

**Interview with
Patricia Rosebough
by Sharon Brescoach,
June 20, 1997**

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Released Form signed by Patricia Rosebough
June 20, 1997, at Camp Washington Carver, West Virginia

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PDF file prepared by Lisle G Brown

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Note: In the original transcript there were blank spaces.
These have been indicated by [blank space] in the following text.

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Sharon Brescoah:...all right, well, let's see. I guess I should just hold this and...

Patricia Rosebough: Do you need to wedge it on something?

SB: No, this is fine.

PR: Do you want me to hold it?

SB: Oh (**PR:** Would it be easier for you to write?) I'm fine. Actually, most of it's going to be on tape. I'm just gonna check things off to make sure that I get everything covered. (**PR:** Okay) And basically like you said, the whole purpose of this is uh,. basically to tell what Camp Washington Carver meant to you. (**PR:** Okay) Okay, so uh...and we're just documenting the importance of it. (**PR:** Okay) So, but since It Is going to be archived as a history and it will be recorded, I need to get some basic information, which people don't like.

PR: Okay. As long as it's not my weight, I'm in pretty good shape.

SB: All right. So, first of all, I need to state my name. This is Sharon Brescoach, and I am working with Marshall University at the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia, as well as through the Oral History of Appalachia Program at Marshall. And I need to get your full name.

PR: Okay, my name is Patricia Rosebough.

SB: Okay. And your home town?

PR: Charleston.

SB: Okay, and that's current?

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PR: Yes, it is.

SB: Okay. Now, have you ... how many years have you been working at the camp?

PR: I've been working here for four years now.

SB: Okay. And so have you-, has your residence been in Charleston?

PR: My residence was in Charleston during that period.

SB: Okay, uh, gender is female, obviously. Uh...and what is your current occupation and past occupations that you might want to....

PR: Uh, currently ... are you speaking of here at the camp right now? Or aside from that? Because this....

SB: Well, your job as well, you know, what you do when you're not here, as well as what you're involvement is here.

PR: Okay, my involvement here is assistant director. And instructor of African American literature, as well as creative writing. (**SB:** Great) The rest of the time I am a full-time culinary arts instructor at the Charleston Job Corps Center. (**SB:** Wow) Aside from that, I've been executive director of the United Way Agency, the Home in Charleston, I have been a multicultural specialist and consultant with Kanawha County Board of Education. And a, a home school community coordinator for the board, as well. It's not as impressive as it sounds. Just a lot of uh...a lot of words with a title, more or less. It's probably some of the same things you do in daily day-, daily work.

SB: Yes. I'm going to go back to these two questions. But the reason is, I'm curious.... I'm gonna skip over to your education, because I wonder with all the different things that you've

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been doing, how you arrive at literature as well as the culinary arts and so forth.

PR: Okay. Well, I attended Howard University. And at Howard I was in two different fields of majors. One was political science, the other was what's now called minority affairs, or minority studies. At that time, it was Afro-American Studies. Uh, I took secondary classes in communications. And once I left there, I had taken additional extension classes in the culinary arts area. Certified as a vocational instructor, as an adult basic ed instructor. And the test, the mandatory hands-on test for the vocation of culinary arts, or food service.

SB: Wonderful. That's just so interesting. And, you know, the other questions I didn't ask, uh, your birthdate.

PR: Oh, you told me this was coming. 11/16/49.

SB: Ok. Well, you look so young. [good-natured chuckling]

PR: That's what everybody says.

SB: I mean, not that that's old. But I mean....

PR: Just keep saying it, just keep saying it

SB: It's certainly not. But uh, and uh, children, marital status?

PR: Single.

SB: Single.

PR: Mmm-hmm, no children.

SB: And uh, so we got that, so everything's there. Now, I'm gonna stop this and check the tape,

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make sure we got that. (PR: Okay) And then we'll start the Let' see, the first one was the, your age at the time of staffing, the camp, when you came to the camp.

PR: Uh, as a child?

SB: Well, no, I'm sorry. I mean, as a staff member, yes.

PR.: As an employee. Uh...four years ago, what's that? Four years ago from whatever I was.[blank space] Math at this point has gone out the door.

SB: That's not my [blank space] either. And so, you said you have been here four years? (PR: Yes, uh-huh) Has that been consecutive?

PR: Yes, it has.

SB: Okay. Uh...and this question ... the path that took you here, how did you end up, or how were you recruited to come in and work here?

PR: I, one of the instructors at the time, the dance instructor who was Michael Harris, uh, mentioned to my sister that he was looking for-, that they were looking for someone to teach African-American literature. There was a reorganization, I understand, going on at the time. And my niece was a student of his. So, he mentioned it to my sister, and she said, "Oh, I know, Patty would be ideal for this." And she suggested that I apply. And I did, through the Cultural Center. And I've been here ever since. (SB: Oh, that's wonderful) Initially, my first year I was an instructor of African-American literature, and creative writing. By the next year, and ever since then, I've been assistant director, as well as an instructor.

SB: Wow, that's great. Uh, why did you want to come and work here, initially?

PR: Uh, I have a love of history. I love, I'm one of those few persons who will watch a I

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documentary or, or a, read a non-fiction piece, merely because it's something that you want to learn about. Even when I grew up in Charleston, at a time when you couldn't find a lot of information on particularly African-American affairs, I'm an avid reader. I would go to the library and just browse through the stacks. Now, I could never catalog books. But I would go through the stacks just to see things, see if I could find books of interest to me. And that kind of fed my desire to learn more. Which, of course, was fulfilled at Howard. And fulfilled here, too. Uh, I even volunteer, teaching classes and doing things at different churches, in Charleston and around the valley, because I wanted to share the knowledge.

SB: That's wonderful. And so you feel that Camp Washington Carver is-, provides good outlet for that type of involvement.

PR: Yes, yes, it does. Plus, I do acting, as well. And I like students to see, regardless of whether it's public school, or at the job corps center, or here, I like them to know that you have to have more than one thing going for you. (**SB:** That's right) If you have two or three interests and you have a gift, I feel it's important to pass it along and to share that with someone, so that they know also, if they have gifts that they need to share them and utilize them.

SB: That's wonderful. All right. Let's see, now.... What are some of the activities at uh, the camp that you remember while you were here? I have a separate set of questions. Uh, and so, while you're here, and also, if you could, compare that to like activities that you do in your everyday life.

PR: Okay. Uh....

SB: Sorry, maybe we'll just do the, the activities here over the past four years that you remember going on, that may have impacted you or that you find, found interesting)[blank space]

PR: Uh, I found it interesting after my first year to come back and to finally, I was comfortable in a setting. I could open up and talk to more individuals more the campers. And I found some of

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the young men and young women who've been here for 9 and 10 years, and keep coming back and who are not hesitant to say that they will do that until, you know, they're a hundred and two. That's one age I got from someone. It's such a special part of their lives, that they're willing to make a commitment once they're past the age to teach other individuals and make them a part of it. **(SB:** That's great) Uh...the other thing, I think the activities I would not be ordinarily involved in. It gives me a personal outlet to break down some barriers with students, who maybe don't have The encouragement to pursue whether it's a talent for singing or art. Those things cost money, particularly when you're talking about audio visual supplies, or visual arts. And this camp, this particular camp fulfills that need. I like to be able to encourage. I think that is my gift, if nothing else in life to encourage other young people to pursue whatever avenues they want. And sometimes they need to be free to open up to somebody besides family. Because sometimes, as family, we don't appreciate the need for art in our lives. This is more than art, it's discipline, it reporting on time, it's fulfilling obligations, uh, and it's using God-given talent. And if you don't have that talent, it's a place where you're secure enough and comfortable enough to try it. And if it doesn't work out, you know you can get right back in and try again.

SB: Well, I know just being downstairs and listening to some of the pep talks, it's so wonderful, so supportive, to take what you've learned and take it back. **(PR:** Right) And that's just really neat. Great. Okay. Well, and you've basically answered the other question, which was how you saw the camps meaning for children. I don't know if you would like to expand on that at all, just ... or....

PR: Oh, the only other thing that I think I need to add, that I feel is important, is that particularly with African-American children, there is not a consistent knowledge, a resource. Maybe a once a month thing. Which would be in February, and we frequently say, the shortest month of the year, and black history is supposed to-is part of American History, and should be throughout the year. I think this is a place where we're not afraid to talk about our heritage and our cultures. And at the same time, we're not afraid to welcome other individuals of other ethnic varieties and other cultures, so that they see the pride that is there for us, and they pick up that pride and they're willing to share their own pride of heritage.

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SB: That's great. It just seems like such a unique place, because

PR: Oh, it is, it really is. This is the first opportunity I've had this week to really take-, just steal a couple of hours, really. (**SB:** Right) And I've already had three different students come up to cheek, see, you know, what time frame we're gonna be working on in the morning. And I'm accustomed to that. Last year I had students who bunked over in my, in my room, with just two beds, we had mattresses on the floor. But it gave us ... just some down time to talk about things they were concerned with, to practice for the showcase. And it's, the foresight of the young men, there were two sixteen, seventeen year old young men who were in my class. And when 12 o'clock came and everybody else was getting quiet, they said, "Now, look, Miss Patty, we're gonna go back to the dorm, because it really, you know, we know we're just sitting here talking and laughing and eating popcorn and reading over these works. But it really is not good for me as a sixteen year old or him, really, to be here at this hour." (**SB:** Right) And you don't find that often. That's a maturity level that says, "I want to respect what the camp is here for." (**SB:** Right)

SB: Well, I've noticed the children are all very polite, and you can discipline, as you mentioned discipline and things of that nature, pride. And it's almost those old-fashioned values (**PR:** yeah) that you don't see very often any more. (**PR:** That's true) Uh, that leads me to yet another question, which I'm sure is on here somewhere. But do you think that the counselors or teachers, instructors here provide role models that maybe the certain students, especially the African-American campers and so forth, might not have exposure to certain people like some of the arts and so on?

PR: I think certainly they do. If they don't, I doubt if the camp would have succeeded. I think that's a personal aim of mine. And that's one of the criteria's which carries me. So I look at everybody through a fine you know, looking glass so to speak. And that's what I expect. I'm not a shy person in the sense ... I'm shy when it comes to me. I'm not shy when it comes to projecting positive models for the young people. And I will say to someone, you need to get your act in order, because that's not the image somebody's watching, somebody's overhearing. And uh, they accept it as that, because you never know who's watching. I think overall, they do

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a credible job, year in and year out of coming up with some of the best people. Not only in terms of quality, but quantity of material, and moral standards.

SB: What I've seen downstairs is just unbelievable. It's really impressive. (**PR:** Mmmhmm) Okay. Oh, I've still got plenty. I'm so afraid a tape's gonna go out on me. Let's see, now, uhm.... as, as a staff person, I wanted to ask you a couple of questions about the people, some of the campers, or the people here that you best remember, that have impressed you, and where were they from?

PR: Uh, let me think. One of the persons who has impressed me the most, and I haven't seen her in two years, I think. She didn't come this year. She may have been there last year, but not the year before. It's a young lady from somewhere on the eastern end. I used to know the name of the town. It's close to Martinsburg. But it's a rather isolated area where out of, I think she said, over a thousand students in high school, she was the only black in [blank space] This was a mixed heritage young lady. And nobody had encouraged her. She writes very well, speaks very well. She never felt like she was cultivated or nourished to do anything with her ability to write. And she just left her mark on me. She had to literally fight, I mean, through paperwork at the school to get the information to go. She had literally fight one of her parents to convince the parent this was a healthy thing. Just because it said African American, did not mean anybody was spuing venom, or anti-this or hate that. Uh, once she got here, and her mother brought her with all the apprehensions. When she left, you could see the confidence. You could see the pride, and that she could hardly wait to go back and share that with her family. The last thing she said to me was, "Oh, school will probably be the same, but I won't." (**SB:** Wow) And that said it all. (**SB:** Yes) and his brothers, he's been here ...I think he told me about 13 years (**SB:** Yes). His brother, Damion, and I had the younger brother, Hossan, last year and part of this year. (**SB:** Wow) And it amazes me the commitment of those young people. They're not always satisfied with things and the rules, and so forth, particularly since they're getting older. (**SB:** Yes) But they've such a respect for the camp, that they continue to work with it, that they are known for being here, no matter how far away they are. Uh, their house burned about five months ago, they lost everything. And people had to call around from place to place and hotel to hotel trying to locate them. And I didn't expect to see them. And I was in Charleston, just ...

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when did the camp start? Last week? Must have been last Monday. I was trying to shop and get what I needed, and went and stopped at a gas station. And this was just last Monday, and heard somebody calling my name. And I didn't see anybody I knew. And I just pulled over and I'm still sitting there waiting when I can get out into the traffic again. And Mastafah walked up to the car. And just seeing him, and his mother. His mother was with him. She had been down the street and was driving up. And when he told me, he said, "We're trying to get there, I'm trying to get the paperwork together. I will be there. Damion's coming. Oh, Hossana's coming." And you know, it was just as if my questions were answered, because they are such valuable resources and role models in their own right.

SB: That's wonderful, that's a great story. Okay. Let's see. Now, obviously he would be someone that-, the next question is people that you have stayed in touch with, that have left the camp?

PR: I call the younger brother, Hossan, frequently. He's 17. And his mother even says, "Well, you're his other mother, you know that know." So, I'll call and exchange with him, Adrian Beezmeyer, who's former camp director, uh, we've talked frequently. - She is interested in what the camp does, she's interested in making life better for me, personally. I had some health problems. She's busy telling me what I need to do and giving me the books I need. And because she's a holistic medicine person. (**SB:** Oh, wow, that's neat) And her occupation actually is family therapist. She gave me these books. I started reading, "Now, Patty, you've got to read these books, now, Patty..." We believe in this sister, this sister love and that it's gonna help do this and this and this [blank space] And I said, "I believe." And I said it kind of queasy like, you know, knowing that if she believed in this, ok, fine, it make not work for me. As I read further into the books, all the things it told me about my own self-, my own lack of confidence at different times and how they were manifested in physical ailments, once I started reading it, "Mmmh, that's me." And when I started underlining things, I saw that I could get to the root of so many things."

SB: Well, I tell you, the thing that's so interesting to me about that is that it shows diversity on a level beyond race (**PR:** Yeah!) and into various (**PR:** Yeah!) areas of interest, as well.

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PR: And I think right, maybe a month after camp, one of these last times, I got on the phone and left a message on Adrian's machine. I called Pamela Portier, in Atlanta, and left a message on her machine. I said, "I don't know about this stuff, but it works!" And just the idea that you're not interested in someone coming in for ten days or a week just to teach. Because we have this slot to fill. They want to see that you're operating at a hundred percent. You become part of the family.

SB: That's wonderful.

PR: And uh, I think that's worth, that says it all, because we think of anybody who comes as a family. Uh, there are people in Charleston I would not know had it not been for this camp. When I walk up to a child, and say, "Oh, you-, that is so good, where you from?" "Charleston." "Charleston? Where?" Once they tell me where, and then I realize I see them in the mall, or I read their name in the newspaper, so I write 'em a note and drop it in the mail to the school, to say, "Saw you, did a good job." Uh....to me, that-, those are those people that you keep touching base with, to let you know, "Look, I'm watching you, you've got an angel or something out there...." **SB:** That's great. Well, the other thing I was gonna ask, because I know there's s-, they were telling me earlier about the arts program in Charleston and so forth. What about campers from other parts of the state, or other states, maybe more rural areas (**PR:** mmm-hmm). Do they-, do you think they have the same opportunities to come, are they as aware of the camp, like state-wide?

PR: Well, in previous years, uh...we've gotten a lot of people from rural areas. This year is not such much as more of a city thing. (**SB:** Okay) Maybe that's because this is the first year we actually opened up and had what we called, 'mini auditions.' We don't expect anything like on FAME. (**SB:** right, Debbie Allen comes out) Right. As a matter of fact, I went to school with Debbie Allen. (**SB:** Wow, neat) But anyway, uh, I think that limited some people. Because we don't expect everyone to have experience. (**SB:** Right) And everyone can't get into Beckley or Wheeling or Charleston, in order to show some of their pictures. So that has-, I think that has something to do with it. Uh...

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SB: When you had dealt with the rural students before, do you there are any difference in the way that maybe the rural campers I'm sorry, I keep saying students,

PR: I say that, too.

SB: So many years, I forget. But anyway, uh, the difference maybe in how they respond, like rural students as opposed to one's from Charleston, that may be more accustomed to that? Or is there any difference at all?

PR: The only difference I see is uh, that individuals in those rural areas don't have access to the things that we do. I have a number of students every year who ask, "Will you please, just send me some books?" Gosh, I never knew you could go to the library and there was a listing of books. And I made copies, and I said, "Here, you take these five, then pages, and next time you go to the library, look for some of these books." We have individuals from North Carolina, some from New York, we have some who travel over from Ohio. But the most important thing, I think, is that we're serving those in West Virginia for filling a void for many who are not always as free from the schools and libraries to get additional information.

SB: Well, what made me think of that question is when you had talked about the girl who had said that she was the only African-American in that school (**PR:** Yeah), and I'm sure that you all encounter that from time to time.

PR: Right. I gave them, I think my cla-, my students last year got I don't know, it had to be a 125 pages of photocopy excerpts from different books, different short stories, uh, poems, essays, you name it. In addition to that, I made copies of plays. Uh, the names of plays and the authors and everything from ...I think it started in '17, early 1700's , and went all the way up to '70-, '89. So, to me, if I never see them again in life, they have some tools to find out or find more or to pass on to their school or their family, to find more.

SB: Wow. Do you think, just double-checking, the other thing I was going to ask is do you think that this has a positive effect? Like I don't know if you've had students that have maybe gone

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on and are in college now and do you think that this affects them, their identity and gives them discipline for later in their life to succeed of....

PR: Uh, yeah, I can say that. Because their individuals who gone on and perform, that wouldn't have had the utter gall, as somebody said, to get up on a stage in front of a hundred or two hundred college students. And they called back to see. Remember that routine we did, or do you know how I can get in touch with so and so, because I need to learn the words to this song that we sang at camp, or remember when we had to do this monologue. Do you have that, so I can do-, you know, I want to use that for a program.

SB: Well, I seem to see so much self-esteem building, too. And that's, I mean, beyond the obvious talents and exposure a lot of West Virginian ... you know, regardless of race, (**PR:** Right, uh-huh)[blank space] exposed to. And I just think that the self-esteem building would be so important. (**PR:** Oh, it is) And might help down the road.

PR: Uh-huh, oh, it is. Because uh, we approach, the first exercise students had to do, in my class, for instance this year, was to write an essay, "I can, I will, I do. I can I will, I do." And each one of those words had to be in all capital letters. And I said, "It can be a short piece. I don't want anything more than maybe a page and a half." And everyone had to interject those words. But it's a positive thing, because we don't accept "I can't". (**SB:** That's wonderful) We will not accept "I can't." You can-, if you say "I'll try", that's half the battle.

SB: Now, that's wonderful. [blank space] I'm so excited. Okay. Got that. Now, oh, as far as, well, you've kind of answered that question. These people that you have stayed in touch with, have any of them been, acted as a network for you, and obviously you've

PR: Right. And they've recommended the camp to others. And they'll come in and say, "Oh, you're the person" Or I'll say, "Where you from?" And they may say, North Carolina." And I may respond, "Is that near ... who did you find out about the camp?" And then we'd get, we'd start talking. So, we see there is word of mouth. And West Virginia really is not considered the mecca of any type of cultural endeavor, okay. So, but let me educate you. So, when somebody

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says, they're something worthwhile there. You know, and somebody takes the time to share with their parent or guardian, "I want to go", that says a lot. SB: Right, right. Well, that's wonderful. Ok, let's see. Were you actually a 4-H member?

PR: For two years.

SB: Two years, great.

PR: Mmm-hmm. I don't know which two years.

SB: Ok, that's fine. And then it says did you relate to 4-H in any other way than camp at all?

PR: No, I didn't, because at that time, I was in an area where I didn't have a lot of transportation. (**SB:** Okay) And most of the 4-H activities-, as a matter of fact, I knew the people, the persons who were the 4-H leaders. They were active in my church, and they kept saying "you ought to be active in 4-H, and at the same time, uh, my father worked two jobs. My mother was working and so forth. And it was-, it would be difficult for me to get to that. (**SB:** Right) But for the two summers that I was there, it was, the camp made a lot of difference in my life. It shaped me. SB: Wow. Well, as a matter of fact, as I'm sitting here, most of the questions are basically the same, so I'll ask your, the questions about when you were here, as a camper yourself.

PR: I can't even tell you the years. I know I was ...I had to be 12 or 13, for both, or no higher. It may have been 11, 12, 12 or 13. SB.: So, it wasn't like high school.

PR: No, it was junior high school.

SB: Okay. And uh, you said two years, two years at camp? (**PR:** Uh-huh) And uh, let's see, any, do you remember people when you were here as a camper? You said it impacted you. Do you remember people, and did they serve...

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PR: I remember only one person by name. Now that I see, from time to time I'll pick up something and see somebody's name. Because there were two camps that I, I, that I participated in. One was at Hilltop, the other was at Clifftop. And for years, I'd get the two confused. The one at Hilltop was a church-oriented, that specialized, not specialized, but uh, had a spiritual base, and oratorical contests, and Sunday school this and that. But I say this one shaped a lot of me. Primarily because it made me stand on my own two feet. I came here without knowing anyone else was going to be here that I knew. Uh, when you go to a church camp, you know there gonna be other persons there from your church, or organizations that you know.

SB: The same thing with scouts or anything.

PR: Yeah, exactly. I'm a shy person. [laughter] I am! Everybody laughs. My stu-, any students, whether they're at home, or here, they laugh when I say that. Uh...but I'm, I was a shy person; I still am. And it's difficult for me to walk into a place with people I don't know and strike up a conversation. Chit-chat is not me. I don't know how to do it. And being there with a bunch of folks I did not know, made me stronger, it made me realize you don't have to be anything but yourself. And it took seeing a shadow of myself, and that was, this young lady from home, that I did not know was coming, followed me every place around the camp. (**SB:** Wow) And I mean she followed me, not-, she didn't have to be able to play this particular game I was playing. But she would follow me. Because she was so insecure. And one day I lost my temper. And I said, "Find some friends of your own. Can't you stop following me? Find something to do!" And it took years for me to look back-....I went home and told my mother about it. And then I apologized to her before we left the camp. I said, "I didn't mean to lose my temper like that. I just need some space." And that marked a turning point for me to realize how it feels to be the odd person out. I was still odd person, but I was trying to find my own way. And I think to have this young lady with me was as a crutch. Maybe I was afraid of both of us failing. (**SB:** Right, right) And I needed to know that I could do this on my own.

SB: So, do you know feel, as you said, you were shy, do you know feel that this place provides sort of a comfort zone? And do you think that it does for the students, did then, and did for the

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campers now?

PR: I think it does. Uhm...I'm still shy. The first, first summer here, was especially hard. What I, I make a practice of and it just something that I started doing. I will walk up to kids as they come in, or they're sitting down eating, and say, "Hi, what's your name?" Or uh, just make conversation with them. I will joke with them, I will use some of their own terminology, as long as it's not profanity, or an insult to somebody. I will joke with them, and I will walk all the way around the big hall just getting to know people, you know. And to me, they need to know at least there's one person that's really ready to reach out immediately. I'm comfortable doing that. And I enjoy doing that. They tell me I work the room. [laughing] And I work the room any time students are there, because I think they need to see that we all are accessible, if there's a problem, we're human like you are. And that's helped me tremendously, and the students. It establishes a comfort zone because I'm still nervous. It establishes "Oh, maybe this is not going to be so bad after all. She acts a little bit like us and a little bit a grownup." So, yeah, I think that helps a whole lot, if I made any sense at all.

SB: No, you did, that's fine, that's fine. And actually, from ... I guess this would apply to both your current status here, as well as when you were a camper, uh, do you know or remember any of any other adult 4-H activities that might have been going on here at the camp, either then or now?

PR: What did they call it? A 4-H roundup. And I just remember vaguely. I'd always mess up on heart, hand... wait a minute, wasn't it hand, heart, hand, whatever the 4-H's were. But when they broke it down into the activities, oh, we're gonna have some people doing little speeches and we want to teach somebody how to make some things. And we want to teach other people, that's when I had an understanding of the full person. And though I never went to a roundup, it educated me to the, to the fact that you had to be a well-rounded individual. You can't address the heart and not address the mind, because you see things that conflict. And (**SB:** in the body) yes, in the body. **SB:** Wonderful. Now, is that current, from now, or was then when you were a camper?

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PR: That's when I was a camper.

SB: Ok. Now, uh, I wasn't sure, because I'm thinking about dates, was the camp, when you came here before, was it integrated, or was it still separate?

PR: NO, it was not. It was still segregated.

SB: Okay. Did you come the whole time was it segregated?

PR: Yes, it was, uh-huh.

SB: Okay. And I guess in comparison in then to now, what is your feeling about the differences of integration?

PR: You know I've thought about that even with the public school system. And up here, I know it needs to be done so that people will know that everyone, each of us is just a person. And to get the best possible out of education, or opportunities or employment, there needs to be an equal playing field. At the same time, there is a lack of the emphasis on self-esteem of the black child. The [blank space] of the black child. The knowledge, the history, the world history, and the American history, of the people that's being negated or totally ignored. Uh, and I think having the transition now to integration, and having the opportunities opened to all races, uh, I've had students who've said that. I have a number of white individuals who take the class and have said, "I didn't, I didn't get this in school, and that's the only reason I signed up to take the class." There are other students who are leery of any white individuals, just like we have Adena from Bosnia here, and a couple of people who are Hispanic from here, who are leery of why they are here. Well, this is an African-American camp, why are they here? And within the first 3 to 4 days, once they've interacted with the other ethnic cultures, they realize, oh, they came to learn. He acts like I do, she acts like I do. And I don't, I always frown on using they, they, because it's something that's been directed at African-Americans for years. Uh, so I use it in the generic sense. Often I tell my students, when I'm sending them [blank space]"Go find whatever," because I don't know what they did with it, and you know how your people are. And

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you know, I try to relax people, that all the time you don't need to be on guard. **(SB: Right)** I said, "As long as you're here at camp, you're my people." You know, and I can talk about you, but nobody else can." And that's the same way I do with regardless ... there's a family unit. And good/bad, you realize everybody's not gonna accept, but the majority will. And you don't have to really like bosom-buddy type everyone to get along with persons. And we proved that here. We have a young man who auditioned as playing the drums this year. And he wanted to take African rhythms because someone wanted to be taught by him for a piece or something at another school. And he said, "I don't know enough about it, I realized I didn't know enough about it, so I wanted to come to camp to learn." **(SB: That's great)** And he just took the initiative, his mother had him down at the Cultural Center for the audition and it's wonderful.

SB: That's wonderful. Well, uh, what do you think as far as African American identity in comparison to when you were here when it was segregated and now, do you feel that when you were here before that the camp helped you realize....

PR: Yeah, yeah, there was a, for the first time outside of my family, and my church, _there was an open sense of pride. We weren't concerned about what other people thought. We weren't concerned about what uh, though we knew what was going' on with the world, but the world's perceptions at large. We were made to feel special. And that we could accomplish anything we wanted. And with the help of this camp, if we never needed anything it would be here for us and it's staff would help us accomplish whatever we want.

SB: Well, it sounds like their still doing that today.

PR: I hope so. I really hope so, but that basically is our goal. Anything you do in life, you should-, it should have some bearing on these formative camp years, or, or what you got, what you're gotten from your culture, your experiences. And it's our charge to make this the richest possible in 10 days. We get up early in the morning with daybreak affirmation. It maybe a proverb that you're to carry with you during the day, and we relate it to what's going on. One of them was "Keep the dream, but beware of the dream stealers." And Lou Myers came last night, and it surprised me, he did the same thing. He said, "When you leave here, you're gonna go

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back home and they're gonna be family members that say, ah, that's over with, you don't need to draw on it anymore, or you don't need to sing so much, or why are you reading those books when you could be outside playing basketball or this and that." And uh, when I was talking to Lou today, and we were reviewing that, I said, "That's what I told them a couple days of go. They're dream stealers, they're people there who don't want to use what they've got." And they don't really want to see you use what you've got. It doesn't mean you can't be friends and family, or that you care for them less. But you keep that dream and you keep working on it.

SB: And we all have them. (**PR:** Yeah, yeah, Mmm-hmm) That's great, that's a great analogy. Uh...let me see ...uh...we talked about let's see ... oh, so now that I've talked about the integration thing, I'd like to get, just looking downstairs and seeing some of the signs that were up, do you think uh, there was, is a difference as far as gender is concerned? Males and females that impact and I guess that would also to then and now. You think it's changed? You think it's more uh, women maybe have different opportunities now as they might have then, or was it just as open?

PR: Uh, in society or just the camp?

SB: In the camp.

PR: In the camp. I remember a very strong, a very strong females at the camp of the past. I remember males who weren't afraid to, to concede, "Oh, yeah, that's a good idea, you take that. And you take the students and you run with it."

SB: And even back then?

PR: Even back then. (**SB:** That's wonderful) Mary Lewis, in particular. And she's deceased now. I don't know, it's been maybe five years, perhaps not, no, it can't be that long. Maybe about three years, two years ago, she passed. And uh, a very strong woman. But very soft-spoken woman. Just kind of a folksy lady who got things done. And people recognized her and respect her because of her "I can do this, " sort of thing. And now I see, maybe we're so oriented in

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gender specific things and trying to prove we're equal that you pick, have four males and four females, or five females, then let's change. We had a female director, let's have a male director. Uh, we spend so much time trying to (**SB**: Be politically correct?) Yes. That's it, and that's one of my favorite programs. [laughter]

SB: Yeah, me too, me too. Uh...let me see, oh, and were there any differences then, I mean you've just kind of put it in words.... current. But then with activities or treatment of wom-, girls and boys. Like I don't know, you know how girls and boys used to have separate...

PR: Well, they divided up some recreational activities. And they've a tendency to try and do that today. And I think it's kind of locked in with some of the recreation directors. Wait a minute, we're gonna finish in a minute. [speaking to someone at the door] come on in. No, come on in.

SB: Actually, I need to flip my tape over, so....

END SIDE 1 BEGIN SIDE 2

PR: Oh, okay, what I was saying was, there's a tendency to try and do that division 23 today by recreational staff. And the females are the ones who'll speak up. Some of the males will speak up and say, "We don't want to play separate games." We had a boxing, little tournament for recreation. Females were in there, too. But the females fought the females. But you know, and recognizing there's some limitations. But the females were fighting the females and it wasn't a knock-down, drag-out. It was more of a sport, kind of funny event. And now, I think staff is recognizing "Oh, we can't divide up like that." These young people know what they can and cannot do, and are willing to work to show that they have skills, too. They have equal skills and somewhat equal abilities on everything.

SB: Let me ask you this just real quickly. When you were at camp, and you said that they did separate [blank space] activities...

PR: Even baseball. I loved softball and whiffle ball, but I couldn't play it up here because there was only for the boys. (**SB**: Oh, I see) But on playgrounds at home, we could jump in and we'd

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have, you know, uh, a team for whiffle ball or softball and we'd grap whoever. You know, we wanted to win! And that was all that was important.

SR: That's great. Ok. Now, this is the overall, give me the importance of the camp to you in general, and I think you've pretty much hit on that in a number of ways. But if you wanted to try to put it in specifics, you know, just like in a short definition.

PR: Okay. In order for a child to grow, and to become productive and to consistently be the best that they can be, or at least strive to be, the child has to be nurtured. Nurturing means more than the food that may be offered on a menu downstairs, or.... And nurturing means more than saying, "Oh, good shot", or "did a good job, had a good game today." It also means letting that person know you need to know something about yourself. You need to be proud of your heritage. If it's warped, then we want to educate you. If it's incomplete, we want to fill in the spaces. Uh, and if you have questions, we're gonna try to answer them. And we can't, we hope that you'll pick up those questions, find the answers and bring them back. All those things make up a productive and a healthy person. If you don't know, there's one of the rap singers, the late Big E Smalls who was killed not-, several months ago, and though I'm not a subscriber to rap, I pick up things that students are listening-, you know, kids are listening to. Because you find good in some of everything. And one of the things he said, is if you don't know, know you know. Or if you don't know, you'd better ask somebody. And that's our message here. To take whatever you don't know and build on it. And once you know, pass it to somebody else, as you're growing along the way. And grow up to pass it on, because as you become a mature person, and you know what you can do, and you've got pride in yourself to achieve it, you can start feeding somebody else.

SB: That's wonderful, that's great. Uhm...and two more questions. One is just the perception of the camp to outsiders, to people outside of the camp, and I mean, obviously, we're in West Virginia. And maybe back then as to now.

PR: I think back then like now, it's a perception of, oh, it's a camp for black folks. And that's what I see.

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SB: And excuse my ignorance, but do you mean in the sense of, I mean, other than just general, do you perceive that as positive or negative? Do you think there might be a judgement?

PR: They're making a judgment. Not only a judgment about who the camp is open to, but a judgement about the [blank space] And too often if African American or black, or, or a gen-, not a gender, but a racial specific titles there, it's passed off as being less than. Uh, and because of that, as with most camps, we have, they have difficulty funding. But it takes a very courageous Caucasian or Hispanic young person to say "I'm going to that camp, because I like that music and I need to find out about it. Or I heard Stanley Spotswood come to my church and play. So, I want to go see what he has to offer, to teach me." That takes courage to do that, to throw aside all the preconceived notions. And hopefully, that strength that gets them here will be the same strength and encouragement they're gonna take back and say, "You got it all wrong."

SB: That's great, that's great. And finally, just if you wanted to tell any stories about the camp. I mean, I know you're running behind time. And you've told me a couple of things. And I just wondered if there was anything that stood out that you might want to....

PR: I don't think there's really anything else. The touching moment for me.... yeah, there's one. And I'm going to try and get through this very easily. It's a quickie. Mary McLeod Bethune and she's someone that we're using on our showcase piece. She's the first black, first black female advisor to the president. She founded the Cookman College in Florida with a dollar fifty cents and five students. Uh...she is an educator, an orator. She founded the American Council Negro Women, just an abundance of things ... penned a last will and testament before her death. And this was months and years before her death. And her legacy, it says, "I leave you love, love is helpful, it heals. Uh, you need to learn to love interracially, internationally, in order to prosper as a person. I leave you hope, I leave you a thirst for education." There are a lot of different things that it mentions. And it's always been one of my favorite pieces. And I saved that for the last [blank space] affirmation, with a bunch of kids that I still did not feel that I really knew. And I had these grandiose plans about going from person to person, you know, finding somebody to represent each one of those things, somebody who's always nurturing somebody. Or somebody

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who's always reading to learn more. So, I started out picking people, I leave you love, and love heals and I love you hope, I leave you racial dignity. And we had a white young man who was in my class. And it surprised him that I would pick, and I said, "I leave you racial dignity." And whatever the line is, whatever, you need to be aware-, you need to be the best that you can be and always be proud of where you've been. By the time I got to the end of it, and the final line is finally "I leave you a responsibility, young people", I was in tears. And I couldn't do it. And here it

SB: [inaudible]

PR: I mean, I was choked up. I had to stop and say, "I can't do this." And everybody was turned around, and all the kids were saying, "She's crying." And all the staff was moved. You know, it was just so unprepared. And that's when it occurred to me what this camp is. And now you messed up my eye makeup. [laughing] I'm sorry. But that, to this day, I can't tell anybody about that, without getting sloppy. You know, because it moved me so much. And some of those same people are still here, you know, coming every year. And tells the story, "Yeah, she was saying that and all of a sudden she just started crying."

SB: Yeah, but it is so moving, it really is. I can tell just even being here the short period, we've been today, everybody it's like a family.

PR: Yeah, it is, it really is.

SB: And I can see how that, you know, there seems to be such a personal touch. It's really been a wonderful experience, just being here a couple of hours. I can imagine...

PR: Well, it's easier tomorrow, because the students are doing it. I had Stacy rehearse this evening, I have a teacher assistant this year helping me. So, I said, "Look, I've rehearsed, I don't want to go through this piece one more time. You go through it this afternoon, we'll get 'em together later tomorrow morning before the final showcase." Because I said, I don't want to be wasted. But it just says everything, all of our hopes and dreams for everyone at the camp,

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every child who may come and every child who's been through it.

SB: Wow, well, that's just phenomenal.

END OF INTERVIEW