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Patience Chukura oral history interview by S. Elizabeth Bird and Fraser Ottanelli, December 10, 2009

Patience Chukura (Interviewee)

S. Elizabeth Bird (Interviewer)

Fraser M. Ottanelli (Interviewer)

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Elizabeth Bird: This is Friday, December 10, 2009. This is Elizabeth Bird, and I am interviewing Mrs. Patience Chukura. As we said, we're interested—we'd like to talk about several stages of the history of this event. And one of the things we wanted to start with was if you could, just—take you back to the days before anything happened, before October 6 [1967]. Life as it was then. If you could describe a little bit about your life in Asaba with your husband and family and what you were all doing and how—life was about.

Patience Chukura: I was twenty-eight. I was twenty-eight, just before. I was twenty-seven, married, with three children, and pregnant for the fourth time, and life was interesting. With me, my husband, and the children, and—normal life, interesting life, happy life, until the outbreak of the war—they talk about the problems in Nigeria, political problems, and it went into the army coming in.

EB: Okay. So we were talking about life before—

PC: It was an interesting life, happy life, with my husband and the children, and I was pregnant for the—four months pregnant, for the fourth child. It really was normal. I felt as a private person. The political issue was going on; we never knew it was going to affect individuals. And it happens like that: you think it's politician talking to politician, at the end of the day they make it up. But this wasn't so, because it went into the secession.

I'm from Asaba, where (inaudible) comes from, and Asaba is in the Western region at that time. The demarcation is the Niger [River] between Asaba and the Eastern side of the country. It was North, South—North, West, and East. And this started from Kano, from Lagos. The initial massacre was the Northerners; they didn't want the Southerners. Nobody knew it was going to get into the political issue of everybody being killed.

We were in Benin, the main city. I don't know if you know—

EB: Yeah.

PC: We drove down through here in Nigeria. When in Benin, I was working with Nigeria Tobacco Company as a secretary. My husband was in business. And within this period, there was secession in the East. You must have heard of Ojukwu.

EB: Oh, yes.

PC: There was problem in the army, problem in—political problem, personal problem, and as a tribal. It went into tribal: who was going to rule, who would be there. And there was a secession from the Eastern side, getting into themselves and declared the state of Biafra, which didn't go well with the other Nigerians. Nobody supported it because we know Nigeria to be one, and suddenly somebody said he wants to be on his own. That was all—we felt it was just something to be settled at any moment, but that wasn't so.

Next, we had—we were in Benin. Next one we had was at—the federal government had taken over and declared a state of emergency in the East, and the federal troops now set out to crush the Biafran soldiers in the East (inaudible). For them to get to the East, they have to pass from Lagos to Ijebu Ode to Benin to Asaba. And what divides Asaba and the East—the other side is Onitsha, this side is Asaba. The other side is the Eastern Region, where this Ojukwu's law was in operation. From my own side, which is Asaba, we are under the federal government. Nobody was into politics.

As the days went on, we noticed that people were running to their states, because not only was it soldier to soldier: individuals were taking it on themselves now to molest civilians. So we—a whole lot of us decided to go back home and stay there until we knew what the situation was going to be. That was how we went to Asaba.

EB: When did you leave Benin for Asaba?

PC: We left Benin for Asaba in September—end of September. No, first week of September.

EB: In sixty-seven [1967].

PC: Nineteen sixty-seven [1967], the first week of September.

EB: You had a home in Asaba to go to?

PC: We had—we were so young that we hadn't built a house. So, we went to stay with our brother-in-law. That's a family house: my father-in-law, and the other children, and my brother-in-law. My brother-in-law retired at Ibadan, so he went home. So we went home to stay with them, as a young couple with our young children. So, we had a home in Asaba, so we decided to go home. It's not even going home: we had to run home, because the soldiers were advancing, and we were told from advices that when there's something like that, it's not the person they are looking for that they're going to attack; it could be anybody. So we decided to go home, leaving a lot of our things behind, because we couldn't carry much. We went home to Asaba.

EB: What was it like in Asaba in that period in September?

PC: Normal life, happy life, everybody was happy we were going home.

EB: What were you hearing about what was happening, about the soldiers, about—because the Biafran troops came in first.

PC: Yeah, that was the problem in Asaba, because they don't—the Biafrans—I don't know how to describe it. It's like you cross the River Thames, one side of the Thames to the other, in England. That's the Niger: you cross from there to there. It didn't take them time to cross over, and the bridge was there; you just went. So, the Biafran troop came into Asaba. The fear of the federal government was that they were advancing through Asaba, so the best thing was to come down and stop them from coming in.

EB: What was it like when the Biafran troops were there? Did they give trouble at all?

PC: They weren't giving us—they were just minding their business. But I don't think—I can't say nothing. They are minding their business; if they are minding their business, they should've been on the other side of the Niger. But their coming over was a sign of hostility. So the federal troop—we heard that the federal troop was coming.

EB: Was everyone happy that the federal troops were coming?

PC: They were happy somehow, that's—I heard there was going—they are mighty. The small—Biafra was just a state, or many towns. We thought that as they come they are going to face them soldier to soldier, and maybe they will drive the Biafran troops to the other side. Mind you, the difference in languages wasn't much. So they mixed up and they were there. A lot of people were happy that the Biafrans came over.

But within this period—that was early September [they] went through. Before then, we were hearing stories of what was happening in Lagos. It turned into, um, tribal. Yoruba man doesn't want to see Igbo man, Igbo man doesn't want to see Hausa man, Hausa man in the first place started it all over. They have been killing all the Southerners. And we happen to be from Asaba, all right, but the same language with those on the other side of the Niger, we speak. So they came in. It didn't matter, it didn't bother us. We're not politicians, we're not soldiers; we are just minding our business.

EB: Try, maybe, to start talking about, if you could, the days immediately—when the federal troops came in, and then from then onwards.

PC: We're told—we heard over the news that the federal troops were coming. We didn't even know, but we decided—because we live on the express road of Asaba; we call it Nnebisi Road. That's where we were staying. Then my brother-in-law knew—our own living, it's not like the English way. Once you are eighteen, you are on your own, but no matter what happens, it's a family, like the Italians do. It's a decision that, "Oh, let's go to settle some place." We decided to move to a house that we felt was safe, outside where even if the soldiers come down that street, they are going to pass us along. And we went there: myself, my three children, the house girl, my husband, my mother-in-law, my brother-in-law and his wife, and eight children—they had eight children—and, um, decided to go and stay in my father's house, where we thought we'd be safe. My father was in Ibadan, my parents were in Ibadan, so the house was empty. We decided to go there, in the village not far from there. This was on the end—towards the end of September, the end of September. Then on the—we'd left home on that expressway to go to the house that we felt was safe on the fifth of October, the fifth of October, with the children.

Then on the sixth of October, on the sixth of October, somebody came looking for my brother-in-law and said that the federal troops had come into Asaba, and they were burning houses. This was the message we had. They were burning houses, and they said, unless they see people who occupy the houses and tell them that they are not involved with the army, and you open the door and tell them that no Biafran troop was there, that the house would be burnt, everything would be burnt. And my brother-in-law said the best would be for us to go back to the house if that—that was the propaganda. Everybody should go back to his or her house and open your door. The federal troops have come, and when they come tell them—let them know that there's no Biafran troop there.

So, we decided to go back home. This going back, it's a matter of about ten minutes, or say fifteen minutes, walk across the main route. That was how we decided to go back home. As we walked back, just across this main route—this is the other side of where we went to stay, and that's the side of where the house we left was on, the house we were going to stay in and to make sure that nothing happened. As we were about to cross the route, we saw that the federal troops had actually come into Asaba because they lined the whole street, a long stretch of the expressway in Asaba—we called it Nnebisi Road. They were all there, left and right. And it didn't bother us, because we thought they were friends, making peace. We decided to cross the route to go to our house. That was when one of the soldiers stood up and said, "Those two men, come." I'm just telling you the kind of thing—what happened. Said, "Those two men, come." We looked, there were the two men that were with us and the children, so they both stepped forward to see what they wanted, to hear what they wanted to say. And they said, "Follow us." That was it.

When I turned back, I saw another—my mother-in-law said, "Okay." Then we crossed over and went to the house to stay with the children, with my sister-in-law and brother-in-law. And my sister-in-law—that's the wife of the other—my most senior brother—we went home with the children. I said, "Okay, let me go with them and see what was going to happen." I had the baby, Angela. I had the baby at my back, and nobody knew I was getting pregnant anyway, because when it happened I was four months pregnant. So with the baby at the back, I followed them, and had even the load we are carrying. When I got halfway, I put the backpack down and followed them. I followed them from that point, about one pole, getting to the front of the cathedral at Asaba, St. Joseph's Cathedral. You may have—in fact, they may want to take you there. By the time I got there, one of the soldiers—they were still lined up—came out and said, "You, woman, get back." I remember my brother-in-law turned back and said, "Go home. We'll be okay." That was what he said. I then left them and went—I was going back home.

As I was going back home, I saw this (inaudible) Murtala Mohammed, the Head of State at that time, and a passenger, the former Nigerian. They were in the—the passenger was in the army. I saw them in a car, they were heading there. I was hysterical, telling them that they are taking my husband and they said, "Don't worry, nothing will happen to

them.” So I went home. And when I got home—this was within fifteen minutes, thirty minutes. I got home, I couldn’t stay. I told my mother-in-law, I said, “I have to go back. I want to know what is going to happen to this—I don’t want anything to happen to them.” Because the man that came out of where he was came out with his gun and drew and—did a stretch that, “If you cross here, I’ll kill you.” That was what the man said. Because I insisted going over there, he said, “If you cross this bar, you will be shot.” So I went back home. When I got home, I told my mother-in-law that I wasn’t at peace with myself; I would like to go back. She said, “Okay, if you insist.”

Because I grew up there, I knew the other road to take to get to where the soldiers were going. But behind—as I was going back, I saw a group of not less than four hundred people taken from the village, from the houses. They were taken from their houses on the line, were marching them to the same place that my husband and brother had taken on the main route. As they were moving, this other soldier would say, “You are like a Biafran soldier.” They are civilians. [He would say,] “You are like a Biafran soldier, come out of the line.” They take them to the field as they were going and shoot them. They shot. So, that was what prompted me when I got home. I hoped this route home would be safe because I went earlier. So I went—I came back and went to the other route, getting there. They had been shot.

EB: All of them?

PC: My husband and his brother. And all those—about four hundred people who were following them, they were shot in front of the police station at Asaba. That made me hysterical again. I held onto the person I saw, the soldier. I said, “Why did you kill my husband?” And I don’t want to remember what happened. The man with the butt—the butt of the gun—hit me on the chest and said, “Woman, if you’re not careful, you’ll get killed as well.” At that point, I went home. I got home to tell them that they had been killed. Three days after, we are now—I became a widow overnight, same as my brother-in-law’s wife. Helpless, we are now home, a lot of people, nobody knew what was happening. Papa—that’s my father-in-law—when he heard that his two sons were killed, he went out, and before he go out, he said, “What happened?” They shot him. They killed him. Federal troops. It was shelling between Asaba and Onitsha. We were in fear of repercussions, that they were going to kill—that they were going to wipe out everybody in Asaba, especially male children. You remember what happened? That was what—my son, I had to put him in his sister’s clothing for people to think he wasn’t a boy, that he was a girl.

EB: How old was your son?

PC: Pardon?

EB: How old was your son then?

PC: He was born in 1965, August sixty-five [1965]. This was happening in, uh—

EB: Sixty-seven [1967].

PC: Sixty-seven [1967]. He was a year, almost two years. Then the sister, his seniorest sister, was about just one year. That's the one I had at the back. That was—that's my son, two year old son. I had a girl before him, and then the girl after him, they had girl's clothing. I was not worried (inaudible). If they came—they were all over the place. If they came they will know that, "Oh, this isn't a boy," nothing will happen to him. And those maids we had, we had to hide them on the roof, because we heard that anywhere they went to, they could rape anybody. That was the fear we lived in, in Asaba. That was on the seventh, on the seventh—that's the seventh.

My mother is still alive; she's ninety-three. Her brothers—she had five brothers. The first one was her senior, the oldest—they were all killed on that day.

EB: On the sixth?

PC: On the sixth, on that sixth. Everywhere they were killing—when they look at any man, they say, "You look like a Biafran," and they were all civilians. Of course, you know soldiers: when something comes up like that, soldiers have a way of—they know how to hide, or how to run away, or how to defend themselves. All the people they killed were civilians. That was how I lost my husband.

EB: What was your husband's name?

PC: Eddie [Edwin] Chukura. Edwin Chukura.

EB: And his brother?

PC: Christian. Christian Chukura.

EB: And they both had the same last name?

PC: Yes. And Papa's name is David Chukura. I had my uncles, who also died. When this happened on the sixth, on the seventh, there was—people in the house were wondering what was happening. Then, nobody knew they had killed—there had been killings here and there. And we heard some dancing. We were debating: can people be joyous when something was happening? We need to be told that they got our people—the people were telling Asaba people that if you come out—just as we came out—if we had stayed in my father's house, maybe nothing would have happened. But I think that's how God wanted it. We are telling people propaganda, that if you come—the federal troops are coming. They have come into town; come and receive them, come and tell them; give them fresh sheep, and so on and so forth. And my people, very joyous people, got out themselves to go and receive the federal troops. That was the seventh. And that was when they did—they killed them.

As I was reading—somebody passed a letter to me on Saturday—that was my first time of hearing of it—where I heard about Ify Uraih, and the man and the woman—which I'm sure you are the one—that you are coming. And I said—they are talking about seventh, what happened on the seventh—and I said, "It can't be!" (inaudible). And then I decided to phone him that I'd like to come and see those who were involved.

EB: (inaudible) It's very, very good of you to do it.

PC: Yes.

Fraser Ottanelli: I have a question to ask you. When you described the events of the sixth and the seventh, all the men, you said (inaudible) you dressed your son like a little girl. So, all the men went in hiding?

PC: A lot of people ran out of Asaba. A lot of people crossed over to the Biafran side. But even my sister-in-law, who lives in—who is married to that side—came two days before to tell my husband that we could all come to the East. My husband said he wasn't going to the East. That was how we found ourselves there. A lot of people ran. Men ran. A lot of men ran out of Asaba, ran into the villages. Because of the nearness of Asaba to the boundary, to the bridge—that's where the bridge crossing over to the Biafran side was. That's how we found ourselves victims.

FO: What did women do, then, in the days after the events? You were the ones left behind.

PC: We were the ones left behind, yes.

FO: And so how did you—what did you do? How did you cope? How did you look after your family, your children?

PC: Um, as I said, I was working for Nigerian Tobacco Company. After this killing, after the people were coming back, I heard—there is a particular man who came from Asaba, who is from Asaba—he’s still around—working with me at Nigerian Tobacco Company. I was a secretary there, and he was one of the managers. So there was a mandate from England, and Lagos, that they could take care of their staff who were there. I’m talking about myself. The staff who were involved in the—who found themselves trapped. So, we were going there to connect—I was then given my salary, my pay. So that’s how I was able to take care of my children until—two days after. These two just were all over the place. They came to our house where we were and saw my sister-in-laws. Because my father-in-law came from Benue State—he returned from Benue State. Everybody was running home. He was living in Benue State, so he came back from Benue State with the younger children. He had two wives, and that wife happened to be—the second wife happened to be from Benue State. So he brought the children back. While the children were playing out, this soldier man came to pluck oranges near us and saw the children. Behold, this man was my stepmother-in-law’s brother, (inaudible).

EB: The soldier was?

PC: The soldier, he was. He was asking, “Did you know what I”—apparently, he didn’t know that the children had any affiliation with—“What are you doing here?” he said. “They came with Papa, too. Where is Papa?” I said, “Papa was killed yesterday.” (inaudible) The man shouted, “Is that his son?” When they took them there, a soldier was ordered to kill, to shoot. The boy—the soldier disobeyed. Why? You see, because the soldier told the younger that—the senior man, the man that was ordering him that, “These two people—I knew these people. The senior one is my father’s friend, because they grew up in the North, in Kaduna. This uncle is my father’s friend. I can’t believe they shot the man.” They shot the soldier before they shot—we got to hear this through this man who came to pluck orange. It was through him. I said, “Where are you going?” He said he was going—they had posed them to Lagos. He was going to Lagos. I said, “I have a brother-in-law in Lagos.” I scribbled [on] a pad and said, “Take it to western house, here in Lagos,” but my company headquarters—head office is in western house. “If you give it to one of the managers, they will deliver it to my brother-in-law.” And I

scribbled to tell him that his brothers had been killed and that we're in Asaba with the children.

Five days later, he sent a Red Cross van. The Red Cross people came and carried me and my children back to Lagos. That was how—I didn't stay too long there. Unless you are suffering, unless you are being given—they had something they call Caritas, from all over Europe. They were sending food stuff—they became refugees. They send them to schools. But I didn't go into that, because I had to leave with—they could have sent to me a Red Cross van from Ibadan. They sent to me, to bring me and my children to Ibadan. That was how I went to Ibadan. At Ibadan, I reported to the headquarters. I started going back to my job. That's how I survived with children.

EB: Were you able to bury your husband?

PC: They were buried there.

EB: They just—

PC: They just buried them there. They were buried on the main road there; they were buried in front of the police station. And nobody was allowed to exhume like they did at that place at—where they said they wanted to build a cenotaph or whatever. They dug the grave, they dug the—they killed a lot of people there, and then for fear of some people like you—the world was asking questions. They quickly dug a big grave and pushed all of them in there. Nobody knew who was (inaudible). For my husband, he and others were there for days before they buried them.

EB: And then they just buried them right there?

PC: They just buried them right there, yes.

EB: And there was nothing that—you were not able to get to him?

PC: To get to give them that burial rite, and so on, yes. But my son keeps asking me.

EB: Is that something you would like to do now, to be able to give him a proper burial, if it was possible?

PC: If it's possible, yes. If it's possible—because I heard at one time that they didn't want anybody to, you know? In other words, they didn't want anybody (inaudible) because you are not affected. They want to cover the—cover whatever sits there. Let life continue. But those who are affected—my children were so young they didn't even know their father. The first girl was five. She had a glimpse of him, but the others—and the one I had—I had that one on the ninth of May, 1968. I had her that spring. She never knew her father. The two didn't know. My first daughter had a glimpse.

But my son kept asking. He told me about these Americans that were coming and so on and so forth, and he heard that they were coming. He kept asking. Yesterday I informed him, I said, "I'm going to so and so place," because he's a man now. [I said,] "I hope you don't mind." He said, "Mommy, I don't mind," because he will ask questions. Why you always (inaudible) on seventh, whereas my father died on the sixth. Not only my father, my grandfather, but many of them died on the sixth, at the petrol station—sorry, at the police station. Many notable Asaba chiefs and such were killed there. Nobody knew whether they were killed, because there was no sign for that.

EB: And nobody wrote anything about that.

PC: And nobody wrote anything about that.

EB: What do you think should be done to remember, to—do you have any thoughts on what would be the appropriate thing to do now? We're trying to hear everybody's story, but what then should we do?

PC: I don't know what should be done, because I know that every year I remembered him. We go to Mass for him, and put him in the papers. You can't believe that at one time I put in the papers, "In memory of Eddie Chukura, who was killed on the sixth of—" Somebody phoned me to say, "Why must you say he was killed? Why don't you let it—it means that you are reporting the federal troop, reporting the soldiers." And I said, "Well, the man was killed. He didn't die a natural death." So it made it difficult for us. And everybody would have loved to exhume him—exhume them—from there and go to the family compound and bury them properly, but it wasn't allowed. So we just left it. I'm a lone voice.

EB: You said that you saw General Mohammed, Murtala Mohammed.

PC: He was in the car.

EB: He was there?

PC: He was in the car. When I was coming back from the soldiers, he was—I didn't know that. Maybe they lined up because he came, to receive orders. He was in the car with a passenger. And he waved, said, "Don't worry." I was terrified. He said, "Don't worry, nothing will happen to them." And they passed.

EB: Do you think he ordered this, or did someone—

PC: I can't say he did. Notice, from my experience now—I was young then, I never saw any soldier. The last time I saw soldiers was when I was five or six, and it was later in—we were told that they were coming from the Second World War. I'm seventy now. At that time, they came back out in 1940, forty-five [1945] or so. They camped on the field in Asaba. That's how I knew they were soldiers. And after camping, they went to a new route. They are Nigerians who came back from the World War. From that time till 1967, I never knew there were soldiers anywhere. I didn't bother to know, honestly. I could see policemen, but I never knew about any soldiers.

But when this problem started, I knew that there was a person—I knew that Ironsi was killed, I knew that it was one problem after the other and the other and the other. But I knew that—I saw Mohammed, I saw a passenger in the car. And he said, "Madam, don't worry, go home, nothing will happen." I don't think—they do a lot of things, the soldiers. It was—from experience—the day after I knew that they can just do what—just give them—ask them do one thing, they do the other.

EB: Do you think the soldiers just—why do you think it all happened? What do you think motivated the soldiers to do what they did?

PC: I'm sure they were afraid. They said every potential man there is from Biafra, and they were going to kill them. So they were killing the men, in self-defense. I think they were trying to defend themselves or to defend their fatherland, which is federal land. Of course, I don't see why you should shoot a civilian.

EB: No.

PC: Innocent civilian. And you see, you need to know who my husband was. Harmless. Couldn't harm anybody. He was minding his business, and we were quiet, simple people who want to live life.

EB: What kind of man was he? Can you talk about him a little bit, who and what he was?

PC: He was a gentle man who couldn't hurt—when they say, “People who can't hurt a fly,” he couldn't hurt a fly. He was number seven in family of nine children, and the third boy. And the senior brothers—you could put his hand behind you and (inaudible) because he was very young. So he never—in the whole family squabbles, he was really a friend to each and every one of them. I knew him like that. In the house, he'd say, “Patience, make sure when you are cooking”—that's when he came in, when we are cooking—“cook some more, because you don't know who is coming.” He was—that's him. That was him. He liked life, he liked himself, he was a lovely man. And they just snuffed him out like that.

And I don't cry anymore. I cried at that time, when the children were younger. I cried at night and cleaned my eyes before they wake up in the morning, because what are you going to explain to them? When they see you crying they think you are not strong enough, that they don't have any defense, that they don't have anybody to defend them. But they know as they were growing up that their father was killed by the soldiers, and my boy was terrified anytime he heard about soldier or no soldier. It was up to me to give them that strength and make them feel secured.

EB: So your family was never the same again, then, after that?

PC: Never the same. I've never (inaudible). But I thank God that they're all standing well now.

EB: They've all done well?

PC: They've all done very well. They've all graduated from the university, they are working, they are married. They are married and they have children. So, I give thanks to God for that.

EB: No further questions. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us, or that we need to know, that you would like—

PC: Um, this is my own side of it. A lot of people have different experiences of what happened. It's, um—I don't know. It was painful, very painful. In the whole of Asaba, that town, every home was affected. At one time, you thought there would be no other—the children have grown, we've forgotten what happened. But it was sad. They came to kill. I'm not saying—you asked me whether it was the passenger. I don't think the soldiers were acting in isolation. They must have backing. They must know what they're doing. They couldn't cross over because there was artillery coming from the east. So they are taking it back on the civilians they see, on the civilians they saw at that time. They were just killing people at random when they came to that town to kill. It was so quiet. Ask Ify Uraih where he comes from. It's a quiet, friendly town of Asaba. But they killed almost everybody. But all I'm asking is to please make sure that you talk about the deceased. Eddie [Edwin] and his brothers—

EB: We've heard a little bit about the other people being killed at other times, but yours is the most detailed and profound story that we've heard about.

PC: Other people heard—the stories they told was what they heard, what they were told. But I am a witness to what happened. They killed everybody.

EB: Did you see your husband be shot, or you heard about it?

PC: No. I left him, went back, dropped things and came back; by the time I came, there's a crowd, there are people they were shooting. By the time I came, I saw him lying on the brother in front of the police station. They'd been shot, the two of them, shot and killed.

FO: You saw them there together?

PC: I saw them together. And I remember that day. Anytime I—he was a joker. He was very—in their family, they are very humorous. You can stay there, you won't be unhappy—unless you are not part of there, unless you don't want to be, unless you don't have sense of humor. I remember that anytime he want to change underwear, he said, “Patience, I must—just give me white. Don't buy anything outside white. I don't want—if there's any accident, people will see something not looking white.” The first thing that my eyes went to was his pants, his white pants. Because he was lying on his brother, the white pants (inaudible). Can this be a premonition or whatever, that he thought one day something like this would happen? I remember that he was a very nice man. They are from a very nice family. Unfortunately, their brother died a few years ago, the only one that survived.

And that night of sixth, that night as we were waiting—the night was long. They were killed on the sixth. We couldn't go out anymore, we were there from that sixth till seventh morning. (inaudible) As we were watching, you could hear cutlery, you could hear people eating. (inaudible) You could hear people eating on the table without seeing anybody on the table. My mother-in-law started crying. My children were hungry. You could hear, we heard people's cutlery. That's why sometimes I don't understand the mysteries of the world anymore. That was—I went through agony. For a twenty-eight-year-old woman to wake up and not have seen her husband—we never quarreled, we never—in fact, sometimes I asked myself, “Was it not better that we were quarrelling every day, suddenly quarrelling every day, so that we live long.” But it was like we were having our honeymoon every day for this five—we were married for five years. Five years, was it going to be so short? It was an experience I don't want anybody to have, but it has happened. But I'm happy I'm alive, and the children are okay.

EB: You've done a wonderful job as a mother, too—that you've raised them.

PC: (inaudible) that raised them. They are doing fine.

EB: Well, thank you. Thank you, we really appreciate that you shared this with us, and we—

PC: Thank you. I hope that one day, when one of my grandchildren gets to Florida to read one of your books, they'll see.

EB: They will. (laughs)

PC: You are—he is American?

EB: He's Italian.

PC: Is he?

EB: (laughs)

End of interview

