Interview with Dr. Kusum Saxena

Interviewed by Polly Sonifer

Interviewed on September 30, 1994 at Dr. Saxena's Little Canada home

PS: First of all, can you tell us a little bit about the part of India that you come from.

KS: Well, it is a little bit of a long story, in a sense. I was born in the Uttarpradesh area in Meerut, and my father was in a transferable job, so my childhood was in different parts of India. We lived about three or four years in Allahabad. Then we moved to the state of Maharashtra Pune. We lived there for about ten years, and I was send to New Delhi to live with my mother's older sister, my aunt, so that I could get an education in a Hindi-speaking institution because in Pune, the medium of instructions in school was Marathi, which was not my original language. I learned Marathi also but my father wanted us to get educated in Hindi also. So I spent some time with my aunt in New Delhi going to school, and living with cousins there. By that time, my father moved back to New Delhi, and we all settled, so you can say I'm basically from Uttarpradesh and New Delhi.

PS: How many languages do you speak?

KS: I understand about four or five, but I speak fluently three.

PS: That's a real gift.

PS: Besides English?

KS: Including English.

PS: Which one do you think of as your mother tongue?

KS: Hindi.

PS: Hindi is your mother tongue?

KS: That's what we speak at home.

PS: You were just telling a little bit ago that you immigrated here about 30 years ago. Can you tell me what led up to the place where you decided to immigrate?

KS: My husband and I, we were working in Uttarpradesh in the government service, and we were posted on a hill station. My husband was kind of getting tired of the routine there. He wasn't very much into it, and he said "I'm going to do some further studies." He's a physician too. So he came to Lucknow, which was his hometown at that time, and met one of his old professors in medical school who was a previous mentor who encouraged him, "Why don't you go to America and do some work there?" And he said, "Well, okay, if you tell me what to do and where to go. "So the professor gave a name of an institution, and the chief of service there. So my husband wrote, and they offered as a fellowship in Pediatric Endocrinology at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. All this was happening, and I delivered my daughter, and I was still in the maternity hospital. My husband announced when our daughter was three days old, "I'm going to America."

PS: Oh no!

KS: That was very good news, because I knew that he was getting restless and now he will be happy. So I said, "Okay." In September 1960, he came to Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston as a fellow in Pediatric Endocrinology. I followed three months later. So I came to this country in October of 1960 with my 6-month-year-old daughter.

PS: And you were already a physician at that time?

KS: Yes, I was a physician when I got married.

PS: Let's back up a little bit. Tell me where you went to school in India, and what kind of things you studied and specialized in to become a physician.

KS: Most of my pre-medical studies, high school and college, was in Delhi, and then I had my medical school training in Lucknow, which is in Uttarpradesh. I did my medical school there and my postgraduate studies in internal medicine at University of Lucknow.

PS: So that was in internal medicine? And now you work in . . ?

KS: I'm basically an internist, but I work in Emergency Medicine, and I have specialized in that and a couple of other things.

PS: A couple of other things?

KS: Yes.

PS: So, when your husband came, did he come on a student visa?

KS: He came on a J1 visa.

PS: What is that?

KS: Let me think, it's a special name. It's not a student
visa.

PS: Because a fellow isn't actually a student.

KS: No, no, no. I'm slipping on the exact word, but it's different. It was J1, and as a member, I was on a J2 visa. Student visa is different, and H visa is different. I'm just slipping on the name of that.

PS: All right. So how did you travel with your 6-month-old baby in 1960?

KS: I came by plane.

PS: Had you been on planes before?

KS: No. That was a little bit tension-provoking, but it was all right. I started from New Delhi, and my father and my whole family was there at the airport, and they were all concerned that I was getting the little baby and this was my first travel, but it was okay. I knew I could handle it. We were supposed to land in London in the morning, but there was a storm going on, so we were diverted to Frankfurt, and the plane was delayed in reaching London, so I missed my connecting flight. Then they transferred me to a hotel. That was a little bit concerning at that time, because I didn't know where I was going and where they were taking me, but it all worked out. They brought me back to the airport. In retrospect, it sounds so easy. It's routine that plane connections get missed, and you go to the airport, but at

that time it was a little bit tension-provoking. They couldn't provide milk for my baby, but I was traveling with dry powdered milk so I was able to feed her, but they said they didn't have milk. They didn't give milk at the hotel, and it was supposed to be an A-rated hotel. I don't remember the name of it, but I was really surprised and angry that they couldn't provide milk for the baby.

PS: How old were you at the time?

KS: Do you really want to know?

PS: Some people came at a time when they were really young, and it was very overwhelming and their English wasn't so good, and so on.

KS: Oh, I had no problem with language English, because we grew up studying English, and actually grammatically I thought we spoke better English than most of the other people here. Let me see, how old was I? I was 26.

PS: So you were a little older?

KS: Well, I was already a physician, a practicing physician. We didn't come here as a student, which most of the people were doing at that time.

PS: What were the biggest things you remember about settling in? What was hard? What was easy? What was it like suddenly being in Boston?

KS: Well, so long time ago. It was intriguing. It was challenging. But you see we were a little bit different, because my husband had a very nice job, and I also could interact with his subject, and so we were not totally lonely. He was really busy in his work. In general it was a very challenging doing everything by yourself, which I was used to, but still with a baby, bringing the groceries, cleaning the house, doing the dishes, and tending to the baby didn't leave much time for me to work. I really wanted I didn't want to just stay home, so eventually to work. once we got used to the system, then I found a baby-sitter, and I started attending the medical seminars to keep myself updated. Then, when my daughter was one year old, I started doing Pathology work. It was not my subject, but that enabled me to keep working as well as stay home so that I didn't have to take night calls. It was frustrating, but I

wanted to take care of the child at home so I didn't have to go through the night calls.

PS: When you were in India, did you live with extended family or did you live as a nuclear family?

KS: It was both ways. Most of the time, we were in an extended family. My father-in-law, my two brother-in-laws, they all stayed with us. I don't have a mother-in-law. She died when my husband was very young. I would say we basically were an extended family.

PS: Did you prefer living in an extended family?

KS: I don't know. I didn't have any choice at that time. There was no question of our thinking we would have that. Then we lived in Boston two years and we were all set to go back. We never had any plans to settle down here. We went back to India, then returned for another two years. He finished all his training and everything. And then we decided we'll go back to India, so we made two trips, changing our household every two years. In 1967 we finally came down here in St. Paul and I said I'm not going to move anymore. We had made five transatlantic trips, and that was enough.

PS: So you had actually moved back to India and then moved back here.

KS: Oh yes! I would dispose of everything in the house, all the little things here and there, and we did that twice in India. So it was a very expensive endeavor, and every time we went back, we settled, we bought everything, we managed to set up whole house, we'd start entertaining, and then we would move back, dispose of everything, just give away literally. I think we suffered a lot of financial setback in that, but that's okay, that's experience.

PS: You have a son also. When was he born?

KS: My son was born when we came second time to Boston. He was born in 1964. We came to St. Paul in '67. So here I come with a 7-year-old and a 3-and-a-half-year-old and then I decided enough of moving, and now we are going to establish a real family home and have children go to school. I didn't want them to move anymore.

PS: Was it hard on them?

KS: It was hard on everybody, and yet because nobody forced us to move, so you can't blame anybody.

PS: You can still complain.

KS: At that time, when we came down here in St. Paul, I said this is the place where we are going to raise the family, let them go to school, and no matter what, we're not going to move. And we haven't moved.

PS: Was that pretty unusual for a woman to just announce that to her husband?

KS: Well, he kind of agreed. I didn't have to announce it, it was a consensus of opinion. He did get a real nice offer within the next two years in Portland, Oregon, but I said, "No, we not moving." Maybe it was in San Francisco, I don't remember exactly. I didn't want to move, and I had started my job at St. Paul Ramsey, and the children were in school, and I thought it was a nice place to live.

PS: Do you have any extended family here in St. Paul?

KS: No. We didn't even have an adopting family. Now we have many very good friends and interact as families because we have been here for 25 years, but at that time, the support was almost negligible. So that was very stressful at times because if you had any problem, any kind of pain, there was just us four, the two kids and the two of us. That was very hard, especially in those times, a working mother, a female physician was unknown to this society. There were no considerations to that effect. There were no day care centers. And the people were not attuned to it. The physicians at St. Paul Ramsey, and places where you work, they just didn't think you had any other responsibilities. If you're working, they had not considerations for any illnesses or problems of the children. The biggest problem for a mother is to leave a sick child home, even if you have a good baby-sitter. was the most I found unsatisfying, very frustrating, and I didn't know how to handle that. I wish I would quit working at that time, but then that was not the best solution. Luckily, the children grew up nicely -- very well trained, and they know how to handle themselves.

PS: What kind of arrangements did you end up making for their care?

KS: Basically, baby-sitters.

PS: They came into your home?

After school. They were both in school. So the first KS: three years when my son would be in school only half days, so I was working only part-time. I would come home by 1:00 or so, and then gradually I extended my time as his school time changed to 3:00, so both of them would be home at 3:00, and I would arranged for him to go to a classmate's home which was right close to the school, and then I would pick him up from there. And my daughter had school until 4 o'clock so that wasn't a problem. Until my daughter was about 15, I would have somebody come in after school before I reached home. It was tension, but somehow we managed. Then I took this job in emergency room so I would have a scheduled time so I would know I would be home. children were older, so they could manage. There were some harrowing moments. One time, during the first year we were here and I had to take a couple of exams for Minnesota license, and the day before the exam -- both my husband and I were taking the exams together at the university -- my son fell off the swing in the day care center . We were concerned about head injury, and I didn't want to leave him with a baby-sitter the next morning. He obviously wasn't going to go to the day care center that day, and I couldn't arrange for a baby-sitter. Even if I had found one, I wouldn't have been able to take the exam because I would have left him. So finally I requested the Children's Hospital director, I wanted him admitted for observation for 24 hours minimum. If I was home, if I could stay with him, I wouldn't have done that, but at that time I said I'll pay for the hospitalization because I can't leave him with a lay person. He needs to be under medical care, so God forbid, if anything happens, he would be under care. And at 5:00 p.m., I picked him up. That was hard. If I had some support group here, I would have fallen back on that support.

I tell you, that's the worst thing, being a mother and a physician.

PS: Worst?

KS: I think so, because you think of the worst possible

complications. And that's another thing, when the children were born, with my husband being a pediatric endocrinologist, we said that we will have a totally unbiased pediatrician for the kids. We're not going to treat them ourselves. One time we were up north in summertime, and I think it was my son who developed serious abdominal pain and nausea, and we were returning the next day. So we decided I would observe him, with clear liquids for 24 hours; he did not improve. So we started on our way back, and ended up at Children's Hospital, thinking it might be appendicitis, and the doctor examined him and the blood count was alright, and his pain was totally gone and we came home.

PS: You never found out what it was?

KS: No, at least not appendicitis.

PS: Maybe he didn't want to be at the cabin.

KS: I think he had swallowed some lake water, and that was giving him the stomach ache. Those things happen. But we were thinking, we don't want a perforated appendix, and so we rushed back to Children's.

PS: Let's talk a little about education, and how you family in India valued education.

KS: My education and the education of my siblings was because of my father.

PS: What did he do?

KS: He was a government officer at that time in the Defense Department. I am the eldest child in family of four. They were all in favor of some education for girls, but then get the girls married. Nobody talked about going into professional training and stuff like that. For some reason, and I don't know what that reason was, I never found out, my father, from my very childhood, said, "Oh, she'll be a doctor." And it never occurred to me to ask him at that time, and he's gone now, so when I thought about asking, he was already gone. As far as I remember when I was growing up, he would say, "Oh, she'll be a doctor," and my uncles and others would say, "Why do you want to waste money on her?" He said, "No, she is my eldest son." He always treated me like a son, and he and I were very, very close.

When I was in Pune, he started my education, and interestingly, even though we spoke Hindi at home, he taught me Urdu, which is a language prevalent, especially at that time, in the north part of India. In my father's family, they all knew English. He taught me, he would give me lessons at home like school, because the school was really far off. He would teach my sister and me Urdu, English, math, history, and geography. My mother taught me Hindi. Up till eighth grade, my education was at home by my parents.

PS: Completely?

KS: Completely. We would get books from the school curriculum, but we would be doing it at home. He would wake up about 5:30 in the morning, and he would teach us for two hours in the morning, then we'd all have breakfast, and he would go to his work, and he would give us that you study this, this, this, and he would pick that up in the evening. So we would have five hours in the morning, and two hours in the evening. That was me and my sister. My brother was a baby at that time. Then I started school in New Delhi with my cousins. From then on, it was all formal education.

PS: So your father did that for eight years?

KS: Until eighth grade, yes. Besides teaching the school curriculum, he taught me to play bridge, because he himself was a bridge player. He had won a couple of trophies. His whole aim was to win a trophy with me as his partner which never materialized, because once I started going to school, I didn't much time, and I couldn't participate, and my schooling was really important. My mother taught me Hindi, gave me lessons in music, in singing, and taught me how to play the harmonium, which is a very common instrument, and all the household work -- sewing, embroidery, knitting, and little bit of cooking.

PS: Were you growing up in an extended family there as well?

KS: No.

PS: Because your father moved so much.

KS: Right.

PS: So did you find your playmates from your neighborhood?

KS: I had a couple of friends, just the neighbor's kids and all that. I'm sure now it's a little bit different, but when you go to school in India and the transportation, you spend time going back and forth and doing homework, we did not have time in the evening, at least when I was growing up, we would just stay home, we didn't go out and play with friends or go to the mall.

PS: There were no malls, were there?

There were not malls, but we were not, by tradition, by necessity, by work, by the things we were supposed to do, we never had any time to think about those things. If we had to go shopping and get some things, we went on Sundays or on Saturdays, when there was no school, with the family. But most of the time the parents did the shopping for us, but it's so different here. The evening is for having fun, Saturday evening, no teenager is home. We came home from school and did some things, played or interacted with our siblings, did homework, and helped the parents in the household. There was no difference between a boy and a girl in our house. That was very different 30, 40 years ago. My father would not take that thing. Like, in my aunt's house, my uncle came in the house, everybody was very quiet, they wouldn't laugh, and they wouldn't joke and run around, a very quiet, sober kind of thing. When my father came home, we would all jump and this and that and gave the whole story, and we were very, very close. I still miss him.

PS: I'll bet that was really hard living with your aunt.

KS: Right, but I knew it was a necessity for my education and we were doing it for a purpose, and I enjoyed being with my cousins who were more closer to my age. One of my cousins was six months older than I was. So I had good company that way, but home was very, very different.

PS: How many years did you live with them?

KS: Three, four years. I finished my high school from their house.

PS: Then you went on to college?

KS: Then I went to college in Delhi.

PS: And you stayed at the college?

KS: No, by that time, my father had moved to New Delhi.

PS: Do you feel like the education all the way throughout the system was adequate for your life's work?

KS: I think I got the best education possibly at that time. I was a very good student. I received scholarships all through my education. Although my father was supportive, his means were not very high, it was very hard to support a household and educate four children, so I thought it was really fortunate for me that I didn't need any money from him for my education. And I saved all my books and everything for my younger siblings, so it helped.

PS: What has become of your brothers and sisters? What kind of work did they go on to do?

KS: My sister who is three years younger than I am has a master's degree in Hindi, and a master's in classical Music. My brother who is nine years younger than I am, has master's in Chemistry. He's working in the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, doing all the clinical tests.

PS: In India?

In India, in the central government there. And my youngest sister, who is twelve years younger than I, she has master's in Education, and MA in English. She is planning to do a Ph.D. in English. She is my favorite sister. She has recently become a principal of a school. She could not become principal, they have a certain age limit, and recently she crossed that age limit and became the principal of a high school in New Delhi. She is really well placed and very vivacious and enterprising girl. I think she will be something. She is already a principal and very much liked. She is developing a curriculum for high school English. For that, she has had a fellowship in Plymouth, England at St. John's University. A group of people from Britain came to India, and they're developing the curriculum for the central government schools in English, so she is pretty busy.

PS: Are your siblings married?

KS: Yes, all my siblings are married. They all have children. The sister who is younger to me is married to a physician who recently retired. Her two children, a son and a daughter, are both physicians, and they are both working. My brother is married to a teacher, who has been teaching. They have two children. His daughter is a medical student in New Delhi, and she and I have very close relationship. I see her as my extension into that family. Her son is in high school, he should be graduating from high school this year. My youngest sister has three children. Her daughter graduated from engineering school this year, and she is going to do fabric and textile designing. She is a computer whiz. The second daughter is a is in pre-med and studying music. Her son is in high school.

PS: Very successful family.

KS: Amongst my cousins on both my mother's side and my father's side, we four are one of the best educated. Most of them are educated, but nothing like professionals. I feel very proud, and I give all the credit to my father. He was very supportive. He would encourage. If I had some difficulty, or if my brother or sister has some difficulty, if they couldn't solve a problem he would help them, and if he couldn't do it, he would find some way of helping us. I don't know how he did it. For him, our studies were the foremost. We had to be educated and do well. He was very proud of me.

PS: Did your mother ever work outside of home?

KS: No.

PS: She was the mother.

KS: She was the mother, and she carried all the burden of us. She worked very hard all her life. She made clothes and cooked all the time and carried the household.

PS: So you didn't have any help.

KS: Except for a little cleaning and washing the dishes. And, from a very young age, we were supposed to do our own washing of clothes and ironing and take care of ourselves and help in cooking and cleaning of the house. We participated as a family.

PS: I wish I could get my kids to do that.

KS: The same for my husband's family. They didn't have much help, except for washing the utensils and stuff like that. That's very common in India, even now. They would have someone come and do the very heavy cleaning of the utensils and the dishes, and the rest of the work is done by the family themselves. There are families who have servants, but neither my family or my husband's families had anything like that.

PS: What kind of considerations were involved in the formation of your family? Was your marriage arranged, and how did that come about?

KS: Well, it was kind of 50-50. We were both in the medical school. My husband is three years senior to me. never courted and went out dating, but he kind of liked me, I kind of liked him, and one of his classmates -- I was living in the women's hostel when I was going to medical school. For my second year only (he was in fifth year), his classmate, who was my next-door neighbor in the hostel, she would say this person is the right one for you, or she would say I'll tell him that she is the right one for you. It started that way, and then for a while I didn't even know who she was talking about and I didn't feel it was my place to ask to be introduced. I don't know how it came that, he was taking attendance, I was in the house job, and he said, "How are you doing?" And then I was sick with mumps, and he came to see me. After a couple of days -- he was doing his postgraduate MD, and I was doing my final exams -- after that, and when both of the results were out, and we were successful, and he said, "Would you marry me?" And I said, "Fine." But I said I would have to talk to my father about this, because I would not do this just by myself. And so the two fathers met, and there was some disagreement and some agreements, and it took one year to resolve all those things. So it's kind of 50-50.

PS: And you're both Hindu?

KS: Yes. We both came from very religious families. In both my house and my husband's house, we did all of the festivals, and we were into it. Actually, my learning of Hindi language came from starting from reading scripts from Ramayan, which is a holy script, and that's how I started in that. All my music training was religious music, and

eventually I gathered up other songs, movie songs, but that's how it started.

PS: Did you tell your parents that you wanted to marry him?

KS: Yes.

PS: How did they receive it?

KS: Well, there is a little background to it. Whenever in my family there was talk of marriage, I knew my father preferred that we should marry in our own kind in the Saxena group. Saxena is not my family name, it is a group name. We never marry in the same family. The job of the family when there is any marriage thing going on, even how, is to make sure that they have no common blood in three generations, as far as they can go. So that was true for everybody, and I knew my father would have preferred in the same sub-group, not people from Bengal or Punjab or things like that. That was his belief, and I respected that, and I see benefits for that. I never thought about marrying until I saw him, he was the only person, but I think it had something to do with that because he was the same sub-group. I'm not using the word caste, because caste to me doesn't In my subconscious mind, I was not going mean anything. against my mother's or father's expectations, so I had no problem with that because I never was attracted to anybody So it worked out best because he couldn't object to anything. He was a well-educated person. All my father had to do was to look into the family, that we were not related. They look into a lot things, you know, the character, how the family stands in the community. One of my father's older sisters was in the same town, so he came there without my knowledge and kind of found out how the family was. My uncle knew my husband's father from work. I don't think I had any problems with that. In other words, the person I chose was up to the standards of my father, and I think he was really happy with that.

PS: Did you have the sense that you were in love with your husband before you married him?

KS: Hmhmm.

PS: That is fairly unusual though?

KS: It was coming up at that time. People were feeling

that way. Some of my cousins were going through similar situations. They would find somebody. We were graduating into that stage.

PS: You hadn't turned down any marriage proposals that your father had arranged.

KS: No, no, there was no question of marriage before I finished my medical school. This happened just about the right time so that there was no other thing. It was just like we were made for each other, and we came at the right time.

PS: How long has it been, 37 years or so?

KS: 37

PS: That's wonderful. Can you tell me about your wedding?

KS: It was a traditional wedding. We went through all the usual stuff. It was a one-day wedding, not three-day wedding. None of the families could afford that.

PS: Did you have your hands painted red with mehdi-hanna?

KS: Yes.

PS: Heavy gowns?

KS: I had a red sari, my mother had bought that.

PS: What is the meaning of the red sari?

KS: We don't wear white. White is considered for widows. When somebody was widowed, they used to wear white. Now things have changed because of economics, because people are working outside. But my grandmother, who was widowed at a very young age, my mother's mother, I always saw her in white -- the silvery white hair and white. She was a very elegant looking woman. So in marriage it is never white for the bride. It is either pale yellow, creamish, and red is considered very auspicious. We wouldn't wear green or blue. They are more social colors, not religious colors. Yellow and red are considered kind of festive and religious.

PS: Are they associated with happiness, or good futures, or prosperity?

KS: Well, yellow is for devotions, and red is for power. Green is considered for fertility, greenery, freshness. Blue stands for peace. I'm trying to associate why only red and yellow. Whenever we do the offering, it is red flowers and yellow flowers. It could be white too, but we don't offer purple flowers. The turmeric which we offer to God, the red, mercuric oxide powder. I don't why it is. I should look into that to find out exactly why it is like that.

PS: The nice thing about saris is that even if your body size changes, it still fits.

KS: One size fits all. That's what I do when I go to India. I just take a couple of my blouses and a few saris, and I exchange it with my sister, and we all trade in and out and then come back.

PS: So your daughter was born in India and your son was born here. You told me a few things about hiring people, but can you identify anything that was different from raising your children in this culture as to how you imagined it would have been had you stayed in India?

KS: Very different, 360 degree. They grew up in a culture which was different for them and for me. Especially in their teenage years. We had some problems. Many times I was told that you can't force your cultural beliefs here, and it was hard for me, I didn't know anything else, I didn't grow up here. I had to go through the experience of growing up with my children, and sometimes that was very hard, and sometimes there were conflicts, but again the values emphasized were the same as they were for me, that you have to be educated in all aspects of your life, not just your studies. have to grow up as a strong person who can stand on your own two feet, not only monetarily, but handling the challenges and difficulties of life. You can't always have a sheltered, protected life. So they were exposed to a lot of different things. Whenever we traveled, we gave them extensive training in traveling, meet other people. I think traveling and meeting people of different societies and different countries with different languages gives a much broader view of life and tolerance of other cultures and other people than just living in one culture in one town. They both had training in maintaining their daily chores, doing their own things. Sometimes they didn't clean their own rooms which is expected. After all, they're children,

not adults. I'm talking at that time. Everything shouldn't go a hundred percent correct. They were taught how to manage money. Early in the game, they had their own separate checking accounts. I would take them to the bank to teach how to write checks, how to deposit money. had some allowances, and they both worked in their schooling. My son didn't work because he was going to SPA and he didn't have any time to work. But my daughter would work in Target and things like that. They were always taught the value of money. They didn't have a deprived childhood, but they didn't have everything they asked for. I didn't give them cars until they were in college. wanted one when they got driver's license. We could afford it, but my principle was that they don't need to have a car until they are in college. After college, once you finish, then you are going further studies or you're going to work, so that's the time you would get the car. I was called names for that.

PS: By your children?

KS: By the children. Not names, but, "You're a cruel mother, and you don't think about that."

PS: That's one of the things you're supposed to do, isn't it -- to tell your parents how inadequate they are?

KS: I told my daughter that you will realize once you have daughter. She went to Northfield, and the year she graduated, she married an American boy.

PS: How did that feel?

KS: It was hard. It was very hard at that time. He is a nice person. I had no qualms, nothing against Jerry as a person, but at that time it was very hard to swallow that. Once she had decided this is the person she is going to marry, we said, "Shoot, we'll participate in the marriage. We had a traditional Hindu ceremony, and his parents were very happy.

PS: Is Jerry Hindu, by any chance?

KS: He is Catholic. They had a really short pastoral ceremony. I don't think it was a Catholic ceremony. There was a minister or a priest, they just exchanged wedding rings after the traditional Hindu wedding. And my son is

not married yet.

PS: If you have done it the way you wanted for your daughter, what would you have done?

KS: Well, we had couple of boys lined up for her, but she told us she was not going to do that.

PS: What were those boys like?

KS: Well, one was doing Ph.D. in pharmaceuticals and he was an executive officer in a pharmaceutical company.

PS: And he lived here in the United States?

KS: Yes, in St. Paul.

PS: Had he been raised here?

KS: He came after doing his college. I was friends with his older brother. His older brother's wife was a physician, and we knew the whole family. I still like him.

PS: Did he marry somebody else?

KS: Yes.

PS: Who else did you have lined up?

KS: There was another boy who was a physician, and that wouldn't have worked out. Because it is very different, people raised in India and a person raised here, they are two different cultures, so I don't think it would ever work out. It would be a real phenomenon if it would work out. So I think it is cruel to put your son or daughter into that situation. I don't mind a Hindu person who was raised here so they understand the intricacies. A boy in India might have different views about the girl who is raised here that she might have done these things because she was raised in the American culture, might not be tolerant, or in times of conflict, he might throw it as a criticism. So I don't think that will work out in most circumstances and I gave up on that right away. Anyway, it wasn't even brought up to her.

PS: She just came home and announced that she wanted to marry Jerry.

KS: She actually announced it two years into college, when she was a junior.

PS: And you knew she was dating him?

KS: Yes.

PS: But you just you thought this would end?

KS: She was living in the dorm anyway. I knew, I just wanted to make sure nothing stupid goes on. We would have liked it at that time, but I have no qualms now, I'm very happy that she married. She has one of the best marriages, at least that's the way I look at it. They are very happy. They have three children. But at that time it was hard on both of them.

PS: Changing tradition is hard to cope with.

KS: I didn't keep those feelings to myself. I was very open about it. But once it was decided, I went one hundred percent, two hundred percent into doing the wedding. When she said yes, I will do a Hindu traditional wedding, we did exactly what we would have done if the boy was an Indian boy. I give credit to Jerry and his parents. They were accommodative; really helpful and cooperative. His parents are wonderful people.

Ps: So you have an extended family with Jerry's family?

KS: Right. They are a much older couple so we don't have much common interest. They are both retired, they play golf, and things like that, and I don't have time for that. We get together on certain occasions, like I did the tenth wedding anniversary for my daughter, and whole bunch of people who had attended the wedding, and I invited them, and they come once or twice a year. In retrospect, I think it was a boon, because we did not have an in-laws problems which you could have with Indian families.

PS: Because they had different expectations about what it should be like?

KS: There are always in-laws problems, but we, being so different, even in age and profession. Gita and Jerry's parents are very close, even closer than their other

children. Jerry has five other brothers, so compared to their wives and their families, Jerry and Gita are very close to his parents. That is very heartening to me.

PS: You did a good job raising her.

KS: That's exactly what Jerry's mother said, "She is a
beautiful and she has been raised very nicely " -- the best
compliment I could ever get.

PS: If you could do it all over again, would you do it the same way?

I think if I would if I had to do it again, I would take time off, stay home until the kids are full-time in school like until they are in junior high and be with them, because even though I tried my best and gave them as much as possible of my time, I feel like I missed out on something. But I was there, I took them to tennis lessons, swimming lessons, cub scouts, girl scouts, everything I could do at that time. They had to be very cooperative, sometimes they would wait for me, like when my son was going to SPA, I would pick him up at 12 midnight because they would come back from their games and stuff like that. I would finish work at 11 o'clock, go and pick him up and go 22 miles back to Dellwood. So it was very hard. I don't know what they would say if you talked to them, but I tried to give the best for what it was at that time. Anyway, I think they came out as stronger, independent individuals. One thing I think I'll give credit to my work. I would bring horror stories about motorcycles and drugs home. Usually I don't talk about my work at home. My son never asked for a motorcycle, and he never touched drugs, never smoked. are teetotalers. When we are entertaining, we never serve any alcohol. But one thing I was reminded, when my daughter was in high school, she had friends at home, and that was She wanted me to go out of the house, and I said, fine. "No, I will be here, I will be out of the way" -- she was in eleventh or twelfth grade -- and I said, "No, you won't be home alone with everybody coming over here. You can have the party, but I'll be here." We had a walkout basement, and I was upstairs doing my studies or whatever I was doing, and I would hear that back door open and close all the time, and I came down and said, "What's going on?" and I saw someone with a peanut butter jar and it had a brownish liquid in it, and I talked to the boy and I said, "Show me what's in it," and he was kind of going to spill it, and I grabbed it, and

it was beer in it, and I told my daughter, "You know your father doesn't drink, I don't drink, we don't have any alcohol in the house, and you're all underage people, what do you want me to do at this time? Either everybody leaves or I'm going to call the sheriff because I can't have this here." They all left. After that, my daughter was really angry with me. She wouldn't have any parties at home, and she would go and have parties with other people, but I said, That's the way it is." I think she went through a hard time after that from her peers because I said, "I'll call the sheriff."

PS: Those are hard choices.

KS: Those are hard choices, and I'm sure she has resented me for doing that.

PS: She'll probably do the same thing to her children.

KS: Probably, but I just couldn't take that -- teenagers drinking. "Oh, beer is not a drink." I'd hear that all the time. It is alcohol, and when you are 15 or 16, you have no business doing this, especially in the house. At that time, I used to see a lot of patients 14 or 15 totally stone drunk, and the parents would say, "Oh, doc, don't you realize he's just drunk?" I say, that sentence is the most critical sentence the parent can say. This means you are not seeing the problem as the problem is. "What are you making out of it because you think he is just drunk?" Alcoholism is the biggest drug problem in this country. I'm sure it is in India too, but this is what I'm seeing.

PS: I hear you, I agree you completely. The next part is about Indian associations. When you first came to Boston, were there other Indian people in Boston?

KS: Very few, mostly students. There was a India association. It was broad-based mostly, for social and cultural activities, celebrating Independence Day, the Festival of Devali and stuff like that. This was in Boston. There were few Indian-Americans at that time. They were Indians in America. Here it is different.

PS: So when you came here to St. Paul?

KS: There was a very small group, and occasionally once in a while we would have that group together, but you count on

your fingers the number of people. I'm sure there were about 150 or 300 students, but we did not interact too much with the student community, because we were family people at that time, you know, married and children, so we mostly associated with people who were in family here. We had a couple of single persons also. We would get together on festive occasions. There was an India club at that time I think run by the students at the University of Minnesota and we were all members of that, and we would get together at the university campus, rent one of the halls, see movies, and have food. Then gradually, we started doing religious activities in 1972, and the families would meet in one person's house and we would do hymn-singing and those kinds of things one Sunday a month. We would rotate, and then we started thinking in terms of establishing some place in the community as a Temple. Then four or five people put down some seed money and we came up with \$25,000 and established Hindu Society of Minnesota, and we became the trustee members. Then we found the old church building which the Japanese people were going to sell because they could not maintain it. It's on Polk and 18th Avenue in North Minneapolis. So we bought that mortgage and since then the Hindu Society is just flourishing and we are founders of

PS: And it's called Hindu Mandir?

KS: Actually Hindu Society of Minnesota. The place is the Hindu Mandir. Mandir is temple. So that's the place where we all gather. It has come along quite nicely. It needed a lot of hard work, and we all worked on it. I wrote all the hymns in English script that are in Hindi and distributed it so that everybody could sing the same things, so that, even though some people could not read Hindi, they could read the words. So it's coming out real nice. We are very active in that.

PS: I've been there a couple of times. They always have such good food.

Have you ever seen any times when there have been conflicts between different parts of the Indian community that's living here in the United States.

KS: Oh, it's an ever-growing problem, because literally, if you see India, it's 23 different countries. Each state has a different dress code, different language. It's just different. And we have learned to live together, even though

everybody is different. And sometimes it hurts here politically to carry the same provincial feeling here. In that way, Indians are not effective as one, cohesive community.

PS: Do you see those lessening with the second generation?

KS: With our children, I think that will be much less, because they don't consider themselves as Indians, except for the Indian heritage. They are Americans, for all practical purposes. They have a different battle to fight, because of their names and because of their colors, even though they are as American as Swedish, Norwegian American here because it's their parents who migrated. They grew up here. They know all about the culture and school is the same. Most of them are very bright students, but the bias is still there. There was one really open confirmation and acceptance of the bias at University of Pennsylvania, Penn State University. In fellowship applications in medical school, the dean there said he doesn't even send out forms to foreign-looking last names.

PS: Why?

KS: Because they are foreigners. He doesn't even give them applications to apply for the job, and I thought that was discrimination to the highest level, that you were just going by the name. What about my kid? He's a total American. He was born here. One day he has the potential for being the president.

PS: That would be nice.

KS: Most of the Indian children, the friends I know and their children, they are American born, they went to one of the good schools, they are intelligent, hard-working people. They have graduated and taken the same tests, the same criteria. Why should they be discriminated just because they have an Indian-appearing last name or their skin is a little darker. That is not American.

PS: That is not the way we talk, but it is the way we act unfortunately.

KS: That's right, that's right. I don't mind saying that, because I respect the South African people because they were at least honest about their feelings. If they had the

discrimination and they acted that way, they said it. But I don't like the dishonesty and being hypocritical, saying this is a nation where everybody is in melting pot, no that's not true, it's more like a salad.

PS: Stew is what's I've heard. There are all these chunks and lumps, and they are all different from each other.

KS: In stew, you mix it, at least the gravy is the same. I think it's a salad because everything is just separate. And it's not by choice. I know the second generation of our children, they feel very American, and they don't see the discrimination, it's us people who sees it.

PS: Do you feel you have ever been discriminated against?

KS: Very much even now.

PS: In what ways?

KS: I'm fortunate enough because I'm a foreign-born, foreign accent even though my accent is better than some American. And I am a woman. I came here with a family, with small children. I still feel there is discrimination against foreign women, against skin color, yes. Very few people have reached the top level. There are people who have started their own business have been very successful in financial matters, in positions, head of departments, but people who work under somebody, it's very rare to see them at the top, to the highest positions. They make up to the vice level, but after that they're done. So-called glass ceiling. There is a lot of discrimination against females, and of course against foreigners.

PS: So you have two strikes.

KS: Yes, and I had three strikes because I had three children at that time.

PS: That you got rid of because they grew up.

KS: They grew up, but when I think back, it was hard raising the children. Like some of my friends say, "You have done a good job." I feel good about that.

PS: Who are the people you socialize with at this point?

KS: My social circle is very, varied. At the hospital, I have good friends ranging from the nursing assistants to the nurses, orderlies, paramedics, police officers. I have one or two in each and I am very good friends with them -- medical students and residents, not so much with residents, because they come there, but with medical students, and I have some very good friends there. We don't interact too much on social level with the physicians, at least in my setting. Their socializing is very different from mine.

PS: In what way? Do they ride motorcycles and drink alcohol?

KS: Their sense of partying and socializing is very different. I go to the professional meetings. But with physicians at Ramsey, I don't have much outside social interactions. We are not friends to go and spend the evening with them or sit and drink. I think it's basically because of my difference of culture. I don't eat meat. don't drink. My husband doesn't drink. We don't go out fishing and stuff like that, so it's just a different culture. The music is very different, and I think those are the things, because in socializing, you eat, drink, and listen to music or dance. My husband doesn't like dancing, though I would like to dance. So there is no commonalty to interact with those people, but we still go to those dinners and mostly professional interaction that way. We socialize a lot, entertain a lot at home, and most of them are friends from India, I mean they are friends who have come from India. And some of our friends are 25-year friendships, and their children are friends to each other and we feel as extended family. We started an investment group, which is not so much an investment group, but a social group. We call it gourmet group, because everybody cooks just fabulous for the meeting. We meet once a month, and there are seven couples, and we have been meeting since 1972, and we do some investment things and talk about that, but then we start socializing and discuss the whole community and Mandir activities. I think I can say for every member, we enjoy that. Otherwise, we wouldn't have continued doing that. Our children now, I'm telling them to start a junior club, children of these people, but they are all kind of scattered out. So right now my activities are mostly involved with the Hindu Society, the temple, and some social groups, but I enjoy entertaining people, going to people's homes, singing and all that.

PS: Are there any other community groups that you are active in, either as a leader, or as a participant?

KS: I'm very active in my professional societies, but in the community, I was active in the India Association of Minnesota, which used to be called India Club, but my whole energy is now channeled into the Hindu Society. We are also active socially. I set up a group for battered females for the Indian women.

PS: Is that much of an issue? That is something I've never heard anyone talk about.

It's a thing which we should be ashamed of, but it is there. It is an evil which is there. It's kept very subdued because most of the Indians here are from educated, socially high status but this evil has no bounds, it is all over. And the problem is that we know that it is there. In this community, you don't want to talk to people you meet socially about this problem. So once I realized we had this problem, I got a couple of American ladies who, like you, have a certain interest in Indian background. So, this friend of mine -- he's from India, but his wife is American -- so I said, "Probably these women will open up more to you rather than to me. Then I had one Indian social worker who is from Uganda. She didn't know many people from New Delhi, so we set up that. I said I have a lot of resources through my work where I can direct the people, women who need help. They don't have to tell me any problem. They can call Sandy or Sushila and they will give the number. I would just be the facilitator because I don't want to be the counselor. I don't have the credentials for this. I just want them to realize there is some help that is available to them and some way we can help them indirectly. We have a couple of incidences for that. One was a difficult situation. Sushila and I had to go to an apartment building where we thought the woman was being kept, so I called the Brooklyn police and said, "Would somebody go there with us?" I didn't want to go there alone; we had no right to go to somebody's house. So we went with the police officer, and I know that man was in the apartment. That was the interpretation of the police officer. We talked to the woman, she didn't know English so I talked to her in Hindi. All I said, "We don't want you to get hurt, we don't want you to get into trouble, but if you have any problem, just make sure you call the police."

PS: Did she ever call?

KS: She called, so I feel I'm doing something. A lot of people don't realize there is a problem. Then we have sent a couple of people to Chicago, because they couldn't keep their privacy here. There's a big support group in Chicago, and it's not difficult to travel back and forth to Chicago. Every culture has different positions. The social worker who is in American culture, she probably will not have an understanding of all the interactions of the Indian women, so you have to give input into that. I think it's best from people who understand the culture, because husbands, as we grew up, the training that we have had, and I'm not saying it's right or wrong, but there is a certain way we have been taught to think about our husbands, and that's difficult, the social worker here will not understand that feeling.

PS: So what is the culturally Indian way to deal with a battering situation?

KS: I think the dealing is the same, that you are not meant to take all the abuse, and you should stand up for that, and if the marriage has to come to an end, it has to end.

PS: Is that what happens in India also, when there is beating?

KS: I have not dealt with that problem in India, but now I know that's the way it is handled. But there is a lot of hesitation. There is not a lot of family here. Well, some people have families here and they will try to keep the thing secret and so that the abuse keeps on going. The way I feel, the job for the support group, or the physician, or whoever, the social worker, to make the woman understand she has her own rights, she doesn't have to take this, and if the situation is life-threatening or cannot be solved, then she should get out of it. She does not have to take this.

PS: But in India, divorce is very rare.

KS: Oh no, oh no, not anymore. You can say that about my mother's time. But there is a lot of cruelty going on, lot of abuse going on. People are realizing that this is a evil, and women are not being passive, they are taking an active stand. I think that comes from education, and why would the woman take the abuse unless she is very

submissive, and why would she be submissive if she does have means to support her. Not everybody can run to their father's house and stay there. So now more women being in professions and able to earn their own things, they are facing it, they are challenging it and getting out. So divorce is not so rare or uncommon.

PS: And yet aren't most women in India still being raised in that culture to be submissive to their husbands?

KS: I can't say in villages, because I have not lived in villages. My group, my family, people I know in Delhi, most of them are educated women, and all my new members in the family is educated, and it depends very much on the individual family, so I can't give you a very generalized opinion and I'm sure the submissiveness and the burning is still going on but not to the extent because so many time the educated women or the women who are earning their own living, they are moving out of this situation.

PS: In America here, we have a real distorted picture.

KS: You take just one aspect. It's just like saying every teenager in America has an illegitimate pregnancy. That's not true. There is a percentage that has illegitimate pregnancy, but that is not all America, so I say the same thing, that not all women in India are being abused, and the divorce rate is going up. It has to come with evolution and education. The TV is another stuff. I think we are losing the good part of our culture. It should be the other way: We should keep the good part of our culture and acquire good culture from American TV.

PS: But there isn't any good culture on American TV.

KS: Not at least what they are seeing. There's a lot of good points about American culture, you know, which we should learn, and I try to learn. My children say that they have the best, except that, growing up, they were raised by very strict Indian parents. They were able to get the best of our Indian culture, and they think they got the best of American culture.

PS: Which parts of Indian culture were you careful to pass on? You taught them Hindi?

KS: We tried.

PS: Are they fluent?

KS: They understand, and my son can write a little bit. But it's this way: when they go to India in two days, they start speaking fluent Hindi. But here they won't talk to us in Hindi.

PS: Did you cook Indian food all the time?

KS: Most of the time.

PS: Did your raise them as vegetarians?

KS: No, I did not, because my husband is not vegetarian.

PS: But you are?

KS: I am vegetarian. They eat Indian food, they cook ndian food, they relish Indian food. They learn the Indian culture giving a lot of credence to study and education, that education; schooling, grades, homework, those are the priorities. The fun comes second. One thing I think would have gone differently that neither of them got interested in Indian music in which both my husband and I are very interested, and I think would have been different if they had been raised in India. I'm talking about 70's. Now there is a lot of opportunity to expose them to Indian dancing, Indian music, and all that. Even in California, they have schools for Indian music and dance. At that time, when they were going through schooling, the opportunities were not there.

PS: Most kids like yours have got some Eastern values and some Western values. Which ones do you see they have of which cultures?

KS: I don't know how to answer that. They will be able to answer that much better than I can. I don't know. One thing I can say is that they don't mind doing any of the work that has to be done.

PS: Like housework?

KS: Housework, cooking, or distributing papers that has to be done or working in McDonald's or Target. I mean they don't have to because they have better jobs now.

PS: But they are not ashamed to do that?

KS: Right, and we are not ashamed that my son did lawn mowing for the neighbors.

PS: Whereas in India . . .

KS: That is not acceptable or not done. There are two reasons for that. The opportunities are not there, because so many adults are looking for jobs. Plus the students are so hard-pressed for their studies and commuting back and forth to school. A lot of kids have to spend one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening just reaching their college or university, so they don't have much time for doing side jobs like the high school kids do it here.

PS: Have you seen changes in the Indian community in the last few years?

KS: Oh, they have changed a lot. Now, people who are coming here from India and living here in the present time, they are not so much Americanized. They are more into keeping their Indian traditions while people who came in the 60's and 70's, changed their dress codes, totally became Americanized, and changed their names.

PS: From Krishna to Kris?

KS: You said it, right, right. He doesn't want to be called Kris, but people call him Kris. He never says, "My name is Kris," but there are people who would say, "My name is Sandy." There were people who would say at that time, "Oh no, I'm not a Hindu." They didn't feel like saying, I'm an Indian, I'm a Hindu," or things like that. Now people take more pride. Children in school are not afraid to say, "I'm a vegetarian, and I would request a vegetarian meal." I think they are more assertive, and they are not giving up their culture easily.

PS: Is that because there is a bigger community that supports them?

KS: And the means to carry on the tradition. When you come in a total blank, and you don't see any Indian face, or you don't see any people wearing saris, or hearing any Indian music, you feel lonely, so what do you do? You want to

blend and change everything, or that was the effect of the time, I don't know, I don't know, but that is one big change I see. I went to a lot of stress on that point. When I went to work, I asked, "Do you mind if I keep on wearing saris?" They said, "No." One of my physicians said, "Can we call you 'Karen?'" I said, "No, you have to call me 'Kusum.'" Then I still I changed into pants suits and slacks because we had a fire in 1975 and I lost my clothes, and at that @ time, I had to go to Dayton's and buy a whole wardrobe, and since them, I'm wearing them to work, but at home or on social occasions I usually wear my saris. And I don't think that dress means anything, but it's the way you feel. I feel very Indian, and at work when some of the patients say, "You are from Spain, you are Hispanic," I say, "No, I'm an Indian." So that is changing a little bit, even though people have changed their dresses, but they are not reluctant to say, "I'm from India."

PS: Do you see that as positive?

KS: Oh yes.

 ${\tt PS:}$ Then that reinforces how you've held onto your Indian . . .

KS: I think it also helped in the sense because people who came from Uganda or British West Indies, Trinidad, there is big contingency of Hindus who have come from there. And they didn't mind saying that we are Hindus, they themselves, even though their dress code and other things are very different. I think it helps in conspicuous way the Indians who are coming from India.

PS: How so?

KS: People who left India 200, 500 years ago, they still feel that way, why shouldn't I feel that way? I should be more assertive too. That's the way that I look at it, I may be totally wrong.

PS: So you're modeling your own assertiveness about your culture after the West Indian?

KS: Hmhmm. There is nothing to be ashamed about. I felt that way from the beginning, but I see more people feeling that way, that's my perception.

PS: As the community gets bigger, there is more support.

KS: And there are more activities to that line. Like one of my younger friends, she has two daughters. They speak Indian at home; they go to American schools. Outside the house, they look just like American kids, talking the same language, the same phraseology, the same activities at school. But at home, she learns dancing, she speaks Hindi. So that's positive I think.

PS: I think it would be a real gift for American kids to grow up with two languages.

KS: Oh yes, I think that's one thing which Americans in general -- I'm an American now -- but people who have been here from two generations ago, they are not so broadminded in their geography. They don't know much about other cultures, other people. They're not well traveled.

PS: Indians?

KS: No, I'm talking about Americans, day-to-day common Americans. They know only one language. I think Spanish should be mandatory in all schools here because you have such a big contingency, or French. I think learning language is a big boon. This is a land of opportunities. I plan to learn Spanish sometimes when I get time to attend classes. I would love to, I would like to, all those things I did not have the opportunity when I was growing up in India.

PS: Give me an overview of your whole working history. You said you worked as a physician in India. What specialty were you in there?

KS: I graduated and specialized in internal medicine which is equal to the boards here. I did my postgraduate, wrote a thesis, went through the exams and all that. Then I joined the government service, because my husband was in government service, medical government service, so we were both there.

I was there as a Class One officer, taking care of patients. Then we came here, and I spent two year in pathology because my kids were small and I didn't want to take night calls but then I came to St. Paul here and I started as an Internal Medicine physician on the staff of St. Paul Ramsey, and then in 1972, I moved to the Emergency Medicine department, and have been there since. I set up

the Poison Center in Minnesota, State of Minnesota, because I specialized in Toxicology which deals with the science of poisoning and taking care of the patients. In the 70's, we used to see a lot of drug abuse patients. We still see, but the problems are on a little bit of a different scale. Then I got interested in disaster medicine, like earthquakes, fires, how to handle those situations, chemical fires like we had one in India. So I started the whole concept of hazardous material handling and its effect, and I'm on the task force, the commission, the emergency state medical association. I work in the emergency room. I teach a course in toxicology for the University of Minnesota, it's a an elective course. And we teach the residents, paramedics, fire people.

PS: Busy life. How do you see differences in work styles, expectations in India and here -- the way people approach their work, how they value it?

KS: I wouldn't say anything different in medical things. In general, people are hard-working here which sometimes I see a lack of in India. Keeping to time and dedication to work.

PS: Keeping to time? Meaning being on time?

KS: Being on time.

PS: I've never seen a physician be on time.

I don't mean physicians, I mean in general. Physicians work very hard all over, in India as well as here. respond to your comment, there is always some serious patient. I know my own obstetrician in Boston, he was two hours late and I was in pains and labor, and he couldn't come right away, because he had a flat tire or something like that. What can you say? Those are facts of life. Here, if there is snow and I can't get out of my driveway, they will send a tow truck and they will take me to hospital to work. Physicians who go into medicine, I think are a very special group of people who devote . . . I have yet to know a medical doctor who is not considerate of his patients. That way, I think the ethics are the same. in general, I think people here are more conscientious of their work and being on time to work and doing the work in the allocated time. If the time for break is there, they won't hesitate for a minute not to take that break, which I

find even in nurses. They will take their break at a designated time and they will come back at the designated time. In India, they might extend it to five more minutes, or ten more minutes.

PS: Let's talk last about maintaining family ties. You said your siblings are still in India. Is your mother still living?

KS: My mother is living. My father died 30 years ago in a car accident.

PS: That must have been hard.

KS: That was very hard.

PS: How do you maintain ties with family members still in India?

KS: I still feel very close to them, and we write letters. We don't talk so much on the telephone. It's expensive. Then we go and visit.

PS: How often do you go back?

KS: It's no regular pattern. Sometimes we go after two years. Initially, we were going when they were getting married in my family or my husband's family, and now I go every two years or so.

PS: How long do you generally stay when you go?

KS: Not more than two or two-and-a-half weeks, because I can't take that much time off work.

PS: Does your husband go with you?

KS: Sometimes.

PS: Who do you stay with mostly when you are there?

KS: With family. Everybody, one night here, one night there, one half day there. And I have some good friends there too, almost like family, so I interact with them.

PS: How about retirement plans? Are you ever going to retire?

KS: Yes, I'm going to retire. I'm feeling tired now, not mentally, but there are certain things I want to do, and with my work and my scheduling, I can't take classes in the evening because I don't work a regular 8-hour day schedule. For that reason, I am thinking of quitting work in a couple of years so that I can attend Spanish classes, so I can learn classical music, computers and other different things. I want to do that before I get cremated. That's my ambition. I don't think age is any barrier. I think if you want to do something, you can do it. I am not ashamed to going to classes with kids.

PS: Would you stay in the United States after you retire? Or spend more time in India?

KS: We haven't decided that. Maybe two or three months there, and the rest here.

PS: Would you go in the winter?

KS: Obviously, obviously (laughter).

PS: You said your husband is three years older than you?

KS: He is very active. He doesn't want to retire. If he had retired, I would have probably retired too. He keeps on working, and I don't want to stay home. My work is still challenging, because I meet younger people, and it keeps you on your toes. I keep my academics up to par, because we deal with residents and students, so it's nice to interact with them.

PS: Are there any other things you want to talk about?

KS: No, we talked about ambitions, about work. What I particularly enjoy is when the medical students or the new residents come, and if we have some free moments, for some reason, they start talking about their personal problems. I think they talk to me because they think it won't go beyond me, which it never goes. Anybody who confides in me, it never goes anywhere. I think they talk to me because they probably look to me as a mother substitute, or as a person who can empathize with them but yet not be maternal, patronizing. So I enjoy that. It broadens my horizon and makes me think more in terms of a human being and problems, and if I can comfort them, that's my job. Sometimes they

talk to me about the most intimate problems, and I think: Why is he talking to me like that?

PS: Is it mostly young men?

KS: Hmhmm. If they ask for advice, I will get give it, but otherwise I never give any advice. Just listen. That's a very interesting situation. It's a good interact because I feel I interact with different levels of people. It's very different to talk to police officer and how they act and interact. I really cherish that -- talking to different levels. Not that I am very superior or anything, but with a different outlook on how people see.

PS: In an emergency room, you probably see a lot of police officers?

KS: A lot of police officers, and a lot of clerks, and all these things happen at night or when there is a stressful situation, like the two officers were killed a few months ago.

PS: Were you involved in that?

KS: I was there, but I did not personally handle those patients. But working in an emergency room is very different than practicing in an office. There they deal with patients and maybe the nurses. In the emergency room, we all work as a team, counting from the cleaning lady to the top people. We interact with social workers very intimately, closely. We interact with the police officers, the lawyers, the judges, because we go and testify in the law. The bad criminal things -- the rapes, the assaults, the drunks, shootings. It's a very wide horizon and we have to deal with different groups of people, and I think it keeps you going.

PS: Your husband is still in Pediatrics?

KS: Pediatric Endocrinology. He is a specialist.

PS: He just sees little babies?

KS: Some of it is very interesting because he has been here in practice for 27 years, and now he is seeing the children of his patients, and some of the college kids still come back to him who were his patients, and they would still come

back for diabetes and talking about different problems, and they don't want to go to their adult physician. They keep coming, and a couple of his twenty-year-old patients are bringing their kids, so he is seeing two generations.

PS: So is he not bored anymore?

KS: No, he's not bored.

PS: So leaving India was a good choice because he's been 34 years and he's not bored yet.

KS: No. I'm not bored with my work either, but I just want more things to be done and I'm not getting the opportunity to do those things. I mean if I could fit in some of those things in my work schedule, which is impossible, then I would keep on working, but I think there is a limit, and I would like to get those things done.

PS: Is there anything else you would like to share?

KS: No, I enjoyed talking to you.

PS: Thank you. It's been a real pleasure talking to you too.

KS: I don't know if I covered to your requirements or not.

PS: Very articulate, very well said.

KS: Thank you.

PS: Thank you.

APPENDIX

Pertinent Data of Dr. Kusum Saxena

BORN: Meerut, U.P., India on October 13, 1933

FATHER: Lal Bahadur MOTHER: Vimla Devi

MARRIED: May 20, 1957 to Dr. Krishna M. Saxena, Pediatric

Endocrinologist

CHILDREN: Geeta (female) born April 21, 1960

Married to Gerald McGibbon on July 9, 1982
They have three children
Sanjaya (male) born Feb. 2, 1964
He is a physician, specializing in
Neuropsychiatrist
Currently unmarried

EDUCATION: Higher Secondary School, 1950 Pre-medical, 1951

Graduated from Medical School (MBBS), 1956

Finished post-graduate degree, M.D. Internal Medicine, 1959

HONORS: Papers of distinction in Mathematics, Anatomy and Physiology.

Four gold medals in Medical School for high academic performance

(One gold medal received by me for obtaining highest marks ever in anatomy has been given to my son, Sanjaya, after he obtained high scores in anatomy at his medical school.)

IMMIGRATION: First came to Boston Massachusetts October 16, 1960

Came to St. Paul, Minn. on Immigration Visa on Sept. 9, 1967.

Lived in an apartment close to Children's Hospital, St. Paul where my husband worked until Aug. 1, 1968.

Bought a home in Pine Tree Hills; lived there from Aug. 68 - April 85.

Lived in various houses until March 88

while our house in Little Canada was being built. The builder declared bankruptcy and ran away. We lost a lot of money on that house. The house was foreclosed and we had to buy it from the other party then got it finished ourselves. We ended up paying almost twice the cost for this house. My husband had done a lot of designing in this house along with the architect, Raj Saksena, who is the Dean of Architectural School in Rhode Island. We have lived in this house since March 17, 1988.

WORK HISTORY: Starting working as a Staff Physician at St. Paul Ramsey Hospital in the out-patient

clinic Nov.. 27, 1967 to June 30, 1970. Had to do a two year residency to be qualified to take board examinations. This was completed in Internal Medicine at Charles T. Miller Hospital, St. Paul MN affiliated with University of Minnesota, 1970-72.

> Worked in Emergency medicine Department at St. Paul Ramsey Medical Center from Nov. 2, 1972 to the present.

Board Certified/recertified in Emergency medicine

Board Certified/recertified in Family Practice

Board Certified/recertified in Clinical Toxicology

Have fellowships in all of the three above. Licensed to practice medicine in Minnesota since 1968.

Licensed to practice medicine in India since 1957.

DEDICATION

This document is dedicated to:

My Mother, "Janani" who brought me into this world and nurtured me into who I am today.

My Father, who was always a source of support and encouragement

My Husband, without him, I would not be here today. no I l has been

My Brother, who I love and care a lot

My Son, who has been the joy and pride of my life.