

Ken Campbell
7/19/16

Samuel (S): And I know your family was pretty big at that point. Your grandfather came over is that right? Building railroads or something?

Ken (K): No. He was... My father was born in 1916 and when he was four or five years old, they moved to Havana because he had invested in the Rolls Royce and Hudson dealership. So that was the reason my father's side of the family moved down there.

S: Was somebody building the railroad between Miami and Key West? Was that...

K: That I don't know. Did Neil tell you that?

S: I think so but I could be... I did a lot of interviews last week so I could be confusing that...

K: So how did you find my brother Neil?

S: Through Christopher Baker.

K: Oh you spoke to Chris Baker?

S: Oh he's been a real contact for me.

K: So have you interviewed him?

S: I did. Twice so far and I might interview him again. He's been fantastic.

K: His father was the headmaster of the school that we went to.

S: Yeah. I read the book that was written. It's published on the website now, the Ruston website.

K: Yeah. Do I have a copy of that? I don't remember.

S: It's interesting. But anyway, so tell me about your family coming down? Lets start there okay?

K: Yeah so my father moves to Havana. He was the eldest of four children. One of them was another brother who died in infancy. And then he had two other sisters who were born in Cuba. Both are suffering from dementia now otherwise they would be good sources. But one of them who is actually in a nursing home... was the family historian but she doesn't remember anything anymore.

S: They were all born in Cuba? So your grandfather lived down there?

K: My grandfather was Scottish. He was from Glasgow. He came to the states when he was 19 years old and somewhere along the way met my grandmother who I

think, I'm not quite sure where she was working but she was a British subject as well. They got married I think on Long Island. And like I said, an investment opportunity came up and they took it and off they went to Havana. So he was born in New Jersey but his sisters were born down there. My father went to Ruston Academy for a short while and then was moved to another school and I'm not quite sure why that happened. And he was in Cuba his whole life except for three years he went to Georgia Tech in Atlanta and back then your travel was... you took a steamboat from Havana to Tampa and from Tampa you went by train to Georgia. And in those days travel wasn't so easy so you had a vacation, summer or whatever, you stayed where you were. So he went to school three years straight and finished Georgia Tech in three years.

S: What was he studying?

K: He majored in Business Administration. I believe he was class of 1936.

S: So you were born in Cuba?

K: I was born in Cuba.

S: And you guys lived in... I know your brother told me but where did you live?

K: Well the house that my father built, I can't remember how old I was when we moved into it. But he bought a piece of land, actually about two blocks away from Ruston Academy and built a house and that's where we lived until we left.

S: Was that in Country Club near the new Ruston Academy?

K: Near the new Ruston Academy. Yes. I remember going to the old Ruston Academy but I believe that was rented space so when Mr. Baker arranged to buy this property and build a school, it was a good sized chunk of land, we moved, like I say, two blocks away from the new location.

S: Wow. What do you do now?

K: I'm a mortgage loan officer.

S: How did you end up here?

K: How did I end up here? In Connecticut?

S: Yeah.

K: My wife and I were living just outside of Worcester Mass. and I was a salesman covering most of New England. She got transferred. At that time she worked for the American Express Company in the sales office they had in Needham Massachusetts and she got transferred to New York headquarters. So since it didn't really matter where I lived, we moved to Stamford. I really don't remember what year it was. 1981, 82, somewhere in there.

S: How did you end up in the Northeast?

K: Well that takes me back to... let me finish the background story.

S: Yeah, yeah go ahead.

K: My grandfather invested in this Rolls Royce and Hudson dealership. My father grew up there, went to Georgia Tech, went back, started an advertising agency. His secretary was my mother's sister. So that's how he met my mother. So they got married and my brothers and I were born and the rest is history.

S: Now your mother was born in Matanzas?

K: My mother was born in Atlanta.

S: In Atlanta. I don't know why I'm off on this.

K: Well you're not far away.

Waitress: Do you need a few minutes?

S: Yeah we haven't looked yet. Sorry this is my fault. I apologize. I just dove in. Sorry just while you're looking. The IRB people who give me permission to do it, they prefer it if I'm able to donate these, I'm going to get this transcribed, these to the North Carolina history collection for other people to view. Would you be okay with that if I donate this?

K: Sure.

S: Also I'm happy to send you a copy of the transcript when it gets made? Would you like that? Does that work for you?

K: Sure.

S: Check it against your brother's.

K: So on my mother's side, my mother's father was Cuban. He met my grandmother in Atlanta but I don't know why he was there and I'll never know because everybody is dead now. My mother was the second oldest but she was the only one born in the states. She was born in Atlanta. And I don't know why my grandmother was in Atlanta at the time she was pregnant with my mother. But she had an older sister and then two younger sisters and the youngest was a boy. And they grew up in Camaguey, which is an interior province of Cuba. My grandfather was an accountant at a sugar mill down there.

S: Do you remember the name of the sugar mill?

K: I think it was Central Agramonte. Central is the word they use for sugar mill, Agramonte is a-g-r-a-m-o-n-t-e. And my mother went to boarding school in Havana. So we lived in Cuba until...

S: Do you know which boarding school? Sorry.

K: No I don't.

S: If I say Buena Vista does that...

K: It could've been.

S: Yeah? You guys went to the Methodist church is that correct?

K: Yeah.

S: Were you practicing Methodists at the time?

K: I guess so. My mother threw us in the car and took us to the Sunday school program. Not much of a choice.

S: And you said your grandfather worked for Central Agramonte but as an accountant is that right? Was he educated?

K: I'm guessing he was but I have no details.

S: I just got finished with a grant that I had at Drew University which houses the Methodist archives so I've been living in this Methodist world.

K: Where is Drew?

S: Drew is in Jersey. It's in Madison New Jersey. Not far from here actually. But there is a lot about the Methodist community... do you remember anything from that world or not really?

K: Not really. The church was in downtown Havana. From my recollection it was a bit of a hike to get there.

S: Did you go every Sunday?

K: Just about.

S: And the services were in English or Spanish?

K: We just went to Sunday school.

S: Oh okay. Do you remember if you learned in English or in Spanish?

K: Well I grew up learning/speaking both languages and Ruston was bilingual. Totally bilingual.

S: The Sunday School was with other Americans or was mixed with Cubans?

K: It was probably a mixture. I don't specifically remember. Most everything was a mixture of people.

S: Alright continue. I'm sorry. We were on your grandfather.

K: So my father's secretary was my mother's sister and that's how they met. So Castro came in January 1st, 1959. My father owned his own business. By the summer of 1960... let me back up. When I was in 6th grade, I remember coming back from Christmas vacation. So that would've been January of 1960 and we were handed new geography books and the entire book was the USSR. It was unbelievable.

S: At Ruston?

K: At Ruston.

S: So how did... they were given these books by the government I'm guessing?

K: The government was dictating, you know like they do here with the curriculum.

S: But private schools?

K: Yeah even the private schools. And that's what we were given to learn.

S: Was that interesting? Did you feel that change? How did...?

K: You know I heard adults talking. I must've been 11 years old then. You know, but I didn't... I wasn't really aware of the political situation. I remember in the middle of the night being awoken by a gunfight.

S: After '59?

K: Yeah.

S: Was that... and you don't know what that was? It was just gunfire?

K: It was probably, you know, what they called counterrevolutionaries, which were people that weren't sympathetic to the revolution, fighting the people who were. And you'd hear... it would wake me up and I'd turn around and go back to sleep. I didn't really care. And I remember on one occasion hearing this noise and it was my father crawling on floor making sure we weren't looking out the window because you looked out the window the shooters didn't know if you were a sniper or not and would take a pop shot at you.

S: Before '59 do you remember being effected at all by events that were going on around you? No? Where were you January 1st, 1959?

K: I was probably at my house. It was Christmas vacation. We were out of school. You know...

Waitress: What can I get you?

K: I'm going to have the tuna salad. This is without the potato salad please.

S: And what's the soup of the day?

Waitress: We have chicken noodle and lentil. Oh wait black bean. I usually work Tuesdays. Sorry.

S: I'm just going to have a bowl of the Matzo ball.

Waitress: And that's just a broth is that okay?

S: I haven't been to a real northeastern diner in awhile.

K: I'm just going to give you this because it has my email address on it.

S: Excellent. Your brother gave me your phone number. Also I'm trying to help... do you go to the reunions at all for Ruston?

K: I did. This year they're having a cruise in November.

S: I think I'm actually just going to be near there.

K: But I didn't sign up for it. So I'm not sure if I'm going to go. I tried to get some friends of mine interested and they didn't seem particularly interested. You know, we were the younger generation. The kids who graduated from high school and graduated from Ruston are the ones that are more inclined to go to those things.

S: Now are you Skilton's year? Richard Skilton's year? I'm interviewing him next week.

K: No he was a year older than me but we were great friends. They lived next door, the next block over. Richard's got two older brothers. He was much younger than his older brothers. Bill and Harry.

S: I'm going to interview them later this summer I think. I prefer to do it...

K: My guess is they're both retired. Harry must be getting up there in age I think.

S: Sure. So do you remember... I want to get back to kind of who your family hung out with because I think it's interesting that families like yours that had real roots in the American colony that went back further than these temporary assignments from Esso, seemed to hang out with other people who had similar backgrounds? Would you say that's fair or no?

K: I don't know that that's the case. I remember my parents would have cocktail parties. The Skiltons were frequent visitors. There was another family called the Harpers. I don't know if you've heard these names.

S: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

K: They were very good friends. George Harper was my father's best man at his wedding. Rocky the oldest, I'm sorry Jeannie was the oldest sibling and then there is Rocky. Rocky was a very successful attorney in the Miami area. He must be retired

by now also. Tom, who was my brother Bill's age, I think he retired to Cape Cod so he's up here somewhere. And Mrs. Harper was my 5th grade teacher I think.

S: At Ruston?

K: At Ruston.

S: Did you guys hang out socially with the Bakers?

K: No because they were older than we were.

S: Your parents though?

K: Potentially. I'm not sure they were part of the social crowd although at one point my father was on the board at Ruston Academy so they were close. He was close to the American community I think in general. I'm trying to think of who else... the Harpers were frequent friends.

S: The Colligans as well?

K: The Colligans were my cousins. She was one of my mother's sisters.

S: And her husband had some interest with the mining company, is that right?

K: He worked for I think it was Freeport Minerals and they had a nickel mine in the Oriente province, on the other end of the island. In fact, they ended up moving to Darien which is not too far from here and that's where they're buried. My cousin Richard is in this area and he had two sisters, Pat and Maria. Pat lives in somewhere around Jersey, I can't tell you exactly where.

S: Do you keep in contact with any of them?

K: I see Richard once in a while because he lives in the area so he's the one I see most frequently. I occasionally talk to Pat. Not real often. And I lost track of their sister Maria. Her husband died at a fairly young age. I would say like 5 or 8 years ago and I just don't know what happened to her. I'll look and see what happened to my cousin Pat. I just have a phone number. I don't have an address for her.

S: I think your brother may have given it to me. I tried it the other day but I think it's actually a different number.

K: Her married name is not Colligan. I don't remember what it is. His first name is Seth. So I brought the two families, my mother's family and my father's family together and so then my brother Bill, Neil and I were all born in Cuba.

S: Yeah, yeah, yeah. When the revolution happened in 1959, how did your parent's react? Do you remember that at all?

K: Well you know in the beginning everybody thought it was the best thing since sliced bread.

S: Including your parents? Because I know some people in the American colony were a little anxious about it.

K: Yeah and I remember in the summer of 1960 we rented a house in Varadero. Varadero is a peninsula that sticks out into the Caribbean Sea.

S: Right, 90 miles about from...

K: Right and most of it was owned by the Dupont family. Anyway, we rented a house there for the summer and it was supposed to be the whole family. I went to camp in North Carolina that summer and when I came back the Colligans had left. My uncles mine had been expropriated and they basically had to leave. So the rental of this property was supposed to all of the families and the only people that were there were my grandparents and us because Colligans had to leave. So it was a great place to spend the summer and a beautiful beach and we just swam all day long. Nobody knew about skin cancer then so there was no such thing as sunscreen. I remember getting burned so badly on my back that there were blisters. It was really disgusting. And I have had some bouts with cancer since then.

S: Because of that. Yeah my dad is similar I think. Did you often rent houses in Varadero? Is that what you did during summers?

K: No that's just what we did that summer.

S: Did you ever explore the interior?

K: One year we went down to Moa Bay, which is where the nickel mine was. That's the only time I had been there and I can't remember how long we were there. Probably a long weekend. We would go to see, because of my grandmother and grandfather in Camaguey.

S: Did they still own the sugar property or no ?

K: He was in Camaguey but they didn't live on the sugar mill property.

S: Did you visit the sugar mill at all?

K: I can't remember if I did or not. I visited a sugar mill because Hershey had a presence down there.

S: And you did that through Ruston?

K: No. There was a sugar mill down there somewhere called Hershey.

S: There is still a town called Hershey down there.

K: Yeah. Well that was it. And for reasons I don't remember we went to visit the sugar mill.

S: Do you have any impressions of that?

K: If you can imagine the smell of molasses everywhere.

S: Have you been back?

K: Yeah I went in May of 2000.

S: What did you think?

K: I should've brought my picture book. I have a bunch of pictures. It was a rotary group. I'm in the Rotary Club and Rotary publishes a monthly magazine and I opened it one day and saw this ad for a trip to Cuba and I remember thinking "I wonder what that's about." But I didn't do anything about it. Then sometime later and I don't remember how much later, I opened up the magazine again and there was another ad and they're going to Cuba again and that time I picked up the phone and called the guy. It was a Rotarian from a suburb of Detroit and he had a connection at the State Department. He was a retired dentist I think. Retired dentist? I don't remember now. But he had put together American tours to China and when Tiananmen Square happened, that connection got cut off. So somehow he developed a connection in Cuba with a local doctor and started doing the same thing in Cuba.

S: Was your father in Rotary when he was in Cuba?

K: My father was not but my grandfather, the accountant, was.

S: I have a friend up at the university whose whole project surrounds studying the Rotary Club in Cuba.

K: Well my father told me he was a Rotarian. I didn't know that at the time.

S: What... did you ever visit your father at work or your grandfather at work?

K: I remember going to my father's office with him. I don't remember going to my grandfather's office.

S: Was it... what was that like? Were there a lot of Cubans that worked for your father? And was this rare because I think your brother told me that he had mostly Cubans who worked for him. Is that right?

K: Yeah. I think he had one American that I'm aware of.

S: Who was the American?

K: His name was Oberheiser. I have a directory and maybe you have it also. It's called the Anglo-American directory. Do you have it?

S: '58, '59 I have. There is another one online for 1960, which is interesting because about half of the names have disappeared. Yeah.

K: From '59 to '60? Really?

S: Yeah.

K: So some of these names I'm not sure and you can probably look up.

S: What did Oberheiser do for him?

K: My dad ran an advertising agency so he was like an account executive. He had a partner by the name of Garcia and in Cuba everybody got called by their last name. So I never knew what his Spanish first name was.

S: But he was Cuban?

K: Yeah.

S: And the companies that your father represented, do you remember them? Were they mostly American? Were they mostly Cuban?

K: I think one of his big accounts was Miles Labs. Miles Labs manufactured Alka-Seltzer. In general, mostly American consumer products. I remember one day he drove home in a Willys Jeep. The reason he had a Jeep was because he started working on the Willys Jeep account.

S: That's a nice perk.

K: And he also, the other cars we had were General Motors cars and I assume he was doing General Motors advertising also. I remember looking up once to see which of the major U.S. ad agencies were in Havana and the only one I ever found was McCann Erickson. So I think my father probably, I'm not quite sure. I think the way he got started in advertising was he went to work for the advertising department at one of the local department stores. And for reasons I can't quite figure out, they wanted to get out of that end of the business and contract it out. So he basically took the advertising department and that became the nucleus of this business he started and I suspect the department store was his first customer.

S: But you said he went to school for business administration so this is sort of connected but...

K: Yeah but I don't think he ever... if you go to work for a major advertising agency you go through a training program. I don't think he ever did that, just the school of hard knocks.

S: Did you ever hear of Godoy and Godoy?

K: What?

S: Godoy and Godoy is another major... I interviewed one of their sons.

K: Miguel?

S: No. Augusto. He went to Ruston as well actually. Another major ad firm.

K: I'd have to look and see. How old is he now?

S: He's a little older than you I'd say but... so in terms of your social world, did you hang out with Cubans or not really when you were growing up?

K: I had Cuban friends in school.

S: Did that ever translate to out of school or no?

K: Most of the kids I hung out with were the Americans. In fact my most vivid memories were friends that I made at the... we belonged to the Havana Biltmore Yacht and Country Club and my father was a scratch golfer. Do you play golf?

S: No.

K: Scratch golfing, do you know what that is?

S: I was going to Google it later. Tell me.

K: His handicap was in the single digits. He was a very good golfer.

S: I know under 80 is good. That's what my friends have told me. They're all golfers.

K: And the Havana Biltmore had a golf course. They had tennis courts. It had an Olympic sized pool and it had a yacht club part of it. Have you heard the name Strauber Anderson?

S: No.

K: He was the guy that faced the firing squad. He was an American.

S: How do you spell his first name?

K: S-t-a-u-b-e-r. That may not have been his first name. People called him Andy. So I don't know if that was his first name or if it was because of Anderson. Anyway, he was a... Oh I have another book you should read. It's called *We Remember Cuba*. Or *We Remember Havana*. Something like that.

S: Who wrote it?

K: I went to a Ruston reunion in Coral Gables some time ago and I met a father/daughter couple and he wrote the book and the daughter was sort of helping him promote it and sell it. I can't remember his name.

S: Were they Cubans or were they Americans?

K: Americans.

S: And they both went to Ruston?

K: I don't know. The daughter did because she knew my cousin Pat Colligan. I remember that. And I don't know how good of friends they were because I remember coming back and telling Pat, "Hey I met this girl." At the time I knew her name. I can't remember it now. It'll come to me. And I said... and Pat couldn't remember this woman and the woman had told me that she and my cousin were best friends.

S: Do you know what year Pat graduated high school?

K: She was a year or two behind me. So it would've been, I was '66 and she would've been '67 or '68. She would've graduated from Darien High School.

S: Then I could look up Pat through the Ruston yearbook and get her last name. Those are all online as well. I don't know if you're interested in checking that out.

K: I have a paper copy of the 1960 yearbook.

S: Wow. That's an antique.

K: Well Chris Baker was selling them at one of the reunions.

S: He was selling them?

K: I think I paid 10 dollars for it.

S: They're all online now. He's done an amazing job. Is he the one who organizes the website?

K: I don't know. I haven't seen him in awhile.

S: He's doing well.

K: Did you say you'd interviewed him?

S: I did twice. I'll interview him again this summer I think. He's been a tremendous help to this project. He just seems to know everything and everyone. It's the name that gets me in. I'll have another cup of coffee thank you. And I'm done with this thank you. He's the name that gets me in the door all the time because people seem to have respected his family.

K: Well at one point his father tried to replicate Ruston and I can't remember where. I think it might have been Colombia. Did he talk to you about that?

S: No. He said that they wanted to redo it in Miami and his father said no, we're not doing it in Miami. But I didn't know he had tried to do it somewhere else.

K: You can ask Chris. I seem to remember someone saying he was trying to do that somewhere else.

S: So you grew up, born in Cuba, so you're technically a Cuban National right? Or no?

K: I have a Spanish birth certificate but the document I use when I need to produce a birth certificate is the document, a State Department document called something like "Report of Birth abroad of American Parents" or something like that. It's a State Department document, which my father filed with the American embassy and when things got a little difficult in Cuba in 1959 and '60 I remember going to the American embassy to get a passport. And the only passport I've ever had was a U.S. passport.

S: Cause you didn't need a passport to get from Cuba to the United States beforehand?

K: Well I was born there so I never went.

S: Well in terms of tourist activities.

K: I was going to summer camps in North Carolina. So I went the summers... I think I went '58, '59, 60 to the same camp.

S: Where was the camp?

K: It was right on the North Carolina/South Carolina border. It was near Greenville South Carolina. It was called Camp Greenville, a YMCA camp.

S: Why did your parents choose that camp?

K: The oldest Skilton boys were counselors there. I have no idea how they found it. So Harry and Bill were counselors there.

S: Did you always feel American?

K: I didn't know what the difference was. I remember asking my mother if there was an English/Spanish in every language. I didn't even realize they were two different languages.

S: Do you ever think in Spanish today or no? How often do you use your Spanish?

K: Well do you have the business card?

S: Hablo español.

K: Well I'm connected to this real estate agency and there are probably 18 Spanish-speaking people in that Keller-Williams office and that's where I use my Spanish. But to answer your question, I don't think I think in Spanish as much as I used to when I was younger. Part of my issue is that I'm using it more and more now primarily at work but as a result of not using it my vocabulary was suffering. And every so often I will run down here into downtown Stamford and buy a Spanish newspaper and try to use it. I remember his entire life my father was reading the Spanish newspapers every day. Just to keep up with the news. It probably kept the language fresh in his mind.

S: You also moved to Puerto Rico afterwards is that right?

K: Yes.

S: What was the difference between the American community in Puerto Rico and the American community of Cuba. Were there differences?

K: I don't know that I'd think so.

S: Was it tight-knit in the same way?

K: Our best friends in Cuba were... excuse me. Our best friends in Puerto Rico were the ones we knew from Cuba.

S: So you carried that social network with you.

K: So the Harpers moved to Puerto Rico. Tommy Harper... the schools that we went to and the schools that the Harper children... the one Harper child was still in school. The schools were literally right next door to each other.

S: What was the school? Was it another U.S. run private school?

K: The school we went to was called Robinson School.

S: I guess every school in Puerto Rico is U.S. run. Sorry. Let me get this because you're doing me a favor by doing this.

K: Oh thank you. Robinson was a Methodist school and then right next door was St Johns. Was St Johns Episcopal? I don't remember. No, I don't think it was anything. It was a private school and Mrs. Harper was a teacher at St Johns and she eventually became the headmistress of the lower school. Then her son, lets see, my brother repeated 7th grade so his friends were kind of ahead of him. So Tommy who was his friend graduated from high school in '64 I think. My brother graduated in '65 and then I graduated in '66 and in the summer of 1965/66 we moved to Westchester. So I graduated from Westchester.

S: Then Neil kind of explained to me that when you left Cuba you lost most of... the business, the property and so it was a real change in social status in some ways. Or class. Do you...

K: Well, my dad was unemployed for a while. I shouldn't say that. He was working for... he got a job in Miami. When we left Cuba we went to Homestead Florida. Homestead is about thirty miles south of Miami. And the reason we went there is my father's sister had just remarried and her husband moved in with her and there was an empty house. We needed a place to live so they offered that house up. My father was driving up to Miami every day and became the advertising manager at a radio station. I'm not quite sure what the radio station did. I think it was a Spanish station. His partner Garcia was one of the news guys at the radio station. So I went to 7th and 8th grade at Homestead Junior High School. Neil was in elementary school then. But the elementary school was literally three blocks from our house whereas the junior high was a little bit further. You know, we didn't have much money because the job

that my father had was not at the level of... he was underemployed. So about the, I want to say that early in 1965 he got a job in Puerto Rico running the office of an ad agency. So he went down there to work and when school was out that summer of '65 that's when we moved. So I went to... excuse me. Not '65. Summer of '62. So somewhere in early 1962 he got this job and he started commuting and in the summer of '62 we moved to Puerto Rico. So in September of 1962 I started ninth grade. I was there ninth, tenth, eleventh grade. My brother was 10, 11, 12 so he graduated from Robinson and Neil was whatever grade. Three years back. And my father worked at the agency was, I don't know how many branches they had. He ran the Puerto Rico office. In the summer of '65 we moved to Westchester because he was transferred to the New York office. That agency was subsequently purchased by another agency that was subsequently gobbled up by Leo Burnett. Leo Burnett is a big agency in Chicago. Somewhere along the way, I graduated from college in '71, '72. He got transferred to Caracas Venezuela because Burnett decided to make Caracas their Latin American headquarters. And they lived in Caracas for almost 25 years.

S: Did you visit them a lot?

K: I remember going down there three or four times.

S: Did you have help, you did have help when you were in Cuba right?

K: Yeah. We had a cook.

S: Who lived in the house with you?

K: Yeah when my father built this house there was a two-bedroom wing and we had a full time gardener living there and a full time cook living there. And then there was a maid that came in daily. So there was a staff of three.

S: Did they have families?

K: If they did they didn't... I mean I don't remember if they had weekends off or days off. But like on Sunday they weren't around. So they lived with us during the week and if they had families that's where they went Saturdays and Sundays.

S: Was the cook male or female?

K: Female.

S: And the gardener, male?

K: Male.

S: And the maid? Female?

K: Yeah.

S: What was the ethnicity?

K: The gardener was Jamaican.

S: So you spoke English?

K: Yeah and the women were Cubans.

S: Afro-Cubans?

K: No. Cuban-Cuban.

S: I'm trying to understand how the help worked there. Was it along racial lines?

K: You know I never sensed any of that kind of discrimination as a child. I had friends that were Jewish and never thought anything of it and it wasn't until I came to the states that I'm hearing things that I've never heard before.

S: So in some ways, it's interesting when you think about race in Latin America versus in the United States.

K: Well one of Fidel's, one of the things that he claimed he was trying to get rid of was discrimination and I just never knew of any. I will say, you know, I don't know that there were any black kids at Ruston Academy. I know there were Jewish families there.

S: Who were your friends... who were close friends you had at Ruston?

K: My best friend was a guy called Bob Hine. Hine H-i-n-e. He was the oldest of three children. He had two sisters.

S: What did his family do?

K: I think he sold agricultural equipment.

S: Were they long-term members of the American colony or were they more short term?

K: Bobby and I, I think Bobby and I had been at Ruston since Kindergarten.

S: Have you talked to him at all recently?

K: Well I have a Masters degree from a school in Arizona called Thunderbird. Have you heard of Thunderbird?

S: No.

K: Well it's an independent business, well not independent anymore because Arizona State University took them over recently. But it was an independent graduate business school that did nothing but international business.

S: Okay. Where in Arizona is it?

K: It's in Glendale, which is a suburb of Phoenix.

S: I spent a summer in Tempe. Yeah go ahead.

K: At ASU?

S: My ex girlfriend went to ASU for graduate school. So I was there.

K: Well Thunderbird found themselves in some financial difficulty and less than two years ago were finally taken over by ASU.

S: So it was international business?

K: It was called, it used to be called and they've changed the name a few times. The current name is Thunderbird School of Global Management. The reason I say that is I went there in '73-'74 and my friend Bob Hine went there it turns out about a year or two after I did. So there was a point where we were exchanging... you know back when it was fashionable to use the internet just to exchange jokes. I know you're younger and I'm not sure if you remember that. I've kind of lost touch with him actually. I should try to reconnect.

S: Do you know where he is?

K: Last I knew he was in Memphis Tennessee.

S: I'll try to find him. I might have his contact information. Would you be interested in me connecting you?

K: Sure. Who else was I friends with? Frankly, towards the end... I became friendly with Americans who belonged to the Havana Biltmore but most of those kids went to Lafayette, which was another school. Have you heard that term?

S: I have. I actually interviewed a Cuban while I was down there who went to Lafayette. She just came up to me and started speaking English.

K: When you were down where?

S: In Cuba. In Havana.

K: Oh when were you down there?

S: In January. I was at the Archivo Nacional doing some research there.

K: So our host on those Rotary trips that we took back in 2000 was a medical doctor and the first night I was there we were having dinner... back then a private house, to encourage the growth of economy, the government allowed people to just go into entrepreneurial things. And one of the most common things was literally running your house as if it were a restaurant. And I remember going to this house for dinner and I was sitting with our host and I can't remember if I started talking to him in Spanish but the conversation... he said, "Where are you from?" And I said, "Well I

was born here." And he said, "When were you born?" And I told him the year I was born and he said, "We're the same age." He said, "Where did you go to school?" I said, "Ruston Academy." He said, "I went to Lafayette." So his father was a medical doctor. They ended up staying in Cuba. He became a medical doctor. His son became a medical doctor who married a medical doctor and during the war he spent time in Hanoi offering medical assistance and I think he might have even gone to Africa when Cuba was involved in that civil war with Angola.

S: So as a Cuban he served for the North Vietnamese offering medical assistance?

K: Yeah.

S: Wow. That's so interesting.

K: And I remember going to his office and he had a picture of a little kid in full battle gear and he had a helmet on that looked to be three times the size of his head. His name was Horacio. I don't remember his last name. I said, "Who is that?" He said, "That was me when the Bay of Pigs happened." Now the Bay of Pigs happened two years... that was 1962 and he was the same age I was mind you. So in that two year period, he was mentally prepared to take on US Marines. So...

S: How did you respond to the Bay of Pigs? You were in Puerto Rico.

K: I was expecting...

S: You were in Miami.

K: I was still in Miami. I was expecting to come home in six months.

S: Go back to Cuba?

K: Yeah.

S: When you left?

K: No when the invasion started. I told my friend, "I'm going home soon." Never happened.

S: What types of Cubans went to Ruston?

K: Upper class.

S: I've had people tell me Batista's kids, Prio's niece, I've heard and I don't know if this is true but one of Castro's kids transferred in.

K: I've heard that too but I don't know... I didn't know.

S: So was it upper crust? Was it mostly professionals? I mean it wasn't old money right? Cause old money was going to Belen.

K: Belen. B-e-l-e-n is how you spell it. I can't tell you. There were wealthy Cubans because they did... There is a guy who lives in New Haven where I live and his family were huge landowners and, you know, they had to leave right away because Fidel took the property over. So that was the kind of money that was there.

S: So he went to Ruston as well?

K: I don't know where he went. I just remember meeting him at a party a long time ago. I think he's still in town. And there's a guy, I think he's still there, who works for Sports Illustrated I think it is, and he speaks English with a very strong accent. He was born in Miami but he was just around his Cuban family and that's how he learned to speak English.

S: Now you went to summer camp in the U.S. When else did you go back to the states as a kid?

K: I thought it was 1952 and the reason I'm not sure is I would've only been four years old and for some reason I seem to think I was older than that. We took a ferry from Havana to Key West with our car and drove up to visit my father's sister in Homestead Florida. And then with her family which consisted of a son and a daughter, we drove to... we took my brother to Camp Greenville and then we went to Rocky Mount North Carolina, rented a house there for a few weeks and I don't know about my aunt.... She disappeared there somewhere. Maybe she went... my father's other sister lived in Tarrytown New York which is not far from here and after North Carolina we drove up to visit them and then drove all the way back to Key West and got on the ferry and that's what we did, we picked up my aunt Ginny and my cousins in Homestead and then went down to Key West and they came to Cuba with us. I'm thinking that was 1952 but I would've been only four years old. And I remember staying in hotels along the Florida Keys. I remember seeing Nat King Cole on TV. I remember seeing Perry Como. Do you recognize these names?

S: Nat King Cole. I don't know the second name.

K: Perry Como. He's a singer. I think he's... if he's still alive he's ancient now. He was a Frank Sinatra type singer and they had a Perry Como show on TV.

S: So was that your only trip back other than summer camp? Did you ever go to Atlanta to visit...

K: Not that I remember.

S: Did you guys identify southern? Was that a distinction that was made among American colony members? No? Was there regional connection to the south because of proximity? For instance I know the Methodists that were there, until they united in '39, were largely from the southern Methodist tradition.

K: I don't know. I wasn't aware at the time that there was a difference.

S: I wasn't aware until last year either. I'm Jewish. I don't know these things. Alright so your connection to the U.S. was pretty limited then. Did you go to Homestead Florida to visit your aunt more than that one trip?

K: No. We moved there after we left. But not before.

S: So it was very much a foreign country that you felt a part of in some way.

K: You know it was a foreign country. I wasn't used to it. I'd never seen a woman driving a pickup truck and my aunt had a pickup truck. I mean in Cuba, women didn't drive trucks.

S: Did it feel that different? Or had culturally was there a ton of similarity also, I'm trying to figure out what that transition looks like for you.

K: Well I was fluent in the language so it was fairly easy to assimilate. Homestead back then was a farming community. You know, you got outside of Havana and Cuba was pretty rural too. I frequently visited my grandmother in Central Agramonte and that was quite rural. I remember my grandmother would arrange for some guy to show up with a bunch of horses and we'd go horseback riding, you know, that was our entertainment. What else did we do when we were down there? My mother's brother was married to a Cuban whose family had farmed and I can't remember where they lived but I remember going to spend a day with them and we went on horseback rides and they were going to roast a pig and this pig appeared and somebody took a knife and slit from it's throat to it's bellybutton and let it just sit there and bleed to death. And that's... they cleaned him out, butterflied him, put him on a, dug a whole in the ground, made a charcoal fire, it was this very hard wood that didn't burn easily. That was the grill of the pit and put the pig on there to roast.

S: Was that nochebuena?

K: No it was... don't ask me... it was probably the summer time because we weren't in school or a weekend. It was just roasting a pig to eat. So Americans didn't know about this stuff. They go to the grocery store to buy it. A piece of pork.

S: Yeah that must've been so interesting. When you got to Puerto Rico did you live with in-home help again or no?

K: No. We never had in home help again.

S: Was that because of different social class?

K: In Puerto Rico it would've been much more expensive because it's much more Americanized. In fact, the apartment we lived in we didn't have a dishwasher so my brothers and I were the dishwashers.

S: I'm sure you all loved that. Do you remember leaving? Tell me that experience. Why did it happen?

K: Well we started school in September.

S: Of '60.

K: Of '60. Most of the Americans left in the summer of '60. That seemed to be the point where whatever businesses were left, Castro took them over, shut them down, whatever. So we started school in September. There were seven Americans at Ruston Academy. My brother Bill, me and my brother Neil were three of the seven.

S: There were only seven Americans left. Wow.

K: Don't ask me who they were. I won't remember.

S: Okay I won't. But the Bakers were still there.

K: Were the Bakers still there?

S: Well the boys probably were in college at that point.

K: That's true. It was Dennis and Chris. Dennis is Chris's older brother and I think he's an MD on the west coast. He must be retired by now because those kids were older. I'm 68.

S: I think the parents were there though. I'm not sure.

K: It could be that he had left and left the school with some Cuban staff.

S: Sorry I cut you off. Go ahead.

K: So by October I guess, you know the passport I have has a form stapled to it and it basically says that the herein named carrier of this form has permission to leave the national territory. So it could be that my father had applied to get permission to leave and we were just waiting for that permission to come through. And if that's what happened it finally happened in October and that's when we left. We had twenty pieces of luggage. We took as much as we could carry. My mother had tons of silver stuff and we had... my brothers and I shared one big room and we all had these closets that had locks on them. So I got real smart and locked my lock and figured no one would ever get to my closet. And then we got on this plane with twenty pieces of luggage and I remember this man whose house we were going to live in Homestead drove my aunt's pickup truck to the airport in Miami, you know, without that we never would've gotten this luggage home. We put twenty pieces of luggage in the back of this pickup truck and went down to Homestead Florida. And then the following Monday my mother took us to Homestead Junior High School and enrolled us in schools.

S: Were you searched at the airport?

K: No. My mother had a ton of American coins and she just loaded all of our pockets with all these coins. My recollection is that we were not searched.

S: Did the maid, cook, gardener, did they all work for you until the end?

K: Yeah they were all there when we left. They were... I don't remember. I wouldn't have known when they abandoned the property. My sense was they were there, they stayed there at least initially after we left.

S: When you went down in 2000 did you visit your old home? Who was living there now?

K: I don't know.

S: You didn't ring the bell or anything?

K: We had a large gate and a fence around the property. We had a fence around our property, the people next door were Cubans and they had a fence around their property, the Americans that lived behind us had a fence around their property. The Cubans had two Doberman Pincers. The American behind our property had one German Shepherd. We had two German Shepherds. Our mutual alarm system was letting our dogs out at night. And we never had a break in problem.

S: I had another question. Are you doing okay on time?

K: You know I'm just going to go to the little boy's room for a second.

S: Go for it. I promise you I'm almost done. Is this okay for you? So tourism. What did your world think about tourists in Cuba? Was there any concern about the connections with the mafia, with the gambling stuff, with the prostitution stuff?

K: I was too young. I didn't know anything about that.

S: And your parents didn't really talk about it with you guys? How do you think Cubans viewed Americans? Before the revolution and then...

K: I think it... at my age I wasn't aware of class differences. You know the Cubans that went to Lafayette and that went to Ruston Academy were probably the upper classes. And the Cubans that left Cuba were the... well let me put it this way, the people that stayed were the ones that would've benefitted from that type of a system, and everybody else left. So I think that the people that we rubbed elbows with, they were probably really supportive of Americans.

S: Did you ever feel out of place as an American passport holder? No. After the revolution did you ever feel anti-Americanism?

K: Yeah I think I do remember some instances where people might have said something. I remember one of my American friends, his father... the embassy distributed these American flag decals.

S: After the revolution?

K: Yeah. And I remember telling my father that my friend's father had put this American flag on his front door as an indication that an American lived here, don't fool around here. Something like that. I remember my father saying. "I wouldn't have done that if I were him." Because I think his feeling was that if they advertise that there was an American living on that property that it may be asking for trouble. So I guess that meant that there was some resentment against Americans growing.

S: That your father at least felt.

K: Yeah.

S: Why do you think you guys stayed so much longer than other Americans? Do you think it was really just about getting paperwork or was there a faith in something working out that your parents had?

K: I think he was trying to work as long as he could cause as soon as he came to the states he was out of a job.

S: Got it. And most of them were working for large international companies.

K: There were a few. The Skiltons, Mr. Skilton had an import business but he was an older gentleman also. I can't remember when they left. Richard will be able to tell you. But his parents were older as evidenced by the fact that there is a big gap between Richard's age and his next older brother's age.

S: Who were the Wests and how were they connected to your family?

K: The Wests were good friends of ours. Bob was my age. He was in my class. Billy West was in my brother's class.

S: Older or younger?

K: My older brother. There was a younger West and I can't remember if he was the same age as Neil or younger than that.

S: Were they long-term members? They weren't working for these international corporations, did they have their own businesses?

K: I don't remember what he did. I think he was in the insurance business but kind of like an independent insurance agent. They had been there forever. All those kids were born there.

S: Sorry because it got mentioned when I was talking to your brother.

K: They lived in Puerto Rico also after. When we moved there, they were there. And Billy the older brother, I understand he was in the air force in the Vietnam War and deserted and never came back. He was living in Portugal.

S: How do you think Americans thought about Cubans?

K: Thought about Cubans?

S: Yeah. Were there... what I'm imagining is people like your family who was more integrated had complex relationships with Cubans being that they identified American... like how did your parents talk about Cubans?

K: They loved them. They'd spent all their lives there. They knew nothing else.

S: Was there a judgment about different cultures?

K: No.

S: Was that in other parts of the American colony? Was that noticeable or were you maybe too young to...

K: Probably too young.

S: Did you ever feel privileged while you were down there as the children of Americans?

K: Not in that sense. I've had talks about this with my friends from Puerto Rico and Cuba. It was just a different upbringing and in that sense it was a privilege to have been able to be raised that way because nobody else knew that other than we the kids that were there. But privileged in that sense, I don't think so.

S: Were there different rules that Americans had to abide by? Like under the Batista government were there things that Americans could get away with that Cubans couldn't get away with? No? Not that you remember? Alright and this is just sort of a question that I normally end interviews on but in your eyes, why did the revolution happen?

K: I mean all I know is what we were told. My uncle, the guy with the mining company...

S: The Colligan?

K: Yeah. He used to say... he'd always point to Henry Ford because he paid his workers a decent wage and the reason he did that is he needed to create a class of people that had some money to buy his cars. And my uncle always used to say that and I remember thinking at the time that they were running this mine at the end of the island in that manner. Of course it wasn't stuff that consumers could buy. It was probably stuff that was shipped to some factory somewhere to have the nickel done whatever they did with it. Knowing what I know now, there was probably... in fact, my grandfather, the one with the car dealership, when he retired he bought a piece of land in Pinar del Rio, which was the western side and he had this piece of land right on the bay and my father kept a boat there for awhile. And the guy that oversaw this property for him lived in a bohio, which is a palm frond hut with a dirt floor. From there goes to the regular... I had seen houses in Cuba that were opulent and all sorts of TV sets and pools, swimming pools and whatnot. My dad was in the

advertising business and he had one of the first TV sets in Cuba but it wasn't anything like what we saw at some of our more wealthy Cuban friends' houses. So there was probably a fairly strong class distinction. But as a child I didn't see any of that.

S: What should I have asked that I didn't ask? What am I missing? Am I missing something?

K: I don't know. I thought you did very good actually. Now you're going to write a paper?

S: I'm writing my dissertation.

K: And what's the thesis? What's your...

S: I'm still kind of creating it. I haven't started writing. I'm in the process of gathering research. The questions that I'm trying to answer are: what was the space occupied by this American Colony or this community? What did it look like? What did Cubans think about it? What did they think about Cubans and how does that matter in terms of the revolutionary events and the direction of the revolution?

K: You know, I remember I had Cuban friends and my thinking was that they were way wealthier than we were. I'm not sure that we were wealthy. And then I'm sure there were others that were just scraping the bottom of the barrel and working for... I was going to say \$5 an hour. It was probably cheaper than that. I think we paid our household help like \$20 a month. So were there people who resented us? Sure but they resented the rich Cubans too I think.

S: Did you ever feel resentment from the help?

K: No. One of the women had been our nanny when we were little and I'm not sure how my mother found her but one time we were living in Westchester and my parents were going somewhere and she brought this woman from Miami to live with my brothers and I while they were gone on this trip. That's the last time I saw her and I don't remember what year that was.

S: So she actually came up to stay with you? You don't know about the other ones?

K: No.

S: Just one more question just because I'm thinking about it now. If your parents were sort of supportive of this revolution in 1959, for a minute at least, what did they hope for? Or what would they have hoped for? Does that make sense?

K: You know economically I don't think that they would've expected that there would've been any change. In retrospect, there was a huge economic difference. You know, if they knew something that subsequently became known by the rest of the world, I don't remember them sharing that.

S: Sure. Did your father talk much about it afterwards or no? I think Neil told me the only time he ever heard him talk about it was during the Bay of Pigs or right after the Bay of Pigs.

K: You know I heard an interesting story recently. I have another cousin who lives in Miami by the name of Boonstra. I can give you his contact information if you like.

S: That's great. I'm going to be in Miami. I got a grant from the Cuban Heritage Collection for the fall so anybody you know who might be helpful would be really wonderful for me.

K: The last time I spoke to him we didn't have a good connection so I wasn't understanding everything that he was saying but I found when my father died and I cleaned out his house in Florida, one of the things I found was a plaque. And the plaque was a cutout from a newspaper. Karl Boonstra's father was with the American embassy in Havana and what Karl was telling me in this conversation he had was that he was having a falling out with the ambassador to the point where the ambassador arranged for my uncle to be recalled to Washington.

S: Which ambassador?

K: Earl Smith. I think it was Earl Smith.

S: What year would it have been?

K: It would've been right before '59. Maybe '58? And so what appears to me is my father cut this thing out of a newspaper and had it laminated on a block of wood so it looks like a plaque and the caption was "Mr. and Mrs. Boonstra are given a farewell cocktail party at the embassy just prior to their departure to return to Washington." And I ran across this recently and I connected with my cousin Karl and said, "You know, I found this thing which you may want to have." Because that was his father and mother. I didn't tell you that the mother, my mother's sister, died of leukemia around 1960, '61 while we were living in Homestead. So I sent this thing off to Karl and I never heard from him again. So I called him up and said, "You know, I'm just calling because I wanted to make sure you got this thing." And he was telling me the story of this friction that developed because my uncle was sort of feeling that Castro was going to be successful and he was arguing, not arguing, but proposing the idea that the American state department encourage some type of negotiation between the Batista regime and the Castro forces. Karl can tell you more about that than I can. Like I say, we didn't have a good telephone connection and I wasn't understanding everything he told me. And that Smith arranged for my uncle to be recalled to Washington to get him out of there. Cause he didn't want to listen to this anymore.

S: Cause he was close...

K: So there was an official, it appeared to be an official American position that they were backing Batista and my uncle was trying to argue, you know, maybe we should give some credence to the other side.

S: Wow. Yeah I'm going to... and Karl was totally American as well or was he...? Yeah? So you guys I guess are a quarter Cuban, is that right?

K: I would say about an eighth.

S: Cause you have a grandfather or something... Okay. Got it.

K: So Karl was about Neil's age. Maybe a little younger. We have a... I have a picture. I just saw it the other day. We have a picture of all of us kids, you know, and it goes from my brother Bill who was the oldest and then to the little one who was Richard Colligan.

S: Richard. Wow. This has been so helpful. I can't thank you enough. I'm interviewing your brother a week from today. What should I ask him?

K: Which brother?

S: Bill.

K: The same questions. I'd be interesting to know how he's answering them. How did my answers compare to Neil?

S: Very similar. Neil had more reflections on your parents I think and his world seemed more surrounded by the family. I think you as being a little older seem to have branched out and had social contacts.

K: The family ties were strong. My uncle there had been posted at the American embassy so his wife, my mother's sister, was there. Actually they lived right down the street from us at one point. And we were in Havana. Then my other uncle and mother's sister who worked with the metal company, they lived not too far away. And of course my grandmother was down at the sugar mill. And who is missing? My uncle, the male of the five kids...

S: On what side? Your mother's side?

K: Yeah there were four sisters and a brother. And John was the brother and I'm not sure what he did. He was some sort of agricultural product sales as well. But he lived down near my grandmother and my grandfather and he was married to a Cuban. And then the fourth sister spent most of her life in New Orleans with her husband and what did he do? Well I can't remember what he did but he died. She remarried. He died. And I lost touch with them. I tried to find my cousin on Facebook and I found something and friended him but that was about two years ago and he never responded. So I guess he doesn't check Facebook very often. He had a sister, she got married but I don't know what her married name is so I sort of lost track of that side of the family. In fact, the others too because they were all in the West Palm Beach

area in Florida and I asked Karl to send me the last contact information he had for them and he hasn't done that, which makes me wonder if he hasn't been able to find anything.

S: Well I'll let you know if I find anything. How about that? Well I can't thank you enough. This has been so helpful Ken. And Ken is okay to call you, I just went with it. Mr. Campbell.

K: Sure. Do you have a card?

S: No I don't. I'm a poor graduate student. We don't have cards. But let me... I'll shoot you an email today.

K: Sure. Give me some contact information. I'd like too...

S: I'll just write it on a piece of paper. And when I get these developed... I will send you a copy of this transcript if you'd like. Does that work?

K: Sure.

S: Sorry my handwriting is terrible. Email, name, what else do you need from me?

K: That's all.

S: Sorry I'm not as cool and don't have a cool photo on this. And I can write hablo español also and we can do it that way.