

An Interview With Brenda McBride

Brenda McBride: Interviewee

Benjamin Luton: Interviewer

Christopher Fitzsimmons: Interviewer

Monday, May 20th, 2013. Knight Memorial Library.

Benjamin Luton: Sure. Hello. Testing. Testing.

Christopher Fitzsimmons: Do you mind stating your full name and maybe briefly your connection to the pond, so we can test the sound levels?

Brenda McBride: My name is Brenda McBride and I live directly on Mashapaug Pond.

Fitzsimmons: Great that sounds good. Perfect. Do you want to start Ben?

Luton: Sure, Well. I guess how long have you lived in the neighborhood for?

McBride: Since August 99'.

Luton: Okay. Where exactly—What street is that that you live on?

McBride: Crescent.

Luton: On Crescent?

McBride: Yes.

Luton: What's your relationship to the Urban Pond Procession?

McBride: I participated in it marginally, because I have a second job that doesn't allow me—They always have the functions on mostly on Saturdays so I have attended a lot of meetings in the past. It's really changed hands a lot, so it's, it can be at times disjointed. When we started we had one group of people and then it switched to a different group of people. So it's been. You know I haven't been as connected as from one moment to the next.

Luton: What kinds of things would you do for the UPP when you're more connected?

McBride: Well, like I said, it was real marginal, so like in terms of sign-making or just, just very small. You know very small things. I would go to meetings sometimes at different people's homes, but to be directly involved, the most direct involvement I've had is with kids making like signs or posters on my lawn.

Luton: Okay.

McBride: Yes

Luton: And so I—I hear you're a—you're a teacher is that right?

McBride: No.

Luton: Oh, I'm sorry.

McBride: That's okay.

Luton: That's what I thought you said.

McBride: No, No, that's okay. I'm a *social worker in a school*—

Luton: Oh. Okay.

McBride:—so that you're, you're not far off.

Luton: What school is that that you work for?

McBride: At Bailey Elementary in Providence. Just right off of Prairie.

[Note from Luton: She means *Robert L Bailey IV Elementary*]

Luton: Okay.

McBride: Yes.

Luton: Do you want to talk about your job some?

McBride: *Snorts*

Luton: Or no?

McBride: Yes, I can talk about it. Well, I've actually been a social worker since 1978 when I graduated from U Conn. And so, it's taken me many different places. And so, for the last fourteen years. Let me see, fourteen, I'm sorry, fifteen years. I've worked in the Providence School Department as a social worker. Supposedly working with Special Ed.

Luton: Yes

McBride: But. Social working—In the school system, you can't just limit it to children with Special Ed. needs or kids with IUP's, which is really difficult for the administration to understand that. Because generally children have needs to.

Luton: Yes.

McBride: So, mostly I work with kids with behavioral disorders. So our school has the most behavior classes in the district, maybe, I would venture to say, in the state.

Luton: Oh.

McBride: So we have five behavior classes and then we have two Mild Moderate classrooms, which are for children with learning disabilities, mental retardation, and other disabilities, so being a social worker runs the gambit. I—It's, it's everything.

Luton: Yes.

McBride: It's a privileged profession also. So. And it's God's work as far as I'm concerned.

Fitzsimmons: How do you think being a social worker has influenced the way you view your neighborhood?

McBride: Good question.

Fitzsimmons: If any influence.

McBride: Well. You know as a social worker you have to deal with many different cultures, and really I haven't—haven't—Worked or lived in a homogeneous community. Meaning that it's always been diverse, whether it was here or. Well, it was a little bit more so in California, because my neighborhood was predominantly white in California. But here it's—The majority of Providence is actually Hispanic and, to be more specific, Dominican. So. Being a social worker—it's—I just don't ever look at people as people, as just a person. So it's—you know, it's part of who I am. It's the same way with whatever professions or whatever you are studying. [To Benjamin Luton:] You don't look at writing just as writing, you're looking at the creative experience. [To Christopher Fitzsimmons:] And history is, you know, is deeper than some words on a page, so you delve deeper possibly. So wherever I'm at. You know social work happens wherever it happens. It happens everywhere. It's just part of my makeup. So. I would like to be—I would like to be more outgoing in the neighborhood, but then something pulls me back, even to the point of having you guys come to the house. Because then there's a sense whereas before I was more open but then there becomes a sense of paranoia with everything that's happening in the world. You get sucked in to it, and even though I don't want that to happen I become part of that also. It's life.

Luton: Yes.

McBride: It's life. So.

Fitzsimmons: Absolutely.

[Note from Ben Luton: Brenda McBride did not want us to interview her in her home, so this interview takes place in the Knight Memorial Library.]

Fitzsimmons: Excuse me.

McBride: So I don't know if that answered your question. Or...

Fitzsimmons: That was great. I'm just curious of your sense of *feel of the neighborhood*. From like your perspective.

McBride: Yes. Yes. I don't personally feel that it's very friendly. I think about this almost every day. Unfortunately. And it's really funny that you'd ask that, because I was thinking about it today as I was you know as I was driving home from lunch. And I was thinking about how when I lived in California. First of all, everything is a celebration in California. [To Luton:] As I'm sure it probably is in Louisiana, too. I don't know what part.

Luton: New Orleans.

McBride: Okay, good. Because everything is like a celebration and a party. People are warm there. I love Louisiana. And in terms of California, even though I found. I found it. [To Fitzsimmons:] Not to offend you, because it's home to me, too. I feel like—Well, I don't feel like I'm bicoastal—but, it's more superficial there. And it's more transient. People move around so much there. But the flipside of it is you know it is—Everything is a celebration, and I felt like really welcomed and wanted. In California. I can't get a feel for the people in Rhode Island. People are just very distant, because you can—People are just very different here, they're cold.

Luton: Yes.

McBride: They're rude. And it wasn't that way. I was born and raised here, I left here when I went off to college. (10:00) So I was gone for like twenty-five years. Back then it was a very different feel. Most of the black people here are from—were from the Carolinas. And so, it had that southern feel to it. People looked out for one another. It was just very different. But as time went on, and as the makeup of the neighborhoods and the makeup of Rhode Island changed, people became very distant and very, I think, suspicious of different ethnic groups. So, you know, even though I've lived in the neighborhood for fourteen years it really—it hasn't changed on our street a whole bunch, it's changed somewhat—but there is for the most part it's been pretty—you know, pretty stable and whatnot, but I just don't find people outgoing and friendly. But I think also that you get what you give. So.

Fitzsimmons: Do you see that same thing with the younger kids? Are the younger kids out in the neighborhood hanging out with one another today? Or [inaudible].

McBride: I think it's very you know—because you have—not to sound classist, but you have different economic—is the correct word strata? I don't know. But anyway you have different economic situations and so I think that sometimes people don't want their kid with that one, you know. Or because of the color of someone's skin they don't want—you know, people just don't intermingle. You know? I know that a lot of that is cultural because I think that Dominican people tend to stick more to one another, and so. But when I lived in California I mean I was just you know—I guess you can say that of any ethnic group really,

but I just felt like I had so many different friends in different ethnic groups. Everybody was welcome in my home. That was the way it was when I had my child, but here it's very strange and very cut off, and people are just colder. I think that the personalities go along with the weather.

Fitzsimmons: Do you see anything different with the people that work for UPP and the work that's going into that?

McBride: Oh, I think that they're pretty outgoing and friendly folks. Yes.

Fitzsimmons: How much... [inaudible] at UPP at first?

McBride: Well I mean because we're part we're there in the neighborhood and so fliers were you know always coming out. You know, the people are just—They're warm and kind of hippyish, you know, welcoming. So. It's fine.

Luton: You grew up in Providence?

McBride: Yes.

Luton: Where is your family from?

McBride: My parents are from the Carolinas.

Luton: Okay.

McBride: Yes.

Luton: What part of Providence did you grow up in?

McBride: In South Providence.

Luton: Yes. Would you want to—Would you mind talking about that, about growing up in South Providence?

McBride: Well, initially we grew up on Dudley St. I don't know if you know where that is. That's where the hospital is now.

[Note from Luton: She grew up about five blocks from where she works today.]

Luton: Okay.

McBride: So, that's where we grew up in. It was very multi-cultural. So you had Armenian. You had, [11:59] Chinese, Black. Portuguese, Cape Verdean. We had everybody in our neighborhood. So it was absolutely wonderful. And my mother was always into, you know, just different cultures. So she brought us up that way. And then in the sixties, in the late sixties—No. Early sixties, we moved to a better neighborhood, so better meaning because it was predominantly White. And then of course white flight took place, so it became mostly black. After awhile, now, it's mostly Hispanic. So. My father still lives on, on that street. So he's basically lived there over about fifty years now. But growing up it was—You know

when we lived on Dudley Street it was a lot of fun but moving to Burnside Street to a larger home was nice because then we had more space in the house. Not outside, but in the house. So we had more space. It was okay. But then my mother in the sixties. In the late sixties, right around the time of Black Revolution—I guess I was getting to carried away. I went to Gilbert Stuart, the school like right in back of here [Note from Luton: She means behind the library where the interview is taking place]. So she pulled me and my youngest sister out and put us in St. Mary's [inaudible], which is an all-girls, predominantly-white school. So there were only three black students in my class. In my graduating class. It was like a small school, I think like a 120, 130 of us. Something like that. So there were only three blacks.

Luton or Fitzsimmons: Do you mind talking about that experience?

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McBride: Excuse me, that's my daughter. Let me just text her and tell her what's going on. Because she's just getting out of work.

Luton: Sure.

McBride: But, that experience, I mean, to me, it was—it was okay. My sister, she did not do well. I mean, she did well in school, she graduated from Providence College

phone rings

McBride: Excuse me. I'm sorry.

Luton: No, it's okay.

McBride: [To her daughter:] Hi!

McBride: The experience to me in retrospect I didn't have those kinds of issues that kids have in high school. At least I don't remember having them. You know I had good friends. You know at one point there were some kids whose parents didn't want their kids to come down to our neighborhood, because it was South Providence. I remember two of them, they lived in Rumford, and they boycotted their parents, so their parents let them come over. I felt like that at times I had to be the spokesperson. Or at least, the teachers, the nuns wanted me to be the spokesperson for the entire black race. I was just very. I was pretty militant back then. Or at least I viewed myself that way, so it was an interesting experience. I don't regret that my mother sent me there. She was doing what she felt was the best thing. I don't think it was a bad thing. I don't know which way I would have gone. I just knew that college was never an option for me. In the sense that it wasn't an option whether or not I was going to go—It was just a given that I was going to go. The same way with my daughter.

Luton: Were you involved in—You said that during—Were you involved with the Black Revolution much?

McBride: No. I would do loads of readings. I would go to different talks. You know. I think that given the opportunity maybe I would have joined the Black Panthers or something. It wasn't—I wasn't in the right place for that. Or maybe I was in the right place. However you want to look at it.

Luton: What was the climate like in Providence during that time?

McBride: You know, in the sixties people were (20:00) I think that people were more riled up and more mobilized in a sense. There was a great sense of Black Pride. To me it was a wonderful time, but you know it was turbulent at times also, because of different riots and with the murders of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. Malcolm X and JFK, they were much earlier. But I don't know if Providence was that revolutionary.

Luton: Yes.

McBride: But what I did do at Gilbert Stuart—When I was in junior high—We didn't have any black history courses, so the most that people ever knew about was George Washington Carver and peanuts, you know. And not minimizing what he did but we were very limited, and the sad part was that we're still very limited, so we still don't have—I don't think there should even be Black History, I just think that the books need to be written correctly to show our contributions and what we've done for this country. So. But I taught a little black history class. I took it upon myself with the approval of the teachers, and I had a little class going at one point at Gilbert Stuart. Like I said sadly we still—I don't even think they teach history. At least not in elementary. I don't see any history being taught. Or very little, I should say. It's very sad.

Luton: Were there more celebrations back then in the sixties in Providence than you notice in your own neighborhood now? And what kinds of celebrations would there be?

McBride: Well, you know we always had the parades and stuff to celebrate different—if that's what you're talking about. Are you talking about specifically Black—

Luton: Yes.

McBride: celebrations? I mean we would have different parades back in the day, which we don't have anymore. And there were always like free concerts in the projects, which of course that doesn't happen anymore. So there were—It seems like there was always something happening or something to do. But. Everything has just kind of petered out.

Fitzsimmons: Going back to Mashapaug Pond—

McBride: Yes?

Fitzsimmons: Do you think that Mashapaug Pond is a unifying factor or could be for the neighborhood?

McBride: I think it could be. I think it could be. When we first moved to Mashapaug pond, you know we were told that it was clean. You know, it was okay. I don't remember who told us it. We would go to different neighborhood meetings at The Mediator, I think it's called, over on Rounds Avenue, which is right in Reservoir Triangle. And at one point, they had renamed the little area, The Buddy Cianci, or whatever. This is before Plunder Dome. And I don't know if you know about Plunder Dome.

Luton: No.

McBride: That's when the Feds came in. I think it was April 27th, or something. It was right around my daughter's birthday. But the Feds came in and took over City Hall. And that's eventually He and Buddy Cianci ended up doing time in a Federal Prison. That's a really—

Fitzsimmons: Twice, wasn't it?

McBride: Well, for that time. But years before that he went for something else, like assault. He's very colorful. But Providence loves him. You know, I have to say he used to get things done. So. Back in the day. Providence is very colorful, and when I used to tell my coworkers in California about how colorful Providence was they just couldn't believe it. Because this is the—It was the seat of the east coast mafia. Right here, so. As a matter of fact right here in Providence College, there's a hall called Raymond Hall, and that's Raymond Patriarca, he was the head of the mafia. So this is a really colorful place. Atwells Avenue has some interesting little sites on it. [24:25] You know I think that the Pond could unify if they actually cleaned it, cleaned it up like they were supposed to before, because we always—They would tell us that they were going to clean it up. At one point, right next door to my house, there was supposed to be a YMCA. I don't know if you are aware of that. Let's say about maybe ten years ago or less, that was going to be the site of the new Providence YMCA, and then you know there was—The land needed to be remediated. And, of course, they were going to have children there—You can't place the YMCA here, and we don't know if the land is even clean or not. That's what the big thing was about the high school. And so now they monitor the vapor infusion level there. There's such history there, and so many lies have been told. I think that it could—I've seen the community come together at meetings, so I think that, that it could be a unifying force, if the Pond got actually got cleaned up. But. People go out there anyway. So there's jet skiing and all kinds of stuff that goes on. And in the summer that makes me really happy that people are out there using the Pond. Then the flip part is like, no. Lots of fishing goes on, but I wouldn't eat the fish if I were people. So. It's interesting.

Fitzsimmons: Do you see many people other than residents enjoying the Pond?

McBride: Oh, yes. It's mostly other people. It's not, yes. It's not the residents. The other things also is that—I'm trying to remember I think it was last summer that there were a lot of homeless people or drug addicts or whatever that would go down there, because our land abuts that—So we're first in line to see all of that stuff. It's really kind of creepy. So. There's just so much work to be done. There's so much work to be done.

Fitzsimmons: So do the homeless and possible drug addicts come to the Pond? Is that what happens?

McBride: Yes. They were.

Fitzsimmons: Yes.

McBride: They were. What they do is they set up an area. To sleep. So. You just have to constantly call the cops. I wouldn't if I was homeless be over there, because there's so many—Any animal you can think of is over there. It's wild. It's absolutely wild.

Fitzsimmons: Can you tell us a story of seeing an animal for the first time?

McBride: Yes. Well, we have a big beaver that comes up in our backyard. This has happened like the last two or three years. And it's eating all of our flowers. So I can't have any flowers in the back. One day—One night my daughter and I were sitting in the car. This has been in the—Maybe the past year. Yes, definitely the past year, because she graduated, so it's been in the past year. She had gotten out of the car, and then she came—I hadn't gotten out yet. She came flying back. And I was like, "What's wrong with you?" She said a deer jumped over her head.

Luton: Wow.

Fitzsimmons: Wow!

McBride: So I mean there's everything. You know the only thing I haven't seen is like a boar. A wild boar. But you know, rabbits, of course, skunks, and—I don't know if—a porcupine, maybe a porcupine. I'm not sure. Hawks. Lots of bats, because there are lots of bats in this area. Like in Roger Williams Park, and because we're so close to the park. So. You know. The first I've seen a bat, maybe three times, like right after we have a cookout. It's dark, and you're getting ready to close up, and something flies back past real quick and it's like, "Oh my God!" So there's lots of bats around here, which are good for the environment, but bad (30:00) for me. And—what else... Oh! Wolves and coyotes! So there's a wolf den down the street from us right on Crescent Street. Somebody has a wolf den right where their water is. So it's pretty wild, and one of the other things are fisher cats. They sound just like babies crying. So I—The first time—The first few times I heard it, I called the cops and said, "There's a baby outside and it sounds like it's being hurt." Nobody ever came, because that's what happens. Cops don't always come. And, come to find out, it was a fisher cat. But they've been spotted right on Blackstone Boulevard also. Right during the daytime they said. They've been attacking dogs that the owners are walking. So that's kind of. Scary. So there's all kinds of crazy stuff. All kinds of crazy stuff.

Fitzsimmons: What was your first impression of the Pond when you saw it?

McBride: You know, back in the day—I don't—I didn't realize that it was the same pond, because when you go away and you come back everything looks different, you know, from an adult size. And so I didn't even, didn't even realize that it was that pond. But when we were kids, a lot of kids died on that pond. Because they were out there ice skating. And—And they fell through, and so I can remember, there was—There was one boy in particular that I—that I knew personally or knew the family personally. And so, that was my impression of the Pond. But. Seeing it again it was like, "Wow! There's a pond here!" And you know you're in the city when you're in the front of the house, but when you go out back it's like you're on vacation. So. It's really nice, even if the water is—

Chris Fitzsimmons: But I had just asked you about your experience with people getting injured or...passing away through following in the ice and kids continuing to do that even though they know

Brenda McBride: Yeah, they do, because people are people and kids are kids. I don't see very many kids out on the pond though. I called one time, I know before I moved there my former neighbor had actually gone out and tried to rescue someone and it was unsuccessful. You know kids continue to be kids.

Fitzsimmons: You said that when you were first here in Providence, when you were living in South Providence, you had experiences with the pond?

McBride: Well I just knew, you, you would hear in the news about, you know about, accidents that had happened here.

Fitzsimmons: Because, I was going to ask, because now it seems as if a lot of people, unless they are living near the pond, don't know much about the pond. Do you know why that is?

McBride: [exhale] Probably because Rhode Island has so much water everywhere. I mean it is the Ocean State. So, there's so many little pockets of water. I...I don't know. And, and people here...it's a Rhode Island mentality, like...they don't travel very far, So... I have a part time job too. Like people will come into the store and they'll say well I need an appointment because I came all the way from, and you, and I'm waiting and they'll say Cranston. And I am like oh my god. It's like...people just don't travel, don't travel much. Yeah...it's just called the Rhode Island mentality. If you have to travel more than 10 or 15 minutes, that, that's a long, a long way. When my father came out, when I was in Stockton, to visit and we went to Oakland, which was nothing. It was only an hour away. He said, are we still in the same state. Like...yes. So, it's a Rhode Island thing. People just don't travel far. So, I don't think people really, really know, which is fine with me. I mean I didn't even realize, because when, before we bought our home, before I bought our home, and one of my friends was gonna live right there, across the street on the pond and she was saying where she was at there was water. And I was only living like around the corner. So, I was really surprised that there was actually water over there. I didn't remember it from when I was a kid.

Benjamin Luton: Did your daughter grow up in the Reservoir area?

McBride: Hmmhmm.

Luton: What was it like raising a kid in that area and living by the pond?

McBride: Well, I mean she found it kind of exciting at times. I found it kind of nerve racking at other times. And my family was real concerned because there was water there. She was nine when, when we moved to the house and...she found it really, it was, I think it was an adventure for her. In terms of like, there being other kids on the street and for her to play with, that wasn't really, I was really sad about that, because I thought I was picking a, picking a place where she could, you know, could have lots of friends and what not, but it didn't. It never took.

Luton: Why do you think that is?

McBride: Oh I think because people are closed off. Also, because of my own paranoia to an extent, because you know, just, I didn't feel safe in just letting her just walk down the street to somebody's house. Even back in the 60's to an extend my mother was like that, but you know, we have so many siblings in our family so it was very different, but with her being an only child. I think she had friends come over, but just to be in the neighborhood it was kind of different. There was one little girl who lived down the street, but they didn't have that much...that much contact and... And then there was a house a couple of doors down and she

would play with the little girl from there, but then...you know, they moved really pretty, pretty soon after we moved there so...

Luton: What is your relationship like with your neighbors?

McBride: I mean we speak, we say hi, that's really about it. I don't really...I don't really yes, have much contact with them other than just on the surface.

Luton: Where'd your daughter go to school in, in Providence and then after?

McBride: Hmmmm, well she went to, she went to a little tiny school initially. Wellspring. Then she went to Community Prep, which is a school in South Providence. It is a preparatory school for high schools, like private high schools. And then she went o, after she graduated from Community Prep in eighth grade, she went to boarding school in Mass, and by her, of her own free will. She wanted to go to boarding school so... Which wasn't a terrible thing, I wouldn't, I wouldn't have mind going to boarding school. So it opened her up to a whole different world.

Luton: So, just to make sure, you didn't really have much of a relationship with the reservoir area or the pond when you were growing up in Providence, is that right?

McBride: Hmmmhmmm

Luton: What is the educational system, education system here in south providence?

McBride: In the public schools.

Luton: I guess public or private. Or Private, which ever you prefer.

McBride: The school system in Providence is just shut [chuckling] to me...it's... When I was growing up, I think we had a really good, I felt like I had almost a superior education in a public school. Schools were really good. Like I said I went to school here, at Gilbert Stuart. And, when I started school, at St. Mary's, the private school my mom put us in, we had the same text, but they didn't allow me, even though I did really well in public school, they didn't allow me [40:55] to be in advanced classes at Bay View. It was just a race thing. Because they were the exact books. So, we, you know, I was taking algebra and taking Latin and those were the same courses I took at Gilbert Stuart and did really well in, but...And it is really interesting because, my daughter, right now, works in an afterschool program. One of the parents, her little girl is Hispanic and Native American, She has just been accepted into Moses Brown. She was told by someone there, she said that her little girl, she was told that her daughter would probably have to stay back a year if she came there. This is before she took the test, the admission test. Once she took the test, they're like oh well. She can go, she can start at her correct grade. But, just the...just the, the fact that it was a little minority child and they automatically figured that she would have to start a year behind. So, those things, you now, things don't change or haven't changed that much, if at all.

Fitzsimmons: Do you have any experience with the Alvarez High School?

McBride: Hmm, not really, not really, not other than what you know, what we were involved in in the neighborhood. Just making sure that the school was safe once it was built. And it wasn't a matter that we didn't want kids in the neighborhood, because that is what

came out in the newspaper. It was a matter that we wanted to be safe for children. And that whole area over there, there used to be a shopping center there. The Stop N' Shop. But, and what was told to me was that, one of the reasons that, the stop, the Stop N' Shop was only there for a very limited amount of time, so they could get a tax break. But it was never up to, up to par. It was always smelly, they had the worst employees. It was just a bad place and it shutdown in no time at all. And they would call the produce the graveyard. You know, it was just bad. This was a brand new, you know, brand new place. So...the, the center itself, the shopping center hasn't been very successful. They had a gas station there near the Stop n' Shop, the Stop N' Shop gas station.

Fitzsimmons: Do you know why that is?

McBride: Why...?

Fitzsimmons: Why it hasn't been successful?

McBride: Well, they didn't put anything into, because I guess they felt they didn't have to. They were getting their tax break. I don't know. You know?

Fitzsimmons: You mentioned the newspaper incident just a little bit ago, could you elaborate on that please?

McBride: Well it was just that in the newspaper, they had an article, when the neighborhood got together and were concerned and we kept delving and delving. There was an article that came out at one point that we didn't want the high school there, because for the high school kids. That wasn't it. That wasn't it at all. It needed to be a safe place. And most of the kids that go there, I believe aren't from the neighborhood. So...and I also...I think it's a non-performing school, I'm not sure, which means it is under correction. So...it's a nice looking school, but I don't really, really know much about it.

Luton: Is there much of a perception of the Reservoir area from the perspective of the people from the rest of Providence, like South Providence?

McBride: What do you mean? I'm not...

Luton: Did people know about the neighborhood or how do they feel about it?

McBride: How do they feel about Reservoir Triangle area? Hmmm...I really don't know. Yes...I really don't know. Somebody said, somebody said that...you know back in the day Reservoir Triangle was...a really...[46:15] I don't know if I could say segregated, but any way there weren't, there weren't many minorities, specifically black people allowed to move into that area so...

Luton: Was it redlined?

McBride: Yes...yes...if that...yes. I mean, we, we – people couldn't move in, people couldn't move in that area, from what I understand. I don't know, I don't remember. I don't even remember the area from when I was growing up. I remember Reservoir Avenue, but that's about it. We never had reason to go anywhere, except for you know, just stay right on the main street

Luton: What's your memory like of Reservoir Avenue?

McBride: Well when we would go to Reservoir Avenue, there was a Jewish Deli there. So, we would go after church on Sunday. My parents, you know that's where you would go for a ride. It was like going to the country, that is what we would call it. Just like headed towards the country, so it was really weird. Like where Garden City is, my aunt used to own a home over there. It is called Sockanasset Road. And Sockanasset Road also where the bad boy school was, which is a training school, which is still there. So all of Reservoir leads up to there. That was like a big trip to go, to, to the country, to go to Reservoir and all of Sockanasset Road.

Luton: Was it more rural there?

McBride: Yes, it was. It was, my aunt actually had a farm with pigs and all that. Now Daval sits there, like the medical supply company or whatever it is. So it is right across from Garden city and Whole Foods, all in that area.

Luton: You said you went to a Jewish Deli, was there like, were there many Jewish people in that area?

McBride: You know, I have no idea. All the Jewish people to me were on the East Side. So, my mother did some domestic work. Her full time job was at the state hospital, but she did some domestic work over there and [49:06] my grandmother was a domestic worker on the East Side, and then my father did some maintenance work, aside from his full time work, in the East Side also.

Luton: How far was the, was your...you said your aunt had a farm, is that right? How far is that from like, from I guess, from the pond or in terms of miles? Is it very far away?

McBride: Yes. If you, do you know where Garden City is? You don't know that area. Hmmm. Well let's see do you know where Warwick Mall is? Ok well if you go down Reservoir you hit Warwick Mall eventually. Ok I know, do you know where Alex and Ani is? No

Luton and Fitzsimmons: [Laughing]

McBride: The world headquarters. Do you know where Borders is? Where it used to be? Ok then, right there. Ok, so from there to the pond, I don't know how far that is. It's about seven or eight minutes drive.

Luton: Ok, so not very far.

McBride: Hmmhmm.

Fitzsimmons: I'm curious, more about the pond. A lot of people have mentioned the pond as kind of a hidden treasure in Providence. Do you have any other places you consider as hidden treasures in Providence? From growing up or from your experience coming back?

McBride: In Providence? Probably like, Blackstone Boulevard area or...well else in Providence? I guess one of the places to me that I think is like, do you know where all the

old homes are in South Providence are? Like Congress Avenue and Lexington. You know where those big gorgeous homes are? That is one of the things I missed when I was in California. I truly missed the architecture in Rhode Island...and I had never heard of track housing until I went to California. And everything is so new, and something that is from the 70's is considered old out there. And it's like really? But I love old, I love old house, old buildings. They have so much character, they have good bones. So...you know just riding around in the neighborhoods, there's just you know... Providence has so many little cute neighborhoods and I love, like, Wickendon and Thayer Street. You know just, I don't know there is just so many interesting places, so...

Fitzsimmons: How do you think many of the houses are in the Reservoir Triangle area?

McBride: Well there's, I think there...like well we have...I think it's an octagon house. It is the original Gorham house. But then there's another one on Public [Street], but the one that is at the end of our street, I think it's from the 1800's probably late 1800's. So...you know it is just, I, I, you, I don't know if you are aware that Rhode Island was the Jewelry Capital at one point. And Gorham was like the Silver, you know. So, you probably have all that background information, so yes. [52:40] The original Gorham house is at the end of the street. So, the house is a pretty, can be pretty old. There are a lot of historical homes, but I mean on our street, the Gorham house, I don't think that is a historical house any more. You can't do certain things, do aluminum siding, you have to paint it a certain coloring, you have to have a plaque up, it doesn't have any of that anymore. But it is definitely, it's definitely a treasure. I feel very blessed even with all the problems, at least at this point I feel blessed. I don't know in years to come, I don't know how I will feel health wise. So, that concerns me a lot.

Luton: From the, health wise, do you mean from pollution from the pond?

McBride: Yes, and...like we'll never, I'll never be able to plant a vegetable garden there, because of lead and what not. And the city really doesn't maintain it at all. At all. So, you know you get politicians that come in and make promises and nothing. Nothing happens.

Can you talk about anyone specifically?

Any politicians that we've, that we've, you know? I think that the most hopeful person that we could have had, was Buddy Cianci...because you hear, I felt like he would really listen. But...because he is really connected. Just connected. He loves Providence. Even though he stole from Providence [laughing]. But he's just, I think that he is more connected. And there were a lot of things that he did, like you know Waterplace Park and all of that. That stuff wasn't around years ago. But there's a, you know, land right next door to me. And I have wanted to purchase it like years ago, and so when I go to purchase it they say no it belongs to the state and the state says no it belongs to the city. So, it just goes back and forth and back and forth and now you know I can't buy it, I can't afford it probably. But...you know just trying to keep that taking care of and maintain, and have the city or whoever do it. I just call back and forth all the time. It gets to be kind of discouraging, but I have to do it, so...

Luton: So, are there people of...are there all different kinds of class backgrounds in the Reservoir area, or in the neighborhood there? Or what kinds of classes are there?

McBride: I...I think so, but mostly I would say it is mostly middle income. I think everybody is just struggling and trying. You know work and poor, we're all just trying to make it.

Luton: Yes.

McBride: Yes.

Luton: Did the housing collapse, did that affect your neighborhood?

McBride: Yes. Well, I'm trying to think. It affected everyone in terms of that their homes depreciated. I didn't...I saw a few homes probably, that went into foreclosure. There is one at the, kind of towards the end of the street that is bordered up now because the owner died. He had some unsavory characters living in there and, and they, it had to be bordered up so they couldn't squat. And there's a house up the end of the street. I could swear they have squatters in there, but they just put in flowers and everything, and [57:58] you never see lights on at night, so that's weird. I know that there is some law where, if a house is foreclosed on, that you can live in it – not the people who used to live in it, not the former owners, but people can live in it. They had something on the internet about some guy who did that in Florida.

Luton: So you said a few houses foreclosed after the collapse, the housing collapse.

McBride: Hmmhmm.

Luton: So did that affect you in any other way? Besides from living by those houses...or, I mean...or your property value going down?

McBride: What do you mean did it affect me?

Luton: Were those the ways that it had affected you after the housing collapse I mean?

McBride: No it didn't. I mean I still had to pay a mortgage. It didn't. It will affect me when I get ready to sell.

Luton: Do you think the housing collapse affected South Providence much?

McBride: Oh yes. Definitely. It caused a lot of homelessness, because there were people, as a matter of fact my niece was living in a house and paying rent, and paying rent, and not realizing the house was foreclosed on her until the very end. SO, tat has happened to a lot of people. You know, working in the school, parents have come in and told me different stories about that.

Luton: Would you be comfortable talking about those stories, or is that...?

McBride: I mean it was just, yes...it was just the fact that they were paying rent and they weren't aware that the house, the same as my niece, they weren't aware that the house had been foreclosed on, so... Yes I have heard that story a few times.

Fitzsimmons: Do you have anything else to add about Mashapaug Pond in particular?

McBride: No it's just that, you know, I mean I think that it is a little bit of heaven there [clearing throat] and I never thought I would be living on water, so... And on our side we are real blessed, because when the water level rises, because of flooding or whatever, knock on wood, we have been okay. So, it's a blessing, I mean, I'm a proud home owner. [1:00:50] I mean I was, I've been a home owner forever. When I was in California, I was a home owner also, but like I said you could go on the front of the house and you know you are in the city and then you can go in the back and feel like you are on vacation. So it is the best of both worlds.

Luton: Do you go to the East Side much? Or...

McBride: Hmmhmm

Luton: Okay. What kind of things do you do there?

McBride: Eat. [laughing]

Luton: Yes there are good restaurant there.

McBride: Yes. Eat. And I go to some, I go to some functions there. At Brown, once and a while, last one I went to Martin Luther King's daughter was there. So that was excellent. So, I go, you know, as I found out different things. Because I like to, my daughter and I like to stay busy and you know and I'll go to, we'll go to the Cable Car, if they are having a good documentary. I used to take her, because we used to go when I was a kid, to the RISD, to the Museum and stuff like that. Yes...

Luton: Do you have a, what was your relationship to the East Side when you were growing up? Did you go to the East Side much then that you remember.

McBride: Oh yes we did, because I had an aunt who lived on the East Side.

Luton: Okay.

McBride: She lived on Doyle. So...yes we would, you know we would go visit her. That was most of my, my experience with the East Side, I mean then I would go with my father every once and a while to help him. But, most of my experience was the fact that my parents worked for people on the East Side.

Luton: Ah okay.

Fitzsimmons: Any more questions?

Luton: I think I...yes, not at the moment, do you have anymore?

Fitzsimmons: No, do you have anything else to add?

McBride: No.

Fitzsimmons: Great.

Luton: Okay.

Fitzsimmons: Thank you so much. We really appreciate it.

McBride: Oh you are welcome. I hope that it was helpful.

Luton: Oh it was.

[END OF INTERVIEW]