

Transcript – Mary Jane Mikuriya, class of 1956

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Interviewer: Mimi Pichey  
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Track 1

Mimi Pichey: [00:00:00] Today is April 24, 2017. My name is Mimi Pichey, class of '72 and I am in San Francisco at 361 Mississippi Street interviewing Mary Jane Mikuriya, class of 1956. Can you tell me a little bit about your family and childhood?

Mary Jane Mikuriya: I had a very interesting family. My father was from Japan, from a Samurai family. He was the eldest son, so he was trained in the way of leadership. He was a Buddhist, Shintoist, Lutheran and he's brought to this country by [00:01:00] the Lutheran missionaries. And because he was a Samurai, he was matched in like status with Edith Vales the niece of John Wannamaker in Philadelphia which is an upscale family. In Philadelphia, they own the department stores and they've been there a long time. So when he came to this country, his contacts were all in the upper class of the United States, which was consistent with his upbringing. And my mother came over from Austria-Hungary, and if you ask the city what country is it in, it depends on who was ruling and which year which country she would be in. The country she would be in now, would be, her birth country would now be the Czech Republic, [00:02:00] it's no longer Czechoslovakia, it's the Czech Republic so she came over here when she was two. She came on a boat that landed in Baltimore, Maryland with her mother, father, and her older sister. Her mother spent the entire trip taking care of this lady with TB, and as a result, my mother got TB and had to be in a sanitarium and I have TB residuals in me, and that means I have to have a chest x-ray because I can't have a prick because it all comes out positive. My mother was one of 11 children, and her job was to take care of all her younger brothers and sisters and have them work on their farm. [00:03:00] She had foresight and determination and she wanted to be a medical missionary, so since her father didn't allow her to go to school and the other children, because they needed hands on the farm, she decided to leave home with her mother's approval and she worked as a mother's helper taking care of several children of the minister's family, and when she told the minister she wanted to be a medical missionary, he said, you'll have to go to Connellsville because it

has schools that have college preparation classes that don't exist in Peripolis where she was. Now, she goes to Connellsville with her one –

MP: What state is that?

MJM: That's in Pennsylvania. Good question.[00:04:00] It's in Pennsylvania and unlike California, it has to provide education somewhere for college but not always in each school. So she rode to Collinsville there, she's interviewed and the counselor said, “What do you want to be?” So everybody in that town is set up to host a student, a high school student, who was coming from a place that did not offer the college prep program they need. She was assigned to a doctor since she wanted to be a medical missionary, and the doctor's wife, Mary Jane Kerr was very active in women getting the vote. So she had a great big impact on my mother. My mother was very good in Latin and English, writing poetry, and all these different things, but Mary Jane Kerr said to her, [00:05:00] “As a woman in this country, if you want to be seen and taken seriously, you must speak absolutely accentless, perfect English, have a big vocabulary. Otherwise, nobody will pay attention to you.” So my mother had a lifetime of collecting words and their roots and was a walking dictionary encyclopedia and she was also very strict about propriety, so she looked at Emily Post, and when she had children, she required perfect manners from them. Which served her very well because when she got married to a man who was Japanese and three inches shorter than she, the family of four was always stared at [00:06:00] and so on best behavior, they were just interesting to look at, not acting out, and that made a big difference in being accepted in society. Well, I say my mother is very important to me because as I get older, I find that I am acting more like my mother did at these ages, which is quite surprising. I have always been a peace activist which means I was, I'm a Gandhian. I've been trained in nonviolence by going to a Quaker school, which is part of the training of being a student in the school for demonstrations. For instance, you sit in a group and somebody comes in and suits on the outside, they have these rolled up newspaper and they hit you on the head [00:07:00] or wherever and they really are very hostile to you, and then they ask you, “How do you feel?” and “Did you get angry?” and “What did you do about that?” and then you express how you feel, but you know it's all made up, but it psychologically prepares you for when you're going to go into a demonstration and be a witness, so then the inside circle that had been beat on with these newspaper rolls goes on the outside sees how other people felt. Well this training was very important as a Quaker, because demonstrating was very important to them and then the Quakers were the people that went into the Japanese relocation centers and provided education and support for them. But for us, they didn't know the war was coming on, and I was

[00:08:00] – December 7, 1941 changed my life, and my parents, you know, having a German speaking mother and a Japanese father wasn't well received, and with all the propaganda said, “Hate the Germans. Hate the Japanese. Hate the Italians.” Then other people said, “Hate the Jews. Hate the immigrants.” So it was a very difficult time since our parents were the only people in the town that were college educated and immigrants.

MP: Now talk a little about how your parents met each other because I think that's sort of an interesting story and how well educated they were.

MJM: My mother had one year of medical school, and she wanted a social life because she worked so hard to get herself through high school and Oberlin College and then she was in women's medical school in Philadelphia, but she felt she couldn't represent [00:09:00] the people, the Christian church that had taken away the scholarship from her for being a medical missionary, so she questioned her faith. So she decided to put her energies into socializing with people who were international. She liked to say, “Well, we should be all equal.” So the international house was the perfect vehicle for her and she went there at the University of Pennsylvania and learned or questioned, that isn't it interesting we have an international house that have American whites and whites from Europe, we have African blacks, we don't have any colored people here, negroes or blacks as they became known as, so why is it? So let's ask. Let's ask [00:10:00] the international house. Well, upon investigation, they found out there was a covenant that said, the International House could not be used – could not have Negro members, American Negro members. it said. American Negros.

MP: What year was this?

MJM: About 1924 or 25. It was in the mid '20s. So what did they do with something like that? So a group of them got together and they said, “Well, let's take our social activities off campus and we'll let the University of Pennsylvania know that when they are in more international house with American Negros as hosting also, we'll come back.” And being both interested in supporting the equality of American blacks, that's how they met. And they ended up [00:11:00] getting married in 1929 and that year they got married, they had a Lutheran wedding because my father was very Lutheran, and he was Lutheran for the rest of his life, although in this country he was Lutheran, when he went back to Japan, we used to go to the Buddhist shrine and pay respects to the family or in his family's house, there was the Shinto shrine, so I said Dad, “How can you be three religions?” he said, “If it's the true religion,

they'll all get along. It's all the same.” So we had to think about that all the time, so I was always educated within different belief systems, but one solid belief is the equality of men and women, equality of races.

MP: Following on that, [00:12:00] earlier you mentioned to me – before we started recording, that your mother had been active at Oberlin with integration, could you just briefly describe?

MJM: Yes, I would be happy to. My mother was the first person in her family to go to college. Her parents weren't supporting her, so she said, “How do I pick a college? Well, I want to go to the finest college that welcomes women.” And she found Oberlin welcomed women and it was the first college to welcome women and colored, so she said, “Oh, that's the place for me.” Then in her senior year, she had a sociology project and three people teamed up. Two sons of missionaries, so they had this good missionary [00:13:00] background, and she was pleased to work with them because she wanted to be a missionary, so she was really thrilled to be working with these. And they decided that they were going to see if the college community, mainly the staff, and the students and the townspeople supported the original mission of Oberlin. So what did they do? They did a survey. My mother's survey was the students, so she surveyed the students and found out, the students were prejudiced against certain races, and she was very surprised to see the people from California didn't like the Chinese, which surprised her because she'd never heard of anything bad about the Chinese, but it was surprising that one state would do that. And the other one she understood [00:14:00] were blacks, but they had black girls living in the dormitory. Then she thought about it, “Yes, they never went to the tea dance.” Which is a formal dance where you have a dance partner the first six ones, you have to have a separate partner. Well, there weren't six girls in the dorm, so if they were to go, who were they going to dance with? So she said, “Let's invite them and guarantee them they'll have dance partners.” So that's what she and these two other young men did. And it was the first time that these black girls ever went to this tea dance. There they were, with their colored girls and colored boyfriends with white girls and white boyfriends. What's going to happen when they run out of same colored partners? Well, [00:15:00] you can imagine it was quite the talk of the event, and my mother was called into the dean's office to – about this incident. So the dean said, “Come to my office at nine o'clock tomorrow and I am to investigate what has brought this about.” So my mother went to the dean's office and this woman was there saying, “I'm so glad that you came. I have been instructed to investigate this. Do you understand?” “Yes.” “And I would like to lay some ground rules for this investigation. Do you understand?” “Yes.” “I want you answer only yes or no to my inquiry. Do you think you can do that?” “Yes.” “All right. I want to know if this was a

group project?” “Yes. I – “ “Remember? Oh, you're excused. The interview is over.” [00:16:00] My mother couldn't believe it. She had thought of all night, what was this person going to do? What could happen to her? And so on. So she was so delighted, she left, forgetting about she was ever thought to be chastised for integrating the dance floor. Well, she was out in Montana doing Christian missionary work and got a letter there and it said, “Dear Anna Schwank, I am sorry to inform you, but your scholarship to medical school in Philadelphia has been cancelled.” That can't be. That's the only money that she had to pay for the college. How was she going to do it? And here she has already left Oberlin. She's already graduated from Oberlin, and she's been accepted into medical school. So what would happen? Well, she wrote to Boston and [00:17:00] they wrote back and said, “Yes, you're scholarship – It is true. You're scholarship has been denied because you have too advanced views on the race question.” So they let her know why. So she questioned them more and they were worried about their funders if they ever found out about this. So she accepted it, but on the way to Philadelphia. All the plans have to be made. If you don't have any money, her plan was to get on the train. She had the train ticket. She was going across the country. What is she going to do in Philadelphia? And this lady, so she's worrying, and the lady who is sitting next to her, she tells her her sad story. And when she gets back to Philadelphia, this lady says, “Call me up.” And she calls her up, and she said, “I've gotten you a scholarship to one year of medical school.” So she had one year of medical school, and she learned a lot, [00:18:00] but she said, “I can't finish medical school because I will be beheld to this Christian church, and I don't know what they are going to ask me to do for them, and I don't know if I can because I do believe that women are equal to men. I believe in equality of the races, and so on.” So she dropped out of being religious and as a result of that, she didn't know what to do with her – instead of all this religious activity and volunteerism, she joined the International House, and that's how she met my dad.

MP: And she was working as a researcher?

MJM: Oh, yes. She was – she got her master's degree in I think it was called pharmacology. Pharmacology and botany and biology. It was some mixture of those, and she worked [00:19:00] with *Daphnia* in the laboratory, and a *Daphne* is a little tiny flea sized water, they called it a water flea, and you can see through it and you could see the little tiny babies inside and you could see them giving birth, but it reacts in a very short time. It has a three day life span. So they used it for different things. At one time, she was working to see if they could use this kind of medication to see if the women were pregnant or not. That's what she was working in one of her research projects. I remember.

MP: And your father was an engineer?

MJM: Yes, he was a graduate of Kumamoto Technical Institution in Japan, which is an upscale Japanese, it's like an Ivy League MIT mix. And he – I found in his drawer, [00:20:00] he was a black belt Judo. He was a swimming person. He was a track person. He had all these honors, and he came to the United States and he never told me until I was an adult helping to clean out his drawers and found these, “Oh, you won them?” “Oh, you can have these.” But, you know, you have a father that doesn't tell you anything about himself and he was an engineer. He worked for US Steel at one point in his life, and when he went was there, he went to US Steel, worked there and he said to them, “I see the Chrysler Building is going up, and it goes up one floor at a time. Why don't you just put the whole frame up?” They said, “Well, you know, that's a very good idea, but we don't know how to do it yet. Would you like to try to figure it out?” My father said, “Yes.” So they sent him back to the University of Pennsylvania and he figured it out, [00:21:00] and that is now standard operating procedures.

MP: Wow.

MJM: And they liked his thesis on tall buildings because of how the psychological component because tall building are getting taller, but you know the buildings all move, so the psychological factor is how much can the top floor move where people will rent it? So he put that – they liked that so much it's in the Library of Congress. And he did all sorts of little kinds of things that come out over time. There used to be a cable car out by the Cliff House at one time. He designed that when he worked for Roebling. You know, there's a circular pad around the Jefferson Memorial, and he designed that. And I remember when you look at him, he doesn't act like a normal [00:22:00] engineer. He's studying, one day I saw him studying the National Geographics. I said, “Why are you studying those so intensely?” He said, “I'm designing a plan in Russia and I want to know where to put the windows so that, you know, windows are important when you're working in a big building, to look out to see if it's raining or sunny or whatever it is, and I want to see what would have the best view.” And I thought, “Huh, isn't that interesting?” I thought he was designing a plan, but you know, it's the kind of thing that was very different about him in designing these plans.

MP: So you mentioned that your parents met, they married, they went to Japan. You told me earlier that your father then renounced being a Samurai and it went up to one of his brothers and that your father's

family never would accept his having a non-Japanese wife. [00:23:00]

MJM: Excuse me. He – their family would, but the Japanese country people cannot accept it. They cannot accept non-Japanese because it – can you think about, they think they are so pure and if you intermarry, that somehow ruins the purity of the line and they have a whole for Samurai, they have to know all the family background of who they marry, they're match marriage and so on. And his – he has been raised from infancy to light the funeral pyre under his whoever dies in the family. He has been trained from childhood to take care of the Buddhist temple and there's a little box for each family there and you give a tribute to that and that's supposed to be taken care of and there is a big stone that you [00:24:00] have to go to and you have to give this like tithe to the Bhuddist – what do you call it? It's not a – it's the head man that runs the gravesite for the Buddhist temple, and once he went to Japan and the Buddhist priest said to him, “You know, we were wondering if there is somebody with the last name Mikuriya, however they haven't paid any of their tithing and you know they may have died off during the war, so we were wondering if you would take over their maintenance?” So Dad said yes. He said they could be my houseguests.

MP: So you also mentioned that this was when your parents were in Japan right when the invasion of Manchuria happened and that then the combination of all those situations brought [00:25:00] them back to the US where you and your brother were born.

MJM: That is very good. That is so true. They had to wait until my father, grandfather died, Grandfather Mikuriya died then my father would light the funeral pyre, and in the meantime, when the time they got there in 1930 until 1933 when he died, they were preparing as everybody in the family was for his demise, but my father was also knowing he was not going to come back because his wife and his children could not be Japanese and you couldn't be a naturalized Japanese until 1970. So you know, even if they stayed, he would have been, you know, you couldn't be that, and there were so many requirements for you to be naturalized Japanese, so many years of living there, you have to pass a proficiency test in Japanese, [00:26:00] and do you know how hard that is? There's three styles of Japanese writing, so even that would be challenging. I don't know what they would put on test, but he decided they had to come back here.

MP: And when they came back, you said that they ended up moving to a farm.

MJM: Well, before they moved to the farm, they came here on borrowed money because they had the money to come back, but the banks no longer existed, so they borrowed money –

MP: Because of the Depression and the crash?

MJM: The Crash of 1929, but it didn't affect Japan. He had, my father had a very good job there and when you have a good job there, you can't imagine a world that you knew for so many years changing so much that the banks went out of business, the people are without jobs, you cannot imagine that [00:27:00] when they got back, they came back and stayed with one of mother's sisters who had a small child and they were supposed to take care of the child. And it was my father couldn't get a job because he was an alien, why was he an alien? My mother was a naturalized twice, why wasn't he naturalized once? Well, he couldn't be. The Oriental Exclusion Act of 1924 said no oriental could become a citizen. So my mother, when she married him, she lost her citizenship. She was naturalized again, but she was a citizen, so she was the working person, but then again, she got pregnant. There's only a year and 18 days between my brother and me so I mean she couldn't work and she was fortunate that she had met the person who was in charge in Pittsburgh of the Works Progress Administration to give people jobs. [00:28:00] And there were a lot of unemployed engineers. So Dr. Kerr's brother, also Mr. Kerr found my father a job so that when I was born in Elizabeth McGee Steel Hospital in Pittsburgh, Mother was on the charity ward because they weren't able to work and what also happened is that my mother and father living with another relative, the little boy of the relative preferred my father to his own, which made the problem great, and he demand they leave right away. My mother, a reader, found the second hand book called *A Family of Four Can Live on Two Acres* and that gave them hope. [00:29:00] Hope was very slim in which direction do I go, so that book meant so much to them and they ended up using that like their roadmap for their life together. And they were always in this life together because you take two people from two different cultures. Mother would always say, “You know when you marry somebody from a different culture and you have a disagreement, you have to figure out is it their – is it a cultural difference? Is it a personality difference? Or is it their lack of understanding? You know you just don't know which it is, so you have to do a lot more talking. So, being in two different professions, my father was an engineer and my mother was a researcher farmer dietician, also a woman's advocate, an animal [00:30:00] advocate, and a Baha'i regional teacher. So she was a Baha'i because that is the religion that really said that men and women are equal and we need an international house of justice that we have now in The Hague, but in 1941 we didn't have that so even getting it started after 1945 took a long time.



So she was a person who saw a problem and I can't tell you how many problems of individual people she has helped out, and people knew she was that kind and they would say, "I think you need to check this out or that check." She was that kind of person. Or with the animals, somebody had an older dog like, it looked like a German shepherd, and it was called Satan, she said, "Oh don't put him down. Give him to me, [00:31:00] but I can't call him Satan. I'll call him Satin." So she calls him Satin and she gets his diet really, really good so he's more muscular and so on and he is healthy and she is so kind to Satin and so proud that he looks healthy, and one day she looks out in the yard and he's lying down. She calls him and he doesn't come. She said, "What's wrong?" So she goes out and sees he's dead. How could he die? She said, "He cannot just die. There must be something wrong because I was feeding him so well." Oh, so she does an autopsy on him and she finds he has heartworms. "He has heartworms?! Oh my goodness! We have to – "So she goes on the radio and tells everybody they better get their dog immu – I mean with the medicine for heartworms. She takes out the heartworms so that you could see what they look like, [00:32:00] how they're killing the dog. They're long strings that I mean, big, and she takes it to the museum and she has them put there, so she has that in the newspaper, she puts it on the radio, and she takes it to the museum. All because of her dog dying. Now I don't know anybody else that would do that. I know I wouldn't, but she was that kind of person. I have to know why. I know he was so healthy. And every little thing was "How many ways can we look at this glass of water? What can you do with it?"

MP: So she was a scientist and an activist?

MJM: Yeah.

MP: So let's fast forward a little bit. You grew up in rural Pennsylvania living on this farm, the two acres and it sounded like from what you told me earlier, you did a lot of work on the farm. And went to school with a lot of migrant kids. What happened during World War II? [00:33:00]

MJM: Well, you know, it was – we moved in the house in 1938. And the house was a split log cabin. A split log cabin means that those are oak logs that are 14 feet high.

MP: Inches.

MJM: Right. 14 inches high, maybe 14 feet long, but they're very thick too. Maybe nine or 10 inches so

there's no heat in there possible, so how are you going to heat this house? So they, in order to heat this house, they'd have to make a cellar to put a furnace in, so the heat can come up from the floor. That's the only way. But how are you going to get the heat up the floor and the second floor and it never did happen because there was no way to put any heating there if you're going to close off the floor and have a solid floor on the second floor. So it was an interesting house. Well, what happened [00:34:00] in this house is that that was their dream house, the two acre farm, with a house that they could call their own with a vegetable garden, and it had been in this family of these two ladies who had been on the market for sale for ten years, nobody bought it. So, my mother said, "Let's go. Let's ask if they will sell it." They sold it to my parents for \$4,000, no money down for three years. Because my mother's a good talker. She's a sales person. And she said, "Well, if we're going to have to make a cellar, put in electricity and plumbing and so on, well, we need to put in the cellar first with the heating for the winter, so we can't pay you right away." And they went along with it. They were nice ladies, two sisters who were old, and they wanted a family on the farm they had grown up in. And that farm had some very old plants that are considered [00:35:00] antique now, and I used to love those plants because there was one called Bridal Wreath, and it was a single – this bush with a strand of branch with all these little white flowers hanging down, and I used to break it off and I'd wear it as a hat. Or they had current bushes or rhubarb or they were all, they would just come up. And they had apple trees that were so great, so when my father died, I planted an apple tree in his memory in my garden because these fruit growings – trees and plants were so important part of my childhood. And when you are building or rebuilding a building it takes a lot of effort for a lot of everybody, so every weekend we had a family [00:36:00] event. My father would plan it out. We'd keep the time open, and after school on Friday, like we raised chickens, he would kill the chickens and then we would heat up a big tub, large tub, maybe about three feet across of hot water, and to a boiling point, and the chickens were killed scientifically, so we would put a knife in their mouth and sever the brain, the nervous system, then after dinner, we'd go out and put them in this now boiling hot water, and everybody would be pulling feathers off the chickens so that they could be taken into the house and mother would clean them out. And what would she do? She'd clean them out, wrap them up, and she'd go on the bus with two children and take them in [00:37:00] two suitcases and deliver them to people who wanted fresh eggs or fresh chickens. And it was fascinating to us because I remember taking – she took the eggs to Trent and this man in the shoe store always wanted fresh eggs, and what he'd do is open the eggs and then he'd take the yoke and stick it in his mouth. It was like watching an entertainer, so we always wanted to go see (laughter) him open them up right away and eat them, the fresher the better, stick the yoke in his mouth (laughter), so it was a very interesting life. You never knew what was around the corner, what you're going to learn.

MP: When Pearl Harbor happened –

MJM: Oh, goodness.

MP: How did life change for you?

MJM: When Pearl Harbor happened, I remember that day. It changed my life forever. [00:38:00] Changed my brother's life forever because people looked at you differently. My father was obviously Japanese, and they knew he was Japanese by the name and you know, they were strange to begin with because they were immigrants, and they had these mixed race, then the propaganda said “Hate the Germans. Hate the Japanese.” and so on. So when they saw my father walk down the street, everyone walked to the other side. I remember my mother lived through the second – First World War, and during the First World War, people shunned her family. Her last name was Schwank. She was obviously German. So she knew what was going to happen to her children, so she'd go to these German people and say, “Remember what it was like in the First World War?” [00:39:00] and the grandparents would say “Yes, but we don't have any power over our children to tell them how it was for us and to get their children off our – not beating up your children.” So for me, it changed my life. Not only were we looked at differently, we were treated differently. We were shunned and we were beat up. I was beaten up. And my fa – my brother was beaten up. But many times when people would want to come to me, he would go “yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah” and then they'd go chase him. So when you went ice skating, they'd take their sleds and throw them across so you'd fall over. One time, they got a BB gun and there's this tall wall around the Quaker meeting house, and they were playing we were the enemy. So they all the boys were standing there, and my brother and I were against the wall, and they shot [00:40:00] my brother in the neck and he screamed like you couldn't believe. Everybody ran away. Because in the movies, it doesn't happen that way. And, you know, it was a constant. When we came out of school, we couldn't find our bicycles. Where were our bicycles? They were gone. Somebody had taken them. And later on, that afternoon, this teacher comes to the house. She was a second grade teacher named Miss Patterson, she said, “I am so sorry. I ran over your bicycles. Somebody put them under my car and I didn't know they were there and I ran over them.” She didn't know we were looking for the bicycles. On the other hand, somebody must have told her those bicycles were ours that she ran over. Now, my – in our family, it didn't help that my brother was a challenging boy. He was [00:41:00] in – on probation when he was ten years old. He has this began when he was little. I remember standing, I

must have been three at the time, because I was standing in front of the – with my mother, and her skirt was here, and my brother was on the other side, and there was this lady with a very red face screaming at my mother, and that was a very unusual, scary thing. And apparently, she said, this was unusual for her too because the woman next door planted some plants and our cats had urinated on the plants. And she was very angry and explaining how she wants our cats away from her plants and my brother speaks up in his four year old voice, “They have to urinate someplace don't they?” and it was not going to help– she was even more furious because she wasn't going to talk to this [00:42:00] child. Well, something else. We moved to Fallsington, and there was a neighbor. His garbage can was knocked over and he said, “I'm going to poison your cats.” Well, what do you know? The next day in this childish handwriting it said, “If you poison the cats, your rear end will be peppered in buck shot.” Signed the cat lovers. So who do you think has to go before the justice of the peace and put on probation? But you know, justice was a very important thing in our household, and going back to that same townspeople. It was a terrible life. For instance, we were raising meat because during the Second World War, meat was very dear, so we raised chickens and squabs. Squabs are baby pigeons before they fly. [00:43:00] And they're not homing pigeons so they have no breast at all, but these have a bigger breast. So one day, we came home and we found all the pigeons in our pigeon house were dead or half dead or dying and all the eggs out of the pigeon's nest were thrown on the floor and cracked and broken, and some of the pigeons were about to be born and you could see a perfect bird inside each egg, and the egg shell was on either side, but it was all dead bodies. And we had to kill off the ones that were dying. And there was a note left that we were the enemy and we were using homing pigeons and they were going to be stopped by this – by these all-American people. So yes, so

MP: So it was a tough period.

MJM: It was. Yes. [00:44:00]

MP: When did you go to high school because I think things changed a little for you a little when you got to high school?

MJM: I went to high school in 1948. And it was a Quaker high school called George School. The Quakers had allowed us to go to Quaker camp, and that was fun because we weren't – we were like ordinary people there, and that's when we realized the Quakers were kind to us. We got a scholarship to go to Quaker camp called Camp Onus and we got into the Quaker school called George School, you

had to take a test, so mother took us to make sure we were smart enough, she took us to the University of Pennsylvania and we were a case study so that we would find out how bright we were. So she said yes. And they got to the IQ test, and I remember I said something and the class laughed, but I know [00:45:00] that my mother was the kind of person that can find resources when need be and was a very good talker, so I remember going on the bus to Philadelphia and going and being tested with all these funny blocks and it wasn't just paper and pencil then. And then they ask you these questions. Well, all right, so we go to George School which is a Quaker school, and we – it's a social action training school. Most of the people there were moneyed. And we weren't. But we all had good manners and the people were kind there, and I felt for the first time in my life what it was – what I was missing all those years that I was – we were put upon, but it changed my life forever. And I'm – it's not like – we were in the East Coast during the entire time, [00:46:00] and although I had a mother and a father, my father had to register every January. He could not go more than ten miles away. We had no pictures of us during the war because the FBI took away our camera. We had to use an AM radio because FM wasn't there yet but it was called an international line, we couldn't have that kind of radio, so it was a different – we were living in a different world. And it was a lot of fear at that time like it is today.

MP: Right, you mentioned to me earlier that your father was taken and questioned by the FBI, then they came and went through all the books in your house.

MJM: Oh, yes, and wanted to know what each one was without – you know, to be a suspicious character when you go across the same [00:47:00] bridge every single day and not allowed to call home and they came to the house and they just were looking around to see what it is. Well, what's interesting about that when you reflect on it? You know, the Japanese Americans were put in relocation centers and when questioned it was only one person, General DeWitt, he wasn't a general, he was lieutenant colonel something DeWitt, the presidio and it's coming up to I think the 70<sup>th</sup> year or something of it, and I have what he said that there were no good Japanese. And there are such no good Japanese. And he was questioned by the FBI. He said, “Why is it in England that they know who the Germans are, who are the spies? Couldn't you do the same thing with the Japanese?” “Oh no, all Japanese are spies.” and you see, that was the anti-Asian [00:48:00] attitude from the West Coast, whereas the logic of if the English can figure out who are the spies that are German, why couldn't you do it over here, but there was so much anti-Japanese fear and what's also interesting is that in 1906, the same year as the earthquake, there was a Japanese war ship in the San Francisco Bay. Why was it here? Because in order, when America asked to send over their farmers to come to California because they knew they could eek out

good growth in Japan to come here, so they sent all these Japanese farmers here and they had an agreement that if they went to public school, they would not be put in the Chinese schools, which is very deficient, they would go to school with the whites. So in 1906 there had been a complaint that all the Japanese were being [00:49:00] sent to the Chinese schools so the President of the United States in 1906, I don't know who it was, called the school board of San Francisco and they went to Washington DC on the train and came back they had to rescind that so that the warship would go away.

MP: So what made you decide to study at Brown? You were going to the Quaker school for high school and what about Pembroke? How did you find out about it?

MJM: I had a boyfriend at George School and his sister was in Pembroke and she decided that she knew that I was good at mathematics, and they had a good engineering school, so she said, "Herman, why don't you bring Mary Jane up and come over for the weekend?" So wouldn't you if you're a teenager and want to go away and look at colleges that way? So we drove up to Pembroke [00:50:00] and her boyfriend put Herman up and she put me up and took a tour of Pembroke and I really, you know, through her eyes, she was an art major and she still does art in Vermont. It's just was a really welcoming place and the size was very good. In Philadelphia is so many people, it didn't have a – it was a small feel, a smaller campus and I liked that. But you know, with her recommendation, that is why I applied, and I applied and people at George School said "Are you sure you really want to go there? You think you can get in?" And I didn't know that it was hard to get in, so I thought I might as well try. But I didn't know about Ivy League schools because my parents were always trying to figure out [00:51:00] the American way, and when I got to Brown Pembroke, I was in a co-op dorm and the food they ate were pigs in blankets. You know what pigs in blankets to me are? Cabbage rolls, like Polish cabbage rolls. Well, pigs in blankets are hot dog with cheese inside with bacon wrapped around it. I mean, there were – I had a whole new food learning or kind of education that I didn't know what were American food was.

MP: So did you have any particular expectations before you arrived?

MJM: I was thrilled to be going to college and know which college I was going to. I was very impressed with Pembroke and I knew I had one person already there who would welcome me so, you know, it was a very comfortable fit to me. [00:52:00] But I was really shocked when I got there that this lady asked me if I were American. I said I was born in Pittsburgh and I tried to figure out where she –

what makes an American? And it was very strange.

MP: That's the dean, right?

MJM: The dean. Dean Horton of Pembroke. Had a special invitation, I had to go see her to figure out to figure out am I American? It's like un-American activity. I didn't know what it was. I just didn't understand why I was being questioned and nobody else was since I was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. And I really liked, I had been trained in mechanical drawings. I had a chemistry teacher who was the first black teacher at George School, didn't know how to teach high school, so he taught it on a college level so by the time I got to Brown, the chemistry was easy. Mechanical drawing, [00:53:00] the drawings were easy. The math was easy. Everything was easy and I had a nice feel and was very enthusiastic about engineering because the people were nice and the department of engineering was very nice to me. They wanted to make sure I was comfortable with the 200 male young men in my engineering classes because you were, engineering classes for freshmen were all 200 here, same 200 there, but you know, if you're in mechanical drawing or whatever they're teaching you, you get into small groups with graduate teachers because they can't teach it in big groups.

MP: Now you – were the first women engineering student?

MJM: Yes, but you know, that's why they were so kind to me I figured out. To have some man in the engineering department make sure [00:54:00] that no hanky panky or discomfort or whatever he thought might happen, but after being through the second world war, I mean, I was sort of psyched up and prepared, and I wasn't afraid, you know, because of all the things I had gone through. But I thought it was really considerate of the engineering department to worry about this young Pembroker, because I never had any Pembrokers and somebody who – well they just never had any Pembrokers and I just didn't know how to handle it, so they assigned me Dr. Van Metre I think his name was. Nice Swiss, soft spoken man. And I always thought, you know, when the sexual harassment came out, I thought “Oh, Brown was really ahead of its time with that.” First, allowing me, Pembroker, because they recently opened up all [00:55:00] their classes to Pembrokers and to allow me to go into engineering.

MP: Now did you stick with engineering?

MJM: I had hoped to, but my father being an engineer encouraged me to go and see what jobs were

available among the different engineering organizations. Roebing was there and I went to see them during the summer and I said, “You know, I'm studying engineering and I'm wondering what jobs do you have for interns during the summer or what do you have for me to get a job here? What would I have to do to prepare myself?” They looked at me. They couldn't believe it and they didn't know what to say other than where would you go to the bathroom? And [00:56:00] how can we guarantee your safety? I mean, it was just a shock to the employers that a woman might consider that, so I took myself in hand and decided to change my major to a math major which I graduated in. Took my comprehensive exams in.

MP: You had a unique living situation. You told me that you spent the first three years in Bates House and then moved into Andrews later, and I want to – I have a question about that later, but could you describe what Bates House was and where it was located and how it was set up?

MJM: Bates House was, there was Sharp House on one side and as you go towards campus the center of the campus [00:57:00] at Pembroke, you go through the backyard of Bates House.

MP: I thought you said it was on Olive Street?

MJM: It was on Olive Street, but the back door of Sharp House was on Olive, but then the front is on Olive and you go through, you know the block that way and so we never had to leave our house to go to meals, so whereas everybody else had to go from whatever dorm they were in and to there, so we were a self-contained group. We bought our own groceries. We planned our meals. And we cleaned the house, and we had a discount so that was part of my scholarship to Pembroke. I had a foreign speed whiteman scholarship and I have this Bates House which was – had been going on for some time. They had three seating areas, three freshmen, and you know some sophomores and juniors, but [00:58:00] it was a wonderful way to have cross grade level conversation and learn what's happening and also there was a mix of people, some were cotillion types, and very upper class and then there were some of us like me were from the farm. So I learned a lot from them about the social society there. It was very surprising coming from a Quaker school where reflected glory was very frowned upon or even consideration of it and there are – I met so many people there, or maybe it was the style when I was at Pembroke, I just didn't realize there was such a difference that people, it's who you know that counts. And saying what's who and what you have, [00:59:00] I didn't realize that having an Ivy League education is like putting on your medals. And it wasn't important to me at all, but it's important to the



East Coast, so it was kind of a shock. I think that's one of the things I like about California. It's who you are that counts not who your relatives are. It's more like the American dream, the self-made man, not your DAR.

MP: So after you left Bates House when you were studying for your –

MJM: Oh, my comprehensive exams?

MP: Your comprehensive exam, which is what you had to take in order to graduate, you said you moved into Andrews and you mentioned, you said that was a Jewish dorm, could you just –

MJM: No, there were different halls in Andrews, but my [01:00:00] hall was all Jewish except me, and at that particular time, I was dating somebody who was Jewish and he was in the Tower Club and I said, “Why are you in the Tower Club off campus?” Well, because there were no Jewish fraternities. However I met people from Brown who were in earlier years and they were able to go into the regular fraternities, and they weren't excluded, so I don't know how it went from forcing no Jews in the fraternities in my – in 1950s, but I guess everything became more conservative during the 1950s.

MP: What about diversity?

MJM: Oh (laughs) diversity at Pembroke and Brown were just beginning. I mean, just the finger pointing, there was one black gal [01:01:00] at Pembroke and she was in my class and I was the other non-white, and at Brown there was a very light skinned black named Gus White. He became a doctor and he's very active at Brown, but you wouldn't have one colored person per year, you would one colored person maybe for four years. So I mean there were very very few there, so I didn't feel there were so many other people there. Only in dating did you feel there may be some problem of your background.

MP: So did you experience some racism yourself?

MJM: I did. I went out with some nice young man and they would even tell you I can't take you home because my parents wouldn't accept you. Which [01:02:00] I found out that it's not just the white race that discriminates. It's other groups, like I was going and I was supposed to be engaged to Sandy

Hollinder a Jewish graduate of Brown, he went to Columbia. He was two years ahead of me and his – I come back in 1956 from going to my brother's graduation at Reed college and I come back he said, “I can't marry you. My parents won't let me. You're not Jewish enough.” Well, I was never Jewish, but the thing that happened to him, his parents never said to him, “We expect you to marry a Jew.” so people sometimes the children are further ahead in their openness than their parents.

MP: So [01:03:00] you mentioned that this was the 50s and it was during the McCarthy period and the witch hunt and so on. How did the social and political issues in the environment shape your college years?

MJM: It was interesting, it didn't because I took a test and I didn't know what was happening in the news. My news was what was happening on campus. Everything was so new to me I couldn't believe it, but let me tell ya, when I got out, after I finished and graduated, graduating from college and I started graduate school, I became very involved in politics, but while I was there I had my nose to the grindstone because you know I'm trying to figure out what I want to do with life and my senior year, you know, I can't become an engineer, [01:04:00] then what am I going to do? So my mother found a program that was experimental for teach – for people in science and mathematics. Sputnik had just gone up. For people in science and math, it was a special educational training program for teachers funded by Ford Foundation. So that was my first grant, and it was the greatest thing because that's why I think I was an effective administrator in schools because I never came through a school of education. I always had all these other ways of looking at and I didn't have the conformity model that education to me seems to have in it, and educators do not like to take very many risks and do things differently.  
[01:05:00]

MP: So before we move on, because I know you've done many other interesting things with your life, are there any other comments you want to make about your Pembroke experience? About the rules and regulations? The events and traditions? The –

MJM: Oh yes. First of all. There are three things I want to say. One, I would like to talk about the athletics. In that period it was very conservative, and although I played hockey in high school, when we got up to play hockey for Pembroke, so many of the girls' schools were dropping out of doing competitive sports because it was unladylike.

MP: This was field hockey?

MJM: Field hockey, yes. Or any sport at all. So it was like sports program used to exist at Pembroke were now disappearing [01:06:00] because suddenly it's unladylike, so to me, I was very surprised. They had one thing that I thought was wonderful and I have some documents I'll give you, it's about father daughter night. The father daughter weekend was the most amazing thing that changed my life. Can you imagine you have an oriental father who is very undemonstrative? I think all the fathers at that time, or most of the fathers were like, had to be cool to their daughters. Well, I thought my father, you know, thought nothing you know, was distant. Well, he has a cold, he comes up on the train. He's there. He talks to – I complained to him about one of my college professors, [01:07:00] not really being quite a good teacher and I didn't get a good grade, but I felt that I don't know what he thought as a teacher, but he was not present. My father, during the reception, talks to him. He says, “You know my daughter felt that she couldn't learn very well in your class for some reason? What do you think happened?” and he said, “Well, you know, I didn't really want to teach the course and –“ he told my father he didn't really want to teach the course, and “so I guess I didn't put my best self in it, but they made me do it, and so I'm really sorry it went badly.” And so the father daughter day was very good because it made my father realize – made me realize I had a loving father, which and beforehand it was distant. He talked to all the other fathers like they were his good buddies, [01:08:00] but all the fathers were there. Some of them were more distant to their children because he worked with us when we were working on the farm, whereas the relationship between the other – so it was a really wonderful weekend that we went to the football game and then there was a dance and oh my goodness, it was I don't know if they ever had one again, but it was pretty amazing, and I don't know who thought up of it, but seeing your father talk with other fathers and other daughters was eye opening.

And what's the other thing is Bates House, I wanted to tell you Bates House, we had something really unique. It was so caring for everybody. [01:09:00] So working together that when I got to Andrews, it was so distant and to me college was a warm place that people would pick up things for you like, “Oh, so and so we're having a meeting at the house meeting and you need to go pick up the butter.” Somebody says, “Oh, I'll be out that way. I'll do that.” Whatever it is, it was the most cooperative dorm that set so well for me and that's what I think of of Pembroke is the cooperative dorm.

MP: And you took responsibility too for Bates House too?

MJM: Well, I was elected twice as president and that was very interesting, but you know, it was a very natural thing for me to do because I had been organizing things and cooking before and clean up and I had been in this Quaker camp and I had been in this Baha'i [01:10:00] camp and you know, I love, even to this day, I like to get up and work and see the things change with your own hands.

MP: So did you have specific expectations about what your future would look like after college regarding work, family.

MJM: Oh, I did. I expected that I would go into a company and have a job working in some field of engineering. Wrong. It really hurt my feelings, and even, what am I going to do with my math? What am I going to do with my math? So I was bemoaning the fact, what can you be with actuarial? Ugh. Stuck with statistics. Ugh. So my mother said, "Why don't you join this Ford Foundation program in Philadelphia and be trained? It's only for scientists and only for [01:11:00] mathematicians." No without any education degrees and you get education courses, Brown had no education department at that time. So my mother and I signed up for this course. My mother was turned down because she was too old. So she went on after she was turned down, her feelings were hurt, she picked herself up, and she eventually became a teacher of special education for at that time, the word is "trainable retarded." The mind of a four year old when you are between the ages of 14 and 21, but there was no credential so she went to the state house and she said "You're asking me to get a high school credential to be able to teach these students with the four year old mind. I don't think that's quite what you need. You need something that's special [01:12:00] because I deal with their parents all the time, preparing them, and I teach them household skills, how to set the table, how to use the dustpan and brush, how to button their clothes. I'm teaching one student and it's been two years teaching him how to tie his shoelace. We have this little story, but you're going to have to change it." At the end of the time, she got her high school credential, the state had changed to have a special education credential, but she worked for 20 years as a special education teacher.

MP: And how about you?

MJM: So since she was turned down on that, I went to the program and I decided, yes, I'll give teaching a try. So I left for Boston. I didn't finish the program in Philadelphia because I found a man who I thought I was going to marry, who I did marry, [01:13:00] and he was at Harvard. And so I went to Boston University and married him. We lived up in Boston. Copley Square and I taught in Newton,

Massachusetts because I almost dropped out, I went education courses were so stupid to me. I had never had any experience with this Ford Foundation program that treated me like this and the material was so inconsequential or not very challenging, that if I were a student, I would be bored to death. So I told my – I went to Boston because that's where the head of the teachers of mathematics were, the chair, I said, you know, this is the first time I've gone to education courses and I need to drop out but I wanted to tell you I came here because you are the – he said, “You know, don't drop out of teaching yet. [01:14:00] I want you to give yourself a chance, so I am going to suggest you take one semester and teach in Brookline, Massachusetts where they have an opening and it's in eighth grade. Do you think you'd be interested in that?” And I said, “Well, if I'm going to be teaching there, what am I going to do with my course?” He said, “This will be like your internship.” Okay. So I take the job. They don't tell me the situation. It's in the bottom of the basket school, this kid was killed in the school, and the teacher whose room he was killed in was – became the vice principal of the school. I've never seen something so inappropriate in my life, so one day I come to class and nobody is there but this girl that's mentally challenged [01:15:00] and emotionally disturbed. She was the only one in class. And everybody had gone. Where had everybody gone? They had gone to the train to see him off taken to jail, their classmate. Okay.

And so in the same school they would call me up, they had one textbook in biology or science eighth grade science I was supposed to teach in, and they had children, two children to a table and one book per table, so they were supposed to share. But I had three, I had to teach three of these courses, three eighth grade sessions of it. How can you give homework when you can't take the book home? You can't look at the pages by yourself because you had to share it with somebody. It was not teaching. It was babysitting. And the next, and the one of the girls that I had in the class, her mother was a prostitute. So she was the next door neighbor was a [01:16:00] young teacher who was just starting out his, I don't know what you call – internship? What do you call it? Anyway, he was a beginning teacher and he was next door. I said, are you ready? And he went home back and forth to from Boston to Brookline with me and we were in this carpool and the – this gal was up to him, and he says, “Get away from me. Get away from me.” And she was trying to proposition him. She would bring Coke to school as her breakfast. It was the most unusual thing I have ever seen in my life. And I said, “Wow, with this challenge, I think I'll go for education.” And that's how I got to become a teacher, because this man put me in this school that was so challenging.

MP: So you have done a lot since then.

MJM: (laughs) I'll say so!

MP: You're an administrator. You're in Washington. [01:17:00] What – Give us a couple highlights, I know you can't talk about –

MJM: In my education?

MP: Everything. In your job career.

MJM: In my job career, women in administration are very few, and frequently it's a political appointment. And it's who you know that counts, and you know, I came in to San Francisco in 1963. It was booming – 109,000 students. It was exciting. There was lots of money. To be in the schools you just go and say I'd like so many red pencils on all these papers, whatever you wanted –

MP: Were you still a teacher at that point?

MJM: That's when I was a teacher in San Francisco. It was all there. It was wonderful. So, I –

MP: And you were teaching math?

MJM: I was teaching math, yes, at Woodrow Wilson High School. And [01:18:00] it was a brand new school that opened up and it was perfect for me because they had this being open it was never, there was no tradition there. But what did they do? They didn't start with ninth grade. No. They started with ninth, tenth, and eleventh graders. Now the tenth and eleventh graders were already at schools. One was in Mission and the other is at Balboa, and they're competitors. So you put them in the same school, not a good idea. So we had a lot of tension in that school. And this is a part of town that is in the south eastern part, and you could smell the slaughterhouses when the wind blew on the warm days. So one of the part of the social worker there made us walk around to see where the students came from. [01:19:00] That was the best thing that ever happened to a new school to see what the environment was. What is Hunters Point? Who knows Hunters Point? What is Bayview? What is the life like near Balboa and Portal and so on? All these different sections, and we were a new faculty. We weren't congealed. We had so many problems we had to stop school and have a speakout which meant the gang members were part of the leadership team, which was a new thought. And it went, it changed the whole

tone of school, so I was with people who had fresh ideas and were willing to take that step, but I don't see new fresh ideas frequently, so that's why in education, Title 1 came in. Lyndon Johnson came in and he believed that the money should go to the poorest of the poor because they don't have [01:20:00] middle class values, so the money from the education, Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1964 brought millions of dollars, I think they are 14 billion now, but they have been going on since '64, so that's a long time. And they have many purposes, but Title 1 is for reading and math and Lyndon Johnson was really committed to the great society and education was a key part of it, so he – Title 1 is for the compensatory education, which meant reading and math and that time it also included social workers and truant officers and people to really help the students, and it went for, if you lived in an area that was poor, [01:21:00] the money followed you, so if you went to a private school, the Title 1 money would follow you. So I was involved with that. All of a sudden, it had to be evaluated. Who – if all this money comes in that never was there before 1964 and you have to evaluate it, so I asked so many questions about this program, they said, “All right. You're going to be evaluator for this program.” Well, so I had to do a quick study on evaluation and became an evaluator, so that's why I went to NYU. Everybody in the United States had to have an evaluator for these federal programs. You get federal money, there had to be so that's how I went to NYU, and I got training in evaluation, which included, it was not just forced choice, multiple choice, it was [01:22:00] semantic differentials, it was just council. The great city schools were involved with this. It was fascinating and times were changing and you met other people with other different points of view, not just in your own district, which was, I don't think a usual thing, but under the great – but under Lyndon Johnson, he expected so much all at once, it was amazing.

Then there was Title 3 – two, three – Title 4 was civil rights. There are so many different titles in there and you see this in Indian education schools as well as the ghetto. At the end of my life in the school district, I worked in a Catholic school that was Title 1 and because I knew the law so well, they [01:23:00] had students that were coming from other school districts and so I charged them for their Title 1 students that were there, and nobody had ever heard of that. Nobody's ever done it before. But if you know what the legislation says, you can go and you can start your own program, so I was very fortunate in starting my own program. So Title 1 got me into evaluation.

Then we had computers come in, and they decided computers and math go together so I went for math training and FORTRAN four how dull can that be? And you know they had these paper cards and we were supposed to program them to do this and we're supposed to teach that, and I'm thinking “I don't think that students are going to be really interested in ones and twos and doing all this programming, and it was not – FORTRAN four was not a good language [01:24:00] to start us in, and

think how far it's come now, but at least they tried it out.

MP: So did you stay an administrator through teaching and an administration that was pretty much your career from a work perspective? And what challenges did you face as a woman during those?

MJM: Remember I got into administration. Evaluation is not considered administration, just another department in the school district, but administration is when you have power over programs. So there was a court ordered desegregation in San Francisco called the Consent Decree and that meant that in San Francisco, we had pockets that were [01:25:00] ethnically Chinese, ethnically black, ethnically Spanish, and ethnically white, so under the court order every child in grade kindergarten through sixth grade had to be in an integrated school where there were no more than 40 percent of one kind.

MP: What year was that order?

MJM: 1971, I think. And so I had this program somebody wanted to become assistant principal. Assistant superintendent was a black man and because he didn't get the job he wanted, he quit. Who are we going to get to do that? Well, if we get so and so, they'll be friends with so and so. I was the neutral one. I wasn't on anybody's control list, [01:26:00] so I got the job and that's when I started opening up different programs.

So I had the first male secretary. And everybody came to look at him as if he were like in a zoo because secretaries aren't allowed to be men, and he could type 60 words a minute. He was just pretty amazing, but in a desegregation program he was, he needed a lot of training because he was from Minneapolis. He would say things, "I have to take my laundry to the Chinaman." Don, how many Chinese people do you know in Minneapolis? I never saw any. Why do you say that? Everybody says it. I said, that's offensive here so you have to cut it out of your vocabulary. And he just came up with this nickel or something until the Indian screams or something, [01:27:00] a buffalo nickel 'til the Indians something or other or he talks about Jewing people down, so I had to, you know, these, you don't know that these words are – Minneapolis at that time was very white. I taught in Minneapolis for a whole year and I was absolutely shocked how racist it was. The Native Americans were treated terribly and the immigrants who came here were having children. They were born in America and the people at this high school, Edison High School, treated them very differently, but then again, think, this is 1960 something, I couldn't even get a bottle of soy sauce in Minneapolis. Now it's so wonderfully a refugee city with Eritreans and Cambodians and has an international store, [01:28:03] so I mean



looking at how times change and how attitudes towards women has changed because being a woman I was in charge of this desegregation project, but the evaluation head would not put my name on it because I was a woman. And he wouldn't tell me or talk to me about what their findings were, so there was a woman that was on the team, Dr. Noelle Crinkle and she and I used to go in the ladies room so we could talk. Well it reminded me of what all these people were talking about all the time with these golfing buddies and worked in, but it was it was amazing how controlling it is. They just could not – he could not accept a woman to evaluate him too. [01:29:00] He had been a principal and I was only a programmer. So there were a lot of things in public education, but Vernon Jordan, does that name ring a bell to you?

MP: Yes.

MJM: Who – how would you characterize him? He was a civil rights –

MP: More middle of the road.

MJM: Yes, but he had an in with Washington DC and they were able to listen to him. And he said the government in Washington is too white and not enough women. So let's make this fellows program. So I had a program officer in Washington from San Francisco, even though Washington DC is now the only place you have program officers because they don't have any regional government officers anymore, so he suggested that I apply for a job [01:30:00] in the government, and this program was for women and minorities. And they'd pick ten a year, so I applied for it. I got it. And government ratings are, I don't know how they're calculated, I got a senior level at GS 14. Government service 14 which is really administrative. Most of the people on the program were 11s and 12s. And GS 11 and GS 12 and I had a wonderful experience in Washington because my first assignment was with a man. I went in there and said, "I'm your HEW fellow and you're going to be my mentor." and after two weeks he said, "I can't have you. I can't speak in front of women." So I had [01:31:00] to find another mentor. So I found John Rodriguez and he was from California and not from Kansas City. He felt as a black man, he could only talk a certain way in front of women. He had difficulty, but – so you can be of a certain color, but you can't speak in front of women, so it was strange and it was at a time when the people who handled the finances of a department would jump into bed with whoever. It was the most shocking time in Washington and Washington was a place that you couldn't believe –

MP: What year was this?

MJM: 1973 to '76. I came in. The women's rights act was passed in '72, Title 9. I was on – I helped volunteer – they were inundated with work, had too small an office, so I would volunteer [01:32:00] there all the time. It was so exciting being part of this great society. Some of the people got their Title 1 money and they put in gold plated fixtures in their bathrooms. They got airplanes with it. They had, they didn't know what supplement not supplant is. They didn't know that it was targeted money, and I had such a wonderful time working with the lawyers for civil rights on when they would find these and then the department of education said, “Wow, looks like you're going to have to pay that money back.” But the lawyers didn't say it, the Department of Education, so I'm writing all these letters to them saying that we've investigated and this is what's happened, but you can't believe how many things were misused. And how many – there was a fund for the improvement [01:33:00] of secondary education. They had imaginative grants coming in and I'd read all these grants, but I should tell you I was a grant [01:33:09]

Track 2

MJM: [00:00:00] writer for the school district because when you are in – you ask for federal money you have to know how to read what the givers want to give for and the askers want to get and try to blend the two. So I was able to bring 24 million dollars into the San Francisco public schools through grant writing for desegregation and civil rights and it was such a happy time for me working with schools and saying, you would like to do this? What can you do? And some of the things they wanted to do were simple like they had gotten rid of all the shop classes and the music classes. Now they have the instruments there, they have the stage, why don't we fix up the shop classes and make some dance floors, put in some mirrors, okay, the government will pay for that. School districts don't have that kind of money, but people will come into the [00:01:00] – the students who come for the arts, that come for the theater, so that's what we develop these special purpose schools by working with the schools themselves writing a grant for them, and we got the buy in before they got the money, so it was improving the schools, so that's when I say I'm an administrator, but not your typical administrator. And the other thing I put in because I'm an evaluator, I put in focus groups. Nobody as an evaluator puts in focus groups, but I can tell you some of the examples of what a focus group will do. We gave – I was an evaluator for a program for ear marks, you know, ear marks are the money they put on something that comes out of Washington, so the ear mark was to put a computer in every child's hand. [00:02:00]

So one in New Haven was in a school and we're doing a review. In New Haven, they put all the non-English speaking and all the special ed. in the same school. Well, that was kind of a shock in New Haven, but we went around, we said "What do you think of this? How does this affect you?" and we also had parent evaluations, teacher and student. Well, in here the parents said, raised their hand, said "You know, my student is in special ed. My child is in special ed. and if it's the computer day they get the computer to have use of, they will not be sick even though they're sick. They have to go. They love the computer. And you know what, I have to tell you, I love the computer too. [00:03:00] What's not talked about is my son brings home this, "Mom, look what I did! Isn't it terrific?" And I said, "Of course! It's wonderful! What does it say? Then he got the computer and I don't have to say that anymore and I can't believe my son is much brighter than I thought. I didn't know he could think that way because they have spell check and the letters are all nicely formed and so on. He doesn't have to do it again," so parents said, "this is just perfect for my son." Now go to the teachers who have their self-contained classroom and they said, "This is the first time we've ever had a bulletin board outside our room. Because in our, for our special education students, we have to take pictures and insert them in the text, so [00:04:00] the text they don't have to write again, they can spend their time putting it together and so we have wonderful bulletin boards that we never had before." And one of the young people in our classes is so good with the camera, he has been named the photographer for the school newspaper. Now how would you have lined that by forced choice kinds of things, so I was really thrilled with the kinds of learning we got for the evaluation. It was very needy.

MP: Yes. I can imagine. Sounds great. Well thank you for –

MJM: You know, when you get in this evaluation, you know, evaluation is one part of my life, but so is budget planning, and I was in the budget planning department, but you need to have that to write million dollar grants.

MP: Right. Well you certainly have done a lot in all of those areas. Let's turn to your volunteer work. I know that [00:05:00] you have been probably I would imagine informed by your background very active in intercultural relationships. And I know that perhaps you could talk a little about Servas, and some of your other international, cultural –

MJM: Oh, that's my passion and it's something that you can do even in old age. As you know, being of mixed race, you are very respectful of different cultures. During my time as a child, it falls into, it was

1938 to about 1954, during that time we had so many different people living in our house that I developed an appreciation [00:06:00] for people of various backgrounds. Why did we have so many people living in our house? Because nobody would rent to them. They were people of color, so who would rent? There was Herbert Tucker Tommy, he was right out of the relocation center. Who would have a Jap rent a room to them? So he stayed with us until the war was over because nobody would rent to them. How about Kimani Wyaki? He was from Kenya, he was a prince from Kenya. He was one of 24 children of his father and he was so black he was purple blood. Do you know people that have that blood? Well, that's what he is. He had a very high forehead which is typical of the Kenyan people and he was blue blood. Well, nobody in Trenton area would rent to him, so he [00:07:00] lived with us. And at that time too, people, when you get cancer, how are you going to get taken care of? So we had a lady next door who was a housekeeper got cancer, so my mother took care of her until she died. I mean, there, the times have changed. You have these assisted living, at that time, there was no assisted anything. And then, let's see, who else lived with us? Oh, the father of one of the his daughters was always sexually abusing his daughters so my mother said they have to come and live with us until they were 17 came until she was 18, until she could get married and whatever she is going to get a job, so we were always collecting people, and I found them fascinating. So, I'm [00:08:00] traveling around the world. I went around the world. Then I'm 1970 – 67 – and 68 for a year, and before that being a teacher, I could go to Europe, you know, during the summer. So we'd go. And one time I went to Denmark and we got on the train and it said, “Meet the Danes” Meet the Danes? You would take any stranger on the train and meet the Danes? So we said, let's try it out. So we tried it out. Meet the Danes, we got somebody and they said okay, they'll pick you up at your hotel and they did, and they picked me up at the hotel – picked us up at the hotel, I was married at that time to Fernandus, and we went over to their house, and it was just like the shows of Danish furniture. And then they had Danish dishes and those [00:09:00] special Danish silverware, and we had a wonderful evening talking. And we talked about their taxes, 50 percent of their taxes. “You spent that high on your taxes?” “Yes, we have to because we have to take care of – everybody's taken care of whether it's for education, for old age, for handicapped, it's wonderful don't you think?” I said “that would be a hard sell in the United States.” So we had quite and educational orientation to another country. And so I was looking for, do you have anything like the meet the Danes program? So as we travelled around the world, we went to India, “Do you have a meet the Danes program?” The tourist agency said, no but I'm the head of transportation for a wedding, I'll ask the groom if you could come. And so they didn't tell us it's three days, [00:10:00] and there is this going through town and the whole streets are roped off or anything with thousands of people and like they had white table cloths and the food was put out and within 15 minutes, it was a mess. The chicken

bones were on the floor under the thing, it was like everybody rushes in. It was crazy, but I learned different styles of living and I said I want more of this, so a cousin from Austria was visiting was driving around the United States, there were six in the car. Two of them came here and I said, “Where are the other people?” “Oh, they're visiting other families.” “How did they know them?” “Servas.” “Servas? How can they know them?” “Oh this is this organization that hosts people for a good conversation, [00:11:00] that's but you have to be interviewed for it. So what these did, these six, two two two, the same city, they came back decided what they found out and they decided what America is about in San Francisco these three different visits sharing what they think it is, so I always ask my guests when they are travelling, “What has surprised you about America?” Which is, you know, everybody has a different answer and one of the interesting ones was that American adoption is very easy. I said how did you come to that conclusion? Well, almost all Servas families that we – several of the Servas families we have stayed with have adopted children. I said, “Do you think it might be the fact that they open their houses to other visitors might be the kind of person and it's not just it's easy, [00:12:00] because it's not easy.” But it's a way of learning what surprises them and helping correct it. Now I host for the UC Berkeley, and they have an international house and it was the second one in the United States, it was set up in the 1920s. It has the same mission statement with Servas and people from San Francisco used to take the boat over and they used to, it was like a tourist attraction. Can you imagine having foreigners living with Americans? Can you imagine men and women living in the same international house in the 1920s? So it's been going on a long time and they sometimes want [00:13:00] to have American hosts so one evening, I had Azerbaijan, Mongolia, and China and the Mongolian one was the younger of the three and he says “you know I am so thrilled to be able to come to an American household because I wanted to – I have some questions. I studied so hard before I came over here. I know where the red states are. I knew where the blue states are. I can't seem to find the United States of America.” What does that tell you about our image in the world?

MP: So how long have you been doing the Servas hosting and staying?

MJM: Well I've done it since 1977, [00:14:00] and I am a host, a traveler, an interviewer, I was on the board, the board president three times, and I was vice president of Servas International, and the chair of the development committee which means that we work with any country that has less than 10, is not a voting member, and that means that, oh my goodness, our challenge is how to get money from one place to another. People don't know that it's a problem. We had a member on the executive committee of Servas of Servas International and we wanted to send him some money in Sri Lanka. PayPal is there,

that's what it says, so I call PayPal and said we want to send some money and he said "I'm sorry, we don't send money, we only receive money." So money from Sri Lanka can come to the United States, but the United States can't send money to Sri Lanka. [00:15:00] What kind of craziness is that? It's going the wrong way, so it's hard to send money places. You have to take a personal trip and carry the money on your body in so many countries of the world and people don't realize it.

MP: So I think we're coming to the end of the time.

MJM: Yes.

MP: Is there anything else that you would like to comment on?

MJM: Well I would like to give these things, I went down into my basement, would be happy to give these things to your archives, which are a little beanie from when we were at Pembroke. The year book of faces, but it's been defaced by my brother and you can see how you have gone from paper products to now the [00:16:00] electronic form. We've had so many changes at Pembroke it no longer – it doesn't even exist anymore. And it was a time when you were I think Pembroke was for safety, a woman's group, but then it emerged and it was men and women so I think there are so many changes that are for the better that I would like to commend Pembroke and Brown University for. I still say you're the smaller university size, not 120,000 or something like that, but I really like the smaller more intimate classrooms, not the classrooms of 200 so I really appreciate that. They have a lot of opportunities, I had one of my best teachers was in classics, I forget what his name was, but he made us act out classics. [00:17:00] They had a wonderful teaching program at Brown. It wasn't a run the people through programs. So it made, it gave me a lot of strength to be independent and accept independence. I mean, it accepted me as the first woman engineering student and I am appreciative of the engineering department being there in case I needed special help. I thought that was well thought out and to have it thought out that far ahead was very very good. I would like to - I didn't make very many good friends there because I just didn't feel I fit in. I was not concerned about who knows who and the pedigree and so on so in many ways, [00:18:00] I was really glad to be back here, but when I was married, my husband is Harvard, and it was so cut throat there that he came back to Stanford and got his doctorate at Stanford because it's a more, it's a different way of living and so I think I like Bates House because it was more personable and authentic and I was really appreciative that they have such a place for those of us.

MP: Well thank you very much. [00:18:42]

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