhere, I would want somebody to tell them where to go or where not to go. So the south is friendly folks, we friendly people, you know. And cooking, we can cook. So how long you been here?

KB Only a few months.

DP Oh, for school?

KB Yeah.

DP You from Florida? What part of Florida?

KB Jacksonville.

DP Oh, I’ve been to Jacksonville.

KB Really? What for?

DP My son was, it was a navy base he had to visit.

KB Mayport is on the ocean, and Cecilfield is on the river.

DP I think that’s the one we had to go to. Yeah, he was stationed there, but not that long. I went to visit him. And yeah I went to Jacksonville, Florida. And I’ve been to Disneyworld, so yup. So I’m like, ok.

KB So you’re like, yeah, this is Florida.

DP I like Florida. It’s kinda, but I like Florida.

KB Are you sure?

DP It was nice. I went to Disneyworld, it was kinda hot. I want to go back one day again, but I want to go on a cruise, the cruise they have.

KB Oh yeah. I've never even been on a cruise.

DP I never been on a cruise and I'm scared of water, but I want to go someday, when I make my 50 birthday. I will go when I make the 50 birthday. I think I'm gonna go on a cruise, or give a party out on the water. 'Cause you know the boats here goes out in the Mississippi and come back for like three hours, three to four hours.

KB Yeah I heard that's really fun.

DP And you can give a party. So I'm thinking about giving a party out in the water. So I'm thinking about doing it for my fifty birthday party. Maybe my sons'll cough up the money.

KB They should, for your fiftieth. That's what they're supposed to do.

DP Cough up that money. But my son, he want me to come over where he at, and I'm like babe I'm sorry, I ain't leavin the state. I'm sorry, I don't think I'm leavin the state.

KB No, for your birthday you should be here, and everybody should come.

DP Yeah, you know, be with my friends and stuff. Everybody I know, right here. Like my job, right here. Been on this job almost, close to 20 years.

KB Where do you work?

DP Chateau de Jean (sp). It's an apartment complex in Metairie, right before you get across the bridge like if you on the Causeway, like if you on the Causeway goin across the lake there, it be before the lake.

KB And what do you do there?

DP Supervise the housekeeping.

KB And you been there how long?

DP Almost 20 years.

KB Wow.

DP About 18. Like it too.

KB Yeah, it sounds like it.

DP It's like a family thing. Everybody been there a long time. We got some new people since the storm, but before the storm everybody been there like five years on up, like 20, 30 years. It's a place like you get there, you ain't leaving, 'cause it's like home. You know, it's comfortable. It's nice, there's family. It's like a family, you know.

KB Your friends and your coworkers altogether.

DP They more like family. So it's like, everybody been there. But we got a lot of new people since the storm, but I mean, it's family, you know. Been there long, I raised my kids up there, you know, so. One lady been there, Diana, been there a long time, like almost 30 years, that's my friend. But everybody is home. And I think that's how it should be at anybody job. You know, you got to treat it like family. These family, these people I see every day, you know.

(35:04)

KB Yeah, cause you're not gonna let somebody down if it's like your family.

DP Yup, so.

KB You want them to treat you the same way you would a stranger.

DP Mmm hmm. And I like it. It's really funny how I got that job, you wanna know how I got it?

KB Yeah, tell me.

DP This what happened. It was in the newspaper, a little bitty ad, a little candle saying "Help Wanted Housekeeping". So I goes to the job and the lady who was the supervisor at that time, she asked me why should I hire you. I said 'cause God give me the job. And they like who? Say that again? I said, God give me the job. And guess something, I'ma see you gone. I'ma be here, you gonna be gone.

KB You told that when they interviewed you?

DP You know what the lady told me? Did you want a cold drink? So I'm like, yeah. So she said, I'm gonna call you. I'm like ok, I'll be workin by next week I guess. So I walks out the place and two ladies comin into the building. They ask me where was the office. I said, what you looking for the office for? You know, you looking for apartments? They're like, no, coming to put the application in for the housekeeping. I said, the job already been filled, baby. Sorry.

KB Don't even waste your time. Did they leave?

DP Yup. I said, baby, that job is already filled. And now two days later, the lady called me. And I been there ever since. Yup, ever since. It was just-

KB You knew that was the job for you.

DP Right. I was working at a place, I was working like every day, and I, you know, my faith is in God. And I asked him, if you give me a job, I will come back to church on Sundays. ‘Cause the job I was working was like nine in the morning on Sundays to nine at night, all day on Sundays. And I guess, must have gave me favor, ‘cause this job I been off all weekends and holidays. I don’t work weekends and I don’t work holidays.

KB Perfect.

DP And it was just meant for me, you know? And I been there ever since. And I saw about five or six supervisors left. And I’m still there. And I’m still there, at the same job. So it’s just meant for me to be there I guess, you know. But it was kinda weird ‘cause the lady like, when I told her you want a cold drink, I’m like sure, why not.

KB I’ll just make one myself at home.

DP No, so I’m like, yeah, sure. And when she called me to come to the job, she gave me an apartment, told me to go do the apartment. And I’m like, ok, I would think you comin to show me what to do, you know, like-

KB Yeah, she didn’t?

DP Nope, she just gavn me the key, told me the apartment number to go to. And I’m like ok, maybe she’ll come up here. Didn’t come, so I had to start cleaning up everything. And when I come back she like, you finish it? And I’m like yes, go check.

KB Like, do you have any questions?

DP I see you tomorrow! And I been there ever since. And I’m like, ok, yup. But I always give my best wherever I go, whatever I do. I’m gone give you the best, 100%, know that’s what I’m gonna give you, that’s it. It’s like at the hospital after the storm, a lot of them patient rooms, hooo. I was having like a whole ward nobody there but me. I’m like Lord after the storm I wonder if anybody died in here or something you know. It like ok, you go clean this whole wing, get it back open. You know, I’m like ok, you say clean it, that’s what I do. That’s what I’m gonna do. So, yup. And then after that, worked at a nursing home out here in Kenner, and then my job where I’m at, they have rebuilt, and they called me like “Donna! We back open!” I already told the nursing home people I wasn’t gonna

be there long. Like, don't give me a section, 'cause, you know, I'm like I wanna be a floater. Whoever off I'll do they area, I don't want an area because I wasn't gonna be there. So when my job opened up, I gotta go back home. It's like kinda looking at me crazy too. Like, how you know they gonna hire you back? And I'm like, girl, I'm telling you. And they like ok, we gone give you. I'm like don't give me a section, I'll work in everybody spot. You know, it's like, you a good worker, you need to have your own spot. I'm like ok, job call me, I'm gone.

KB And then you're gonna be missing somebody.

DP One day I was at work and the phone rung. She like Donna, we open! Went there, I said, look, I'ma finish this weekend out, but I'm outta here. 'Cause my job called me back. I told you, I was leaving you. It's like, you know, we really like you. And I'm like, uh uh, gotta go back. Yup, you know, it's like, how bout if we keep you and you just come on weekends?

(40:19)

KB I like to have my weekends off!

DP I like to have my weekends off, and holidays, okay? It's not about the pay. It wasn't about the pay. It was, you know, if something I liked to do, that's me, I'll do it. Not, it wasn't about the pay. I'm not worrying about the pay, you know. Yup. And a lot of jobs, you know, that's, people look at the pay. It's like I'm not worrying about the pay. If it's just something I like doing, then I like doing it.

KB You like the people-

DP Right, and I like where I'm at. I don't worry about the pay, 'cause I never worry about the pay. Not here anyway, when I get home, that other side of the world. Yup, when He call me home, that's when I get paid.

KB You're rich.

DP Yeah. I ain't looking for this pay here. Yup. Besides that, you know, it's really nice. So I hope you had a nice interview with me.

KB Yeah, I loved it. It was great. Alright.

(41:20)