

Beatriz Gausch Karasik
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Beatriz (B): We know and she's ready to talk to you. The problem is that Maria Juana Cazabon, she's recorded... and she's of French heritage, not American but whatever. She's recorded all of the history, all of the beginning... she's like an encyclopedia. The problem is she's having surgery the 20th so I don't know if you can fit her in before or if you're going to stay until the end of the month cause us collectively would like you to meet with her because she has all of the photographs. I mean she's the one that everyone has entrusted and she's basically an incredible source for you.

Samuel (S): So I'm leaving November 4th. So I'm here until... Is she going to be okay by then?

B: I can call her. I leave today and I'll tell her to give me the dates before I go. And then I can tell her because she really needs to make her presence.

S: Sure. And just in terms of spelling, B-e-a-t-r-i-z.

B: Yeah.

S: And then G...

B: No, no, no. Well G. Gausch is my maiden name but my legal name is Karasik. I was married to a Jewish guy. K-a-r-a-s-i-k. And Gausch is G-a-u-s-c-h. We're from Catalonia, from Barcelona.

S: Got it.

B: All the names that you see ending in -ch like Gausch, those are from Barcelona, Catalonia. Yeah.

S: I'm actually going to be there very soon.

B: Oh you're going to love it. I can give you tips.

S: Awesome. I could use some tips.

B: Oh it's beautiful. I like it even more than Madrid. It's the borderland with France.

S: Yeah my girlfriend got a grant to study in Madrid and Barcelona. So right after this, that is where I will be.

B: Oh how fantastic.

S: I know. I've got a very fantastic life.

B: Yes I can see.

S: So lets start with your family coming to Cuba. When did that happen?

B: Okay. On my father's side, actually they came to Cuba. My grandfather was born in Barcelona. So it's only my father and I. I believe he was born in the '20s, 1923, in Havana Cuba. But previous to that, my roots are Catalonia. We're from Barcelona originally. I had an uncle who went to Barcelona many, many, many years ago and traced our roots and he went back to like 1760 or so. You know, he was tracing from the small towns to eventually the Barcelona area. In reality, percentage wise I'm more Catalonian than Cuban but my father was born in Cuba and so was I.

S: Was your grandfather your paternal grandmother were they born in... did they arrive in Cuba before or after...

B: No they never went to Cuba to live. They stayed in Barcelona and they're all buried in... well the grandfather yes. I'm thinking of the great-grandfathers. Yes my grandfather was...

S: And they arrived after the Wars of Independence?

B: Yes they came to Cuba in... I was very lucky. They were a very rich family. They had a fortune according to them because both families, both the Guasch and the Guails were very, very well to do. They had a lot of businesses there. My grandfather came to Cuba I believe he was in his 20s. He was born in Barcelona like I said but then he went to Havana. I guess it was like the in thing to do at the time to start new businesses and things like that. He had the support of the family and then he met my grandmother but she was on the Cuban side.

S: And that was after the Wars of Independence?

B: Oh yes, yes, yes. When was the War of Independence?

S: 1898.

B: Yes, yes, yes. This was the late 1800s or early 1900s.

S: Okay. And would they be considered Gallegos or no?

B: No. We're Catalonians.

S: Okay so that's a completely different...

B: Completely. Actually if you know Spain, it's very regional. You have the Gallegos. You have the Bascos from the Basque lands. They speak their own language. So do the Catalonians. Very, you know, they've been trying to be independent. To this day they still fight for their independence and they speak Catalanian.

S: Sure. But it didn't get all mashed when you were in Cuba? There wasn't this Spanish identity?

B: Yes. Because most of the regions that populated Havana, actually I have a professor that you might want to meet. She's an anthropologist and Cuban historian and she's done her dissertation. She's in her 80s but her mind is incredibly bright

and you might want to meet with her. In Havana, because it was an island, it was a very desirable spot to be because it was very easy to arrive and leave and go. So in Cuba you had the Spaniards from different areas, from Valencia from Catalonia, the Basque, so different regions of Spain. You also had a French colony more towards the mountainside. We also had Chinese. We had a lot of Jewish people. They called them Polish but they were Jewish. So it really was an island that really was integrated by a lot of different nationalities. In addition of course there were the Native Indian Americans but the Catholic Church arrived, the priests arrived... When Columbus arrived, and by the way when he came to Cuba he said, "This is the most beautiful island human eyes have ever seen." Because it is a beautiful island as far as the flowers, trees, rivers, and whatever. Basically they were decimated. The Tainos and the... I don't remember the other. So we are a little bit unique because no Indians were left alive in Cuba.

S: Sure.

B: So most of Central America and South America you will see the roots but for us you don't.

S: So when you were growing up did you consider yourself Spanish or did you consider yourself Cuban?

B: Cuban. We were very proud of our heritage because we should be because it's so beautiful and they contributed a lot and actually to Doctor Sandoval it really was the Catalonians. I don't know if you know but in Catalonia they are really the ones that have the money, they're the brightest of all supposedly. They're Spaniards and it's where the money and ideas, they supported Madrid. You know what I'm saying? And when they came and they started coming over to Havana. They started getting together as groups or guilds or whatever and she said after the War of Independence in Cuba they needed to bring together business and all that because Cuba was pretty decimated and all that. And they're the ones that got Havana afloat and by that basically... it really worked. But people worked in groups of their own area of origin or region.

S: So within the Spanish community?

B: Yes.

S: So your family hung out with other Catalonians?

B: Not really no. By the time I was born in 1947 we really considered ourselves Cuban and my dad did too because... that doesn't mean my grandfather mostly had a lot of other Catalonians and he kept doing business with them and of course he had a lot of other families who were friends. We did but not really exclusively. It was not a closed society. It was really a very open society.

S: Do you speak Catalan?

B: No. I wish but I don't.

S: Did your father?

B: No. Not either. My grandfather did and he used to go back every year and spend three or four months there.

S: So you still have family there even after the civil war?

B: No they've all died. We had the beautiful cemetery. It's beautiful. Usually after the one in France it's the top three cemeteries in the world because of all the sculptures and things like that. It's right by the water, by the Mediterranean. All of them are buried there except my grandfather who came here in XL and then we had to do XL again, my father and myself.

S: Your grandfather came here, came to Cuba in XL?

B: No my grandfather went to Cuba to study business and be independent and he did. Actually he made a fortune, he lost it and he did it again. He was a lawyer. Came from a family of lawyers, five men and four women.

S: Did he have to get reeducated in Cuba or pass a bar or something?

B: No because he came at 20. That I really don't know but I know he had studied in Barcelona and then he came over and then he had his law firm until the day he left in the '60s.

S: So tell me about your parents. First of all, what are their names?

B: Okay my father's name is, well they used to call him Bebo. You can say Baldomero Guasch. They used to call him Bebo.

S: And what did he do?

B: He was a lawyer too. My father, my grandfather and my aunt, they owned... well my grandfather owned the law firm and of course his daughter and my father were part of the law firm. It was Guasch and Guasch.

S: Is that the name of the law firm?

B: Yes that's the name. It was in the Bacardi building. Gorgeous building in Havana. A lot of offices were there. A lot of law offices were there. And they had their offices there.

S: What type of law did they do?

B: They did everything. It was from commercial, corporate, you know...

S: Did they work with American companies at all?

B: Yes they did. Actually they were the team that represented Cuba in Havana for Pan American Airlines. We used to come here every year to Miami because Pan American at the time was in Havana and they were part of the Cuban team of lawyers in Havana working with the American lawyers here in Miami. So they were representatives of Pan American in Cuba.

S: So how often would you come to Miami?

B: We used to come once a year, usually in the summer time so my mother used to bring us. We used to come. My dad usually met one afternoon with the people here because, you know, the headquarters for Pan Am were here. Then we would buy our clothes for the summer, our shoes.

S: That was a common thing right?

B: I really was brought up between the two cultures. You know the Buster Browns, the Janssens, we used to stay in Miami Beach at the Hotels. Usually two weeks out of the year every year right after school was over. Then we went on to Varadero and the family and all that. But every year we came to the U.S.

S: It was a common thing for Cubans of a certain class to come to the United States and go shopping?

B: Yes it was.

S: Is that right?

B: I'm not sure of that. That I really cannot tell you. For us it was part of our family and I know some of my cousins did too but not as often as we did. For us it was really a yearly trek but I know that a lot of Cuban families had a lot of businesses here. They sent their kids, especially the boys, they'd send them to military schools and things like that. So if it was Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, Virginia or whatever and certainly Miami. Yeah. There certainly was... because we had Pan American Airlines and just in an hour or an hour and whatever you'd arrive here. So there was a lot of interaction between the two cities and between the Cubans on the island and the Americans here.

S: Tell me about your mother a little bit.

B: My mom's side comes from Castille in Aragon.

S: What's her name?

B: Clara Romero. Her family's side came from Castille in Aragon and Majorca and they had been in Cuba longer than my family. I don't know that much because she didn't get along that great with her dad so she never really got all the story together but, you know, this is what I can tell you. From Castille in Aragon came the Estradas and we were directly related to Don Manuel Estrada Palma, which was the first president of Cuba. On my mom's side. She's Estrada, my grandmother is Estrada. So

they were like first and second cousins to the president. So on that side the heritage was very embedded in the Cuban Renaissance, the Revolution and then the first presidency.

S: Did your family continue to be in political circles or no?

B: No my family was completely apolitical. My parents, we were very liberal, thank god they were very liberal, open minded.

S: What does that mean for...

B: Liberal means... we were Catholic but it wasn't... that's why I'm so glad they sent me to Merici, you know, usually at that time a lot of the schools especially the schools were very rigid and the Spanish nuns and they used to hit you. We didn't experience that. I'm saying as a child but even my house, my parents, one thing... my family really they were in the higher society so every night they used to go out to the Sans Souci to the hotels to dance and drink, to Tropicana, to the movies. They had tons of friends. We were at the club. My dad did, we did a lot of water skiing. He used to come to Cypress Garden to buy the skis, hand made then at the time. He introduced the skis in Cuba.

S: What club were you in?

B: Miramar Yacht Club. And he introduced skiing in Cuba at our club and there was a team of skiers and all that and they used to come here also to buy the boats, the motorboats. So really we had a, in a way it was a very Cuban American, you know we were not realizing it then but I can tell you now. We celebrated Thanksgiving and we celebrated Halloween because Merici was in a place called Biltmore. I don't know if you've seen it. And that area had a lot of American families, you know, I cannot tell you, you'd probably need to get a phone book or something. There were a lot of American families there and other descendents of French and some Russians and you know it was a very... so we celebrated Halloween, Thanksgiving.

S: Was that a common thing for Cubans?

B: No not at all. It was the Biltmore and Country Club area in Havana.

S: So would you celebrate with American friends or who?

B: No Cubans.

S: So you would get a turkey? Yeah? And you would do the whole thing?

B: Yes. Yes. Because...

S: Tell me about that tradition in your household.

B: Well that tradition and I don't know if it came from Merici or whatever. We knew it was happening because we used to come here and all that. And at night usually the same thing as here. We would gather together. They would bake the turkey in the

kitchen in my house. It really wasn't like cranberries and mashed potatoes. It was more like rice and beans and the turkey and the salad.

S: So a Cubanized Thanksgiving.

B: A little bit yes but some of the desserts were more American desserts. And one of those towards the end, the revolution had started, I know I'm digressing here, but one of those thanksgivings was very significant because the revolution was already starting. The movie houses, they were putting bombs underneath the chairs, people were being taken. And one Thanksgiving we have the turkey out and I'll never forget it. The maid- we had a cook and two maids and a nanny and a gardener and a chauffeur and all that- but that night it was just my mother, my sister and one of the maids who stayed there and we were waiting for my dad and my dad was not coming. The turkey was out. I remember it was all dressed. The table was set. He was not coming, he was not coming. He had been taken to jail because unbeknownst to him the law firm was so big and my father and grandfather had a great library, legal library, down there in the bowels of the... you know they had like half a floor of one of the Bacardi buildings there. Apparently somebody a secretary or somebody that worked in the office had started a counterrevolutionary paper against Batista. And they attached my father to that and he didn't know what was going on. That night he was taken. I will never forget it. And then the family started coming in. He finally was let go like two or three days afterwards and one interesting thing about him, at that time Batista was in full force. He was a horrible dictator. He pulled the teeth. He did a lot of horrible torture, his henchmen, because that's really what they were, the military. And that's why Fidel came so we have to thank Batista for Fidel because otherwise there would not have been a need. And he remembered that night, apparently they were rounding up a lot of the lawyers in the Havana area and he remembered young lawyers, two of them. They were very good friends. He had mentored them. They were in their 20s or early 30s and they were killed that night. They were taken to La Cabaña, which is the place for... he remembered the screams and the torture and thank god my family knew somebody within the government and they pulled my dad out. And I'll never forget it. My sister and I are walking towards Merici because we lived only two blocks away. So I really lived in the shadows of the schools. I could see the nuns up there. And we're walking in and my mom, I can see her with her clothes and my dad. We had a Dodge. Okay let me tell you Havana loved American cars. You can still see them. In the fifties there was every Chrysler, every Dodge, every American car. Buick. So we're walking and almost entering and, "No girls. Don't go in." And they got us in the car and we went to the airport and came to Miami and spent here like three weeks.

S: After your father was in prison?

B: Right. We wanted to make sure, my grandfather wanted to make sure that the state... because at that time they just picked you and...

S: Your grandfather who was also a lawyer.

B: Yes. Yes. He was a lawyer. My grandfather was a lawyer. My father was a lawyer. His cousins were lawyers. Like I said, there were nine. Five guys and four of the ladies. I have four aunts who were lawyers. One on my mom's side and three on the other side. So at that time women were going to University of Havana, they were getting their degrees. And at least in my family my mom herself studied diplomacy or I don't know whatever. She never worked in her life but it would've been to work in the embassy or something but they had gone to the university and they were really educated women. They had gone I guess in the '30s.

S: Your father went to University of Havana to get his law degree as well?

B: Yes. And my mom did too. I should've brought you some pictures. I have some beautiful pictures.

S: It's okay. You can email me things too.

B: Okay.

S: Did your father's experience with the Batista government, did that alter his perception of what was happening at all?

B: Yes. We were all scared. We saw Havana degenerating and it was horrible. It was really sad for all of Havana and it got to a point where you were afraid to walk in the street. You were afraid to go to a movie house, etc. etc. To make a long story short, in the meantime, Fidel goes... he came first here in the Granma then he went back to Cuba to the mountains in Santiago and he started his revolution. So while all this is happening, the revolution and Fidel and all the boys over there, it was starting. So then at some point all these things, it was the underground and this and that and then all the fighting started happening.

S: What was your awareness of the revolution?

B: I was very aware. First because my parents but also we read the newspapers. We saw what was happening.

S: What newspapers did you read?

B: Well there they had the *Diario de la Marina*, which was one of the best in Havana. And also the *Prensa Libre*, which was also... plus they had two that I was not supposed to look at but because I loved to read I always opened them when they weren't there, *Bohemia* and *Carteles*. You've probably seen them, the covers. Those are almost antiques. And there they had, I'll never forget the photos of the jars like that in formaldehyde or something. They had taken the...

S: The fingernails?

B: The fingernails. And the torture and the things they used and people dead. In Cuba the press was pretty graphic at the time.

S: But this was after the revolution right?

B: No this is during Batista.

S: So they're showing these photos during...

B: Well because first Batista started clamping down on anybody he thought and there was already a clamp down. And there were families that really didn't know about Fidel or work with Fidel but they were against the repression that was happening in Cuba and the robbery.

S: So the violence and the...

B: Yeah it started in Havana especially yes. And Fidel took the opportunity and of course he wanted to liberate but we already knew that we were... Cuba has been really unlucky and the professor, hopefully the professor can talk to you about it. We never really had a republic. It was a republic but it's never really been years of prosperity. Even though there were years of prosperity. People worked very hard. Cubans treasure very much education. You had the French nuns, the American nuns, the priests, the Las Salle brothers, the Jesuits in Havana. And even public education was good. At the time Fidel came, the Cuban dollar was the same as the peso, or I mean the peso was the same as the Cuban dollar. The trains. We had the airport. It was really a competitive nation and architecture was beautiful. We had a lot of colonial buildings. I know this for a fact but you can research it, out of Madrid or Spain, the Spaniards loved Cuba. So that's where they replicated, they did the same, especially along the Malecón and all that in Old Havana. The old architecture, most of the buildings they resemble the buildings in Madrid. So there was a lot of architecture there.

S: Where did you learn English?

B: At the school. Yes but even before that because the first school I went to in kindergarten is called Happy Garden. It was in the Miramar area.

S: In English it was called Happy Garden?

B: Yes. There were a lot of schools. You had Philips, Happy Garden, Saint George, Merici. There were tons of little schools. This was for like toddlers and pre...

S: Who ran it?

B: I don't remember. It was two sisters who ran it. I don't remember.

S: Were they Americans or were they Cubans?

B: You know what? I really don't... my mom probably would've known but she's long passed. I know there were American kids there. Kay was one. I remember some other names.

S: Kay?

B: K-a-y. She was in my class and she had an American last name. I don't remember her last name.

S: I think I interviewed her. Kay Torpey is her name now. Her father worked for United Fruit or you wouldn't know?

B: I wouldn't doubt it. Is she my same age?

S: Yeah she's about your age. She graduated high school in '65?

B: Well I graduated in '66 because my mom held me back one year. Oh my god I can't believe that that is the same.

S: I'll find her name but I would...

B: I know we used to call her Cake to bother her but she was Kay, K-a-y.

S: No I interviewed her. I'm forgetting her maiden name though.

B: I might not remember but did she tell you that she went to a kinder school called Happy Garden in Miramar?

S: She didn't tell me Happy Garden but she told me she went to a different child school I think in Miramar.

B: Well this school, from the beginning, I guess my parents figured the English and all that, they realized that a lot of families would go for the French or the Spanish but my parents always were... you know we were involved with Pan American and had a lot of friends or whatever.

S: Yeah so what is that? What did they think that English could do for you?

B: They thought, thank god, and we all as a group and everybody who comes here from... we were so lucky that our parents had the vision to realize that in addition to learning Spanish, of course we all had to, that English would be the language of the future, that it was the international language. A lot of parents chose French for their daughters at the time because you know you were in one of these schools like Sacred Heart they had classes in French but not in English or very basic. So for whatever reason, thank god, we were very lucky they realized that they wanted us to be bilingual. So I was bilingual from pre-kinder, kindergarten, all the way up until I left. When I left I was in seventh grade.

S: Did your parents speak English?

B: Yes of course. Absolutely.

S: How did they learn it?

B: I guess at the university or maybe even before in their life. I can't tell you exactly when they learned but they both were fluent in English.

S: Did they ever speak English to you?

B: In the house? Sometimes we would say some stuff and all that. And we in Merici in the morning from 8 to 12 was all English classes and then in the afternoon we used to go home for two hours and then from 2 to 4 in Spanish. So really we were more immersed in English than in Spanish. When I came, when we came over, the revolution in 1960, October 29th. I'll never forget it. It was horrible but we can get to that later or whatever. I had my bag ready and all that stuff. And I'll never forget it. My mom asked if I was all ready, my dresses, and everybody is crying and she comes with all my books from Merici and she props them up in my bag. And she says, "You're taking them." And I said, "Mom who is going to..." "You're taking your books." And you can see some of the books are there and this story repeated itself in a lot of families. I brought my medals, my certificates, all my books, my mom made sure. I went here to Saint Michaels and sure enough, English, the arithmetic and the spelling book were the same as I was using in Havana.

S: Wow.

B: So yeah. You can see maybe a lot of our memorabilia. We were attached to our schools. And we were very lucky because these nuns were wonderful, wonderful, bright, advanced women. It was a beautiful school. It had a huge pool. It was one of the Olympic pools. There was a little rowboat, a little white rowboat with oars and all. A trampoline. We had coffee cake. Every Friday the whole school would get together in the auditorium and we would sing God Bless America, you know they had the award ceremony.

S: How did you think of that? That's an interesting idea. God Bless America.

B: We grew up like that. We didn't question it. It was part of the... we knew we were going to school that the nuns were... all of the nuns, most of them only spoke English. There was only one Cuban nun and I think... Mother Claudita and maybe one from Mexico or somewhere. Most of the nuns spoke English and the Ursulines, I don't know if you know the story of the Ursulines. Originally they come from Brescia. Saint Angela of Merici was born in Brescia in Italy and she was apparently from, you know, more or less well to do. She was from a middle class family but then her parents died and Maria Juana can give you the whole story to that. Then she went to live with an uncle who was very rich and then she really came... and then she saw the need that there was in Italy of the poor girls that were in the streets abandoned and she started picking the girls from higher society to teach them to bring them in and all that. So that's how... I digress. Why was I telling you this?

S: No you were telling me about the school which is helpful.

B: Oh so that's where it started and that was the first order of women in the whole world of women in the Catholic Church. It was Saint Angela who started that and she named it Ursulines which according to... Saint Ursula was going to another island in Italy, they had like 500 virgins in the boat, this is the story, and I think there is a little... not the postcards, the things that go in the missiles and all that? Saint Angela

and the 500 virgins and then there was a tempest and they wound up in an island and it was of course there was a man and they killed them. They were all killed. So they all became saints. So instead of giving the name to herself she dedicated it to the order of the Ursula, in tribute to Saint Ursula.

S: Got it.

B: And I had a book. I should've brought it. A whole book where it shows you and you can see this. They were in Japan, in China, in France, in Canada, all over Europe, in South America. The Ursulines reached far and wide.

S: So they didn't speak Spanish to you at all?

B: The nuns didn't speak Spanish.

S: They didn't even know Spanish?

B: No.

S: How long would they come for? Would they be living full time in...

B: They lived in the school. The school was very beautiful. I don't know if you've seen the pictures but it had like four stories. I think like three or four stories. The first and second floor were mostly classrooms. Then the third story they had their boarding school. Cause some girls came from as far as Santiago and their parents put them there for boarding because they couldn't drive. They couldn't do a three hour drive. Especially the ones that owned... you want to go back to some of the sugar... I'm thinking plantations but that's not what they're called.

S: Colonias?

B: Centrales. They would come from as far away as those centrales in Camagüey and the girls lived there on one side. I think they usually had like 30 or 40 boarders. And on the other side of the third floor were the nuns' rooms, which I can tell you about that because that was one of the classes one day when there was recess... there was a lot of mischief going on. And one of the days during recess and all that, we all got together, my little group. I must've been like 10. We wanted to go up to the third floor. We wanted to go. And the one who guided it was one of the boarders so she knew. We went up and we went into their rooms. I can tell you, I remember, they were very Spartan. There weren't beds, there were what do call them? The ones that you can fold?

S: Like mats?

B: They were like little tiny beds.

S: Did they all sleep in the same room?

B: They had different rooms. They had like two or three in a group and then there was a wall and another and of course the crucifix. Very small. Oh yeah I can

remember. We paid a price for that. All the nuns were there in different rooms and that's where they lived. I think they had their own place to eat up there. Their own little dining room and their own little things. We got caught and we were put out- in the second floor they had these columns, they were beautiful- and they stood us one per column, that was a disgrace, while the whole school went by. So yeah we got punished for that. They lived there and on the weekends... actually after school hours and all that I was only a block away. We used to bike a lot around with the Anderson boys, sometimes they would come with us.

S: So Gary Anderson?

B: Did you get to meet him?

S: I'm sending out a... trying to talk to Gary Anderson or Bonnie Anderson.

B: Cause I have a friend that is a good friend of Bonnie Anderson.

S: Is she in Puerto Rico now or no?

B: I don't know.

S: That would be great. Yeah.

B: Jody Pratts. These people were Irish. Oh but they didn't go to Merici but the Pratts, I was with Jody last night and I was telling her I had a meeting with you. There is Shelton O'Burke. They were at Lestonac. They were only five blocks from our school. Lestonac. They went to that school. She hated it. They had very small classes.

S: Was it an American school?

B: You know what I think it was but I'm not 100 percent sure. I think it was. Or maybe they had Spaniard nuns. I'm not sure. No the nuns were... they hardly spoke English but they taught them English. But what I'm saying is that now I remember it these girls are... you might want to interview them. I don't know. Shelton O'Burke. They're English-Scottish.

S: Wow. So they went to...

B: They happened to be my friends. There were a lot... they lived in the Country Club area, which was next to where we lived.

S: Did you have Americans, other than Pieper go to Merici?

B: What's that?

S: Other than the Pieper family, were there other Americans at Merici?

B: Oh yes. Yes. Oh yes absolutely. I had them in my class but I forget their names.

S: Were they the boarders ever or no?

B: Some of them I think were boarders and some lived around the area. In almost every class I remember... I even have photos of some of them but I forget their names. In almost every class there were one or two girls. Not huge. Or say sisters that were American born that lived in Cuba.

S: And they would go there because it's Catholic presumably?

B: Well if they were Catholic and it was in English if they spoke English and of course they had the school also for the people that were ambassadors. The people that were in Cuba, all the diplomats and all of that, there was another school that was there.

S: Right so it was like an option similar to like Lafayette?

B: Exactly. But in a lot of them people would kill to go to them. It was the biggest, most expensive and supposedly the best school for girls. It was only girls in Havana.

S: Did you have any male counterpart? Did you guys interact with...

B: Well yeah sure, not exactly an American school but they had Belen, which was really famous for the Jesuits. Very strong position there and Las Salle, the Las Salle brothers. And the Maristas that actually my grandfather had to do with it because he had gone in Spain and he brought the priests for all of that, the Maristas that came from Spain and where he used to go. Havana Military Academy. Have you heard?

S: I have heard of this one. Yeah.

B: It was beautiful. They had the most beautiful uniforms. Usually the Cuban boys were a little bit crazy and parents would send them to the Havana Military Academy. It was beautiful and rifles and like a little imitating West Point, even in the uniform.

S: Who ran the Havana Military Academy?

B: I cannot tell you but I'm sure because the name was in English there probably were Americans running it.

S: Yeah.

B: You would need to find out about Havana Military Academy.

S: Oh man. You're giving me so much more homework, which is great.

B: I'm a big talker. I remember. I came when I was 12 and I remember everything. Some have amnesia but I never had amnesia.

S: Yeah and your placement in society just offers me things that... I just talked to people who went to Ruston which feels very much like a bubble and so they lived in that bubble. You seem to have a wider lens.

B: And we all thank, of course I also had my family and I had some friends who came home and the mother was with the rosary and more the Spaniards... And thank god my father, mostly my dad, they came from Spain, from Barcelona, a very international city and all that and that was transferred to my household. I was very lucky. But some of the other regions of Spain or whatever they were, they were more concise. Looking back I really had a pretty Cuban American teaching and it made me very... it helped me a lot. We didn't know it but it helped me with the horrors of exile.

S: Did your father use English at work?

B: Yes because they had American clients. I mean he had Pan American so they were representing the Pan American amongst all the others that they had and in Cuba you had the Hersheys, they had the centrals. Actually the next door neighbors, the guy was a lawyer and the mom was French, the cousins lived at the Hershey central. And yes he had American companies and also he had a lot of, like I told you, people that owned a lot like my aunt married the owner of all the dynamite in Cuba. So these people... I really was very lucky. I grew up in an area where there were mostly millionaires or multimillionaires at the time. We were very lucky. I was very lucky. And then people that owned the boats. How do you say in Spanish? It was like a whole... I actually have the papers and he could never bring them back and I want to tell you this story. A lot of them owned the boats or the dynamite or part of the centrales or they owned a lot of territory in Havana. Hotels. And one of the things that my grandfather did because he was a true Catalanian to the end and a gentleman to the end. He stayed until 1966 and really it cost him his life because he didn't want to leave Havana when the whole revolution started happening he had all the original papers and they were so trusted because of their decency and... when the revolution starts happening and Fidel starts coming down and the whole thing in Havana, people used to come... the owners used to leave all the papers. You couldn't walk out of Havana, out of the airport.

S: So they'd give it to your grandfather?

B: All the ownership, the lands, whatever. So they would come every time. Sometimes it would be their chauffeurs, sometimes it would be the maids, sometimes it would be the... and they would throw them there. He was great. He was very courageous. He saved them. Some people actually buried the stuff or gave it to somebody which eventually they left... but a lot of Havana, not a lot of Havana but a lot of their clients came to them and my grandfather said he wasn't leaving until he made sure... and my father used to say, "Your grandfather now has become in the underground. The old man is doing revolution." And after my father left because my father had to leave and we had to leave. So he would get a chauffeur and go to different parts of the island and leave him with somebody or the other in the middle of night they would knock on the door and he would open the door. And he stayed until he made sure most families... but eventually when he came he had some and I have them, my sister has them. These people owned a lot of boats. They went from say the Americas to Europe. How do you call those boats?

S: Like the cruise lines? Steamships?

B: Right. They owned steamships and based in New York and lets say Madrid. So anyways.

S: Did... alright I'm going to go back to the school. You've opened a lot of questions for me. But did... why do you think other people chose a school like, because there are very good Cuban schools run by Cubans, why is it significant to...

B: Maria Juana can tell you about this and we will talk to her about it. When the nuns arrived in Havana, I think it was 1941. They themselves, because she remembers the nuns saying, they thought oh they're going to have a little school in Havana. The Ursulines have arrived and all that. When the word got out that the Ursuline nuns were there, they themselves couldn't keep up with the demand. The parents kept knocking on their door.

S: So was it about the Ursuline order?

B: It was about the Ursuline order with English. The Ursulines were American nuns.

S: So it's a way in a sense, it's a way to...

B: To say the education of my daughter is going to be Catholic and American. That was the choice. Catholic Americans.

S: It's just interesting to me because...

B: The Ursulines were American nuns. They didn't place us with Cuban nuns or with Spanish nuns.

S: Right and the fact that it wasn't a secular American school or Protestant American school...

B: No. These were Catholic families, especially at that time, and of course they wanted Catholicism. Yes. They themselves from what I read from the older ones because believe it or not you're talking to the oldest one in the group. I'm 68 going on 69. If you meet the other's they're usually older. I'm the chiquita.

S: A lot of the people I've interviewed have been in their 90's yeah.

B: Okay so you can see I'm a little bit younger. Exactly. So I'm the youngest that joined them. Of course you have my sister but my sister is younger than me but she doesn't care about the school. Not everybody kept together. I have kept together with the association. I also worked for the U of M for 33 years. I was director of the medical school. So the combination is perfect and that's why they picked me. But anyways, the nuns themselves from what I hear when they got there they thought they were going to have a little school in Havana but as word spread throughout Havana that the Catholic Ursuline order was there to teach their daughters and bring... basically I'm thinking the years that they were there were not much. '41 to

'61. First they had a very small school, then a bigger school, then the very big... they kept growing. My sisters class already had to be divided in two because half of Havana wanted... my sisters class had 35 and 35 in each class of lets say 4th grade. They couldn't keep up with the demand. And some of the nuns who came... a lot of the nuns were young nuns. There was one... Of course Cuba was kind of like close and when she arrived there she was 19 and had just taken her vows and she taught us. So a lot of the nuns from the Ursulines who were sent there were also very young.

S: Right. Did they interact, I mean the nuns themselves, did they have lives outside of the school?

B: I don't know but... I'm really not sure. I think they mostly stayed within the compound but they had a very active life inside the school because they had the boarders. They used to... I remember sometimes with my mom we used to go buy the groceries and there were a couple of nuns because they had a car or they had the jeep or whatever you call it and they used to go buy their food at the supermarket. We had American supermarkets like Eklo and I think the other one was called Miramax. And they used to go buy their food and that kind of stuff. They also had American teachers, lay teachers. One year Mother Thomas, that was the principal of the school, called my parents who were a block away and they knew us, and asked if we could house, the same thing we're doing now, if we could house in my house one of the teachers. We had a lot of American teachers. I forget their names.

S: So did you house them?

B: No. Because they said they could help Beatriz and Cristina do their homework and all that. We had the extra rooms and all that but my dad thought that it would kind of like disrupt... having the teacher and all that. He did offer the... we had a huge farm outside of Havana and he did offer the chauffeur and there was a beautiful house and a pool and the whole nine yards. And we offered that to her so she could commute and have the chauffeur at her disposal but that was like a half hour away and the nuns were afraid. There was a family living in there and they said no. So eventually another family, she went to live with another family and I don't know who she ended up with but she was a very nice lady. We had American teachers, lay teachers who also went to the school to teach.

S: And they would've had lives in the city outside of the school?

B: Some of them lived with Cuban families, with other Cuban families, and some I think chose to live within the school. There wasn't that many, maybe three or four, I don't know how many teachers, they ended up in different Cuban houses. You know being like hosted.

S: Were there any non-Catholics that went to the school?

B: There probably were but I cannot tell you but I wouldn't doubt it.

S: Got it. But probably not that many?

B: Probably not that many. At that point I couldn't tell you. We all went to Mass, we went to communion, but I wouldn't doubt that somebody there was Episcopalian or Baptist or no religion or whatever and they sent them there for the education, not for the... I cannot tell you if anybody has a clue on that.

S: When the revolution is going on, when did you leave?

B: 1960. October 29th, 1960.

S: And you guys are singing God Bless America, right and you have this rhetoric of anti-Americanism you could say...

B: No. Not in our school.

S: No but I mean...

B: Oh in the country yes. Absolutely.

S: Especially after the revolution right?

B: During the revolution.

S: It must've been interesting balancing your own identity and your own loyalties in figuring out...

B: Not for us and I don't think most of the girls would tell you... I don't think so because we knew. There was... these people, these revolutionaries with their green fatigues and their rosaries and they came down from Havana, the mountains and all that and of course Batista like I said was an assassin, dictator, piece of you-know-what. Another Latin dictator like Trujillo and the other like Pinochet and squadrons killing. I mean my dad almost got disappeared if it wasn't for the connections, who knows? So I think that Havana knew all of these revolutionaries and oh he was very dramatic. He came all the way from the mountains and then he crossed all of Cuba to Havana. You've probably seen, it's very interesting, Che, el gringo, Mr. Anderson. He was there. This big tall American. They all had the beards and the... so they were almost like bigger than life and then as they came up it was almost like when the French got liberated and people went to the streets and threw flowers and they came down in the trucks. Not in the trucks but the artillery and whatever. So you're watching all of this and getting a little scared and a little hesitant of what's going on with these revolutionaries. As life would have it, my aunt, her husband, his sister had married one of the revolutionaries, Omar Fernandez and he was in the mountains. So that night, Batista left, you heard about the night. I don't know if you've seen the movie...

S: *Godfather II*?

B: No the Andy Garcia movie?

S: Oh *Lost City*?

B: That one. It kind of gives you an idea. They were at the grand palace and then they got on the planes and they, you know, they left the palace and they started coming down and we got very lucky. We got on the revolution's side because Omar was with them and when he came to Havana he stayed at our house. And all the houses, well not all the houses but you could see five cars outside and the poor chauffeurs were sleeping in their cars and the maids couldn't get there because everything, the whole, nobody could get to the houses and all that and when he told us what was going on and all that so we had like first knowledge. He never said the word communism or anything but from the beginning there was some kind of a...

S: There was hesitancy.

B: Especially from my dad. My mom no. And neither did we. We were like "Cuba is liberated." And all that. But from the very beginning, Cienfuegos, Camillo Cienfuegos. He looked like a patriarch. And apparently when these men start finding very soon once they get in power that there is this communism and all this undercurrent, they start rebelling because the life of Anderson, Camillo, he got disappeared over the Bay of... from the very beginning he starts killing people or evicting them. So no one except the city, how do you say? The people in the country. But if you were in certain areas and you started realizing, you started realizing that there is something wrong here. Imagine here, we're a little island in the 1950s, gorgeous island, in the middle of the Caribbean here and you start to hear, "Oh the Iron Curtain." Who is going to think that the Iron Curtain is going to come to a little island? We were so lucky to this day, you can see they're still there. If you put it in the historical account, it's almost unheard of. It is really unheard of. I don't think there is another. So who is going to think the Iron Curtain and communism? Nobody. So it took awhile to realize it and we stayed a year but within a year we started leaving and usually in '60, '61, and maybe '62 the higher class, the professors, the doctors, the accountants, the PhDs, the lawyers, they left and they left with their families.

S: So did most of your class from school, did they end up here within those first few years?

B: Yes. Many of them came from eventually... because we all lost track of each other. You can imagine. You're in a place, you have a family and all that. It was devastating. It was horrible. I never saw a lot of my family ever again. I've never gone back to Cuba even though my house is still there. I still a block away from Merici. My aunt is there. She's in the house. She's in her 80s and she stayed in the house. And I still have my house. Our house was not intervened or taken over. We've been lucky. I have a friend, Alicia, the books that are there in the middle are hers. She was my next door neighbor and she went to my house two years ago. She says, "Your house looks like the day you left. Everything is in the same..." It's like a museum.

S: It's in Miramar?

B: No in the Biltmore.

S: Oh it's in the Biltmore.

B: A block away from Merici.

S: Got it. Got it.

B: Yeah my aunt is still there.

S: So why did you go to Miramar Yacht Club then?

B: Oh because my dad liked it there. He liked the people there. It was only a half hour away. There were a lot of clubs. The Havana Yacht Club, the Biltmore. All that. That was really a nice... they more like avant-garde. The Havana Yacht Club was more older men and this one was more young guys. My parents, I thought they were old but when we moved over here they were 36. They were kids. We thought they looked ancient but they were 36. So he brought like skiing and we did a lot of... my uncle who was there also was a part of fishing because in Cuba there was great fishing so he was into fishing. We were into waterskiing and a lot of... actually they competed here in the United States. There was a lot of competition. You should look into the athletics part. A lot of the clubs and they would do the Pan American Games or they would come here to the United States, you know, there was an interaction between athletes.

S: Sure. I've talked to some people who...

B: Baseball, basketball, especially swimming, diving.

S: Rowing.

B: Rowing. Cuba was very much a participant.

S: It's been interesting speaking to these people who would go to the U.S. south and see racial dynamics they haven't seen before.

B: Exactly and the American teams would come to Miami. I mean to Cuba, to Havana.

S: Did your family have American friends?

B: Yes. Yes. I cannot tell you... I don't remember.

S: That you socialized with though? Like your parents would go out...

B: My parents socialized with everybody. They really were social butterflies. They went out every night. I thought it was normal. Then I realized here... they went out seven nights a week, my mom would get dressed up and go to a friend's house or go to the movies. We had American movies. I don't know if anybody has told you have they? American movies were at the Miramar Theater. We all saw from the beginning. I grew up with Davey Crockett, Peter Pan, the old actresses, Doris Day, John Wayne. In Cuba you always had two, one movie and then the second movie. So they always showed... it was usually American movies. We all grew up with them.

S: And it's so interesting...

B: With Spanish subtitles. Of course we spoke English so we didn't have to look at the titles but yeah. Oh and TV also. We had Roy Rogers...

S: How about radio?

B: Yes. The cartoons. The Walt Disney cartoons. We all grew up with the cartoons and the radio also.

S: CMOX or something?

B: There was a special station that played American music, jazz.

S: Did you listen to that?

B: Yes because I had a little, you know, a little one of those... the little portable. I used to like Elvis Presley. We all grew up dancing to Elvis Presley.

S: Did you go to Carmelo?

B: Carmelo was a big nice restaurant.

S: Okay but they had records or maybe I'm getting confused. There was a record shop.

B: Well there was CMQ. C-M-Q. That would be like NBC over here. Yes. Because my father had business there. He knew a lot of people. Then my grandmother on his side, his mother, thought she was an artist and she loved to read poetry and stuff like that. He got her a slot on the radio on CMQ and she had her own half an hour. She would report, read and talk and of course he knew the Mestres. The Mestres were the owners of CMQ. So yeah that was a very... that was like NBC, CBS here.

S: So when you came to the United States do you think it was easier for you to adapt to what was happening?

B: Absolutely.

S: You'd been Americanized in some ways?

B: In a lot of ways. Yes. Absolutely. Actually last year was our 50 year reunion and we had to... did you see the tape I did about the school? I should... they have it here but if not I'll send it to you also.

S: That'd be great.

B: I made it with Suzanna Shelton.

S: So it's a documentary or it's a...

B: Well the way I did it... let me finish first the answer and then I'll tell you how I did it. Listen I'm sorry. Last night I went to see *Girl on the Train* and then we went out to dinner and I got to breakfast and said I should've prepared...

S: There is no preparation.

B: I live two minutes away from here. I live in Gables. I can drop you that and copies and all that. I made a tape. I want you to see it. In the 50 year reunion what I did cause I was in charge of that cause most of the girls, we were almost like 42. But we've only been able to connect like 12 or 13 of us here. Many people just disappeared cause we were younger. I mean the parents, I don't know. The other women, apparently they're... But my class, 1966 graduates, we settled here but we had the ones who went back to Argentina. The other ones came back here. Some others went to California. It was a different... and I can say, most of us married American guys. Karasik, I married a Jewish guy. We have a Smith. A lot of us from our class, we were so comfortable there we actually, you know, we integrated here very easily and we actually married American guys which of course has affected... the other generations it was Cuban with Cuban, Cuban with Cuban. I myself stepped out of the religion myself. You asked me a question and I don't remember.

S: I really will, if you send me that movie that would be great...

B: Oh the video. I'll drop it here or whatever. I thought I wanted to do a tribute knowing that I'm the last class of the chiquititas, the little ones cause the other ones don't care. I want to do it more universal. I'm really more universal you know. I have never been constrained by this and if there is something to break the mold or whatever I'll do it. I mean here I had since the 1700s married Catalonian with Catalonian and here I married an American Jewish guy. You can imagine... mine was not whatever. But to make a long story short I said I want to do a tribute to the school and that it's more... not about our class. I had to fight them and I did. So you'll see the thing it has the pictures of the school and I started from the little classes and then went on to the bigger ones and you'll see a lot of the grounds of the school. Our uniforms are beautiful. Some of the nuns, some of the servants. And then I made a trajectory like Pan American ticket, then the exile, then beginning here, then you'll see some of the newspaper up to this day. I took it all the way since I was involved in this project to leaving our memories and memorabilia here at UM. So I could've done 50 more but they told me only 10 minutes. So I'll send you the video or bring it or whatever.

S: Yeah your files right now are being digitized and so I won't have access to them until they're online.

B: Well I want you to have a video and I have an extra video cause it gives you an idea. It's photographs but you can tell, you'll see us with the hula hoops, the shorts, singing happy birthday, singing you know, you will see, you can tell. The dresses were gorgeous. All the dresses came from El Encanto, which was like the Macys or the Nordstroms or whatever of Havana. And the owner, she was in the school with

her parents, she just died this year. And they were beautiful and you had to go every year and get a shirt for the uniforms and for the Holy Communion and all that.

S: Had you finished up at Merici would you have gone to the University of Havana? University of Villanova? A school in the United States?

B: We were close to Villanova because the University of Villanova was right at the entrance to where we lived. To the Biltmore and the country club. It was right there on 5th Avenue. I remember thinking because I was in 7th grade and you had to make a decision, of course little did we know that no plans were going to be happening. And they kept saying bachillerato or... and I said for me, forget it. I couldn't identify with it. So I wanted to stay at the school and they sold it like a finishing college.

S: Like comercio?

B: No like a finishing, like liberal arts. Like of course you would be doing English and all of that. If you wanted to get a job you could but it was more like liberal arts, they were going to prepare you were now going to be an accountant and if you wanted to you could then go to the University of Havana or the other Universities, Villanova and become a lawyer or a doctor or an orthopedic surgeon or whatever or a teacher, it would be valid.

S: Got it. Did a lot of kids from your school end up going to the United States for education before the revolution?

B: That I cannot tell you. From my school, if they went to school at the time... when Havana was basically, especially in the '30s, '40s and '50s of course we had our system but it was basically a thriving city, a peaceful city, a very happy place. Only certain parents send their children to the United States. Boys because they had behavioral problems.

S: So that's when they would go to the military academy.

B: Yes. They would send them here or to Penn or this and that. Or because the parents, they themselves had been to study, the grandfather or certainly the father had gone here to one of the schools in Pennsylvania, Virginia, whatever and of course they wanted the son to go to the same school they had gone to. But that was not the majority. There was no need to. Either because you had a tradition in the family because somebody had graduated from lets say Harvard, you know, and then they wanted the kid to go to Harvard. Or because the mother was here or they had family here and they wanted them to experience... because that's one thing is Cubans were very open. We were really very open considering the rest of Latin American or Central American minds that there were... as an island... because it was... I think it had to do a lot with geography. So they always saw the United States as a neighbor and as a possibility.

S: So this is just a random question because I always talk to Americans. I've done about 40 of these interviews so far and I would say about 30 of them were with

Americans who lived in Cuba. They always talk about having these Jamaican home workers. Was that something Cubans did as well? They would have Cubans right?

B: Yes.

S: So the Jamaicans was just an English...

B: Apparently because in Jamaica some of them spoke English or something?

S: I mean that seems like what it was. They would come down and they would have...

B: Yes, yes. That was not usually for us. The service and the cooks and in the restaurants and all that, it was Cubans.

S: Got it. Did your housekeepers live with you?

B: Only one. The nanny would stay in most houses where there were children like ours when we were kids. And our parents actually went out every night. They were not going to leave us alone. I don't think all the parents... I realize my parents were a little bit too much, especially my father. All Cuban men were philanderers. They had mistresses. I mean it was like an open society. If you were good looking and charming and all that, it was kind of like these poor Cuban women I don't know how they put up with it but they did. Our mothers and aunts and whatever. And what am I saying?

S: You were talking about going out and I think your parents...

B: Oh yeah in my house and a lot of the other houses they would not leave us alone so of course we always had like a maid that lived with us. There was the house and there was towards the end there was room for them with their own bathroom and all that. She stayed there because my parents... like my sister and I stayed... She was the one that took care of us at night.

S: Yeah. Wow. Tell me about the farm.

B: The farm was beautiful. It was on the outskirts of Havana. I'm going to make a lot of pictures for you. We had a nice pool. My grandfather had wanted to give... he wanted a... a tradition in Cuba as in Italy and here and everywhere, on Sundays you got together, it was the day of the week that the family got together for lunch. So he built the farm, it was called La Nietecitas which is the granddaughters because my sister and I and my aunt, which was the daughter of my grandfather, she had three girls and we were two so he dedicated it to us, the granddaughters. And it was beautiful. It was a two-story house. My parents had a room and we had a room and my aunt had a room and my cousins had a room. We had... it was beautiful. There was a brook going by. It was pretty big. There was a little brook going also around. It was really a recreational farm. It was not...

S: It wasn't like you grew anything or...?

B: Yes. Well actually... He had mandarins and lemons and mangoes and the palms and all that. Then there was a little house for the guy that lived... the family who took care of the farm because we only went there on Sundays. It would get packed with 40-55 people depending on how many people. Religiously, it was almost like a caravan.

S: After church?

B: Exactly. People used to go there and spend the day and then when night fell they left and went back home. And then there was a bohio, you've seen it, open which was great and there was a kitchen in there with huge picnic tables. And then this lady on Sunday they would cook anything and everything.

S: So the family that lived there?

B: The family that lived there. She cooked and she cooked delicious... and of course everybody would arrive with their panecitos and this and that and there was a huge sit down and there were the cousins and the half cousins and the friends of the cousins and then the men used to play domino and our mothers used to play Canasta. And we used to run around all over the place. We had the swings. We had the pool. It was really nice. And that repeated itself in a lot of households in Havana even if you lived in the center of Havana somebody went to their grandparent's house and usually Sunday dinner was with the family.

S: When do you remember first realizing that a revolution was happening?

B: I think when the newspaper started printing... I was always very kind of like... and I read that the bomb exploded or I heard my parents talk about it. Everybody was kind of hush hush cause in Cuba, you know, it's very hush hush. But it got to a point where you realized that at least two to three years before Fidel came. There was already cause they wanted to... and there was a big thing in Cuba that they wanted to get rid of this guy that had been a military guy. He had come from very poor beginnings and some way some how he never had education or whatever but he just kept rising and rising and rising until he got to be president of Cuba. I would say at least three years before all this stuff happened.

S: What year was your father... you don't remember what year the Thanksgiving your father was arrested?

B: I can tell you more or less. If I came in 1960...

S: So '57 or '58 right?

B: Exactly. I was going to say '57 or maybe even '58. It was two or three years. At that time little did we know that two or three years later we were going to be in exile.

S: Now other than that time that he was in jail, at any other time were you afraid during the revolution?

B: Yes we used to go to the movies. We used to go to the Miramar, the Tropicana and it got to the point where what the underground was doing, I mean I thought it was crazy but whatever, that's what they were doing. They used to put bombs underneath the chairs. So here we're sitting and watching Davey Crockett or Esther Williams or whatever and you're afraid, you know, or if you were in a restaurant or, you know, it started becoming more of a police state. I used to see more of the police. The police were kind of brutal. You can see they had the sticks and of course they had the guns in the holsters. So it started becoming very... and of course you heard some of the girls in class, some of their fathers were really against the revolution and actually some of them were taken to the firing squad or they died at the end fighting with Fidel's forces. So there was a lot going on there and we were definitely affected. We were never for Batista. Ever. But a lot of Havana was for Batista and a lot of... and then of course come the Fidel forces and a lot of people start going toward the Fidel... My mom loved him. Actually I had a lot of fights when we were in exile. "Oh she's a communist." If you even praised a little bit of what was going on at the beginning you were labeled a communist. Here the exile was brutal. They were completely to the right and I blame them to this day because if we had come here... and of course there was the invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis and all that stuff that was a fiasco, but Kennedy was part of it... and then Cubans hated, we didn't but they did, hated Kennedy and his policies and thought he had sold us out and the boys who had gone over to, you know, these camps, they weren't given training or anything. They really were thrown there to die and of course Fidel's revolutionaries in two days they had them all wiped out. There wasn't a prisoner... eventually there was a prisoner exchange. We went to the Orange Bowl and there was a prisoner exchange and all of that.

S: Why do you think... I mean it sounds like in your family the violence and maybe the lack of democracy really justified a change of some sort. How do you think other people thought about the revolution as it was going on? What did they see as needing to change?

B: I think in a lot of Havana to tell you the truth, they didn't care that there was a dictatorship going on. That's what I think. They put up with it because they all had great lives and did this and that and it was like why rock the boat? At that time especially in Central America and the Caribbean, I mean even to this day. Nothing has changed. Have we learned? No we haven't learned. You talk to Cubans now and they talk the same shit they used to talk 55 years ago. They haven't changed. My friends, I have to fight with them. I'm a democrat and a liberal. They're republicans. I mean I'm digressing. It's like I've had to fight my whole life. I mean to this day it is so engrained. So I have to say most of them turned a blind eye to what was going on. If there was poor in the country they didn't give a... some families did and there was a lot and the Catholic church and... but they really were not so, you know, to work with the society and the poor they left that to the churches and yeah some of them did but I don't think there was that. So they were happy to turn a blind eye as soon as life was happy and jolly and great and of course when this crazy stuff starts happening people don't... it was to this day I don't think anybody has comprehended

it. Like to this day, god forbid Trump gets elected... I'm sorry I don't know what you...

S: I'm not a fan of his. Don't worry.

B: Okay so here is a great analogy. And you wonder half of this country is this racist. Half of this country thinks all Mexicans are rapists. Half of this country thinks women are just... and you have to wonder but we were having the same experience then. Actually many of us say, this is exactly, and that's why we are getting worried, that hopefully he doesn't get the presidency because it would be a watershed moment and this country will never, ever be the same. Even though with everything that's happening already... these people are being riled up. They're not going to go gently into the night. The change is going to be forever and I think change is good and this crap has to come out and you have to drain the sewers and realize. And then society, here, that we do not realize, realize and start a different type of education more worldwide, more universal, cause I mean you can see the country is divided. That's why they're neck to neck.

S: I mean it's interesting talking about this...

B: And the same thing in Havana. The same thing happened to us.

S: Yeah see I think there's an interesting analogy here and I've heard arguments on both sides of this, Trump is bringing out all this racism, Trump is whatever. And I've heard other people say...

B: It was there all the time.

S: Right. So and now in terms of looking back as a comparative analysis, the anti-Americanism that emerges in '59? Was that there all the time? How did that emerge?

B: No I think he really... because of that time Cuba, you know, Meyer Lansky and all the Miami mafia was in the middle of Havana. All the casinos were owned by them. The money was flowing everywhere.

S: Did people resent that at all?

B: No not really. I don't think so. They were part of it. I'm sure there was resentment... there was the telegraph I think it was...

S: International Telephone...

B: And the chocolate factories and whatever. There was a certain resentment that they were not Cuban nationals but still people loved it and they made business with all them and all that. I imagine there was also some anti-Americanism but overall on the island I don't think so. Most people didn't even know what was going on in Havana anyways. So I don't think there was anti-Americanism in the country but of course Fidel he was the master. It's like Trump. You can see how he starts putting

ideas... he really was the master of ceremonies here and then he started using that because the first thing he did, he did knock on the door of the United States. I think you know. And I think it was Eisenhower and he turned him off and then for the first time in life he turned to Russia. And here nobody ever expected it and of course they tried to assassinate him and all that. That didn't happen. So then when the United States turns their back on them, which looking back on it was a mistake, they should've kept them... then he went to Russia and then before you know it the island is full of missiles and all that stuff. And he really was the one. I don't think previous to that but it was nothing like that.

S: Got it. Yeah.

B: I'm hoping. Would you be interested in speaking to Doctor Sandoval?

S: Yeah. People you could...

B: She's a Cuban historian and anthropologist. And she is a history book of Cuba. I mean if you want. And she's Catalonian. No big deal but maybe she'll be able to come. Oh she's won every award and... I'll try. I don't know if she'll be able to make it down here or whatever but I'll let you know.

S: Sure. And this is just a question that I ask at the end so you can just write my dissertation for me but what do you think the overall influence of this American community was? Did they matter?

B: In the '40s and '50s? Yes absolutely they mattered. I think absolutely they mattered. First of all they brought a different type of thinking. The businesses that they brought and other ideas. We were not a closed society. The American community in Havana brought the winds of whatever... well it represented the United States. You know? And it was for us, it was part of our upbringing and some were our neighbors, some were our friends, some business partners and they made their presence felt. I don't think it was as strong. I think had it been allowed to grow it would've blossomed into a great thing. But there were a lot of great, decent people who had nothing to do with Meyer Lansky and the mafia that lived in Havana and worked in Havana and there was a bridge between the two nations.

S: So they served as helping to create that bridge?

B: For sure. And the nuns and the orders of the priests and the Ursulines for us... Oh I remember now that's what I wanted to tell. We thank them and we realized that we have been so lucky because we had had an American education, because we know how to speak English and because we knew what the United States was all about. Little did we know living there that it made the transition into exile so much better for all of us. We've been blessed because we could speak the language. We could communicate. The other ones knew English so they could get jobs. We mentioned that they could get jobs as soon as they got here. At least they could come in and get hired. It made it so much easier to adapt. Most people came to Miami to adapt to this society.

S: Do you feel like you served... and it's interesting that you mentioned that your husband is Jewish and my family is Jewish. And we're Polish Jews and the story of the Polish Jews is complicated right? So we came after the German Jews. We were significantly poorer. And the word "kike" for instance gets invented to describe Polish Jews and differentiate them from German Jews. This doesn't work so German Jews decide we have to lift up these Polish Jews. So this is sort of the Jewish success story. And the Cuban success story is sort of similar right? You have a lot of these educated professionals who arrive and sort of establish a community.

B: And there was a Jewish community. And that's why I said they were Polish and really they were Jewish but probably they came from Poland because after the war a lot of people immigrated.

S: It's interesting. That's part of my story as well. Cause there were a lot of American Jews and a lot of Jews who spoke Ladino, which is the language of Sephardic Jews.

B: Ladino yes. Exactly. That was happening in Havana too.

S: Yeah so you have all of these communities coming together which is interesting but in terms of your role when you got here certainly the first arrivals, the professional class, kind of served as a bridge for the newly arriving Cubans who maybe weren't as well educated.

B: Yes they did.

S: Do you feel like when you were in Cuba because of your father's cosmopolitan internationalism and your own ability to speak English in this world that is very influenced by both American individuals and American corporations and American policy and of course your 20 minute plane ride. So do you think that elements of the Americanized Cuban population kind of facilitated the co-existence of those two worlds?

B: Absolutely. And I think that all that sentiment that you mentioned, it really did. Because when we came here it was, you know, it was... but the one thing though. It wasn't that easy. If you were a doctor you could... my father was a lawyer, He tried, he couldn't become a lawyer. And the architects and all that. A lot of them ended up cleaning floors, working in hotels, it didn't matter if you were a professional or not. Thank god we had money here and my brother he bought some gas stations. But it did, it really made for us, I really think we were not so intimidated to come to the United States. The problem is that in the '60s Miami was a backward town. It really was a retirement town. Miami Beach mostly because there was really nothing here. Not much of anything. It was mostly Miami Beach because of the water and all that. So that is what we encountered when we came here. At 8 o'clock if you were hungry you weren't going to eat anything because all of the cafeterias were closed. The buses stopped running. So there was a big... but they already had American cars so they already knew when they bought their first cars if it was a Ford or a Buick or you know. The food, we knew the food and you were familiar with that. There was a lot. I really think. And as the professionals and the professors and all that, that it was

easier, versus another migration of people that are really going to an unknown area. So we started making it bilingual. At that time nobody spoke Spanish here. It's like... and I remember thinking, "Oh god now we'll forever be speaking English everywhere." Because the school I went to there were Colombians and Peruvians and they were completely acculturated. I don't know why but Cubans were very different. It was like to express yourself you had to speak Spanish. So we were the first group here that started the bodegas and supermarkets and restaurants and then it's English, Spanish and that's where you end up with Spanglish. So we started merging I think the Cuban exile community at the beginning especially. Well we brought, because we were proud and we knew and we were not going to disintegrate... you know you didn't go to be a maid. You tried to strive and if you were a teacher well okay you may be babysitting. They knew they had a world ahead and this was the land of opportunity. So I really think nobody, even in the middle of all the despair, people knew that there were possibilities there and that was what pushed the Cuban community forward to strive and then you started a little restaurant here, a little store there, a little doctor that finally passed the exam, and little by little.

S: What language do you dream in?

B: I think in English.

S: You do?

B: Yeah. I think so. I'm not sure because I really think in English and believe it or not I really express myself in English. Sometimes in Spanish I start going... and I like to write in English. In that sense I'm more... that doesn't mean I've forgotten Spanish or I don't think in Spanish or if I get really mad I'll say something but I really think in English. I think I think in English and I think more like an American than the Cuban. My daughter, she lives in Georgia and she married a Colombian. She's half American and she's... and I think she's completely American and my grandchildren are too. But they know a little Spanish.

S: So you didn't speak Spanish at all to your children?

B: No I did. Leslie I spoke Spanish. No actually my house was different because Michael wanted her to learn Spanish so he spoke Spanish to her. She had a Spanish nanny here and I spoke English to her.

S: How does your husband know Spanish?

B: Because he learned it in Miami.

S: Okay. Wow.

B: He was from Miramar. He used to live in Miramar here in Broward County. He was on his way to Georgia, not to Georgia, to Gainesville. Then he met me and then he stopped the projectory there. And so he learned Spanish here. He picked it up. He

really has an affinity for languages. So he... then I had a nanny that I brought from Nicaragua so she spoke Spanish. So I was the one in English. When I put Leslie at the Mailman Center at UM at the Medical School there is the Mailman Center for... she got there and I said, "Michael what do we do with this girl? She hardly knows English." But you know in a month she was... Cause I was the only one in my house. She was brought up in English. But a lot of my friends, we all tried to do that. But our children? Their children's children? Forget it. Most of... Leslie was telling me, "Mom the Fajuls..." I don't know if you met that family. They were very rich. They were the owners of all the sugarcane in Havana. The Fanjuls. They have sugar in Cuba. And they're here. They're multimillionaires. They're in the Dominican Republic and all that and they don't speak English. The grandchildren, the same age as my grandchildren, the parents already the third generation is not teaching them to speak Spanish. I'm sorry, Spanish.

S: Wow.

B: So that's the tip of the iceberg but that's the story.

S: Well this has been so helpful for me. Honestly your insights and just the perspective that you have is... it just rounds my project in a way that I can't just speak to Americans and it's been so fantastic and you so understand the world and you're very eloquent about talking about it so...

B: Thank you.

S: I really appreciate it.

B: Do you want to meet others from the school?

S: I would love that so lets be in touch.

B: Cause they wanted to know more. We're trying to get the Bryans. They're Americans. We're trying to put... but we have two or three that were American families in Cuba.

S: Sure.

B: Do you need help with Bonnie Anderson?

S: That would be great. Yeah.

B: Let me see if I can help.

S: I shot her an email the other day. I have her email address but that's it. But if somebody were to say, "Hey this is a real person." That would be great.

B: Cause you really need to speak to her. She's a reporter. She's a writer. She would be so crucial to your... she could add a lot and she has really a love for both countries and I'm sure she is super eloquent. She'll give you information that nobody... and her dad died in this whole thing. It was a very dramatic chapter. And

the other one I want to try is Doctor Sandoval. She's the anthropologist and Cuban historian and all that. She might be able to give you... and she knows exactly the French were here, the Chinese were here, the Polish were here, the Cubans were... she might be able to... when are you leaving? You told me you were leaving the...

S: The 4th of November.

B: Okay.

S: I need you to sign this if you're comfortable with it.

B: Of course. Yes. The disclaimer. I know. We had that at the medical school.

S: So there are two parts of this. One is this is just going to be used for my dissertation. That's the first part.

B: I hope you let us know when this is happening. I'm traveling up there. Are you going to have a seminar there or a conference?

S: At UNC? Probably eventually. We're talking about a year and a half away.

B: Okay well you let us know down here because some of us will travel. We'll be there. I mean if you're going to have a conference or something we can join you and congratulate you.

S: Thank you. The second half of this is that I'm actually creating a collection of these oral histories which I'm going to donate to Wilson Library and you're going to get a copy of this transcript once I make it and you can do whatever. You can donate it here if it's a part of this project as well.

B: I would like to. You mean this thing that we just talked about?

S: Yeah so this is going to be a tape...

B: You have immortalized me.

S: You are forever now. So you're going to be part of the collection if you're comfortable with it...