Mehelli Behrana Interview

Interviewee: MEHELLI BEHRANA
Interviewers: SAROSH J COLLECTOR; PEARLINE COLLECTOR
Date/Time of Interview: May 3, 2014 at 10:00 AM
Transcribed by: PEARLINE COLLECTOR
Audio Track Time: File 1- 0:35:16 and File 2- 0:25:50

Background:

Mehelli Behrana was born in Karachi in what is now Pakistan. He was educated as an accountant. He came to Houston, Texas with his wife and children in 1974. Mr. Behrana was raised in a Parsi colony in Karachi. He played a key role in the founding of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston and is a practicing Zoroastrian. He is currently retired and spends time with his wife, children and grandchildren.

Setting:

The interview centered on Mr. Behrana’s education, work experience, family life and daily activities as well as his experience coming to America and his Zoroastrian connection. The interview was conducted at Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Center (ZHCC) in Houston Texas. The interview required about an hour and a half with a few interruptions.

Interviewers:

Sarosh J. Collector is a business consultant, a CPA and is active member of the Zoroastrian community. He was also raised in Karachi and knew Mr. Behrana there. He is interested in collecting and preserving the history of the first generation Zoroastrians in America.

Pearline Collector is a retired NASA engineer and wife of Mr. Collector. She was raised in Oklahoma. She is interested in preserving the Zoroastrian experiences for the future generations.

Interview Transcript:

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SJC: Hi, This is Sarosh Collector and with me is Pearline Collector who are going to be doing the interview and our interviewee today is Mehelli Behrana. Mehelli, can you introduce yourself?

MB: Yes

SJC: for us and then yk once you have done that we will try to ask you some questions that we would like you to answer as we go along. Okay?

PC: And please spell your name.

SJC: Yes

MB: My name is Mehelli Behrana, MEHELLI, and last name is Behrana, BEHRANA. Thank you Sarosh.

SJC: Mehelli, Do you live in Houston?

SJC: And can you give us your address, please.
MB – Edit out 1:02—1:10

SJ: Mehelli, Prior to Houston, can you tell us where you have lived?
MB: I lived, I was born in Karachi and I lived all my life til the day I came here in Karachi Parsi Colony.

SJC: Okay, So you came here in 1974?
MB: That’s correct.

SJ: Okay, Can you tell us a little bit about your childhood and, and and yk, what you felt and what you did when you were growing up?
MB: I was a normal kid and [laugh] I used to just- I studied at BVS Parsi School and then I went to St Pats. I was just active and yk did whatever the other kids were doing it. I was nothing out of norm.

SJ: While growing up in Karachi did you live in a Parsi Zoroastrian neighborhood?
MB: Yes, I lived in Parsi Colony. My grandfather had built that house and I was born over there. Until the day I come over here I lived in that house even after getting married.

SJ: So the the school, I think you mentioned the name of the school. What kind of school was that?
MB: It was a Zoroastrian School but non-Zoroastrians were also in that school. It was built by a Zoroastrian.

SJ: So the school, I think you mentioned the name of the school. What kind of school was that?
MB: It was a Zoroastrian School but non-Zoroastrians were also in that school. It was built by a Zoroastrian.

SJ: So so, when you were in the BVS school, you were in the ahh .. I presume when you said Technical you mean there were divisions in the school and you were in the technical division. Is that what you were meaning?
MB: Yes technical section. There were academic and the technical and so I was in the technical section

SJC: And ah, so, in the technical section what kind things did you learn?
MB: Hands on. You have to yk do the filing and do the engineering drawings and, yk, architecture struc - kind of a thing and... That was the main thing.

SJC: So, Did you learn I suppose more science subjects in the technical section?
MB: More of ah, yk what you can make and yk electrical stuff and things like that.

SJC: So you learned about electricity and
MB: Yes
SJC: And and yk,
MB: Engineering drawing building
SJC: Right right
MB: and yk things like that. Yes

SJC: Okay, Good. You said something about Metric, I I suppose it’s like high school here. Is that what that is?
MB: Yes sir, that is the way it is yk. There are two things, Metric and St. Senior Cambridge. And in BVS there was only Metric, that is finishing high school.

SJC: And then after you finished high school. What did you do?
MB: I went to St Pats College. Yk It is a commerce college and I also did go to the Balsara Institute. That is where I did my diploma.

SJC: Okay and so while you were in college what were you studying?
MB: Accounting
SJC: Accounting, you were studied accounting and commerce, okay

SJC: While at Balsara College what did you study?
MB: That was the same kind of a thing. That was another diploma kind of thing...
SJC: Okay, okay
MB: That was a part time- kind of thing. You know that was not a full accredited college.

SJC: Okay, okay, okay

SJC: While you were in Karachi, did you work at a job, did you own a business, what was your lifestyle in Karachi?
MB: Okay, After college I had, when I was there, I did work at a bank first and then later on for about 10 years I worked for M M Ispahani Limited in the accounting.

SJC: So what that that company, M M Ispahani, what did they do?
MB: They had a lot of business, like import and export, shipping, tea business yk They had, from, they were from East Pakistan and everything used to come to the West. Karachi was the West and I used to keep the accounts for them.

SJC: So, for all the different businesses or just one of those businesses?
MB: No, All of those businesses. It was not all that big company or anything. There were about 30, 40 employees and you in the different divisions and they were supposed to bring me all those papers and I would do the accounting for them.

SJC: Very good, very good. And so that was I think you said was your second job. I mean the first one was at bank and this was second then afterward you came here.
MB: Full time yes, But when I gave metric exam and you that we get 3 months off. In that 3 months, I worked for Metropole Hotel.

SJC: Oh okay and now you also have hotel experience. What kind experience did you have there?
MB: The same thing. I was always in the accounting, you bookkeeping and accounting.

SJC: Oh wonderful. And so, Metropole Hotel is how big?
MB: Oh,[laugh] It is one of the big- It was one of the biggest hotel at that time. It had about 300 rooms and then
SJC: Wow
MB: And then they also had some offices on the main floor.

SJC: Okay so it was like, on the main floor, bottom floor they had offices
MB: That’s correct
SJC: and other retail outlets?
MB: Correct

SJC: Then they had the hotel and all that.
MB: Yes On what we call the first floor, first, second and third floor were the rooms.

SJC: So while you were growing up in Karachi, what was … your lifestyle like?
MB: It was simple. Well, after finishing my Metric I was a member of Karachi Parsi Institute. Where most of the time I use to go in the evening and … nothing extra ordinary.

SJC: So you belonged to a club?
MB: After finishing my school.

SJC: Okay and so at the club what did you get to do?
Mehelli Behrana Interview

MB: I used to play table tennis, swimming and later on, and later on cards that’s … I used to play billiards! I was a champion in the second class, not a champion, but runner up in second class.

SJC: Oh, Very good. So, you, this was like a very big club for people to come to?
MB: It was for the Zoroastrian Parsis only. And I guess there were 3 - 400 members. I am not sure.

SJC: But It was it was big enough where you could swim, and you could play badminton, and table ten… yk table tennis and billiard and and things?
MB: Yes they had everything.

(S:10:21)

SJC: Was it an enjoyable time?
MB: Oh Yes Definitely, That’s where you could meet girls also.

SJC: [laugh] Oh so is that were you meet your future wife?
MB: Yes, yes!

SJC: Wonderful So this is someplace you went to every evening?
MB: Most of the time

SJC: Most of the ... On the weekends?
MB: Weekends was usually the days everybody is there because the club is open all day. On weekdays it was only open in the evening or afternoon.

SJC: So, so that is where you met Mrs. Behrana?
MB: That’s correct. She had come from London and we used to go around in the same group and that is where I met her.

SJC: So when you said she came from London, she had came for a visit or she came back to-
MB: Actually I knew her before she went to London and studied over there. She was there for 7 years and then she came to Karachi for her sister’s wedding and we all used go around. And that where yk she would come to KPI, Karachi Parsi Institute, and that’s where I met her and I was fond of her, she was fond for me and bla, bla, bla. You know how it goes. [laugh]
SJC: That’s wonderful, good for you. You said something about having known her before.
MB: Yes
SJC: Was this when you were teenagers or was this while you were younger or
MB: Teenagers I would say yk. After I guess I finish I guess my Metric and she was a pretty woman and I used yk go toward her house and look at her, kind of a thing.

SJC: So you where a flirter at that time ha?
MB: You can say that [laugh] yah.

SJC: Okay. So after after
MB: Let me say one thing.
SJC: Yes, go ahead please.
MB: We, when she went to London, we used to correspond and I was in touch with her.

SJC: Yah, so you had a long distant romance?
MB: Romance … or pal pen not a pal pen but yk I knew her. Yk She used to write to me, not often maybe once in six months and things like that.
SJC: Well, I mean I presume it would take a long time for letters to go back so I guess it’s still reasonable. But that’s good, that’s wonderful.
MB: In those days there was not a cell phone, long distance phone while cost a lot. So you never called her on the phone.

SJC: So you never called her when she was in London?
MB: Not from Karachi
SJC: Not from Karachi oh.

(0:13:23)
SJC: So, Had you left Karachi before you came to the United States? Had you gone out of Karachi before that?
MB: To settle?
SJC: No, just go out
MB: I had gone to India, many times.
SJC: Okay and any place else or just just India?
MB: Just India. I mean in Karachi I had hardly seen anything except for Lahore. I had gone to Lahore. And also from a school trip, what they call it –Mohenjodaro yk as a scout. I was also a scout in school.
SJC: Oh, Wonderful
MB: and I was also in school band.

SJC: So, now describe the school band.
MB: Well, we had a band that use to go and play on Pateti, Nawroz, things like that at everybody’s house. And yk for any high dignitaries or anybody that come to the school we welcomed them with the band. And I was in band for last 2 years of my schooling. Dinsha? Metha sent me a picture from 1950 something. I wish I had brought it that. But I can get that picture if you want to put it in this.  
[picture attached]
SJC: We would love to have a copy of that picture.
MB: And there were a lot of guys in that band who is also passed away now.
SJC: Wow

SJC: So was this a band like we would see in school bands over here with a whole lot of people or?
MB: It was not that elaborate. In that band I would say there were 18-20, that’s it.

SJC: Okay wonderful, so kind of, what instrument did you play?
MB: I used to play the bugle and
SJC: Bugle? Wow
MB: Yea and also sometimes the drums.

SJC: Wonderful, wonderful and you said something about on Pateti and Nawroz which are the two New Years festivals that we have and so on. You would go out to different places to play?
MB: Yes, we used to go out to Parsi Colony and all those colonies where the Parsis were and early in the morning. The first thing we would do is we would go to our Principals house and from there we go. And from there, our teacher would be there. Yk It would start at 4 or 5 o’clock in the morning when we assembled and would end up round about noon.
SJC: Wow that is a long time already.
MB: Yea, but we used to go to that Parsi Colony, Jamshed Baug, and all those yk Katrak Hall and all that, so
SJC: and these are the places the Parsis used to lived and congregate. Right?
MB: That’s correct.
SJC: And so you played for them?
MB: We would just go and play. We had a donation box also. And some guys would go to everybody’s house and they would put in whatever money they feel.
SJC: You would played all just normal tunes or did you play something special or
MB: I guess normal. Whatever we learn in school at the music. There was a
music teacher also. And we also went to the rich Parsis houses like the Cowasjee
and Minwallas and they would in those days put like a 100 dollars/100 rupees in a
box yk

SJC: These were the people like the business people?
MB: Yes
SJC: These were big business men whose houses you would go and play for?
MB: Yes, That’s correct

SJC: Do you think they enjoyed it?
MB: I’m sure they did. And they used to give us breakfast and things like that
SJC: So I imagine you guys enjoyed it.
MB: We all enjoyed it! Yes, we looked forward to it. [laugh]

SJC: Okay Wonderful. So, I presume you have some very good memories of
your your childhood in in Karachi?
MB: Yes I would say growing up yes we had a wonderful time. I (cough)
SJC: So, go ahead, Take your, time, take your time

(0:17:54)

SJC: So when, when did you decide you wanted to leave Karachi?
MB: After I got married, I believe it in 1965 and Zenobia was from London and
she did not much like Karachi and there was war and all that. So that’s the time in
67, 68 maybe, we applied to go to London and she had British citizenship and I
had one daughter at that time. And they said the British consulate would not allow
me to go there yk as a citizen. They told me that I have to go there, find a job and
then I can apply and I did not want to that. And we were discouraged by the
family members at that time. Don’t leave with a small child.

Then, in 1973 we started applying again because the situation was getting bad over
there in Pakistan, especially for the minorities. So, we, Zenobia and I were of
belief we should leave the country as soon as we can. So I applied, we applied for
And we got the best results, yk response from the America. That was in 1973.
SJC: So so you in the late 60s, early 70s were uneasy in Pakistan and you didn’t particularly like the political climate. Is that a fair statement?

MB: I would say that yk there was no future for the minorities. And it was getting from bad to worse. Yk Even if you go in a government job and things like that or business you want to do. It was not yk It was I– What we felt that our children had no future there as time goes by. So that’s the time we said we should get out of there. A lot of Zoroastrians were getting out of there at that time.

(0:20:45)

SJC: You said something about war.

MB: Yes

SJC: What actually?

MB: There was a war in 1965 with India and there was a second war in 1971, if I’m not mistaken. And after that second war we said we should get out. And the British government had sent out saying all the Britishers should get out of that country. And that was Zenobia was a British subject and she said yk I am going to leave without you. And they would let me yk let me go to England without having a having job. They said I can go there as a tourist. And they were not going, I’m not sure, they were going to pay for the fare for Zenobia and then later on she would have to pay it back to the British government.

SJC: So, I guess when you got immigration to the United States you of course evidently took it because you are here

MB: Right

SJC: But how difficult was it to leave Pakistan or was it difficult? Were you happy to go? Did you have any regrets that you were leaving at that time, any questions?

MB: No, we applied to the American Embassy there. Within 6 months we got our papers to come to the United States. And they - I did not have a job nor did Zenobia. And when we came here as soon as we landed on the airport I got my green card and social security card and everything. And I got a job, both of us, we were lucky, both of us got a job within 7 day time. First seven days we were trying to settling down here and getting the kids into school and things like that.

No answering your question I have no regrets. I don’t think I am ever going to Karachi, Pakistan and settle down there. I don’t think I will be able to. It’s very difficult there.
SJC: When you were leaving did you have family that you left behind there?
MB: Oh yes, my family and Zenobia’s family were all there, we were the first ones.

SJC: So, When you were leaving were you, did you have any kind emotional issues about leaving or were you just so glad that you were getting out or

MB: Both glad as well as yes emotional, leaving my parents and my brother, same thing with Zenobia’s. My kids were very young. Yk Fiona was only 7 years old if I remember it. And it was difficult. We had servants over there. Over here we didn’t have servants. So we had to do everything ourselves. Yes, it was, it was difficult yk but I am glad we are here.

SJC: You said earlier that you came straight here and yk you got the green card and you were lucky you got to the airport and within 7 days you had a job and everything. So did you have any struggles?
MB: In the beginning, yes I did, we did yk as I mention to you in Karachi we had an easy life. From work I used to KPI and things like that. The aya, the servant used to, nanny used to look after my kids. And then when she would leave my mother used to look after my kids. Cause my mother was downstairs also. We were upstairs. She was there. And then I’d go home 7, 8 o’clock and have dinner and play with the kids and all that and put them to bed and that was it.

Over here, we had to do everything! Yk there was anybody to take my kids to school. I did not have the car at that time. I used to travel by bus. And the nursery used to cost us $75 a week for 3 of them. And in Karachi we used to pay 100 rupees [laugh] to the nanny. There was a lot of difference but earning power was also okay yk over here. We could afford it. But then we said if we were going to live the way we are, pay the nursery and all that kind of thing. Then, it would be difficult for us to save anything.

So, Zenobia started working in the night and I work in the daytime. So I would drop them to school, go to work, pick them up, come home, and make a little bit of food or whatever it is. Or Zenobia would get up and make some food and then she would go to work. Within the first 2 months I got bought the car. Yk

(0:26:23)

SJC: That’s wonderful. So you did have some financial struggles initially but beyond that there was nothing else or
MB: No, the thing was with the time change and all that as I said I was going to, going in a bus. At times I was so tired I would go to sleep on the bus and the bus driver would know that this was the place I was to get out and he would call me and say “Okay it time for you to get out” [Laugh] and things like that. And yes yk The life we had over there was an easy life. When we came here we had to struggle but I learned a lot also coming over here, responsibilities and things like that.

SJC: So yea, I guess you were on your own and you had to as they say you had to step up to the plate.

MB: Exactly

SJC: and work a little harder. What kind of job did you get that first job?

MB: The first job was also in the accounting and worked for a shipping company yk in downtown and as I mentioned to you I had to take my children to school and I use to even hitchhike, at a lot of time people would give me a ride because they would see me at the same time every day. And they, when they were stopped at that traffic light they would say “Come on, come on.” And I would get down yk a certain place, go in the alley where the nursery was and drop them and come out and again run for, get the bus from there, Bellaire. Some of them became so friendly and all that they would stop for me to drop the kids also because they would get stuck in the traffic anyway.

So, yes, I had, and in the evening I did not, it did not bothered much yk because my kids were not going anywhere [laugh] and I was in no hurry to go home. So

SJC: That’s wonderful, so you made friends that way I suppose

MB: Yes I did

SJC: You made some good friends that way. So people were really helpful when you came out here first time round.

MB: Yes

SJC: and you did not knowing anything about it. Okay, all right

(0:28:53)

SJC: Over time, I think you said that you had a accounting job, and and I presume, but Zenobia went to work for?

MB: Yes for hospital. Ben Taub Hospital, which is a general hospital.

SJC: When you first got here eventually you had a lot of people that you met and over time and so forth and yk earlier you were telling us about people that helped you out going back and forth and so forth. Was there anybody that you became
friends with or stood out who was I suppose a remained a good friend and probably
influenced you in a positive way or anything like that?

**MB:** Before coming here at one of the functions in Karachi, Eddie Behrana’s
father, Homi Behrana, met me at the function and he ask me, he told me he had
heard that I was going to America so he ask me where we were going. And we had
applied in about 18 states at that time and out of which some states said there yk
there was a job freeze but Houston gave us a very good response and that’s why
we decided to come to Houston. And the weather was like, more or less, like
Pakistan and we used to go to the Embassy in Karachi yk to apply for America and
they said yes your papers are getting ready and you will get it in time.
They used to give us a big catalog in those days for America that we could look at
it and that catalog had all kind of, what job you have, what are the salaries, what
kind of clothes you wear, what the weather is like and all that. So we go through
that. We applied to the 18 different States. And Houston was one of the places we
found interesting. So we applied here and we got the green card on the bases of
my wife’s education as a registered nurse. She had studied in London and we had
sent her resume and all that and that’s why the American Embassy said okay you
all can go.

But and when that my, one of my uncles said “Oh my son is also there”, who was
Eddie Barana. So I started corresponding with Eddie and Eddie was the one that
came to pick us up at the airport. And with him was Nergis Sethna and Nergis
Sethna yk we got settled as I said within the first seven days. She said Okay lets
go here buy the groceries, things like, yk how the cooking utensils, this, that and
everything like that. And that’s the way yk it started.

**SJC:** So Nergis and Eddie played a great part in your being able to settle down
here?

**MB:** They did play a part not a great part, all was busy, but yes they did, more so
Nergis than Eddie.

(0:32:47)

**SJC:** Beyond that is there anybody else who stands out as having had any kind of
a influence on you, either coming to America or even after came to America
settling here or yk in the direction you were going or anything like that?

**MB:** No, I don’t think so yk We were on our own and Zenobia and I learned very
fast that we had to do everything ourselves and not to depend on anybody. Not like
Pakistan where there was my mother, and my brother and yk the nanny, aya. So we had to do everything on our own and we didn’t have much of a social life at that time.

**SJC:** So if I was to ask you, if I was to ask you what *did* you miss about Pakistan when you first came here and what *do* you still miss about Pakistan?

**MB:** In the beginning my family, friends and KPI [*laugh*] where I used to yk, it was my second home you can say. When we came here, there was nothing like that. And that was what I was missing. Then as the time went by yk I became used to this kind of life. Now, if I have to, I used to go to Pakistan when my mother was alive every four to six years. Now the last time I went was nine 2007. In other words 7 years I have not gone there. All I have there is my brother and his kids and so does Zenobia. Zenobia’s parents have also passed away. And a lot of my

(0:35:16) (problem with recorder/ end of file 1)

[The recorder is off, the interview continues with file 2(some questions were repeated)]

(0:00:00)

**SJC:** So Mehelli when you came to the United States did you encounter any people or any person that has influenced you in a positive matter in in this area or you think helped you quite a bit after you got here?

**MB:** In helping us, I would say Nergis Sethna giving us advice, and when I came here she opened the bank account for me yk where she used to work and we used to go meet them, see them yk in the on weekends kind of a thing  But most of the time we did everything on our own.

**SJC:** So when you first came here did you already know some people here,  
**MB:** Yes  
**SJC:** in Houston?  
**MB:** Yes, I knew Eddie Barana and who before me about 6 months before, Dinsu Sethna, Nergis Sethna, They were in the same place, use to live in the same Parsi colony where I was.

**SJC:** So why chose Houston?  
**MB:** We had applied 18 different states in the United States from Karachi only and the best response we got was from Houston. Zenobia being a registered nurse from the UK, they hired her from there only, within 4 days time. And I got a job.
within 7 days. I got a job in 4 days time also but I started after 7 days coming to the United States. We were very lucky both of us got a job right away.

**SJC:** So, You you came to Houston because some people in Houston had already agreed to hire you? Is that-

**MB:** I’m not sure, I don’t remember very clearly I think yes. I think Zenobia had a very good chance of getting a job and she went for an interview and she was hired. And the next day I went to and applied in downtown and I got a job also.

**SJC:** Okay so, Considering the lifestyle here and the lifestyle in Karachi, what do you miss about Karachi or Pakistan?
**MB:** Easy life [laugh] yk

**SJC:** Easy life, what does this mean?
**MB:** Means we didn’t have to do everything we are doing here. I have learned a lot over here. That nobody is going to help us but we have to help ourselves. Over there we had servants, my mother was there, Zenobia’s parents were there, so all those kind of a thing.

**SJC:** So you mean like you had family support, structure that would help out and take over. Is that what you are talking about?
**MB:** Yes, Yes, and there was a social life as I said over there. Used to go to KPI every day. Over here was no social life the way, what we had over there.

**SJC:** So you went you went to the club and so you had a yk more easier time and so forth?
**MB:** Right

**SJC:** Here did you feel isolated over here? Did you feel alone over here?
**MB:** In a way, yes, because as I said we had to do everything ourselves. If my child was not well one of us had to stay at home. Over there it would be my mother, or her parents, or a nanny, and yk things like that. So yes we had to and we have to look after our job also. There was nobody I can ask say, “Okay can you come take care of my child, she’s not well.”

**SJC:** You did not, would it fair to say to say you missed your support system that was in Pakis, Karachi Pakistan?
**MB:** Exactly, yes
**SJC:** You missed that quite a bit.
MB: Yes definitely My brother used to take one of my child to school and bring her back, over here I had to do it. And then we had, we had yk, what do you call, a system where everybody would take turns yk- carpooling, I would take 5 kids to school one week and the other parents so that way yk we had some kind of coverage in that respect.

SJC: This is in Houston or ?
MB: In Houston In the beginning
SJC: So, You did develop some type of support system here.
MB: Right.
SJC: After a while.
MB: Yes.
SJC: Okay.

(0:05:34)

SJC: So was it -what was more difficult- before I ask this question. Did you have to make a change in your thinking after coming to the United States?
MB: Definitely, definitely, yk because as I said we never bothered about all those kind of things back home that we know there is somebody there, always. Over here there is nobody. Yk We had to do everything ourself. That was the reason, I would say we had to change the thinking and learn fast everything.

SJC: There was a change in the mindset that you had to make. What was more difficult the change in the mindset or the actual change in circumstances after you got here?
MB: Change in the mindset was not all that difficult but yk we realized it. That nobody was here to help us but we had to do it ourself. That is what I was talking about.

SJC: When you came to the United States and to Houston, were you considered as a minority when you first came here?
MB: We were a minority in Pakistan and we are a minority [laugh] over here also.

SJC: So you did not feel any change in the?
MB: No, yk and I was working here with all American white and black and they used to treat everybody equally, most of the time
SJC: Was there any instances where you felt you were not treated fairly just because of the non-American origin or because you were not either born here or were like them?

MB: No! I don’t think so. On the contrary they, at work they just looked at the work not the color of my skin or where I came from. Because when the company closed down and I was the last person to go because my boss like my work, and yk reliable. So he kept me and the other people were let go in eighties if I’m not sure. And not only that, when he retired, he gave me all of the office furniture and he gave me the some of the accounting that I use to do. He said why don’t you take over all this thing. So, I’m blessed I, my boss was one of the wond- most wonderful person.

SJC: So, you never did experience anything at your job that you feel that was yk because you were not American you may not have been treated differently.

MB: Not at all, on the contrary, some of them were jealous and said that you have come recently, recently when I say 5-6-7 years ago and some of them had been there for longer time and they were not getting the treatment that I was getting.

SJC: So you feel that you were treated
MB: Better.

SJC: It was probably the other way around. You got better treatment because of your-

MB: In the beginning when I did not know the work I used to stay behind. Other people would say why are you sitting here late yk. The time is up go. I would say No I have to finish it and I was kind of slow in the beginning. So and I learned my the work and all that and I would work hard and my owner used see me doing all that and that was the reason I was kept yk even after the company closed down.

(0:09:57)

SJC: So, so let me ask this, at work you don’t think you had any unfair treatment because of your quote/unquote non-American origin. Do you think any other instances outside of work did you have situations where you felt you were treated differently because of your non-American origin?

MB: I don’t think so. I don’t know. I never thought of all those kind of things. But No I would not say that. Yk and I have no regrets coming here. yk

SJC: So so I mean, you don’t- Nothing stands out in your memory that ha there was this one guy and I was treated badly by him because of where I was from or
anything like that verses no, he did something just knowing where I was from versus he was just an idiot? I mean is there anything like that that sticks out?  
MB: No, but there was one guy at work he would say why are you doing extra work, why are you doing this yk staying behind late, yk by doing that and not putting in your time? for overtime. I say “No This work should have been done, finished within this much time. And I took longer than that so treated it my responsibility to finish it.” Yk Especially in the accounting, end of the month, end of the quarter you have to do all kind of paperwork yk trail balance, balance sheet and things. And the other people would just walk away. Say either you give us overtime or go, we are going. So I did not do, behave that way yk.

SJC: So so, Let’s say outside of work just in general life was there anybody that sticks out at you that you felt was not a fair person or whatever just because you were not from the United States?  
MB: I don’t think I would say that. 
SJC: Okay 

(0:12:23 ) 
SJC: Did you identify yourself to people as a Pakistani, or a Zarathushti or a Parsi? Or how did you identify yourself to people?  
MB: If they ask me where I was from I would tell them I was from Pakistan. But other than that yk yes if they ask me yk “Are you Muslim?” I would say “No” then I would say I was a Zoroastrian.

SJC: So, the first, did you, did you go out of your way to explain that you were from Pakistan but not a Muslim? Did you go out of your way to do that?  
MB: No, as I said with the color of my skin they would ask where I was from and I would say Pakistan and the next question would be “Are you a Muslim?” And I would say “No I am not a Muslim, I am a Zoroastrian.”

SJC: When you came here, did you immediately, I mean did you have any problems adjusting to the American diet verses a Pakistani diet? 
MB: No, I can eat anything and everything [laugh] so if you are hungry there is no question whether you’re going to have a pizza or a hamburger or Pakistani. My wife was cooking food once in a while Pakistani yk and yes I use to miss that food and I still miss that, yk our Parsi food. So anytime there is Parsi food I enjoy it.

(0:14:24 )
SJC: Okay, As far as the religion is concerned and our traditions are concerned. What do you think to you is the most important tradition?

MB: I would say let’s not forget our roots, where we come from and what we were taught. But my think have change, my thinking has changed after my second daughter got married to an American. In the beginning I was not very happy. But she made me realize that we are not going to be here for the rest all her life. After we are gone she has to be on her own. And she married a white America. He is a wonderful guy, my son-in-law. The second also got married. And both are wonderful people. I have one daughter who is married to a Zoroastrian and the other two to American and all my three son-in-laws are great. Any time I need help and I call one of them they would be there.

SJC: Any traditions from Pakistan that you miss?

MB: To be honest I don’t think so as I said my thinking has changed a lot. My daughter has made me understand that and only on occasions like Pateti, Nawroz and we have the function and things like that and I am getting too old to even think about that.

SJC: If you were to convey anything to the later generations what would like to tell them?

MB: Think, think before you say anything and Adapt to this country’s way of living and Do the right thing.

SJC: Is there anything, is there anything in… your lifestyle that you have regretted?

MB: I don’t

SJC: Coming to the United States, let me put it, in I’m sorry I need to change it around. Is there anything you have regretted about in your life after coming to the United States?

MB: No definitely not.

SJC: No

MB: No, Not even in the beginning within first year only yk I like the way that things are over here. People are honest and helpful and climate is good. And every time I have gone to Pakistan when my mother was alive, the things were getting bad to worse over there. The last time I went to Karachi and I could not even recognize my own school. Yk and the traffic is so bad and it is that yk it’s all smoggy and thing like that. No, if I if I could help it I will not go back. When my mother was there and we used be there for fifteen days I wanted to run back home here [laugh]. Yk and Right now, my brother is there I so call him on the phone and
tell him you come over here. But other that, no. I might go back to Karachi one more time in my lifetime maybe but not to settle down.

**SJC:** Would you, would you recommend to you children that they go to Karachi and learn about their roots?

**MB:** Yes, but I tell them whatever I know of, over here in the Sunday School they know what is happening what has happened there. But now my children are also grown up; they have their children. [laugh]

(0:19:11)

**SJC:** What do you think your major successes in Pakistan and then the United States?

**MB:** In Pakistan I don’t know if I had any success. There was a job job and home routine. Over here if you work hard - no matter how much hard work you do you are not going to go ahead in Pakistan because you are a minority- number one. Over here you can achieve your goal if you work hard. Yk I don’t think I would have had 4-5 cars in my house over there in Pakistan. Over here I have it, I have a house. I have -

My success is that I brought my children and gave them a good education. And I would call that a good success. My all three children, minimum education is Masters.

**SJC:** Wonderful

**MB:** One is a teacher, one is a lawyer, one is a doctor of veterinary medicine. So that is my success.

**SJC:** Have there been any failures that you know of and, if there have been, what did you learn from them?

**MB:** Learned from my children?

**SJC:** No, from your failures. Have there been any failures and if there have been any, what did you learn from them?

**MB:** I don’t think I can call myself as a failure in anything. Because the reason that I came here, the goal I had set, I I got that.

**SJC:** So you don’t think that have ever been failures because you have been successful in your mind all the way through and then you consider that as the biggest thing there is.

**SJC:** Wonderful
MB: Right In my mind I don’t think I have been a failure at all. I have done whatever I could.
SJC: Wonderful
MB: I’m glad at what I did.
SJC: Wonderful

SJC: If I was to ask you that we’re putting together a time capsule, and give me three things that you would you put in time capsule for yourself and for your family. What would you put in there?
MB: Sudra, Kusti and a… note to my great grandchildren saying that I came here and I have prospered, and how I prospered and why I prospered and advise them to do the same thing and better than me.
SJC: Wonderful

PC: For the people listening that may not know, what is the Sudra and Kusti?
SJC: What is a Sudra and what is a Kusti?
MB: Sudra and Kusti are our religious things yk when you 7 or 9 years old and you get, what do you call it. In your - what I can’t get the word.
SJC: Navjote
MB: Not Navjote, but in the religion you become.
PC: Initiated
MB: Initiated yah. That is when that’s says when we have this girban that says whatever you do before that the Navjote is on your parents head and after the Navjote it is on you head and you have to. This is a Zoroastrian thing to identify who you are. Yk I have heard the stories that were people laying in the road and didn’t know. For example, Vera’s father past away in Soldier Bazaar and they said “This man is a Parsi” and they took him to the Parsi Colony. This is your identification you can say.

SJC: So if I was to ask you, “How would you like to be remembered by the coming generations?” Okay. What would you like tell me how you would like to be remembered in the future?
MB: I would tell my children, my grandchildren and my great grandchildren that we did struggled in the beginning over here but we succeeded. This is a good county. People are good and you have to do the right thing. And change with the world. Don’t keep on saying that our parents and grandparents said this and that’s the way it is going to be. No, I would say yk use your own head and think what is right and what is wrong. And do the thing, the right thing.
PC: Very good.
SJC: Okay, Mehelli thank you very much
MB: You’re welcome.
SJC: Appreciated it. We didn’t keep you too long.
MB: No you didn’t

MB: What happened about the association this that?
SJC: Didn’t want to get into that unless they want to do one for that. This is more about our community than-
PEC: Okay, just a second-