

Interviewee: Khan, Mazahir

Interview Date: September 5, 2011

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
ORAL HISTORY OF HOUSTON PROJECT

Mazahir Khan
University of Houston Oral History Project

Interviewed by: Uzma Quraishi
Date: September 5, 2011
Transcribed by: Michelle Kokes
Location: Synott Mosque, Sugar Land, Texas

UQ: This is the oral history interview of Mazahir Khan on September 5, 2011 location is the Synott Mosque in Sugar Land, Texas.

MK: Yes.

UQ: Alright and interviewer's name is Uzma Quraishi. So you could begin by telling a little bit about yourself, who you are and your childhood.

MK: I was born in Rampur, India. I did my high school and intermediate from there and in 1955 I went to Karachi in Pakistan instead of going to another university in U.P. we just call it Uttar Pradesh these days. When I arrived in Karachi I stayed with my distant relatives for a while and then I joined the University of Karachi and I did eventually my BSC Honors in 1961 and then I did my Master's in '62. Then I started teaching physics in different colleges in Karachi and then I always had wanted to do a Ph.D. so then I started applying for, you know, admission in the United States and in 1966 I got admission in Cincinnati, University of Cincinnati Ohio and I got a Fulbright scholarship to go there. I arrived there in summer of 1966. But then I had a friend here in Texas, Texas Tech who had come a year before me in 1966 I think, '65 and so we were very close friends from early childhood. So he was also in physics so he encouraged me and I was lonely, I was seeing nobody there so he asked the chairman and

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the time was short the classes were about to start in a couple of months, I think in September, so he talked to them so they gave me the admission and they also gave me... what do you call... teaching assistantship, because I had been teaching in colleges before. So that's how I ended up in Lubbock, Texas, Texas Tech University. At that time it was called Texas Technological College, okay, it was not university, it was not called university. So I got in their Ph.D. program and I arrived there on the campus there were only four or five total foreigners on the whole campus, graduate, all graduate students and we had a professor who had joined in physics in '64. So then we became pretty good friends. Anyway but within two or three years [of] our stay up there, the numbers had changed. Because I did not know at the time but in 1965, the U.S. had passed certain laws that more foreigners could come. Now I had come on a Fulbright scholarship with the full intention to go back to Karachi and join the university up there and reinstate teaching but in the meantime in '68 or '67 I met Bonnie, my wife, who became my wife later on so we married and then we had children, two children while I was in school, trying to finish the education. Then in 1971 my thesis was getting very close to finishing. So I had done the coursework, most of it, but then the war happened in Pakistan, Bangladesh was created and also in one of the bombings my youngest brother, he was on a ship and so he was killed. When I was there I had encouraged him to go into the navy because you know and he did his bachelors from there so I felt very, very bad that he was young and then I just did not feel like, you know going back up there. So that was a little bit dilemma because my wife was ready. We had wanted to go back up there but the things had changed considerably.

UQ: Back up where?

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MK: To Pakistan.

UQ: Back to Pakistan.

MK: Yeah back to Pakistan after '71 and these things did happen. But the problem was that I was on a Fulbright scholarship so I had a visa, a J Visa I think they used to call it. I may be wrong I think it was a J Visa so I could not stay in here. Then I applied for the Green Card but that... so I finished my thesis in 1973 I completed my degree but I could have done in '72 but I was so upset with the things that you know, I just postponed it. So '73 I finished but then when I finished it I could not work in here [the U.S.] because I had a J Visa and I did not want to go back because of the conditions that had happened up there. So I applied for Green Card and it took almost 8, 9 months. So as soon as I got the Green Card then from Lubbock then I came in '74. It was I think May or June to Houston. I had a class fellow from Texas Tech who was here, he was Pakistani. He was a very good friend. So he encouraged me to come and so I came, had a couple of interviews and just started working. My first job was... I had some interviews at NASA because my field was theoretical physics so it was a lot of math and so on. They were interested but their process at that time I think it was Lockheed Martin, I think I had interviewed with some company, but anyway that job process would have taken about 6 weeks for me to join them. But then I went to I signed I went into other Western U Physical I guess I had an interview with them on Friday and they asked me how soon can you start? So I started there the following Monday. Okay so that's how I got into the exploration, geophysical exploration business. Because my field was theoretical mathematics and so there were a lot of closeness and I could adapt very quickly into the geophysical explorations. So I was in their research department for quite a while. So

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that's how then I brought my family in here [to Houston] and so we moved here in 1974 okay? At that time in Houston the only place for worship or mosque or whatever you call it, it was up on Woodhead and Richmond okay? The Muslims had started the Islamic Society of Greater Houston, ISGH, which is now. So they had done it in '69 and I was familiar with some of the people because they had come to Lubbock and so I was in touch with them. So I got very heavily involved in ISGH activities at that time and in the '70's, mid '70's, I did lot of lot of things for ISGH. I had held some international seminars and Sheikh Qaradawi and many other people we had invited. So and then moved on so that's how I came in here.

UQ: Okay alright a few questions about your childhood. First, when you went to Karachi you went without your parents, siblings?

MK: That's right. That's right. My father actually was not interested for me to move. He wanted me to go to the Aligarh University. Somehow I was more just moving out and going to Karachi because my *khalazad bhai* [maternal aunt's son] and some others, they had moved to Karachi so and it was a different, you know, situation at that time. So that's how I ended up. I did go without my father's permission.

UQ: So your parents were not among the many who migrated to Pakistan in '47?

MK: No.

UQ: Why?

MK: I don't know but they were old-fashioned. They had their *jagir* [small territory gifted to military leaders] or whatever all of those things [are] up there. So I don't think my mother was opposed to it because if it was not her encouragement I would not have left. But she did approve but my father didn't. So I went instead of Aligarh, I went there

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and he was mad, you know. For two years I guess we had no communication but then in 19... I think it was '57, I had gotten a job there in Karachi, there was an American institution there called Cotton Research, Pakistan Institute of Cotton Research I think so I had joined them. And then also I had gotten admission in the University of Karachi in '57 so he did come. He did come in '57 I think and then for three months. He brought his wife and I had two younger brothers. Okay one of them was killed in '71 war.

UQ: He brought your mother and...

MK: Yes he brought them to visit.

MK: He brought them to visit. Then they stayed for 3 months and then he said I had to go back and I will get my, you know, whatever land and house and take care of it and I will move. So he left my mother and the two kids for... to stay there for longer. But unfortunately as soon as he got back home, you know, the communication was not that easy telephone or this or that. Then I got a telegram after about 6 weeks or something and you know telegram in those days meant bad news. So the telegram simply was that he died. I had gotten one or two telegrams from some relatives before a couple of weeks before that he had been sick. So he...I think he got, what I was told later on was that he got typhoid, okay. And then it was not treated well and whatever. He was in his... I don't know exactly but he must have been in his late '60's or early '70's I don't know exactly you know because of.... But anyway so that was a big blow for me. I could not go back because there was nothing in there for me in Rampur where... and then my two younger brothers so I had started my life in here and I didn't want them to go and be alone because those brothers were too young to be... so that's how we kept my mother and the two brothers in there.

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UQ: Where did you live in Karachi?

MK: Federal B Area. In the beginning when I was there in the '50's I mean in the '60's when I had come I stayed with my... you know, relatives. I think it was in Jacob Lines [a neighborhood in Karachi]. You know I think somebody had government job I think so I think they had a kind of apartment, not apartment but they had some houses, little ones, so there were family we were staying with them. I stayed for a while then I had moved in some other areas I don't remember.

UQ: But you lived on your own?

MK: Well not in the first year or so.

UQ: After that?

MK: After that then I had I remember renting an apartment in PIB Colony, there was that Pir Ilahi Baksh Colony, with few other students, university students they were also going and I had this job. But then when my mother came and then this situation then we had to get a house okay? So at that time I had moved to this Federal B Area and we rented a house up there because they had a newer development that some houses were built and so...

UQ: I see...

MK: ...and it was right across from PIB Colony. I remember that I stayed in PIB with my friends for a while and then there was a *nala*... not *nala* [river], a *nadi* [stream], and then I would cross over so it was not too far that I could walk. But then later on I moved up there.

UQ: Okay alright.

MK: So that's how...

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UQ: Okay. Regarding your upbringing in India, what kind of a town, city did you grow up in?

MK: Rampur was a state, independent state, Princely state, one of them it was. So and it was mostly... mostly Muslim. Now the Nawab of Rampur, their family was Shia okay, so there were a lot of a lot of things during Muharram, the *ta'zias* [part of Shi'a processions] and all, things would happen but there were no problem of any kind but we were Sunnis and so there were, you know, a lot of big population there. So that was not... and there were some Hindus, some business people and there were big... and I remember that I was also when I was doing my college I was doing some what do you call? Tuitions. You know so I used to go and there were some, not too far, some big houses for some Hindus and I did some tuitions. I was pretty good in school, you know in subjects, interest but it was a small community. I don't remember how big population may have been at that time. I'm pretty sure it was no more than fifty, sixty thousand. But it was... a very academic center from Urdu point of view it had been the center because Nawab had over the previous century they had obliged these you know Ghalib, the big poet and many others. So it was a little bit, center of academic learning. But I did learn English in the school at that time. Hindi was starting to be taught but Urdu was also. So I was very good in Urdu and English and math of course. I was not interested in medical sciences but math and physics.

UQ: Okay were there other groups aside from some Hindus?

MK: Not that I know of. I mean... not the biggest were I would say that 90% of the population was Muslim okay? And then I do not know what percentage would be Shi'a but when the ruler is Shi'a and so... but there was a big tolerance you know. It was up

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there. There was an intermediate college, Raza Intermediate College was the name and the high school name was Murtaza High School.

UQ: And there were Hindu's attending the high school and college?

MK: I don't remember, I don't remember.

UQ: So you don't remember your friends being Hindu really?

MK: Yeah I don't remember but I know that where we lived in that *mohalla* [neighborhood], *mohalla* they call it, and as you came out of it and the road.... Our *masjid* [mosque] was actually... *masjid* was in such a way that from our back yard we could go into the *masjid*. But when you came up the *gher* and then you go up in there and this was the *masjid* and all on the back was Hindus, and multistory [buildings]. In those times, three story buildings and I used to go there. But I don't remember a Hindu friend in ... but I had some. I had Hindu teachers who came to teach me, teach me, what do you call... tuition, in the evening. So when I was in the school I don't remember what grade.

UQ: Okay.

MK: And then when I went to college I went as I mentioned in the back. So... but I did not have has my... I don't remember having just like, you know Mazhar Kazi or Masroor Shah or people that I [counted as good friends].... now they had an excellent library in Rampur okay? It was a State Library I mean now it is one of the well-preserved historical library up there. And I knew who... you know the librarian because his son was my classmate. So there was but I don't remember as a close friend in a school or high school, a Hindu young man. I'm pretty sure there were but not that many.

UQ: What about your servants or the servants in the area? Were they Muslim?

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MK: Yes. Yeah they were mostly. But then again, as I mentioned, Hindus has a lot of businesses, you know so there were up there. And also a lot of *munshis* and other things so they were in higher education also because I remember this teacher who used to come to teach me as a tuition in the evening, he was Hindu you know.

UQ: Okay. When you came to Cincinnati or when you applied did you already know a lot about the U.S.? What were your...

MK: Yeah I had because in Karachi there was what did they call, American Embassy had a library and also British Consulate had a big library up in Karachi, okay. It was... I don't remember... I think it was on one of them, so I used to frequent it quite much, okay. So then when I had gotten my Master's and I was teaching in Islamia College and also Jinnah College so several, some places I was teaching part time, you know. So I was full time in Jinnah but I was teaching in several [colleges] because I used to go... I spent a lot of time in British Consulate and there were a lot of books in English and so...

UQ: What kinds of books, books about what?

MK: All kinds of books and about America on all subjects and most of them. That's where I got this information about the schools where to apply and what to do there.

UQ: I see okay.

MK: I don't remember the specifics but I know that I did frequent quite much. We didn't have the car or I didn't have even a motorcycle so I would just take the rickshaws on the bus. You know that was the main transportation.

UQ: Were you concerned?

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MK: Karachi was pretty small relatively I mean compared to what it is now. It was not as spread out. But still it had become I don't remember how many million people but it was not 15, 16 as it is now you know so...

UQ: Okay. Were you concerned about coming to the U.S. and the treatment of foreigners?

MK: No, no it really it never in my wildest imaginations. Let me tell you one more thing. I don't remember how I got the scholarship but I know that I was teaching physics in the colleges and I had professors at the University of Karachi and I did occasionally also give lectures up there. But there was some professor when I applied I think one of them had recommended that I should apply for Fulbright because I could not come on my own. I didn't have the money. And so I think they had recommend so when I had applied for a Fulbright scholarship then I think I'm pretty sure that they had to get the recommendations from my previous professors. And so, suddenly when I got that that was in Spring I think of '66 okay? So then the things moved on very quickly okay and I do not remember how or why I had gotten University of Cincinnati. I just have forgotten why or how I had ended up there because I wanted to go in a certain field and I think they must have given me not only admission some other ... but when I got there things happened such that I was since they had brought us there for training, you know, to what do you call... a lot of people came from there was an agency, education agency I forget the name so they had training for one whole month in Indiana. So there I met also some people from Lubbock okay?

UQ: I see.

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MK: Then I think there was a young lady I think she was married to a football player or something but when she found out and I had my... Masroor Shah was my physics friend, he was there in Lubbock but I don't remember how I had ended up in University of Cincinnati but that's where my admission was and whatever.

UQ: So you didn't have any concern prior to coming to the U.S.?

MK: No absolutely not!

UQ: And what was your experience like after?

MK: Oh when I came, when I came to Lubbock and it happened very quickly because the school was about to start in late August or September I don't remember so they gave me not only admission... and let me tell you when I came to... when I left Karachi I went to the bank and I had a full \$6.00 American on my body. You know? That's all the change I got! \$6.00 in those days to my name when I landed in there. But since I was in the scholarships a lot of things were taken care of. They had put me up there and so on. So I didn't have much money you know so that's... but when I came to Lubbock and I don't remember if I took a bus or how I flew from Cincinnati in here I don't remember now. But anyway I so had gotten here and that friend as I said he was there a year before me and there was a professor from Pakistan who had joined the physics faculty that I met him and then I had two other people from Pakistan so there were about 4 or 5 total on campus. Okay one was in engineering. Anyway now these boys... so I stayed with them. I shared an apartment with them. So I didn't know I never had cooked in my life you know. But these young men were cooking so I learned very quickly how to cook. Then we went on a picnic one time and there was some canyon up there about maybe 10 miles out and it's a big water lake and I remember that the first time when I went there in

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the park and when I went to the bathroom that's the first time I saw it was written clearly

"For blacks only" so that's... so that's where...

UQ: What year was this?

MK: It was it must have been '67, '66 or '67 but it was after a few months that I had been there and so these boys had taken me, you know for a picnic or and so that was my first understanding of black versus you know or something was there.

UQ: Which one did you choose?

MK: I don't remember but I know I think they were banned by that time I'm not sure.

Or maybe in '68 they were banned or something but that had stuck on my mind you know. So...

UQ: Had you had interactions with African Americans until that point?

MK: No, there were not that many on campus not at that time.

UQ: How often did you leave campus?

MK: Well we had rented an apartment right across the university gate...

UQ: So between the university and your home what about elsewhere?

MK: So we walked, I really did not see African Americans at that time. But within two years as I said there were no Chinese in '66 when I went there. There were no Indians but by '68, '69 there were hundreds of them, foreign students. And then, not only the graduate students then the undergraduates were coming you know. So that changed. And African Americans were still not there, that many. So I really did not see very many at that time in that part. Now there were some Spanish areas but not that many but there were there. I'm not saying that the African Americans were not there but not necessarily in the university atmosphere.

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UQ: You didn't get to see them?

MK: I didn't see them yeah.

UQ: You didn't get the opportunity yeah.

MK: Yeah because our life was very much limited you know up in that area. We didn't... if we went out then we... and I had bought a car at a later time and so then we could go.

UQ: Okay. All right, what was your impression when you first came to Texas comparing it to Cincinnati?

MK: It was very different. It certainly... and you know Lubbock in those days it was... now there must have been African Americans for that sign to be there. I mean it was not but my encounter did not happen, you know because I spent a lot of time in the university. I had my own office and other things so I would be there at night. So I saw a lot of cleaning people and it was a three story building in the basement.

UQ: What were the cleaning people were they?

MK: They were not African American.

UQ: They weren't Hispanic either?

MK: They were either white or Hispanic.

UQ: I see.

MK: So I mean I'm pretty sure there were some somewhere but my encounter was very little.

UQ: Same with the students? There weren't many Hispanic students?

MK: Well, I didn't see very many Hispanic students no I did not see very many Hispanic Students.

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UQ: Okay so yeah comparing Cincinnati to Texas your impression, the place, the people?

MK: Yeah it was first of all climate wise it was very different. In Cincinnati there, you know there was a lot of trees, a lot of gardens and other things. Here of course on campus there were some old trees and grass and this and that but the climate was very hot but we were used to it coming from Karachi so that was not a big problem. It did not snow as much but I did not stay in Cincinnati but about six weeks so it was really not that much that I had that much...

UQ: What about the people of Cincinnatians versus Texans?

MK: I think the people that I came in contact in Cincinnati again, they were mostly graduate students and the people in the academics, you know. So I really did not live there off campus because I had I was in a dormitory they had put me up there so I cannot say.

UQ: Okay.

MK: And at that time I don't know if there was a masjid or not up there because I never went out of that atmosphere.

UQ: Okay so regarding your experience in Lubbock with non academics so did you venture...?

MK: They were very... what I noticed was that the people were extremely friendly, extremely friendly and very trusting, very trusting. Now there are some things that are coming... yeah coming back to that girl that I had met in Cincinnati so she had called her parents there. So they became in a way my guardians over there, you know.

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UQ: Do you remember their names?

MK: Yes, I think one family that particularly her family was Pharr, P-h-a-r-r but I don't remember now the first name. Yes, they were extremely nice they will come pick me up on Saturday or something, take them to their house, you know big, big house and I was impressed you know, you go in the door at that time bells. But yes and I occasionally I will stay, you know overnight or weekend or something. On all occasions, Thanksgiving or... and there was another family and another boy from Pakistan and they were... I think he was Christian, yeah. His name was Azmat but he was Christian from Lahore area.

His family Cagles C-a-g-l-e-s Cagles and they were, they were also so they would also come and take me and so they were very, very nice people.

UQ: So you had these sort of surrogate parents...

MK: That's right.

UQ: ...who provided you with support and a family atmosphere?

MK: And also from the campus there were these foreign student advisories or groups where they would have these every month or every few months some things up there and so...

UQ: Some programs _____.

MK: Yes yeah and actually I don't remember that's where exactly I met Bonnie.

UQ: Oh.

MK: Yeah it was one of those evenings and the weather was bad, yeah, something was there and so I was living with another Pakistani. He didn't want to go but it was tea party or something in the evening and so I went there. We met a lot of people and I met this girl and she said she had lived in Philippines and she had her parents were missionaries

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and she knew about Islam and she had met this and that. So and she was very, not only good looking but tall and so I was not good at the age because I was not familiar with the, you know, whether she was 20 or 18 or 17 or whatever. And she was going to the Christian college up there. What was the name? It was a Christian college, you know, anyway. So I met her and so I was very impressed particularly because of her background and she knew, you know, so we became friends and so later on... Lubbock Christian College. It belongs to Church of Christ that, you know they had the different places I believe and I didn't know at that time very much about the difference between the Baptist. Lubbock is a bible belt, Baptist Bible belt. So this was the... and they had the residential dormitory. So she was staying in the dormitory up there.

UQ: So this event you went to was it sponsored by the church?

MK: No it was from the international some group international

UQ: Okay.

MK: ... because there were some groups but it was now she was there... why she was there I think it had something to do with because she was also in the international group or something but there must have been about 50 kids, you know of different types.

UQ: So it wasn't just international students it was also...

MK: Yeah Americans. Now I don't remember why these other kids were there, whether they were a host. I don't think it was a host because her parents were in California and he was I think they were I think they had sent her in here to study in a college and I think they had come back from Philippines the year before. So that was... anyway so we became friends and so finally we got married a year, six months or a year later. So that's where... that was a big change.

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UQ: Okay. When you first came to Houston where, which neighborhood did you live in?

MK: Bellaire Boulevard kind of ended at Gessner or something like that. Sharpstown Mall was there on 59 and Bellaire. So we had...I had taken an apartment somewhere on Bellaire Boulevard. Because my wife... you know I had two kids at that time they were young and so yeah we had taken an apartment. My job was on Westpark, Westpark and somewhere Gessner in that area and so yeah I remember now we had taken an apartment and it was Colonial Estates at that time I think it was called so we had the apartment up there so it was not too far from the... I think maybe 4, 5 miles at the most.

UQ: So that's the reason you chose the apartment was proximity to work?

MK: I don't remember because that was the area Southwest and Western Geophysical, where I got the job. It was closer and I did have a car and...

UQ: How long did you live in that apartment roughly?

MK: Several years.

UQ: Oh okay. After that where did you move?

MK: Then we got but that was in '77 or '78 we got a house, we bought a house on which is now Pompano Lane, the subdivision was 10 year old at that time so we got a house on Kirkwood and Beechnut. This house that I'm in now that was what we had bought it in...

UQ: How did you choose that neighborhood?

MK: Just stupidity. I mean just walking, just driving around the tree look good in the front of the house and when we visited the owners they were so nice and wonderful. My

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wife still curses... not curses but didn't know anything. We could have bought a house in the central area, you know. But...

UQ: So that sounds like a decision you regret now?

MK: Well I mean I was not very good with the real estate. That was never in my mind otherwise, you know, people who were, they did much better. But I had no understanding over one thing or the other.

UQ: What dissatisfies you about this neighborhood?

MK: Well the neighborhoods they went through... now of course the neighborhoods are all the way to almost Katy you know and all of them but the neighborhood went down a little bit. It's stabilizing but...

UQ: What do you mean went down specifically?

MK: Well the older people as been tradition they keep moving to the better places or they get older. It was almost 100% white when we... without realizing it was not a question to me at that time this or that. We just were impressed with the house and our demands were nothing. I had no idea how many square feet it was but the people were so nice when we went in there in the back yard and so we just said, "Okay." My wife didn't know much either but then later on the kitchen is not good or it's not that where. Then of course we had moved from there. Then we had bought a much bigger house toward Westheimer but when we lived there but we kept this house. So...

UQ: So are you saying there was a demographic shift the old people?

MK: Demographic shift.

UQ: Who moved in?

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MK: I would say that 70% is Hispanic now. It doesn't have to be from different South America and this and that but I would say that about 60 to 70% is Hispanic and about 10% African American and the rest some whites and some Chinese and so on. But the property had gone down. Now it seems to be stabilizing but it's a little bit different now.

UQ: So when you first moved to that area and your kids were small did you socialize with your neighbors?

MK: Some yeah. Particularly you know one or two neighbors (not too much) but we knew and they have all most of them have moved. But yes, yes I think we had a better relationship with them and then they took care of us in different ways and I think that I had moved to Dallas and then I was living in this house alone before and that was burglarized and so the neighbors they offered me to stay in their room for and I stayed there for about six months until the house got fixed and the kids came from Dallas. But they have changed. We have good relations (but not with most of them) but some.

UQ: So would you say that back then you maybe interacted with them in what ways I guess? Did you have dinner with them that sort of interaction?

MK: Not that much. Not that much but we talked and sometimes visited they came but I was in my own we had two little kids and and later on Alief Independent School District was pretty good so later on I think demographic and the quality of education probably went down little bit as a whole. But there was a time that Alief had a very good reputation school wise.

UQ: So that's changed now as well?

MK: Well it went through considerable change in the '90's and it has kind of I think stabilized and then you have so many other good, the population has shifted towards Fort

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Bend and Sugar Land and this and that so naturally the money is the biggest thing and I think they went through a lot of things. Alief Independent School did not have that much reputation as it had at one time. But they have a larger number of students they have high schools...

UQ: So you're saying the wealth has sort of shifted?

MK: Shifted yes.

UQ: Further out.

MK: So it has now stabilized so my kids at that time they were going to the elementary schools and because then I was in the _____ and then they had transferred me to Midland so at some point I had gone there I'm trying to remember when it was, sometime in the '80's, mid '80's I did go to Midland. I was there for two years or three years then they transferred me to Dallas and so '89 we got back into Houston again. '89 or '90.

UQ: Okay.

MK: And since then we have not gone. But there was that time between '85 and '89 that because of my job... yes that was the period now that I remember, yes. '81 we moved from Alief current house to Dairy Ashford and Westheimer area. There was big houses there, big subdivision so we had a very nice house. But then suddenly in '84 we had been there three years I think and this house we had rented the Houston had gone through just a devastation you know economic. That's right. It was terrible. It was terrible. So Mobil, yeah I had joined Mobil at that time and so Mobil transferred me to Midland because they had bought some company there Superior Oil or something so they transferred me up there. We tried to sell that house. And we had bought it for about \$200,000 and then the appraisals you know the company helped us and the appraisal one

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of them came at \$110, the other came at \$120 and we had not only bought we had spent thousands in you know shrubbery because I like that and other things, you know. I said, "No they are doing us this." So I got another one and another one so we got three of them, all within that range, \$110 to \$120. So we said okay we'll sell ourselves. We couldn't sell anything. I got, I went along I left Bonnie in here so finally we gave it to the company that Hugo had, whatever they had offered. So that was for real estate in Houston was a very terrible time in the mid '80's I think it started stabilizing towards late 80's so when we came back this house was had been rented so I didn't want any other bigger houses. Also, no I had also lost the job at that time. So we didn't want to go, then I went to Indonesia I left my wife and kids here as a consultant for a couple of years.

UQ: Okay a couple of questions about your wife that I didn't ask earlier. How did your family how did your mom react to your wanting to marry her?

MK: Well...

UQ: Since she's not Pakistani?

MK: Well I really did not take her permission. I did and so she really didn't have much choice in there, we notified her as I said there were no telephones at that time. I didn't have a telephone at home in Karachi and so the only communication generally was through letter. I was a poor communicator on that. So I didn't write regularly so but we did notify her, send her the pictures. So she accepted it. So eventually when eventually we went there. I'm trying to remember when we went there. We went to visit her I think in '81. So I did not go back from '66 to about '81, '80 or '81. Then she had gone with me and the kids and so she... they got along very well so I think I had come back and left her there for three months so she was very close to her and the whole family.

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UQ: So generally everyone accepted her.

MK: Yes that was fine I had no problem.

UQ: No one disagreed?

MK: No, no... my younger brother is still up there and so her daughter's and everybody so they do have. Naturally it's different but when we went there we stayed in their house so now she is dead. So she died about 10 years ago I think.

UQ: Okay.

MK: So now she is gone but my brother is still there and his family.

UQ: Do you think that your family would have reacted differently if you had chosen to marry someone who was Hispanic?

MK: I don't think so. I don't think they knew enough about this or that. One thing, you know, when I got when I was coming to America it was in '66 right before that, you remember in the University of Texas in Austin some crazy guy had gone up into the tower and had shot some lot of people.

UQ: Right.

MK: And I think it was right before I was coming here. I'd have to look up the dates. Because now that the people were so worried why am I going there? I saw some... but Hispanic or black was not, you know in the news that much you know because the country has changed considerably now but I don't think for them it mattered one way or the other.

UQ: Even if she had been African American?

MK: I don't think so.

UQ: Okay.

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MK: I mean I cannot say for sure in those days but I don't think it would have mattered much.

UQ: Okay. Another question about when you settled in Houston. Do you remember facing any particular struggles related to your being an immigrant?

MK: Not really. I am now more concerned and worried but not at that time. I don't think there was any problem that we felt. I was very actively involved in the university when I was at Lubbock because I was in the speakers forums so I had organized, I had invited the ambassadors and whenever I was there and same thing in here when I moved in here I got involved with ISGH and it was in the formative stages so as I said I did, you know all these international seminars so now they are very common. I mean it's not... but at that time they were big deal so old timers were here I think Aziz Siddiqui was also there and many other... there were a lot of Hyderabadis in here at that time. Now I don't remember, you know, being discriminated against or any other thing.

UQ: Not in stores?

MK: No I don't really feel that I was... I'm probably more cautious now than I ever was at that time.

UQ: What is it that you feel now?

MK: I think there is a climate change where there is a, you know, not that much tolerance it seems like, especially being Muslim or something but I have not personally encountered any that I can really say that. My kids, they grew up in here and they had... the youngest one he has many black friends because by that time some blacks, African Americans, had you know moved in the area and the schools so quite a few of his friends are all variety, you know, Pakistanis and whites and African Americans. Some of his

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very close friends are African American. I wouldn't be surprised in the girl that he has been telling us is African American then he wants to marry. So the things have changed, the things have changed.

UQ: How does your wife feel about...?

MK: She is non committal but she has, you know that's his life what he has to do and we have, we have no problem one way or the other.

UQ: Have you met her?

MK: Yeah we have met her. We have met her and on the Eid he told us that he took her to San Antonio they had some Eid prayers somewhere first time and she is in the news media I think in San Antonio. But he lives in Austin but... but yeah they met at the university. He went to San Marcos and what is that university up there in San Marcos? So that's where they had met few years ago. So they have kept friendship so that is what he is planning to do. We have no problem. But let's see.

UQ: Okay what was your initial reaction?

MK: Initially I have been concerned because I think we have not done well in raising kids. I was too much involved in my jobs and other activities. I was too much involved with ISGH whether I was editor of that for so many years in the past so a lot of that... so I really, especially the older ones I was not that much part in their bringing up. So really, their religious... yeah, now something came up to my mind. When we moved here in '74 and so the only place was there on Woodhead, Shias came there, Sunni's came there, everybody was there. Within a year or two then it started to move on. At that time and that's why we have some friends from Shia at that time. We put these kids up there we had some hafiz who had come in there to teach them Quran and other things. We had

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such a nightmare that these hafiz or whoever that they had from Pakistan they will beat those kids you know. Finally we had to say, "Just pull them out" because they never understood. I don't remember who they were but I don't want to see them. But things have changed now. But you know its typical Pakistani style, just spank them. These kids were young and so we had problem. So really their training got a little bit not as much, as much as I was involved with the ISGH and in everything else, their Islamic training did not get done well.

UQ: So is your biggest regret about her, about your son?

MK: About the older ones particularly.

UQ: That their...

MK: Yeah they got a very bad impression of Islam, you see. And so I was not there to coach them and guide them and other things because those were difficult times and I was involved in many things. With the geophysical exploration I would travel, I would go on different parts of Texas visiting crews and this and that and even when I was here after the office my things were involved. And I really neither Bonnie was that clued in with the first, she was young. I never realized that she was that young. I thought that she was tall, she was big and being a mother is very different or a father, you know, so those I had some concerns. We didn't... I have been in education most of my life but I think that portion we didn't do well. Well I didn't do well.

UQ: Okay so you have how many children total?

MK: Three, three boys.

UQ: Three okay.

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MK: The youngest one he was... she had two boys she always wanted a girl Bonnie, she always wanted a girl. So we had the third one ten years later when everything and that was another boy. So she... by that time she took care of him much better than the first two. I was young and she was... and I was away but I think she did. And he is much more tuned into the Islamic thing. We never have gotten them into very, very rigid. But and I did not want that but at the same but he was much more because then I had more time and you know going to the Mosque and other things and study also.

UQ: How old is he now?

MK: He will be 30 I think. '81 he was born in '81 so he is 30.

UQ: And his he married?

MK: No he is the one I was talking about.

UQ: Oh he's the one.

MK: Yeah that he might get married to this African American.

UQ: Is she Muslim?

MK: She is trying I don't think she is yet but because that's what I have talked to her, to him. But she is quite religious but I think this was her first exposure that he had taken her to, to this you know Eid and he is trying. But they are a little bit, she is in... she is exposed to it but not enough, not enough. So let's see what will happen.

UQ: Okay alright. Do you think it's possible, again going back to your family's welcoming of Bonnie when she went to Pakistan, do you think it's possible that they accepted her more easily because of kind of the sub continents prior interaction with Britishers?

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MK: It could very well. It could very well be. But my mother was very loving anyway. So, you know, and the other relatives, you know it really doesn't matter much and my wife was also, remember that in Lubbock she learned how to cook Pakistani food. She wore sarees she work all Pakistan... she used to make, she doesn't do anymore by the way. She is now that, you know... but while we were at Texas Tech they were these Pakistani ladies and Indian ladies. She was 24 hours with their friendship. So she was, you know, much more. She never put the scarf like that but she was all the time in everything up there. But in the past 15, 10 years now... she still cooks and wears clothes but this and that but she doesn't have time, she doesn't sew it herself and so on but she used to sew Pakistani clothes herself and of course her weight and other issues. In Lubbock Avalanche-Journal general there are a lot of her pictures of modeling sarees or modeling clothes or these or those and articles. But the things have changed a little bit. Also she has had I think our community is very different in some ways. Of course there are many Americans who are married into Pakistani or Muslim families but sometimes they are not very accommodating and so it's a different style so whenever she goes to the Pakistani or Indian stores she always comes complaining, they are rude, they don't give you help. They don't talk properly, you know. So but she has been with adjusted with most of the people.

UQ: Did you know a lot of people who married non Indians, non Pakistanis?

MK: Not very many but there are, yeah we have met over the years. But, you know, there are much more now then, you know there were 40 years ago, or almost 30.

UQ: You would think it would be the opposite because back then...

MK: Yeah.

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UQ: ... there were so many students and not as many families.

MK: Yes, yes.

UQ: You would think there would be more marrying into the local population.

MK: I think they did but we did not come across that many but there were some that when we had moved in here and of course a lot of divorces. Well the divorces are even Pakistani so it doesn't, you know, one thing or the other. So but she had very good relationship with lot of Pakistanis. But well you know Alia and all of them. Now there are more changed, I mean. But anyway... But I think in my family I never felt any reluctance of any kind but because one thing was she ate what she wore the same clothes. Even she tried to learn Urdu and when she stayed there. But I never spoke Urdu at home so really that's why my children never learned Urdu. I never emphasized because I did not see that much affinity. I was very good in Urdu but when I stayed at Texas Tech doing my Ph.D. that period was such a blockage for me that I lost my appreciation for Urdu Ghazal. I, you know, because it was all English and there were only very few people up there so I think something has to do with that too. I used to write and do a lot of things. I've been meaning to get back into that but I went through that. So my youngest boy he keeps in touch with the girls in Karachi, you know, his cousins on the Facebook and all other so they have.

UQ: Okay can I ask you a few questions about current affairs in the U.S. today?

MK: Okay.

UQ: So one of the questions is what do you think of the immigration situation today?

MK: You mean immigration from Pakistan or Muslim countries?

UQ: In general do you think there is an immigration problem?

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MK: Well our immigration problem is basically from South America which is considerably challenging when you have 12, 13 million, you know immigrants who are not registered. So that certainly is a burden. The country is going through economic troubles. The structure has changed. We have now almost, my numbers may be wrong, 30 to 40% is Hispanic, it's a high percentage. So there is a resistance what I notice with this group of people is they don't necessarily assimilate that quickly because there are areas that are completely Spanish. They don't try to learn English. I'm not saying that Germans, there were so many Germans who came 200 years ago so there are German towns almost they are still there. So it's not that but to me maybe we came from a background where English was not that uncommon you know so it looks a little bit foreign to me that in here you are coming and you are not learning it. Now I know that many of the ladies in our communities do not speak English. So it's not that, it's not that but in the job market and in other things it's kind of surprising however now we are getting used to it.

UQ: Okay.

MK: But immigration is a problem and I think that since 9/11 there is particular challenge for us as Muslims in here. And I think we are not, we are not very careful we could have trouble for ourselves okay? Because these little incidents the other day that I read about in somewhere in New Jersey or somewhere I think those things are uncalled for on both sides.

UQ: What is the incident you are referring to?

MK: The incident was there was a Eid mela in a park where the slides and the coaster, roller coaster and this and that. I think some of our people do not particularly train our

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Muslim sisters, our Muslim brothers you can't take it. If roller coaster does not allow head covering so it's not a religious issue. It's a safety issue and when they say that we had the organizer mass or the other people we have warned them that we don't allow because when the hat falls off it becomes a problem, you know. Now a scarf will not do that but certainly if that is their rule, honor it tell your people. Don't make it a religious issue. So that's what I meant. So 9/11 is coming, 10th anniversary so it's a little bit edginess and the country's tolerance level has I think gone down. It seems like it. There is a... and because of the hype in the radio particularly in other places or whatever, whatever has been happening where the people are trying to build a mosque and other places. So those are the issues that I feel is not as tolerant as was there before 9/11.

UQ: Okay. Another question, what do you think about government welfare supporting poor people?

MK: Well it's wonderful but the government doesn't have enough money of themselves to I don't... this is the only western country which does not have a proper welfare system. People... I have never been to Canada but my friends what they tell me about Canada it's a much better welfare system. They take care of their older and the sick in wonderful ways. There is a tradition in Britain but not in here. If you do not have insurance you are on your own. I mean there are some... so there is I don't know and this Obama healthcare that he has adopted the intentions are very good but I think that there is such a strong opposition that I do not know what will happen. The country I think the war has, the Iraq war and all of that since 9/11. I'm pretty sure we have mismanaged. And we are suffering from economic situation and it will take several years. And what I fear is that Muslims will pay a bigger price.

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UQ: Do you think there's a discrimination problem in America today?

MK: Yes. Yes it is. It doesn't have to be open but in some cases what you hear of the incidents is it's open. But some of that is... is violent because when you don't know and your effort, if I don't know you, you know, or you don't know me so there is a unrest so the more people that will get to know other people, Muslims in particular, I think it will go away and that things have changed. As I told you that when I came that was the shocker for me to see that "blacks only" although it wasn't being practiced I didn't see the blacks. You know I didn't come in contact until much later with... in spite of me being all around but I didn't see very many African Americans so that is I think is the same thing. What I fear though about Muslims is that I think we are getting into more channels. We are not... there is a certain group which is more outgoing and have interfered in all others but then there are certain groups that they are cocooning themselves as if what they had done in Africa, you know, living in their communities, meeting with their people. So that will create down the road problems for Muslims. But younger people who are coming, going to the high school, going to the universities they are much more open then these some of the older people. So that's fair.

UQ: Okay you also mentioned that whenever your wife goes to India or Pakistani stores she doesn't like the service, the way that they treat her.

MK: Yeah I don't know if they treat her any different then Pakistani's. That's not the issue. The issue is she says they have been here, they don't learn from... you know if you go to any other store and that's again, all five fingers are not the... some places they don't leave you alone. Like in the sari houses when she goes... you have to give me time to make up my mind. But most of the other stores that's what I think they are just

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nonchalant you know. "You want to buy this, bring it I'll check it out." So that courtesy I think that is in the, used to be in American stores that's what she is talking about not necessarily and of course there may be an added factor, particularly if the males are there, Pakistani or Indian or something so they are more reserved also you know. But somehow that is what it is. I don't think it is just because she is white you know or something.

UQ: So in your experience here at the mosque you are still heavily involved in the mosque here, what's your position?

MK: I don't have any position no but I am very much involved.

UQ: Okay you are involved on a volunteer level?

MK: I have been in the *Shura*, I have been in...

UQ: Okay.

MK: ... and a lot of other things. I made Friday announcements and do other functions and I have been the principal of this school, Dar-ul-Arqam, for four years. Although I have... I am not this year I am not there but I still have my office there and I'm still.... I wanted to cut off slowly but they have not hired a principal yet so I'm helping out.

UQ: Okay so in your experience here at the mosque you have been heavily involved in many ways do you think that Muslims treat different ethnic groups differently?

MK: Yes.

UQ: Explain please.

MK: First of all there is that sect business you know, Shia, Sunni, and amongst Sunnis Ahlus-sunnah wal Jamaat or Barelvi or this or that or Salafi, so that. It's not very much in the open but it certainly is there. And I think as I told you that in early 70's, in the mid '70's all worked together because numbers were low. Now as soon as the numbers grew

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everybody wanted to hang their hat separately. So the Shias I mean I think part of that will be the Sunnis that they did not... they wanted to do the *maatam* [spiritual self-flagellation] of course these, our other brothers they could not have, they could not live without *maatam* and these people could not allow them to have *maatam* so finally they moved on. So that's not done. Then what happened then a group wanted to do *durood* and Salaam then the other group didn't want that so they went and make their own masjid. So that's where we are dividing ourselves. Rather than getting closer, you know, so that's what I mean. It has no secrets. I mean one group will, you know Salafis are unto themselves. So that doesn't matter I'm really amazed that many of these, how do the children will know when they don't go to the other *masajids* or they don't have other things and so? So those are the concerns yes.

UQ: Okay has the demographic makeup changed?

MK: Let me get back to you. Remember what you saw on the Eid this time? We had... to my understanding it will... Eid-ul-Fitr.... was all different *fiqah*... *maulvis* [don't] work together. But ultimately, you know, *fiqhi ikhtilaf* [juridical difference] that they had two Eid you know and this will be forever. I don't think this will change much.

UQ: Alright has the demographic makeup of the mosque changed over the years?

MK: You mean certain groups going?

UQ: Yes.

MK: Oh yes. Oh yes. It certainly has. It's... you know yes it has changed. ISGH is a still the main group where any group can go Shias, Sunni's and this and that but in their *masajids* they are becoming also now that this masjid is one more or Pakistani's or more Arabs so there have been. Masjid-al-Noor, Ahlus-Sunnah-wal-Jamaath so now they have

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their own series of mosques. Al-Farooq has its own series of mosques. So yes there is a much more, you know, grouping.

UQ: Okay.

MK: Much more grouping then it was, you know before. And some of that is healthy but some part of it is unhealthy.

UQ: Is there one mosque that is a strongly Hispanic more than others?

MK: Not yet.

UQ: No?

MK: Not yet. But also there is a lot of you know this new group of Hispanic converts is quite much active and so but there are I suspect that it will not be very long where they may have something of their own.

UQ: I see.

MK: But again their numbers have to grow, you see and I don't think they are at that stage. Because most of these... well there aren't many Hispanic ladies who are married to Pakistanis or Arabs so they naturally go where their family structure is. But like the movement that is going on with Mujahid Fletcher and Parada and some others. So there are, they don't have... they are moving up, you know ahead but I don't know whether Hispanic will be a separate issue, not... down the road I wouldn't be surprised.

UQ: Okay so do they come to this mosque?

MK: Yeah.

UQ: Or to activities?

MK: Yeah but the numbers are very few.

UQ: So they just join in whatever programs there are.

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MK: Yes. The numbers are very few.

UQ: Okay.

MK: But there are because I know the ladies particularly because of the school and I also had knowledge of otherwise I wouldn't know which ladies are where but since their children come so I see them and so their husbands are involved there so they are involved.

UQ: I see. What about African American Muslims?

MK: A lot of them come in here.

UQ: Okay.

MK: A lot of them come in here yes. A lot of them come in here. And they go to different places. But I did hear a lot of complaints because I used to go to the prison system for maybe 12 years or more. These days I stopped going but and then... those the concern and the majority of them they were African Americans. Some Hispanic, one or two and some white...

UQ: In the prison?

MK: In the prison, in Islamic environment. So they will tell me that when they get released or something and so when they go to the masjid you know they are not accepted very well. But I think that again that comes from our nature. In the masjid even though I come that much involved but you know people don't necessarily they come pray and go they come do this and go. There is not a system where, "Hello my name is this I'm here I do this. I'm a carpenter or..." efforts have been made sometime but knowing people is not that much...

UQ: It's not organized?

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MK: It's not organized. Just like masjid is only for prayer. What the hell is this it's only for prayers? You know you want to do something else. Also, that's what I mean. Also now there are some older people who come for Isha, they come for Maghrib they come... so maybe they have their group they know. But you know there are 600 people on Friday. How many do I know? They probably know my face because I make the announcements and I have been involved all the time but they don't know my name. I don't know many of them call me doctor they don't know my first name but since they have heard from somebody calling me doctor so they call me doctor. But I don't know very many either. It's both ways. Because I don't have that much time, you know. I know those whose children come and I have been involved with them. I know all of them but the masjid in here is quite mixed. There are some Arabs some mostly Pakistanis and majority of them I would say is Pakistanis but there have been Arabs and so, some African Americans, some Nigerians come even though Nigerian they are making some mosque not too far but there are some.

UQ: Do African Americans have their own mosque as well?

MK: Yes. Yeah they do. But that's on West Bellfort. But you know and this on Eid. I went to visit in Sweeney they have they are trying to build a mosque up there in Sweeney which is near Victoria up there. But they have 15, 16 families living up there and I don't know where they get in contact with or who is teaching them or where they have learned but there are different, yeah African American and actually, you know, quite a few of them are very active. You know Imam Wazir Ali his mosque up there in the Mercy thing that he has. So there are and there are African American mosques.

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UQ: Yeah I think the last question I think I just lost it. I think actually we are going to close it out. I think I asked everything that I wanted to ask.

MK: Oh okay thank you I didn't realize it has happened one and a half hours.

UQ: Yeah always tends to stop right about there.

MK: I would not have thought that.

UQ: Time flies!

MK: Yeah okay.

UQ: Did you want to add anything else before I close it down?

MK: No but I think this is a very worthwhile project and a couple of times I had invited some older people to come talk to the younger kids so this kind of project I have in mind. I wanted to do particularly as the older people are moving away from this world. So a lot of changes have happened in Houston, in terms of the Muslim community, you know and everybody has their own version. But I have told you and I don't remember every detail and it's much more that it will come and that's why I wanted to capture some of the other things. So I will do some other times. But there are a few people who came here in 60's and 70's.

UQ: Who are still here now?

MK: Yes.

UQ: Can you remember their names?

MK: Yeah. Well I mean of course you have talked to Mazhar Kazi I'm sure.

Baddiuzaman he I think he is still around. Khan he is in insurance, Hassan Ali Khan so I'm pretty sure you have gotten him. Kazi knows all of them I guess and Moazzam you know but there are many others and I don't remember names right about now I'd have to

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look it up. Some I remember faces and I don't remember their name but they come to me later. Yeah Zubair, Zubair Haq he is a geologist and he has been here long time. Asad Uddin, he is in real estate, no he was an engineer he went into real estate I think he's back into... he has been here. Riazuddin Ahmad, his wife is Talat, mother of this attorney in Fort Bend what's her name, young lady?

UQ: Farah.

MK: Farah's parents. There are many others.

UQ: Okay.

MK: That...

UQ: So these are people that you still see from time to time?

MK: Occasionally and that's one reason why I go for Eid to the convention center. I don't see them because I'm so much involved here that I don't even go pray at Jummah anywhere else. And so that's where occasionally we meet with them. There are many others and I'm involved with this senior citizens group that's a lot of Agha Khanis are in there also and some of our people. Jalali, I think Salman Jalali he came to Houston I think but I think he came in the late 70's or early 80's but he was in Florida and Malik Syedi of course but he moved here to Houston only last two to five years ago but he came to country, U.S. before I did. I think he came here in the 60's, 1960's. But there are a lot of other people.

UQ: Okay well we'll wrap it up with that. Thank you very much.

End of interview