

**Interviewee:** Lanzing, Rayne  
**Interviewer:** Jennifer Lanzing  
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**Lanzing:** When and where were you born?

**RLanzing:** I was born in New London, Connecticut at the naval air base on December 27, 1959.

**Lanzing:** How old were you when you moved to Florida?

**RLanzing:** Well, I was a military kid, and we did move here twice. Once when I was five, and then we moved to California, and then we moved back to Florida when I was nine.

**Lanzing:** Which air force base did your father work on?

**RLanzing:** He was at Hurlburt Air Force Base.

**Lanzing:** How integrated was the military base?

**RLanzing:** As far as I could tell, it seemed to be totally integrated. I don't remember seeing black and white barracks. They all seemed to share barracks and go to the same school and go to the same church.

**Lanzing:** So then you saw integration as a practice and not necessarily just the army saying, "We're fully integrated?"

**RLanzing:** Yes, it did seem to be integrated to me.

**Lanzing:** Were there many black families living near the base in your neighborhood?

**RLanzing:** In the neighborhood I was in, I don't really remember a black because we were not on the base at Hurlburt. I don't remember seeing a black family in my neighborhood. We had a black section of town where most black kids lived.

**Lanzing:** Did you have any black friends?

**RLanzing:** Yes. When I was at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, we lived on the base there, and there was a black family that lived close to us and she would come over to my house, and she spent the night, and we would play together a lot. In Fort Walton, I did have

black friends there as well.

**Lanzing:** Did your parents have any black friends?

**RLanzing:** Yes. Both my parents were part of the NCO Club, and there were black families in that, and my mother had lots and lots of friends. Some of them were black, so we did associate with other black families.

**Lanzing:** So your mother was a social butterfly then?

**RLanzing:** Yes, she knew people all over the country, and wherever we were, she knew somebody that lived there.

**Lanzing:** And she intermingled regardless of race?

**RLanzing:** Yes. She had black friends that I remember, yes.

**Lanzing:** Did you attend school with both whites and blacks?

**RLanzing:** Yes, I did.

**Lanzing:** All the way through?

**RLanzing:** All the way through, from first grade on to high school.

**Lanzing:** What about kindergarten?

**RLanzing:** I didn't go to kindergarten.

**Lanzing:** Did any of your white friends or classmates make negative comments about black students?

**RLanzing:** Many people made jokes, racist jokes, but I don't ever remember, none of my friends, people that I was associated with, that made any hateful comments about people of other races. I don't ever remember any of my friends using the 'n' word or you know, being racist.

**Lanzing:** Do you think the jokes were mostly made in jest or do you think that they were malicious comments?

**RLanzing:** No, they were all made in jest. They would make fun of me. I'm Catholic. They made fun of me 'cause I'm Indian, they made fun of me 'cause I'm short. I mean, they were just jokes. They were not, I never took them to be anything but a joke.

**Lanzing:** So just as kids make fun of their friends today? Same type of thing?

**RLanzing:** Yeah.

**Lanzing:** I know that your mother had some racist views herself. Do you remember her talking about these views?

**RLanzing:** I don't ever remember my parents making any racist comments when I was little. The only time I remember my mother making any sort of racist comment is when I was in my late teens and started the dating thing, late '70s, mid '70s. She did make it very clear that she didn't agree with interracial dating or marriage. She didn't feel that was good for the children, that the children would get made fun of, that they wouldn't know what their identity was. She didn't that was fair for the children. She did not approve of interracial dating.

**Lanzing:** What if there weren't going to be any children produced?

**RLanzing:** Well, I'm Catholic. Of course, there'd be children produced. That's the goal of marriage. [Laughter]

**Lanzing:** Was there a situation or circumstance that arose that led to her speaking about her views on not liking interracial dating?

**RLanzing:** We saw an interracial couple one day, a black man and a white woman, and she made it clear that she didn't think that that was proper, that that was right and told me that that would not be something that I should do, that that would not be fair to me, my husband, or any children or in-laws or anybody else affiliated with our family. [Laughing]

**Lanzing:** Do you think it mattered to her that it was a white woman and a black man?

**RLanzing:** I don't think she would have approved any more if it had been a white man and a black woman.

**Lanzing:** Do you remember your father talking about any racist views?

**RLanzing:** I don't ever remember my father making any comment about racial mixing or I certainly never heard the 'n' word used in my house while I was growing up. Ever. And I don't remember him saying anything about interracial marriages or dating.

**Lanzing:** If you had dated a black man, would your parents have approved of that?

**RLanzing:** I don't think so, but allowed is probably a strong word. I was kind of allowed to do whatever I wanted, but she would have definitely have let me know that she did not think that was a good thing to do.

**Lanzing:** Did anyone in your family ever date outside of white or American Indian races?

**RLanzing:** My niece dated a Mexican at one point, and my mother did tell her that she didn't think that was a good idea, that there were plenty of nice little white boys out there that she could be dating and that she shouldn't be dating a Mexican.

**Lanzing:** Did you ever see an interracial couple on the military base?

**RLanzing:** I don't remember seeing one on the military base, but I mean, I did see them around town. There weren't very many interracial couples back in the '70s. I did see one at school once at a dance. There was a couple that came to the dance. Both of them very popular, he was a very tall basketball player and he was black, and she was a very pretty, popular girl, and they came to a dance together. They were dating, and it was a little shocking to see them there together, and they were dancing and kissing. I don't remember anyone giving them a hard time or saying anything. No one stopped them, none of the teachers made them stop or separate. I don't remember there being any consequences for them being there. Everybody, you know, it was just a little shocking, that's all.

**Lanzing:** Did people know that they were dating before they showed up at the prom?

**RLanzing:** I'm sure that some people knew that they were dating. I knew that they were dating, so I'm sure other people were aware of it. They would hold hands in the hall.

**Lanzing:** Both your husband and your mother-in-law saw members of the KKK in their hometown of Avon Park. Was this a completely alien idea to you?

**RLanzing:** Absolutely alien idea to me. I never saw any organized hate that I was aware of. I'm sure there was some in Fort Walton, but the KKK was certainly not something I ever saw, and y'know, Skinheads, I never, none of that. I never heard of white supremacies, white supremacists, when I was growing up.

**Lanzing:** How did you know that your mother had racist views?

**RLanzing:** When we saw the black and white couple together she made it known that she didn't think that was proper.

**Lanzing:** Was that the first time you had any inclination?

**RLanzing:** Yes, that was. As I said, we did have black friends growing up, and she had black friends, and I'd never heard her say anything bad about black people before that.

**Lanzing:** Did her comment surprise you?

**RLanzing:** Yes, they really did surprise me. I just thought that that was very strange. I was totally taken aback and said, "Oh, mother! That doesn't matter."

**Lanzing:** So you never had any problem with seeing interracial couples even in the '70s?

**RLanzing:** As I said, it was shocking. I mean, you just didn't see it, and it was odd, but I never thought anything was wrong with it, and I certainly had no problem with them. I certainly wasn't going to lead a lynch mob over to burn a cross in their yard or anything. I thought that if they were happy together, and they loved each other, that that was all that really should matter.

**Lanzing:** Where do you think your mother came to these ideas?

**RLanzing:** Well, she was born in the 1930s, so I'm sure she did see some segregation even though she lived up North. I find it a little strange that she would have any sort of racist opinions like that or feelings since her own mother is American Indian, and she married a good old Irishman. My grandfather was an Irishman, and they had no problems with that was two races, an Indian and a white man, and my grandmother herself had faced racism 'cause she was American Indian, and you know, trying to get a job back then, being American Indian now is cool, but back when she was growing up, it was not cool, and people did discriminate against them. It was hard to get a job. She tried to make herself look as white as she could. She never would braid her hair in any sort of way. She cut her hair short. My mother was never allowed to braid her hair as a child either because that would make them look too Indian. So, it was kind of odd that my mother would have racist views being that her own mother had to suffer through racism against Indians.

**Lanzing:** Do you think that your mother passed her views on to any of her children?

**RLanzing:** Well, certainly not me. My brothers have made racist comments before, but I think that has more to do with their own failings to get jobs or get promotions, and they'd rather blame that on affirmative action, or 'cause they'd see black people getting jobs then to take responsibility for the fact that perhaps if they had done a better job or showed up for work more often, that perhaps they would have gotten the job or the promotion instead of the black person who got it.

**Lanzing:** So you think that your brothers' personal experiences probably shaped their views more than your mother's own ideas?

**RLanzing:** Yes. I think anytime people are poor and struggling with issues in their life, it's easier to blame a whole other race of people than to take responsibility for their own actions, and when you're poor and you're trying to get a job so you can feed your family, and someone from another race gets the job instead of you that the pressure that you feel can sometimes make you angry towards a whole race 'cause there's a lot of stress in being poor.

**Lanzing:** Where did you hear views that differed from your mother's?

**RLanzing:** Actually, I watched a lot of TV when I was growing up. I had an interesting childhood, didn't have a lot of supervision and I watched a lot of TV. I liked to watch the Brady Bunch, and I liked to watch Bewitched, and on those shows, If you watch any of those shows, there's usually at least one episode where there was interaction with a black person or a black family, and the whole moral of the story in those half an hour was that blacks are just as good as whites and that racism is wrong and bad. I remember one episode of Bewitched where Darren has some interaction with a man who happened to be black who was also an ad executive, I think. Tabitha and the black child of this man were friends, and Tabitha put white spots on the black child and black spots on herself because the two of them wanted to be sisters, and they thought the only way they could be sisters was if they looked alike, and at the end of the show, it said that, you know, we could all be sisters because we love each other, not because of the color of our skin.

**Lanzing:** Was that show in black and white at that time?

**RLanzing:** I think that was a color episode. Only like the first season of Bewitched was in black and white.

**Lanzing:** Do you think that those were controversial ideas or episodes airing at that time?

**RLanzing:** Well, I think Hollywood has always been a little ahead of the moral climate of a lot of America. Certainly was with the blacks. Those shows were probably made a little bit later, late '60s, when I think it was a bit more acceptable. In the early, late '50s, it would not probably have been acceptable shows, but when they were made, they were a bit more acceptable. Pretty much, I think Hollywood is kind of in the same boat with the way gays are portrayed, and Hollywood is a lot more accepting of gays than the general public is. I think the same is true with the blacks back in the '60s.

**Lanzing:** How do you think you came to your own views on race that you hold today?

**RLanzing:** I said watching TV and I just always have felt like If you treat someone with kindness and respect, whether they're black or white or old, children, whatever their circumstance is, If you treat them with kindness and respect, generally you get kindness and respect back.

**Lanzing:** When you left the military base, did you ever see whites and coloreds only signs?

**RLanzing:** I did not ever remember seeing colored only or black or white only signs anywhere, but I was up North in Connecticut, and I moved from there when I was two to New York and lived in New York until I was five, and then I moved to Fort Walton. So for the first five years, I was up North, and I do not ever remember seeing a black or colored only sign ever

when I was growing up.

**Lanzing:** This is slightly different from Avon Park at the time. Do you think this was a difference between central Florida and north Florida?

**RLanzing:** I think Fort Walton is much younger, much more diverse. Being a military town, people come, people go, lot of young people are there, and it's a tourist area, so there's a lot of people that come from other cities and different areas of the country and probably from around the world because it's a military base. Whereas, Avon Park is more of a rural area of Florida, much older, most people that are in Avon Park were born, raised there, so were there grandparents and their grandparents before them. It's not like people move in and out of Avon Park the way they do Fort Walton, so I think it's more of an Old South kind of a city or a town, Avon Park is, where I would think you would see a bit more racism there than you would in Fort Walton.

**Lanzing:** Did you ever spend time with your black friends away from military children?

**RLanzing:** Yeah, I mean, not everyone in Fort Walton is military. I happened to be, but not everybody. My best friend's dad was in the military, but another very close friend of mine, her dad was not in the military, so not all of my friends were military. I don't remember there being a problem with us having black friends. You know, we were friends with blacks and whites. It didn't matter if you were military black or white or whatever.

**Lanzing:** Was there any sort of distinction between the military children on the base?

**RLanzing:** Actually, 'cause my father was an NCO, not an officer, non-commissioned officer, we were called once by the officers' children, "NCO trash." So, there was sort of, not really racism, classism maybe, more a separation between officers' families and children and the noncommissioned officers' families and children. We were not allowed to mix with the officers' children.

**Lanzing:** Do you think that you found more racism off the base than you did on?

**RLanzing:** Well, I mean, in the town, you know, there was a black section of town where most of the black families lived, and I think that's still true of most cities, unfortunately. To me it seems more of a financial struggle. Blacks generally don't make as much money as whites, and they have to live in houses that are not as nice as most white people's houses. I think that's more of an economic issue for the black community than anything, that they can afford houses in the poorer sections of town. And I mean, you still see it today in our own town here in Bradenton, there is a section of town that is predominantly a black section of town, and houses are not as nice, and I think it's more of a poverty issue, economic issue, than it is a racial issue.

**Lanzing:** Did you ever see anyone campaigning for civil rights? This was the era of the

equal rights movement.

**RLanzing:** I don't ever remember seeing anything about equal rights for blacks. I do remember seeing about equal rights for women 'cause that was back in the day of NOW, I think, National Organization for Women, was petitioning, but I don't remember seeing anybody petitioning for equal rights for blacks.

**Lanzing:** Were you even aware of the tension going on between the races in the country?

**RLanzing:** I mean I was really shocked when I got to college, and I started studying some of the racial tensions. I remember learning as early or as late as 1963, that in Alabama they still had laws about blacks and whites playing football together. It was such a foreign idea to me that we would be separated like that. I really did not see it when I was growing up and was very shocked when I learned you know, about the hosing of blacks who were just trying to peacefully demonstrate, about how those children trying to go to school in Alabama were just treated so horribly. I found all that to be very, very shocking when I learned about it when I went off to college.

**Lanzing:** When you got to Florida State, did you ever encounter racism there in the university system?

**RLanzing:** I don't really remember any, certainly no overt racism that I saw. I still think that for the most part, you know, blacks were friends with blacks, and whites were friends with whites, but I mean, we did have black friends. I'm sure the black people had some white friends, but for the most part, I didn't see anything racist going on.

**Lanzing:** I do know that at that time there was some incidents with some of the gay students. Do you think that prejudice towards homosexuals had come to predominate over prejudice towards blacks?  
[pause]

**RLanzing:** Well, I think that they're similar issues, but they're different issues. I mean, people have twisted religion to make it okay to hate blacks or think less of blacks, and some people have used religion to say it's okay to hate the gay community. So, they are similar in some ways. But I think people are threatened by gays, that it will dissolve marriage as we know it. I think divorce dissolves marriage as we know it, but a lot of people seem to think that gays will somehow harm marriage between a man and woman. I don't know if it's replaced it. I think there's still a lot of people who are racist. Obviously, there's a lot of Skinheads and White Aryan Nation and a lot of hatred out there. Some people, they're just full of hate, and it's easier to blame your losses or your failures in your own life on a whole other group of people, much as Hitler blamed all of Germany's problems on the Jews. "If we could just kill off all those damn Jews, all of our problems would disappear." I think some people think that If we could just kill off all the blacks or kill off all the gays, all of our lives would be better. Of course, that's flawed thinking

instead of looking at what you're doing wrong and what you could improve on yourself, it's just easier to blame somebody else for your problems.

**Lanzing:** Okay, was your experience at Florida State different from though~ on the military base in relation to racism?

**RLanzing:** No, I mean, I'm not black so I don't know, I'm sure there's probably, just as there is with women, there are subtle signs of racism that you pick up as a woman, not as much anymore, but twenty years ago, women had to fight to be able to be vice presidents or presidents of companies. It was kind of shocking for a woman to be a president of a company, and I mean, there's not any law about women not being allowed to be those things, but there certainly were subtle bits of racism. I'm sure that a black person could probably say yes, there's racism everywhere. I don't see that though.

**Lanzing:** Is there anything that you would like to add?

**RLanzing:** Well, I do think that it is very sad that the one place that we really do see segregation of blacks and whites is our churches. Of all the places for us not to be one with each other and be brothers and sisters no matter what our color is, you would think that would be at church. Generally, if it's a black church, there's almost no whites there, and if it's a white church, there's no blacks there. I know at my own church, and I'm Catholic, there are very, very few, very, very few black people. A few people who have immigrated to our country from Haiti do originally come to my church, and I notice that they don't stay. I don't think that they feel very comfortable there being the only black people in the whole church. And I think that's sad. I'd love to see churches be more integrated and that we could all worship God together. It's the same God no matter what color you are.

**Lanzing:** Do you think some of the segregation in the churches has to do with different cultural styles of worship?

**RLanzing:** Absolutely. I think that the way you worship God is such a personal thing, and your whole culture is all woven into how you express your belief in God, and I think that probably people feel more comfortable in a cultural setting that's closest to what they're used to. We're not used to sharing that intimately with people of other races generally. Generally, blacks are used to being around blacks, and whites are used to being around whites. I just think we're more comfortable with that. I just think it would be nice if we could be more sharing and gain from each other other than having to separate like that at church.

**Lanzing:** Thank you for doing this interview.

The End