

Interview with Pennamma Cherucheril

Interviewed by Polly Sonifer

**Interviewed on July 22, 1993
at Mrs. Cherucheril's West St. Paul home**

PS: Pam, could you tell us first, what area of India you came from?

PC: I came from the southwest part, a state called Kerala. Kerala means "lands of coconuts." I was born in a small village, probably 600 people or something like that. Everyone knew everyone. I grew up like that. I came here shortly after finishing high school back in 1959. I came here about mid-September to study nursing.

PS: And how old were you at the time?

PC: Sixteen. My sister who was 18 at that time also came with me - the two of us came together. We were two frightened young girls leaving our home village for the first time. We had never traveled anyplace by ourselves. About a month before we were to leave, our parents told us, "Why don't you go and visit your uncle who lives about 40 miles away." We had to find our own way to get there. We had to transfer buses two times and also cross a very large lake by boat. So we did that, and we were scared to death, and we finally got there, and we made our way back. Our parents were just sitting there anxiously waiting for us to get back. Then they felt somewhat relieved that we can maybe make this trip all the way to the United States.

PS: How did you parents decide that you should study nursing in the United States?

PC: The reason was that my uncle was in Milwaukee studying at Marquette in the early 50's and then he had met the director of the nursing school in Marshfield, Wisconsin, a small town of maybe about 10,000 people. Maybe more than that. Anyway, it was a farming community and they had quite a large hospital in that central location in Wisconsin. They became friends, and he thought that we might like to study nursing in this country. In those days, very few people had the opportunity to go to a different country and study. So, we applied, and we did get admission. So that's how we came to studying nursing. We had no idea what we wanted to study after high school. So then, when he said

this and we thought, "Well, it sounds pretty good."

PS: So, you had never thought about becoming a nurse before?

PC: Never.

PS: How about your sister?

PC: Neither did she.

PS: Did you leave any siblings behind in India?

PC: Yes, 10 children in the family. My sister is the oldest, and I'm the second in the family. At that time, I think there were nine of us. One more was born after we left. So, we came from a large family.

PS: Did your siblings, any of them leave India after high school?

PC: No, they didn't. All the others finished college or at least part of it before they left. Eight of us are in this country now. Two of them live in India.

PS: Was it somewhat unusual for your parents to send a 16 and 18 unmarried girls to the United States?

PC: Oh, yes, it was very unusual. They were quite afraid. They were scared to let us go that far by ourselves. But they had so much faith in my uncle. He said that would be all right. We were going to a small town and to a school where the sisters ran the school...

PS: So, this was a Catholic school?

PC: This was a Catholic school and we are Catholics. So, my uncle said that they would take very good care of us, he assured them that there would not be any problem whatsoever. So, then, my uncle of course, knew them quite well. That's the reason they sent us.

PS: So, tell me, what it was like leaving.

PC: Oh, that was terrible. I don't even know if I have the words to describe the feeling. I was actually hoping and praying that something would happen so that I wouldn't get the passport, or maybe I wouldn't get the ticket, or maybe I would have some sort of an accident where I would be in bed for a few months or something. And I wouldn't have to

leave. I always thought that I probably would go after finishing college. I had started college actually, and I had so much fun in college because I was staying in the dormitory and I wanted to finish and I was hoping that somehow it would be delayed so I could finish and I would be older. But I didn't tell them that because I thought, then again, if I passed it up I might not have another opportunity to go to the United States. Secretly I was hoping that I might not have to go.

PS: But you did anyway. Do you remember the day you left?

PC: Yes, I do. Very well. The day before, so many people came to the house to say good-bye to us. It was sad. It was like somebody died and leaving forever. It was a very different experience that I had never had. I felt like some part of me was going to be gone. It is really difficult to describe.

Then, I didn't sleep all night. In the morning, we went to church and before noon we left by taxi. My father and my cousin came with us. We had to take the train to Bombay. From there we were to fly to Chicago. We knew that we would end up staying in Bombay for two weeks or so because there was some problem with our reservation. I don't remember what it was. But, we ended up staying something like three weeks in Bombay. They made arrangements with a friend who was living in Bombay to help us get through all this so we could get on the plane and leave. In the meantime, we stayed in the YWCA in Bombay. My father and cousin had to go back home. They stayed with us for several days and then they left us. That was a terrible moment. We felt really alone at that time. But, we still had some consolation that this fellow who was a friend of the family could help us. But that was the first time we were ever on our own living in a place away from home with nobody with us.

PS: Except each other.

PC: Right.

PS: What is your sister's name?

PC: Her name is Allie.

PS: So you were on a student visa?

PC: Yes, we were on a student visa and the program was for three years. We had no idea what we would find because we knew very little English at that time. We had some English

in school, but we never learned how to speak. So, if anybody asked us anything, we didn't understand anything. Especially, the European people when we were traveling. We didn't understand their accent and we also didn't know how to say correctly in English what we were doing. We would listen to them very carefully, and then whatever we understood, we tried to translate into Malayalam, which is our local mother tongue. And then try to answer in English. It was so confusing and we got all mixed up. That was really scary -- not being able to communicate.

PS: When you arrived in Chicago, what happened?

PC: It was interesting. I'll never forget an experience we had during the trip. We had to change our planes in London, so somehow, we made it to London but all the way we were scared to death. We both couldn't eat anything and couldn't sleep very much and we didn't know what would happen when the plane landed. I think we had a couple of stops in between, but I really don't remember. We got to London. It was at night. We were sort of wandering around because we knew we had to go to a different location to get to the next plane. We knew we had several hours there. We didn't know how to ask anybody for directions. We just looked around and we were walking back and forth looking at signs, and all of the sudden a fellow who was an employee of one of the airlines walked over to us and spoke to us in Malayalam. We thought "Whew, what a welcome relief!" And we wanted to just grab him and keep him, but he said he was on duty and had to leave shortly. So, he told us where we should go to get the next plane. And he said, "You'll have several hours and you'll be really hungry." He gave each of us a meal ticket. Apparently he worked for the same airline we traveled by - I think it was Air India - anyway, he gave us each a ticket and he took us to a restaurant that was right in the airport, which was close by. He told us, "Just tell the waiter what you want." He couldn't stay with us, so he had to leave.

The waiter came and said something we didn't understand. He gave us each a menu, and we looked at that and just pointed to something that said chicken. That was the only thing we recognized. He brought the meal, and I'll never forget; it was baked chicken, but it had absolutely no flavor, and peas and mashed potatoes, and a bun. And the dessert came later.

We didn't know what to do with this chicken. We saw salt and pepper, so we put some of that, and we tried to eat, and we could not eat it. We were scared to death, and we looked at each other and thought "Oh no, if we could only be home now." So, we kind of picked at it and looked around and saw

what the other people did. We just wanted to go. There was coffee, so we had some coffee. Then he (the waiter) came back and said something, and we didn't know what he was saying. Now that I think back, I think he was asking if we wanted dessert. But we didn't understand anything. Finally, we started to leave, we thought it was the end, and we gave him our meal tickets. And then we picked our bag and started to walk out. All of the sudden, we could hear someone yelling, and we thought, "Who is this?" And we looked back and here this waiter was coming after us. And we thought, "Oh no, is he going to charge us money?" We had some dollars, not very much, maybe \$10 or 15 each and we thought, "Oh no, he's going to ask us for money and maybe we don't have enough money. Maybe the man who gave us tickets didn't give the right tickets or whatever." So we thought, "Let's get away from him." So, we ran away as fast as we could. Here he was running all the faster and saying something that we couldn't figure out. All of the sudden, we thought, "We can't get away, and he had something in his hand." There he was, we had left our passports at this restaurant. He was telling us, "You need your passports. You'd better have this!" So that's why he was running after us, and we were so thankful that he did that.

So, then, finally got to the place where we were supposed to wait, and then there was some problem with the next plane. They had us all aboard, and then told everybody to come out, because they apparently had some engine problem. Then, we were just sitting there and we didn't know what to do or what would happen next. We had no idea. Even if we asked somebody, we knew that we wouldn't understand what they were saying anyway. Then, this elderly couple from Chicago came to us and told us their names and asked us where we were going. We showed them our tickets and passports so they knew we were going to Chicago and they said they were going to the same place. We communicated enough to understand that they were going the same place. They told us, "Just stay with us." and we felt like they were guardian angels. So, we just stuck right with them and boarded with them. Finally we both fell asleep. When we woke up, we didn't eat anything there. We really didn't like any of the food they gave us. When we woke up again we had blankets on us and these people were coming and asking if we were okay. We said yes. After we arrived in Marshfield, somebody sent us a paper clipping about a bad storm on the way over the Atlantic. It spoke of how people were frightened, and of course, we didn't know any of those things. We slept through everything!

PS: That was lucky.

PC: That was lucky. So, we got to Chicago. There were some people from Kerala, we didn't know them, but our family knew them, and one was a priest. We had written to these people ahead to meet us there. We came out of the airplane and we had to fill out this form for Customs and we didn't know how to fill it out. So they detained us. They told us to fill it out. They came and told us and told us numerous times, "Do you understand?" and we said "No" and they repeated the same thing again, and we kept saying "No". Finally, we thought, "We'll have to get rid of these people, because if we keep saying no they'll keep on asking us", so finally we said "Yes" and they left. Pretty soon, they came back and we still didn't fill it out. We didn't know that's what they wanted us to do. So, they went out and found these people who were waiting for us and let one of them come in and he filled it in. Then we finally got out.

This priest, of course, couldn't let us stay where he was staying, so he had made arrangements for us to stay with an American family. So, he took us to this family. We went by bus, and we had dinner with them, and then the priest left. He said, "They'll take you to the airport tomorrow."

We had to fly to Steven's Point, Wisconsin the next day. Since we couldn't communicate, so we didn't know what went on. They told us where to sleep, they motioned to us, "This is for sleeping", they put their hands over their heads. In India, we very seldom used blanket and the mattresses were so different. We didn't know there was this one layer that you had to open up and lay on. So, we laid on top and then we got cold and didn't get covered up. Somehow the night went through. We didn't eat the food they gave us, but we ate fruits and pastries that they had. In the morning we had coffee and they took us to the airport.

When we got to Steven's Point, Sister Edith came and got us. She was the director of the school. Of course, we couldn't communicate. She was telling us things and was very kind and smiling. I was wearing a sari, I'll never forget, there was a pin on top where you gather and put it over your shoulder. One of the pinhead had come open and she noticed that, so she picked it up and put it on me, but she didn't realize she was poking me right through the skin. I didn't say anything because I didn't know the right word to say "Stop, it hurts." So, I just sat there wondering if I could endure this. After a while I said "Oh" and then she realized. Even that little thing, I didn't know what word to use.

So, finally we got to school and that was a weekend. The

cafeteria at that time wasn't open. I don't know what the deal was, but she took us to the housemother who had made a meal for us. She made chili. I think it was the spiciest thing she knew how to make. Of course, it wasn't very hot and we didn't like any of the food she gave us, except fruit and ice cream. We liked the sweet things, so we had all that. It was real scary. We wanted to send a telegram home telling them that we had gotten there safe, but of course, we didn't know how to ask them that. So, we used the word telegram and Sister told us something. We didn't understand what it was. I think she was trying to tell us that we would do it in the morning. But we told her again "telegram" the next day, and I think finally I she sent a telegram home to let them know that we got here okay. Then, of course, we wrote them a long long letter.

We were already three weeks late for school, then. The school already started the first week of September and not knowing the language, they didn't know where to fit us for classes. They knew that we couldn't start the regular classes with the other students. So, Sister had her secretary type a page full of English words for us. Every single day she would bring us a new set of words and she wanted us to learn all those by heart, look up the meaning and know what it meant. She gave us a dictionary. We had no opportunity to speak our own language, Malayalam here because there were no other people who spoke it here. We had to just do the best we could, so we were sort of forced to learn English. So, I think it took us probably a month to learn, but she was very kind and really patient with us.

They let us go in the class and just sit there so we could get used to the lectures and get to know all the other students. We didn't know what they were saying. I think it took us probably at least three months before we could understand what they were talking about in the classrooms.

PS: Were you the only foreign students at the school?

PC: We were the only two foreigners in the whole town! And it was a new thing for the people in town, because, I think a few days after we got there (or maybe it was a month, I can't remember) the newspaper came out and there was this picture on the front page of these two foreign students coming off the plane and Sister was meeting us at the plane.

This was in the newspaper and we were really surprised. And they talked to us and wanted to know about our trip, but of course, we couldn't say much. So, I think Sister told them what we went through and they sort of wrote that up. Later that year, around Easter time, they came and interviewed us and wanted to know about how we celebrate the

holidays in India and the differences.

Sister took us shopping one day to buy bed linen and things that we needed, so apparently they came and took a picture, so that was in the paper. We were really news to the people.

People hadn't really seen anyone other than Western people in that town. Anytime we went with a sari on and walked down the street, the cars would stop and look at us.

PS: Was that uncomfortable for you?

PC: Well, that was, because we were not used to anything like that. We were the only people who were different in the whole town. A lot of people invited us to their homes. On Sunday when we went to church, everybody would look at us. It was kind of a new experience. Sometimes, you felt like somebody important, like somebody with status, because everybody's looking at you, and other times we felt (especially at that age) so different.

PS: You just want to blend in.

PC: Yes, you want to blend in so bad, you want to be like the rest of the people. I think if it was in a big city, it might have been different. If there were people from different ethnic backgrounds, it might have been different.

The students, too, were curious. Many of them would come and ask us about our culture, our way of dressing, and our food. They were really interested. Sister had gathered all the students together before we came, and told them not to use the term "Holy cow!" because they didn't know if we worshipped cows or not. They told us that. Because a lot of people didn't know. Many people had the idea that since we were born in India that we lived in the jungle and we didn't have any beds, we had little huts and things like that....

PS: And you all had pet tigers.

PC: Yes, yes, and elephants were roaming around the streets and that type of thing.

PS: Did they talk with you about those things so you could correct?

PC: Yes, many of them talked to us about it, but of course, we had a real difficult time without communication in the beginning. But, I think that was a good way to learn the language. I'd say that in six months or so, we were able to talk pretty well.

PS: That was pretty quick.

PC: Yes, I think it was, because, like I said, we made a real effort, my sister and I, to talk to each other in English. We thought, well, we don't care if we make mistakes. I think that helped us.

PS: How did you get used to eating the food?

PC: I think gradually we did. Then we started to go through the cafeteria line, people got to know us so well, they would ask us, "What is this?" They made us tell them what we wanted to teach us the names of food. We would try small amounts of different things, and eventually we sort of learned to like different things. At first we ate ice cream, apples, bananas, grapes, and things like that.

PS: A very balanced diet!

PC: Right! I liked milk. Oh, my sister didn't like milk. She doesn't like milk. So eventually, I think we learned to like the food, but we craved for Indian food.

PS: And you couldn't cook any?

PC: We couldn't cook any because we were at the dormitory. There was a kitchen there, but you couldn't get any of the spices. They were not available. I think after about a year, the Sisters asked us if we wanted to cook something. We decided to cook a chicken. We had never cooked back in India because when we were growing up we had so many little sisters and brothers that my mother said, "You just take care of one of the kids." She never expected us to help with any of the cooking, so neither one of us knew how to cook. We had to just guess what went into what. So, when they asked us to cook, we decided to cook a chicken. We knew we could get curry powder, and then red pepper and some garlic and onions. We used all the right ingredients we could get and we cooked it, and it was fairly good. You know, after a year, anything like that tasted good to us.

So, then, we made a trip to Chicago a year later to visit these friends who were in Chicago who were from Kerala. So, during vacation, Sister made sure that we had a chance to go. She took us to the train depot and we went by train. We spent a couple weeks with them, and we really enjoyed that because they made all the Indian food there. We really had a good time.

PS: Did you get some spices from them too?

PC: I think we brought some spices back and we learned how to cook some things too. That was a good experience.

PS: You passed your first winter a few months after you came. How was your first winter?

PC: We looked forward to seeing the snow because we had never seen the snow. When the winter came, it was extremely cold. Of course, it was a surprise how cold it got. I never thought it would get that cold. I think because we were so young, we were able to adjust pretty fast. I think it was about a mile to go into town and we had to walk because none of the students had any cars. So on Saturdays, if we wanted to do any shopping, we walked into town. All the students lived at the dormitory. Nobody had a car, and all of us walked so we learned to walk in the wintertime. I don't remember adjusting to the winter being particularly hard.

I do remember the first time we saw snow. We went outside and felt it and touched it and held it in our hand. That was exciting!

PS: Is it still?

PC: Oh, no! Not anymore.

PS: How did you keep in touch with your family back in India?

PC: We wrote letters. That was the only way we could communicate in those days.

PS: They didn't have a telephone.

PC: They didn't have a telephone. Even if they had a telephone, we wouldn't have reached them. But it was very difficult to reach in those days. We didn't have a satellite and all that. We never talked to them for years.

PS: When was the first time you went back?

PC: We went back five years later, after we graduated and worked for a couple of years. Then we went for a visit.

PS: Why don't you tell me about how your family valued education, formal education?

PC: Very much so. My parents both did not have college

education. My father didn't finish high school. He wanted to, but his father wanted him to quit school and take care of the family farm. My father had an older brother who was college educated and he had a job which took him away from home. I think he taught in colleges, and he was so involved in the religious affairs that he gave talks and traveled a lot, so my dad's father didn't want his second son to be college educated and be away. He really sort of forced him to quit high school. My father missed that, and he always said, "I'm going to make sure my kids go to college." He would sort of insist, it was made clear from day one that you would go to college. Not all of us finished college, but he wanted us to at least start, and he encouraged us. Some did finish.

PS: And your mother as well?

PC: My mother as well. In those days, not very many women or even men from Kerala finished college. Among women, there were very few who went to college in those days. She didn't finish high school. They had two different school systems. In one you had more English and in the other you didn't. My father was in the one where you learned more English. My mother was in the one where you learned more native language. So, my mother didn't finish high school. She went as far as most women went those days. Well, not most women. Those who are fairly educated went up to high school or some of high school. Then she got married. My parents got married quite young.

PS: Was it part of the Catholic tradition in India that there would be an arranged marriage?

PC: Oh, yes, it was the tradition in Kerala, and in India generally. In Kerala too, all the marriages were arranged. Once you are done with school, then the next step is the marriage. So, they got married quite young.

PS: But, you didn't get married. Did you find that the education that you got both in India and at Marshfield in Wisconsin was sufficient for you?

PC: No. When I went into nursing, actually, I didn't like going into nursing. When I started, at that time there was a stigma of nursing, at least in Kerala. Only poor people would go into nursing because it was considered a menial task. But, my parents would probably not have let us go into nursing in India. Since it was in the United States, they thought it was better and then we could go on to something different and better. If we really liked it, we

would have the opportunity here, whereas in India, we wouldn't. I didn't like nursing. This was my idea too about nursing because that's what you hear. I finished school, and I still didn't especially like it, but I enjoyed many of the classes. Then I started to work and liked working with people. I liked it better and better as I worked into it more. But, then I wanted to go back to school again. This was a diploma program, and eventually I did get my degree.

PS: So, your first job was right after you finished nursing school.

PC: That was in Marshfield where I went to school. In those days, it was just a given that after you graduated, you would stay there and work. There was no such thing as not having a job.

PS: So, there was a hospital right there?

PC: Yes, right there where we trained.

PS: What sort of nursing did you do?

PC: It was a general sort of nursing where we had everything: pneumonia, heart attack, stroke, you name it, it was a medical floor.

PS: So, that wasn't much of a transition, I wouldn't think for you.

PC: No, it wasn't. So the type of training we had there wasn't really a lot of theory. It was more a practical sort of thing. By the time you graduated, you were ready to work as a nurse. Whereas now it is different. Now, you get a lot of theory and you don't have quite as much clinical experience when you finish.

PS: Were you an RN when you finished?

PC: No, I wasn't until I passed the State Board Exam, then I was an RN.

PS: Any vivid memories from your first job as a nurse?

PC: My first work as a nurse was actually during my training at school. It was sort of like getting a job too, because you are given a lot of responsibilities of an RN while being a student nurse. It was very very different when I started because we had to give report to the next

shift nurses. You have to talk about your patients. There were so many things that I had to get used to. Dealing with sick people was something I had to get used to. And being from a different culture, I had to learn how to deal with people from a different culture and that was quite different. I always felt comfortable dealing with older people in their 70's and 80's. They were much more patient and more generous and kind and gave you the time. It seemed like they were easier to deal with than younger people.

I don't remember a lot about my work being particularly difficult. At that age, I think being so young, the thing that I had to adjust to was that a lot of the girls had boyfriends, and of course, my sister and I didn't and we didn't dare to go with any boys. Because that was not our system; it was not what we were used to. We felt uncomfortable. When weekends came, most people had dates. In Marshfield there was nothing to do except go to bars. So they would go for dances and many of them would tell us, "Why don't you come and you'll have a good time." We went a few times, but we felt extremely uncomfortable especially to drink liquor. There was nothing to do, and you had to drink something when you got there. And we never danced, and it just was a very uneasy feeling to go, so eventually we just didn't go for that type of thing. We went to parties at home, but not to the bars. I think it was just in our background that it was not a very nice thing for girls to do.

PS: Deep inside, you didn't even want to have a boyfriend?

PC: At times, I thought, it would be nice to know a boy, just to say that I had a boyfriend. But I didn't really feel comfortable to date someone. On a one-on-one basis, I didn't know if I could handle this. So, we sort of avoided that type of situation. And they had prom every year. Our friends would say, "Well, I know so and so, and if I arrange, would you go on a prom date with him?" and we said "No". We always volunteered to serve punch. We would be involved, and yet not involved like many other people.

PS: Was that safer?

PC: Yes, that was safer.

PS: Where there any other cultural values like that which were real sharp distinctions for you from India?

PC:, No, I can't think. This was the major thing -- it was a big thing. This was the highlight - the only thing that

girls at this age talked about. All they talked about was how nice their boyfriends were and they were dreaming of getting married and it seemed like it was the norm those days for women; you finish school, you have your career, and you get married. Many of them were already making plans to get married a week after graduation with a wedding date set, and all that. And here we were, we didn't have any of that.

At times, it was real difficult. Especially on weekends when most people were gone. Maybe two or three who didn't have any boyfriends stayed back -- otherwise almost all of them did. That was a difficult thing to deal with, I would say. You feel awkward all the time.

PS: You want to fit in, but you don't....

PC: Right, you want to fit in and I thought, well I wish I had a boyfriend. I wish I had known maybe somebody from India. There was nobody around from India, but then I thought it would be nice to have somebody at a distance. Just to say I have somebody.

PS: Make up somebody "back home"?

PC: Right.

PS: How do you think your life would have turned out differently if you had finished your nursing and gone back to India?

PC: I don't know if I could adjust. It would have been really difficult I think if I would have gone back by the time we finished. We often thought about that in the beginning. We would finish and then go back there. By the time we finished three years later, we adjusted quite well.

We kind of liked this lifestyle. Then I thought, if I go back and live there, I'm not sure if I would work there as a nurse.

PS: How did you parents feel about that?

PC: They were okay with that.

PS: Had they expected that you would stay on?

PC: I think they sort of expected that. At the time we left, we really didn't know what the future held. We didn't know what would happen in the long term, and nobody discussed it. We never talked about it. They said, when you're finished with it you can come back or you can go on to school there, or do something else. That was sort of an

unfinished ending. We never talked about it -- I never even thought about what would happen later. But, some of the things my sister and I discussed were that we really didn't like the thought of never going back there. We thought, "We'll spend several more years here and eventually probably get married to somebody who is educated and go back there and have some nice jobs or something." That's what we were thinking at that time.

PS: So, the person you were imagining marrying was an Indian person?

PC: Yes, an Indian person, somebody who would be educated with a great job, and then, eventually probably go back and live there. So, you know, we'd have good enough jobs so we could have pretty good living, but then as the years went by, it was more unrealistic. Especially after we made a trip back home, we realized the difference, the contrast, and that we would be kind of going backwards. Then we realized it would be difficult to have the same lifestyle in India and I thought I probably would live here most of my life. But, I still kept thinking, "Maybe I'll go back there someday after we have children." I always had that thought until maybe ten years ago. Then I realized that the children were born here, this is the place they know. They'll never go back there. And I had lived most of my life here by then so I thought, "Well, I'm more comfortable here, because I no longer knew very many people back home like I did years ago when I was growing up." So, I'm sort of a stranger when I go home now. I don't know very many people like I used to. I feel more comfortable here now.

PS: Were there changes when you went back after five years in India that surprised you?

PC: Well, people changed. They had gotten older and many had moved away. Like I said, I don't know many people. Life was changed in India too. It is more modern now. In Kerala anyway. When I grew up we didn't have any electricity in the house. We didn't have running water or a radio. Now, we have just about everything imaginable where I grew up at my parent's house. They have a TV, VCR, radio, microwave, you name it. It is a new house now, a modern house. It's quite nice there. But, everything is very expensive and things are not as readily available. Health care is not very good there. When I went there, one of my kids got sick, and I realized I really appreciated the health care here in this country very much. You have so many choices here and there, your hands are really tied. It's very hard.

PS: Tell me about how you came to be married, then.

PC: Well, my sister moved to Minneapolis then. We met some Indian people here. There were several men that we met, but nobody that we really wanted to go with as boyfriend or anything.

PS: These were Indian men?

PC: They were Indian men. Also, when I was in Chicago to visit those friends, they introduced us to some fellows who were single people. But I never really met anybody that I really liked or wanted to have a relationship with. I always thought, "Well, my parents will make the best choice for me from India." So, that's what I told them. I was old enough by that time, I was 23, 24, and they wrote to me about my husband. My uncle (who was a priest here many years before) and my husband's uncle (who was also a priest) they knew each other and my parents asked my uncle if he knew anybody for me to marry.

In Kerala, the marriages are arranged between two families who know about the family background a lot. You don't just go to a community where you don't know anybody. It's usually a family that you know pretty well. That's where you pick from. So, my uncle knew that my husband's uncle had this nephew who would probably be a good match for me. So they talked about it, and they both thought it was a good idea. So, my husband's uncle, the priest, wrote to me. My parents also talked about it. My father and mother went to see my husband.

PS: So, he was living in India at the time?

PC: Yes, he was living in India. He had finished graduate school and he was teaching in a college. They went and met him, and met his family and talked to them. They really liked him, and they wanted to know about him. They gave my husband's family my pictures and told them a lot about me. My husband's family inquired to find out as much as they could about me. Normally, when the marriages are arranged, the couples will have a chance to see each other. They can see each other as many times as they want, and then they decide whether they like each other or not. If they don't, then, of course, the parents will drop it, and look for somebody else. Since we were in two different countries, we couldn't do that. So, my parents wrote to me about him. Living in this culture, by then, I was also scared. I didn't know what I was getting into and I wanted to see the person and know the person a little bit before I made up my

mind.

When this proposal came, my husband said, "Hey, she's living in another country. I don't know how I can make up my mind fast like that." So they said, "Okay, you don't have to make up your mind. You can go there." So, he could only come as a student here. So, he got admission here to go to school. They told us also that we could write to each other. So, his uncle wrote to me first and then I wrote to his uncle back, and then eventually, he said "why don't you both write to each other? Then you will have a chance to get to know each other." So, we did, for about two years. And then, by that time, my husband got the admission here.

He came with the understanding that after we met, if we didn't want to, we wouldn't get married. But, after two years, we felt like we kind of got to know each other pretty well. And I kind of felt like he was the one for me, and he felt the same way. We had exchanged pictures and we learned about each other. But, still, when you see the person, it's different. I still remember, he came to the airport that day to New York. My sister by that time had moved to New Jersey. She was married and they had two children. So, they picked him up at the airport in New York, and he stayed with them for one day and came the next day. Then he called me and I finally heard his voice. We talked and the next day he came. I was real nervous and he said he felt the same way. And I was staying with a family (an elderly couple) at that time, and they treated me like their own kid. I asked her to do the driving when we went and picked him up because I was too nervous to go by myself. So she drove. We went to the airport and picked him up. I liked him right away when I saw him. And he said he felt the same way too.

Of course, I had made the wedding arrangements. I knew it would take some time to arrange a wedding. So, I thought I would do that....it's easier to cancel than not have the arrangements made. I went and talked with a priest and he couldn't believe it when I told him I hadn't met him yet. So, it took me a while to convince him.

PS: This was an American priest?

PC: This was an American priest. I tried to explain all the cultural differences and all that, and he said, "Well, you are not 17 or 18 year old who is just getting married, and I think I'll believe you." So, I have the date all set up and everything was done.

My husband came in the evening and we stayed up all night and talked and before we knew it was morning. We couldn't wait to find out about each other, there was so much to talk about. Then, in the morning that was the day I was supposed to go and see the priest and tell him for sure. My husband asked me if I had any doubts and I said, "No" and I asked him the same thing and he said he had no doubts, so we went and talked to the priest and 20 days later we were married.

PS: Wow! Did your family come from India?

PC: No, you see, my sister from New Jersey was the only family I had here. Of course, they were here and my friends here. My husband didn't know anybody here.

PS: Did you and he talk to each other in English?

PC: We talked to each other in Malayalam.

PS: Did he speak English?

PC: He spoke English very well, because he had finished college and graduate school, all the classes were in English at that time. It was really no problem, his English was better than mine was.

PS: But, you chose to use Malayalam as your primary language between each other.

PC: Yes, yes.

PS: So you were married at 26?

PC: I was 25 and he was 27.

PS: And he was then a student at which school?

PC: He was a student at St. Thomas College. He was studying for his teaching degree. It's called MAT - a Master of Arts in Teaching. So, he did another master's degree there and then he got his certification after that, and then he started to teach and he teaches at Cretin-Durum Hall High School in St. Paul.

PS: He's still teaching there?

PC: Yes.

PS: Did you support him during that time or did your

families support you?

PC: While he was going to school I supported him because I was working full time.

PS: Where were you working at that time?

PC: At that time I was working at St. Mary's Hospital which is where I am now.

PS: Very stable.

PC: Very stable. I'm not a person to move around that much. It's not St. Mary's anymore, Fairview bought it out, but its the same building. So, I've been there for many years.

PS: What kind of nursing do you do now?

PC: Now, I work in the premature nursery, taking care of premature babies. I enjoy that very much.

PS: Little babies, little, bitty babies. So, your wedding was a fairly Catholic wedding. Did you have any traditional Indian elements in it at all?

PC: No, because there weren't many Indian people at all. Well, actually only my sister and we knew a few Indian people. So, it was very difficult to incorporate that. The only different thing was the "thali" that my husband put around my neck. It's this little pendant. (*referring to what she was wearing around her neck*) Christians have a cross on it and Hindus have some other religious symbol on it. Sometimes they have a stone, other times they have a picture of a Hindu goddess or something. This is a symbol of marriage for women. It is a very small, heart-shaped pendant. Instead of a chain, you use a thread that is taken from the bride's sari and you hook the thread through it and it is tied around the brides' neck. We didn't have the thread and I didn't know quite how to do it. It was just the two of us who knew about it. So, we decided to use just a necklace. He had brought the necklace from India and he put it on me. That was the only thing that was different.

PS: Do you have any regrets that you didn't have more Indian things?

PC: No, that was fine. But we feel of course, if there were a lot of Indian people we would have done it the Indian way. So, I don't really have any regrets.

PS: Tell me about your children, then.

PC: Okay, we have a son and two daughters. The son, George, is the oldest, he is now 24 years old and graduated from college and is now working for the state as an auditor.

Our daughter, Ann, she's in college and she'll graduate in December. Then the third one is Maria and she's sixteen years old and in high school. She is a junior now. The children of course were born here and raised here, and we speak not just Malayalam, we speak both languages. The two older ones, George and Ann know a little bit of Malayalam, they know how to speak, but they have a heavy accent. They all can understand everything, but they have a harder time talking back in Malayalam.

PS: It's nice to have children who "*can't talk back!*"
(laughter)

PC: Or answer, I should say, not talk back! (laughter)

PS: What was it like trying to raise children and teach them Indian values and the cultural aspects?

PC: What we tried to do was give them the best of both cultures. So, it is really difficult to raise children just the Indian way. I think it is difficult when you live in one community and give them only the values of another community. It's confusing for the kids and it is difficult.

So we tried to teach them both: to have respect for both. Also, that they can't forget the rules. I think it is important for kids to have a sense of identity and if they don't know the rules, they won't have that stability. So, we always told them about our history.

PS: The history of India?

PC: The history of not so much India, as our own particular culture. You see, we belong to a small group called the Knanites in Kerala state. Knanite community is a very small community and the history says that somebody by the name Thomas Cana came from the Middle East to India in 34 SAD. He brought a group of people and we are supposedly the descendants of that group, so we are called Knanite Christians. There are Catholics and Jacobites; these are two different groups. But our customs are quite different from the other Catholic groups in India. We have distinct histories and this is passed on from generation to generation. There are songs and our wedding ceremony is slightly different from other Catholic weddings in India.

Now, more people have marriages outside of this community, but before, when I was young, it was forbidden. You could only marry within your community. In fact, my sister in New Jersey married somebody from outside the community. She met her husband here. He is a Catholic and he is from Kerala, but my parents strongly objected to that because he is not a Knanite. So, there were some problems. All the arranged marriages are done only within the community. But, I would say now, the last 10 years or so, some people are going outside the community.

PS: How big of a population was the community when you were young?

PC: We have a separate diocese for this community alone. I don't even know, you'll have to ask my husband. (Husband confirmed that the community at this time is approximately 120,000 people in India.) It's a large community.

PS: So, it's a pretty big pool of people. Okay. I was thinking about inter-marrying, if you get too closed in....

PC: No, it's not that small, but sometimes it gets difficult when you arrange marriages to match people. That's why they are going out of the community. So, maybe its not as large as I'm thinking.

We do have a convention here in New York in the first week of July called the North American Knanaya Catholic Convention. I think there were 4,000 people who attended that.

PS: And they are all Indians?

PC: They are all Knanites, Indians just from this particular community who live here in this country.

PS: Wow. That's amazing.

PC: Yeah and the community is still going strong in India as well. We have our own bishop. Of course, he is under the jurisdiction of all the other church hierarchies, but this particular bishop and his diocese is just for the Cananite.

PS: And there is no Knanaya community any place else other than the one that started in India and spread all over the world?

PC: No. I don't know exactly a lot of history about it. My husband is a real good historian at that.

PS: We'll get him next. (laughter)

PC: Okay.

PS: You mentioned values; that you tried to teach your children the best of both values. What do you see as the best values of the Knanite community and of the US society?

PC: Well, the Knanite community, the best values, I really don't know compared to other Catholics and other people. Just being a Knanite, you are sort of brought up with the feeling that you are a Knanite, so you are a really important person. You belong to this group. You are a good person. Nobody else is as good as you. Sort of the feeling you get when you grow up. But realistically a Knanite person is no different from anybody else, but the values that we try to teach our kids are what we learned.

The main thing is to respect the older people. It is a tradition back in India that you don't call anybody older than you by their first name. So, always call them "uncle" or "aunt", or there are terms in our language to use for that. So, when we came here, anybody who was older than them, they were automatically called uncle or aunt. They were not related to us, but that's what they did. So that's what they learned.

We also tried to teach them that in India, when a younger person is sitting down, older person comes into the room, you all stand up. It's a show of respect and sort of a greeting. So we taught them that.

Respect authority. We were spanked a lot when we grew up back in India. That is one way of disciplining the kids rather than punishing them other ways - giving allowance (we don't have allowances back there, anyway.) Well, we learned that, so we did the same thing. But, we probably didn't do as much as our parents did. But we did spank them.

I can't think of other things. Oh, of course, we wanted them to learn to eat Indian food. They didn't like the Indian food as much when they were younger. But now, as they get older, they really enjoy it. They don't enjoy it as much as we do, but they still enjoy it so much better. My two daughters, especially, they miss it if they don't get it for a week or so.

PS: And you've learned how to cook now.

PC: I've learned how to cook since. (laughter) Yes, I did. My husband knew quite a bit about cooking, even though he didn't do any cooking there. He was the oldest of the family and he helped his mother a lot. So, he had a pretty good idea what kind of spices went into the different dishes. So, I learned most of my cooking through him.

PS: That's a switch, isn't it? Not what you would expect in a traditional Indian marriage.

PC: Yes. Well, he likes cooking and he's pretty creative and he enjoys it.

PS: Is he cooking tonight?

PC: He probably is making something. I don't know what it is. I was working all day.

PS: What were the American values that you consciously chose to teach your children.

PC: Well, the American values, just the basic things; being honest, respect other people, and not critical. The kids being minority, you know how kids are. They went to Catholic, parochial schools. The classrooms were small. There weren't very many minority kids in their classes. So sometimes kids would make comments and it would bother them and they would come and talk to us about them. We would tell them, "Just think about the positive. You tell them that we are the same people, just that the skin color might be different," and that sort of thing. They didn't have any problem with it. But, what we were afraid of was the kids starting dating so much on one on one basis and get too involved. What we were afraid of was divorce. The kids are not married yet. That was one thing we always told them about the value of arranged marriage. We talked to them a lot about that.

PS: That if you had an arranged marriage, you would never be divorced?

PC: No, we didn't tell them that. We told them about the value of arranged marriage, because when you look back in our families, you won't see anybody who is divorced, at least not in our immediate families anyway. We all went to India for one of their uncle's marriages, so they saw the whole process; how he met his wife and how they step-by-step saw all those things. We wanted them to appreciate it. Whether they believe in it is one thing. They said they can't imagine after meeting each other a few times, getting

married. So, they said they would like to know the person and an opportunity to date. Our son said, he went with groups of girls, but he never really went on a `date'. He said he has no problem if we arrange somebody, but merely just to introduce him to somebody, and if they like each other and like to date and get to know each other, then they'll think about marriage. That way, not the typical Indian way. So, that's fine with us.

PS: It seems to be kind of half-way between both traditions.

PC: Yes, yes, that's the way he feels. Our daughter Ann, too. And of course, Maria is thinking the same way.

PS: So, you've been able to pass that tradition along to them, even though what's going on in the rest of American society is very different.

PC: Yes, it is very different. So far, I don't know, unless, it could be that they just never met anybody that they wanted to have a relationship with. But, I like to think it was because of what we taught them.

PS: Yes, that's a remarkable achievement, I think.

PC: Well, you never know, they are still young enough they could meet somebody.

PS: In your mind, what would be the ideal kind of partners for your children?

PC: In my mind, I don't know if that will happen, what I would like to see for my son I'd like him to meet preferably from the Knanaya community a girl who was brought up here in this culture, just like he was. I don't think he could adjust marrying somebody from India who was brought up there. Hopefully, if they can get along and like each other, and fall in love, they will get married.

PS: So, if she was Catholic who wasn't Knanite, that wouldn't be quite right?

PC: Well, it's okay, but I would prefer Knanite. If he meets somebody who's not a Knanite, that's okay too. As long as they are Indian who's raised in the United States. We would like them to carry on the traditions of the Knanaya community because that's how we grew up and we probably won't see it again after their generation. At least in our lifetime, we like them to have that experience, if possible,

and continue some of that. I know they won't have the same kind of feeling that we have. So eventually, it probably will die out anyway.

PS: But, let it be two generations from now, huh?

PC: Right (laughter)

PS: So you would have a hard time if they decided to marry someone who was not Catholic or not Indian?

PC: No, I don't say that I'd have a hard time. If that person, if they like each other and have the same values, I don't see why not. I know people who are married inter-culturally, and come along just fine. They don't have any problem. We always told them, if they met somebody that they really liked and wanted to go with, that was fine with us. I mean, we never made a rule like that, "You cannot meet somebody else." But we sort of wanted them to know the differences and the values and make their own choices then.

PS: Do your children live independently now?

PC: They live at home. All three of them. We told George if he wants to, he could move out, but he likes it here too much.

PS: Do you think that living in the United States has affected the division of labor within your family? The traditional roles you play?

PC: I think it has affected me somewhat. When I compare with my parents, my father never did any cooking. My mother did all the cooking. It was her worry. My dad went and bought all the stuff that she needed, but it was her problem to do the cooking. But here it is different. My parents were shocked when they saw my husband cooking.

PS: Do they disapprove?

PC: No, they don't. Well, maybe they did in the beginning, when they first saw, but once they stayed here for a while and saw the lifestyle -- we both work and we are busy, and this is the best way. He's happy doing what he's doing. Then they realized that this was fine. But, I think it took them a while to get used to that.

PS: Have they been to visit you a lot?

PC: Well, my father-in-law died last year. They moved here

three years ago. All their children were here except two daughters and a son who is a priest. But they lived quite a ways away, so they were alone in India. They asked us if they could come and live here in the United States. There are five sons living here. So they've been taking turns and living here and my father-in-law was diagnosed as having cancer and died. My mother-in-law is still here, but right now she's with one of my husband's brothers.

PS: So, she just goes around from house to house, staying a while at each place.

PC: Yeah, that works out pretty well. And, my father died about two years ago, and my mother is here visiting us now. She'll be here until October.

PS: So, she's here right now?

PC: Well, she's not here in this house. She was here yesterday, but she is at my brother's now. She is also going around and around.

PS: Are there family members that you stay connected with in India?

PC: Yes, my brother is living there in the house where I grew up. Of course, my mother is living there; they live together. That is a tradition that one of the sons, usually live in the old general family home. They live with the parents and look after the parents until they die. They don't usually go to nursing homes. So, we keep in touch.

My sister next to me is also living there. She's got a family and we write to each other. We are in close contact. My husband's two sisters and brother keep in touch a lot.

PS: Is he from a large family also, your husband? Tell me his name again.

PC: His name is Kurian. He is from a large family also. He's the oldest one from a family of ten.

PS: Good Catholic family. Tell me about Indian Associations? When you came here, were there any?

PC: When I came to Minnesota there was Indo-American Club. My sister and I joined. The only thing we went to was and Indian movie once a month, sometimes it was once every two months in those days. They were Hindi movies with English subtitles. That was the only way we could see an Indian

movie. That was the reason we joined. I don't know if the club was that active in those days, and I don't know if it had ongoing meetings and functions.

PS: This was in the early 60's?

PC: Yes, the early 60's. But, even if they did, we didn't have a car at that time, it would have been difficult for us to get there. So, that was the only time we went to anything like that. Then, I think occasionally they celebrated some Indian holidays.

PS: But they were the Hindu holidays, and you didn't feel very connected to those?

PC: It was nothing connected with Kerala, which is quite a bit different from the rest of India.

PS: So, you didn't feel like you fit in very well?

PC: No, we didn't. We felt like we didn't fit in.

PS: So, that was the first association you belonged to. Were there any others since then?

PC: Oh, since then, any Indian associations. Well, I helped Jacob (my husband's brother) with the India Club a couple of years ago. I helped with the entertainment part of the India Day Festival. We are members of India Club.

We have a Malayalee group, the people from Kerala who live in the Twin Cities. We have a get-together a few times a year, like for Christmas, then in the summer we have a picnic. Then, there is another typical Kerala celebration. It's not all of India.

PS: Oh yeah, what's that called?

PC: It's called Onus. That's in August or September. We usually celebrate those three. It's not a formal organization. We just call it a Malayalee get-together. Malayalam is the language we use, so, Malayalees are Malayalam-speaking people. So, then, what we do, is after one function, we suggest a committee of maybe 6 - 8 people for the next function. So, they will be in charge of it, and put together a program.

PS: That rather loose structure works for the group?

PC: Yes.

PS: How many people are in that group right now?

PC: Oh, probably about 100 families, maybe 130 now.

PS: Did you know that there are a number of children adopted from Kerala?

PC: We invite them also now. Some of them have come too. These are not only Malayalees. Some people bring their friends too, people who are interested in learning about the culture, or some who have married, and their partners or whatever.

PS: So, that's the only Indian group that you are associated with at all?

PC: Well, let's see; India Club. Then this Kerala group. Oh, and we are also members of this North American Knanaya Catholic group.

PS: And that's a national organization?

PC: Yes, that's a national organization.

PS: Is there a local chapter of that?

PC: Well, not really. Well, again, I don't know if that is really a very formal thing. There is one contact person in the Twin Cities, and he is the one who contacts all of us. We get the mail. They provide an opportunity for the young people if they want to get together after the convention for a few days. So, they can talk about their problems, being from a different culture - their advantages and disadvantages. And, maybe have a chance to meet someone too.

You know, we never went to that. We were going to go this year, but my husband went to a workshop in Arizona. We just didn't quite make it.

PS: Do you go to any other events, like the Festival of India at Landmark Center?

PC: Yes, we go to those events. Festival of India, we went to that. We also go to the Festival of Nations. Also, at the Guthrie now, there is a play, Nagamandala, and we went to that a couple of days ago. Then, there is also an Indian music group that comes here, I don't know if you know about that. We go to that also.

PS: Do you go to any of the classical Indian dance performances?

PC: If any performances are coming and we hear of them, we go. We enjoy going to dances and music.

PS: Do you see any major benefits or disadvantages of belonging to these different organizations?

PC: Well, the benefit is the enjoyment. We enjoy the music -- we miss that a lot. So, its also a good feeling to go to that. There was a musician who was quite well know in Kerala. He came to Chicago some years ago and we went to Chicago for his concert, and we thoroughly enjoyed that. There is a large number of people from Kerala in Chicago, so they could afford to bring him there. We can't here because there aren't that many people.

PS: How about other activities in the community? As you were a parent of small children, were you involved in any civic organizations or community groups?

PC: Well, when the kids were going to grade schools, I was involved with parents; we were room parents for our kids at their different ages. So, we would be involved in the fundraising or managing parties and different things like that.

PS: Were you working during that time?

PC: I've always been working. Generally, once a year, I don't do it now so much, but when they were in grade school, I would go to the classes and speak to them about India. I would get a couple of topics, maybe schools, and they always liked to know about the arranged marriages. So, I would talk about a few things, and bring a few pictures and costumes, and show them how to put the sari on, and different jewelry and things like that. I would bring maybe one or two different food items to taste.

PS: What a good mom!

PC: Well, I feel I didn't do enough of that; I should have done more of that, but you know with a full-time job it is hard. I don't work so much now, but I did then.

PS: Did you join any work-related organizations?

PC: Well, I belong to the Minnesota Nurses Association. We

are also involved in our church activities, like the fall festival, we help on the committee. So, we do some of that type of thing. Then, my husband was on the Board of Education when the kids were in the elementary school for a few years.

PS: Did they go to parochial schools?

PC: They went to parochial schools.

PS: Did they ever go to the school where he (your husband) taught?

PC: Yes, that's where they went. That's where Maria is now.

PS: How was that, having your father be on the?

PC: They didn't take any of his classes, of course. So they go to school together. Maria says, "Well, I don't want to see you 24 hours a day," so once they are in school, she goes with her friends, her own way. They had mixed feelings in the beginning, until they got adjusted and then they found out it wasn't so bad. They didn't have to be with him all the time at school, and they were afraid their peers might look at them differently because their dad's a teacher. Then, they found out it wasn't that bad.

PS: They just never take their dad's class! (laughter) The last section I wanted to ask about is your retirement plans. How do you envision that? You've sort of hinted at that. You're a ways away from that yet.

PC: Well, a ways, I'm 51.

PS: You are! I would have guessed mid-40's.

PC: Well, thank you.

PS: So, it's not that far then. What do you envision?

PC: Well, we don't really know how it will be, but we're thinking that eventually the kids will be married and they'll probably be away from the Twin Cities, or where ever they find their place. But we're hoping that they won't be terribly far so we'll be able to see them. We think, maybe eventually we'll sell this house, and move to a condominium or something like that which is low-maintenance. I can't envision us living with one of our children, you know, like they do in India. I'm not sure if it will work out or not,

it depends on who they get married to and whatever kind of life they are going to have. One thing I hope for is never to end up in a nursing home. But, you never know. We hope to help out with the grandchildren, and they'll come visit us.

PS: Is that the same vision that your husband has?

PC: Yes, we both have that.

PS: Have you told the kids? (laughter)

PC: We told them that, then George said, "Well, I'm your only son, you can come and live with me." And I said, "Well, you don't know, someday you will be married, and you don't know what your wife will be like and how she feels."

PS: You have to be flexible.

PC: Right.

PS: So, you'd like to spend your retirement puttering around and taking care of the grandchildren.

PC: Yes, that's what we want to do.

PS: Cooking Indian food?

PC: Yes, cooking Indian food and doing some traveling, but not alot.

PS: How often do you go to India?

PC: Oh, not very often. I went there by myself when my father was ill two years ago. But before that, my husband went by himself to visit his uncle the priest before he died. I think all of us together went for Jacob's wedding (my husband's brother). That was six or seven years ago. I'm hoping the next two years we can all make a trip together as a family. And travel through-out India. I really haven't seen much of India, because I left home at such a young age. I had not traveled any more than 40 miles away from my home in Kerala.

PS: To your uncle's house?

PC: Yes (laughter), and to visit other people and my parents. That's about it. So, I haven't really seen much of India. Well, we went through Bombay and Madras, but we never really stopped to see much of the country.

PS: It's probably very different now.

PC: Yes, very different. Of course, my husband has seen a lot more of India, since he was there during his college years. Students went in groups on excursions for learning purposes. They went to visit the historic places. So he's seen quite a bit of India that I haven't seen. The kids haven't seen it either. So, we talk about it.

PS: In the next two years?

PC: Hopefully, in the next two or three years.

PS: And when you go, how long would you likely stay? A month or two?

PC: Probably a month at the most.

PS: What time of year?

PC: I like to go in December or January time.

PS: That's what I keep hearing too. Don't go when it's raining or hot. Are there any other things that I haven't asked you about that you'd like to talk about or you think is important about your history or the history of Indian people?

PC: Oh, I can't think of anything right now. I just have to keep thinking about it. All I can tell you is it's a huge adjustment coming from one culture and living in another culture.

PS: How long do you think it took you before you really adjusted?

PC: Well, I don't know if I can say. I think it was more difficult living in Marshfield in a smaller town. After coming to Minnesota, it was easier to live here. I think I adjusted pretty good after coming here.

PS: Because there was more of an Indian community?

PC: More of an Indian community.

PS: When you look at your friendships now, are most of them with Indian people?

PC: Most of our friends are Indian people. I do have

friends that I met through work and church and things like that.

PS: So, it feels most comfortable yet to be a part of the Indian community?

PC: Yes, I do.

PS: Anything else.

PC: No, I can't think of anything.

PS: Well, I've really enjoyed talking with you. Thank you so much.

PC: You're welcome. And thank you for coming!

India Association of Minnesota Oral History Project (Phase 1)
Minnesota Historical Society