

Exceptional Spelling?

British
Honduras

checked ✓ ?

FL 1983

Community
10.

Exhaustive (20)

Family

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NEW JERSEY MULTI-ETHNIC

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH

Vernon Bevans

April 15, 1980

Interviewer: Cindy Popolillo

Transcriber: Pat Thomas

Cassette #1, Side #1

Int: What is your name?

Bev: Vernon Bevans.

Int: What is your age?

Bev: 37

Int: Place of birth?

Bev: British Honduras.

Int: Your nationality?

Bev: British.

Int: Could you give me a discription of what it's like in the British Honduras?

Bev: First of all it's a tropical country. I guess I should give you an approximate location of where it is. It on the mainland of Central America, boarding on the easter set of Caribbean Sea. On the west is Guatemala. Northern boundry is Mexico. The southern boundry is Honduras. They are Spanish as opposed to British Honduras. The weather ??? from March until June is hot,

85 degrees, sunny. From July on it rains and there is a lot of mosquitoes.

Int: How do the people live down there? Is it different from here?

Bev: The standard of living is a whole lot different as what you can expect in any country different from the United States. The standard of living is by comparison less, the income level is less. The cost of things in the country is more expensive than here despite the difference in wage and income. People there are a mixture of several ethnic backgrounds. Primarily Spanish and East Indian. The country is basically English speaking. The secondary language is Spanish ??? because of the influence of Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. There is also a very strong mix of a group called ??? which is some descents ??? tribe from the ??? of the westward islands on the Caribbean.

Int: What language do they speak?

Bev: The language is called Carib also. It's a mixture of German, French. I don't speak it.

Int: Kind of like ??? is?

Bev: Not really. It is a language. I don't know what the ??? is. It's not a broken English or is it verbal Spanish. It's very distinctive language. I have no idea what it is.

Int: Are you forced then, if you live there, to speak several languages or can you get along with just one.

Bev: I'm forced to speak good English. (laughs) We have a ??? which is really distorted English. You might say it funkated English. We don't say words completely. We tend to shorten words. If I might say, "Come here." I might say, "???"

Int: Wow.

Bev: Which is come here. Okay?

Int: Would you spell it the same way we do?

Bev: No. You would say C-O-Y-A. Or if it'd say, "Could you get that for me?" I'd say, "Get that for me?" It's lazy English. It's the only way I could interpret it as lazy or funkated English. But we are, about the time when I left the only language I had to speak was English. But I think today they are encouraging Spanish because of the heavy influence of Spanish that live in the area. There is also a large group of ??? Indians in the country. There is a very heavy culture of ??? Indians. They are well know for the world ??? ??? United States, in New York, and in England. That's also a relatively high percentage, I would say the ??? Indian tribe in the country is probably 20 percent or better.

Int: You have really seen an actual tribe?

Bev: Yeah.

Int: ??? ???.

Bev: You can't tell they ??? ???. They live right next to us.

Int: When did you first decide to leave home?

Bev: It wasn't really my decision to make. My parents came here and being dependent as I was on them I followed naturally.

Int: Do you have any idea why they wanted to leave?

Bev: The standard of living is the same reason why most people would go to a foreign country and look for a better way of life. I suspect that that was the reason.

Int: Do you have any idea why they picked the United States?

Bev: Well, it seems to be the one that offers the best oppertunity. It's the one that well known and given the choice that's left it's the best one to come to

as far as getting here, as far as the possibilities of a future. The things you heard from people, the things you read, the things you see in the movies. That has a lot of influence on the people there. One wouldn't want to go to England because of the cost of getting there, mostly. The job opportunities doesn't seem to be as great as they are here. Most of our friends and family come here and so the only news you get back about any foreign country is the United States. So, the natural place to go is the United States. Mexico and the Latin American they are Spanish speaking. We don't speak spanish. I don't.

Int: Would that make a difference? Most immigrants don't care about coming here and not being able to speak English. Most of them can't. You have the advantage there.

Bev: That's true perhaps but the other thing, if you stick to the reason why not Mexico is because Mexico and a lot of Latin American, as far as we knew then, maybe that's different now, it dosen't seem to have a strong middle class and your more obviously a fireigner in Mexico and Quatamala and opposed to the United States. It's a single national ????. Single ethnic background. So, your an odd ball.

Int: And here it's a melting pot of everybody. Nobody is actually an American. Everybody is a descent of somebody.

Bev: Right.

Int: Where did you first come to?

Bev: I came to Brooklyn.

Int: Brooklyn?

Bev: Yeah. (laughs)

Int: That's quite a difference.

Bev: I came to Brooklyn first and I guess I ??? in Brooklyn for 5 years or so and, I guess, wondered to different parts of New York, New York State.

Int: How long did you - You stayed there for 5 years? Was there a reason why they went to Brooklyn?

Bev: Yeah, I think the influence to go to Brooklyn was ??? ??? family here. An uncle who has been here for probably 20 years before my parents got here. I think Brooklyn was as good as one as any. We had friends in Brooklyn, family in Brooklyn.

Int: It was more like ties that took you there?

Bev: It's more like ties that took us there. It could have been Manhattan or Queens or Bronx or anyplace. There was no, as far as you knew the states was the states and you didn't know there was a Brooklyn or a Bronx.

Int: When you came did you plan to go back?

Bev: No, there was no time to go back. My mother was born in another country and she was a permanent residence by the time I was ready to get here. So, that I had no plans to go back. Maybe I'm not so sure ??? plans to go back.

Int: To live here for a while and go back there to live again?

Bev: I don't know that I made plans in that direction at all. I made plans to live in which ever direction I went that's the one that I'll follow. So, that plans in the near future would be to live here. As far as ??? ??? here or there. My plans is to live where it's most comfortable.

Int: How did you come here?

Bev: We flew to Miami and from Miami to here.

Int: To get into Miami must have been like home to you compared to where you were going. The climate was ???

Bev: Climate wise, yeah. I came in November and it was cold. The wind was cold ??? ???

Int: You never felt cold like that?

Bev: I have never felt anything below 65 degrees. When you hit 65 degrees ???
???. Usually when it gets that cold in my country it's either rainy, windy.
It's never blue skies and 65 degrees. If it's blue skies it's 80 degrees. So, you
only experience cold weather when it's gray, dark, cold, and windy. And it
goes with that temperature. Like I said, there is never a blue sky with 65
degrees.

Int: How did it feel to get off the plane in that cold weather?

Bev: Awful. (laughs) When I came in November, I came November 10 and I got
up here November 11. We had to stay over in Miami one night. I was ???.
It was about 50 degrees. I had on two pairs of socks and several shirts and
several trousers. Two at least.

Int: For 50 degrees?

Bev: Yes, I was cold. I remember visiting a friend of mine and I stood down stairs
and looked down at me and he said, "Goodness, I haven't seen you in two
years. You really gained a lot of weight." I started taking off the clothes
and ??? ???. I didn't like it at all. It was too cold for me. And besides that
was probably the worst part. As far as coming here, ??? ??? anxious to be
here to see my parents.

Int: Did anyone give you any idea what it was going to be like when you got here?
Did you have any expectations?

Bev: Yeah I had some expectations. I expected it to be a lot more than I saw. It
was dirty. It was, that was probably the thing that amazed me the most,
that it was dirty. I got here on a Saturday night and when I got here my
parents lived in ??? ???. Back then it was much better than it is right now.
Even then, this was in 1962, the following Sunday, the following morning I

got up and I decided to take a walk around. And this is right at Bedford ???
???. I think about 60 percent of the street was covered in newspapers and
garbage. Just from the night - There is a lot of traffic. There is a lot of
people. Lot of people buying the Sunday paper. A lot of people read it and
just throw it down. I was depressed. I expected - Most of my impression of
the United States was when I saw the movies. Naturally you only see the
best in movies. So, that was my first disillusionment.

Int: I'll bet. Especially there in Brooklyn. It might have been better had you
been somewhere else.

Bev: No, see, that's the point I'm trying to make. Is that Brooklyn today is a lot
different. Because by Monday it was all clean and all gone. And I'll say that
Brooklyn then was a lot nicer than a lot of places in Mid-Manhattan as it is
today. So, that in retrospect it wasn't that bad. Today, well, it's a different
story.

Int: I've never been there. I don't really know.

Bev: Brooklyn is not as bad as

Int: I've only seen pictures. Where did you actually leave from? Where did your
plane depart and land?

Bev: There is a Latin American plane that travels from, through Central America
and makes the only American stop in Miami. So, I took a flight from my
country to Miami and made a connecting flight from Miami to Kennedy Air
Port.

Int: Did you feel sad leaving home?

Bev: No. I don't recall. I'm adventurous. I look forward to something different.
I look forward to better times. I look forward to change. ??? ??? ???. I
don't recall being sad. Leaving home as I was. ??? ??? leaving my brothers

and my friends but as far as leaving the country I don't know that I did, you know. I don't know I was glad to leave it. I don't know if I was sad to leave it.

Int: Your brothers weren't coming with you?

Bev: No, we came, the family is a large family. It's a family of 8. You put 8 people on a plane ??? in United States, wages and income is not as great as, and easy to come by as it is in this country. So that the - My part was to help provide an income for my other family members to come. So, I worked ??? ???.

Int: Your parents were here before you?

Bev: My mother was here before me.

Int: And your father came with you?

Bev: No, he came last.

Int: Wow.

Bev: What's wrong with that?

Int: That's splitting your mother and father up like that.

Bev: Well, you know, there is a lot of things I think that people in this country take for granted and that's one of the things that, you know, there are certain sacrifices people have to make and you make it and you don't think about it. I have an idea and I'm certain that people in this country don't think in terms of traveling in different pieces to assembly a family across the other side of the ocean.

Int: Your right.

Bev: It's not the thing to do. You tend to lose the perspective of life. That everyone lives the same way. And it's only in this country that people live this way. Everybody is different somewhere else. In my case there was no

way my parents could have afforded to have all of us come at the sametime. So, that it was sort of like one first and then one gets over there send somebody and get the otherone over here.

Int: Did any of them not want to go?

Bev: No.

Int: They all wanted to go?

Bev: They all wanted to come. Well, you know, they don't know what's it's all about. They don't know what it is to be here. They don't know what it is to be anyplace else. We traveled quite a lot in my country. From district to district or I guess you would call it county to county here or from state to state. But I think we were all anxious to come. The states is the place to come. No matter what.

Int: Did you have any trouble with immigration officials at all?

Bev: No, there wouldn't have been. My entry was a legal entry. So, no matter what the normal procedures were to customs and going through immigration so that, you mean if I came over on a truck across Mexico Boarder at night, no. (laughs)

Int: Where did you live after Brooklyn?

Bev: ???

Int: Did your family all move together again?

Bev: Oh yeah, we all moved together as a family. We were a very close family. For that reason why we were able to seperate and live with it. Because we knew that this was only a matter of distance. We all moved together as a family. We moved several times in Brooklyn from a place large enough for 8 people.

Int: Did you move everytime somebody new came?

Bev: No. We only moved, I guess when the whole family was here, we only moved once when the whole family been here. Yeah, we just moved once.

Int: Did you have a big party when the whole family got together again?

Bev: We are a family that enjoys life. We enjoy everyday. We don't celebrate something like that.

Int: You had to celebrate that. You hadn't seen each other in such a long time.

Bev: We have different ways of expressing, you know, joy or like that. We never had a party. We never had a celebration. It was just being together was a party in itself. It never crossed our mind to have a party. We never had a party back home except for birthdays and things like that. But, no, we never had a party.

Int: What was the first house like in Brooklyn?

Bev: The first house was a rented apartment in somebody's home that we knew. Two bedrooms, top of a 3 story house. It was a single family house. Well, not single family, I guess. Nobody has ever been on top. It was a 2 family house.

Int: You got it from a friend of yours?

Bev: My mother, she met a friend, she met somebody and between this one and that one who knows this one and the other one. She met these people who were very good to us, good to my parents. And so she rented the apartment.

Int: Were there other ethnic groups in that area?

Bev: In Brooklyn, I think, every ethnic group in the world is there. There are Jews. There are Indians, Chinese, blacks, Africans, Latin Americans. It was more southern Americans in that area. Very strong Jewish background. Very strong Jewish neighborhood. That particular corner because it's all merchants. They are all merchants. That's the so called ??? ??? which is a

shopping district.

Int: I didn't know that. After you moved out of Brooklyn completely where did you go?

Bev: That took several years. I've work several people, several companies. One company I worked for was not in Brooklyn. Was not even in New York City. They were in West Chester, New York. So that I went to work in West Chester. So, I moved out of Brooklyn, I guess, after 5 years.

Int: Do your parents still live there?

Bev: My parents went back. They went back 3 years ago to live in my country, British Honduras.

Int: Why did they do that?

Bev: They have had a lot of problems. Lot of muggings. Mostly a lot of muggings. They really couldn't take the cold weather. So added to being mugged almost once a month.

Int: Once a month?

Bev: Yeah, gun point, knife point and with the rest of it and the cold weather they gave up. They decided it wasn't worth it so they went back.

Int: I can see their point of view.

Bev: They are happy back.

Int: Did you go to school in the British Honduras?

Bev: Yeah, I went to school in British Honduras and I got, I guess, what is equivalent to an associate degree. And when I came here I went to school in Monmouth College in 1969, 1970. I got accepted in 1969 and I attended Monmouth College in 1970, January.

Int: How did you manage to go from Brooklyn to Monmouth College?

Bev: Well, I looked for a college that had a small attendance. Had a small

student group. That's why I picked Monmouth College. And they had a program I wanted.

Int: You just picked it and then stayed there? You didn't go back and forth?

Bev: Oh no. See, that's moving up quite a ways in my life now. That's in 1969. After I got married in 1969 we decided to come here. Monmouth College. In the meantime I've checked several universities in the United States and got accepted in several. But I just didn't - First of all I couldn't afford some of the other universities. University of Utah, ????. They accepted me but I think they was just testing because they knew I couldn't afford to go there.

Int: Monmouth College isn't cheap.

Bev: It was cheap back then. It was \$35 a credit. That was affordable. At the time N.Y.U. was almost ????. I also got accepted in N.Y.U. but between the cost of that and I didn't really want to be in a big college. Monmouth College had the program I wanted. Also they took most of my credits. That's another reason why I took Monmouth College. They transferred a lot of it. I spent 2½ years there getting a bachelor's degree.

Int: When you were in British Honduras did you go to a public school or a catholic school or an ethnic school? What kind of school was it?

Bev: Most of the schools are privately owned. Except for, perhaps, one technical college. There is one technical college. Most of the schools are privately owned. By private I mean that they are owned by church groups. ??? which is equivalent to Episcopalian. Methodist which is equivalent to Presbyterian. Catholic, they have, of course, the catholic school. And they take you, I guess, we have different grades. I don't really quite know what the cross reference is but they take us up to 6th grade which is equivalent, which is about age 12. I don't know what that is here. After age 12 you go

to what is called high school. I suppose that's equivalent to American high school.

Int: Jr. high, I would think.

Bev: That takes you up to 18. The difference there at 18 is that at 18 you just go and have an associates degree. As opposed to, what is it, 20?

Int: Yeah, right.

Bev: They have pretty much an associates degree. That's the one I had. At 18 I had an associate's degree. These exams, by the way, back in those days they were interesting. I think they still are today. Is that when those exams are set and they are not set by the school in British Honduras. They are set by the University of London. The exams are set from there. Then they send them back and they mark them.

Int: That's strange. And yet it was private school?

Bev: They are private, no, wait a minute now. Yeah, they are private to the extent to satisfy, I suppose, a certain international British ??? ??? or the standards that they set. That you had to qualify and pass those exams. This is that if this is the world standard that they have set then you measure the world standard which is really ???. If the exams are set in my country and you really didn't have international ??? mark then the exams could have been too hard or too easy. This way you measure up and when you apply to a university in the West Indies or London, American university you know that you have this degree or you have this amount of credits for the course you taking that it's equivalent. You know, it was better to take their exams. The next thing about their exams is that it's a lot harder than American exams. I say that with no inner reservations. Because you can attend their two year program and you take one exam at the end of the two years. There

is no accumulation of credits or points. You take the one exam in two days. You take your English and your math and chemistry and physics and all 12 courses if that is what you took. All 12 or 10 and you sit for 2 or 3 days of ??? ??? to take one exam.

Int: It would be awfully difficult to study all the subjects at once.

Bev: Well, that's where the difference is in the American system. Is that you have to know your stuff. You can't study, like cram at night because there is no point in cramming. I wouldn't do you any good. So, that you have to know the stuff. I mean, during the course of the year you are getting exams and take ??? exams and you get your final and it says you got a B or you got an A or you got a 95. We call it distinction. You call it an A grade here. For us an A grade is called a distinction. In other words semantics, I suppose. You do get those grades. So what it does is really it gives a measure of where you will sit when you take this final exam. But those grades have an influence on your final grade. You get 100 toward your whole 2 years of your college career. You could flunk if you are on a bad day. That's it.

Int: That would be discouraging.

Bev: So, you take it in another year, six months.

Int: You can take it again?

Bev: It's not discouraging because this is all you know. It isn't like. . . .

Int: I suppose.

Bev: See, your familiar with the system that you could accumulate credits and you know that if you go into a course with an A you'll come out at least a B. You got into an exam with an A and you come out with nothing. But if that's all you know then you'll be prepared for it. You don't have a choice.

Int: You didn't go to any high school here at all? You only went to Monmouth College?

Bev: Yeah.

Int: How did the teachers treat you?

Bev: I was fortunate, the department chairman was an Englishman. (laughs) He was an Oxford graduate. He was familiar with the system. I didn't know that when I applied to Monmouth College. I only knew that after I got there. But I didn't know that he was English. Which probably why my credits were a little, the transferred credits were a little bit higher because we call ??? grades advanced level. Your jr. high school, I believe, if you went through - What did I say? Did I say 18? I think I meant 18 or 20. You go to jr. high school to you get to the end of it, it's called ???. Ordinary low. That's for us. And the American equivalent of an associate is called an advanced level. So that when you submit the grades or transcripts then it says you have this course advanced, A level as it's called. He knows what it means. So, it was easy to convert those to American equivalents. I think that's what the advantage was in my favor. I didn't find, as a matter of fact, I found that I was beyond the, I was at the ??? at Monmouth College. I went ahead, by what I knew I had ??? ???. That's when I got into my jr. year at Monmouth College I was at least a semester ahead. So that's what the equivalent was. The A level is equivalent to an associate.

Int: Did you ever work in the British Honduras at all?

Bev: Yeah.

Int: What did you do there?

Bev: I teach. I teach chemistry and physics.

Int: Now I know where to go when I have a problem.

Bev: (laughs)

Int: What was your first job here?

Bev: My first job here was working garment district. Cutting the pieces of cloth that was separate from pieces that weren't good. I made \$1.25 an hour.

Int: It's a far cry from teaching.

Bev: I made more money.

Int: Your kidding?

Bev: But I live less. Because of the difference in the standard of living. The standard of living today has changed drastically. Let me give you an approximate idea. I got to pick something that you can measure up to. The only thing I can remember is a quart of kerosene. Let's see now. A gallon of kerosene back ??? 20¢. in my currency which is 10¢ American in 1962. Then I think a quart of kerosene was about, maybe, 80¢ in this country. The cost of living was a lot different. I mean you could live. . . .

End Cassette #1, Side #1

Begin Cassette #1, Side #2

Int: Just give me a brief summary of the jobs up until now. Maybe up to your ??? and then up to now.

Bev: Okay. The one of the company I work for after the garment district was for an electronic company. They manufacture radiation detectors. I was production manager for about 6 months. Then I worked for NYU as a research biochemist. I did it for 3½ years. That got me publications and 3 journals. The American Medical Association proceedings biochemical pharmacology and the New York Academy of Sciences. That was 3½ years and then I worked for Union Carbide for 3½ years as a research chemist. What basically they did was make and design material for rocket nozzles and

??? blades. That got me ??? ??? ???. At the time that I left ??? ???. They are ??? ???. Then I went to school. Decided to get myself a degree.

(laughs) I think I could do a lot better with a degree.

Int: Then after the degree you worked for ???

Bev: No I worked for New Jersey Bell.

Int: That's not the something?

Bev: It's the same, it's an affiliate. The Bell Labs and Western Electric and New Jersey Bell, they are all, I guess you may call it ??? companies. Bell Labs I think dose basic research. New Jersey Bell is an operative company. They install your telephones and that sort of thing. They are worlds apart. New Jersey Bell uses what Bell Labs design.

Int: That straightens out my misunderstand of Bell Labs. I know so many people that worked there and nobody worked on telephones. I guess your working conditions were fine? Right.

Bev: Where?

Int: On your last job.

Bev: You mean the one I'm in now?

Int: Yeah. The, say the last jobs that you have been working in as a chemist or a physist.

Bev: Oh yeah, they were good.

Int: You were never in unions?

Bev: No. I was never in unions.

Int: It wouldn't pertain to you.

Bev: No. I could have been but I try to avoid unions. Nothing personal ??? ???
???.

Int: Did you get along well with the other workers?

Bev: Oh yeah. I'm easy to get along with. I'm easy going. Basically a loner. It was easy enough to get along with anybody if your alone.

Int: I wouldn't say that. You first job you left because you didn't like it. The other jobs you left because you were more or less advancing?

Bev: Yeah.

Int: Were you ever unemployed?

Bev: Oh yeah, inbetween jobs. But not for long. Not for any long period of time. I guess I was unemployed for the first 3 or 4 months I was here. But I don't even know if I call that unemployed.

Int: A period of adjustment?

Bev: Right.

Int: Lets talk about your family structure a little bit. What was your father's name?

Bev: James.

Int: Where was he born?

Bev: He was born in British Honduras.

Int: What was your mother's name?

Bev: Ruth.

Int: She was born in the British Honduras?

Bev: No. Guatemala.

Int: Guatemala?

Bev: Is that a curve? You didn't expect it?

Int: No.

Bev: I could tell. (laughs)

Int: What were the names of your brothers and sisters?

Bev: Cripes. James, Francis, Anthony, Julian, my sister's name is June.

Int: Such American names.

Bev: Why not? We are centralian Ammerican.

Int: I guess so. How many years were there between the first one and the last one?

Bev: ??? by one year.

Int: What?

Bev: There's in one inbetween each of us.

Int: Your mother had a hard time.

Bev: I don't know ??? . . .

Int: That's tough.

Bev: It's tough on American standard. I keep on going back to that. It's tough on American standard but it's a life style.

Int: We must appear very soft to you?

Bev: Yes.

Int: What kind of work did your father do?

Bev: In this country?

Int: Home.

Bev: At home he was a policeman.

Int: What was he here?

Bev: Here he worked in a hospital. I think he was a nurses aid.

Int: Did he like it?

Bev: No. He liked it - My father is outgoing. He meets a lot of people. I think he liked it for that reason. He met a lot of people. And this is also one of the reasons why he went back home. Because the life style there is very, very different. The way people live and meet each other. It's not unusual to go to somebody's job and leave and go to someone elses and socialize. It

dosen't mean that the country is not productive. It just means there is a different life style. That was different from what he liked to do. So, he had a difficult time adjusting to not having friends around. People are always involved in doing things that has to be done. You got to prepare for winter. You got to prepare for summer. You got to make sure the boiler works. You got to make sure the ??? works here. You got to make sure you got enough money to buy food. Those are problems. You don't have to worry about heat because there is not heat to heat the house. It's not cold enough.

Int: So it's a ver relaxed atmosphere all the time?

Bev: Well, in most tripical countries it is because you don't have the problems you have ??? the cold country. All these things I think is one of the things that speeds it up a bit. So that the adjustment for him was difficult. It's not unusual for coming home after work to just get together, a whole bunch of guys and sit and talk about nothing. Sit and enjoy each other's company. On a daily basis if you want to do it. You don't worry about things like doing something on the house as you have to do. So ??? he was mostly lonely.

Int: Could have fooled us. Your always doing something to the house. You must have adapted very well?

Bev: I think I've adapted remarkably well. I'm more Americanized, I think, than my brothers are. Only because I'm one of these people who think that if your going to live in a country then your going to live comfortable. We have to adapt to the country. My brothers have adapted but they have adapted in a different direction. No apart, just in a different direction. And I guess they are pretty much ??? style. Take it easy. (laughs) I aggressive.

Int: Did your mother ever work?

Bev: Oh yeah.

Int: What did she do?

Bev: She was a nurse back at home. Here she worked as a nurse but when she first came she worked as a housekeeper.

Int: Did she have to get a new degree to work here as a nurse?

Bev: No, she didn't. I think she worked as a nurse's helper. She could never work as a nurse here because - It wasn't called a nurses aid. It was called a nurses helper. Which I think is probably less than a nurses aid. My mother never really worked. This is really what it's all about. I think the only time she worked as a nurse was before she got married. And after that she never worked.

Int: She wouldn't have had time.

Bev: Again, it's a different life style. Although my parents were never making, were in the lower income bracket, enough to keep a family going. It ??? an advantage for my mother to work. But she never did. There was no real cause for it because of tradition and life style. In those days there is not unusual to woman work. There were less women employed than there are today.

Int: Who was the boss of the house?

Bev: There is no question about it. My father was.

Int: He made all the decisions?

Bev: That's definitely ???. Well, whether he made them or it looked like he made them. We saw him make them. (laughs) We don't have the problems of whose boss in the house in my country. I think it's only in this country that people are boss. One has to be the boss.

Int: I think it's an influence from the other countries.

Bev: I doubt that. But then again I don't know anything about other countries. I

think that it's taken for granted that it's a man's responsibility. And I guess that's probably the thing I shouldn't say. But that's the way it is. Is that his responsibility is not so much ??? as ???. I don't think we ever identified - I've only heard as a boss in the house since I've been here. You know identify he's the boss in the house. What would be the point? ??? ??? and do what you did yesterday. ??? ??? the boss, I'll still do the samething. But I don't think there was anything about a boss. There is no ??? ??? ??? ??? he or she is boss.

Int: I think they tended not to give the women any merit.

Bev: I don't believe that.

Int: Well, the European countries did. They are studying a lot of the immigrants. They tended to put the woman in her place. She did what he said and she wasn't allowed to do anything else. Which dosen't go so well over here.

Bev: Well, I can't speak for the European countries. I can speak only for my country. And that is that we don't try to make anybody look less.

Int: It's an interesting difference in additude.

Bev: My opinion is that you either accomplish anything ??? ??? ??? ???. And then again I'm speaning subjective because I'm open minded. I don't think that people would try to say I'm the boss. There probably is some sentiment in that direction. But, you know, women work now.

Int: Did your parents have any expectations for you kids? What you grew up to be?

Bev: They gave us everything they had. Which was direction. My parents are very religious. Very victorian. Very triditional. They are a very proud family. They definitely knew what they want. They had an idea what they wanted us to be. More than we were. That was enough to want.

Int: Did your family get along well with other relatives?

Bev: Yes and no.

Int: Typical of relatives.

Bev: Yeah, well, with relatives to the extent that, you know, I'll say we get along with relatives but my parents, I guess, were an odd ball. They had a direction in mind and a goal in mind. Is that they wanted to change their life style and nothing was going to stop it. So that they worked in one direction and they didn't let anything interfere with that. So that to get along with relatives, they got along but I think my parents appear to my relatives in retrospect to be different.

Int: So your aunts and uncles couldn't influence your family?

Bev: They probably could eventually. ??? ???. But in the end the decision was made. You take all that's there and you decided in the end after you looked at everthing ??? ??? ???.

Int: Do you remember any crisis in the family like a death or an illness or a fire?

Bev: No. I can't think of anything.

Int: What is your wife's name?

Bev: Ritta.

Int: When did you get married?

Bev: In 1969. In May 10. I hope I got that right. Your not going to play this back are you? (laughs)

Int: You got married a month before us. Where did you get married at?

Bev: In Manhattan.

Int: She was obviously not a British Honduras?

Bev: Why do you say obvious?

Int: Well, you just don't find to many of them.

Bev: I don't know that you'd say that you don't find to many of them.

Int: I've never met one before.

Bev: Why do you say I've never met one before? Have never met a British Hondurian?

Int: Yeah.

Bev: I don't like to refer to people in terms of ????. But I might say I've never met a European before. ??? ??? ???.

Int: I have ethnicity on my mind.

Bev: You have what?

Int: Ethnicity.

Bev: Well, whatever that is. There are lots of British Hondurians in New York. Brooklyn and Manhattan. But I think you would probably would never meet a British Hondurian because you don't socialize in their circles. And if you have you couldn't tell the difference anyway. Because they don't look any different.

Int: Was your family dissapointed that you were marrying somebody who wasn't from the British Honduras?

Bev: Yeah, I think, I don't know that I read them right or not. My parents always said if that's what you want to do then I wish you well. They never expressed and ??? in the decision that was made. Unless they really think it was a bad decision made. I don't know if my parents wanted me to marry a British Hondurian or marry an American. I do know that when my wife, when my mother ??? my wife ??? she says, "She dosen't look like a hard worker to me." (laughs) But I'm just as ??? as she is so that my mind was made up and nothing was going to change it. There was an opinion expressed and it was taken, you know, that's the way it was given.

Int: How did you meet her?

Bev: On an elevator. Took her name off her clothes, off her pin as a nurse and knew where she lived which was right across the street from the hospital I worked in and I called her.

Int: You knew what you wanted?

Bev: I think I said that. (laughs)

Int: How long did you know each other before you got married?

Bev: Maybe 3 years.

Int: What are the names of you kids?

Bev: Keith, Corry.

Int: Where were they born?

Bev: Both born in New Jersey.

Int: When?

Bev: Your going to ask me a tough question now.

Int: I'm going to get you in a corner.

Bev: Well, it's not going to get you anywhere. Lets see now. Keith is 6 and Corry is 4. You figure it out. Keith is going to be 7, May 11.

Int: Did you celebrate any triditional holidays?

Bev: In this country?

Int: ???

Bev: Yeah, we celebrate. . . . You mean. . . .

Int: Your British. . . .

Bev: I know what you mean. British Hondurian triditional holidays in this country. We have something equivalent to July 4th. We are September 10. We celebrate that as a national holiday. A lot of festivities like you have here. Parties and great big dance and big occasions. So we celebrate that here. For us

also Christmas is something equivalent to Thanksgiving. We celebrate Christmas with the same ??? that you celebrate Thanksgiving. We don't celebrate Thanksgiving. We don't have a Thanksgiving.

Int: Do you eat food that would be ??? British Honduras?

Bev: Today?

Int: ??? Is there any difference in the food?

Bev: Not really. There is not a whole lot of difference between the food in British Honduras than the food here. As a matter of fact even back then the food was American. We eat a lot of fish. It's the cheapest thing to find. ??? ???
 ??? ???. We love our shrimp and lobster.

Int: Not cheap.

Bev: It's there. We export a lot of lobster and shrimp to this country. The red lobster ??? is one of our biggest ??? in this country. Red Lobster, the chain you find around here.

Int: They just opened one in East Brunswick.

Bev: Yeah. Their lobster is not main lobster. You can tell by the way the tail is squashed instead of being flat. Our food is different in the sense that we season our food differently. We season our food, perhaps, a lot spicier than you. We eat rice, beans, sweet potatoes, meat, vegetables. Difference is ??? vegetables. Fresher maybe.

Int: Did you know anything about your family's ancestry?

Bev: Not a whole lot. When I went home I ??? to do a study on to see how far back I could go. I guess maybe a take off of Roots. I didn't know I had Roots in mind. ??? ??? ???. A friend of mine arose my curiosity. ??? ??? and he traces entire family back to the pilgrims. This was last year, 1979. He kind of roused my curiosity. The things that he found in his ??? was really

interesting. So that maybe I'd find some interesting things too. But I never did. I probably will because I'm curious. My dad, he has a member of the name of a famous family. He knows who my 5th cousin is. And how he got there. I'll have to tap his memory one of these days.

Int: You said your family was very religious. What religion are they?

Bev: Two groups. My mother is Episcopalian and I think because my father is. Which really came from what you call Presbyterian background. Presbyterian in my country, I guess, is, they are very religious. Whether they are religious or ??? religious, I don't. Probably shouldn't say that. It's not nice.
(laughs)

Int: What are you now?

Bev: I'm Episcopalian.

Int: When your family wasn't working what did they for recreation? Your mother, father and your brothers and you?

Bev: I don't know that we ever had a recreation period as you have a vacation here. When you in school like the summer, my father worked as a policeman. Before he worked as a policeman he was a truck driver. Again I have to speak in terms of equivalent. The equivalent to your state highway construction crew. He was a truck driver for them. He worked in the outlying districts. They had to station out there. For us it was a vacation. We just packed the whole family. Furniture and beds, everything ??? ???. Spend 2 months there. But in the meantime it wasn't when they weren't doing anything. It's when we are out of school ??? school that we would vacation like that.

Int: Did your family mind you playing with, say when you were in British Honduras, there were Spanish people there or whatever, did your family mind you

playing with the other groups?

Bev: You mean with other ethnic groups?

Int: Yeah.

Bev: We don't have noticable racial problems as you have here. ??? race isn't why I came here. ??? ???. I'm usually imbarried long after it happened. Somebody would say, "Well, why do you let them say that?" Today I'm still racial nieve. I have learned quite a bit. I've known racism since I've been here. But there was, I think, the barriers that were there were mostly ??? barriers rather than ethnic barriers. We have also a very large group of Menonites. They are, their ??? is from Canada or Germany. They migrated south. When I was there last year they were all intermarried with Spanish and Chinese and Indians and blacks and Carribians and Carribs and everybody was just mixed in. They all lived together and married together.

Int: Do you recall your family ever being treated badly by any other group?

Bev: Where?

Int: I guess here.

Bev: Oh yeah. All the time.

Int: All the time?

Bev: Sure.

Int: Did your family stay in touch with relatives at home?

Bev: Oh yeah.

Int: Now that your parents are back. . . .

Bev: Even when they were here they stayed in touch with, I guess, sisters. My parents have a lot of sisters and brothers. And they kept in touch.

Int: Do you make any return visits? Do you go back and forth at all?

Bev: I went last year. That was the first time in 18 years.

Int: Was it really different when you got there?

Bev: No.

Int: Exactly the same as you left it?

Bev: Unfortunately.

Int: You still knew your way around?

Bev: Oh yeah. We are only talking about a city that's about 50,000. You find that many people live ??? ???. It's a small city. I'm talking about a country that population is 150,000. ??? ??? ??? ???. ??? ???.

Int: Did you become a citizen?

Bev: No.

Int: Were you ever afraid of being deported?

Bev: Why?

Int: It's just a standard question.

Bev: I know but why the question ???

Int: Why would you be deported?

Bev: Yeah.

Int: It really pertains more to the emigrants from Europe and Russia and so forth.

Bev: I think deportation comes in most of what when you get into trouble. With politics or you don't meet the country standards or your here illegally. It never crossed my mind.

Int: Did you join any political organizations at all?

Bev: No.

Int: How about social clubs?

Bev: Politics or politicians? Social clubs? I guess the only club I ever belong to was ??? ??? United Nations Cricket Team. But I've long been out of that

since I don't live in New York anymore. I obviously couldn't get there. ???
 ??? possible to go there. But I played cricket with them for a couple of
 years, I guess. Social clubs? No.

Int: What do you think of your experience in the United States? Do you ever
 wish you hadn't come or wish you could go back there?

Bev: I think I wish all of that. That in order. In the order of the way I like my
 life to go. I'm not sorry I came here. I'm glad I did, as a matter of fact. I
 think it's done a lot more for me than I would have done in my own country.
 I think I would go back home if I think that I could live comfortable. The
 life style there is slow. The job ??? ??? ???? as they are here.

Int: Do you think you act like Americans now? You must. I see you out there
 cutting the grass all the time. Typical American.

Bev: Well, that's also typical British Honduras. We also cut grass there. As a
 matter of fact cut more because

Int: It will grow more.

Bev: Sure. I suppose I do act what is called typical American. Except Ritta
 doesn't think so. That's my wife. She doesn't think so. Because I think to
 do thing I feel like doing. Maybe because I'm a great ???. I'm big at putting
 things off. I don't think that British Honduras or American. It's me. I think
 also one of the things that's different that I think of myself and I think of
 people who are ???, a sense of value. Here I think people have a sense of
 value for things you can touch, material things. I don't have a sense of value
 as intense as that. People that I know from my country don't have that kind
 of intense sense of value. Things that you can touch. I guess because they've
 never what you call your, as much, you know, as much as strictly a matter
 of of much respect to you and to the other guy. So that, yeah, there is a

difference. There is a big difference in life style. But I don't think I have any regrets coming here.

Int: Are there any main differences between your life here and there?

Bev: Oh yeah. ??? ???? there's a big difference. I managed to measure that on my last ??? ??? ???. I find that my life ??? definitely is ??? some. I have a way of doing things a lot faster. In my country, as in most tropical countries where it's hot, people tend to do things a lot slower. Physically slower. You don't walk as fast.

Int: Do they think your fast now when you go there?

Bev: Oh yeah. Because I think a lot of reasons why you go fast is to keep warm in the winter. Second reason you got to get there in a hurry. ??? ??? ???. I walk ??? ??? to ??? from one end to the next in 3 or 4 minutes. I wouldn't walk from here to. . . .

End Cassette #1, Side #2

Begin Cassette #2, Side 1

Int: Were there childrens games that you played as a kid that you are going to teach your children?

Bev: Perhaps most of the games we play are very similar to American games. We play skip rope, jump rope that is, soccer. ??? American ??? softball. Basketball, baseball. So there is no difference. There is quite an American influence. There is a lot of Americans in the country.

Int: Are you going to tell you children songs, stories, jokes and things that learned as a child?

Bev: They will probably learn them during the course of just being in my presence. But it's very difficult for them, raise American tridition and background to understand a lot of the humor, a lot of the sayings, nursery

rhymes. The nursery rhymes are universal. But you have to understand the ethnic background and the feel, tradition to appreciate the humor. So, they'll probably hear it and they probably won't understand it. They will probably ask me to explain things to them ??? ??? because the basic to understand it. They will. Like all kids they will grow up and they ??? ???.

Int: Were there any traditional instruments in the British Honduras that we don't necessarily have here?

Bev: I'm pretty sure there is. The ??? Indian group is well known. Their music is well, it's the same ??? that you find in Mexico and in Guatemala. They have instruments which I've heard. I don't know what they are called. But other than that, as far as the ??? ???, the normal people, because these people, the Indians are different. Only because they are ??? Indians and they go back historically a long ways. But as far as what you may call a ??? ??? people ??? instruments they make. Maybe there is one. There is one particular instrument that has, is made from automobile leaf spring. It's about, I guess, depending on the length gives you different notes. Maybe a C or a B or a G. Basic notes. It sits in a box with a 4 x 10 inch opening in the front. These things stick up through this opening on the same vertical ???. Depending on the length it gives you different notes. You sit on it and you sort of have your hands down and you pluck them with your fingers. It gives a bassy note.

Int: Can't say I've ever seen that.

Bev: You probably have. You have probably seen it on television. You probably have seen it on some of these African shows. Probably seen it on some of the programs that they do with the carnivals in Brooklyn and the West Indians in the carnival in New Orleans. I think I've seen them do shows.

Int: Did you family make anykind of crafts? Is there anything in particular you father used to make or anything your mother made?

Bev: My mother is a dress maker also. Mom made a thing that she wares. She is a very good dressmaker. She'd look in a book and make it. You know, patterns. My father is a very good cabinet maker. He also made jewlery from fish ???

Int: Fish parts?

Bev: Uh-huh.

Int: That's more of a hobby, right?

Bev: Maybe I shouldn't say fish parts. My mother did the dress making for a living. ??? my father just did that again for a hobby. Making furniture. The jewlery from black coral or different parto of the ???. I guess you call them sea turtle. They have large shells about 8 inches in diameter, 10 inches. You cut them up into slices and make ??? for rings or earrings.

Int: You didn't kill the turtle did you?

Bev: Of course. They are eatable.

Int: You ate the turtle?

Bev: Why not. Don't you eat cows?

Int: Turtles are so nice.

Bev: Little one maybe. . . .

Int: I guess cows are nice.

Bev: (laughs) When they are small they are nice but when you get a sea turtle that weighs 100 or 200 pounds then they are not so nice anymore.

Int: They are not friendly?

Bev: I bet if put your hand in their mouth they will bite your bones off. I'm talking about a turtle that's about as big as half this desk.

Int: I saw a big turtle at the petting zoo and you could could pet him right on the nose.

Bev: Well, that's not a sea turtle. A sea turtle has a mouth as big as your head if he opens it.

Int: I guess I've never seen. . . .

Bev: Yeah you've seem them. You've seen them on ??? if you watch it.

Int: I just assume that they are nice turtles.

Bev: You probably seen, they call them turtles from the ??? Islands. Those things. I think that's where they seem them.

Int: Goes swimming and one comes it would scare you?

Bev: You probably scare it first. Try and get away from you. They are eatable. Turtles are eatable.

Int: Did you ever eat turtle now?

Bev: Sure. If you go to the better restruants in New York you will find that turtle fin soup is a delicacy.

Int: You go there?

Bev: Yeah.

Int: It's like eating ??? soup.

Bev: That's good.

Int: I thought it was clamb chowder.

Bev: There's a big difference.

Int: Yes, I found that out.

Bev: I don't like clambs.

Int: Did your parents hand you down any heirlooms or triditional clothing or anything?

Bev: Nope. Not that know about.

Int: No pictures?

Bev: Oh yeah pictures. The pictures as far back as ??? pictures ??? ???. As far as, pictures, I guess, is the only thing that we have.

Int: Some crocheting or anything that your mother did or table cloths or anything like that?

Bev: Again, that's not a family tridition. I don't know what tridition it is.

Int: You don't pass things down from generation to generation?

Bev: Well, let me see now. We have a system which is ??? ???. The system which again is typically British and it has a name and I can't remember what the name is. But in any family the oldest member of the family inherits the entire family's wealth. Whatever the wealth might be. And it's up to him if he want's to divide it. Sometimes he dose and sometimes he don't.

Int: They don't resent it if he dosen't want to do it?

Bev: In general I suppose that, well there is nothing to hand down in the first place that was worthy of making a big fuss about. Like I said, we get along pretty good as a family. If my parents gave me a piece of land or there is no resentment about it. As far as I'm concerned it's everybody's land. Even though it belongs to me. My brothers can do whatever they want with it. And so can my sister.

Int: Did your mother practice any home remedies or triditional cures?

Bev: Oh yeah.

Int: What did she do?

Bev: There were - lets see now. Most of the cures, I guess, were the same thing they do right here in this country. Except for maybeFirst of all most of the cures. . . .

Int: Anything unusual?

Bev: You mean like witchcraft?

Int: If they have that there.

Bev: You should travel some and see how the rest of the world lives.

Int: I'd love to go to South America. I've been everywhere else but not there.

Bev: Go to some of the islands and live with the natives. ??? the natives and it's a different life style. Go to Nassau. If you go to Nassau don't go the tourist way. Go where the natives live. It's more fun. Anyway, ??? ???. They have the rituals. My family have their rituals. They are known as ??? rituals ??? ???. Again you could almost pin point where they come from. The ??? group, again I said, that's a triditional group. It's history goes back as far as you could count. They have their rituals. The Carrib group, I believe, has a ritual and I think it may be something equivalent to voodoo. I don't know. I think it's just done as a tridition. I don't think they expect anything to come out of it. We have an indian group. There is a big indian tribe. Like I said, my father was half indian. That's East Indian not American Indian. They practice a ritual which is a religious ritual. I think it's just done maybe something go into carnival again. It's very dressy. Very sporty. Lot of music. Lot of dancing. A lot of praying to the gods. Which is angain, you know, I go to church with them. Some of the gods are just, I think, they tell me. I don't know. But I saw my parents go and most people in the country, some believe in voodoo, they call it, I can't think of the name that they call it. I guess it's pretty much equivalent to a soft version of witchcraft. Witchcraft is really to strong because I don't think that they really believe in it. They believe in dreams. I guess a lot of people believe in dreams here too.

For home remedies, to answer your question directly. We do things like

honey and lemon for a cough. Or we gargle with salt and vinegar for a sore throat. If we get a sprain ankle we have different roots, tree roots, that from my experience are very effective. I remember getting - I play soccer and you play bare footed. You kick a soccer ball bare footed. There was a stump right in front of the ball and I didn't see it and I kicked the stump. One of these home remedies, I got a sprain foot. My whole foot was swollen up. ??? ??? using one of these remedies the next day the swelling was down. There's nothing magical about it. It's just a remedy that works.

Int: A lot our medicines are derived from roots and things anyway.

Bev: Sure. I think that's what I was leading up to. The remedies that we have are just a microversion of everything that you isolate here and you call it this, A, B, C, and D. Where as you got all A, B, C in one mix and you never know what you get. Your getting everything in there. Some of them are probably ????. Some of them are probably remedies. But I can't think of any of the ritual that we have. I know the country has another ritual that I've seen. I keep on saying the same you do here.

Because I've seen it mostly with certain ethnic groups. That is that in the case of a funeral or someone is dead they take the youngest member of the family and pass the youngest member over the coffin of the person. I have seen that in films in European culture. I think, I'm not sure, I've seen it this country also. But I've seen it in European country.

Int: What did they do that for?

Bev: I think it's, I'm not sure what it - I knew at one time what it is or why they do it. I think it has something to do with maybe the kid might acquire some the the wisdom of the older person.

There is one thing that's very obvious in my country that's loosing ground at

this point is that ??? ??? wisdom and knowldege ???. That was a shock. You asked me a question before and I kept on thinking of an answer that was more direct. Is that what I was most impressed with you. I was most impressed, and I keep on wondering off the question but maybe after some of these questions. Plus you getting all this good stuff on tape.

Int: I'll get an A. The more you talk the better I get.

Bev: Is that people in a responsible positions were young. That was my big impression. I found out, of course, later that this was just a changing times. I got right in the ??? of changing times. Because even today not only the Bell system but also Union Carbide and even different companies in the north is that one always tend to associate - Even if you look into your American congress, people who are suppose to be most knowledgeable and knows most about the laws and so on, and then your airline piolots that fly and has the best record are people who have 25 or 30 years of flying time. So that we still, in this country all have that tridition which give the credit to those people because they have accomplished that. It takes time. In my country if you were sitting there at the age of 23 or 24 and someone else is sitting beside you - Now you do exactly the same job. The other person ??? ??? and I want an answer to a question and it was a real serious problem. Maybe not so serious. I wouldn't go to you. Because I'd be certain that he knows more than you. Chances are your smarter. Chances are you taught him.

Int: It's automatic.

Bev: It's just automatic, right. You always tend to go to, you always associate authority with age.

Int: Going back to the dreams. What is it they believe in the dreams?

Bev: They gamble.

Int: They gamble?

Bev: Sure.

Int: They dream a number and they go play it?

Bev: They dream a number and they go play it, yeah. (laughs)

Int: I thought there was something behind it.

Bev: There is more. That thing is the main reason for dreaming. I don't know the people are superstitious. In fact I'm sure that most people are superstitious. Whether we admit it or not. I'll say I'm not superstitious but I often wonder whether or not I am superstitious. But ??? people dream, they tend to figure, well, they always tend to associate the dream with something that happened or what happened. Sometimes, you know, - I don't know how to interpret a dream. But a dream is some subconscious, what to dream about is something that you ??? through whatever. ??? believe in dreams that what we dream is what we think or what will happened.

Int: I was just curious to see what they thought of it.

Bev: I never, see - It's like we go back and you ask me a lot of questions about myself. I'm more caught up in living. ??? ???. Plus I forgot a lot. You know, you were asking me things when I was 15 or 16 years old and it's almost 20 years later.

Int: Some of the people I interview are 80. And you ask them things they don't remember anything. Or it's a little ???. That's about it.

Bev: I hope I helped you?

Int: Yes you did.