

The following interview was conducted with Rolonda Jones, For the Star City Treasures AmeriCorps history project. (Long pause) It took place on Tuesday May 23, at "F" Street Community Center. The interviewer is Blaine Lyons.

R Now Blaine tell me a little bit about where you grew up.

B Uh I grew up in Escondido, California. It's about 30 miles North of San Diego and about 10 miles from the beach.

R Ummmm nice. So how many siblings do you have?

B Seven. I have six brothers and one sister.

R okay. Uhh so did you have any family traditions? Such as certain things that you celebrated, certain celebrations?

B Uh. None really. Uh I just remember on Christmas we had a combination of ahh turkey and enchiladas and tamales for Christmas and Thanksgiving.

R Okay we'll get along. So tell me about your education, where did you?

B Uh I went to grammar school at Alvin M. Dunne (clears throat) grammar school in San Marcus, California. Uh graduated from there in 1960 from the eight-grade uhhh we had a graduation ceremony. And we bought class rings, sterling silver. Uhhh the nearest high school was in Escondido California. And it was a school of about 2,000 kids. Um I went there my freshman year. My sophomore year they built a new high school in San Marcus and I finished up high school at San Marcus.

R Oh, okay. So I noticed you said you graduated at the eights grade. So when you went to high school it started from the ninth to the twelfth?

B Right.

R Okay. Uhm Okay, okay. Uh so what all did you do to prepare for your profession today?

B Prepare for my profession today, what did I do? Uh-well schooling (pause) I suppose helped a little bit. But I went to school for architecture and special education. Uhm (pause) when I got into the social service, that mostly prepared me for what I doing today.

R Oh okay, okay okay.

B I worked thirty years as a counselor and program manager uh team leader for uhhh. We used to take kids out of the institution with special Ed children and adults and put em

apartments in the uh community. And I hired staff, and the staff were with em to teach em how to cook, do the laundry take care of the apartment. Umm I supervised about eight employees with eight kids and uh in Seattle, Washington for about, oh 14 years. Uhm supervisor at a workshop, getting contracts for about five years. And I worked at uhmm the state development center down in Beatrice. Uhm was a supervisor for about 5 years, Martin Luther Home for a coupla years. Uh. When I came back to Nebraska I worked uh in for another company here in town, Vital Services for about four years.

R Okay, okay. So what would you say was the most rewarding what was the rewarding for you doing that type of work?

B Uhm (PAUSE) It varies we had there were so many, I was involved in Special Olympics, with the kids. Uhm all my time working with um a, so there were (pause) successes and an kids uh doing well in Special Olympics and what they thought they couldn't do. An uh people being able to move out of the apartments and moving to apartments unsupervised by them selves. So there was many success I felt that made me feel good.

R Okay. So how did your parents feel about the type work that you were doing when you first started?

B (pause) Uhm (pause) well my parents are, uh my dad is deceased, my mom lives in California. Uhm (pause) I guess she felt fine with it. Um I've never really discussed it with her. But I've taken a couple of kids on uh vacation from Washington down to California with me and we've stopped in at my mom's and uh she ope ya know. Welcomed the kids with open arms and uh treated her like, like. Uh treated the kids like she was their mother so there weren't any uh problems or she didn't feel any strange being around them or anything like that.

R um-hum Okay, Okay. Now I forgot to ask you this earlier, but which number are you? In the

B One.

R In your. Oh you're number one

B I'm the first one.

R Oh wow. Okay. That's really great. Okay. So what made you, well first let me ask you uh tell me about you and family customs relating to marriage. When did you... when did you first get married.

B Uhm. I've been married twice. I first got married in around ' 72 we uh (pause) When I was in school. Uhmm. We came back, ... When I was living in L.A., and uh the girl. The woman was from Beatrice Nebraska, so that's how I ended up out here. I came back to Beatrice; got married uhmm went back to school moved back to Nebraska. Uh lived here

for uh about ten years, uhmm had two children uhmm. And got divorced and moved back to uh and I moved up to Washington. Uh pause) And the second marriage was moved to uh was married in Washington, lived uh out there for fourteen years. Uh my wife's parents are from Beatrice uhmm her father had a stroke; so we came back here ten or twelve years ago an been here ever since.

R Oh. Okay. Uh I'm gonna go back a little bit to your education. Uhmm and ask you, tell me how did you uh. What was your decision I mean what made you come to the decision to take the architect? And other courses you took there, the curriculums you took?

B Uhhh. Architecture, well when I was in junior high school uhh I read an article about Frank Lloyd Wright and I was very impressed by him. And start looking at everything, pictures, reading books about houses, and buildings he'd designed. And um and I was fairly good in art so I, I thought that that's what I wanted to do.

R Okay, Okay. So since you've been here in Lincoln, uh since you've moved here to Lincoln, the first time I would say. What did you think about Lincoln?

B I had no idea what it was like in Lincoln. I couldn't put anything, an idea together, because if I looked in a in a history book they showed people lived in sod houses. Uhh I had no idea what to expect in, in Nebraska. Uhm All I knew was that there was supposed to be a corn growing state. Uhm and cattle. But I had no reference to what it was like in Nebraska. Uhm I didn't really even know about the Cornhuskers uh so it was quite a culture shock when I moved out here. Uhh the first time we when we moved out we lived on a farm, ...one of her, my father-in-law farms. And uhh I worked in town and I had a '65 Mustang and I still had California license plates on it and I droove out, drove home in the evening aah a policeman, the county sheriff, used to follow me home every night. Until I switched my license plates. So

R Yeah, well their good for that, their good for that.

R Now uh tell me a little bit about your Mother.

B Uhm My mother her name is Frances Elizabeth and her uhmm she is uh, I hope I pronounce this as Juannino uh Indian, from California, Uh it was from Santa Barbara to San Diego is where the tribe, (pause) well I guess you would say that was their land. Uh we have uh records about my, I don't know Great-grand mother, she would about the uh from the 1700's. Uhm. (Pause) And my dad was from Partridge burg, West Virginia. So uh they met during the uh World War II. And uh he was in the Marine Corps and uh in World War II when he took training in San Diego. And was stationed in uh Oceanside where they uh (pause) had a boot camp in at San Diego and training in San Diego uh a Oceanside. And my mom lived in Fall Brook. And that's about oh, 40 miles from North from San northwest from Escondido. Where I was born. And uh, she's about 5 foot and my Dad was five foot seven. And on my Mom's side my grandfather was about, I don't know five six, five five. My grandmother was about five foot. Both of em uh were uh stocky, short and stocky. Dark hair. Uhm I met my (pause) After I got out of the service I

went to back to West Virginia, and spent some time with my grandfather and he's about five five. My dad's side. So he had some brother that was in the service from (pause) oh he spent forty years in service. And he had red hair and he's about six foot. So I'm about six foot and my sister is about five two and all my brothers err, except one he's as tall as I am all the rest are about five seven. So uh they were married, mom and dad were married when they were uh during the Korean War. So.

R Now do you remember as a kid or a child any special things that your mom made? In the type of craft or

B Crafts?

R Crafts or food or.

Be Uhhh uh (pause) You know I, I just think I I don't think it was anything special, but uh she used to make uh well because of of the Indian and Spanish thing they used to uh she used to make a lot of tortillas and beans and rice an things like that. She didn't like to but she did for ah. Uhm, and she made a type of fry bread, uh that (Pause) the Indians made, in California. Uh (pause) and I guess the fry bread, because they cut in a kind of a triangle shape and as opposed every other fry bread is round. But uh they made it; it's made the same it's just cut different. Uhm my grandmother used to be a medicine woman in the tribe, when she lived on the reservation. And she would get a lot of plants and make like the sun tea, and she would get I remember well if I had a cold when once in awhile she would ...We had a lot of eucalyptus trees in California and she would crush up the leaves and junk and uh, uh and do the whole thing with the hot water and inhaling it with, with that. Uhm (pause) my great, great, great, great, great, sometimes back in the 1700's anyway the Spanish when they came to map California had changed all the Indians names from their original Indian name to a Spanish surname. And uhhh they changed my grandparents name to uh Rivers or Rios. And then sometimes during the '50's I guess my grandfather changed it to Rivers. Uhm I think because of the, the Indians weren't, were considered to be mostly Hispanics and the Hispanics during, in the fifties and forties, in California was not a popular thing to do. So I thought. I think that's one reason he changed us. Yeah. To Rivers instead of Rios.

R Oh that's very interesting. So is there any one in the family, or did anyone in the family carry that name?

B Uhm, my uncles, still do. Uhm (Pause) and their live down on the reservation now. And so does my mom and my brothers. My sister and I are the only one that doesn't live on the reservation. Uhm I remember my great-grandmother living on the reservation, we had to visit her a few times. But it didn't really, I didn't really, like fit in. The, the Caucasians were like, treated me like I was Spanish. And the Spanish, treated me like I was a Caucasian and the Indian kids treated me like I was Caucasian. So it was kinda hard so I I didn't really fit in. Uh like accepted, uh and it's like the same thing in in uh. Like my Dad didn't like or didn't want my mother to teach us Spanish. Uhm so I guess

that's a little bit of prejudice on his part. So when I got in the service and hung around with people I picked up a little bit of Spanish. But the Hispanics in the in my company I didn't really hang around with them because they didn't like accept me, and so I, I. All my life my friends have been either Hispanic guys, or when I was growing up anyway. Uhm and white guys. Uhm (pause) For, yeah I don't know whether because I didn't Spanish or or what, but.

R Hum. Let me ask you again you probably said it but what tribe did you say your mother was.

B Juannino.

R Juannino

B It means Juan's children and that's from Juan Sierra. He was the uh priest that came over from Spain and they built the uh missions along California. Uh (Pause) so it was like to, when they did that it was like slave labor. Uh the same thing that the blacks went through the Indians in California went through. I mean if you didn't want to be building their churches or tend their stock and you ran away. To go back to live the way before the Spanish got there, If they caught you, they'd cut off a hand, cut off a foot, put you in chains, beat you with whips. Uh but, in the end you were supposed to be Juan's (Clears throat) Juan's children. Uh if I think I was a child and I was treated that way I'd certainly run away too. But, you know.

R Okay Blaine I want to thank you so much for this interview.