

A TEI Project

Interview of Pat Tobin

Contents

1. Transcript

- 1.1. TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE (DECEMBER 20, 2001)
- 1.2. TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO (DECEMBER 20, 2001)
- 1.3. TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE (JANUARY 18, 2002)
- 1.4. TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO (JANUARY 18, 2002)
- 1.5. TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE (FEBRUARY 18, 2002)
- 1.6. TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE TWO (FEBRUARY 18, 2002)
- 1.7. TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE (MARCH 21, 2002)
- 1.8. TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE TWO (MARCH 21, 2002)
- 1.9. TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE (APRIL 5, 2002)
- 1.10. TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE TWO (APRIL 5, 2002)
- 1.11. TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE ONE (MAY 16, 2002)
- 1.12. TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE ONE (JUNE 6, 2002)
- 1.13. TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE ONE (JULY 19, 2002)
- 1.14. TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE TWO (JULY 19, 2002)
- 1.15. TAPE NUMBER: IX, SIDE ONE (AUGUST 30, 2002)
- 1.16. TAPE NUMBER: X, SIDE ONE (OCTOBER 14, 2002)
- 1.17. TAPE NUMBER: X, SIDE TWO (OCTOBER 14, 2002)

1. Transcript

1.1. TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE DECEMBER 20, 2001

WHITE

How are you today, Pat?

TOBIN

Hi, Renee, I'm fine. How are you?

WHITE

I'm doing really well, thank you. I just wanted to let you know that on behalf of the UCLA Oral History Program, we are very pleased and excited that you are affording us the opportunity to interview you and to document you, your life memoirs. It is a real honor and a pleasure.

TOBIN

I'm thrilled to be a part of it. I really am. Thank you so much.

WHITE

Good, good. Well, generally when we start, since this is our very first interview, we begin at the beginning. And we just like to talk with you and have you share as much insight and information as your memory will permit. I'll try to trigger certain things for you. After having the opportunity to look through a lot of your research material, I have a good sense of your background, but, of course, you have all those in-depth details that we are so looking forward to having documented. So let's start actually with your family. Can we begin with your parents or even your parent's parents, if you would like to say a word or two about your mom and your dad's parents, their names and maybe when they were born?

TOBIN

Yes, going back. Well, I'm fifty-eight years old today. Today is not my birthday. I'm just fifty-eight now. Reflecting back fifty-eight years ago, I was born in White Plains, New York, to a single woman, Bessie Randolph. My mother's name is Bessie Randolph and we had cousins and aunts and uncles. I remember growing up in White Plains New York, attending White Plains High School. And my mother was just a poor, hardworking woman who did what they called back then "day's work", taking care of people's homes and laundry just so her children could hopefully go to school, get an education. So Bessie Randolph was a single mom and she wasn't married so we didn't have—I think I met my father maybe a few times but he wasn't a dad. He wasn't a real dad. He was just someone who fathered—had a child. But my mother had four children that I know of. Someone said there's another sister down South who is older than I am. My siblings are my brother William Randolph, my brother Britz Randolph Williams, who passed away last July, my sister Daisy [Randolph], my baby sister Daisy, she's—I remember her at the age of two.

She was two years old when my mom passed away. Anyway, my mom was a single woman raising these four kids by herself. And I do remember my grandfather. He played a major role in our lives. My grandfather lived in White Plains and he was John Bates Randolph. He was the man. We loved my grandpa. My mother was ill, I didn't know. I was twelve years old when she died. So growing up in White Plains, I didn't have many years to grow up there. By the time I was twelve, we were uprooted. My mom passed away and all I can remember was she had both breasts removed. So that was a long time ago. So I had no idea at that age, at twelve years old, what was going on. Now, today we hear about cancer and breast cancer but she died at the age of forty-two or forty-three— I was twelve years old. The things I remember— I remember going to school and having fun in school. And I remember in kindergarten and maybe first grade, in elementary school, having a crush on a guy named Gordon Crookshank. Gordon Crookshank was a Caucasian young kid with the biggest blue eyes. That is what I liked about being a kid. You know, we didn't care what color you were, we just loved each other. So growing up, you know, my mom worked hard and she had men in and out of her life that didn't mean anything, not to us anyway because they weren't really there to stay. So I had those memories that weren't as pleasant, because she was all we had and it just seemed like everyone took advantage of her and she was so good and kind and giving. She died when I was twelve years old. So at the age of twelve, one of the things that really sticks out in my mind is my baby sister, Daisy, Daisy Randolph. Daisy was two years old when my mom died. And I remember holding Daisy over the casket and Daisy said, "Is mommy sleeping?" I mean, she was two years old and so she thought mommy was sleeping. So relatives tried to keep us in White Plains and, I guess the social services, whoever these people were, said that this John Bates grandfather, who is like probably close to eighty or something, could not keep a twelve-year-old, a fourteen-year-old, a six-year-old, and a two-year-old.

WHITE

Absolutely.

TOBIN

Yeah. My sister Daisy was two. My brother Britz Williams, who is now deceased, he was six at the time. My other brother, Sonny, we call him Sonny,

William Randolph, he was fourteen, and I was twelve. So relatives came out of the woodwork from everywhere trying to figure out what to do with these four kids and tried to keep us together.

WHITE

Do you recall where your grandmother was? Had she passed away at the time? Your mom's mom?

TOBIN

No. No history of relatives other than my grandfather who lived in White Plains. That is the only reason I knew of him. I don't know anything else about my mother's mother or anything like that. I didn't get a chance to meet anybody from that side, except my grandfather, John Bates. He passed away, probably a few years after my mom.

WHITE

Did your mom have siblings?

TOBIN

She had a sister named Henrietta McFadden, who is now deceased. See, that is the bad part about this family thing. You don't really grow up together and stay together, and live together. I had relatives all over. Many of them are now deceased and there was really no real— There was one woman in Philadelphia, my aunt Henrietta McFadden, that I was going to stay with for a while, but that meant splitting us up, you know, the siblings. So other relatives came forward and said, "Well, we'll find a way to make this work." So we ended up moving from White Plains, New York, to Philadelphia. So moving to Philadelphia we lived in a house with more relatives.

WHITE

Were these cousins and what have you?

TOBIN

Cousins and aunts and people that we didn't know. They were like strangers really.

WHITE

Sure. You hadn't spend any time with them prior to coming to live with them.

TOBIN

Didn't know them. They came to get us when my mom passed. So in Philadelphia— In White Plains, New York, I had fond memories because I was growing up, brothers and sisters, friends, family, what little family we had. But then my mother dying, that was just, "Ah." To me that is the worst thing that could ever happened.

WHITE

Absolutely, for a young person, you know.

TOBIN

Twelve years old, growing up without your mom, or any age growing up without your mom. Any age, you loose somebody, you know, it is devastating.

WHITE

Absolutely. Do you recall elementary school? You mentioned briefly friends you had. What was the name?

TOBIN

Yeah! Let's see, was it Ferris Avenue? In White Plains we lived on the poor side of the tracks, which is Ferris Avenue and I remember, I think it was Ferris Avenue Elementary School, I think. I can't remember now. I would have to go back and research. But I remember my elementary school teacher telling me that I had to eat my carrots so my eyes would be bright. I still remember that. I love carrots to this day.

WHITE

Ah! [mutual laughter] That's great. That's terrific advice.

TOBIN

I love carrots. "Eat your carrots and your eyes will be bright." I think her name was Ms. Emanuel. I remember that. But at the age of twelve, moving to Philly, starting anew, I just don't remember too much about White Plains. I would try to get back occasionally to visit relatives or they would come to Philadelphia to try to visit us because the family, all these different cousins and aunts, they

would come out of the woodwork and everybody tried to get together and make some sense of all this. But I don't remember too much about the school. I remember in White Plains, one of my friends, her name was Annette, I want to say Annette Funicello, whatever. But of course, it is not Annette Funicello. I can't remember Annette's last name, but she was Italian. She was like my best friend. I think my first bra I got was from Annette because, my mom was— You know, we were poor, struggling. She was trying to raise four kids and she would bring home all these nice clothes and things and I think I got my first training bra from Annette's family or something like that. [mutual laughter]

WHITE

Interesting the small memories we keep.

TOBIN

Things we remember! One thing I do remember, now that I think back, I'm kind of like a pack rat myself. I save all kinds of papers and books and things. My mom, growing up in this little flat that we lived in up on Ferris Avenue, it was like this little first floor thing, and in the hallway, like outside in the hallway, outside of the apartment there was like a hall that other people went upstairs to their apartment. But we had this thing full of clothes. I guess you would get clothes from people and just keep them. I can remember that now, this little shed with all these clothes and things in it. And we always had. I mean, we weren't rich but she always provided for us. We always had what we needed. So growing up in White Plains, it was interesting and sad to leave it, but—

WHITE

I'm certain that it was. Do you recall or how would you describe yourself if you could remember, the kind of child you were up until that age? Were you talkative? Were you introverted, extroverted? Were you sort of the caretaker in your family? What role do you recall playing?

TOBIN

I think I was always outgoing and very personable. I always liked talking and doing and going and being friends. I loved having friends. I can remember being friends with— There was a family in White Plains, the Williams family.

Oh my god! It must have been twelve of them and they were my best friends, because if you got into any trouble, you fought one, you had to fight them all. So they were really my good friends. You know, you grow up with friends like that, you make sure you stay close to them. I had a girlfriend named Evelyn. She was one of my best friends, Evelyn. We went to church together and we just— I don't know, thinking back when I was twelve, I just remember being outgoing and friendly and having friends and just trying to survive.

WHITE

Do you recall the kind of church you attended?

TOBIN

Always Baptist.

WHITE

Always Baptist. Okay.

TOBIN

Yeah. I can't even think of— Oh my goodness! What was the name of our church? I'd have to find it now because back in White Plains— Where did I go to church? I don't remember the name. But I have since visited, when I became an adult, I did go back but I just can't think of the name now.

WHITE

Okay. Sure. Now, so you are the second child in the family. So your brother, William—

TOBIN

We call him Sonny. Yeah, he was fourteen, he was the oldest. But you know, he was kind of quiet and he held a lot of things in, because I remember when Mom died, I don't even think he cried. I don't think he cried. He held a lot in. And the other two were so small, they really didn't know. My six-year-old brother and my two-year-old sister, at that time they were very young. They didn't really know what was going on. So I think my fourteen-year-old brother, Sonny, who is now sixty, he, I remember, he kind of held a lot in. We used to think he was the bad guy. He was always out there getting in trouble it seems or doing things. He was the mischievous one, but he was a good guy. He was a

good kid. He didn't do anything. He didn't harm anybody, he didn't kill anybody, but he was out there roughing up with the guys and having fun. I remember him just being the one that we thought was going to beC He may be the bad guy because he was a boy. But he turned out to be quite a good young man. He turned out to be quite okay. I remember one bad experience. We were young, we were in the kitchen washing dishes. We all had to take turns. These kids today don't know about taking turns and doing things. And I remember I kept teasing my brother Sonny, he had a little temper, I was making him mad and I think he tried to cut me with the butcher knife.

WHITE

Oh no!

TOBIN

I mean, we were playing around and he said, "You better leave me alone! You better leave me alone!" I think I still have a little scar over here. I remembered not to tease him anymore!

WHITE

Quick learn!

TOBIN

And he didn't want to do the dishes anyway. So I would always be a little jokester, always messing around and kidding and teasing and joking, but we were fun kids. We grew up having fun. But like I said, when my mother died, it took everything out of us.

WHITE

Sure. Now there is a gap between you and your next sibling of how many years?

TOBIN

Let's see, I was twelve and my brother was fourteen, so there was two years between my older brother and myself. And then my younger brother was six. Six years.

WHITE

Okay, six years.

TOBIN

And we called him Dusty, because he was a little guy out in the street always playing around, getting dusty and dirty. I don't know why my mom named him Britz. But his name was Britz Williams because unfortunately we all had different dads. Yeah. She wasn't married to anyone. My mom was— I don't even know if she had a high school education. I didn't know much about her, because I never bothered to do the research and look back and I really wish I had now. I guess I still can.

WHITE

Certainly you can.

TOBIN

It is just that she came from the South and moved up North and I don't think she even finished high school. But everybody loved her. She was a giving, caring, kind woman. She really wanted to take care of us and do the best she could but, she was taken from us so soon. Then her last baby, my younger sister, who was two at the time my mom passed, Daisy— It was four years between my brother Britz and Daisy. So she had these four children. There's talk that there's an older sister in the South that my mom may have had. You know back then, when you had kids early, you didn't brag about it. Now these young kids today, the young kids, babies having babies. I mean, back then, it was "Oh my god!" You don't do that, you don't have a child, and they send you away and all that stuff.

WHITE

It is a different lifestyle, isn't it?

TOBIN

It is a different lifestyle. So thinking back on what she must have gone through— Because she had to be young. She was forty-three when she passed.

WHITE

She was, okay.

TOBIN

She was forty-three years old when she passed. I always try to go back and do the numbers because I think like, I was twelve, you know, how long ago was that?

WHITE

So now, am I correct in assuming that the area in which you lived, was it diverse? Because you mentioned a number of your playmates were other ethnicities.

TOBIN

You know, it was predominantly blacks going to school. See back then, you go to school, it was a lot diversity. You had white, I don't remember getting any other, just white and black mostly. I don't know if there were any Hispanics or Native Americans or Asians. I don't recall. I don't think so. But I know that there were a lot of black and white in school. We lived in a predominantly black area, up on the side of the tracks. We always say "up on Ferris Avenue." You know, I remember, across the street, a little bar. One woman, I can't remember her name, maybe it was Miss Sarah, she owned a bar across the street and she lived upstairs over the bar and she would be out, leaning out the window, waving and talking and watching over kids. You know, it was just like—

WHITE

The community.

TOBIN

The community. A real community. We'd sit outside on the steps and play games. Oh, I remember one time, the guys were chasing me. We were all playing, girls, boys, chase each other, whatever, and I'm scared to death of snakes.

WHITE

Are you?

TOBIN

Oh my God. They found this little green garden snake and they chased me so hard with that snake, I think I ran into a brick wall. And today I still have a scar on my knee from trying to kill myself to get away from the snake. And one of the things I remember is playing jacks. Oh, I loved playing jacks. We'd get out. See, we jump roped, you know, the whole thing about double-dutch, jumping rope. When I see movies today that take you back some years, I just love it, because I know about that. That was the way I grew up. We played jacks, we jumped rope, we played hopscotch. I mean, we made our fun. We didn't have to go— Today they've got video games and God knows what else, but back then we just made fun with what we had.

WHITE

It is interesting how kids could exercise their creativity at that point in time. Like you said, they weren't given all these toys and all these technological tools in order to have fun.

TOBIN

Yeah. We didn't have all that and we still had fun. Hide-and-seek, all those funny little things. We just made all of that work. Of course, watching TV. I think one of the exciting things was when television first came out. Do you remember the year? I'm asking you!

WHITE

The forties.

TOBIN

Because I remember going over to somebody's house to watch something. Was it in the forties?

WHITE

Uh-huh.

TOBIN

God! You see, I was born in '43. So I don't know how old I was when— But anyway, I remember that certain people didn't have them right away because you know you had to be of a certain income level to get a TV.

WHITE

Exactly.

TOBIN

So I remember when somebody in our neighborhood finally got one. Oh, was that a big thing! Going to watch TV over at somebody's house. I don't know what we watched but it was a big to-do.

WHITE

Yeah. That is interesting. I remember hearing a number of stories about people who— There was usually maybe one family or two families in the community and everybody would come over and there would be a little party, a community party, and everybody would gather around the TV. Same sort of phenomenon happened with the radio. Everybody would come over and gather around the radio.

TOBIN

And listen to the fight with Joe Louis and all that stuff, the Brown Bomber. You know, back in the day, we had— I mean there you had the family, the extended family, back then. I mean, we really looked out for each other and took care of each other, just like the woman upstairs, over the bar, who would be out, looking out the window. My mom used to come outside on the step and call us. You could be within ear shot. You could hear a voice and know, okay, it's time to go in now.

WHITE

Exactly.

TOBIN

We had a little yard, a parking lot, where we would play, but when it was time to go in and they called, you went, you know. You did. Things are so different now in terms of children— My daughter [Lauren Tobin] and hopefully my grandson now. He is nine years old. Looking back on how I grew up, you just want to be the best that you can be. You want to try to always do the right thing. And there are temptations in life. It's not easy. You know, we have all had our crosses to bear and we still bear them everyday. You just have to try

to make the right decisions and do the right thing. As Spike Lee said, "Do the right thing."

WHITE

It's true.

TOBIN

But thank God, I, for the most part, made the right decisions. Even losing my mother—that, even today, that still bothers me. Mother's Day, holidays, without your mom! You just can't imagine.

WHITE

Yeah. It is hard for anyone to imagine who has not had that experience.

TOBIN

That is why I think I'm so sympathetic to orphans and to people who are in an orphanage, because I know what it is like. Even though you have relatives, extended family out there, looking out for you, it is not the same.

WHITE

It is not quite the same, not the level of attention, of course, that one gets from their immediate parents.

TOBIN

Right.

WHITE

For the record, what's the date of your birth?

TOBIN

February 28, 1943.

WHITE

Okay. Do you know the time or where you were born?

TOBIN

I have it on my birth certificate. You know, I think I was born at night at eleven- thirty something in the morning, I think. And I'm really a night owl.

WHITE

Are you?

TOBIN

Oh, I can stay up all night long. Don't ask me to be someplace early in the morning. If I have to be there, I will, but I'm a night person. I like the night. I mean, many times, now that I'm working in my office, people say, "Why are you still in that office at this time of night?" It is peaceful. It is quiet.

WHITE

Those creative juices start flowing in the evening for you.

TOBIN

Late at night. But don't ask me to get up early in the morning. But I will do if I have to. I was born at night in White Plains, New York. White Plains Hospital.

WHITE

White Plains Hospital. Okay. All right, great. Okay, so let's see, so you moved to Philadelphia with your parents. [Tobin shakes her head] I'm sorry.

TOBIN

With my relatives, aunties, and cousins. And that part— Okay, moving to Philadelphia. Well, first of all, coming from White Plains, New York—a little hick town up in the suburbs of New York, across the tracks, the poor side of the tracks, having fun, just being a real person. Then going to this city, this big city, this Philadelphia, where they have north Philly, south Philly, west Philly, Germantown, west Oak Lane, oh my God! One of the things that I remember moving to Philly with my relatives and cousins and aunts was my brother going to junior high school. We had never seen anything like this in White Plains. But he was going to high school, FitzSimons, I think it was [Thomas] FitzSimons Junior High [now Thomas FitzSimons Middle School]. And we were coming home, being new in town, you're new kids on the block, going to a new school, and we saw a guy get shot. I had never seen anything like that!

WHITE

Oh my goodness!

TOBIN

Back then, I guess, I mean it was really—I mean now these kids are gangbanging, shooting each other, but back then it was like real rare. But evidently in Philly, they had these gangs or whatever, and this guy was coming home from school and I remember him being shot. My brother and I, we were devastated. I mean, he didn't die. I don't think he died. I don't recall now. But I remember everybody gathering around him and I had never seen anything like that. And then, my brother had this leather jacket, my older brother Sonny. It seemed like everything was happening to him when we moved to Philly. Somebody beat him up and took the jacket.

WHITE

Oh no! Were you there at the time?

TOBIN

I think we were all—since I was two years younger—I think we were going to the same junior high school at the time. I don't really recall, but it seemed like all these things were happening.

WHITE

He was being challenged on every front.

TOBIN

Challenged. And you know what? Because he didn't cry when my mom died, I believe he held a lot in, and he just had a lot of things in him that he kept within, and even today he doesn't talk much. You know, he talks of course, but he is the quiet one. He holds a lot inside. And as I said, growing up in Philadelphia, I had a real challenge, because living in a house full of relatives, I wanted to get out early. I wanted to be on my own. It was so many people. And people were jealous if you got too close to somebody.

WHITE

Sure. Competition with your cousins and what have you.

TOBIN

Oh! It was a real challenge. So I got married very young. How did it all begin? Well, when you moved to Philadelphia and you thought that you were unhappy, then you thought that getting married would be the answer. And I remember my mom used to say things like, "You're going to jump from the frying pan to the fire!" Because as a teenager, getting married? But we didn't know. Back then we thought, okay, this is what you do. You get married and you go. You'd be grown, you get out on your own and you have your own apartment and blah, blah, whatever.

WHITE

Sure, sure. I'm sure it was and it continues to be romanticized to a certain extent, getting married young and starting your family and having that American dream and all that.

TOBIN

But that was a big mistake on my part. I did it for all the wrong reasons. I was kind of like pressured into it, even, because I was so young and I didn't even want to really be married. But I was afraid to not do it. I thought I should do it. I thought I was in love, but for all the wrong reasons. So to this day, I really have a problem with that whole marriage thing. I've been engaged once since then, but I don't think I'll ever get married again.

WHITE

Really?

TOBIN

Oh, I have a bad taste in my mouth.

WHITE

Have a taste in your mouth. Exactly. I was just going to say that.

TOBIN

About the whole thing. Yeah.

WHITE

Yeah, I can understand, having experienced it at such a young age. Well, let's backtrack just for a little bit. When you first came to Philadelphia, you attended [William H.] Shoemaker Junior High School [now William H. Shoemaker Middle School]?

TOBIN

Shoemaker Junior High School. Yeah.

WHITE

Do you have memories of that? What was it like? What was the community in which it was located and the community in which you lived? Did you walk to school?

TOBIN

Oh yeah, definitely. You know, I don't remember if I took a bus or walked. I kind of think I walked. Let's see, Shoemaker— Where did we live? Was that north Philly? Maybe it was in north Philly. I don't know if we took a bus or walked. I really can't remember, but I remember a teacher that I had. I think it was my ninth grade teacher, Mr. Emanuel, and he was teaching Spanish and all I can remember about him was the way he said, "El burro es muy perezoso." For some reason, all these years that stuck in my mind. I mean it would roll off his tongue. He was the blackest man, but he was fabulous. He was wonderful. So I remember that. Now that I'm in Los Angeles I wish I had studied harder. I could have used that Spanish.

WHITE

Absolutely.

TOBIN

But Shoemaker Junior High, I remember being— I was always active and enjoyed— I won't say sports. I think I played basketball a little bit, but I wasn't a real athlete or anything. But I was just always very, very friendly and outgoing and liked working with people. I shouldn't say just working with people, just liked being around people. I think I was always looking for that family. Even now, today, I have these people that are like family. They are not my blood relatives but they are like family.

WHITE

That sense of community.

TOBIN

Yeah.

WHITE

So when you arrived in Philadelphia you started, if you can recall, the eighth grade or seventh grade maybe?

TOBIN

I was twelve years old. I don't remember now, yeah maybe. It had to be probably like the seventh grade or something like that, because I was twelve. Let's see my mom died— When did she die? Her birthday was in May. I'd have to go see when she passed, when we actually moved. For some reason with me, things that aren't pleasant and I don't want to remember, I try not to think too hard about it. Back there, the transition from White Plains, New York, to Philadelphia, to being married as a teenager, all of that just, ugh.

WHITE

Kind of fuzzy.

TOBIN

It is just a part of my life that I wasn't happy with.

WHITE

Sure.

TOBIN

Wasn't happy at all. You know what? I think that is one of the reasons why I strive so hard to make things better today. Philadelphia— As I became an adult, of course, I grew to love it, and I grew to make friends and get to know people. Even after the marriage was something I didn't want to be part of anymore, I continued to strive and excel, to do good things and get involved with community organizations and Operation PUSH [People United to Save Humanity] and church and, you know, just—

WHITE

Still always ambitious, looking for a better experience, better lifestyle, richer lifestyle, more fulfilling.

TOBIN

Always wanted something better, even though, growing up in White Plains wasn't— To me then, at twelve years old, I didn't think it was that bad. But now, looking back, I know we were poor, and I know my poor mom did whatever she could. I do have some bad memories of people just taking advantage of her, like men being very abusive. I remember that. You know how guys will want to control you and make demands on you and if you're not doing what they want you to do, then they want to beat you. So I kind of remember those kinds of things. She was always just so kind and giving and opening her home up to people to come in. I mean, we didn't have much but she was always sharing and giving. So I think I took a lot of that good stuff from her about wanting and giving and caring and sharing.

WHITE

From what I know about you, I can certainly sense that. From the conversations that I've had about you with other people, that sentiment is echoed as well, very giving and nurturing.

TOBIN

I always try. I always try to be the best. I mean, going to church and hearing all those things. Some people go hear and come out and just be a devil. You know, I always try to live, to live, not hurt people, not do the wrong thing, and help people when I can. I mean, sometimes it even feels good, even though these people out here on the street begging, you don't know whether they are alcoholics or drug addicts or whatever. Sometimes it just makes you feel good to give somebody a dollar.

WHITE

It's true.

TOBIN

Because you don't know. They aren't all necessarily on drugs. Some people just have a bad turn in life. I mean, I have had some where I didn't know, sometimes I didn't know where I was going to end up. I mean, I've had some experiences, as we go through this and you get into more of the adult life. Anyway, growing up in Philly was another challenge.

WHITE

Did all of your siblings stay together though in this home?

TOBIN

Now, see, that was the challenge, keeping us all together. So we moved in with relatives who already had a bunch of other cousins from other relatives and it was just like fourteen people.

WHITE

Fourteen! Adults and children combined in this one home?

TOBIN

Well, mainly children. Well, young adults, yeah.

WHITE

Did you go to high school? I think in your records, Overbrook High?

TOBIN

Overbrook High School.

WHITE

Okay you went from Shoemaker to Overbrook?

TOBIN

Yeah. That's when I got married, when I was in high school. And as a result the marriage thing was such a family problem until it was thought that I should go back to White Plains, New York, in my senior year of high school, rather than get married and go through all this stuff with these relatives and these people. So I moved back, but then it didn't work. My aunt that I lived with in White Plains, my aunt Martha, I loved her, Martha Brown, Martha and Bill Brown, my aunt and uncle. And they wanted me to stay with them and go to school. But

you know, I don't know, for some reason, there was this force driving me and trying to dictate my life and, "Oh, you need to be married. You need to come back here!" and blah, blah, blah. So I went for a short part of my senior year to White Plains High School.

WHITE

Oh you did? Oh, okay.

TOBIN

Because actually, on my wall there is a class picture. The class of 1961, White Plains High, but I actually graduated from Overbrook. So it is crazy, because I went back to Overbrook in time to get my diploma from Overbrook.

WHITE

I see. Okay, and when did you meet your husband-to-be? Was that at Overbrook, during the initial phase?

TOBIN

No, I met him when I first moved to Philadelphia. I was twelve years old.

WHITE

Really?

TOBIN

He was part of this clan that we all kind of— There were cousins and people who said they were cousins and we were all living together in this house. It used to be fun, growing up, they teach you how to drive, your older cousins teach you how to drive and they teach you how to play cards and they teach you how to sing and tell jokes. I remember we used to all get together and sing. There were some fun times but then sometimes you get too close. It becomes more than just a friendship kind of thing. You get to be intimate. You have mixed emotions. Is this the right thing? Do I really like this person? Is he really who I think he is? So I have, that's why the back and forth situation, going back to White Plains was probably best, because it was just not a good marriage.

WHITE

Not a good scenario? Okay so you married at what age?

TOBIN

I think I was eighteen.

WHITE

You were eighteen?

TOBIN

Because I didn't have a wedding. I remember going to a justice of the peace because I was really, I think I just turned eighteen. Was I out of high school yet? Was it my last year? I was a senior in high school.

WHITE

Okay, so you went from Overbrook and then, you know, based on some recommendations or what have you, you went back to White Plains for a period of time and stayed with your aunt and decided to come on home, back to Overbrook, and that's where you graduated and then right after or during that period of time, you decided to get married.

TOBIN

Well, I was married while I was in school. That was another thing. It was like a big secret, you know. You didn't want to be married and in school and all of that back then. But I was married at the age of eighteen, so by the time I was twenty-two, I was a mom. I was pregnant with my daughter by the time I was twenty-two. So at twenty-two I still wanted to do all these things that I was doing—modeling and being involved in the community. I have pictures to show. Being married, this really wasn't for me. Actually, it was really not something I wanted to do but I was easily persuaded, easily persuaded.

WHITE

It was very influential.

TOBIN

Very influential.

WHITE

Did you both live in the community in Philadelphia.

TOBIN

Yeah. Yeah.

WHITE

You moved out? Moved to your own place?

TOBIN

Yeah, we moved and had our own apartment and everything but like I said, that wasn't really what I wanted to do. Thinking back now, of course, that I knew early on that I shouldn't have been married at that age, being forced— It is kind of like you don't really want to do this but somebody— When you're young, people telling you, so many people telling me, go ahead and do this, do that, and I just did it for all the wrong reasons. And he was just very demanding, very demanding. So by the time I was eighteen and married, and then a couple of years later, trying to make this marriage work, then my daughter comes along. So then I really wanted to stick it out, because back then, you didn't— If you have a child, you try to keep it together. Being a single parent, raising a child, wasn't something— I just never thought I would be involved in anything like that. But every year got tougher trying to stay married, because it wasn't really something I wanted to do. So even after ten years— My name was Randolph, Tobin is the married name.

WHITE

Okay. I see.

TOBIN

But I was married so young, and so I just kept it because from the time I was eighteen years old, and now, at fifty-eight.

WHITE

Of course not. Who's Randolph?

TOBIN

My own relatives, they are all gone, most of them. They don't remember.

WHITE

That's interesting. Do you recall what was going on with your siblings at the time, when you decided to move out?

TOBIN

Oh my little sister, she was sort of like my baby, because even when I moved out from the home with the relatives, trying to be on my own and everything, she would always want to be with me and I would always buy her things for Easter. I remember, I think I bought her first bicycle. I was like her mom, my little baby sister. And my brother Dusty, Britz, he joined the service early, as a teenager.

WHITE

Oh, he did?

TOBIN

Yeah. He was in the Vietnam War and he got second and third degree burns all over his body. I remember that. And I remember my older brother just, I don't know, I guess he eventually— Everybody eventually got married young. That is another thing we do when we are trying to escape something. Sometimes we think this is the answer. So he got married young. I just remember my sister always wanted to be with me, my youngest sister. She didn't ever want me to— You know, I was always like her mom. Even today we are real close.

WHITE

Real close. That's terrific.

TOBIN

Real close. My sister and I talk all the time. Well, not as much as we should. She likes E-mails.

WHITE

Oh really?

TOBIN

Yeah. I had five hundred some E-mails the other day and I think that half of them were hers, no, not that many.

WHITE

But enough.

TOBIN

But she loves to send E-mails, so— And she's ten years younger. So she is about forty-eight now. She just had a birthday, so she must be forty-nine because I think I'll be fifty-nine in February.

WHITE

So let's see now, when you were married were you a housewife? Did you work at the time?

TOBIN

Oh! Back to working. I've always been, what do you call it? When you're aware of having your own and having a job. I've always wanted my own because there were things I wanted to buy for myself, growing up. In the summer, we had the Penn Relays in Philadelphia, which was a big to-do.

WHITE

The Penn Relays?

TOBIN

The Penn Relays, with Bill Cosby. If you ever hear Bill Cosby talk about the Penn Relays, that's from the University of Pennsylvania or Penn State. It is a track meet where all these colleges and everybody come to compete. And I remember the girls wearing white blazers and I wanted to wear what they wore and I wanted to have my own. So I have always worked. In high school I went away every summer and I worked for this Jewish family. They were practically like my extended family, the Kaplans, Lorraine and Herb Kaplan. They were jewelers. They owned the jewelry store in downtown Philadelphia somewhere. I will never forget, they gave me my first watch. There's things that I remember, like getting my first watch from the Kaplans and then staying with them during the summer months, being their nanny sort of. I was their nanny and took care of their little— Back then, you had to do something in the

summer. You either worked or stayed in the streets and played all day. I always needed to work because, going to school and living with whatever, you needed to make ends meet.

WHITE

Have your own income for instance.

TOBIN

Have my own income. I've always been, now that I think about that, I've always wanted my own. So that was a good thing. Wanted to work and be independent because it is not easy. People think it's easy. "Oh! I'm going to get me a guy and get married!" Uh-uh. It's not necessarily the answer.

WHITE

It doesn't unfold like that generally.

TOBIN

No way.

WHITE

Now you mentioned a moment ago, modeling? You said you had done some modeling?

TOBIN

Oh yes.

WHITE

How did that come about?

TOBIN

Well, this whole thing, while being very active in Philly and involved in the church and in community organizations, we always had something called fashion shows and cocktail sips, and I just loved, I always wanted to be and do. I was young, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, and I had a cute little figure. I have pictures to go with all this.

WHITE

Okay. I would love to see those.

TOBIN

Oh I remember modeling, different fashion shows and even when I was a mom, I had my daughter do all of this. She was two years old. She did Winnie the Pooh fashion. She was on TV and I used to take her to New York and she was in a couple of commercials. So once I had my daughter, I kind of lived out a lot of things I wanted to do through her. And then, she did a lot of these things. She was on the cover of a game and I remember moving to California and my fiancé at the time— I was divorced by this time and my fiancé, who brought us out here, he was at a store, some education store, and he saw this game and my daughter was on the cover of the game.

WHITE

Oh, really?

TOBIN

Yeah. I think I have it somewhere. I hope we didn't throw it away, but some educational game. But yeah, modeling was something that I enjoyed doing. And hosting events.

WHITE

Were you able to do some of these things when you were married?

TOBIN

Yes. Now here's the problem. Being married and trying to have a life and a career, unless you have a supportive mate who really wants you to do this and if he's not jealous of every little move, then maybe you can do it. But this guy was, he just—

WHITE

He was very jealous and controlling.

TOBIN

Jealous and controlling.

WHITE

Very controlling and domineering?

TOBIN

Yes, it was a struggle. So I got a break— Well, I hate to say I got a break. But when he went into the military I had an opportunity to kind of like spread my wings and do my own thing. But then again, I felt bad. So I think I was instrumental in telling the Red Cross that he should come home or something. I was very confused back then. I didn't know whether I wanted this guy, whether I wanted to be married, whether I wanted to be single, but I really realized that it was not the right thing.

WHITE

It was a confusing and challenging time in your life, given your past experience.

TOBIN

Yeah. But I continued to do the things that I liked to do, being involved and then, I remember in 1971 my brothers and my sister, we all got together. We decided, maybe we should get this house, you know, so we can all be together.

WHITE

In Philadelphia?

TOBIN

Yeah. In Philly.

WHITE

What part of Philadelphia were you living in with your husband?

TOBIN

West Philadelphia. Was that our first apartment? On Spruce Street, somewhere on Spruce Street, if I can remember back then. But I bought a house in the seventies, early seventies. So I came to Philly, was it the fifties? I guess it was in the fifties. And ten years or so of getting out of school and being married and being a mom, somewhere along the lines I decided, let me

try this over again. Let me just have my own life. So my sister, my youngest sister, we got a house up in the West Oak Lane Area.

WHITE

So you were in your early twenties because you had moved to Philly in '55, so another ten years later, in the mid-sixties.

TOBIN

Here I was now, practically raising— Well, my sister went to Gannon College in Erie, Pennsylvania and she was living with me at the time. So I was excited about that, because at some point we got together and we decided we needed to be together. You know, it was rough out there. But my older brother, he stayed out on his own because he was trying to make his marriage work. But my younger brother and sister, we moved together in a home in West Oak Lane. As a matter of fact, I still have the house. My sister has it now.

WHITE

Is that so? Okay, you've kept it in the family.

TOBIN

Kept it in the family.

WHITE

Oh, that's such a wonderful thing.

TOBIN

My sister Daisy is there now.

WHITE

Oh, she is?

TOBIN

We got it in '71, so—

WHITE

Wow, long time. Thirty years you guys have kept it in the family.

TOBIN

The mortgage should be paid for by now.

WHITE

Well, sure.

TOBIN

But I don't know, you know. Sometimes you refinance and refinance. I don't know where they are but at least they are in it. So that made me feel good. That was something I accomplished. But one thing, thinking back on Philadelphia, my brother who passed away, my brother Britz, he wanted this Cougar, this Mercury Cougar, this automobile. Well, I co-signed for him to get this Mercury Cougar. I was so mad because he was always a free spirit, and of course he didn't keep the payments up or whatever and I remember having to pay for that Mercury Cougar. I was so mad. I don't know whether they finally took it or whatever happened. But that is one of the things I will always remember. I will never co-sign for anybody again in my life.

WHITE

He's ruined it for anyone else in the future.

TOBIN

Yes. He has.

WHITE

This is when he was living with you? When you all lived in the same house?

TOBIN

Yeah, when we were all together in this house in West Oak Lane. Yeah.

WHITE

Aha. That is good. And so was your husband, were you divorced at that time or did they move?

TOBIN

You know what I used to do every year? And I shouldn't say this because I don't want to dislike anyone, but I would leave. You could tell that I was displaced, misplaced, unhappy, confused. I would leave almost every year. I would go and either get my own place or something. So that's when we realized, my brothers and sister and that, "Okay, let's just get a house." Because I was always like the wayward child or something. I was like, "I don't want to be here. I don't want to be married." Even when my daughter was little. For a while, he tried to keep her with him and that didn't work and so I finally had to say, "Okay, I'm going to raise my daughter. I'm going to settle down and take care of her." And I just had to buckle down and do that.

WHITE

So when you had your daughter, were your siblings still living with you? You guys were all in the same home?

TOBIN

Yeah. My sister Daisy was a big help to my daughter Lauren. Oh, my sister Daisy—she has four kids of her own now, my sister Daisy—but she was always good at braiding hair and reading to her and teaching her. She was like— See, things happen. This circle of life? Like my little sister, I was like her mom, big sister, when my mother died. And then, when I had a daughter at a very early age, then my sister was like a teenager. I remember living in this little—one of the times when I left—one little room place, me and my daughter. And my sister Daisy was graduating from— No, she was going to her prom or something. I remember her dressing and coming out of the little room where we lived, and we didn't have any place for her to stand and take a picture, the place was so small. We were trying to find the right wall. She had this pretty pink satin dress and we were trying to find what's the right wall. It must have been the ninth grade or something, because she stayed with me. My sister was always with me. She stayed with me a great deal and she helped me with Lauren a lot.

WHITE

What year was Lauren born?

TOBIN

In 1965. Lauren is thirty-six.

WHITE

Okay. What is her birthday?

TOBIN

July 6, 1965.

WHITE

Interesting. That was an interesting time of history, 1965.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah, was it. The Supremes and all the good music.

WHITE

Lots of things, I'm sure, going on in Philadelphia.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah. And Philly had a lot of—I think that's where I got my strength. I really did. What do they say? I cut my teeth in Philly. It's like New York, if you can make it in New York you can make it anywhere. I mean that's where I got involved in Operation PUSH and Jesse Jackson and starting the Philadelphia chapter of PUSH. And that is where, after high school, even during high school, I remember working all the time. Back to this thing about working and having your own. I remember in high school I worked for a little restaurant delivering sandwiches and washing dishes.

WHITE

Did you really? In high school?

TOBIN

I remember one year, working after school or during school for Bonwit Teller. I don't know if you're familiar with Bonwit Teller.

WHITE

Aha. Absolutely. It's an investment firm.

TOBIN

I was a stock girl down in the millinery department— Oh no, Bonwit Teller is a clothing store.

WHITE

Oh right!

TOBIN

Maybe they have an investment firm too, but they were a big high-end fashion clothing store and I remember working in the haberdashery, down in the basement of the stock room.

WHITE

Wow! Always an entrepreneur.

TOBIN

Always. I remember when I moved up to Saks Fifth Avenue to work there, Sada, Sada Turner, she was my manager there. All these mentors in my life. And I remember I used to model. That's probably why I started modeling. I used to model the clothes in the store when they would come in, because I was a cute little petite size. And they would say, "Here, Pat. You put this on. Patricia, you wear this." And I remember that back in the day, at Saks Fifth Avenue, Sada Turner— She was from England. I loved her. And then I remember working at Sun Oil Company and one of my mentors at Sun Oil— And this was in the sixties now, or maybe early seventies, I don't even remember now, but in Philadelphia I worked for Sunoco Oil. Barbara [C.] Harris was the first African American bishop in the Episcopalian Church.

WHITE

Oh, really?

TOBIN

[Do you know of] Barbara Harris?

WHITE

Yes.

TOBIN

She was my manager at Sun Oil Company in Philadelphia.

WHITE

Okay. Lots of mentors that came into your life.

TOBIN

Lots of mentors.

**1.2. TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO
DECEMBER 20, 2001**

WHITE

Pat, you were just talking about some of your experiences working in the clothing stores, in Saks Fifth Avenue and your introduction to modeling took place there.

TOBIN

Yeah. I think that working in those clothing stores and trying on those beautiful clothes and having to walk around the store, I think that sparked my interest in modeling. I used to get involved in all these little fashion shows around town. Another really funny experience I remember is this woman named Stormy Red Cross. She was a jazz singer. Sonny Stitt was a jazz musician, and Stormy Red Cross, they were performing at the Philadelphia Academy of [Music], a place where we had music and concerts. And I remember coming from one of my fashion shows with a hat box. Back then, we put our hats in a hat box, and I always looked like the typical model, whatever. I wanted to go to this. I had done a fashion show, I wanted to go see Sonny Stitt and was it Gloria Red or Stormy Red Cross, somebody, I can't remember these jazz artists' names. I know Sonny Stitt was one of them. And Stormy Red Cross, I think it was, and Gloria is a jazz— Gloria Lynn? I can't think of her name right now. But I probably have pictures going back to this time and I remember going into the academy with my hat box and they said, "Oh come on! Ms. Red Cross is coming!" They thought I was her valet. They let me in her room. I sat back in her dressing room because I didn't have a ticket to get into this show. I don't know how I thought I was going to get it. But I

remember sitting in a room and I said, "Oh my God! This lady is going to come and I'm sitting in her dressing room!" Stormy Red Cross, I think that was her name, and Gloria Lynn. Stormy Red Cross, Gloria Lynn and Sonny Stitt. I think I said, "Ms. Gloria Lynn," whoever's dressing room I was in. I said, "I'm so sorry." She said, "Girl, that's okay." So I always found that to be my way. I found out I'd be doing something and thinking, "Oh my God! How am I going to explain this?" and people would say, "You know, that's okay." It always worked out. I remember going to Madison Square Garden to see— This was all during the time when I was out on my own and I had developed different friends after being divorced. This guy Joe, Joe Duckett, I was engaged, he was another dominating one and I remember him saying, "Oh, we can only take two people." We were going to see Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali. "And we can't take anybody else." And I remember my best friend from Washington D.C. was coming to Philly to visit me. How can I not take her to the fight in Madison Square Garden in New York? I don't know how I was going to do this but we all went. Three people went on two tickets because at the time we were walking in the gate to go into the Madison Square Garden, there was Aretha Franklin and her entourage, and I kind of just walked right in with Aretha's entourage.

WHITE

You were meant to be a PR.

TOBIN

I was meant to be! I was born Patricia Randolph, PR.

WHITE

Oh! [mutual laughter]

TOBIN

Patricia Randolph. PR.

WHITE

I didn't see that connection. Absolutely.

TOBIN

It was made to be. I mean, I have so many stories like that. I mean, my daughter, when she was five years old, she had her fifth birthday party at Muhammad Ali's house.

WHITE

Did she really?

TOBIN

Oh, I have pictures. Didn't I show you those pictures? Let me show you those pictures.

WHITE

I didn't see those pictures. No.

TOBIN

I have a whole book of Muhammad Ali. This is not the book with me here but I have a little book of her fifth birthday party and then I have pictures where I gave Muhammad Ali, his wife Khalilah Ali a baby shower, when the twins were born. All this was growing up in Philadelphia. I had some fond memories of things in Philly, when I became a young adult, was able to get out and network and do things. Muhammad Ali was fighting Jerry Quarry and I gave his wife—Khalilah at the time—a baby shower. She had just had the two twins. So Khalilah Ali, Muhammad Ali, May May [Maryum] Ali, Muhammad's oldest daughter—I mean, I've known them for years. As a matter of fact, May May Ali just called me to invite me to a screening of Ali the movie, because a lot of her friends missed it. Everybody didn't get a chance to get invited to the big hoopla. So her special friends are going to a private screening this Saturday over at Sony. So I have all kinds of stories. I mean, what I need to really do is just get some of these pictures out, like you've been telling me all this time. When did you tell me you were going to do this? I mean I had plenty of time to start gathering stuff.

WHITE

Oh, three months. That's okay. We still have plenty of time now. Absolutely.

TOBIN

Yeah. I like the idea of now trying to put it all together and go back. Because at fifty-eight, you try to go back fifty years, it is a lot of history there.

WHITE

Sure. It is. It is a challenge to recall, it is, because you have had so many rich experiences and you've lived in a couple of places, different places where the environment and the community in which you lived and the people in which you lived with, they were all changing over time, so I know some things come to mind readily and others you have to probe. And of course, the memories from the photographs really help. How did you come to meet Muhammad Ali's family?

TOBIN

My daughter Lauren, at the time I had her modeling. See, here I go again with this modeling thing. There was a woman called Trudy, named Trudy Hanes. She is still very much alive, bless her heart. Trudy Hanes, she was one of the models, she had a modeling school or something. I put my daughter in Trudy's modeling school. But Trudy was an entertainment editor or journalist or something for KYW, a TV station in L.A. And Trudy and I got to be friends. I remember going to her wedding when she married on this beautiful ship or yacht or whatever in Philly. But my daughter had gone to Trudy Hanes's modeling school. So that's how I got to meet Ali. Lauren was modeling. I had these pictures of her and I was walking down Market Street. Market Street was a popular street in Philly where they had lots of shops and stores and there were certain stops where you caught the "L" Train, like the subway that ran up above. Philly was a great experience. Anyway, I was walking down that street one day, and Ali was with some people, and I don't know if I just pushed the pictures in his face and said, "This is my daughter. She is a model." I think I did. But I remember correctly. I think I said, "Ali, this is my daughter. She is a model and here's my card," because I was always a PR. I was always promoting something. And it was so funny. When I was living in that little apartment that I was telling you about, where my sister couldn't take a picture, didn't know what wall to take a picture on. I was bathing my daughter one night, and she was a little thing, she was three or four years old. I was bathing her in a little tub or whatever, and the phone rings and a voice says, "Is Laureen there?" And I wanted to know, "Who's calling my daughter, my

little baby daughter? Who's this man calling my child?" "I want to speak to Laureen." I said, "Who is this?" He says, "Muhammad Ali." Girl, I almost dropped the phone.

WHITE

Oh my God.

TOBIN

Not only did he follow up and called, he wanted to talk to Lauren and they had a little conversation, whatever a three or four year old would say to someone like Muhammad Ali. And of course, mom gets on the phone and I said, "You know, Ali. My daughter will be turning five and I would love to have a party, but we live in this little place." And I did, I told him about this little party. He said, "You can have it in my house."

WHITE

Oh my Gosh!

TOBIN

And I got pictures.

WHITE

What an opportunity!

TOBIN

She had her fifth birthday party at the home of— Of course, he asked his wife—Khalilah at the time—and we had her fifth birthday party in his house. I have the pictures. That was a great experience. But he followed up, he called and I made friends. I mean, we would go to their house. We were really friends. It wasn't like that was just a one time thing. I mean, even today, when he sees me. Oh, I have a picture of Muhammad Ali and my daughter, after she became an adult, and he would see her, he'd hug her and kiss her. I have a picture of those two right now. I need to make a note to be sure and get you that photo.

WHITE

Oh, that's an excellent opportunity.

TOBIN

Of Muhammad Ali and Lauren and her fifth birthday party at his home. I definitely have to get that for you.

WHITE

I bet this movie Ali is going to be particularly meaningful, if they've done it well, it's going to spark up some memories for you.

TOBIN

And not only that, look how the future— Things change, and even growing up, my grandson had an opportunity to meet Ali. And, of course, I take pictures of everything, that is why, if I ever get all my pictures in order, you'll know that my life story will have even more of a meaning, because I can document all this stuff. Here we are with Aaron [Michael Tobin Curry], when he was a few years younger.

WHITE

Oh! Look at that! Great picture. This is a picture of Muhammad Ali and your grandson Aaron. Okay.

TOBIN

Aaron and me, grandma. And that's another thing. I do Aaron the same way I did my daughter Lauren. She went everywhere with me, everywhere. When she was twelve years old we moved to Los Angeles. So isn't this funny? When I was twelve I moved to Philadelphia. When she was twelve, she moved to California.

WHITE

Isn't that something? How history repeats itself?

TOBIN

That is just what's been happening. All the things that I used to do with my daughter I am now doing with my grandson. You know, I used to take her modeling. I had him in commercials. I could see me just being the— I was the Hollywood mother, moonlighting it, a Hollywood stage mother, long before I came to Hollywood.

WHITE

Long before Hollywood was in vogue. My goodness, this was quite interesting, just to think about you, your experience and your having been married and not quite satisfied with that experience, but still endeavoring to do and be something larger and greater at the time. And the fact that you were able to sort of mobilize and move, and sort of get connected in Philadelphia during that period of time. Because you said your daughter was five, well, she had a fifth birthday party from Muhammad Ali, and I guess you got divorced when she was four because you were twenty-two. Correct?

TOBIN

I was twenty-two when she was born. By the time I was twenty-eight, I was divorced.

WHITE

Oh, okay.

TOBIN

I was twenty-eight. I married at eighteen, so the marriage really should have lasted ten years, but every year— See all these different experiences when I was gone and out on my own, and I would go and come back. You know, I wasn't a stable wife. I wasn't really a wife. I was a young woman trying to find myself and do what I wanted to do with my career and not be tied down to some marriage. That is just not what I wanted.

WHITE

This wasn't working for you.

TOBIN

Yeah.

WHITE

I can only imagine. He probably thought, "Oh my goodness, there is no way I'm going to be able to keep this woman down."

TOBIN

Oh no. And he wasn't It turned out that it was just not a good situation. But I was strong and I still had my brothers and sister and I had other relatives and, no matter what side they were on, whether they were on his side or my side, everybody was like family and they were all supportive. So I got through that. When I finally got my divorce, the exciting part of leaving Philly and coming to L.A was, I was engaged at the time to this guy, Joe Duckett, who brought me three thousand miles, brought me to California. And two and a half years later, he was gone.

WHITE

Okay. Interesting. Interesting. But that was your entry to Los Angeles.

TOBIN

That was my entry to L.A. See, everybody had their purpose in life and I managed to grow and learn from each of those experiences. In Philadelphia, even though the marriage part was not something I was happy with, I continued to be involved in my community and get to know key people. For instance, everybody talks about Emma Chapell now. She was the president of the first black bank in Philadelphia or something and now she heads up the Jesse Jackson Rainbow/PUSH [Coalition] Wall Street project. Well, Emma Chapell and I grew up in Operation PUSH together, I mean, we helped to organize Operation PUSH in Philadelphia. And then Reverend—I mean, there are so many ministers—Reverend Sullivan, Leon Sullivan. I remember when we started the first, was the 10/36 plan, ten dollars for thirty-six months or something like that, and they had the first black-owned shopping center in Philadelphia.

WHITE

Really? A lot of firsts.

TOBIN

The 10/36 plan, a lot of firsts. And then I always remind the people that riding the bus, going to school when I was in high school, Patti LaBelle, Patti LaBelle and the Blue Belles. When I went to school, she went to [John] Bartram [High School], I went to Overbrook [High School]. We were thinking, "What is she? What is this?" Because, honey, she was wearing some stuff back then.

WHITE

Was she really? [mutual laughter]

TOBIN

Kenny Gamble. Kenny Gamble who owns the Sound of Philadelphia—the music company? Kenny and I went to school together. When we see each other—I haven't seen him lately, but we talk on the phone, we've been in touch. We had a ball. He went to West Philadelphia, I went to Overbrook. Dick Clark, I was looking at the news the other night and he's suing the Grammys or whatever and some mess, but he, Dick Clark had Bandstand. He had American Bandstand. I used to go dance on American Bandstand.

WHITE

Really?

TOBIN

I knew Dick Clark long before he came out here and become some big time producer.

WHITE

Oh my God! There is so much creativity going on in Philadelphia. It was a robust Philly.

TOBIN

That's where I really got the oomph, or whatever I needed, to bring me to California to deal with Hollywood and the movies and the stars and to keep me grounded. You know, coming from a very humble beginning and even now people say, "Oh! You own your own business. You are making money. You are doing well. You are driving this. You are doing that." Hey, Toyota [Motor Sales USA, Inc.] provides me with the Lexus that I drive. God gives me the energy to work seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, to build this business and I am thankful and I am grateful. I look back on the Patti LaBelles and— Bill Cosby! I mean, Bill Cosby introduced me to Pat [H. Patrick] Swygert, who was the president of Temple University, who is now the president of Howard University. Bill Cosby—

WHITE

Oh my goodness! These connections and ties.

TOBIN

Bill Cosby was smoking cigars in a little club on Lancaster Avenue in Philadelphia, long before— You know. So I always tell people that growing up in Philadelphia was much more than just, I mean, that's where I really got a lot of my— That's where I became connected, really became connected, growing up in Philly. Philly was the kind of place where we had the music, we had celebrities. Will Smith, I mean I didn't know him then, but look, I brag about all the people from Philly now, and I put my name right in there. I say, "Pat Tobin, Will Smith, Patti LaBelle, Bill Cosby, Dick Clark, David Brenner."

WHITE

All these fabulously accomplished people.

TOBIN

And while Muhammad Ali lived in Philly, he was very instrumental, he and his wife and family were very instrumental in helping me to start or launch my business. I had started something called P.T. Enterprises. I always had my little promotional company on the side and I remember there was this Latin Casino in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Latin Casino was a club, a supper club where they had major entertainment and I had a business partner at this time, this guy that I was dating. All these men in my life, they never worked. He was my business partner and we put on this big event, P.T Enterprises. We had Gladys Knight— Well, Gladys Knight was already booked into the Latin Casino Supper Club— But what we did— And Muhammad Ali kind of vouched for me and said, "Oh she can do this. She can sell five hundred seats." You know, because that's what you did. You would buy a block of tickets and you would sell them and you would make your own event. Well, I sold over five hundred tickets.

WHITE

Did you really?

TOBIN

To Gladys Knight and there was a ventriloquist, a black ventriloquist, William somebody. I can't think of his name now, but they were on the show, and

somebody else, and it was a big success. So that sort of helped to launch P.T. Enterprises. I had articles in the newspaper and everything.

WHITE

And what year was this? Do you recall?

TOBIN

That had to be in the late—I came to Los Angeles in '77, so between the fifties and the seventies, growing up in Philly. I don't remember when that was, but it had to be—Okay, I think I got divorced in '71, so it could have been in the early seventies.

WHITE

In the seventies or shortly after that, because your life completely just blossomed, just a new world opened up after you kind of severed that relationship and got past that, I'm sure.

TOBIN

It was a bad relationship. Yeah. I needed to not be there and do that because even now people back in Philly who knew me and who knew of the relationship or whatever, that I had back then, they say, "Well my! Look how you've grown! Look how! I'm so proud of you, you've expanded, you've done this." Because sometimes people stay in a relationship and it is not what they really want, and they become stifled. They don't grow.

WHITE

Absolutely. Completely stagnant.

TOBIN

And I just didn't want that. I mean, my mother died. Like I said, I got so strong. My mother died when I was twelve and I said that for the rest of my life, no matter what it takes, I'm going to succeed or excel or do better.

WHITE

It really helped you to develop a real strong inner strength.

TOBIN

It really did.

WHITE

In a sort of a go-getter attitude without acknowledging any obstacles.

TOBIN

And I remember coming out here—when my fiancé, after two and a half years or a year and a half, whatever, he left—I remember getting really strong. My daughter called me one day. She was twelve or thirteen years old and she says, "Mom, Joe is not here anymore." I mean, he just took off. But you know what? That was another turning point in my life because I really got strong. I remember that we were in Culver City and I lived near Washington Boulevard [at 3841 Mentone]. I would take the bus down to Reverend James Cleveland's church on Washington. I would go down there and I would pray and sing and cry. And, honey, I just got real strong. I was telling somebody the other night about my relationships with people and how I connect with people. I remember how when my fiancé left, after we moved out here, after he left and I was living in this apartment, I said, to Ida—Ida was the manager of the building—"Ida, I don't know how I'm going to make it. I don't know how I'm going to pay this." She said, "Honey, don't worry. Don't worry. You'll stay. It will be okay." I was wondering, I hope Ida is still alive today, because I'd sure like to thank her. Because she did not kick us out. We could stay and managed—I was able to move out of there and get even a nicer place in the [San Fernando] Valley.

WHITE

So many wonderful angels have come into your life.

TOBIN

Angels. I believe my mother is still there watching over me.

WHITE

Sure.

TOBIN

Taking care of my child, my daughter, making sure she's okay.

WHITE

And work through other people so that they can touch you.

TOBIN

And I believe that. I do believe that.

WHITE

Absolutely. And move you to higher levels. Before you decided to leave Philadelphia, things were really moving along. You were making lots of contacts. I suppose having met one person, they would introduce you to someone else and the opportunities just continued to unfold for you.

TOBIN

And the gentleman that I was engaged to at the time—I was in Philly and we were going to move here—he had gone to [North Carolina] A & T [State University], the college in North Carolina, with Jesse Jackson, so he was very close to Reverend Jackson. So we were instrumental in starting Philadelphia PUSH. When I was working for these oil companies—back to the oil companies—I was working for Mobil Oil and Sun Oil, and I was one of the few African American, or probably the [only] African American woman sales rep in a major oil company back then. Then African American women just weren't selling tires and motor oil and batteries and I remember being Ms. Sun Torch. I found pictures of that.

WHITE

Ms. Sun Torch?

TOBIN

Ms. Sun Torch is like Miss United Way or the Rose Bowl Queen. I was the only African American woman at the time that became Ms. Sun Torch, back in the seventies. So that is another group of photographs that I have to get for you, the Sun Torch days, the Sun Oil days, back then.

WHITE

Wow. So many different things were going on. Now, you had also, I guess in 1975, decided that you wanted to pursue your college education at Temple University?

TOBIN

Yes. Being an adult and having a child, that doesn't exclude you from doing the things that you want to do, with the support of my sister and relatives and other family members, I was able to always have somebody watch over my daughter while I did these things. So I went back to Temple but I—Barbara [C.] Harris, now Bishop Barbara Harris—as she said to me back then when she was at Sun Oil, "You want to be the hottest thing in PR by Saturday night?" I'll never forget that. So what she was trying to tell me is, you know, you have to take your time. Because I didn't want to stay at Temple for four years. That was taking too long. So I took a few classes at Temple, but I actually graduated from the Charles Morris Price School of Advertising and Journalism. It is a special two year junior college for people interested in advertising and PR. And I graduated with honors. As a matter of fact, I received the Reginald E. Beauchamp Award. Reginald E. Beauchamp was a guy who worked his way up from the basement of the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin to become the publisher of the Evening Bulletin newspaper.

WHITE

Oh really?

TOBIN

Oh yeah.

WHITE

He was an ambitious gentleman as well.

TOBIN

Oh yeah. So that award, getting that award was an honor. So yeah, I went back to school, even as an adult. Even when I came to Los Angeles, I started taking classes at UCLA. I'm a guest lecturer at UCLA.

WHITE

Yes. I am certainly aware of that.

TOBIN

And I was doing really good. I need to talk to Barry Bortnick, and get my certificate in Professional Designation. I was doing so well, but I stopped to run my business and travel and do all these things and I never finished. You think he'll cut me some slack?

WHITE

I think he probably would be open to that.

TOBIN

I need to talk to Barry about that.

WHITE

My goodness. So you were doing all of these things! You had your young daughter, you were making these contacts. I'm sure your social life had expanded as well, meeting a lot of people in sort of a social circle and environment.

TOBIN

People say to this day that I know everybody. There is my hair stylist, Michael [Peters]. He tells this joke about me walking into a room with someone or walking to the airport with the Pope and he'll say, "Who is that with Pat Tobin?" In other words, "Who is that with Pat Tobin?" Not, you know, "Who is [the Pope] with?" But I mean, I met a lot of people and I'm going to do something that George [C.] Fraser has done. George Fraser is the author of Success Runs in Our Race, a book that he has written. Then he also wrote Race for Success and he has other books. But George Fraser is a friend and he wrote this book about the successes of African Americans and the kind of things that we can do. In the front of the book he has listed eleven hundred people that he networked with. Eleven hundred.

WHITE

Wow.

TOBIN

And I'm one of them.

WHITE

Oh is that so?

TOBIN

I'm in Earl Graves' book. Earl Graves' book [How To Succeed In Business Without Being White]. I'm in his book. And Cheryl Broussard, she wrote a book Sister CEO: [The Black Woman's Guide To Starting Your Own Business]—black women who own their own company. And I'm in her book. All these people that have come into my life and I've networked with. Just like meeting you. I met you at Larry McCormick's event and look how we—I mean, I just made it a point to get to know you. I said, "I want to be like Larry. I want to be part of that program."

WHITE

You sure did. You were very personable. Came up to me, absolutely. Actually, now that you say that, the first time that we met, I can certainly understand, basically your modus operandi, shall I say, just coming up and meeting people and saying hello and what have you and engaging them in conversation and I guess this really started back then, when you really started to get your feet planted on the ground.

TOBIN

You know what? If we would just, we as a people or anybody, would just open up and speak to other people, you just never know. A good example is, I was at Spago's in Beverly Hills, at the Shell Oil Christmas party. Former client, [Robert] Bob Russ of Shell Oil, and I'm sitting at this table talking. I mean it was Yvonne [Brathwaite] Burke and all these people who were dinning, Diane—Congresswoman—Watson, we were all there. And I'm sitting next to this guy and I said, "Okay, we all have to introduce ourselves and say hello. I'm Pat Tobin." He says, "I know who you are." The guy next to me, he says, "Natisha Newberry is my niece. She works for you."

WHITE

Oh my goodness!

TOBIN

If I sat there all night or all afternoon and never said a word, I would have never known that. Well, we turned out to be the best of friends and as a result— Of course he is married. His wife is Natisha's aunt. But the lady next to him, sitting next to him is his co-worker from the Los Angeles Eye Institute and we are about to do some business with them.

WHITE

Oh my goodness!

TOBIN

The L.A Institute gives eyeglasses to needy children. They give thousands of glasses away through LensCrafters, so we are about to do that publicity and get that out. But most of my relationships have been because I'm networking and I'm open and receptive and I like to mingle and talk to people. As a result, it usually turns into hopefully some connection.

WHITE

Some connection. Wow. That is great. Now, this is before you decided to come to Los Angeles, [when] you became engaged to this gentleman.

TOBIN

Joe Duckett.

WHITE

Now, was he very social? Was he sort of in the social scene there in Philadelphia?

TOBIN

He was a popular guy, because he worked for IBM and he was a smart investor. He invested his money, owned property up in the Pocono Mountains, he loved to ski. He invested his money wisely, but he had been in the Vietnam War as well. And I think he was still shellshocked, because he was another one that was very bossy and dominating. I mean he was good to us, me and my daughter. My sister never did like him, so now I know why. But he wanted the best for me. He wanted to be my manager. He wanted to direct my career and my daughter's career because she was doing some modeling and everything. He wanted to be our manager. Well, he did something good.

He brought us to Los Angeles and he took us around to all the wonderful things. My daughter was Ms. Hal Jackson Talented Teen [International Scholarship Competition].

WHITE

Yes.

TOBIN

She won the state competition. Well, she won California and then she went to compete. She won at Los Angeles and then she went to compete up in Sacramento and I think she was number two in the state for Ms. Hal Jackson Talented Teen. But my fiancé at the time, he made sure that she studied. She learned sign language. He made sure that she was really— He was good about certain things and even me, he tried to make sure that I was more disciplined and did my PR things that I needed to do.

WHITE

He was very motivating.

TOBIN

He was very motivating. But one thing I didn't like about him is he said, "Oh you'll never get a job in TV. You've never worked in TV before. What makes you think you can be in TV?" Well, I worked for CBS television for five years.

WHITE

And proved him wrong.

TOBIN

So these people that tell you, you can't do things and you are not going to do things. I don't listen. But that is another story about my getting a job at CBS. I went there, rusty, trying to get a job. And the woman who was in human resources, Dolores [Christian], she said to me, "You know what?" We got to talking. And she was a single mom with a daughter, just like I was a single mom with a daughter, and we got to talking and she said, "You know what? You go home and you practice your typing. You come back. I know you can pass that typing test." And I did.

WHITE

And you did.

TOBIN

I mean, I always had a typewriter right on the kitchen table anyway. I had my own little business. I was doing my own little consulting stuff. I went home, I practiced and got that job and I stayed at CBS for five years.

WHITE

Another opportunity. Another angel.

TOBIN

Another opportunity. So I have to remember Dolores. I have to find some more background information on her. She recently retired from CBS.

WHITE

Oh really? Okay. So what was the motivation for coming to Los Angeles? Things were going so well for you there in Philadelphia, you were, you know—

TOBIN

I was trying to get away. I had done, well, Rizzo, Mayor [Frank] Rizzo was the mayor and I did not like him at the time. He was not a good mayor, I don't think. I don't like certain things that were happening on the political scene and I was involved in Operation PUSH. Operation PUSH was having a convention out here in California in the seventies. We were coming to the convention. But prior to that, my fiancé at the time, Joe Duckett, he did some advance work and came out here and saw the— Back in the seventies it wasn't as crowded as it is now. He saw opportunity, and because I was interested in public relations, I had my daughter in the modeling career. We were sort of involved in entertainment, leaving me New York or California, and California just seemed like the best decision in terms of school and where to put her, in terms of my career.

WHITE

Aha. Just time for a change. Time to stretch out a little bit.

TOBIN

Time for a change. While I was engaged to Joe Duckett, he threw me a big party. I have a plaque on my wall right now, my farewell when I left Philly—He gave me an engagement ring. We became engaged. Oh, it was a big to-do. Then he got me out here and left.

WHITE

Oh no! Life is wonderful. Now, you had worked for the Sun Oil Company there in Philadelphia, before you made this transition.

TOBIN

Fourteen years of experience at oil companies [Mobil and Sun Oil] that are among the major oil companies now. One of the things that helped me to make my decision to leave was, while working at I guess it was Sun Oil, back East, when it snows the roads are slippery and you need chains on your tires and all of that. I was a marketing rep, a sales rep. So I had all these credit card slips and different supplies in the trunk of my car for my dealers. I had a territory and I had certain dealers. I remember this old manager that I had. I said, "You know what? It is bad out here. It is slippery and icy." They give you a company car. I had this Chevy Impala. I said, "You know, it is kind of slippery out here. I think I better go work from home." He said, "No, you take those credit cards slips. They are really heavy. Weigh them down in the trunk of your car." You know help keep your weight. So rather than let me work from home and get on the phone, he wanted me to jeopardize my life out there in the ice and the snow. I said, "I'm out of here. I'm out of here. This is not good." Plus, you had quotas to meet, and sales numbers and forecasts. I accepted the position because it was a challenge. They had not had any African American women, to my knowledge, to be sales reps. If there were, they weren't in Philadelphia. And I wanted that job. I remember being tested, going to psychiatrists. They thought I was crazy. "This black woman thinks she can sell tires, batteries, and motor oil?" I didn't know a two-ply from a poly tire, but I succeeded and I got that job. I remember it was a real challenge and it wasn't exactly what I wanted to do, so I knew that I wouldn't stay there for ever. So while being involved in the community and having a good job at the oil company, I still was able to do my freelance stuff on the side. Even when I came to L.A, I managed and still freelanced, while working at CBS Television.

WHITE

Okay. All right. Now tell me about your interaction, your experience with Operation PUSH. How were you introduced to that and who did you work with and what did you do?

TOBIN

Well back in the seventies and growing up in Philly, the ministers were quite active in the community. I remember Reverend James Hall, Reverend Small—Reverend James Hall I think was Triumph Baptist Church and I can't remember Small, whatever his church was at the time. But I remember Jesse was coming to town. Reverend Jackson was coming to Philly and he was trying to organize a chapter of PUSH in Philadelphia. I was always out there doing and being active in the community and wanting the best for our people, because there were still problems with jobs and people not getting certain positions because of color of your skin or whatever. So I got really involved and I know they were looking for volunteers. That's why I say to young people today, volunteer. Do not be afraid to volunteer. Get involved. How are you going to learn? And I volunteered to be the Director of Communications for the Philadelphia PUSH.

WHITE

That was quite a volunteer assignment.

TOBIN

Girl, my first press conference, nobody came. One person. You know you got Reverend Jackson and you have— I think we had one radio station that came out to the first press conference but honey, I learned my lesson. I learned how to really do it and how to do it right and when to have a press conference. As you can see now, I do it all the time.

TOBIN

Yes. How did you learn? By doing it?

WHITE

By doing. By doing. The more I stayed as the Director of Communications I got to know media people, plus I had a relationship with CBS television. I didn't work for CBS in Los Angeles, but they would hold these town hall meetings and I knew Arnie [Arnold] Wallace, who was like the Director of Communication or Director of Minority Relations or some title. Arnie Wallace

in WCAU [Television] in Philly. I was always involved in community organizations and journalists and media people. So I got to know a lot of people and as Director of Communications for Philadelphia PUSH, I mean, I was a prestigious— It grew to be something really prestigious.

WHITE

Okay, something that you started off and helped to create as a volunteer.

TOBIN

As a volunteer. And certainly, Reverend Jackson, to this day, he remembers me, he knows me. He used to have to come and meet with us, the organizers of the chapter back then. So I was real involved then. Now, when he is out here, dealing with whatever issue, he certainly knows who I am. I mean, his children growing up, my daughter grew up with his kids, meaning that we all knew each other. When we moved around and came to L.A, they would come out here. Lauren and some of her friends, were friends with Jesse Jr. [Jesse Jackson, Jr.] and others.

WHITE

Interesting, very interesting. Of course, the organization had a political bent and they were trying to make inroads and creating opportunities for African Americans at the time. Do you recall any particular event or function that you worked on for them, as the Director of Communications, that was memorable for you or maybe challenging?

TOBIN

There were many. Let's see. I remember coordinating that first press conference, that was very memorable because not enough people showed up. But we always had, let's see, do I remember any special banquets or rallies? We had a lot of rallies, rallies at churches and big banquets and things of that nature. That's where I also got a lot of my skills or honed my skills, organizing events, organizing rallies and meetings and banquets. I have a friend, she is still at OIC [Operations Industrial Center] today, oh what is my girlfriend's name? She would kill me. Ah! I see her when I go back to Philly. She was at OIC. Delcia. Opportunities in Industrial Relations. OIC, Reverend Leon Sullivan. Delcia [Scott] Afantchao. She married an African. His name was Afantchao. I

couldn't remember her name for the longest. Now I can just blurt it out. But she was very good and very involved in the church and very good at organizing things. We all worked together with PUSH and the ministers. I don't know, I just remember doing a lot of those kinds of things. They were all memorable because whenever Reverend Jackson was coming to town, that was a big to-do. It was back in the early seventies and late seventies, and whenever we were doing something in the late sixties, early seventies, it was a major thing.

WHITE

Absolutely, it got a lot of press, a lot of coverage.

TOBIN

A lot of press, and that is one of the reasons I got to get to know the media. If you could work with the media in Philly, you could work with the media in L.A or anywhere else, once you learn how to call on the press and get friends that are within the organization, no matter what station they work with. For instance, Dave Clark, who is on the air out here, Dave was a young reporter covering Jesse in Philadelphia, a young radio journalist working for a radio station back in Philly.

WHITE

Oh my goodness!

TOBIN

Oh I know one thing that is really memorable that I will never forget. There is this woman, I think she is still alive in Philadelphia, her name is Mary Mason. Mary Mason, WHAT Radio. Well, she was Ms.— She had a gospel radio show and you didn't do anything without running it by Mary. Well, here is this little Pat Tobin, Director of Communications, getting close to Reverend Jackson and his team and doing things. And Mary was sort of like— She was older of course. You just don't do certain things. I remember being afraid of her. "God! What is Mary going to say if I don't do this? If I invite people to go on her show?" If she didn't want you, she didn't like you, she wouldn't have you. She was a mess and for the longest time I didn't think she liked me, but she did. She ended up sending me notes when I moved out here and I had all kinds of friends and mentors that were helping me along the way and I didn't even

know it, like DeLores Tucker. C. DeLores Tucker? She was the highest ranking African American woman in Governor [Milton Jerrold] Shapp's cabinet back in Pennsylvania. I have a letter right now to this day that I saved, that she sent me when I moved to California. I have a book full of letters that I save from people. From the Urban League, Charlie Bowser of the Urban League, his son Kyle Bowser is married to Yvette Bowser, who produced the TV—

WHITE

Exactly, the TV show Girlfriends.

TOBIN

[Living Single.] So Yvette and my daughter were all friends. Kyle would all know, you know.

WHITE

Small circles, the circles just keep expanding and connecting and what have you.

TOBIN

That is why it is so important to network and to make friends and continue to build on these relationships, because you don't know where it is going to take you.

WHITE

You never know. Yes. Now, were you able to, did this translate into a paid job as Director of Communications or were you still working at the Sun Company and doing that as well?

TOBIN

Can I tell you this was an experience, because when Jesse was in dispute with the oil companies about something or employment or he would come down there. I remember one day—I think I was off from work that day—and people said, "Ooh girl, are you going down there with Reverend Jackson and you work for the company?" I said, "You know what? I am off and I wish they wouldn't bother me." I was always that way. Even when I came out here and I worked for CBS television and Reverend Jackson, no, [Louis] Farrakhan was having something, a rally. I always liked to go hear good positive messages from

African American leaders. And I remember people saying, "Girl, you better not sit up on that stage with Jim Brown and Farrakhan. CBS is going to see you up there." I sat right on the stage, right next to Jim Brown and Farrakhan. You can't be afraid.

WHITE

Right, to take a position.

TOBIN

And I think that is why I am an entrepreneur, because when people dictate to you, and you know it's the right thing, there is nothing wrong with going to hear these people. The people who don't want you to go, evidently they have something to hide and don't want you to hear it.

WHITE

Or feel intimidated or what have you. You probably garnered a bit more respect from the people that you worked with because you take a stance in what you believe in.

TOBIN

Because I take a stance, right. And while at CBS I remember wanting to be in public relations in the worst way. I was like an administrative assistant. The first job I had was administrative assistant to the manager of press relations and this woman, Phyllis Kirk Bush. She was Nora on The Thin Man [TV series]. She was an actress when, just at the height of her career, she became ill, stricken with a disease, something that left her partially paralyzed. Some people say she was bitter and mean, but she was a sharp, smart woman, and she knew. I learned a lot from her, but many people could not work with her because she was tough. She was really tough and you had to be strong, you had to have tough skin to work for her. I was a single mom with a daughter to raise and I remember taking three buses. I was living in Culver City. Three buses from Culver City to Hollywood, to get to work. And she said anybody who would take three buses to get to work has got to be okay. I worked for her for a few years, then I moved on to another position at CBS. But I'm just remembering all these different positions and the different people whose lives touched my life, helped me to grow. I think back on Van Gordon Sauter, who

was the General Manager of CBS and he went on to marry Katherine Brown Rice, Governor [Edmund G.] "Pat" Brown [Sr.]'s daughter, and how I got to interact with all kinds of people. And Jamie Bennett, was it Jamie Bennet who was one of the general managers of CBS? While working there, he was new to L.A., so he needed a sitter, so my daughter ended up babysitting for the general manager's kids on a few occasions. Jonathan Rogers, who now runs the Discovery Channel or something. My daughter ended up babysitting for his kids while she was growing up. She always worked too, because it was just the two of us. And I remember when she was twelve years old she worked for TeleCredit in Century City. I had gotten to meet Alex Haley through being the outgoing person that I am. I remember trying to get my daughter in to Palmerstown, USA, to audition for Palmerstown and Alex fell in love with my daughter. Like I said, I kept this modeling career thing going, thinking that maybe she would want to be an actress or something. But she got out here and after a while she said, "No more." She was still very young. She was auditioning for Palmerstown and Alex Haley adored her. One day she was in Century City. She didn't get the role on Palmerstown, but the contact she made with Alex Haley and everybody. And one day, she was in Century City working, a young teenager, going to school, after school working at Telecredit with her little uniform, and she saw Alex Haley and they were talking. She was telling him about these boots that she wanted in this window, these cowboy boots. She always wanted something. She's Ms. Fashion Plate. And he took her to the store, and he just happened to be looking around with her at the store, and the next thing you knew, he bought these boots for her. Just because he knew her. Mom was working, she was working. She came home and put those boots on and slept in those boots. She said, "Ma! Alex Haley bought these boots for me!" and she slept in those boots. He called me up and told me. He says, "You know, I bought these boots. I want you to know she didn't ask for them." And we were friends, so I didn't mind. But people like that, Alex Haley, I just have all these wonderful memories of people who have been very instrumental in helping to shape my career.

WHITE

Right, right. Interesting. You were going to tell me how challenging or how interesting it was working for the Sun Oil Company as well as being the Director of Communications. You mentioned a moment ago about—

TOBIN

How Jesse had to come to Sun Oil and they said, "Are you going down there with him?" And I did. I went with him. But I think that was one of the reasons why I didn't stay more than, I don't know, six years. I had fourteen years experience at major oil companies. Mobil Oil was my first experience out of high school and I remember being one of the first. I think I got the job in the early sixties, '62, '63, something like that. I was instrumental in bringing other African Americans in, because they didn't have very many when I got there.

WHITE

Oh really? What did you do when you first got there?

TOBIN

I was a receptionist at first. They had the receptionists that sit on different floors, or was I the credit card operator where we manually made the credit cards. Where you punch in the credit card number and the name. The guys at IBM— See, this goes back to when the computers were in a big room, and when everything was in this big room and these guys would put the information on these tapes, and you would run these tapes through the credit cards center.

WHITE

It seems so archaic now, doesn't it?

TOBIN

Oh God! Now these computers are the size of your tape recorder. But I remember that working in the early sixties back at Mobil. I think Mobil was my first job. I was very involved in the Pegasus Club, that is the flying red horse, the symbol of Mobil. Then after spending so many years at Mobil, I went over to Sun Oil and that's where I became marketing rep. Because I figured what Jesse was fighting for, to get upward mobility for African Americans in these companies— And we could be a receptionist or we could be a credit card operator or we could be a dictaphone operator, dictating letters, but we couldn't move upward to sales or to other positions.

WHITE

There was a glass ceiling there.

TOBIN

Glass ceiling there. So that is one of the reasons I had to fight to make sure I became a sales rep and I did. Oh and also I worked for Hertz Rent-a-Car. I was a sales agent for Hertz. What year did I do that? Maybe that was the job before I went to the oil companies. I have to think back. But I remember wanting the job, because you were at the airport and you got to meet a lot of people. I remember wearing this— Jacqueline Kennedy had her clothes made by one of these designers, and he made our Hertz Rent-a-Car outfits.

WHITE

Oh really? So that was important for you at the time.

TOBIN

I can't even remember the guy's name [Oleg Cassini]. It was a pill box hat, cute little suit. I can't remember who that was, but one of my experiences while working for Hertz Rent-a-Car was, was it Gladys Knight came through the airport and somebody King was her musical director. I forget his name now, somebody King, big-time musical director or something. Everybody knew him. And he ruined his suede shoes in one of our cars. I remember telling him that I would get him, I don't know what I did, something to help him out. And he gave me free tickets to see Gladys Knight or somebody.

WHITE

Oh my goodness! [mutual laughter] Another connection.

TOBIN

It had to be Gladys Knight. Another connection. I kept in touch with him for a while, but he was just so proud to see this black woman at Hertz Rent-a-Car rental car, behind a counter. Of course, I think I had the dead men shift, like late at night or something. But it's okay.

WHITE

Nonetheless you were making inroads as a woman and as an African American woman. Wow. Very interesting. Very interesting. It is still quite fascinating to hear you speak about the extent to which you were making these inroads at

the companies and establishing a place for yourself as a woman and as a mother and as an African American person, and also giving your time and energy to Operation PUSH, volunteering. You had to do both.

TOBIN

You had to do that. That helped you. For instance, if anybody in those companies—not that I was a threat to any of them, but they knew that I was involved with PUSH and the ministers—and you don't want to mess with somebody who is visible. That is why I try to tell our people today, get involved, do something, join, belong, because that way, you are protected. You have an armor around you, a community that will embrace you. But when you think you are too good to be involved with us, and when you think you are better than us, who has got your back?

WHITE

Right. Right. It is important to have that support and community effort to push forward, to initiate change. I know. It is very, very important. On that note, we are going to go ahead and end the interview for today and we can pick up next week, when we meet.

TOBIN

Thank you so much.

WHITE

Thank you.

**1.3. TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE
JANUARY 18, 2002**

WHITE

So we are picking up from our interview. Actually it was last year. It's been almost three weeks, a little over three weeks, since we had an opportunity to speak and during that time we talked quite a bit about your upbringing, about the transition that you made with your family, coming here to live, with other relatives in Philadelphia. I believe that was in 1977.

TOBIN

Los Angeles is '77. Yeah. Leaving Philadelphia in '77.

WHITE

In '77. Right, right.

TOBIN

So the twenty some odd years— I went to Philadelphia, remember, when my mom passed away, I was twelve. So that was in the fifties, I guess, or something like that.

WHITE

And the fact that you decided to get married early and you were making some shifts in your life and trying to find your place. And things started to move along pretty rapidly for you. Your gregariousness and your knack for communicating and dealing with people seemed to bode for you as you navigated your way in Philadelphia and began to meet a number of people that were instrumental, and probably continue to be instrumental in your career path. And I know that we are going to revisit some of the wonderful experiences you had in Philadelphia. But we also had a chance to speak last time about when you made a transition to Los Angeles in 1977. You had been working for the oil company in Philadelphia. You had also been working with Reverend Jesse Jackson on Operation PUSH, and you continued in that vein after you moved to Los Angeles. We talked quite a bit about your having the wherewithal to actually work full time at the oil company while raising your daughter. Then you volunteered as the Director of Communications for Operation PUSH. So we did have a chance to speak a bit about that. One thing that we talked about that proved to be really interesting and exciting is that you were able to make some inroads at the oil companies, because there weren't very many African Americans there, particularly African American women. You were interested in becoming a sales representative. With the assistance, I believe, of Reverend Jesse Jackson, and actually the fact that he was actually mobilizing at that point in time to make a space for African Americans at all levels of various industries. That he was instrumental in helping you to move forward in that initiative, and that you were able to initiate change, which is excellent to hear. You talked a little bit about when you worked for Hertz Rent-a-Car, which is probably before the oil company.

TOBIN

Yeah. I've got to find that picture.

WHITE

And we ended the interview by talking about how significant and important it was, and is, for you to continue to establish yourself as a professional woman, a professional African American woman and how throughout your life, you have had the wherewithal to make some significant inroads in various industries in which you worked. We talked a little bit about— Also, you had a desire or a special desire at one point to work for television, the television industry. You said you didn't know a whole lot about the television industry at that time and that your fiancé [Joe Duckett] at the time told you, "Oh you'll never work in television."

TOBIN

Right.

WHITE

And you very, very nicely had an opportunity to correct him after having worked at CBS for five years.

TOBIN

Five years. I love it.

WHITE

That was very nice to hear.

TOBIN

Tell me no. "Who are you to tell me no? You are not God."

WHITE

Exactly. So let's continue from there. Let's talk a little bit more about some of your experiences at the Sun Oil Company, Sunoco. After having had an opportunity to look over some more of your literature, I understand that you participated in a competition and you won actually, Ms. Sun Torch at the oil company. Can you tell me what that means to become Ms. Sun Torch?

TOBIN

It is almost like being Miss America for a company. Instead of Miss America, you were Ms. Sun Torch. That's where all the employees—and there were probably hundreds probably, not even a thousand, I don't remember how many employees we had at the time—all the employees get to vote for you, regionally and at the headquarters downtown. I just had a lot of friends, black and white. I was always, as you've noticed, congenial and outgoing and fun-loving and everyone gets to vote for their choice for Ms. Sun Torch. I don't know, I probably think I'm correct in saying this. I think I was the first African American to reach—I'm not sure, but I'm going to do research and find out more about that. But this was a major drive. You select this person who is going to help raise money for United Way. It was called the United Fund Torch Drive through Sun Oil Company. And being Ms. Sun Torch was a real honor. I mean, the Chairman of the Board presented me with a special gift that I still have today. This was back in '69. Here we are in 2002. He found—It's like a doorstop and you being an artistic person, you would appreciate this, because it really is art. It is like this doorstop. He presented me with this doorstop and he was Mr. Wilson, the chairman of the board, and he was a big shot. I mean, to have him give you something—He found a doorstop and it said "Tobin," and he gave me that, and I know that must have had some kind of history or significance because today I still look for—I tried to research and find out where did he get this. I don't know where he found it, but it had my name on it. It is like something from—I don't know how old it is. It may have the date on it. It is really something from the past. But anyway, this Ms. Sun Torch thing was a bit of a to-do. And, Renee, why don't you read a little bit? Can you make that out? Because I would feel better if you read it. I'll start coughing.

WHITE

Sure. Sure. "Ms. Sun Torch is not just a title." I'm actually reading here from an article that is highlighting the actual Ms. Sun Torch contest and it says, "Ms. Sun Torch and her court. It was a pretty sight along Market Street recently," and it actually shows some of the other ladies that were in the court with the lovely picture of Ms. Tobin. "Like the Miss America contest, but on a smaller scale," it reads, "Ms. Sun Torch is symbolic of an idea. The idea is that she will represent Sun Oil Company's efforts to support the United Fund and its 250 agencies. Behind all the banners and fancy frills, the new Ms. Sun Torch must

show the Philadelphia community that the Sun Oil Company cares, so much so that their goal was to raise [inaudible] dollars." Then it just talks a little bit about Ms. Tobin and it talks a bit about her experience when she was a cashier in St. David's in 1961 and that she was a graduate of Overbrook High School, that she has a long list of civic activities, including a Sun Oil representative on closed-circuit TV at Simon Gratz High School. She is a member of the Consumer's Education Protection Association. She is a hostess for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and a corresponding secretary for Bill Green and that her hobbies are modeling, hostessing, bowling and dancing.

TOBIN

And I still like bowling. I still like bowling.

WHITE

Yes. It is a lovely article.

TOBIN

But see, I hadn't even remembered all that. I'm so glad that you refreshed my memory, because now I know why it was so important for my baby sister Daisy to be there, because I was always gone. And even though I was always gone and active, either my daughter [Lauren Tobin] went with me, or if she was too young to go with me or she didn't want to go with me, my sister Daisy [Randolph] was always there. I had like a built-in sitter. So I didn't really feel as though I was neglecting Lauren, who is now thirty-six years old. I was always gone, but she always had family and good friends and good neighbors. We talk about a village raising a child or raising children today, we really had a village back in the sixties. I mean, you didn't cross the street and do anything wrong, without Ms. Essie or Ms. Bessie. Girl, we looked out, they looked out. I didn't have to worry. If I was doing these things in the community and being busy and I wasn't sitting up in some bar somewhere. I wasn't running around necessarily with men and doing the wrong thing. I was really in my community working. I have always loved that. Even today, reflecting on all the things I did in Philly, people say, some of my friends laugh at me now, "My goodness! You go to everything! You go to an envelope opening." This one particular person doesn't like all this social stuff. And I think that is why I'm still single, because it

is hard to find a mate who will really understand what you're about, what you want, and not be jealous of the community, of the people, of your child, that may appear and go before this loved one or whatever. So being single just leaves me the room to do what I want to do. Even then, as I said, being married at an early age, I knew that was a mistake. It was all wrong because, first of all, I was too young and there was so much I wanted to do and some people want to stifle you and hold you down. So while I was doing a lot of these things, it was just me and my daughter and my sister and friends and neighbors. Even though they were ex-in-laws and ex-relatives and ex-cousins and ex-everybody else, we all still got along. Even today I can smile and say hello. Those people that I'm no longer close to, I would still be cordial, because I always had a purpose in life. I didn't realize what it was but I just loved doing these things. Now that I see that there is such a need to embrace people and help people. Especially after 9/11, meaning September 11, 2001, we all need to remember how important it is to just help each other. So I love doing this. And when you love something, you really need to do what you love doing, because if you are going to do it the rest of your life, you better enjoy it. You don't want to feel bad about getting up and having to do, "Oh God! I have to go to this job!" You want to jump up and say "Oh, here I go! Thank God for this job or thank God for the opportunity." And I believe that is one of the reasons I am an entrepreneur today, because even though Sun Oil was a great company, I couldn't believe the challenges I went through just to become account exec[utive]. I was just a clerk cashier or whatever it was when I started out, but I know I wanted to be a sales representative or marketing rep. and it was a real challenge. You had to go through all this testing. I guess psychologically, they wanted to make sure you weren't crazy.

WHITE

Really? They gave you psychological tests just going to be a sales rep?

TOBIN

Oh, yeah. I remember putting in the pegs into the brown— Well back in the sixties, if you're brown— Remember, I'm brown skinned. So when you are brown skinned, there is a different set of rules for you, for us. There always has been, there still is, and thank God it is changing. People like Paula Madison, the highest ranking woman at NBC, the sister. She talked about her

experience too, reflecting on something I went to recently, a luncheon. Paula reflected on how people told her "No, you can't go to Vassar College. No, you can't go here and you can't go there." She said, "Well, I would let the Pope know that you're keeping Catholics out of Catholic school, you know." It is like me with the "You can't work for TV" or "You can't be account exec." Well, I can sell. Why can't I? So no, when they put you through all these tests, you just rise to the occasion and pass the test because we all know we are smart enough. God gave us all the same amount of talents and we just have to apply them.

WHITE

Aha. Have the opportunity to apply them and to assert yourself, to be on equal playing field.

TOBIN

There you go. And don't let people [say] no. What do you mean, no? Like I keep going back to the day and back to the sixties. My grandson—now that I'm fifty-eight years old, soon to be fifty-nine, and I have a nine year old grandson—every time he says "can't." "Can't? That shouldn't be in your vocabulary! Spell can't. No. You can't." So anyway, I just love reflecting on this, because you are right, back in the sixties, growing up in Philadelphia, I really got my feet wet. A lot of it was because I volunteered. There was no job out there saying I was going to be a community person. I was doing a clerk's work or secretarial work and I learned those skills. Because I could type. Oh, I used to brag about how fast I could type. I can still type very fast, at least a hundred— Well, I don't time myself anymore, because now I pay people to type. I'm not bragging. I'm just saying "Thank God!" I remember hustling and typing and going to school at nights so I could learn all these things and now I just enjoy doing them.

WHITE

That's terrific. Now, do you recall the kinds of things that came your way as a result of the notoriety that you got as Ms. Sun Torch?

TOBIN

I didn't even realize that I was on television somewhere. Was it a closed-circuit TV or something?

WHITE

Aha.

TOBIN

But I remember now, just being a spokesperson, because I'm always talking, as you can see, not lost for words. I think that modeling, my hobbies— Later on, as you follow my life, you will see what I try to do through my daughter. I had my daughter modeling and doing commercials and all this stuff and she probably wanted to knock me upside my head when we moved here to Los Angeles, because I had her in all this show business stuff and she said, "I'm tired of carrying these clothes mom. I'm not going anymore." She was twelve when we moved here to Los Angeles. But back in Philly, she was two when she started. She was on the cover of a game. She was on TV shows, Frostie the Rootbeer commercials and Winnie the Pooh fashions. I just loved— I think I was living out my dream through her. Taking her around with the little anklet socks with the lacing, her little pigtails. She had long hair, so I always enjoyed just dressing her up and just taking her places, things that I missed out as a teenager and my mom dying when I was twelve. So a lot of those things from twelve to eighteen—being a wife at eighteen—I missed. And now thanks to you, Renee, I'm reflecting back and realizing, well, now I know why I do all the things I do. I like to think about Michael Jackson and they say— Well, all the things they say about him now because he didn't have a childhood, but if you miss that and you want it, so what? We want to be, all of us want to just sort of like enjoy the kid in us. We are all big kids and there are certain things I love to do. I will go to a movie in a minute, I don't care what is showing, I love going to movies. I just love doing things and when there is somebody in your life that says, "You can't do this and don't do that and you can't go here." Well, they can't be in my life.

WHITE

Absolutely, and in some respects they are a source of inspiration, because they tell you you can't, which makes you feel like, well, yes I can.

TOBIN

Yes. That's the good thing about it. That makes you rise to the occasion and accept the challenge and succeed in spite of it.

WHITE

Absolutely, and sometimes it makes you feel like they were there for that particular purpose.

TOBIN

And I reflect on some of the ministers growing up in Philadelphia, the Reverend Hall and the Reverend Small, James Hall and I forget Reverend Small's name, but they were very instrumental in— Because they were all very involved in this PUSH, this Rainbow PUSH. It is so funny how things turn out years later. Growing up in Philadelphia, people were very active, and we were always in the streets doing what we had to do and it was nothing to picket and march, but of course it was the sixties.

WHITE

Right. The rebellious spirit.

TOBIN

Yeah. I was growing up at the time when it was fun to be out there and to fight for a cause, really be serious about fighting for a cause and making a change and making a difference. I remember Reverend Jackson used to come to town for our meetings and we were all excited and geared up. It was just great and I still have my love for Philly. Today, living in L.A., I have something called a Philly reunion. I haven't had it lately, but it started out being a get together every year where we just bring everybody together from Philly—and certainly any of our L.A. friends or wherever else they may be from—we would still all get together and I'd have this Philly reunion thing. I think that I will do that again. I will bring that back, because it was just so many people with great stories from Philly. I used to always brag about the Bill Cosbys and the Patti LaBelles and the Dick Clarks and the David Brenners. I could name all the talented people from Philly, then I would throw in Pat Tobin.

WHITE

Terrific. So do you think you will have a reunion in the near future?

TOBIN

Oh, I think I'm going to do that real soon.

WHITE

Yeah. After having reminisced about some of these things happening in Philadelphia.

TOBIN

Going back and looking at these cute little mini skirts— Now see, looking at these pictures, these were my daughter— I'm showing Renee a photograph where I'm at St. John AME [African Methodist Episcopal] Church. They had a building fund and we helped to raise funds. I was in some community group called the Squirrels. Well, the only thing that I didn't like about our name, now that I'm older and I think about it, the gentleman who helped to organize us, they were the Masons, and they really meant well, but they called us the Squirrels. But squirrels gather nuts. [mutual laughter] After I became an adult and I started thinking about it. We let ourselves be called the Squirrels, but squirrels also are very busy doing things. So that was the positive thing, but nuts— But, look, I laugh now because my daughter, when she sees how cute I was with the little short skirts— I said, "You guys with these short skirts, please. It is nothing new. Look how cute I was back there in 19—"

WHITE

It's true. It's a very, very attractive black-and-white photograph of Ms. Tobin that she is showing me currently.

TOBIN

And it will be in the book, Dr. White, because we must take all these wonderful pictures. So people who don't believe I was this size, they can see it's me. And I think that's my hair too.

WHITE

Oh yes.

TOBIN

Yeah. I used to wear an Afro wig. But yeah—

WHITE

Now, the community in Philadelphia, was there sort of an area or a location within the community where the African American people would congregate? Or was it very diverse, did they blend?

TOBIN

Well, it was predominantly black, and that's what I loved about building my business on the strength of ethnic marketing because honey, I knew about black folks. I have been black all my life. I know where we like to go and get our hair done. I know what we like, at least what I like. And I felt, "Well there are other people out there of color like me." In Philly we had a united front. Black folks were coming together. And even now, I keep going back and forth thinking about poor Mumia Abu-Jamal. I knew Mumia growing up in Philadelphia. I knew the Africa people, when they were bombed and all of that. I felt so bad because Africa, was it John Africa? Alice Africa? I don't know if I got the first names right, but when I was involved in the community, whenever there was an issue, I mean I was right out there. I remember when one of the Africa— Everybody's name was Africa. I remember that somebody called me Loose Lip Tobin because I was doing a report or giving some information to the news. I guess I was not saying what I should have said about them or in their favor. I have to research that for you too and find out what I was talking about. But I was always a spokesperson, representing some group or organization, and the media would speak to me because I was sort of a person that they wanted to talk with and get information from. I remember saying something one time and those Africa people—John Africa, whoever it was—he said, "That Loose Lip Tobin!" So for a long time people laughed and teased me, Loose Lip Tobin. But many of those things that happened back then, I was either right in the middle of it or involved—in the election of a mayor, or you name it. I mean, I was right there. .

WHITE

It must have been such a challenge! I know that you said you had become involved with your soon-to-be fiancé during the time when you were about to make a transition. But it must have been particularly challenging for you to pick up your roots from Philadelphia where you were, you had really developed a real niche for yourself.

TOBIN

But let me tell you one of the things that drove me. I guess it was a point in my life when it was time to go. It was just time to go. I had grown a great deal, but there were a lot of political things. When you talk about diversity, we had Mayor Rizzo. I think it was Frank Rizzo. We'll do our research and get his name right. I think it was Mayor Frank Rizzo and I'm not sure that Mayor Frank Rizzo was very concerned about— Well, I shouldn't. I don't know. I don't want to say the wrong thing, but there were just some things that I thought he was not fair about and it was kind of one-sided. There were things that happened in my life when I knew it was time to make a change. For instance, even working at Sun Oil Company. I think that's when I did finally become a marketing rep and I was sliding around on the ice. And my German, white or ethnic manager—I mean he was not ethnic, he was Caucasian—he said to me, "Well just weight down your car so that you—" Never mind that I may kill myself sliding around in the ice out there in that big blue Chevy Impala. I remember getting so excited about having a new Chevy Impala and having my own company car, because those were some of the perks you got in sales. That was one of the reasons there were very few people of color in sales. You got a company car, you got to go on trips. I think I related to you, while I was a sales rep, we were on a trip and I was the only black woman with all these men. I remember feeling, "Ooh," kind of left out, because I didn't golf or play tennis or any of that, but I communicated. So I could hold a conversation with the best of them. And I had a little sense of humor, so even if they tried to— Sometimes people would throw digs at you and try to insult you, but I was very quick and witty and could always come back with something.

WHITE

It makes a difference.

TOBIN

It makes a big difference. Instead of tucking in my tail and running away, I'd come right back with "Oh yeah? What about this?" and, you know—

WHITE

It definitely garners you some respect.

TOBIN

"You know you like brown sugar. You're just mad because you can't get any."

WHITE

I'm sure you gave them a run for their money.

TOBIN

I did.

WHITE

Oh sure.

TOBIN

Back to the people in Philly, this woman, Jean Williams, we were all here at some big event and Jean— Now in L.A, a big time record executive was married to Jim [James] Cleaver at the [Los Angeles] Sentinel. So a lot of the Philadelphia connection just moved west to Los Angeles.

WHITE

Okay, so a lot of the people that you affiliated with, they were also at a point where it was time to leave.

TOBIN

Time to leave, because politically things were different and you could grow so much until you feel like, "Okay, I need to make a change. If I'm going to specialize in entertainment or public relations, I need to be where there is an opportunity to do just that." There aren't very many PR firms in Philadelphia.

WHITE

Oh really?

TOBIN

Well, African American owned. There is a Bruce Crawley who is wonderful. He is one of the best. He wasn't in PR back then. He was in banking. Now, today, he is one of top advertising PR firms and there just weren't a lot of those. I thought it would be either New York, Los Angeles or somewhere, that I should

go to get into this business of public relations and marketing and promotions. And now I look back and see people like Jean, she left Philly and came to L.A and now she is working with many of the record companies.

WHITE

Jean. What is her last name?

TOBIN

It was Williams then. I think it's Jean Riggs now or Jean—I just got her card the other day, so I have to look it up and make sure we get her name right too.

WHITE

Oh good. So now, once you came to Los Angeles, I know that you were working for the oil company here in Los Angeles. But what was the—

TOBIN

No. No oil company in Los Angeles. The oil companies were all in Philadelphia. I had Mobil Oil. Remember I had fourteen years of experience. That is one of the things I used to brag about. Not brag about, but when they said, "Well, what makes you qualify?", "Well, I have fourteen years' experience in oil companies. That is equivalent to a college degree."

WHITE

Absolutely. On that note we just need to pause for a moment. [tape recorder off] We were just talking about the fact that your fourteen years of experience with oil companies was in Philadelphia, but, of course, in fact, you did move to Los Angeles in 1977 after making the decision that you wanted a change of pace. You wanted to explore a community that offered more in the way of public relations. Some of the political environment was a little bit different in Los Angeles at that point in time. So tell me, what was it like? When you first stepped foot to Los Angeles, what was it like for you?

TOBIN

I had never been here a day in my life, but the thing that excited me most about coming here— Back to my daughter. My daughter was twelve years old and even though we had all this family and connection and friends in Philly, she didn't want to leave. She cried the whole day. She sat on the step, because

our best friends lived across the street and I remember my daughter sitting on the step with my best friend's daughter and they were drawing pictures. My best friend's daughter, she drew a picture of our house so we could bring our house. Because you have your row houses back East, and so we brought this picture out here with us, but all the way out here from Philly my daughter cried just about the whole way. She did not know that LeVar Burton was on the plane. I don't think she knew. Maybe when we got on the plane she did recognize him, because that's when Roots was out— This was 1977. So LeVar Burton was on the same flight, because when we landed, Dolores Robinson, Holly Robinson Peete 's mom—

WHITE

Yes.

TOBIN

Dolores is from Philadelphia, so here is the Philly connection again. Dolores Robinson was managing LeVar Burton, and he was just beginning to star in Roots or had starred in Roots or something. So my daughter, twelve years old, stepping off the plane from Philadelphia landing in LAX, had an opportunity to meet LeVar Burton, one of the first people, and somebody like a Dolores Robinson. And I kind of knew Dolores from growing up in Philly because she was in radio. I think she worked at KYW, one of the radio stations or TV stations in Philly. And her husband Max Robinson was a very, very popular, serious businessman, producer and even now, when we moved to L.A, he had been doing a lot of things with Bill Cosby. But one of the reasons we came to L.A, my daughter was receiving the PUSH for Excellence award. So back to Rainbow PUSH and Jesse Jackson. They had this PUSH for Excellence where kids had to read and excel, so I always had my daughter in all these programs. Whenever she couldn't go with me, like I said, she was taken care of by family and very close friends, but she would always be involved as well. That is why, now, she doesn't want to go anywhere with me. But she received the PUSH for Excellence Award at the Greek Theatre.

WHITE

Really?

TOBIN

Twelve years old and she is standing up at the Greek Theatre with thousands of people and Bishop H. Hartford Brookins presented her with the PUSH for Excellence Award.

WHITE

Oh my goodness! What a special occasion.

TOBIN

Special occasion. We actually came out here—my fiancé, my daughter, me—we came out here to Los Angeles for the PUSH convention, but I knew we were going to stay because I just loved it. And it was a stay really.

WHITE

Okay. And your sister Daisy, who, of course, has always been your right arm

TOBIN

My rock.

WHITE

She is still living in Philadelphia.

TOBIN

She is still there today. She has never left, never moved anywhere.

WHITE

How did that feel for you? I know that there was a certain point in your life when you really wanted to make sure that your family stayed together, connected.

TOBIN

My sisters and brothers, it was hard.

WHITE

Yes. It was a difficult move for you, I would imagine, leaving your sisters and brothers anyway.

TOBIN

I thought that some day they'd come out here, and now one of them [Britz Randolph "Dusty" Williams] has since passed away. He is with me in spirit. My youngest brother, he passed away. So he won't get to join us in California. And I keep telling my sister, AYou got to come out.@ She has been here to visit, but I doubt if she will ever leave because she is married with her kids and they're grown and she's got— You know.

WHITE

She has her roots there. I see.

TOBIN

It is hard to pull up those roots and move. It really is.

WHITE

Sure. So when you came to Los Angeles, do you recall where you lived? What sort of accommodations did you have?

TOBIN

Oh yes. First of all, back to the connections thing again. Mayor Tom Bradley was the mayor of Los Angeles in the seventies. So there was a big PUSH Convention in Philadelphia. Mayor Bradley, Lois Hill Hale, and I think Diane Watson—I can't remember who else—was in Philadelphia for the PUSH convention because all these leaders from around the country were in touch with Reverend Jackson, all these political people and religious people. I remember meeting Mayor Tom Bradley. I don't know if I just walked up and introduced myself. I can't remember how. But there was this woman Lois Hale, who had been working for KCET in Los Angeles. Anyway, she was out in Philly at the convention and we talked about, "Well, if you ever get to L.A., look me up." People always say that, "If you ever get to L.A., look me up if you ever come." Well lo and behold, when I got ready to make that move, I had acquired or secured so many contacts that I just felt I knew people out here. And I had never been here before in my life, here in Los Angeles. But through networking and friends, I had met Mayor Bradley, so I wrote him. Now that's one thing my fiancé was good about, this guy Joe Duckett that I was engaged to, that I thought I was going to marry, who left me, broke my heart after he brought me to Los Angeles. But that's okay. Now he reads about me. But he

was always good about writing letters. He had that IBM training, so he knew about the executive way and what to do. So he would always write letters and send notes and make sure everything was spelled right and he really pushed me, he really did. He got me going. So everybody that I met, I would write a letter and say, "I'm coming to Los Angeles. I'm looking forward to meeting you." I remember, my friend in Philly, Arnold Wallace—who knew the people out here in WCAU, the CBS station in Philly, KCBS out here in Los Angeles—I ended up working there because an Arnold Wallace in Philly called a Joe Dyer in Los Angeles or referred to Pat Tobin. A Pat Tobin is moving to L.A.. I want you to look up my friend Joe Dyer, Director of Community Affairs in CBS for 30 years. @ We became best friends.

WHITE

Really?

TOBIN

And his wife and his family. It was difficult leaving the loved ones and the friends and all of that, but it was like a new awakening, a new journey. It was exciting, on the other hand.

WHITE

Sure, a whole new world opening up for you and being able to utilize some of those contacts that you had made. So when you came here—back to the accommodations—where did you and your family settle? Where did you live?

TOBIN

Oh yes, that question. Okay now, remember I'm with my fiancé, this guy Joe Duckett and he was just a wonderful guy. He always liked the best of everything. Through the networking, through Lois Hill Hale, who lived in L.A., but was in Philly at the convention. She had a friend named Roger Crawford. I think Roger passed away. I think his name was Roger. He had a beautiful apartment in Inglewood. We sublet his apartment. There was a swimming pool. You know how you live in the complex and they have a pool and everything? Well, coming from Philadelphia, honey, we didn't have pools in our—So we were living large. Joe Duckett, being the smart businessman, he was really supposed to be my business manager, and my fiancé, that made it

really hard. He was going to be my fiancé, my business manager, I didn't want to listen to him half the time. So he spent a lot of money making sure that my daughter Lauren and I were well taken care of. I remember he rented a Mercedes and he took us places. He got her involved in the community out here. My daughter Lauren was a Ms. Hal Jackson Talented Teen. She won her little competition by using sign language, doing a poem and signing it. We lived in a very nice apartment in Inglewood. It was very nice. We were subletting it, because I think Roger was traveling and doing something—the gentleman who owned it. But through Lois Hale, we were able to make that contact. She said, "Oh when you come out, you can stay in so and so's place. My boyfriend—" or her friend or whoever it was at the time. After we stayed there for a while, then we moved to Culver City because Joe, my fiancé then, had done the research and he was looking for the best schools and that's how my daughter got into Le Lycée Français, the French school of Los Angeles. I would have never known anywhere to go but Joe was real good about—He was an explorer. Remember, he had served in Vietnam, and he was an executive at IBM and he owned property up in the Pocono Mountains, back in Pennsylvania. He was a smart business man and if he wasn't so nutty, we would have made it, because I admired him. He was tall, good-looking. I hope I still have some pictures of him. When we left Philly, I still had the diamond ring. We were engaged. That ring is beautiful. I've still got the ring. He had a big party for me with all my friends and family and he gave me a plaque. He treated me like I was, like—ah! I mean it was wonderful what he did. So I have all those memories and I still have the plaque hanging up in my office. Next time you come I have to point it out to you. But I love it. Keeping those contacts and following up and staying in touch with people and coming out here and being busy, not just coming out here and sitting and feeling sorry. Honey, I didn't have time to think about who I left. I got busy. But I shouldn't say that. I was lonely and there were times when you are sad, but you don't sit and dwell on that. You don't dwell. And even when I got lonely, I'd pick up the phone. If he got on me about the phone bill, I didn't care. I'm calling my sister Daisy. I'm calling my brother Sonny, my brother Dusty.

WHITE

Absolutely, staying connected in that way. So now, your first official job when you came—

TOBIN

Oh honey, you don't want to know about this first job.

WHITE

Yes I do.

TOBIN

Girlfriend, I remember trying to start my own business. "Okay, I'm going to come out here and be a consultant." Because for a period before I left Philly, I think just before I left, I became my own consultant. I was doing my own thing, P.T. Enterprises. And I thought I would take that and expand out here. I think that is one of the reasons Joe Duckett wanted to be my fiancé and my manager, because he saw potential, but he couldn't wait. I mean, here I am now, on my way, but he had to leave like two years after we got here, a year and a half, he was gone. Anyway, I had to look for a job, because starting your business in a new city, unless you have clients and money, it wasn't happening. But I was able to get a job with, I'll never forget, Edward Hyman. Edward Hyman in Culver City, the Hyman Linen Company. I was an assistant to Hal Zinko. This typing, going back to this typing and having good administrative skills or good office skills and being able to communicate and articulate. I didn't go in there and say, "Hey I want a job!" I was Pat Tobin from Philadelphia and I was Ms. Sun Torch and I worked fourteen years in the oil companies. I had credentials and I had people who wrote letters, as you'll see, from Governor [Milton] Shapp's office and from all these references I had. So I was able to get a job with the Edward Hyman Company. Well, I didn't have a car. Joe Duckett would drop me off, because we lived in Culver City. We moved to Culver City because my daughter was going to go to school. We came out here in July. It was the summer. We came to Los Angeles in July during the PUSH convention, so we had to find and get settled by September, get her in school. So we moved to Culver City and we got a cute little apartment on Mentone Avenue—you got to write this down—3841 Mentone. When I go by there now—because Sony Pictures is right across the street, big ol' Sony on Washington Boulevard, Mentone leads into Washington—when I go over there I reminisce. That is the second place I lived when I moved here, twenty some odd years ago, when I moved to Los Angeles. And that is where I remember my landlord saying to me, "Don't worry," after Joe Duckett left me,

"Don't worry. You'll be able to stay here." I was able to stay there because he [Joe Duckett] had gone. He had decided I wasn't listening to him and he decided to take off Working for Edward Hyman in the Linen Company and being an administrative assistant, I had good friends there. I never had a car of my own, but when I decided, Al'm going to start looking around for another job. @ And I really didn't feel like doing it on the bus, couldn't do it on the bus. Stacy Latkin, Jewish girl, wonderful young lady, used to loan me her car. She had an Impala, no, she had an El Dorado, I can't remember, an El Dorado. She would loan me her car so I could go look around for other jobs. Then Hal Zinko, who was my boss— These are all Jewish people and they loved me. For some reason I think I'm part Jewish. Hal Zinko

WHITE

This was at the Hyman Company.

TOBIN

Edward Hyman Company.

WHITE

Edward Hyman Company.

TOBIN

Oh yes.

WHITE

Yes.

TOBIN

Hal Zinko gave me my first chai. I can't say it like they say it, but it's a chai, a Jewish symbol. I still have it to this day.

WHITE

Really?

TOBIN

I don't know whether he gave it to me when I was leaving the company. It was gold, it was beautiful. I still have it and I wear it every now and then. I have to

find another chain for it. But that's the kind of person I was whenever I went to work. It wasn't like, "Oh God! Where did you get her? Get rid of her! Get her out of here!" It was like "Oh we like Pat. Get Pat to do this. Pat can do that." I mean, if they needed me on the switchboard, if they needed me to type something, whatever they needed I could do.

WHITE

What kind of company was it?

TOBIN

Linen, they provided linen clothing, uniforms, uniforms for mechanics and doctors. They are still there I believe. No, they have done that area over now, but Edward Hyman, Hyman Linen Company. And I remember one of my good friends being Linda— Oh God! What is Linda's last name? I can't remember now. I just remember, most of them were predominantly white. The black workers there were mainly guys in the warehouse, boxing the linen, the uniforms and all of that. And the executive offices, where I worked, were mostly white people. But we all got along. I mean, I fit right in. I can't even remember the black people who were there, but then there couldn't have been too many, because most of the people that I remember were all white. So I'm sure it was mostly white people. But we got along. I was new to L.A. I had to make friends. And today, Stacy Latkin is still in touch with me. We are still friends.

WHITE

Is that so?

TOBIN

Yeah. She is looking for a job now, but I don't think she knows what she wants to do. She's been looking for a job ever since I left Edward Hyman. Stacy doesn't really want to work and I always kid her about that. She's always saying, "I'm going to send you my resume," and she never does. So Edward Hyman, doing administrative work. But I knew I wanted to get into television. This is where the conflict came with Joe, the fiancé. "Well how are you going to work for TV?" He wanted me to focus and be disciplined and practice just concentrating on one thing. Then again, I don't know whether he supported

me. I don't think he did, because I remember him saying, "Well how are you going to get a job in TV? You have never worked in TV." I said, "Well I will. I can do it. I'm going to go. I can type." And that is where, I got Stacy's car, was able to go out on interviews and everything. That's where I ran into the situation at CBS television, where I wasn't typing fast enough.

WHITE

Right. The human resources person.

TOBIN

That woman today is my good friend Dolores— What's Dolores's name? Oh my God! I have to look it up because it has been a while. She has since retired from CBS.

WHITE

Not Tucker?

TOBIN

No. Not Tucker.

WHITE

No, [C.] Dolores Tucker was the politician in Philadelphia.

TOBIN

Politician in Pennsylvania. But there was a Dolores— Oh my lord! She is in my phone book. I'll have to look her up. [Dolores Christian] But anyway, she was the one to say, "Girl, you practice that typing and you come back." I practiced that typing, I went back, and in 1979 I joined CBS television. Mind you, I came out here in '77.

WHITE

Right, so you worked for Hyman for two years approximately?

TOBIN

About a year. Well, before I got a job at Hyman, I was trying to do my own thing for a few months. I can't remember now, I have to go back and find you notes. I'm trying to think, if I start building my own little business and getting

clients on my own, while I was working— I'm sure I did. I always moonlighted. I was moonlighting long before the TV series *Moonlighting*. I really was. I always had this energy. A satisfied person is a lazy person. I never forgot that. I don't know who told me that, but that is what I remember. So anyway, after Hyman, maybe about a year. I remember it being fun, and I did not want to be an administrative assistant to somebody's president or vice president in a linen company forever, but I remember being thankful for the job. Because I was trying to think where I was when Joe Duckett left. Maybe he left me after I got the job at CBS television, because I remember taking the bus. There you go. When Joe was around, my fiancé was around, he would take me places. He had this red van. Oh! We were always in this red van and then he had his motorcycle and I did not like the motorcycle. So there were things where we just didn't fit. He would smoke and drink and the motorcycle is no big thrill to me and he loved it. That was his thing. And he liked the mountains and the outdoors and the bugs. You know, we just had different—

WHITE

Different interests.

TOBIN

He was a nature man. He had a dog. Oh, bless his heart. He had a dog named Shannon, Irish setter named Shannon. We loved Shannon. I don't know what happened to Shannon. I don't know if she ran away or what. But anyway, after the Hyman company, I got the job at CBS in 1979 and that was such a beautiful experience because I remember, AI am going to get this job. @ And I listened to Dolores. She said, "You go back and you practice."

WHITE

So you just went to CBS with your resume in hand.

TOBIN

Arnold Wallace gave me referrals and there was a woman named Diana Munatones. She was the Manager of Community Relations or something—Joe Dyer was the executive—but Diana ended up working at the School Board, L.A. Unified [School District] as an executive or an assistant superintendent or something. And I ended up being on TV. Did you see that tape from KLCS?

WHITE

I have not seen that tape.

TOBIN

Okay you need that tape. When the kids interviewed me about my career and about my life. You need to see that. Whatever it is called for the Los Angeles Unified School [District] station. The TV station for the LA Unified. So the CBS thing was a big coup for me. Getting a job at CBS television in 1979 with no previous TV experience?

WHITE

That is substantial.

TOBIN

But the media director person or the Director of Communication for PUSH, that volunteer position helped me a great deal, because I was able to say that I had experience in the community by coordinating press conferences, writing press releases.

WHITE

All those things of course bode well.

TOBIN

As you can see, I'm all congested [with allergies].

WHITE

Sure, no problem. So after you went away and practiced a little bit more on your typing skills, you went back to see Dolores and what happened?

TOBIN

Oh, honey I went back, and I got the job. I passed. You have to pass a test, certainly I passed with flying colors and landed my job. Now the exciting part was you get a department to work in if there is an opening. The opening was at press relations because of my background in communications and working for PUSH. I thank Jesse to this day. I always say, AYeah, volunteering for you helped me a great deal because I was a Communications Director for PUSH

and a volunteer. Now, I'm in the CBS press department. @ But Phyllis Kirk Bush was Nora on The Thin Man [TV series]. She was an actress, she was wonderful, she was all this. She had had this illness that left her partially paralyzed and she was kind of— She was a sweetheart if you got to know her, but most people couldn't work with her long enough, or work for her long enough to really get to know her. I mean, she would get angry sometimes and really give you— I mean, if you had a 't', and you didn't cross the 't' and dot the 'i', you caught it from her. She was tough. But I had been through so much in my life, honey, that was nothing. Come on Phyllis, bring it on. You want me to dot my 'i's and cross my 't's, I will. There were people that were like, "Ah! I can't work for her." Coming from the East Coast where you had to be tough, and you had to hustle. It took me three buses to get to work. She would say, "You take three buses to get to work?" Mind you, by this time I think my fiancé had left me. I was raising my daughter by myself and I needed a job, a different kind of job, more money. I think that is one of the reasons I did have to get another job, because I think Joe had left by then. I've got to find out at what point he left. But when he left us, I was on my own. I had to pay for this apartment. My daughter was in this private school, Le Lycée Français, the French School of Los Angeles, with Madame [Esther] Kabbaz. And Jodie Foster and Eartha Kitt's daughter [Kitt McDonald Shapiro]—all these kids went there. And now my grandson [Aaron Michael Tobin Curry] is in a school like that. He is at Campbell Hall with Denzel Washington's kid and— Who else is there? All these celebrities. But that is not the important point, the important point is that academically they can compete.

WHITE

It is a good private school.

TOBIN

So I had to get a job at CBS, or someplace like that, to make more money, because here I was in '79, and I needed to continue to take care of my daughter and take care of myself. I got that job and I stayed there for five years. Well, not in that particular department, this Phyllis Kirk Bush lady, she was not easy to work for. One thing I liked about her—and I had my letters of referral from WCAU in Philadelphia, so all that worked—she said to me, "Anybody who takes three buses to get to work has got to be all right with

me." Honey, I'm from the East Coast and that's all we did was ride buses. These people out here in L.A., drive me, drop me off, chauffeur me, valet park. Uh-uh, get me the bus, the trolley, I was used to it. So that helped me a great deal and prepared me for this, for L.A.

WHITE

And what department specifically was this lady in?

TOBIN

I started out in press relations, media relations.

WHITE

Press relations department. Okay.

TOBIN

Media relations was exciting because Connie Chung and Pat O'Brien— Phyllis's job as manager of press relations was to make sure that the press— Every week there was a press bundle, and if Connie Chung was speaking to the Girl Scouts or if Pat O'Brien was doing something or whatever, or whenever we got into the L.A. [Los Angeles] Times or TV Guide— I remember how Phyllis Bush taught me how to deal with people like Alene McMann at the L.A. Times, all these high-powered people who handled media stuff. Just watching Phyllis and working with her and making sure that you learned how to do it the right way. It was a big, big asset for me in my career, because I learned how to do things the right way, the CBS way. You know, there was a special way that CBS did things, because they were number one back then.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

I don't know where they are today. But they were number one back then. And there were other mentors like Mary Kellogg. Mary Kellogg Jocelyn at CBS, that was my second position.

**1.4. TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO
JANUARY 18, 2002**

WHITE

You were talking about some of your mentors.

TOBIN

We were talking about, I was telling you, Dr. White, about the UCLA— I'm thinking about UCLA. Well, that helped because while at CBS, I was able to pay for my tuition and go to school part-time, and take classes in the evening at UCLA. But Mary Kellogg Jocelyn, who is now an executive over at Disney [Buena Vista Television], was one of my managers at CBS, she was the second manager that I had, and we were so close and friendly that my daughter and I were always invited to Thanksgiving dinner at Mary's home. Mary and her husband would take us to— We would have these outings, when she would take her whole department. She was real good, she was a hard working woman and she didn't take any stuff, and she was driven. I mean, you would come in in the morning and there would be notes from her. She had been there over the weekend and all night, leaving notes. Now I do the same thing. People who work for me will find me there. I was working until three o'clock, three-thirty, this morning and I had to be at a breakfast by eight, seven-thirty, a quarter to eight. But there is something about nighttime, when it is peaceful and quiet. But Mary Kellogg Jocelyn, I will never forget her. I had dinner at her home for Thanksgiving, because it was just me and my daughter. So we had many people out here who embraced us and took us under their wings, especially after Mr. Duckett left. It was like, "Oh! She's there with her baby by herself!" But my baby wasn't young. My daughter went to work at the age of twelve!

WHITE

Right, right. You mentioned that. Where did she work?

TOBIN

Telecredit in Century City, where you verify people's credit to make sure they can get a car. It was called Telecredit. They are probably still there.

WHITE

At twelve years old?

TOBIN

Twelve years old. She met Alex Haley while working in Century City and he bought her these boots. Did I tell you the story about the boots that she slept in?

WHITE

Right. Yes you did. Yes you did.

TOBIN

Well, while working there, she also met another kid who was working there and his father was Coppola, Francis Ford Coppola.

WHITE

Really? Great connections.

TOBIN

Oh yeah! Great connections. So that, you know there has been that angel on my shoulder, every contact, everybody that I think of, I always find some good in them or some way that we connect. And one thing turns out to benefit something else and it's just wonderful. So Mary Kellogg Jocelyn was a wonderful— She was another one that taught me a lot, and then one of the people Mary hired was a gal named Linda Taubenreuther. Linda Taubenreuther, she went to work for the May Company and then she finally started her own business after leaving CBS. Linda taught me how to write. Linda would edit all my stuff, because I was taking classes and trying to learn how to be a journalist and do all of this. My little training in Philly with the volunteer stuff with PUSH, when you get to CBS, there is a different level. So I was taking classes and learning all this stuff and Linda would critique my writing, and now to this day, Linda and I are really good friends.

WHITE

Really?

TOBIN

Yeah. We stayed in touch. So I moved around, three times at CBS. Each time you move you get a promotion or something. My third position, I ended up at Television City, which is 7800 Beverly Blvd. I was in the entertainment department where we would ship the promos that promoted the upcoming

special, or soap, sent all that to New York, so it could be distributed to our two hundred affiliates. It was really exciting, that, doing the different jobs. I went from log editor, I went from press relations— Administrative assistant to the press department, to log editor, to entertainment editor. I forget what I was called by the time I ended up. And this is where I decided, when I got to the entertainment department, over at TV City, Television City, which is on Beverly Boulevard. I started out on Sunset Boulevard, 6121 Sunset, and I believe that is why my office is there because I used to look around, look at the area and say, "If I could get an office, I would do my own thing eventually." There were ceilings, there were glass ceilings at CBS. Here I am now in my thirties, I'm sure by now. And every time I tried to get a job and move up and get promoted and wanted to do PR, "Oh no. You can be a secretary, you can be this, but you can't be that." It was another no thing. And there was a big article, a major article in the L.A. Times that I'm so proud of. It says, "I got tired of knocking on doors so I opened my own." After five years with CBS, I took a leave of absence to pursue my career in public relations. I took classes at UCLA, ended up teaching classes at UCLA. I always liked going to school, I always liked learning. Even in Philadelphia, like I didn't finish at Temple University or anything like that, but I graduated from the Charles Morris Price School of Advertising [and Journalism]. So I would go to school at night, there again, back to Philly with my sister and how important she was in my life. So out here, my daughter was working. And even though I was doing this part-time thing at the Speakeasy, working during the day in CBS and during my Media Night, my daughter would come there with her books. I didn't have the same extended family out here on the West Coast like I had in Philly, but I made it work. She knew to meet me and she knew to be with me and she went everywhere with me or I could trust her to be at home, to do her homework. We lived in a secure apartment building over there on Mentone Avenue in Culver City.

WHITE

So you were the Media Coordinator at CBS and you moved up to Press Information Officer?

TOBIN

Well, no. I started out as the Press Information Officer in KCBS at 6121 Sunset.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

That's where I got hired in 1979 with Phyllis Kirk Bush. She was at the local station being the media relations manager. I forget her title now, but press manager, whatever she was. But I was her assistant.

WHITE

Okay, and then you moved to media coordinator.

TOBIN

Then I moved to log editor.

WHITE

Log editor.

TOBIN

Yeah.

WHITE

Okay.

TOBIN

Where I learned to write the little lines about Saturday Night Fever, dance fever and John Travolta, whatever was appearing on CBS. If you look in your TV Guide, the little blurb, I used to write those.

WHITE

Oh did you really?

TOBIN

So I just knew I could be a writer and do all that stuff. You'd pick up TV Guide, I'd say "I wrote that little line." It was good training because you didn't write a whole bio, you didn't write a whole paragraph, but the training that I got from Phyllis Kirk Bush and Mary Kellogg Jocelyn, and Linda Taubenreuther — I

mean, there are so many other people that I still talk to, that are still at CBS. You know the twenty-year, thirty-year people, they are still there. They were such great mentors and so helpful. I look back now and see all the things that I've learned and how many people have helped me in my life and I'm just blessed. I'm truly blessed.

WHITE

Interesting. You know, as the media coordinator, they then gave you some responsibility in terms of dealing directly with the press yourself and coordinating press conferences?

TOBIN

I think as a media coordinator, if I'm correct, this is when I went to TV [Television] City and I had to coordinate the, or was I the entertainment coordinator? I can't remember what my title was by the time I went to TV City, but the press department where I started out—I think I was administrative assistant to the manager of press relations or press department with Phyllis Kirk Bush—that is where I got to get the experience of writing for TV Guide, when I became a log editor in that department. Mary Kellogg was in charge of the production for the TV commercials and spots and promos see, but Phyllis Kirk Bush was still the print side. In TV Guide, if you saw somebody like a Pat O'Brien or Connie Chung in an interview in the L.A. Times—Alene McMann, I think that was her name at the L.A. Times. She was a big time something. I have to get her correct title. But between Phyllis Kirk Bush with the print side and handling the talent and getting her bios and press releases out, then Mary Kellogg with the production side, she produced the promos and the spots for specials—If you see a special on Connie Chung or something, somebody had to create the little teaser, the little promo that you would see, "And coming up tonight is—" And I had to learn to make sure they aired properly. Once I got into log editor, you had to log these promos so that they would air and tease the program that is coming out the next day. If you make a mistake and tease something that aired last Sunday, you have to go in and fix it.

WHITE

I see. Okay.

TOBIN

So I didn't want to do that job too long because no matter where you were, they would call you up, the people, the technical guys would call you up and say, "Well, Pat, I have this promo out here but it says next week and the show is tomorrow." So you were always on call. Ah! And you had to be right, make no mistakes, because there's people paying for this time and commercials and all that. Everything had to be right. So I did that for a while and then I moved over to the entertainment division. Oh God! What was his name! Let me think. Harvey Sheppard? Who else? Ann Kalman, she used to run marathons. I loved her. And I admired her too. I remember her running in and out. She was head of the entertainment division or something. Harvey Sheppard and some other people were really head of it but she was one of the top managers. She would run in with her books. I mean, I just had all these mentors, and Paula Barcelona and Janet Hopkins Levine is now an executive with, I think HBO in New York. I mean, if I ever got a reunion together of all these people it would be the who's who in entertainment and politics and business. Because I think back of all these people that I've met in my life and my past. I remember when Janet Levine— Because she was one of the people at CBS too. She was one of these managers. When she was leaving to go to New York, she had one of these break linen shelves or cabinet, a bookcase or whatever, and I bought that from her and I still have it today. Didn't buy any new furniture.

WHITE

So many mentors and contacts. Now do you recall— When you moved to the entertainment division, this was after you were the log editor?

TOBIN

Right.

WHITE

And what did you do in the entertainment division?

TOBIN

That's where we had to ship the promos. Somebody would produce those promos and I remember learning about freelance, what freelance meant. There was a guy named Tom—I can't remember Tom's last name—but he was a freelance guy. He would help produce those commercials, or produce those

promos, and then they had to be shipped to New York and to the two hundred affiliates. They had the co-op on commercials and promos and shows. I mean, I just got to learning about all the different affiliates, more than two hundred affiliates. I talked to a woman in St. Louis at one of the CBS affiliates and ended up being one of her best friends after we got to go to conventions. We would go to the [National Association of] Black Journalists convention. Anybody who was black, that worked on TV or print, you got to know. So I got to develop a lot of friendships through that. One of my best friends, Pam Moore, she's like one of my best friends and she was an anchor here with Tony Cox in Los Angeles at CBS back in '83. That's when I left CBS, when they were coming in. And we all still remained best of friends today because we worked through the Black Journalists and we have events and I'm still doing PR and marketing. So when I took a leave of absence from CBS in 1983—

WHITE

In '83?

TOBIN

Because I opened my own doors in '84. I took a leave of absence to pursue my career in public relations, because sure I could work at CBS and still be there twenty years, but I was always an entrepreneur. I had that entrepreneurial spirit. There's got to be something else for me and I wanted to make money. I had a daughter to raise. Speaking of my daughter, when she became of age to go to college, she wanted to go to USC [University of Southern California], the most expensive school out here. I said, "What's wrong with UCLA?" So we would joke about it, because here I'm taking classes at UCLA and I'm a so-called Bruin and she was a Trojan and she would come home with these buttons. "Mom, sell the house, I want to go to USC," and all this stuff. She ended up going to USC, but I used my connections. I wrote to a few people that knew me and would send me letters of recommendations. I didn't have a big fat sixty thousand dollar budget, or whatever it took back then, for her to go to college. I wrote to people like Bob Farrell, who was a [Los Angeles City] Councilman at the time, Robert Farrell. That was his area, and I had been involved in local community stuff and working at CBS, so people knew me. So when my daughter got an opportunity to go to college, I just wrote some

letters and people helped. So of course she got a student loan and I think she's still paying, because we didn't have money.

WHITE

But she attended USC, I'm sure.

TOBIN

She is. She went to USC and she majored in mass communications. I had no idea she'd be interested in public relations and here she is today, the director of PR, director of publicity at ABC.

WHITE

Oh that's terrific! That's terrific. Now you mentioned a moment ago that, of course, you continually exercise your entrepreneurial spirit, and that you were very interested in moving up the food chain, so to speak, at CBS, but in the interim you moonlighted at the Speakeasy. Tell me a little bit about that.

TOBIN

That was a fun thing to do. Actually, it started as a direct project related to my job at CBS. Jim Hill, the sportscaster, was being honored. You know how you go into the community and these different clubs and organizations would have you come over and get a plaque for your work in the community? So Jim Hill, our sportscaster at CBS, was being honored. Why, I saw an opportunity. I said, "Jim, rather than just go over there and pick up your plaque, lets put together an event. Let's make it an event." I was always event driven, event oriented. Back to Gladys Knight and the Pips at the Cherry Hill Latin Casino, back to that event. I think about that. Anyway, Jim Hill, I said, "Jim, let me do this." And he knew I was a hard worker, I was a good person and actually, I even got involved with helping him with his wedding when he married Denise Nicholas.

WHITE

Really?

TOBIN

It was at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. It was a sit-down dinner with about eight hundred people. It was fabulous, Darryl Strawberry and I can't remember, Alex Haley, everybody in the world was there. But anyway, Jim

was getting this award from this club, this West Hollywood night club and they were honoring him at the Speakeasy. I was working as a log editor or either the press relations department. So I had a direct relationship with the talent and the people on air. It was my job to help make them look good in the community or write something about them or get them in the press. So I went to Mary Kellogg. I said, "Mary, if you don't mind, Jim is being honored at the Speakeasy. And why don't we make this an event and write something about it. 'Jim Hill receives blah, blah, blah.'" Because I always loved writing little blurbs and getting stuff in the newspaper. Actually I was published before I came to California. I wrote an article for the Daily News. A friend of mine got killed and I was moved and I wrote an article for him. It was published in the Daily News in Philly. Anyway, back to the Speakeasy.

WHITE

Now, just for clarity's sake, just for the record. Speakeasy is a West Hollywood night club on Santa Monica Boulevard.

TOBIN

West Hollywood night club on Santa Monica Boulevard. And I mean, back in the day, back in the eighties, the late seventies and the early eighties, it was the place to be. You didn't worry about gang-banging. It was an upscale, West Hollywood night club. I mean Roger [E.] Mosley, you name them. When I started Media Night there— As a result of Jim Hill and CBS and what we were doing for Jim, I started something called Media Night and we had Stevie Wonder and John [W.] Mack from the [Los Angeles] Urban League and every kind of female group or male group or club or sorority or people from out of town. That's where my Philly reunion got started, because people were coming to L.A and "I'm from Philly! I'm from Philly!" And I'd be on the microphone as Ms. Emcee, hosting my Media Night. "I'm Pat Tobin from Philly. Hey! I'm from Philly!" So we started our Philly reunion thing and that helped me with a lot of contacts, because people would spread the word around the country. You know, back in the years when we had the drum— Well, honey, word of mouth. You cannot beat word of mouth. "Girl, when you go to Philly, look up Pat Tobin of Media Night." People, years and years later, they tell me, "Girl, I used to come to Media Night because everybody would tell me about looking you up."

WHITE

Really? My goodness! And you were coordinating this one night a week.

TOBIN

Just one night a week. It was Thursday night. Thursday night was Media Night. One of the big successes of Media Night, we had this big, heavy, dark-skinned, strong, black man who would cook some food. His name is Jimmy. Jimmy made barbecue ribs, barbecue chicken, potato salad. I mean, we had a meal. And there were starving actors and people trying to get in the entertainment out here, trying to be cute, didn't have no food hardly. And they were coming to Happy Hour and all. They would come. It was free from five [o'clock] to eight or five to nine. You didn't have to pay to get in the club, the food was free, but you bought your drinks. So the bar owner, the club owner, made his money because people would buy drinks. I mean, the bar tab could get up to a thousand dollars or more. I mean, a few years a go it was a lot of money. He, the owner's name, was David [Curtin]. David was my buddy. He let me do Media Night for ten years.

WHITE

Ten years?

TOBIN

Ten years, every Thursday night was Media Night for ten years and the only reason I stopped it— It was so much fun, I was networking, meeting people and doing my little Oprah [Winfrey] thing. Long before Oprah, I was doing Media Night. So Oprah, I was out there before you, at this club hosting Media Night. My business started to take off, because you remember now, I'm on my own now and I'm trying to build my business. I started to get good clients and I started to get real busy and I started to travel, so I had to stop Media Night.

WHITE

So was Media Night lucrative for you financially?

TOBIN

Not as much. He owned the club and I may have gotten a little stipend once a month for expenses, but that's where I met my business partner. I didn't have

a business partner out here when I was working on my own until I met this woman Bonnie. Bonnie [Bonita] Coleman, from the Speakeasy. She was producing a newsletter for the Speakeasy. She was very bright when it came to computers. She was wonderful. So we teamed up and she came to work for me part-time when I started my own business. But she ended up marrying a client! Bishop [H. Hartford] Brookins! Oh that's another story.

WHITE

Your partner married a client? I'm sure that was quite interesting.

TOBIN

That was interesting. So she decided to relinquish her little piece of the business that I gave her. But one of the things she was smart about doing—where everything that I accomplished with the Spike Lee and all these other things that I've done—she would, when they wrote about her getting married to Bishop Brookins in Jet [magazine]—Jesse Jackson was at the wedding and Governor Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary. It was a big wedding in Little Rock, Arkansas, because Bishop Brookins was this African American AME [African Methodist Episcopal] Bishop and he was known all over the world, all over Africa, everybody. When he was marrying this woman—He was divorced from his first wife, so when he was marrying this young lady that was my business partner, the wedding was a big to-do and all these people flew to Little Rock. We were all in the wedding. I still have a picture now, sitting up on the shelf at home. I have to bring the picture so that you can see the people that were in the wedding. But it was a wonderful event. But Bonnie, we called her Bonnie, her name was Bonita Coleman. Back to Bonnie, while she was doing her work for the Speakeasy part-time, she helped me to launch my business really. Because I opened an office, but I knew nothing about computers and database and all of that. So we were really good as partners, because I had all the people skills, of course, going out, networking, meeting people. And she was very attractive and shy and she was real good with the computers. So we were a great team.

WHITE

Absolutely. It sounds like a good partnership.

TOBIN

Until she met Bishop H.H. Brookins.

WHITE

Since she's so shy.

TOBIN

Then she became his wife, and I didn't have a partner anymore. I was like "What?"

WHITE

Oh no! So tell me now, your last days or, say, the last year at CBS. What was that like for you as you were thinking of moving on.

TOBIN

I couldn't wait to get out the door. I couldn't wait to get out, even though I loved being there and I used to always say, "There's life after CBS." Because we, the black employees— There was a CBS employee's organization for everybody. But the African Americans, Frank Dawson and a bunch of us, we started in 1979 I think it was, the BEA, the Black Employees Association. Because we had certain goals and certain needs and they just weren't being addressed, in our opinion, in the overall CBS employee's group. So we started our own. And it was very positive. We had a woman named Sheila [Clark], Sheila. Sheila, who is now in New York. She ended up working for Dow, where did she go to work? Oh lord! Federal, FDA— She worked for some major companies and now we still see each other when we travel around the country. We talk about our days at CBS. She worked for CBS in New York. She was the sort of like the HR [human resources] person to put on the career counseling seminars. And her job—I guess it was diversity long before they would even talk about diversity—it was her job to motivate the African American employees, not just African American, but to get us ready, and to take her classes and seminars, and get us ready for moving forward. Because we would wonder why we could never move forward, "Well maybe you need this. Maybe you need that. Maybe you need this training." So we took all that and some of us still didn't move forward. So that's when I went out and tried to get jobs in PR firms and they just weren't hearing it. "Oh you can be Warren

Cowan 's secretary." Rogers and Cowan. A big firm. As a secretary? I've been there and done that.

WHITE

So you took a leave of absence from CBS.

TOBIN

Leave of absence. That way, I got along well, I probably could have gone back if I wanted to, but I wanted an opportunity to try and make it out there. And if I couldn't make it, I still wanted to be able to go back. So we had this sabbatical thing. For educational purposes you could take a leave and go to school. Because CBS paid 80 percent of your tuition if you were going to school, and I was taking classes at UCLA.

WHITE

Oh, did they really?

TOBIN

Yes. So CBS helped a great deal because you got dental plan, you got all these wonderful benefits, you got an investment where you invest and for every dollar you save, they save two or match your dollars in savings programs that they had set up. So there were a lot of advantages of working there. So it was a big, big step to leave all that security, but I just didn't want to sit there for the rest of my life at a desk and not do what I wanted to do. Sure you got the comfort and the security of a job and benefits, but you want to be in PR, you want to represent clients. You want to travel, you want to be in entertainment. You want to do all these things and the right job just wasn't there for me for some reason. I couldn't be head of CBS entertainment division or whatever.

WHITE

Not at that point in time anyway.

TOBIN

Not at that point in time, and now I consult with all these people.

WHITE

I'm sure you do. I'm sure they're all very familiar with you and your work and your organization. And I'm sure, the fact that you were sponsoring the Media Nights at Speakeasy, that built up your confidence and built up your network of clients.

TOBIN

That helped a great deal. Contacts, people like John Mack. Back to the Jim Hill night, he made me look so good, Jim Hill, because he allowed me to, he said, "Okay, here's my list. Here's my people, invite them." And he had relationships with all these people and I told Mary Kellogg, I said, "I don't want to do anything wrong. I want to do this invitation, do this thing nicely and have your blessing. She said, "Okay. It's for our guy, as long as you don't abuse the time at work, put together the event. We had Darryl Strawberry. We had Alex Haley. We had Connie Chung. Everybody came. I mean, it was a major event. I have pictures from that. It was wonderful. So the owner David said to me "Oh! This is wonderful. Can you do this for me on a regular basis?" I said, "Look. You're not going to get Pat O'Brien and Connie Chung and Jim Hill up here every week. But what I could do for you is start a Media Night. Because I'm from back East, where we always had some place to go after work." We always had a bar or club or restaurant. We always did that. So out here, because it was so vast and sprawling and people were scattered all over the place, you didn't have any real communities, any sense of community so you can get to know people. Because if you lived in Pasadena, what are the chances of my meeting you—you, Dr. White—if you're in Pasadena and I'm in Culver City?

WHITE

That's right. What would be the incentive?

TOBIN

What would be the incentive? Then when you work and go home and you have a kid, you don't do as much networking. So I provided a forum where we could network and meet people and do business and hobnob. So Jim's event was such a huge success, with all the celebrities and all the stars. So the owner asked me to do something like that on a regular basis. So I knew I needed to supplement my income. I said, "Well if I do this, coordinate this Media

"Night"— We were going to call it Media Night, because I worked for CBS television and I didn't want it to not be job related. So it was Media Night, where people might get to know people in the media. It helped me a great deal. Oh, there's not anybody that I don't know and didn't know me. "Yeah. Pat Tobin hosts Media Night, and besides, they have good barbecue chicken and ribs up there at the Speakeasy on Santa Monica Boulevard." So I did that for ten years.

WHITE

Ten years!

TOBIN

When was that? I got a news clipping or something from when Jim Hill did that. It was in, let's see, I came out here in '77, did that, started in CBS in '79. It was like '80, '81, and I did it until almost early nineties or something like that.

WHITE

Okay. My goodness! That is terrific because we don't have very many places like that in Los Angeles today. Just a few.

TOBIN

Even today. It is always very successful. People didn't have to worry about getting shot. Eventually the crowds started getting louder when they were leaving. It is a very nice residential area around there. I forget the street, but it is right off of Santa Monica, La Cienega, Santa Monica Boulevard. It is a very nice neighborhood. So when you leave the club at night, twelve, one o'clock, you have to be quiet. It started getting noisy. So the neighbors started complaining about the noise, because some people were louder than others and then pretty soon, the guy just kind of—either he lost his lease or whatever—but the club just kind of, he lost his interest in it. Then, I see today, somebody else has taken over and it is called something else. I mean, the building is still there but it is not what it used to be.

WHITE

Right. Absolutely. I've passed by it a couple of times. After I learned of your affiliation with it, I began to look at it a little differently and was real excited about hearing what you did there.

TOBIN

Oh, it was the place to be. And what I would do was, one Thursday night would be LABE, black employees from Xerox. I think they were called LABE, I can't remember the acronym [Los Angeles Black Employees of Xerox]. But I'd have Xerox, I'd have CBS employees, I had ABC. Every Thursday was a different theme, a different group, and it was community related, it was media related and it was always a huge success.

WHITE

Great networking opportunity for everyone there.

TOBIN

That's why people call me the queen of networking. Even now they start, "Girl, I remember you from the Speakeasy. You used to host that. Why don't you do that again?" So that's another thing, the Speakeasy reunion.

WHITE

Why don't you do that again?

TOBIN

I will. It is just the time.

WHITE

The time commitment, sure.

TOBIN

I want to bring the Speakeasy reunion back. The Philly reunion, the Speakeasy reunion, the Speakeasy Media Night, but the Philly reunion. It was called Media Night and that's why it was so successful because at Media Night, you could either meet somebody who is in media or either television or entertainment or something and deals were made. People got husbands and met husbands and networked and I'm just being the hostess with the mostest, still alone, nobody.

WHITE

But enjoying it, probably most of all.

TOBIN

That's what people say, "You're still single! You never met anybody up there at Media Night?" I was too busy hosting Media Night to find anybody. I remember running into some good-looking guys later and they said, "Oh yeah! We used to come to Media Night, but you never had time. You were so busy on the microphone and networking." You know, I was running, "Hi! Hi!" So I probably missed a few opportunities.

WHITE

Being the socialite huh? Hum, interesting. So when you stepped out on your own from CBS, you took a leave of absence. You knew exactly what you wanted to do, correct?

TOBIN

Exactly.

WHITE

And I understand that you basically started your own business at your kitchen table on your own.

TOBIN

Kitchen table in Culver City, 3841 Mentone Avenue, with the typewriter. My daughter used to say, "Get that typewriter off the table! Get that filing cabinet out of the kitchen!" But see, because when we moved out here from Philly, our intention was to be independent anyway, have our own business. Remember Joe Duckett was the boyfriend, the fiancé who was going to help me start launching my own business? So we were set up anyway to be independent, but then when things started turning around and either he decided to leave or we just didn't have enough money— Because he used a lot of his resources, financial resources, to bring us to L.A, to set us up to live. I mean, he spent a lot of money. I think he told me he liquidated like fifty-thousand dollars of his assets because he had property and he had stocks and he was a smart business man. That's why I thought, "Sure it would work." But you can't always work with your fiancé.

WHITE

That's true. That makes it very difficult, or friends sometimes.

TOBIN

Sometimes it is very hard.

WHITE

Yes.

TOBIN

And I think that's kind of what happened with Bonnie—back to the partner that I had—when she decided to get married to one of our clients. He lived on Mulholland Drive. He had a beautiful home and they fell in love and blah, blah, blah, but the marriage lasted what? Twelve months, sixteen months?

WHITE

Oh, is that all? Oh my goodness! That is too bad.

TOBIN

And here I was looking to build a company together where we could just grow and expand. Tobin & Associates. Then I changed the name to Tobin— It wasn't Tobin & Associates. It was P.T. Enterprises or Tobin, I can't remember, or Tobin and Coleman because she used to say, "Oh you've got to change the name." So now I'm back to Tobin & Associates, because once I changed to Tobin and Coleman and she decided to get married and leave, she didn't care about the business anymore. But this has been my dream, my life, my you know.

WHITE

That must have been difficult. So actually, when you made the decision to leave CBS, she was in the picture at the time.

TOBIN

Yes, because we had been friends through the Speakeasy.

WHITE

Through the Speakeasy and so you guys decided to—

TOBIN

For ten years, doing this Media Night, I got to know her through the Speakeasy, so we were buddies. She did the newsletter and I'd come up every week with my little project, what I'm doing this week and they'd put it in the Speakeasy newsletter. I mean, they had a newsletter that you would pick up. They really had it going on. It was a hot spot, very efficient. David, I see him— And I know he had a few heart attacks so I'm hoping he's okay, hoping he is still alive. And one of the young ladies, God, what's her name that used to work there? Her uncle or husband, somebody, owned the Whisky A Go-Go, the Roxy up on Sunset. Everybody had some connection. It was like Coreen. Coreen was the other young lady, and these were white young ladies, these weren't black folks.

WHITE

Do you recall Coreen's last name?

TOBIN

No. But she was one that either the Whiskey A-Go-Go people were her— But I have old newsletters from the Speakeasy. I'll go through all that.

WHITE

Okay. So what was your vision when you left CBS? What did you envision your entrepreneurial venture? How was it to look? Where were you going to place yourself, your office facilities and who were going to be your clients?

TOBIN

I either wanted to be a big executive. I really was looking for an executive position at a PR firm, the Rogers and Cowan, a V.P. of Account Relations or something. But that just wasn't happening. There were just no real jobs paying you six figures or whatever I was looking for. So I really just felt, "Well, I'm not going to get the kind of job I want. These people aren't hiring and I'm getting frustrated and I know I can do this. So I'm just going to start my own business." I already had my own business in Philly, but it was more like a hobby. Because I always worked. I always had a job. So when you work full time and you try to have a business, somewhere along the line you have to do one or the other. You can't do both, because something is going to go lacking.

So when I started feeling like "I don't want to work. I want to own my business. I want to be an entrepreneur." But I'm working. I'm working real hard. Harder, but it is much more rewarding, because it is for me. You work so many hours and— Oh, this is the part I forgot! My last raise, back to CBS. You get these raises every year, cost of living. My last raise averaged, I think it was fifteen dollars a week. And Paley, I think his name was Bill [William S.] Paley, the then CEO, president of CBS, he had seventeen million dollars after taxes! After taxes he had millions! I said, what is wrong with this picture? Let me go and do something else. I was always very conscious of that kind of thing too. If I'm working this hard every day and still don't have enough money, something is wrong.

WHITE

Something is wrong with that picture certainly.

TOBIN

And I still don't have enough. You never seem to have enough unless you're just a multimillionaire.

WHITE

At least it's your own business now.

TOBIN

At least I can do certain things. If I want to get a little suit made every now and then, if I want to travel, go to Hawaii every now and then— I still have a daughter and a grandson that I help and look out for and make sure— If they need my assistance, I'm there for them. So I don't go overboard, but it's different when you work for yourself.

WHITE

Sure, sure. You get gratification.

TOBIN

Yeah. Your last raise is fifteen dollars. Fifteen dollars?

WHITE

Oh, that's really interesting. That is certainly a motivating factor, particularly seeing the disparity between yourself and the people that were running the organization.

TOBIN

Oh, and I just got tired. See, coming from the East Coast, very aggressive, very outgoing, if you were qualified and talented, you would get a job. They were going to give you the right position. But this business of not getting in entertainment, not getting what you want. I said, "Enough of this. I'm going to open my own office."

WHITE

Right. Absolutely.

TOBIN

Right up the street from CBS.

WHITE

Oh that's right! [mutual laughter] That's right. So who was your first client?

TOBIN

Well, I had such good friends that— I remember Cynthia Mitchell, a good friend of mine, who was working with Roger Mosley and he was on Magnum, P.I. So I remember sharing that project with her, helping her do some PR for Roger Mosley. Then I remember Hal Williams. Hal Williams was on Private Benjamin, 227, Sanford, and Magnum, P.I. [and the film version of Private Benjamin]. Hal Williams was a client and we still talk today. And I did a lot of community stuff, Brotherhood Crusade and a lot of community groups—and most or predominantly all black groups and organizations, because who else is going to hire a young struggling PR person from Philadelphia?

WHITE

What would you do for them? Write press releases and—?

TOBIN

Go back to my same experience that I used in Philadelphia to help PUSH get their communications get out there. I would write a press release, get

something placed in the community newspapers and black papers, promote somebody. If somebody was a furniture maker and they could make a great cabinet, well, I would tell the world, "Oh, you got to meet so and so!" Everybody who did something wonderful and good, I was a walking commercial.

WHITE

And advocate.

TOBIN

And advocate. And then I belonged to organizations like Black Women's Network. I've been a member of that group since I got out here. I continue to network and join groups and organizations and churches. I always affiliate myself with the church. I think one of the churches I used to go all of the time was James Cleveland's church. When I moved to Culver City, I used to get on the bus and go down there, go to James Cleveland's church to hear that good gospel music. So belonging to church and community groups and organizations and making friends at work and just staying on top of things.

WHITE

Excellent. Well, I think on that note we are going to go ahead and end the interview for today.

TOBIN

Thank you, Dr. White.

**1.5. TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE
FEBRUARY 18, 2002**

WHITE

We've been learning some really fascinating things about you in your early childhood and in your initial career and all the inroads that you made in Philadelphia. Then having come here and working for CBS and working over at the Speakeasy, and doing your Media Night there. All the contacts and the inroads that you made with folks, that you would later do business with, and how you just have sort of developed yourself into one of the most prominent African American public relations experts in Los Angeles. So that's where we

want to start. The last time we spoke, at the end of our interview we talked about some of your initial clients. I know that you started your business off in your home, on your kitchen table, with your typewriter and your file cabinet and your daughter over in Culver City. Initially you had worked with individuals such as Roger E. Mosley, who was at the time on *Magnum, P.I.* and then you mentioned Hal Williams from the show *227*. So can you just talk a little bit about your first clients, just from there, just in terms of, say, working with those two individuals, how Williams and Roger Mosley— What was it like? What did you start off doing with them? Did you just sit with them and find out what their needs were and how you could fulfill those needs? What were the detailed steps that you used initially in your career?

TOBIN

Well, first of all, Renee, it was through networking that I got an opportunity to work with Roger Mosley. His publicist was a young lady by the name of Cynthia, Cynthia Mitchell. Cynthia and I were good friends and she used to party at the Speakeasy. That Speakeasy was really a gathering place for professionals, African American professionals in media and entertainment. Through Cynthia— She realized that I had certain strengths and she had certain strengths and together we would joint venture on the Roger Mosley project. So Cynthia was actually his publicist, but I got to work with him, working with Cynthia, because there were certain events and activities, and press releases and photographs that needed to be distributed. We could write the press release and send it out. So we kind of teamed up and it was exciting. Roger wanted to make sure that certain people knew him because of his role on *Magnum, P.I.* But he was very involved in the community, and every chance we got to write about something he was doing in the African American community— He'd come and speak to students and he had a special program in Watts that I'm not too familiar with, but Cynthia knew more about that than I did. Whenever he was doing something in the community we always made sure we wrote about it. So writing a press release, sending out a photo and just documenting of the good work that Roger was doing in the community. So that was mainly what we did for him.

WHITE

Okay. Just to get his name out and to give him a little bit more notoriety outside of his experience in the television industry.

TOBIN

Right and even today people still need that, particularly African Americans. They do a lot of good work. If they are on a certain show, you know about them being on that show, but you don't know about the work they do in the community. So part of our job is to get that information out. And Hal Williams— The same with Hal. Hal, a real philanthropist, gave a lot to students and education, and people weren't aware of that. So Hal Williams, being on 227 and Private Benjamin and all those shows— Sending out his photo, writing a press release whenever he was signing autographs or doing something in the community. There was one thing that Hal did in particular that we really enjoyed, he gave a scholarship event every year. Well, he used to do it annually, sort of like a breakfast, and he would give door prizes and give money to students who were aspiring to go to college, because I think he lost one of his sons in some accident while his son was a student in college. As a result, Hal made sure that he always gave back to education.

WHITE

Excellent. Now, do you feel that for individuals—well, at that point in time, individuals that were pretty prominent in television—was the PR campaign to advance their career in that industry or was it just to sort of build character in the community?

TOBIN

I think a combination of things: build character and advance their career, because when you pick up a newspaper— Maybe you don't watch the particular show, maybe you don't watch 227 or Private Benjamin. Maybe you didn't see any of those shows but you read about an actor who is doing some wonderful things in the community. You may want him to come speak for your group. You may want him to come to UCLA and speak to students. And when you read about them, then you know, well, they're available. They are out there doing this kind of thing so it is good. It's just good PR. It's good to read about what they are doing on the positive side. Because certainly you and I

know how the media works sometimes and if you were to do something really, really bad, it would be all over the paper.

WHITE

Absolutely.

TOBIN

So you never get enough exposure when you are doing something good and we always like to highlight the good things that these guys were doing.

WHITE

Okay. Good. Terrific, terrific. Now, let's see now, at this time, at the beginning of your career—I know that you have a daughter—and at the beginning of your career, if I'm not mistaken, she was just getting out of high school. Is that correct?

TOBIN

Yes. Yes.

WHITE

What was she doing at the time? Can you describe what was happening in your home in terms of the mother-daughter relationship and her having gone through adolescence and what have you. What was happening with you on a personal level?

TOBIN

Let's talk about Lauren Tobin. Let's talk about Lauren Tobin, apple of my eye. First of all, I just called her on my way here today and we always chat, just about every day when it's possible. Lauren was twelve years old when we moved to Los Angeles, and of course, I think I told you the story about how she cried all the way out here until she got off the plane. But a twelve year old living in a L.A., going to school with all the—First of all, she went to Le Lycée Français [de Los Angeles], the French school of Los Angeles, and she did a few years there and she loved it. She could speak French. But as I said, moving, growing up, the fiancé who brought us out here had left, so it was just the two of us. You remember at this point it was just mom and daughter. So we were very, very close and, back to that Speakeasy event that I talked about, she

would even go up there with her books with me after school, because I didn't want to leave her at home. It was a restaurant and a night club, so she could sit in the corner and do her homework. But it was a challenge because she is a young, attractive young lady and she saw me being busy and active and on the go and many times she just had to go with me. There was just no excuse. It wasn't sitting home and watching TV or something like that. You are with me so I know where you are and I know what's going on. So one of the things I admired about Lauren, she was very open and receptive to new ideas about helping her mom. I said, maybe you ought to get a job. She was twelve, thirteen years old. She worked for TeleCredit after school. She worked after school and the reason she got hired at an age so young is she was very helpful at home, working out of my kitchen, on my kitchen table in Culver City. She had to answer the phone. She had to take messages and she had to do it very accurately and correctly and spell names. So this helped her a great deal, little did she know, helping her mom, with my home business, helped to launch her career in terms of being a professional. She was very good at answering phones and very articulate in taking messages and getting information right. So she worked part-time. She worked at TeleCredit in Century City, and it was interesting for a twelve, thirteen year old. She got to interview people about their credit card or something and one of the people that she worked with, her supervisor was, was it Francis Ford Coppola's son? A young son. There were two young men that were her friends and both of these guys, their dads were major producers in the entertainment industry, and even today she still keeps in touch. She had been in touch with these guys—and I'm almost sure it was Francis Ford Coppola's son, but I'll verify that information. It was a guy named Steven Brown and somebody Coppola. So these two guys were her friends and they were just admiring this young lady, working so young and being so intelligent and smart at such a young age. But going to that French school of L.A. and then moving on to Notre Dame [Academy] and graduating from Notre Dame— Because she didn't finish at Lycée Français. It was very expensive and I had gone through some hardship so she ended up her senior year graduating from Notre Dame Academy in Culver City, on Overland. So she graduated there and went on to USC [University of Southern California], although mom always favored UCLA, but she went to USC.

WHITE

Okay, so she went to college right after high school.

TOBIN

Oh yeah. She went right on to college and that was a challenge too, because we had no money and certainly contacts helped and my being active and involved in the community. The councilman then was Bob [Robert] Farrell for that area of USC and I wrote him a letter. He knew me from being involved in the community and all the work that I had done. I said, "My daughter wants to go to USC. I have no money!" So he wrote a letter on her behalf and certainly her grades were good and she got accepted. She graduated, I guess it was '87. I think it was 1987.

WHITE

Okay. Terrific. Did she live on campus?

TOBIN

Oh no. She came home every day. She commuted. She worked even— Can't keep up with the jobs. I'll have to ask her but I'm sure she worked while she was in school. Yes, she did. She worked at Victoria's Secret. She worked at, oh my goodness, she's had a few jobs. She's always worked. I guess watching her mother work a full time job at CBS television, moonlighting part time at the Speakeasy with these celebrities and personalities and business people and community leaders, she saw that she had to measure up, or step up to the challenge and do what mom was doing. If I had laid around and watched soaps all day— Nothing is wrong with watching these things, but if I didn't have the energy and the wherewithal to do something, she probably wouldn't have wanted to do much either. But she saw me. There was no way you could sit at home and not help mom out.

WHITE

Absolutely. Now did you miss her when she went to college? I know you said she was working on her own, her part-time job—but I would imagine, when you were in the house and things got hectic, that she would be there to offer some semblance of support.

TOBIN

Oh yeah.

WHITE

After she went to college, I would imagine that changed.

TOBIN

We were like sisters really, because I'm a young mom. I like to think I'm a young mom. I was twenty-two when my daughter was born. We were very close and we would talk to each other about everything and, yes, the part—I guess the only thing I really remember being a real detriment to me is when she decided that, okay, I'm in college and I'm grown— Oh she worked at [T.G.I.] Friday's too, part-time, and this is where she met this boyfriend, this one boyfriend that she decided she wanted to kind of spend some time with, more time than I wanted her too. [mutual laughter] Or more time than I thought she should be able to spend. So this boyfriend, she decided maybe it was time to stay away from home a little bit more and spend more time with him. That was hard at first, but we kept in touch and she didn't leave completely. but she was gone a lot. If it's someone that you have had around all these years and all of a sudden she is not there anymore, as much as you would like her to be— But she was coming in to her own womanhood, college graduate, or getting ready to graduate from college, working part-time or working in the evenings. So that was hard for me to realize that she was becoming a woman, making her own choices, deciding what she wants to— Even now it's hard for me! She's thirty-six years old! I'm still trying to be the mom that wants to know everything. But yeah, it's interesting.

WHITE

I just wanted to know what it was like for you on the personal front as you were launching this career. So you continued working there, in the house, and your daughter was moving about and finding her way. Who were some of your next clients? I know that you dealt with Spike Lee. He was one of your first. Now was he one of the clients that you had when you were in the apartment?

TOBIN

Oh no. By this time I had an office. Let's see, when we were in Culver City in the apartment, I was doing a lot of this stuff. This was in the early stages in Culver City, when we moved to L.A. in '77. Inglewood, for sure we stayed a few months in Inglewood and then we moved to Culver City in an apartment.

Okay, by the time we moved out of Culver City, we went to Hazelhurst in the [San Fernando] Valley. Hazelhurst. We had a lovely loft apartment on Hazelhurst, in North Hollywood.

WHITE

And what was the impetus for this move?

TOBIN

A young lady moved with us from Philadelphia, who was like a daughter to me. She was like a family, she was almost like my niece. She grew up with my daughter, Lauren, and she wanted to come out to— Stephanie [Clark], she wanted to come out to L.A. So she moved with us. It was kind of small in my apartment in Culver City. By this time things were getting a little better for me financially, so we moved to Hazelhurst in North Hollywood. So it was Lauren and Stephanie and myself. This is where Lauren was really growing up and getting out there and Stephanie— They were teenagers, well, young adults, and they were sort of like sisters for a while, and they went many places together. But this is where having two young ladies around was a real challenge, because they were both, I don't know, kind of vying for affection and attention and that kind of thing. So Stephanie and I got to be very, very close, because she would go a lot of places with me. By this time my daughter was tired of going to all these places and she decided she was doing her own thing. So Stephanie and I spent a lot of time together and she was more like a niece to me, I mean, more like a real daughter at that time. But I haven't seen her in a while, so things change. She's gone on to do other things now. But that is why we moved. We wanted a bigger place for both the young ladies to be comfortable.

WHITE

Did you actually set up an office? Did you have space for an office in this new place?

TOBIN

I'm trying to think. I got the office in 1984.

WHITE

No, in your home. You were still working in your home?

TOBIN

Oh, yeah. I've always worked out of my home. I didn't have much of an office by then, living in the North Hollywood apartment, because I think I took an office— When were the Olympics? In '84?

WHITE

Yes.

TOBIN

I had a small office. This is where the business really got started. I took a small office, the same office I am in now. I took one room, sort of, in a shared arrangement with a guy named Bill Thomas of Creative Image. Now that had to be in '84. That was in '84. So through the Speakeasy I had met my friend and later she became my partner, Bonnie, Bonnie Coleman. So we took an office, a small one-room. I think it was like I paid, I don't know, a few hundred dollars for one room, but we set that up and that's where I really started moving this stuff from home to an office because I was getting busy and it was starting to really grow.

WHITE

And so Bonnie Coleman— Was she also working out of her home at the same time and you were working out of your home?

TOBIN

Oh no. Bonnie and I met through the Speakeasy. She had been doing a lot of public relations for the Speakeasy night club. Bonnie handled the newsletter for the Speakeasy and that kind of thing, because I had information every week to go into my newsletter about what I was doing with Media Night. We got to be very, very good friends. She started seeing the kind of people that I was having as my guests for Media Night. It would be John [W.] Mack of the [Los Angeles] Urban League or it would be the black employees of Xerox. I had some interesting guests. I mean, as I said, Stevie Wonder and Larry McCormick and all those people had come to the Speakeasy when there was a special event or a special activity during Media Night. So Bonnie got to see that, by incorporating this information in the Speakeasy newsletter— So we got to be real good friends and that is how she came to work with me in Tobin &

Associates. Well, then it was Tobin—I can't even remember it—it became Tobin & Associates because it was Tobin and Coleman at one point. It was P.T. Enterprises I think. I can't remember all the names. I have to research those names for you. But finally, after Bonnie was no longer a partner, it went back to Tobin & Associates because it had been Tobin and Coleman for a minute.

WHITE

What was your thinking about partnership at that time? You had been working, for the most part, on your own. I know that you had lots of support from the gentleman that you were dating in Philadelphia and that sort of thing and you were sort of growing together in that vein. But thinking about a partnership, do you recall what your feelings were about that? Did you—

TOBIN

I had mixed emotions because it is like a marriage. You get excited at first, you think everything is going to be great and then you find out you have differences. People want to do things a certain way and here it's your baby and you think, "Well I want to do it this way!" Bonnie had great skills and she was really great on the computer and building a database for me. I mean, she really started all of that, putting everything on the computer. She was kind of shy, so she wasn't really outgoing and she didn't necessarily like to be around a lot of people, and this is a people business. So we had some challenges but we worked them out until she met and married one of our clients. [mutual laughter] She was married to the Bishop H. Hartford Brookins through a meeting. I will never forget this. I encouraged her to come back in town. She was out of town, it was a holiday weekend or something. I said, "You have to come back. We have a very important meeting at Bishop Brookins' home on Mulholland Drive." And she was not wanting to come back. Well, she got a chance to meet him, and I guess he was separated or something at the time, I'm not sure. Anyway, they became good friends and the rest is history. She ended up marrying him. But we had differences. I mean, there were things that I thought were important and she didn't think were so very important, and so eventually she realized that being a full-time partner in a PR firm wasn't what she really wanted anyway. But it helped her a great deal get the kind of exposure and notoriety she wanted, because she got to meet people that she probably wouldn't have normally met, working part-time at the

Speakeasy. And she got to sort of take on all the things I had accomplished. It became, "We did this," instead of "My partner Pat Tobin accomplished this." You know the Spike Lee, the Jesse Jackson, the celebrities, all of that stuff, all of my involvement. Whenever she wrote something she would write "We did this."

WHITE

It must have been a challenge.

TOBIN

That was one of the challenges. "You didn't do that! You weren't even around!" And she was real good at writing. That was another one of her skills. She was a good writer. She was able to turn this stuff around. I still saved the Jet magazine [with] her wedding to Bishop Brookins. We were all in the wedding. We flew to Little Rock, Arkansas and Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton were there, the governor of Arkansas. And I saved that Jet—I hope I can find it in my archive somewhere—because it wrote about Bonnie, the bride, and what she had done, and I was reading that stuff. It was me!

WHITE

Oh my goodness! That must have been quite a challenge, particularly to have it published in Jet magazine, about all the things she had accomplished.

TOBIN

Some of it she was probably a partner at the end, because she wasn't a partner very long. Like I said, she decided to get married not long after we started building our client base and working on projects.

WHITE

Really! So would you say, three months, six months, a year?

TOBIN

I'll have to, maybe a year or two. It could have been a year or two. But see, to me, when you have been doing something all these years, a year or two is no time, you know, to put in for something I have built a whole career, a life time.

WHITE

Absolutely. So your intention, when she—I don't know, when she stopped working at the Speakeasy, or what have you—when you moved out of your kitchen to this small office, it was your intention that you would both be dedicated full-time?

TOBIN

Build a business together and I'm not sure she kept the part-time, I don't think she kept the part-time status at the Speakeasy, because she was working only part-time at the Speakeasy anyways. I'm trying to think how that worked out. I would have to review that, but she decided she'd come into the office and work part-time in my office at first, that little office that we took on at first, until we grew. The accounts got busier and then I do believe she was there longer, more hours. But she always had certain hours that she would work and there were certain things that she had to do on her own that had to be done regardless. So that is where we really had a challenge because I was a workaholic and I probably still am. It was like all day, all the time, twenty-four hours a day, going to the events, still going to events, working on whatever project. She was, I guess, very organized and disciplined and she only had a certain amount of hours that she would do certain things and then the rest was her own time, which in a way is good. You got to have balance. I don't really have that. I need to work on that.

WHITE

Even at this point?

TOBIN

Even at this point. You have to help me with that.

WHITE

It would be my pleasure to do so. Absolutely.

TOBIN

I need to work on that because it is work, work, work, work, work, all the time.

WHITE

Yeah. It is really important to have that balance and down-time for Pat.

TOBIN

But see, the fun part of it though, even though it is hectic, my work is people. It's going to events. I mean, this weekend, I was working. I was at the Trumpet Awards in Las Vegas, at a viewing of the Trumpet Awards and a big dinner. I learned something new. The lieutenant governor of Colorado is a black man.

WHITE

Oh really!

TOBIN

And he was there. Yeah. I'm telling you, it was fabulous. So even though back then, working all the time and not being involved in a relationship kept me going. But then I did get involved again. We have to talk about the California guy that I dated for six years. Yeah. So Bonnie, after she married, I went back to just— How long did she stay in the business? I think she stayed a little while after the wedding but she knew it was going to be hard to be the wife of a Bishop and try to stay partner in a PR firm. So her duties as the first lady of the AME [African Methodist Episcopal] Church, became very— She became very active and she was real involved. So she traveled a great deal because the Bishop traveled everywhere, Africa. I forget where his territory was, Arkansas, everywhere. So he was quite busy. So she decided she really didn't have the time to put into the business.

WHITE

So what was your thinking then? You were in the throes of increasing your client base, had come to terms with, maybe the necessity to have a partner that maybe had some strengths in different areas. What was your thinking at this point? Did you feel like this was a setback for you?

TOBIN

I was devastated because, you think it's going to work out and then you find out it is not going to work out, and oh my God, who can I get now to keep up with the things that she was good at doing, the writing, the database, the contracts. She was real good. Smart business woman when it came to negotiating fees for projects or jobs you know. How much should we charge? And writing out the contracts. She was really good. She had a lot of good

strengths, setting all this up on the computer. Remember this is back in '84, so I knew very little about computers then. I guess I have to check my record, but I think I got someone else who became a very good dedicated, committed person that I thought was going to be around for awhile. But this young lady—I was just reading some notes—this young lady worked for a while and then she went on to do something else. So I guess this is the kind of job where people don't stay very long unless they own the business or are a serious committed partner. Because I did find another young lady who was very anxious to get involved in public relations and she worked with me during the time of Spike Lee, when we got Spike Lee as a client. Judy, as I called her, Judy, she was fun and she had been in, she had worked in the prison system. I guess she was what you call, what are you a ward or something? I don't know. Where you stay in and you watch the people. I don't know, security or something. And she was tired of that. She wanted a new career so she came to work in public relations which was very interesting for her and exciting.

WHITE

Quite a shift!

TOBIN

Big shift. But she was good with people and very outgoing and personable and would love to mingle and network. So on that hand she was good and she stayed for a couple of years and worked on the Spike Lee account, even got to travel. I remember Spike was over in Europe and I was invited to Iceland or somewhere—not Iceland, North Ireland or somewhere, and I didn't want to go or couldn't go and Judy went. But I do remember her bringing back a couple of gifts for me. She felt bad that I couldn't go, so she brought back a beautiful leather coat and all this stuff from Europe. So I was excited and happy that she had the chance to go. She worked with me for a few years on movie premieres and various projects and you just find new people along the way. You don't give up. You can't quit. I mean here is something that I built and I knew that I wanted to keep it going regardless, no matter if it was Bonnie or Judy or whomever, I just had to keep going when these people decided, "Well, this is not what I want to do for the long haul. I'm going somewhere else." Then Pat Tobin, okay, you have to keep going regardless. You have to find new people. You have to cultivate new relationships. You have to hone skills, sharpen skills,

get other people to step up to the plate and do things and hopefully grow the business. I always looked at Tobin & Associates as a company that would be around when my grandson [Aaron Michael Tobin Curry] wanted to work somewhere. If no one else gave him a job, he could run Tobin & Associates, and that's why I'm still at it. You know, at fifty-nine years old, almost fifty-nine, this month, at fifty-nine I want Tobin & Associates to be around. I want it to be here. And if some day, you know, my daughter is no longer at ABC television, which— Disney owns ABC— I certainly can't compete with her, because she does such a great job in the mainstream industry. I know one day she will really do well-working for a boutique operation like Tobin & Associates because she knows everybody in terms of all the producers and casting people. That's one of the great things about working in mainstream corporate America or just a small agency. Our contacts are so different, but yet very similar. You know, I can pick up the phone and call a community leader or somebody because I know these people. She can pick up the phone and call the head of the studio because she knows those people. But together, man, our strengths!

WHITE

Great team! Absolutely.

TOBIN

So for the record, one day, Ms. Lauren Tobin, your job will be to run Tobin & Associates.

WHITE

I'm sure she would be as excellent as her mom, given the example that you've set for her.

TOBIN

Well, we've continued to, even now, I bounce things off of her and ask her questions. We don't ever want it to be a conflict. I mean, today of course, because she is in the business but you don't want anybody to say, "Well it's a conflict. You are working with your mom and you work here." You know how these studios are. But she is always very careful about how she answers things and helps me out. But I always have to find sharp young people and that is

why my scholarship was one of the things I implemented, Pat Tobin Scholarship. There are so many young talented people in the school of—not only journalism but public relations communications—wanting to get into PR, so Tobin & Associates, we have had an intern program for years. In fact, I have an intern who comes in every Friday now and works in our office. And every summer I hire an intern to work for the summer.

WHITE

It is great for both of you. It gives them experience and exposure and for you to get the assistance and the support.

TOBIN

And it is interesting working for a black-owned agency. I mean, some of the experience that these young people get, hands-on. I mean, they just love it, whereas they may go to a big company and nobody takes the time to show them something, so they may get stuck in the mail room, copying all day or doing some mundane thing that, over and over that drives them nuts. But with Tobin they can do everything. They get to go to events, they get to, maybe write a press release, they get to answer the phone. You know, they get to do everything.

WHITE

Really fun stuff for a student particularly.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah.

WHITE

Now would you say that, speaking of your interns, are most of your interns African American?

TOBIN

Yes, although I had a young lady, what's her name? I can't forget. She came to me. We used to work on such exciting award shows like when LeBaron Taylor was alive, the late LeBaron Taylor, out of Sony. Oh, I can't think of the name of the program now but—"Celebrate the Soul of Music." It was at Cerritos [Center for the] Performing Arts. One lady came to me because we did the

Image Awards one year. We did all these interesting things and she wanted to work on it and she was not—she was a white young lady—she wasn't African American. So she did work in our office for awhile. She was really good, and later on I ran into her and she was some executive at Disney.

WHITE

Oh really!

TOBIN

Claire something— So she worked her way up. She said, "I remember you gave me my internship!" So we've had a few non African Americans but it was mostly for African Americans because they are the ones that don't get the opportunities to work everywhere else, you know.

WHITE

It's true.

TOBIN

They are the ones that rarely get to work at the major companies, the big corporations. So I have always had a chance, gave them a chance to come in and learn a little bit about the business from Tobin & Associates' perspective.

WHITE

Terrific. Speaking of offering opportunities for the African American community, when you first started out, you started your niche in sort of an African American segment at a time when there were not many firms specializing in that market. Who were your competitors at the time, when you first started off, when you first got your office at 6565 Sunset [Boulevard], correct?

TOBIN

I'm still there. You know what? I want to tell Paramount developers, Paramount Developers and Contractors, the people who own that building, they ought to be paying me. I have been in that building since 1984. People have come in and moved out and come and gone. I have been there.

WHITE

Wow.

TOBIN

Since 1984 and I'm still there.

WHITE

Wow. One building.

TOBIN

Still there, same building. Now, let me think, '84 is when I set up the office, and '88 is when I really started getting big accounts. That is when I got Toyota [Motor Sales USA, Inc.]. Oh, that was the best day of my life! But from '84 to '88, working with various projects and clients and growing the business, I'm thinking, who was really competition? And you know, I don't even like that word competition, because nobody is really your competition. You have certain strengths and you have certain skills and God gives us all these talents, and we just use them. So I guess maybe I was a little more outgoing, aggressive, and I can't remember, there were people like, there is still a list of people that are doing this, but back then, I don't know. I remember talking to Alesia Buford, who is doing very well today. But Alesia Buford was in law school, and I remember going into Simply Blues, my friend, Joe Dyer, at CBS television said, "I want you to talk to this young lady. She is thinking about going into PR." Alesia Buford is the wife of Don Buford, who is a baseball great, and she wanted to change careers and not go to law school and go into PR. I remember sitting down talking to her. And now today she has Magic Johnson and all these people. So she is one of the major firms that do these special events and do PR and handles certain projects. She is very well known. As a matter of fact, her name was in the program for the Trumpet Awards that I just returned from in Las Vegas. Alesia Buford, she started her business in the early eighties. There is another young lady named, oh, God she moved back East, Sheila Eldridge. Sheila Eldridge was one I remember. She used to work for a record company and I remember her wanting to go into PR full-time. So Sheila Eldridge—Orchid Communications, that is her company—she is back East now. Who else? There is a guy named Kim [L.] Hunter, LAGRANT Communications, who is doing very well.

WHITE

Based in Los Angeles?

TOBIN

He is based in L.A. He has a lot of major corporate accounts and he does a lot of state business, health projects from the state, the Department of Health Services. So he is doing very well. I have a list of people. But back then in '84 there weren't that many.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

As a matter of fact, as I look back, I think that is one of the reasons Tobin & Associates was able to succeed and have that longevity, because I really knew the African American community. I really knew how to show the positive things our community was doing and not just focus on all the negative stuff that you see on TV and read in some of these publications. So when I was able to, when I got Toyota as a client, it was good for us, because focusing on the African American community is what Toyota wanted to do at the time. It was long before diversity, before everybody started talking about diversity and Tobin & Associates had all this experience with the African American community, with the Brotherhood Crusade, with the Urban League, with every fraternity and sorority and black organization you could think of. So it helped us a great deal, and even today it is helping us. Because people talk about diversity, But unless you have somebody at the table looking like all of us, we're not represented. You have to have Black, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, all of that.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

Gay, lesbian, everything.

WHITE

Absolutely, reflective of the populace.

TOBIN

There you go.

WHITE

Absolutely.

TOBIN

So it is working for me, thank God, still today. But back then in '80, in the early eighties when I got started, I didn't even—I was always proud to focus on the black community. Growing up in Philadelphia and working with Operation PUSH and Jesse Jackson, I was always proud to be black and proud to push for excellence and all of that. As I said, my daughter got the PUSH for Excellence Award when she was twelve years old, so I was always concerned about that.

WHITE

That is very good. And even, say in other states, perhaps Atlanta or what have you. You know, looking at a public relations firm, or an established one, one that is pretty well established anyway, there wasn't really very many role models for you in developing your whole mission.

TOBIN

Hardly any role models. But you know what, Renee, one of the really good things I'm proud of—One of my role models was Barbara [C.] Harris. Barbara Harris had been in PR. She had worked for a guy, I think it was Joe Baker. That is why, when you go back and do your research, Joe Baker is one of the first blacks in PR in Philadelphia. But Barbara Harris, who was my mentor and friend and manager over at Sun Oil Company? Yeah. And now she is a bishop, the first African American woman that is a bishop in the Episcopalian Church. So I had some role models, but not many. You are right. I mean, not many in public relations. I had other mentors and leaders in various communities, and through working with Operation PUSH, you met great talented people who would do research. I will never forget, I forgot this reverend's name, but he could tell you how many African Americans ate oatmeal every day in the United States, because he did research. Because they were dealing with Quaker Oats and they had to do their research about a project, some problem or some project they had with Quaker Oats and they had to do some research.

And reverend, I have to find his name, but this reverend could tell you, "I can tell you how many kids in the US eat oatmeal everyday." Something to do with Quaker Oats, I've never forgotten that.

WHITE

That's funny.

TOBIN

So meeting role models along the way, even though they weren't in PR, they still motivated me and encouraged me to keep going and move forward. And when you start something, don't quit. Don't quit. A quitter never wins and a winner never quits.

WHITE

Absolutely. Certainly good advice.

TOBIN

That's somebody's quote that I keep using. I take out everybody's quotes and just say, I don't know who said it, but I'm saying it now.

WHITE

It's apropos. Stands the test for time.

TOBIN

Can I throw something in here now? We can put it in the right place later on. I brought this picture. Weldon Arthur McDougal III took this photograph of Lauren, my daughter Lauren, and this was November '71 and that's at Weldon Arthur McDougal's house. Now when you get an opportunity to talk to Suzanne dePasse, Weldon Arthur McDougal III was on the road with the Jackson Five when they were little kids. He was a promoter for Motown, Weldon. Weldon still lives in Philadelphia and Weldon sent me—you've got to call Weldon Arthur McDougal III—he sent me a tape now and some groups that he is working with. He is still working in the music industry. He has written a book. He has written a couple of books about his days with the Jackson Five and here, when my daughter was, see that was in '71, she was born in '65. Let's do that math. She was born in '65. She was six years old. Weldon took that picture of her when she was six years old and he is still

taking pictures I guess. He was one of the best photographers, and being on the road with the Jackson Five and some other groups as a promotion man for Motown, we still are friends. And I ran into a young lady who is a PR person out here in California, who knows Weldon, and we are talking about bringing Weldon out here to do a book signing. And this young lady has her own PR firm, Platinum Plus. But here we are talking about joint venturing, working together on a project. So there are people that I—as you keep saying throughout this documentation—there are people that I have met along the way, that I'm still friends with and still can do business with and I just love it. It is so exciting. So I would really love you to talk to Weldon Arthur McDougal III because Suzanne dePasse knows him very well.

WHITE

Absolutely. Okay.

TOBIN

And they were all working with the Jackson Five and my daughter, oh I have to bring that picture! Would you make a note for me to bring in the picture when my daughter was getting dressed for Jackson Five Day in Philadelphia?

WHITE

Sure.

TOBIN

She had the cutest little outfit and we were all excited and I do believe that the late Jocko Henderson, the disc jockey in Philly and Weldon McDougal, all these people were just instrumental in my daughter getting to meet the Jackson Five, because they had a press day and everything in Philly and because I was Ms. Philadelphia PUSH. You know, I could get all the free passes, not free, but press passes to things. And I remember her getting dressed to go see the Jackson Five and how Weldon McDougal—I was so proud of him being, you know— Everybody claims they discovered the kids. I don't know who really discovered them but I know that Suzanne dePasse and Diana Ross and Weldon Arthur McDougal III, everybody is a part of that Jackson Five history.

WHITE

Right. Interesting, very interesting, how these circles continue to connect, just connecting the dots, you know, as you move along from one state and city to the next, from one generation to the next.

TOBIN

Yeah.

WHITE

And when you first started, do recall having a mission statement?

TOBIN

You know, oh, see, I'm glad. Some of these questions you ask me help me to remember people who were part of my life and part of my business. There was a young man named Fitzroy Hamilton. Fitzroy was my best buddy. He was so smart. He is an engineer and Fitzroy would come to the Speakeasy. See, the Speakeasy—There's history to the Speakeasy. I got to write a book about this. Thanks to you, Dr. White, we're documenting all of this.

WHITE

Absolutely.

TOBIN

Fitzroy would come to the Speakeasy and he was part of my Thursday night, Media night, happy hour crowd, but smart as a whip. And he got involved with assisting me in my business early on—Bonnie Coleman, Fitzroy Hamilton—Fitzroy helped to write business plans and business statements. I didn't have all of that initially. The fiancé who brought me out here, he was a smart man because he had been an executive at IBM, Joe, and I think somewhere along the line he kept trying to encourage me to do all these things. But it wasn't until later on that Fitzroy Hamilton really helped me to develop that. There were people in my life who helped me do the things that I maybe may not have had the strength to do or the skills to do. I may have had great people skills and coordinating events and doing certain things. But sitting down, writing a business statement, maybe that wasn't one of my strengths and Fitzroy Hamilton helped me with that. He used to go everywhere with me. People thought we were an item. But we were just good friends. As I said early on, you see somebody together all the time, you think, "Oh, they got to be

going together." But he wasn't a boyfriend. He was my best friend, my best buddy. And even today, he is married but we are still good friends. But he always went to events with me. He was sort of like my escort. But smart as a whip. From Jamaica and being an engineer, he knew a lot about business and he helped me a great deal. So I definitely want to remember him and his contribution to the growth of Tobin & Associates.

WHITE

Now I know that in much of your literature today, it talks about, in terms of your mission statement or the kinds of services that you offer: marketing, advertising, event planning, fundraising, writing press releases, and at this point internet promotion. I know, of course, that would not have been prevalent that time. Same thing with web design, e-commerce solutions and direct mail campaigns. Of these particular things that your organization is focused on today, what would you say was included in your mission statement originally? Would it have been marketing, advertising, event planning and fundraising?

TOBIN

Yeah, those things, because many community-based organizations and non-profit groups, they maybe did not have the skills to put together an event, to plan ahead, to prepare the invitations. So there was always some work out there to help groups do things the right way, plan it. So that was just one of our strengths and one of the great things that I enjoyed about the business. We always had some community group to work with or some event to plan for somebody. Early on, I knew that there was a need for that, for marketing and promotion and publicity, and particularly targeted to the African American community. There are so many companies out there to forget—they don't anymore—but they used to forget about us. There was a guy named Jerry Johnson who helped my company a great deal. Jerry Johnson is no longer alive today, but Jerry Johnson was with Ebony magazine, Johnson Publications, for years. I think he had retired by this time and he was a good friend and he helped me to develop those skills about writing those letters to major corporations. I think that's one of the reasons we got Toyota as an account in the early eighties and mid-eighties, '88. Jerry Johnson, from his years selling ads—he was an ad manager, an ad executive for Johnson Publications—he

had to go to major corporations and get the ads for Johnson Magazines, for Ebony. So he knew. He was an older gentleman. He was from the old school and he knew how to talk to the corporations and deal with these people and get their ads. So he helped me a great deal. I really need to do what George [C.] Fraser has done. George Fraser wrote a list about eleven hundred people who he networked with when he was writing that book. George Fraser is the author of Success Runs in Our Race.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

And although I am one of those eleven hundred people, I need to do the same thing. There are so many people along the way that have been instrumental in helping me get to the next level. Oh, it just makes me cry, because at fifty-nine, many of these people aren't here any more, and Jerry Johnson—I adore him, even his daughter. He has two grown daughters and we stay in touch. He has one daughter that is an opera singer: Brenda Hudson in New York. I just got an E-mail, a letter from her for Christmas or something. She moved to Miami or somewhere in Florida. So there is still this circle. It keeps extending. I love it. It keeps expanding and evolving.

WHITE

So you had that gentlemen that gave you some guidance and support with advertising, marketing. You had been involved in a lot of event planning and things like that, Speakeasy, etc, etc, the PUSH program. Fundraising, can you talk a bit about that? Because one just does not step up to the plate and have the ability and the wherewithal to coin themselves a fundraiser. Do you recall what skills it took? What tools you needed? How did your college training support and help you in that particular endeavor?

TOBIN

You needed, yes, you needed to know people and know how to ask them for money. Remember, I took classes at UCLA, through their Extension. I really want to go back and get my transcripts from UCLA because I was really a good student. I need to talk to, and I haven't done this, you've got to help me. I

haven't talked to Barry Bortnick. Barry needs to help me get my certificate in professional, what was this? Certification, ah! What is my certificate called? Professional Designation in PR. Whatever it's called, I've got to get that because Barry Bortnick told me I had to finish. Anyway, while taking classes at UCLA in the eighties— Remember I went to UCLA when I was working at CBS television, because they would pay for, they would give you 80 percent of tuition when you were working at CBS. Anyways, many companies will do that to further your education, help you advance. So it was fun, while working at CBS and going to UCLA. So I took those classes, writing, press releases, fundraising, and we would have speakers come in and they would talk about raising funds. Now, one of my teachers, I will never forget, he was a Jewish gentleman and he said— What is his name? Kramer? One of my teachers said he needed to raise sixty-five thousand dollars for a charity, for an event, and he just called sixty-five of his friends and they gave him a thousand dollars.

1.6. TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE TWO
FEBRUARY 18, 2002

WHITE

Pat you were just about to say about this gentleman at your UCLA Extension class—

TOBIN

I've got to find his name somewhere. He said he had to raise funds for charity or non-profit and he needed sixty-five thousand dollars. Now mind you, this was back in, I don't know whether it was the late seventies or early eighties, because I came to L.A. in '77. I've got to remember, 1977 is when I came out here. But when I was going to school, taking these classes in the evening, he said something about needing sixty-five thousand dollars and he called sixty-five of his friends and each gave him a thousand dollars.

WHITE

Terrific.

TOBIN

Fundraising is not that easy. I don't know of any of our friends we can call up and get a thousand dollars.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

So I'm good at it because, raising funds, because I know people and they know me and they know if I'm asking, it's for a worthwhile cause or a good charity. Even today, one of our projects with the National Association of Black Journalists is to help raise funds for their scholarship program. I was looking at some notes back in the eighties, where I was going to a Black Journalists meeting. And I mentioned how exciting that was for me and how I always enjoyed those seminars and hearing people speak. Even today we are working with the Black Journalists for their scholarship dinner in March, raising funds, calling on corporations to get those dollars and to put it towards a scholarship program. Now, another thing about fundraising that excites me or makes me feel good about doing it, not only is it for a good cause, but when it comes to an African American program or project, we just don't seem to get enough money. I don't know what it is. It is changing now of course, because today, Bill [William H.] Gray, the former congressman Bill Gray who is head of the United Negro College Fund—I knew Bill Gray, since he was a preacher at Bright Hope Baptist Church—I can't remember the name of the church in Philadelphia. We go way back. I can remember when he was supposed to be, not even thinking about politics because he was a preacher and his family was like, "What? You are going to go into politics?" So Bill Gray—I just wanted to say that just this year, well, last year, for the United Negro College Fund, they have a big fundraising dinner they do out here, and Bill Gray called me and asked me to assist with helping them to get some of the corporate sponsors that they needed.

WHITE

Interesting.

TOBIN

Bill Gray. You have to call Bill Gray too.

WHITE

He would be—

TOBIN

He would talk to you. You say Pat Tobin and he'll pick up the phone. His family, we go way back. I was just in—where was I?—Miami, Florida, for something to do with the National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers, and Sheila Vaden-Williams, who runs that organization, introduced me to a young attorney. It was Bill Gray's son.

WHITE

Oh really! Oh my goodness! Here we go again.

TOBIN

Of course he was a little, he wasn't even born probably, when I knew him. But anyway, so yeah, fundraising is one of my strengths, although I don't like it because everybody is always—I'm contradicting myself. I enjoy raising funds and getting money when I can. But not everybody wants you to raise money and everybody is calling on the same people and funds are drying up and some companies are finding excuses not to give anymore. So I work very closely with some people who were in philanthropy and aid. They are supposed to give money and some of them get tired of giving. So I don't understand that. [mutual laughter]

WHITE

I'm sure.

TOBIN

You are supposed to give. It is your job to give money.

WHITE

Philanthropist, that's what you do. [mutual laughter]

TOBIN

But maybe it is just so many people needing it and wanting money for their program or project that there's just not enough to go around.

WHITE

That's true. And then the budgets are a little bit tighter these days since the September event [September 11 terrorist attack].

TOBIN

Yes.

WHITE

People are being a little bit more mindful about how they distribute their funds and having a safety net.

TOBIN

Yeah.

WHITE

Speaking of distributing funds. Another area that I was interested in exploring with you, particularly when you first started in your business, the accounting aspect of it, the budgeting aspect of it. What were your overhead costs when you first started this project?

TOBIN

Can I tell you that, back to Bonnie, one of her strengths, she was good at managing money. She was very good at that. So when I first started the office, I think it was maybe five hundred dollars a month, for office space. It was one big office. It was like one big room. Since we had a shared arrangement with Bill Thomas and Creative Images, when you walk in to 6565 Sunset Boulevard, Suite 525, it was quite impressive because we had shared arrangements. So we had a receptionist out front, very nice office, because Bill was so creative and very neat and organized everything. It just looked nice. So Bonnie and I had just one big room and that was our— I don't know how many years we stayed in, yeah, we stayed in that space for a while and then we were able to take on more space with them in the suite 6565 Sunset Boulevard, suite 525. We started out with one big room. So it was maybe five hundred dollars and Bonnie and I had a shared arrangement where we would get a certain percentage of what came in, after expenses. So she was really committed and dedicated in helping me in the beginning, because that is how we got started. She would get a certain percentage and after a while it was like, well, are you entitled to this percentage if you are not here working this hard? So that's

when you find— But she was good at doing all of that. The overhead was low. We kept expenses to a minimum and working with a net shared arrangement was the right way to go for us at that time. So as we continued to grow and take out more space, as we got more accounts and more clients, then the managing and budgeting was done mostly by Bonnie. She was real good at that. And even today, today, 2002, I have a woman who has been with me since '91 handling— She is an accountant, her name is Patricia Ann McIntosh. We call her Posh. Posh still manages the funds. And that is not my strength, money. I just want it to spend. I don't care how you get it or where you get it. Just give it to me to spend. But Posh, that is one of her challenges, to make me understand about the money part of it. I just want it. I want to spend it. Don't tell me what you need it for, over here and over there and not to spend this because you need it for that. But she is real good and she has been with me since '91.

WHITE

Wow. Wow. There must be something to be said about job satisfaction.

TOBIN

Over ten years. She is a strong woman, a smart woman. She is very organized, all the things where I may be lacking, she is real good. So you can imagine, we are strong, both strong-willed women, and sometimes we butt heads but we turn that around and know that it is for the good of the company and we work it out.

WHITE

Absolutely. Well can you recall, what would you charge for some of your services initially?

TOBIN

Oh God yes! In the beginning, if I got a hundred dollars a month from somebody, I was probably happy. Let me think, what I would do for you is go back and get some of my initial contracts. When I think back, it had to be, God, it was hardly anything! I don't know. Let's see, we are talking about in the beginning right?

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

When I actually set up an office. I know a couple of hundred dollars month was really a good deal then and I remember sitting down with Joe Dyer. You have to write about Joe Dyer, because his book is about to be published, it is coming out in April. Joe Dyer spent thirty-five years at CBS television. And remember, when I left Philadelphia, Mr. Arnie [Arnold] Wallace at WCAU, the sister station to CBS in Philly, told me to look up Joe Dyer. So when I came to L.A. in '77— Joe Dyer is one of my friends and mentors and still today. I just met with him the other day for lunch to talk about the promotion of his book, From the Cotton Fields to CBS. It is a great book. I have to get you a copy. Anyway, I'm saying that because back then, sitting down with Joe Dyer back in the, I can't remember when it was, I'd have to check. He was also very instrumental in helping me with pricing. He said, "Patricia"—some people call me Patricia—he said, "Patricia, if you are going to go out on your own, start your own business, you need to look at what your overhead is. If you have a thousand dollars a month that you need to cover, then you need at least five clients giving you a thousand dollars a month." I mean, he was very good at giving me that kind of advice. That is the kind of guy he was. He was a Director of Community Relations at CBS television. Through people like Joe Dyer, that is how I got to be involved in many of these groups and organizations and got to know a lot of the community people. And even today, he is still that way. You can sit down and talk to him. We just had lunch at Chan Dara the other day and talked about the promotion of his book. Yeah. Because he is from Louisiana and he talked about how, you know, his thirty-five years of CBS. I have to get the title of that book for you.

WHITE

It sounds fascinating.

TOBIN

I will get you a copy of the book. That is what I will do. So, you know, the contracts in the beginning were very small. I can't think exactly how much they were. But today, it is so different today. You need so much more money today, so much more overhead, health insurance and all this stuff. Things that

you just have to have and have to pay for and unless you're making a lot of money, you are in trouble.

WHITE

Right. I wondered about that actually. It was one of my next questions, that when you first started out, it must have been pretty unsettling, a single African American woman— Well, the African American myth of it is not important to this questions, but just the whole notion of starting off in your own business and the insurance and all the benefits and things like that. It was very important for you and I would imagine your daughter at that point.

TOBIN

It was scary. When I left CBS television, I know that was one of the most frightening things, leaving a full time job to go into business for yourself, where at CBS you had stock options. I had health care, dental, eye [coverage]. You had all these things. But going out on your own, and now you are responsible for all of this? I guess I just stepped out on faith and knew that it would be all right. Then, I didn't have, when I stepped out, I didn't have, did I have an insurance policy? I don't even know if I had health insurance or anything back then. I must have. There had to be some. Maybe it wasn't as expensive, it didn't cost as much as then and I was able to afford it. But even today, I'm off and on. Sometimes I have it covered and sometimes I don't. But belonging to organizations, another good thing, Women In Film and other organizations, sometimes you get a group policy with all of that and Women In Film just implemented one. I belong to Women In Film and they just implemented this program where you can get insurance in a group and get covered, so that helped. But, yeah, back then, early on, starting out, it was a real challenge. You had to just stay healthy and stay well and hope that you didn't get real sick. Although, when I left CBS, I think it was a year that you were still covered. I kept the plan, I was still covered for at least a year after I left. So if I left in '80? When did I leave—'79 to '83?

WHITE

In '83 I believe you left.

TOBIN

Yeah, '83 to '84 I was covered and I felt that, well certainly that when I built this business, I'm going to make money to be able to afford all those things, insurance, health care and all of that. I'm still trying to make enough money to cover all of that.

WHITE

Sure, it is so expensive these days, all those benefits. So let's see now, can you recall, can you describe a day in your life when you first started off at the office. I'm sure, like you said, it was somewhat different when you had your partner and you were there in a space with Creative Image. I don't know, how long did you share a space with Creative Image?

TOBIN

We shared the space with Creative Image until 19— Let's see, when did I move in? '84 to '89.

WHITE

Oh! For five years you shared the space!

TOBIN

And we are still friends today.

WHITE

Okay. Terrific.

TOBIN

But they moved out. They meaning, Creative Image and his partner, and there was some renovating or some changes going on with the management at the building where we are, 6565, so they decided to move to 9000 Sunset.

WHITE

Oh! Even further west.

TOBIN

Even though it seemed impressive and it was nice, I just didn't have the funds and I wasn't going to chance that. I'm glad I didn't, because now the people

who I was sharing space with, and they moved, and they're not even doing what they were doing now.

WHITE

Oh, really!

TOBIN

They're not into managing groups and bands and all of that. They are not into personal management. They have all moved on and gone different ways. Bill Thomas and his partner, Sally. His partner was Sally Mishkind, but Sally Mishkind and I are friends. We are still friends today. We go to lunch, dinner, but they are not into this at all.

WHITE

Okay.

TOBIN

So because I stayed in the building, and I had been there for five years as a sub, had subleased my space through Creative Image, when Creative Image moved out, having a relationship with the people who owned the building, knowing that I had been there for five years and I paid Creative Image for five years on time, I got my own space.

WHITE

Okay.

TOBIN

Now, talking about stepping out on faith. In 1989, when I had to move from suite 525 to suite 301, I was devastated. I said, "How am I going to pay this every month?" You have to have a cushion when you're subletting because, God forbid, if something goes wrong, you could say, "Bill, you know, I may be late a couple of days but you are going to get it if you pay the whole thing." Well, when it is your name on that lease and you are responsible for five years, and then, you know, the leases were, you took a long lease so you would get a better deal. Five-year lease, so in '89, I went to suite 301 and this is 2002 and I'm still in suite 301.

WHITE

My goodness. That is right.

TOBIN

But now, initially we took, again you keep adding space or giving up space if it's not working for you financially. I think we had about 2000 square feet and then we went down to maybe 700, but all in the same suite. These builders can come in and adjust your suite so it fits your needs, and now we are still in 301, but it's not the 2000 square feet that we originally had. It is more like a 1000, maybe, or 800. It is smaller, but, you know, economic things happen to you in the economy and you just have to make adjustments. And now I'm in a smaller space but I'm still in the same building, still at the same address and to me, longevity is important.

WHITE

Consistency.

TOBIN

Many people move around, they change addresses. I laugh all the time with one of my associates who works with me. I have known her for twenty-seven years, Carole Eileen Wade. We call her Kidogo. She is a very creative graphic designer, writer, poet, you name it. So whenever hard times fell on her, I would always give her an opportunity to help me out, because she was good at certain things. And she used to move around when she had her own graphic design studio. She would move every year. She lost business because people couldn't find her. I said, "Carole! You can't do that!" So we joked about when I'd sublet to her when she needed space, when I had all my space at Tobin & Associates. I sublet a room to her, for her to have her graphic design studio and she was with me longer than she had ever been. She was at 6565 longer than she had been anywhere, because she used to move every year or every other year. She keeps a list of all her business cards, because she is a graphic designer, that had all these addresses, and she has them hanging up.

WHITE

Oh no!

TOBIN

She thinks it's funny. I think it is terrible.

WHITE

Yeah. You do lose a lot of clients.

TOBIN

You lose! People can't find you and when we are out sometimes at events people will say to her, "Oh, I tried to call you. I tried to reach you." Because when you change your phone number and address, it only lasts for a few months.

WHITE

Exactly, so one year to the next.

TOBIN

So I didn't want to move from 6565 for some reason, no matter what. And now, they are going through major renovations. I mean, here it is, 2002 and they are putting a whole new face lift on the building and there is a whole new revitalization of Hollywood going on.

WHITE

Yes there is, isn't there?

TOBIN

I'm glad to be there. We have got that Hollywood and Highland project and oh, I'm so excited!

WHITE

You have a new mall there.

TOBIN

But what I would really like, Renee, is to own a building, have my own building. Because now that I look at paying all these years, paying rent. Certainly there are advantages of not being the landlord. I don't have to worry about things when they go wrong because somebody else fixes it. But when you look at all the money you spend every month. Anyway, that is down the road.

WHITE

Certainly. It is like owning your own home versus renting an apartment or what have you, a duplex.

TOBIN

There you go. Down the road.

WHITE

Could you foresee, say, your office opening in something, a space that maybe is more quaint, as opposed to being in one of the big office buildings, maybe one of the old vintage homes, changing it and remodeling it and that kind of thing?

TOBIN

Yes, I have thought about that and that is probably one of the things that I will do because I have been to many of these studio offices where they have a building or a complex or they own a duplex. It is just zoning. You have to make sure you are in the proper area that is zoned for business. And finding the right security because, God forbid, we have so many people who don't have respect for other people's property. And I work many hours, long hours, different hours. I want to be able to come and go. I want to have the freedom to come and go. I am not a nine to five kind of person. I may stop by my office in the middle of the night. You never know. So I need to know that there is security and that you are in a safe place, although nothing is guaranteed. But I'm looking at that down the road, probably getting my own building, whether it is a duplex or a stand-alone, single dwelling that I can convert to offices. Because I probably will always consult, as long as God gives me the strength. And I am still in my right mind, although, I'm really not in my right mind half the time.

WHITE

Of course you are!

TOBIN

But to give me strength to continue this. I will probably consult, because I know many people in their seventies and eighties, as long as they are well and

can move and breathe and talk, they are still doing what they like to do. Aaron [Michael Tobin Curry], my grandson Aaron, who is now nine, almost ten. He will be ten in May, so he can look back and say, "God, grandma! Now I know why she couldn't come and get me, so I could go play with my X-Box. She had to go see Renee."

WHITE

She had a few priorities!

TOBIN

A few priorities. And they're going to benefit him. One day he will realize, when he reads all this, he will realize. But, you know, space and budgets and all that. There are always people in my life who help me with these things. You know, it is not I, it is not about I, it's not about me, it's about we. And I really mean that because, when I look back at all these people, in each area that you ask me something about, there was somebody there who helped me. There was somebody there whose shoulders—

WHITE

That you were able to lean on.

TOBIN

That I was able to lean on. It just brings tears to my eyes because in a way, it is kind of sad that some of these people have either gone on and they are no longer there. That is why I have to do, really do a good job, because I know that they are still watching, from my mother to everybody else.

WHITE

Sure, sure, and appreciating the work that you do and helping other people who don't necessarily have the wherewithal to get notoriety for themselves or to create a sort of a balanced image of themselves. As you indicated earlier, often times, many of the stories that we hear about African Americans, they tend to have a negative slant. Balancing that is so important.

TOBIN

And people don't know. They don't know what you go through just to accomplish something. That is one of the things about what you are doing that

is so great, people look at you and say, "Oh you made it! You are successful!" They have no idea of the price you pay for what they call success.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

And the reason I am getting teary-eyed is because my grandson wanted me to get this game for him. And I got the game for him on Friday. Well here it is, Monday, and he still wanted to play it. Of course, his mom is, "He can wait. He can play the game later. He's got all these hours he wants to sit in front of this X-Box." I didn't know that my daughter had to work, so she couldn't get him the games. He is spending the weekend with his dad, and I just felt bad because I can't see him today. I'm busy. I have things to do later on. But there are priorities that you want to, when do you, I have to pencil in my grandson. I have to have some time for him and that is what I meant earlier about the balance.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

It breaks my heart when I can't do certain things. I have to do A and B but I really want to do C and D. Somehow I just have to work it all out.

WHITE

Yeah. It is a constant challenge.

TOBIN

It's a constant challenge. So people think it's easy. It may not be easy. It might be hard. But what's hard is best. I just heard a quote and I can't remember it, but whatever is hard you have to do it because that is going to be better in the long run when you get the hard stuff out of the way.

WHITE

Absolutely. It builds character.

TOBIN

It builds character.

WHITE

When you have those kinds of challenges. When you don't have really a struggle in life and everything comes easy, you just sort of float through.

TOBIN

And that is why I have, I guess a love, I have this passion for other people, I want to help other people. So many people have helped me Renee. So many people have helped me along the way and they are still helping me. I have a friend named Bob Jones. People don't know him as well, they think he's this mean guy. He is the vice president of Media Relations and Communications for Michael Jackson Productions.

WHITE

Really?

TOBIN

Oh Bob and I were friends for years and he threw me out of a party. This story, the Bob Jones story, you have to hear. He threw me out of a party. I didn't know him, he didn't know me, and he wasn't just throwing me out, but there were people who came with other people who shouldn't have been there, and he is very exact. You just don't do things unless you do it the right way.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

So the young lady he hired to coordinate this event, I know I'm digressing a little bit.

WHITE

That's okay.

TOBIN

But she invited me, because she was a friend of mine and my daughter and my daughter's friends. Actually, I was working with Al McKay at the time, and Al McKay got the invitation. Al McKay was the former lead guitar for Earth, Wind and Fire. He was one of my early clients. So this was back in the eighties, I guess. We went to this event and this gentleman, Bob Jones, said, "Well, who are these people? They are not supposed to be here. They have to get out of here!" People were afraid of him, because it was a sit down dinner for about eighty people for Lionel Richie. It was like a listening party. It was in the home of these wealthy Nigerians of Bel Air or Beverly Hills. And there were people who really shouldn't have been there, because he only expected eighty people and you know how people bring people? Like, Al McKay was my client, so he brought his publicist and my daughter went and my daughter was his guest. It got crazy. So other people had to leave as well, that weren't invited. So I left. You know, I've been thrown out of better places. I don't mind. To this day we are the best friends.

WHITE

Really?

TOBIN

He and I ended up, I guess I was at CBS television at the time or whatever, but I ended up starting the [National] Black Public Relations Society in 1983. In 1983, when Helen Goss and I started the Black Public Relations Society, people like Bob Jones was one of my best supporters. He helped me a great deal. So when I think about, along the way, people who have helped, how I'm still friends with some of these people today, it just brings tears to my eyes. When I think about the early days and how we met and our relationship.

WHITE

That is funny, getting kicked out of one of his parties.

TOBIN

Kicked out of his party and now we are the best of friends. We go out often. He takes me everywhere. I got to all these big events that I would never be able to buy a ticket to because Michael Jackson's budget is much bigger than

mine, so when Mr. Jones puts his guest list together, I'm usually right there, as one of his special guests at many events.

WHITE

That is nice, very nice. Now, speaking of the Black Public Relations Society in Los Angeles, that was something that I wanted to chat with you about since you mentioned it, that you and Helen Goss— Who is Helen Goss?

TOBIN

Oh! You have to meet Helen Goss. You have to call Helen Goss. You are going to have so many people to call. Helen Goss is an attorney now, but she is working at the City of West Hollywood. I have her business card. I forget her title. I happened to be at Roscoe's not long ago, Roscoe's Chicken and Waffles, and there was Helen. We hadn't see each other because she is a single mom and she went to law school, part-time at night or whatever, while working full-time for the City of West Hollywood. She is a strong, dynamite woman and I adore her. But she has her priorities and place and she could no longer give any more time to the growth and development of the Black Public Relations Society, but she was instrumental in getting it started, the two of us back in '83. I can't remember when she stopped being involved, but since then she has gone on to law school. She has got a law degree. She has a daughter that is probably a little older than my grandson Aaron. Her daughter is probably ten or eleven or something like that, and she is still in the City of West Hollywood. I forget her title. I'll get her information for you. We are still friends. We still hug and kiss when we see each other and chat about the good old days, but starting the Black Public Relations Society in 1983 was just one of my goals, dreams, ambitions, to see black people in PR come together and help each other.

WHITE

It was a national organization right? And you were the national president? Is that correct?

TOBIN

I am the national president now. When the Black Public Relations Society was started, it was called beepers, BPRS, long before these pagers and beepers got

to be important. So now we can't say beepers, because people think you are talking about a pager or a beeper. But BPRS, Black Public Relations Society started in 1983 in Chicago. I just got an E-mail, not long ago from Sharon Morgan. Sharon Morgan is living in Paris now and she was the one who introduced the Black Public Relations Society concept to Helen Goss and I. Sharon started it with a group of people in Chicago in 1983. But Pat Tobin, being the hoo-ra-ra cheerleader for PR, kept it going. Every opportunity that I got—doing the conventions, whenever there was a National Association of Black Journalists, because I belong to all of these organizations—every opportunity I got to travel, I would tell people in that city or at that convention, "Have you heard about BPRS? Do you know about the Black PR society?" Because in L.A., from '83 until I can't remember how many years we had it going strong. Bob Jones was one of our presidents when he was at Motown. Ron Carter, one of our presidents locally at the California chapter. We had a strong chapter in L.A. We raised money. We gave scholarships and through Bob Jones, I mean, at one time we had over ten thousand dollars in our treasury. I mean, he was very instrumental in helping us to take it to the next level. Kim [L.] Hunter, of LEGRANT Communications, who no longer is involved in BPRS, got burnt out. He was one of the past presidents and we had a strong chapter. We had been doing things for a long time and doing it well and so we got written up everywhere. So it became a national organization because I continued to fight. Everywhere I went I kept talking about BPRS and black PR. So many of the journalists, who are no longer journalists, will come to NABJ, the National Association of Black Journalists, will come to their convention and all the PR people would have a workshop.

WHITE

Oh really.

TOBIN

I was instrumental in getting, I will never forget, Greg Freeman, one of our St. Louis journalists, to hold a workshop for PR people, because they were journalists who wanted alternatives to their career. We used to have these workshops for PR people and it grew and grew and grew. Now we have—Every convention, NABJ convention, has a workshop or a task force dealing with PR. I mean, I was instrumental in helping to get the task force form, the

PR task force, because there was this fight with journalists and PR people, where they didn't necessarily work together. One didn't like the other necessarily because they thought PR people were just all fluff and no substance and journalists were serious and factual. But that has changed now. We all work together. As a matter of fact, one of my dear friends is Aldore Collier, who is the West Coast Bureau Chief of /Ebony/Jet magazines. And I mention him because we all do this toy drive together every year. We have been doing it for ten, thirteen years, fourteen years now. Al was a very serious journalist and he doesn't like all the fluff and all that. He doesn't really want PR people bothering him, unless it is factual and he needs information. But when he hit L.A. back in the early eighties, I gave him a party at the Speakeasy and we have been friends ever since.

WHITE

Your life long friend. Wow.

TOBIN

Another life long friend that I welcomed to L.A. with a party at Speakeasy. So back to BPRS. I am so proud that it is finally a national organization. People like Randye Bullock, out of Detroit who would come to Black Journalists because she was very involved in the Detroit chapter of Black Journalists. She was instrumental in helping to form the national organization. A young lady named Meta Mereday out of New York— So all the people who would meet at the Black Journalist convention, we kept out PR thing going. We kept our workshops going and we kept talking about it and planning and organizing. So we became a national organization and we have chapters in Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, [Washington] D.C., L.A. Well, L.A. is sort of in limbo, but because I am the national president, and I live here in L.A., I'm going to somehow find some people to help me get it back on track. There was a young lady who helped to try to start it up again, Anna Varnon Grier, who works at Disney. But people just weren't responsive so we will have to put a little more energy. I personally don't have the time but maybe some of these young interns that I am grooming, I could get them to start a chapter again because they really need that here. During the holiday, December, we went to a mixer and it was Asian PR, Hispanic PR, Black PR and young professionals. Young

professionals consist of all PR people and they started this group called the Young Professionals and they work at PR firms.

WHITE

Oh, really!

TOBIN

Not enough people of color are in there. I mean, Asian and every other group but I didn't see too many African Americans. So at this mixer that we had in December with all the PR professionals, I think there were only maybe three or four black people. Maybe it was because of the holiday and they were busy and they had other things on their schedules. Because you know during the holidays, Christmas holidays, everybody has receptions. But we have been committed to keep this diversity thing going within the PR group. That is why at UCLA, not long ago, I was on a panel. A representative from the Hispanic PR [Public Relations Society], me from the Black PR [Public Relations Society]—That was a wonderful workshop. I am often invited to come and speak at UCLA because I'm the president of the Black Public Relations Society. So the news is out about us. We have been around since 1983, even though the L.A. chapter is in limbo. Because people take over the reins and they are at the helm, and while things are great they are happy, but then when things are going bad and it is rough and there is a challenge, they go out and do something else. But like I said, a quitter never wins and a winner never quits. I'm going to make sure that the Black PR Society has an L.A. chapter that is active again.

WHITE

That is good. That is excellent. And so the primary purpose of it is to bring the PR professionals together for professional development, to have seminars and that sort of thing.

TOBIN

And to help young people who want to pursue a career in PR and give them scholarships.

WHITE

Okay.

TOBIN

Now, what Kim Hunter has done with his company, LAGRANT Communications, he has the LAGRANT Foundation. See he has been organized and he got his board of directors and he got his non-profit status and he is giving away thousands. If you look up LAGRANT Communications, you will find a lot of information about him and what he's done. He used to be the president of BPRS, but he doesn't want to claim that any longer because he got burnt out, he got discouraged, because people wouldn't do what they were supposed to do. He is a real professional. He wants it done the right way. So I keep saying that I'm going to start the Pat Tobin Foundation because I give scholarships, but I want to keep mine in the area of public relations. So I have asked people to help me with the paper work but it seems like it is taking a long time to fill out the paper work for the Pat Tobin scholarship. But I am going to file a non-profit— You have to make sure you have a board of directors and the right people who are going to keep you going in the right direction. So we still give scholarships to the Black Public Relations Society. We still hold a convention every year. We have had a convention now for three years. Our first convention of the National Black Public Relations Society. Our convention was in Detroit the first year. We went to New Orleans the second year. We went to St. Paul, Minnesota the third year and it is so funny. Dr. Sherrie Mazingo lives in St. Paul. She happened to send me an E-mail because she was doing some research. She's from UCLA.

WHITE

USC.

TOBIN

USC, I'm sorry. See, UCLA's in my brain! She came over and hung out with us in St. Paul, played cards and ate, because the circle continues there. She left L.A. and she is in St. Paul, Minneapolis, really. But St. Paul and Minneapolis are right next door to each other, so even though our convention was in St. Paul, we had a chance to go and do a little sight visit in Minneapolis and I loved it. So the year 2002 in October, our fourth convention will be in Washington D.C.

WHITE

Oh really? Okay.

TOBIN

And Mr. Ofield Dukes. You have to know that name. Ofield Dukes. Ofield Dukes and Associates in Washington D.C. I went to him years ago to start the chapter, the D.C. chapter of the Black Public Relations Society. And here again is where I used my friends and resources to call on them when I need them and say, "Hey!" I sat down with Ofield. And he had come to L.A. at one point and received one of our scholarships, one of our awards that we were doing when the L.A. chapter was well and thriving and organized. Ofield received an award from us. I went to D.C. at one point on business for something and we talked about the D.C. chapter and they are very active and very strong. If you look in Jet and other magazines you will read about Ofield Dukes. And in PR Week. He has been very instrumental in keeping that chapter going. Now they have some sharp, young professionals from all walks, all these different corporations, all these different organizations, that are members of the Black Public Relations Society. See, in some cities it is still BPRS. Black PR Society is a local group that organizes in that city. NBPR, the national chapter, we are still working on the paper work to make sure that people become a member. See, there is this thing. When you have a local group and they want to know why they have to belong to a national group— It is like the NAACP. If you belong to the NAACP in L.A., some of your funds go to the national. I belong to NAWBO, National Association of Women Business Owners, and \$100 [of your dues] goes to national, and \$125 or something like that is local.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

So if you don't have the funds to join both or to pay for national dues— Even though we are a national organization, there are certain chapters that haven't really done the paper work and do what they need to do to become part of the national. But as we are growing and now we are going to be in Washington D.C. in October, early October for our fourth convention, Ofield Dukes is very involved in helping us to bring in the D.C. chapter as part of the national group.

WHITE

I see, to help mobilize.

TOBIN

So I'm excited about where we have come since 1983. We started out as just two cities having a group of black PR professionals come together. Here it is, 2002 and we're having national conventions all over. This was my dream. Being a member of NABJ, the National Association of Black Journalists, I remember their story, when they started out with forty something people in a room or twenty-four people in one room and now they have thousands people at their conventions. They are about twenty-six years old, the organization, the National Association of Black Journalists. I just know one day, I don't know where I'll be, but the National Black PR Society will be that big.

WHITE

And it will continue forward. That is great. And Helen Goss, what is she doing today?

TOBIN

As I said, she is an attorney. She works for the City of West Hollywood and we have to find her and talk to her, because like I said, she is a single mom, she is still working, she has a law degree. I don't know if she is going to leave the city of West Hollywood and go work, practice law full-time. Maybe she is using her law degree to work with the City of West Hollywood, I don't know, but I would love for you to speak to her, just to call her and say hi and let her know what you're doing. There are some key people that you really should talk to that will help you just get a little more information and a little more factual information and a little more details. It is just so much and it is so exciting to try to go back and remember all this.

WHITE

Speaking of which, just going back a little bit, I wanted to talk about one of your first clients, Spike Lee. I know that early on you got one of your largest accounts with Toyota Motor Sales USA, Inc. in 1988. But I believe in 1984 there were several people that you worked with, Spike Lee and Jaleel White from Family Matters and John Marshall Jones, Smart Guy, and also you worked

at the 1984 Olympics. Let's just talk about that year for you, with those four clients.

TOBIN

Oh, 1984 was exciting. I brought this book with me, to go back and document some of this stuff for you, but this starts in '86. I really am making an effort to compile my notes. I used to keep a journal and I really still do. I just have to organize it. I have to find it. I went back to '86 to bring some notes. I used to sit down and write. All the time, I'd write my notes.

WHITE

Very helpful.

TOBIN

But I have to go through this and save some of this for you. But back to '84. I was so excited about working in the '84 Olympics and my daughter worked there as well. 1984, because of my involvement in the community in knowing so many people, in being involved in everything— When everybody talked about, "The Olympics is coming, the Olympics is coming! We have to get involved! We have to find something to do!" Well, I didn't want to be a volunteer. I wanted to work and I wanted to get paid. So I went through all the necessary steps to find out the jobs that were paying. And even though I had my little office here on Sunset, I knew, because I was an entrepreneur and I owned my business, that there had to be something I could do and get paid for during the Olympics. Well, since media was my thing and my thrust, and I wanted to be involved in journalism and media and PR, I went to the International Press Credentialing Office, where they were giving out credentials to international press. Well, the people at the International Press said, "Well, you know Ms. Tobin, you know it was very impressive. Your resume is impressive blah blah blah, but you don't speak another language. And this is the international press." I said, "But you have all these Berlitz language interpreters. You don't need me to interpret. I know how to credential. I know media. I knew this, I knew that, and I got the job."

WHITE

Really?

TOBIN

So I worked in the International Press Department. But now the downside of that is, the price you pay for success. Yes, I was successful in getting a job during the Olympics in 1984, but my hours were eleven at night until seven in the morning.

WHITE

You're kidding! PR at that time— Why was that the case?

TOBIN

I wasn't PR. It was credentialing of the International Press. Because of the International Press I guess coming at all hours at night, from wherever, I don't know, I have to look back at my documentation and see why. Well, it was a twenty-four hour service I think we provided. Credentialing the press was twenty-four hours. So it had to be covered. So I worked in the press office from eleven at night to seven in the morning, and then I would leave. Since it was right in Hollywood. ABC, on Gordon. I think it was right on Gordon, right behind Gower Studios or somewhere, the offices were. I would leave at night. I would leave at seven in the morning, go to my office on Sunset, and go to work. So there is just no excuse, when people give excuses for why they can't do something. If you want to do it bad enough. I wanted to work for the Olympics. I can't remember, I think it was a pretty good salary too. I remember getting paid a few grand a month. It was good. Yeah. So I needed that. I needed that to supplement my income for the business. If the clients weren't paying big dollars and I didn't have big clients. I needed that money to supplement the business.

WHITE

Wow. I wonder, that was a real challenge, working from eleven p.m. until seven or eight in the morning or what have you, and then going to your regular job.

TOBIN

My regular office to check on my mail, to check on what I had to do for clients. Yeah. I was working two jobs.

WHITE

Wow.

TOBIN

But you know what comes to mind, Renee, when Dr. Jerry Buss, when you read about him and I have read it somewhere or heard it somewhere— That he worked two full-time jobs for ten years straight. Two full-time jobs for ten years.

WHITE

For ten years.

TOBIN

So if Dr. Jerry Buss can do it, so can I.

WHITE

Sure! That's a role model for sure.

TOBIN

But look where he is today! Yeah, but it helped me because I needed to supplement my income. The International Press Credentialing was exciting. You got to meet all kinds of people and that looked good on the resume, the 1984 Olympics.

WHITE

On that note we are going to go ahead and end the interview for today.

TOBIN

Thank you, Renee.

WHITE

You're welcome.

**1.7. TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE
MARCH 21, 2002**

WHITE

Okay the last time we spoke, it has been a few weeks, but we were just beginning to talk about many of your clients that you were able to get in the early eighties. We started off by just taking a look at some of your work that you had done with the 1984 Olympics and talked about that. I wanted to proceed from there and talk about many of your other clients that you had worked with during that period of time. I wondered if you could talk, number one, about Spike Lee. Spike Lee, I know, was one of your most visible clients at that point in time, so I wondered if you could tell me, give me some background about your first interaction with him, how he came to be your client, and what that experience was like.

TOBIN

I'm still talking today about that experience. Just working with Spike Lee was just something that I will never forget. He is such a creative and interesting young man. I had an opportunity to meet Spike through networking. There was a convention. I'm always attending the Black Journalists Convention, the National Association of Black Journalist Convention. And I'm not sure where we were, what city we were in, but this young lady that I knew said to me, Victoria Horsford, Anna Maria Horsford's sister. Victoria Horsford was doing some work for Columbia Pictures, and I guess she was just maybe doing all kinds of film publicity and outreach, and she said to me, "Pat, Spike Lee is shopping his film. He's trying to get a deal and I think he just landed a deal with Island Pictures. You really need to call the people at Island Pictures." And I said, "Oh my goodness! I'd love to be able to work with him. How do I? What do I do?" So she told me what to do, told me who to call and I didn't wait until I got home. We were way out of town in a convention. I called from there and I started selling myself on the phone to Island Pictures and I said, "You need to make sure you reach the African American community. You need to make sure you have outreach, special marketing. My expertise is ethnic marketing." And before I got off the phone the people said, "Okay, when you get back in town, be sure and come and see us." So that is how that happened. So I had already convinced Island Pictures that I was capable of marketing this film and handling ethnic outreach for Spike Lee and She's Gotta Have It, because that is what he had just gotten the deal with Island for that film. Then I had to meet Spike, of course. Well, you know, God works in mysterious ways and he is always working. It so happened that there was a young lady in my office who

had gone to Spelman [College], a young lady named Kim Bailey, [now] Kimberly Bailey-Tureaud. Kim went to Spelman and after she graduated from Spelman, she came to Los Angeles and worked with me and of course she knew Spike Lee from Morehouse [College] days. He was at Morehouse, she was at Spelman [College]. They were good friends. So we had an opportunity to pitch our company to Island Pictures and of course we got the job. But when we had to meet Spike, because Kimberly Bailey knew him from school, that made it easier. So we got along very well. And Spike is a Pisces. His birthday is March 4. I'm not an astrologist or anything like that, but I do know that sometimes people with like interests and, I don't know, whatever— We kind of clicked, and we got along really well. Spike Lee, he is kind of shy and he just had his own way of doing things. People just didn't understand him at first but I just loved him, because he wasn't afraid to stand up for what he believed in. He wasn't afraid to tell these heads of studios what he thought. He wasn't afraid to demand that he had African American outreach and marketing on his film, because many of the studios didn't have that. There was one woman doing a great job for years, I think about eighteen years, Rosalind Stevenson. She was at MCA and she was one of the very few that was marketing, promoting, and doing PR for the studios. So when I got a chance to work with Spike, I just felt so good. We worked on School Daze, of course, She's Gotta Have It, Do The Right Thing. We launched his store on Melrose—Spike's Joint, the store he opened on Melrose. And that was exciting. Magic Johnson and everybody in the world was there. It was a wonderful event. Booksignings—I mean, we just had wonderful, wonderful experiences working with Spike. But he didn't come to the West Coast. He stopped coming to the West Coast. He didn't really care too much for Hollywood, it seems. So he no longer really had a need for a publicist out here. He ended up getting one on the East Coast, that he is still working with today I understand. So it was a great experience, and thanks to Spike I own a condo in Studio City, because he paid enough that I could buy something.

WHITE

Is that so?

TOBIN

Oh yeah. It was wonderful. It was really very rewarding in more ways than one working with Spike Lee.

WHITE

Do you recall what it was like during that pitch meeting?

TOBIN

Oh yes!

WHITE

Can you describe the scenario?

TOBIN

Well, Spike, he doesn't have any hesitation. He doesn't hesitate at all using whatever words he wants to use, whatever language he wants to use and he is not afraid to say what he feels. I remember him banging on the table sometimes and using sometimes profanity if he had to, to express himself. It was just a good feeling, because everybody was predominantly white. It was just Spike and his team. We would be the only people of color. But here is a producer that they wanted something from. I mean, I'm talking about the other studios. I don't think we had any problems with Island. Island was very open because the gentleman, Chris Black, I think, the head of Island, I think he is from Jamaica. Anyway, he was very open and receptive so there was no problem there. But some of the other studios down the line, when he got other deals, it was a real challenge. I think he had Columbia Pictures and some other studios that he worked with. But it was just wonderful because, even though he wasn't very tall and very big, he was very, very firm about what he wanted. He knew what he wanted and people knew better than to challenge him because he came right back.

WHITE

Interesting, very interesting. And when he went back to New York or started working with the publicist there, do you suppose that is one of the reasons why the store over on Melrose closed?

TOBIN

Well, the store closed before that. I believe, you see Spike is ahead of his time and now, today you see a lot of shops seemed to be flourishing and doing okay on Melrose. But this was back in the eighties I guess, and people just weren't ready for maybe the prices or something. His baseball shirts and the kind of merchandise that he had, maybe they were a little pricey for the Melrose crowd at that time. I don't know.

WHITE

I see. Now, the first film that he produced that you were handling the PR for, She's Gotta Have It— Tell me a little bit about the kinds of publicity you put together, because it was rather a controversial film. And I'm sure that the marketing and the PR for it had to be done in a very delicate kind of a way. Can you talk a little bit about that?

TOBIN

But see, Renee, when it comes to controversy, being a black woman in America, there is always controversy it seems, about one thing or another, whether it is religion or whatever. And I just love a challenge. I've always liked being challenged and the fact that I knew— I'm a black woman, and even though this woman in the film, Tracy, had all these boyfriends and everything— Spike dealt with reality. I mean, this is real. I mean, there are people like that. So I had no problem getting the sisters, the girlfriends, the brothers, "Hey, brothers, you've all have to see this." You know, the barber shops, the beauty salons. I mean, we did postcards, we had that grassroots marketing approach, which worked, and it still works today. No matter what people say, I get called all the time, "We need ethnic marketing. We need grassroots. We need community outreach." We just knew we had to get to our people. African Americans spend an excess of, well today we are talking, what six hundred billion dollars. I don't know. But back then, we knew that we were a market to be reckoned with and we, African Americans, should not be taken for granted. So promoting this film, even if it were just for black people, it would have been a success because, you know, when we go out and spend our money at the theaters, we help to make those big box office successes. So it worked. I mean, we got to the schools, and the community groups, and fraternities, and sororities. Even today people still have the video. They keep the video as a keepsake, because that was such a great film.

WHITE

Right. So your grassroots concept, it includes schools, fraternities and sororities, barbershops—

TOBIN

And even churches, depending on the content and the nature. I mean, we all go to church and we are all human beings and, well, we believe in somebody, God, Buddha, somebody. So you reach. You don't leave any group out. You reach out to everybody. So we were just very successful at getting to the community, the total community, community groups, organizations.

WHITE

Do you actually have what you would consider like a street team that would go out and distribute materials to them? Or how do you reach some of these organizations? Is it just faxing them press releases? What is your approach?

TOBIN

Well some of our people we would do, of course, mass mailing is always a big success. We would mail to many people. We would fax. Speaking of faxing, I'm laughing because of my first fax machine was because of Spike Lee. He tried to send me something one day from New York. You know he's been based in Brooklyn, and he said, "I want to fax you something." And I said, "Fax! I don't have a fax machine!" This was in the early eighties. He said, "Well you better get one!" So I got a fax machine, thanks to Spike Lee. But, yeah, people wanted to be involved in this film. They wanted to embrace it. Of course, everybody wanted to go to premieres, whenever there was a Spike Lee premiere. I think back now of people like Larry [Laurence] Fishburne and Wesley Snipes and Eddie Murphy. I mean, we had access to all these people because they all wanted to come to Spike Lee's premiere. It was always a big to-do. So getting postcards out or— And Spike is really good at that himself. Oh, he is a marketing guru.

WHITE

Oh, is he? Okay.

TOBIN

Oh yeah! Yeah, I mean, growing up, going to school in Atlanta and being a Morehouse man, I mean, he just knew. He and— I can't forget his partner. Oh God! I can't think of his name right now. It'll come to me. [Monty Ross] But they were in school together at Morehouse and these two guys, they were just the best. They knew about the T-shirts in the trunk of the car. They would sell T-shirts out of the trunk of the car. That is why I teased them all the time, about when he opened Spike's Joint. He had one in Brooklyn and one in Tokyo and one in Hollywood in L.A. on Melrose. And I told him, I says, "Look, Spike. I remember when you were selling T-shirts out of a cardboard box. Don't get grand." And we were really, like I said, we were really down. Down with each other, down to earth, open and real and I just liked that so much about him. It was really fun working with him. But he knew what he wanted and he would always say to us, "Make sure you do this," and "Get that out there," and "I want everybody to know about it." And we would leave postcards in different places and now, today, it is a big marketing tool that people use. If you go in these restaurants, you will see postcards in racks.

WHITE

Exactly. You were using them back in the eighties.

TOBIN

We were using those way back then.

WHITE

Interesting. Well I'm glad to hear that that was a good experience. He is a terrific artist. It is nice to know that someone such as yourself, not necessarily helped him get started, but helped him publicize one of the first films that received notoriety.

TOBIN

I tell people today that Spike Lee, I put him on the map. Well, not me personally, but Tobin & Associates, we were part of his marketing team. We helped to launch his career and I'm still claiming that today.

WHITE

Good for you! As you should. Okay. Well, some other celebrities that you worked with, I know Jaleel White from Family Matters. Can you talk a little bit about that experience, how you came to have him as a client.

TOBIN

Well, definitely through networking. Of course, my daughter [Lauren Tobin], having worked and still works in the entertainment industry, many times when she couldn't work on a project or something, she might just say—People might ask her for referrals. And even though sometimes she couldn't really refer me—for some reason she thought it would be in conflict—somehow Jaleel's mother, Gail White, who manages Jaleel, we just hit it off. We went to some social event one time and my daughter was there. And Gail says, "Oh! Your mom does PR. Maybe I should talk to her!" And that is how that happened. We went to a Mother's Day brunch or something. And Gail White and I talked about my being able to just do some PR for Jaleel. I'm still very close with the White family, Gail and Michael White and Jaleel. Every now and then I will recommend him as a speaker for different events. A recent one, he just spoke for some young people at Toyota Motor Sales [USA, Inc.], the Young Black Scholars program that we have.

WHITE

Oh, really!

TOBIN

So back then, it was about referral and networking. Once somebody recommends you and people get to meet you and they like you, then the rest is up to you. You have to just sell yourself. I was able to do that and Gail— You know, there were so few black managers handling successful clients at that level. I mean, Jaleel has been working since he was three years old.

WHITE

Oh really!

TOBIN

And he just recently graduated from UCLA Film School.

WHITE

Oh! Good for him!

TOBIN

So he is a young filmmaker now.

WHITE

Terrific.

TOBIN

Yeah.

WHITE

Okay. I would imagine the same holds true for John Marshall Jones, from Smart Guy. He was one of your clients as well at that time period.

TOBIN

Yes! John Marshal Jones, Smart Guy. How did he come to us? Another referral, I'm sure, networking. Oh, I know, through NAMIC. NAMIC is the National Association of Minorities in Communications. John was at an event, and we were there and we got introduced. Kyle Bowser may have been instrumental in introducing us, some of the members of NAMIC.

WHITE

Who is Kyle Bowser?

TOBIN

Oh Kyle Bowser. Of course, he is the husband to Yvette Bowser, who created those wonderful, successful shows—Living Single and all that stuff. Well, Kyle headed up—was the president, I guess, or the chairman of—NAMIC, this organization that I mentioned. And we knew each other just through networking and being around at different events and working in the entertainment industry. He has his own production company and he was on the Warner Brothers lot for years. So by working with him on this NAMIC project, I got to meet Marshall and through that, got him as a client.

WHITE

Okay. Great. Do you know what NAMIC stands for?

TOBIN

National Association of Minorities in Communications. Now, years ago it used to be National Association of Minorities in Cable, but they changed it. Because these ethnic people, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American, they are all in some form of communication—cable, TV. And it is a wonderful event that they have every year. They have the Vision Awards and it is very similar to the ACE awards. I don't know if they still have the ACE awards. HBO used to, I think, sponsor the ACE awards. But now, NAMIC— It takes place every April. It is a fabulous event and we usually help with sponsorship outreach and we work on that account.

WHITE

Okay and are you actually involved in that organization? NAMIC?

TOBIN

Oh, yeah. I'm a member. I usually join everything that I work with because as a member you are looked upon favorably. Well you know, we give her business, she is one of our members and it's a good thing.

WHITE

Absolutely.

TOBIN

So it's like giving back. You join, you support the organization and when there is an opportunity to hire our services, they remember, "Well we got a member that is in this business so we will utilize her service."

WHITE

Okay. Of course. Okay, you spoke a moment ago about Spike Lee's, of course, interaction or affiliation with Morehouse University in Atlanta, and I wanted to find out a little bit about your experience. I know you've worked with a lot of the historically black colleges in doing public relations for them. Can you speak a little bit about which colleges you have worked with and what kind of outreach and PR sort of programs you established for them?

TOBIN

Well, mainly, my contact with the black colleges has been as a result of my association with Toyota. Toyota Motor Sales has UNCF, United Negro College Fund/Toyota Scholars. One good thing about that was Toyota would give scholarships and internships to students from Bethune-Cookman, Morehouse, Spelman, Tuskegee University and I think they've added Xavier. Those five universities Toyota would give scholarship to, four-year scholarships. The students would get an opportunity to work at a Toyota office, their junior year. And Toyota would make sure they got their scholarship for four years and it was a wonderful— And we did that for years. Actually the scholarship still goes on, but one of the reasons I got to go to Atlanta so much is that we used to have a dinner. Toyota would sponsor a dinner in Atlanta, where they would bring the students together, from all those schools. And we would have a dinner and they would get recognition. It was a wonderful event. As budgets got tight, it was kind of difficult flying back and forth, all these people and housing them and putting them up. So the program still continues, we just don't have the dinner every year. But through Toyota Motor Sales, I was there in New York when we launched this major press announcement about Toyota implementing these scholarships for the United Negro College Fund. And, just like the circle of life continues, Bill [William H.] Gray [III], who heads up the United Negro College Fund, is my good friend from Philadelphia, that I have known since he was a minister at Bright Hope Baptist Church. I think early on, I talked about how we couldn't believe he was going, leaving the ministry to go into politics and we all thought, "What?" That's before he was Congressman Bill Gray. So now, I get calls from him, every now and then, to ask a question or two about United Negro College fund and about Toyota and how I am I doing out here on the West Coast. So isn't that something?

WHITE

It just keeps going on and on, the contacts. That is terrific.

TOBIN

I wanted to mention, speaking of Atlanta and Morehouse, Monty Ross. Monty Ross was Spike Lee's buddy and they worked together. They went to Morehouse together. They worked on Spike's first film, I think the one he did for school, We Cut Heads. Monty was Spike's producer, associate producer, co-producer. And that was a young man I wanted to remember, because

Monty lives out here now, and I don't think he still works with Spike, but Monty and I stay in touch now and then.

WHITE

Good for you. How do you ever make time to pick up new clients, establish rapport with people that, perhaps you have not met before, as well as maintain the kind of interaction with the clients that you have now, as well as those that you have worked with in the past from Philadelphia? How do you manage that in a given week, a given month in your schedule?

TOBIN

You know, it's a gift. It's got to be a gift, because there are some people who will not want to work with a certain person for whatever reason and they may have an attitude. And I always say, "You know what? I'm going to try to make this work." It is a challenge. Remember I said I liked being challenged? And there are some difficult clients and some of them you would rather not work with, but when you are in business and you want to survive, and you have to survive, it is like having a job. You either go to work or you don't get paid. So in your business, you either service the clients and do the best of your ability to keep them and make them happy or you are not in business. And, I just love people, networking. Even when people are difficult, I like to still try to work with them because I've had some difficult folks. It is not all easy. Trust me.

WHITE

Really?

TOBIN

But being a Christian helps because when things get really rough and you want to just maybe explode, then you think about—and this will bring tears to my eyes, I'm a sentimental fool, I cry all the time—I think about when Christ was crucified and how he had to carry that cross and he had thorns on his head and nails in his hand. I mean, how could you not do whatever you need to do to survive, when look what he went through. Look what he did. So that keeps me focused.

WHITE

Sustains you.

TOBIN

Sustains me. That is why I hear a lot about, "Oh, you have to have a balanced life. You have to have this. You have to have." No. You just have to be happy. You have to like what you are doing and do it well. As long as you are having fun, then it is not a job. I'm having fun. I like what I do. I get to travel. I just got a call today, on my way over here, about a major hotel resort in Las Vegas and the possibility of maybe doing some marketing for them.

WHITE

Oh, really!

TOBIN

So referrals keep coming and that's one of my favorite cities. [mutual laughter]

WHITE

It won't have any problem doing work there.

TOBIN

And the good part about the networking and having friends and doing—I mean, I'm not perfect. Certainly there's probably some people out there that weren't happy but you know what? I tried to do my best and if I didn't succeed then, so what. "Next." You know, you just move on. I don't deliberately try to hurt people or do anything wrong and most people know that. And I think that's why all these contacts and friends and referrals—if you go back to any of these names—you will probably find that most, for the most part, have something positive to say and that is a good thing.

WHITE

That's certainly been the experience so far. Every time I mention your name or say that, "Well, Pat suggested that I call you," it is an open invitation to come in and chat.

TOBIN

Because I try to help people. I mean, you witnessed today, when I made a phone call to the vice president, no, to the president, general manager of NBC and somebody said, "Oh, we needed your name. We wanted to recommend

that you maybe invite speakers to come to this center for underprivileged children." I said, "Of course!" It is never like, "Oh." Very rarely will I say, "Oh, I can't do it," or "Don't bother me." It is always, "Sure. Let me try to help."

WHITE

Sure, sure, giving and giving. It is quite a gift because one would feel, I'm sure, stretched at all ends, trying to maintain this kind of workload and life style, though it is a lot of fun. I'm sure meeting people and talking to people is also very, very energy draining and it takes up so much time. I know you have talked many times about trying to maintain balance in your life. So I certainly commend you for having the stamina to continue at the pace that you work at. It is quite commendable.

TOBIN

Thank you.

WHITE

Yeah. Now you mentioned, of course, that there are difficult clients. Without naming names or anything like that, can you talk to me a little bit about some of those experiences? I know when we talk, usually the experiences are good and they are positive and you are putting your best foot forward and your organization is helping to bring light to a particular client, but I'm interested in some of those other situations, where it is not quite so positive and how you actually dealt with it, of course, without naming names. Can you talk a bit about some experiences?

TOBIN

I'm thinking of one in particular right now and rather than explode and yell and scream and have a shouting match, I'll say, "Okay, I understand. I hear you." I want them to know that I understand what they are saying. I hear what they are saying, but if we can't seem to agree and make things work, then we'll just have to move on. I don't want to be confrontational—not that I'm afraid to be, because I grew up in a city where folks are really rough and tough and we're not afraid of anybody.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

So rather than scream and yell and have a shouting match, I just try to be sensible and talk it through and reach some kind of understanding. But it is a thankless job being in public relations, it really is. As long as you got their name out there and you're doing a wonderful job, they are happy. But the first time they don't get what they want is, "You're not doing anything for me!" And it is like, "We are not doing anything for you? Let me show you these pages of notes and these tons of faxes and these phone calls, toll calls, on my phone bill." So you just do the best you can do and hope they'll understand. And when they don't, you just move on, because it can get kind of ugly. There are times when a client thinks that they are the only one and we may have 27 projects on the table, with just a few people. I've been able to reach out and get some freelance people to help, which is a good thing, because there are many freelance folks out there looking for work. So when you have to bring in more people, you do that, but when you do your best and people aren't happy, then you just move on.

WHITE

How would you suppose that a client measures the success of the work that you do for them?

TOBIN

If it's media related and they want to see themselves in print, then you gather all the clips, through a clipping service or some means, and you show them, "Look. You've been in this publication. You've been in that publication. Here are all these clips." Then they know that you are doing your job, because those clips— If you were to buy that space in the newspaper, per column inch, you wouldn't be able to afford that. For instance, one of our clients, we got her on the cover of Black Enterprise.

WHITE

Really?

TOBIN

Oh yeah. Her name is April Weeden. April Weeden-Washington. She is a stunt woman, African American stunt woman, and we got April on the cover of Black

Enterprise and recently, I went to April's baby shower. She is going to be a mom very soon and we are still in touch and we are still friends. And as a result of April being on the cover of Black Enterprise, she also got other work as a result of that. She never forgot me. She would always send me a note and thank me and let me know that it was a direct result of her being on Black Enterprise that people are contacting her.

WHITE

That's terrific!

TOBIN

Now that is a great way to measure a successful story or activity for a client because Black Enterprise magazine, it's an international publication. I don't even know what the circulation is but she was on there recently in the eighties and it was a great cover.

WHITE

Wow. How did you go about making that happen?

TOBIN

Well, people in the office, they work with me, sharing my contacts with the National Association of Black Journalists, saying who to call. We developed these press kits and these press releases and these pitch letters and having young, talented people reach out and use those press kits and pitch letters and call and follow-up. That is how that happened. I can't remember whether it was Stephanie, or who was in the office at the time that was working on that project, but I would normally delegate and say, "Do this. Do that. Contact this person, that person." And, if the young people were really serious and relentless in their efforts and follow through, you get results, and that is what happened.

WHITE

Wow. That was a real coup, because that is quite a prestigious magazine and to be on the cover of it, really speaks volumes about the work that you guys have done with Ms. Weeden.

TOBIN

Yeah.

WHITE

Good for her and for you.

TOBIN

Oh yeah.

WHITE

Okay. Well let's see now, I know that you had an opportunity to work with some black-owned businesses during that time, when you were sort of just expanding your client base. Can you recall some black-owned businesses that you worked with in the beginning of your career anyway, in the early eighties? And most specifically, how did the black community respond to you and to your work?

TOBIN

The black community was very, very positive. It was a favorable response because public relations, owning a PR firm, and being a black woman and heading up a PR firm, it was a wonderful thing. Because most PR firms were major, mainstream, white males. So [there were] very few African American women that headed up a PR firm. One of the things that helped a great deal to get my business going were community groups and organizations—the Brotherhood Crusade, Black Journalists Association. It's been over twenty years that I've been associated with them, not only as a member, but helping to coordinate events, major scholarship fundraising dinners that they've had throughout the years. So that's been a wonderful blessing. And many, even sometimes, church groups and organizations will need a professional fund raiser, a PR person and they would come to me. I remember working with Faithful Central Bible Church on a few of the Easter Sunrise Service events, contacting the media and letting them know about the Sunrise Service and the special speakers that Bishop [Kenneth C.] Ulmer and Bishop Noel Jones used to have jointly. They would have the Sunrise Service together. So just helping there and working with church groups and fraternities, sororities and— I'm sure there's a list as long as my arm that I probably can't think about right this moment. But I just know that there were a ton of groups and organizations

that helped me. And that's how I got my start, really worked with predominantly black groups and organizations, because mainstream companies just weren't really hiring African American firms, until it became popular to think about diversity and ethnic outreach. Then they started looking for, "Oh, we need African Americans to help us with this ethnic outreach."

WHITE

Do you recall at what point that occurred? What time period?

TOBIN

You know, I always say to people, I was preaching diversity long before they started talking about diversity, because my niche has always been the African American market. So when I think back to the seventies or even the eighties when major companies— For instance, a company like Coors, when they were having problems with the African American community, here again, we became the firm that helped on the West Coast to launch the Coors Brewery, Coors Brewing Company West Coast office. There is a woman named Lura Ball who hired us when Coors hired her, and she needed some outreach in the African American community. She needed someone who knew the community leaders, who had a good reputation, who could interface with people from all levels. And that is how we got the Coors account. So back in the eighties, late seventies, early eighties, when many of these companies, either they were in trouble with the African American community, or they just didn't know how to reach us. Here again, with the success of Spike Lee and other successful campaigns, our name and reputation just kind of stayed out there.

WHITE

Interesting. This was a real interesting period of time, of course, with regards to race relations, sort of the racial climate in the country. But more specifically in Los Angeles, it was Reaganomics during that time, a very conservative ideology. How would you describe the ways in which that affected the African American community in Los Angeles, because of Reaganomics and that conservative ideology. More specifically, how, or if there was any impact for you as a public relations, African American public relations professional in this city.

TOBIN

I don't think there was any impact on me personally because I always said, and I still say, I have done so much with so little that I can do almost anything with nothing. So it wasn't like I had a whole lot and all of a sudden, you know, this Reaganomics thing affected me. I always had to hustle. As they say, go out and get the business and fight to keep it. It was just always a challenge. And, I don't remember getting any big fat contracts from anybody in that Reagan camp or anything like that. So it didn't really affect me. I just continued to keep fighting and pushing and working with the people that were interested in doing business with an African American firm and joining those organizations, business organizations, like the Black Business Association, the Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce, the Southern California Regional Purchasing Council. Those organizations that were fighting for small business and black business to get a piece of the pie. And one thing Congresswoman Maxine Waters did, and I am always very, very thankful to her for this, she made sure that if there was a major contract in the state of California, it called for some diversity. You had to have an African American, Hispanic consultant involved, especially with something that the state was issuing. There are many proposals that go out from the state, whether it is from the Department of Health Services or something like that. And you need to make sure that they are being fair about it and that the business is spread around, that not one main stream agency is getting it all.

WHITE

Right. And did that initiative help your organization?

TOBIN

It helped. I think we teamed up with a few mainstream agencies as a result of that and got some business from the Department of Health Services of the State of California in the eighties.

WHITE

Terrific. Okay, now I understand that you also worked with the Congressional Black Caucus during that period of time. Did some of these initiatives, or what have you, did some of those get channeled through that organization? Or, to

what extent were you working with them? Do you recall what projects you collaborated with them on?

TOBIN

Yes. Working with the Black Caucus, it was really good, because it came as a result of having a Coors Brewing Company as a client or Toyota. Many times, if you represent these major companies and they want to reach the African American market, it is our job at Tobin & Associates to make sure they went to the Congressional Black Caucus, the National Urban League, the National Association of Black Journalists. So locally, being involved with the Jesse Jackson campaign in 1984, I got to work with Maxine Waters at that time and Brenda Marsh [Mitchell], who was with the Brotherhood Crusade, who is still with the Brotherhood Crusade today. Working with those community leaders and political leaders, you got a chance to take it from a state level to the national level. So if you know the Diane Watsons and the Maxine Waters, and all the political people in the state of California— Even in northern California, Willie Brown— I just got something in the mail the other day. Willie Brown is doing something. You take it from California to Washington D.C. So working with the Congressional Black Caucus was always something I looked forward to every year, because not only was it a big event where you networked with everybody from all over the country, but it was very important that you dealt with issues that affected people of color and that affected all of us really. So through major clients like Toyota or Coors or something, and Spike Lee— Another outreach when we worked with Spike, of course we went to the Congressional Black Caucus, and we would set up a TV so they could view clips of his films. We would pass out material and, even today, that is a big success at the Black Caucus and Black Journalists. You will find monitors set up where people may be viewing clips of film and handing out postcards and having screenings. So it works. Whatever works, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. So it still works today. And the Congressional Black Caucus, I am still involved even to this day. Thanks to Toyota, almost every year we're at the Congressional Black Caucus.

WHITE

I see. Good for you! That is excellent. Excellent contact to have and to continue to maintain, decade after decade.

TOBIN

Decade after decade.

WHITE

Right. Now tell me something, you mentioned before, in brief, how much it costs actually to hire your organization. You mentioned early on that you received a couple hundred dollars and then I think that somewhere along the way, I think in our last interview, you mentioned that you were getting maybe a thousand dollars and it helped to sustain your business. During the early eighties, what would it cost to hire an organization as efficient and as effective as yours?

TOBIN

Well, one of the good things about having friends in business and friends who knew budgeting and finances. I remember sitting down with one of my mentors and saying, "Okay, how do I survive?" They said, "Well, if you have ten clients paying you a thousand dollars a month, that is ten thousand dollars a month." It is just doing the numbers and watching your overhead and your expenses. Instead of having a plush office with thousands and thousands of square feet and all new furniture and all, I mean, you just can't do that unless you are in the money. So working with people who knew numbers and who knew how to budget and help me with my finances, it was either you asked for five hundred dollars a month, maybe if you can't get a thousand. Then you get twice as many people giving you five hundred dollars. It was just a numbers game where you made sure you had enough to stay in business and to pay people and to get people that you can afford. I mean, there were many people who were looking for work and were probably out of my league. You know, they wanted as much as I was making or more and I couldn't afford that. So you just make sure that you try to balance your budget and ask for the amount of money you need so that you can stay in business. I'm still not doing as good a job as I should do, because I should be a millionaire by now. As hard as I worked, I should be a millionaire. But having good clients that stay with you for a long time and hopefully increase their pay, you will hopefully get your pay increased over a period of years. The longevity counts for something. And if you stay in business long enough, you have a track record. Then you can demand a certain amount of money. It is like an entertainer. He may start out

doing the Chitlin Circuit and just doing little places for gas or food, you know, gas money or food money. But when you become a superstar, then people can't touch you. And I'm not saying we're going to ever price ourselves out of the market. As long as I'm in public relations and I'm a consultant, I will always want to, hopefully bring somebody along, and teach young people, or people interested in the field of PR, how to do this and how to price yourself, and how to stay in business, and how to get clients. So that is one of my dreams, is to eventually just have the Tobin School of PR, to keep it going.

WHITE

That sounds exciting. Now, does one come to you and ask for full service public relations, or are there, I don't know, sort of categories or packages that you put together. Say, someone that wants full scale and you charge a certain amount for that, or someone who needs just maybe to publicize a small event or something like that. How do you structure those kinds of things. Do you have sort of a scale that you work with?

TOBIN

Yes, thanks to the classes that I took at UCLA, through the networking, UCLA Extension— Taking all kinds of PR courses helped a great deal. I'm still trying to get my professional designation in public relations. I have to finish that, but we learn to price out projects. If you're paying by the hour, say for instance you have three people working on a project and they each have an hourly rate, one person gets \$150 an hour, another one gets maybe \$100 an hour and another one gets \$60 an hour, you add those up and that total hourly rate is your agency fee for that particular client. Now, mostly corporate accounts will pay you by the hour. So you can really do well if you get major corporate accounts, and that is one of the reasons I have been able to survive with Toyota, because of the longevity and the hourly rate. And they cover all your expenses. When you are doing business for them, if you're traveling, they take care of all of that, travel and out of pocket expenses. So that helped a great deal. But you may get a smaller client who just wants a press kit. So you just charge one flat fee, maybe for putting together a press kit, writing the press release, compiling the material that goes in the press kit, the picture, the bio, and that is a lesser fee. So there is an hourly rate. There is a flat fee. And you know what? Really, this business, you are a consultant, it is whatever the

traffic will bear. I mean, some people may ask for five thousand dollars to compile a press kit. Well, that's kind of not realistic and those people know what they want to spend and know what they're budget is, so you try to come to some common understanding and some agreement. You don't really try to gauge people in and take them to the cleaner's. As they say, try to get more than something is really worth. So I'm usually fair about that. As a matter of fact, I think I'm too fair. I'm underpriced. I should be charging more.

WHITE

Really?

TOBIN

Really! Sometimes I think I don't charge enough because I like what I do, so it's not always about the money. But when you are in business, that is the other side. Maybe you do have to kind of say, "Okay. Enough of this volunteer. Enough of this free stuff. Enough of this. I have rent to pay. I have expenses. I have staff." So you just have to work it out.

WHITE

I see. Now what barometer do you use or have you used in order to, either compare what, say, other organizations are charging? How do you know what's fair market value for your work? And how do you know that at this point in time, maybe you should be charging a bit more?

TOBIN

Well one of the things that has been very helpful, through the National Black Public Relations Society, is we compare notes with other PR professionals around the country, and depending on the area that you live in, the demographics, wherever you are. It depends on people's lifestyle. For instance, in L.A. and New York, you may pay more in Los Angeles and New York than you would in North Carolina or someplace in the South. Prices vary. And we compare notes through our networking and professional organizations and people who are in business. At the major agencies, the mainstream agencies, they have friends that will share with us, "Okay, this is the market value. This is what you should be charging." We try to get that from the client if it is realistic and if we know that we should be getting it, then

that is where the battle usually comes in. I was talking to a client not long ago and they were paying two thousand dollars a month to one person and fifteen hundred for the other, but the people getting fifteen hundred was working twice as hard, doing twice as much and continuing to work with the client. So you just have to try to get what you know you deserve, because if you are really going to work hard and do the work, you ought to be paid. So there are ways to measure that by comparing notes with other people who are in the business.

WHITE

Okay. That is one of the excellent benefits of belonging to some of these organizations.

TOBIN

Professional organizations. And that is why I encourage young people to join because you don't know everything. You are out there by yourself, you need to network with other people and brainstorm, share information, and learn. I mean, it is a learning process. At fifty-nine years old, I'm still learning. You never stop learning.

WHITE

Sure. Absolutely. Let's see now, there are certain points in time, I'm sure, when you have to turn down clients. What is your criteria for selecting your clients? Particularly, I ask that because I know that you represented Old English 800 Brewing Company at one point and a quote in some of your records says, "Some people won't touch tobacco or alcohol but anything that is positive and will enhance our community is workable. And besides, your organization sees some good in everything." But can you talk a little bit about some of the more controversial clients? And if in fact, what criteria do you use to turn down?

TOBIN

Well before Tobin & Associates had an opportunity to work with the Department of Health Services, tobacco, liquor, any paying account was a good account.

WHITE

Okay

TOBIN

But then when it became a conflict to work with— If you have a contract with the Department of Health Services and you are working to get people to stop smoking, then you can't work for a tobacco company. It is a conflict. So before we got any contracts with the Department of Health Services, we would maybe work with an Old English or Coors, or whatever those companies. As long as it is not in conflict and the alcohol or beverage company, they may be putting money behind something positive, teaching young people about business, or having business seminars, then I can justify doing a project like that. They are not out there really selling the beverage, they are really putting their money behind something positive that has to do with business. So that kind of helped us to justify working for some of those companies. And as long as it is not— People need to be sensible about alcoholic beverages, and not do anything so that it is detrimental. I mean if you drink yourself to death, or smoke yourself to death, come on now, you have to think about what you are doing and do it sensibly.

WHITE

Did you ever receive any sort of backlash from the community for any clients that you took on?

TOBIN

You know that is funny, not at the time, because back in the day, when we had Coors, Coors was doing a lot of positive things or trying to rebuild their image in the black community so they would sponsor a lot of worthwhile programs, educational programs. So it is funny how this whole thing works. People may be up in arms about something one moment but as long the company makes some sort of effort to turn their image around and do something positive, then everybody is okay.

WHITE

It is so true. And of course, you helped to broaden people's perspective about a particular company, in that people may automatically think that, "Oh. This is

an alcohol company." But there are positive things that that organization does for a variety of communities. So that is part of your assignment, right?

TOBIN

Yeah. You got it.

WHITE

Okay. On that note, we are going to need to go ahead and turn over the tape.

1.8. TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE TWO
MARCH 21, 2002

WHITE

We were just talking about some of the clients that you actually had to think about, very carefully, representing and some of the backlash, or not, that you may have received from some of them. I know that you also had made many inroads into collaborating with other, large-scale public relations organizations. I know that you said that one of your missions was to reach the African American community, but also for Asians and Latinos and other mainstream markets. So in some of your literature you indicated that you found yourself joint-venturing with other major companies in order to compete with the mainstream agencies. Can you talk a little about your experience, collaborating with other PR organizations, to broaden your reach to other communities?

TOBIN

One company in particular that comes to mind is Manning, Salvage and Lee. Manning, Salvage and Lee is another one of those mainstream PR firms. When I had an opportunity to work with them on the Century Freeway— Back to what I said about political leaders making sure that the money is divided fairly. If you are going to build a major freeway, that is going to come through our community, then you need to make sure that there's some African American, Asian, Hispanic and other ethnic groups working on the business. So through Manning, Salvage and Lee we got a chance to work on the, what was that freeway coming through? Century Freeway.

WHITE

The Century freeway, 105.

TOBIN

Right and we had to make sure that we got the word out and in some of the malls in the African American community. We would go to the ethnic malls that were located in predominantly black communities and have spokespeople and pass out material. So that was a good opportunity to work with Manning, Salvage and Lee. As a result, there is a gentleman named Mike Malaszko— We are still friends today as a result of having worked together, and every chance we get we try to find new ways to continue working together. We haven't done anything lately, but that was a good experience. And then when we had the BabyCal [state program], when they were educating young teenagers about pregnancy and healthy babies and all of that. We worked with the company called Evans Advertising Agency. I don't know if they are still in business, but that was a mainstream advertising agency and we were the subcontractors. Many times you get an opportunity to be a subcontractor and the mainstream agency will be the prime. And a piece of the pie is better than no pie at all. So that was really good, to be able to work with mainstream companies and get some of the money, even if you couldn't get all.

WHITE

And so, when you worked with them, they would actually, in terms of the day-to-day functions, when they wanted to reach, say an ethnic group, particularly the African Americans, they would come to you and say, "What would be the best approach for this?"

TOBIN

Well usually we would handle the African American piece of it, since our niche was the African American market. For instance, we worked with the Rowland Company. We worked with them on the tobacco business, making California a smoke-free state. This was years ago when we talked about, "Year 2000, we want California to be a smoke-free state." Well, this was back in the late eighties, early nineties or whatever, and it seemed so far away then. But working with companies, we would handle the ethnic piece and we would do our job to make sure we reach the African Americans. We reached churches

and schools and organizations in our community that they may not, the other mainstream agencies may not be familiar with.

WHITE

I see. Terrific. Okay, I wanted to move forward or move into the late eighties and talk about one of your major clients, Toyota Motor Sales [USA] Inc. How did that relationship come to pass? I know that you have been working for them for many, many years and that you traveled to Japan as an ambassador for Toyota Sales. Can you talk a little bit in detail about how that relationship came to pass and then what it's been like over the years.

TOBIN

It's one of the best experiences I've had as a businesswoman, as an African American woman, because certainly, I probably would have not gotten to Japan had it not been for Toyota. In 1988 there were some negative things being said about African Americans from, I guess the late, I don't know if he is the late prime minister, but the prime minister in Japan had said some negative things about African Americans. As a result of that, one of my mentors, friends, and business associates, said, "You know, we should write to some of these companies. We should write a letter and let these companies know what we can do for them." This was in Japan, that this was said over there, but the word got out. I mean, you know, we are global, word gets around. So when the word— It was at a press conference actually, that this person, this man said this. So as a result, many Americans got wind of it. You know the Andy [Andrew] Youngs and just everybody and there was dialogue back and forth about this whole issue of saying these negative things about African Americans being lazy and bringing down the economy and all of this. Well the person just kind of put their foot in their mouth. They really didn't understand what they were saying. So as a result, there were many African American leaders who saw this as an opportunity to set the record straight, to fix this, and show these people in other countries that we can all work together and they need to know more about African Americans. They need to be educated, because there are many significant contributions that were made to this country by African Americans. I mean we were here from the beginning to help to build this place. So being aggressive and wanting to get business, I understood that this was an opportunity to reach out. So we wrote

to several Japanese companies at the time and Toyota was the only one that said— Everybody else was, "Oh, no thank you. We don't need your help" or whatever. "Well, let's talk. Let's come in and talk and tell me what you can do. Show me what you can do to help us reach the ethnic community, particularly the African American community." That was in 1988, and because our niche has been ethnic marketing, because— As I said to the vice president who hired me at the time, I said, "You know, I've been black all my life. I can tell you about the significant contributions that African Americans have made to this community." And certainly he had some idea too, but he didn't know that there was a black PR firm out there. No one had approached him. No one had contacted him. The fact that Tobin & Associates did— It started out, probably, as a hand shake with just some small projects in 1988, and fourteen years later we're still working with Toyota. We have gone through many managers that have moved on, and gone back and forth to Japan, or many managers who have left the company or moved to other areas. Tobin & Associates being, first of all, being proud of the association with Toyota, because they are really doing some positive things in diversity. They are really reaching out. And they have always done a lot of good, but you just didn't know to what extent and maybe you didn't know how much. But now we are educating African Americans and letting them know about what is going on. Toyota is doing a lot of good things. And we were able to help implement some of those programs. Like I mentioned the United Negro College Fund and going to those major conventions and scholarships. Education is a big thing, one of the thrusts, main thrusts for Toyota. So helping to get the word out and to reach the African American community and let them know about what Toyota is doing has been a joy for us, because they are one of those companies that— They are a major corporation. They have the budget, and even though budgets are cut sometimes, if you are loyal, if you do a good job, they will keep you. They have been able to help our company grow—grow in experience, grow in finance, just be able to stay in business. Certainly, in California you have to have a car. So being able to get a vehicle to drive, because you work for another motor company like at Toyota, has just been a blessing. I learned somewhere, in my UCLA class or something, about growing the account. No matter who comes along in the company, and they're your manager, it is your job to get along with that person if you want to keep the business. People have attitudes and they don't want to work with someone for whatever

reason. I try not to let that bother me. I don't care who—I will never forget [when] a gentleman came in from Little Rock, Arkansas and he was going to be my manager. I said, "Oh no! Little Rock, Arkansas! This tall white man!" He turned out to be one of my best friends.

WHITE

Oh really! Okay. You can never judge a book.

TOBIN

You can never judge a book by the cover of it. And we worked together for many years on projects. And many times, he had to go to a lot of these African American events, because there was not, at that time, an African American person at Toyota in that position that was a national manager. But things have changed certainly since then, and we have been able to stay around and work with Toyota long enough to watch the upward mobility of African Americans within the company. That has really been a blessing, because I remember in '88, starting out, things were different. There weren't as many people of color in management positions. But that has certainly changed and is still changing and it is good to see that diversity is starting to take effect. Some of the people that I just adored working with—The gentleman who hired me initially was a guy named Jim Olson. Well, Jim had worked in Detroit for Ford, so certainly when he came to Toyota, he had some idea of what this community outreach should be, what should happen. So when we went to him with our proposal and our plan, and told him about the Black Caucus and the Urban League and all these things, he was open and receptive [to] how important it was to get out to the black community and make sure that we drove their cars, we buy their products. So make sure you spend some money in our community and that helped a great deal. So through the Doug Wests and the Jim Olsons and the Bill Paulis and—One African American woman that I had an opportunity to work with, she is still there, Tracy Underwood. She wasn't a national manager at the time, but she has since been promoted and is a national manager today.

WHITE

Oh, really? And that's who you work with directly there?

TOBIN

Tracy Underwood, and now today she is directly my manager.

WHITE

Oh terrific!

TOBIN

And that is a wonderful story, because we were on the road traveling, working with other managers, but they were always white males or maybe white females. But Tracy Underwood is an African American woman who has been promoted. She has been with Toyota, I don't know, twelve, thirteen years, and she has been promoted now to national manager. And that has been a wonderful, wonderful experience.

WHITE

That is exciting, very exiting. And so, in terms of her being your manager, what sort of relationship does that entail? She draws to your attention what she wants to have publicized? Or you come to her?

TOBIN

Well, we meet monthly. We have events. There is a whole calendar of things that we attend. We are part of the Urban League. The Urban League is part of the Automotive Training Center on Crenshaw, the Toyota Urban League Automotive Training Center. That's been a nine-year project, where in '92—I'm moving ahead of myself—[during] the civil unrest, Toyota bought this facility, this old dealership, renovated it, and turned it into a training center. But years ago when I started back—I said in '88—working with Toyota, we would go to conventions. We would display a booth and have the Toyota vehicle and material about the company on display. And we would go to certain dinners and banquets and buy tickets and tables and put ads in African American newspapers during Black History Month and during Martin Luther King's birthday. So having the expertise as to what to do when it came to the African American market, it was just a win-win situation for us, because Tracy Underwood, being an African American woman, certainly she was able to be there and work with me all along the way. So even now that she is the national manager, it is just a matter of sitting down and going over our projects, whether it is the Essence Awards that Toyota is sponsoring, or the

National Association of Black Journalists. We talk about our program and how Toyota is positioned at these events and what we want to do and we work together to make sure that happens. If I need to contact somebody or we need to send out a press release. Normally Toyota writes their own. Many times we assist in writing press releases ourselves. But a major company like that, they have their own communications department and research department, so we just assist by helping them to reach our market, the ethnic market.

WHITE

I see. Okay. Can you speak a little bit about your travels to Japan as the Ambassador? What was that experience like and what exactly did you do there?

TOBIN

Well people say Ambassador. It really cracks me up. That is funny. Actually, the first time I had the opportunity to go to Japan, I was on business with Toyota. There was a delegation of Toyota associates traveling to Japan. And many people over here in the states go over to Japan, on a regular basis, to deal with the headquarters over there. So I had an opportunity to go because I had never been. I said, "You know, I would love to go. I've been a consultant with you for years." And my manager at the time was kind enough to say, "Well you know, that is right. You are working with the company. You should go and see where it all started and how it all started and how everything is done in Japan." So it was a working meeting. I was looking at pictures not long ago from the trip over there. It was just so much fun looking at those photographs and thinking back on how I was so excited about some place I had never been and how people would perceive or receive a black woman. Because there are not that many black people, not that I know of, living in Japan. I mean, there may be a few more now, but it was just a real good experience learning about their culture and actually being there and meeting the people that ran the Toyota operation over there. And it was just an experience I will never forget, traveling over there, the hours on the plane. It was like thirteen hours or something like that. Everything is just different. When you get into a cab— The cabs, I couldn't understand, they were so pretty, the lace sheets—not sheets, but coverings on the cabs. You get in a cab

in some other cities and you are afraid to sit down. But everything was so clean and pretty. It was just really beautiful. Visiting the headquarters, everybody is very polite and they have your name prepared in advance. They know you are coming and they just greet you and make you feel so special. And even some of the children—I remember one day we were going on an excursion somewhere, and there were a lot of children. And they looked at me as if to say, "Oh." They didn't say it, but I could tell by their look. There's a word for when you are foreign or different, gaijin. And they knew that I was an African American woman. They were just kind of surprised, I guess, to see me. But it was just a good experience and now—actually there are African Americans living over there—people continue to have this dialogue. We want to bridge the gap. I think that was one of the articles that was written about me a long time ago, because being an African American and dealing with a Japanese company, I felt honored when the late Ron Brown and I started to know each other. He had represented Sony. He was a consultant to Sony. So he consulted to Sony and I was a consultant to Toyota. Together we would compare notes and talk about what it is like to help shape the image of a Japanese company in America, particularly two African Americans.

WHITE

What a great person to collaborate with!

TOBIN

Oh, Ron Brown! That was so wonderful, the late Ron Brown—And his family, I got to know his wife and his daughters. And my daughter got to be friends with some of their children. So it was a good experience just knowing him and sharing notes and networking. And I remember we both had to speak at, I guess it was, a hearing in Washington D.C. on Capital Hill. We were talking about the work that Toyota does and the work that Sony was doing—helping to change the image and shape things and make it known to people the positive things that these companies were doing. So Japan is just one of those experiences that I will just never forget, even the currency, the money and understanding all of that. I mean, to travel abroad and to learn about different countries is something that we should all, hopefully, get a chance to do if we haven't done it. Because many people come over here and they get to soak up

everything we have to offer. So it is really kind of nice to go to other countries and learn about what they are doing.

WHITE

It sounds like a great experience.

TOBIN

It was. And you know, the second time I had a chance to go, it was a fun thing. I mean, once I had been there because of Toyota. There was an opportunity to go because Michael Jackson was performing at the Tokyo Dome.

WHITE

Oh my goodness!

TOBIN

And there was sixty thousand people at the Tokyo Dome and I just had to be there. So a friend, we hopped on a plane and went to Japan, New Year's Eve.

WHITE

Oh, how fun! Wow. What a great experience!

TOBIN

Between work and play, I got some wonderful experiences in Japan. I had some wonderful experiences in Japan.

WHITE

Getting abreast of the Japanese culture. That is a nice perk of the job for sure.

TOBIN

Definitely.

WHITE

On that note we are going to go ahead and end the interview for today.

TOBIN

Thank you.

**1.9. TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE
APRIL 5, 2002**

WHITE

Now the last time we spoke, we had begun talking about a lot of your clients that you had garnered in the late eighties. In our last interview, you left off with us talking about Toyota Motor Sales [USA] Inc., and the fact that you were an ambassador to Japan on their behalf. You had gone to Japan to represent them and to discuss some diversity issues. Then, I think, the last comment was that, as a result of your having visited Tokyo, you went back for a concert with Michael Jackson at the Tokyo Dome.

TOBIN

That was one of the highlights of my life. Tokyo Dome, Michael Jackson, the Dangerous tour. It was awesome.

WHITE

Oh good, good. Well, I just wanted to talk a little bit more about Toyota. I noticed in one of your articles here that there was a program that was done by Reggie Life. And it was a program, it records the lives of African Americans in Japan, and it's called Struggle and Success: The African American Experience in Japan. It was screened in Santa Monica. I'm wondering if there is a connection between Toyota and this particular project being done, or was this just something completely separate from that?

TOBIN

It was completely separate from that, but because I knew Reggie Life and because I was representing Toyota, certainly I was trying to interest Toyota in the project because of the information that Reggie had gathered. There's a group in Japan called JAFA, Japan African American Friendship Association, and these are people who have either married—some of us in the military, they married and lived there. It's just a way for African Americans to kind of form some sort of a group, networking group while in Japan, because for the most part, there aren't a lot of African Americans in Japan. So Reggie Life traveled—and he still does I think—traveled a great deal back and forth to Japan working on this documentary. He continues to do that and update. I

believe KCET airs it occasionally. That special. But it was just good for Toyota to be aware of the African Americans living there and to know about this young man and his project and hopefully underwrite a portion of it. I don't know if it ever got to that, but that was my intent, was to make sure they knew about Reggie.

WHITE

Okay, it was real interesting, and I understand that it was narrated by actor Ossie Davis, and music by Paul Jackson. I noticed this in your literature and I thought, "Oh, that's interesting—that connection," because I know that Toyota has a real interest in the African American experience.

TOBIN

Certainly.

WHITE

Obviously, hiring you, and then sending you over there as the ambassador, so I thought of course, there must be some connection or you must have instigated some meeting of the minds.

TOBIN

Another thing to mention about Japan and African Americans, there's a young lady by the name of Gretchen Cook. Well now it's Gretchen Cook-Anderson because she's married. But she was an intern for Toyota. She had graduated from Spelman [College] and went on to Johns Hopkins [University] or many other universities, but she speaks Japanese fluently, and she taught at Howard University in the language department. This was a young woman, very young woman, and she lived in Japan for a couple of years. One of the events that we attended on behalf of Toyota with one of the former presidents, Mr. Sakai—Mr. and Mrs. Sakai were at this event—and he was the president of Toyota. I introduced Gretchen to Mr. Sakai, and Gretchen started speaking to them in fluent Japanese, and Mr. Sakai, his eyes were big as saucers, he could not believe. Here was this young African American woman speaking fluent Japanese, and they sat the whole evening and talked in Japanese. I just wish I could speak the language.

WHITE

No kidding, what a great skill to have.

TOBIN

And I'm still in touch with Gretchen. She's married now with two children, but she's written a book and she lives in Columbia, Maryland. And just a wonderful young lady, and we had an opportunity to meet through Toyota, when she was a student at Spelman.

WHITE

Oh, terrific, terrific. Lots of connections there, because there was the other lady that you mentioned that was at Spelman, that knew Spike Lee when he was at Morehouse, that introduced you to him.

TOBIN

Kim [Kimberly] Bailey[-Tureaud].

WHITE

Kim Bailey, exactly. Yeah.

TOBIN

Yeah. The circle of life.

WHITE

So lots of connections with the African American college there.

TOBIN

Yes.

WHITE

Okay, I noticed in other literature having to do with Toyota Motor Sales, that they featured a Black History Month exhibit.

TOBIN

Yes. That's one of the things we're so proud of in our fourteen year association with Toyota. One of our projects or assignments is to come up with some creative, innovative, educational ideas for Black History Month. Carole [Eileen "Kidogo"] Wade and some of the creative people in our office at Tobin &

Associates, we come up with ideas for Black History Month. And we work closely with Tracy Underwood and other managers at Toyota, a guy named Bill Pauli. What we do is sit down and discuss the kinds of things we'd like to see for Black History Month. So this exhibit that we came up with, we just sort of went through the archives and found people like the Bill Cosbys, the Oprah Winfreys, the Madame C.J. Walkers, all these wonderful African Americans who've made significant contributions to our country. We have put them on display with photographs, and a little caption about these people, and sort of educational and informative, and very appealing to the eye, because we get wonderful black and white photos made through Mayme Clayton.

WHITE

Oh really?

TOBIN

Mayme Clayton, who heads up the Western States Black Research and Educational Center. So yeah, that's one of the projects that Toyota really enjoyed underwriting and being a part of.

WHITE

That must be really nice to work with them, because they're certainly reaching out.

TOBIN

They really are.

WHITE

To people of color. Yeah, because this one is the African Americans in the music industry, and it says that, "The exhibit is a photographic retrospective of leading musicians and recording artists."

TOBIN

That year we did just the musicians, and you'd be surprised how many musicians that we came up with, not just the Quincy Joneses and the Michael Jacksons— And, oh God, I don't know, you just name them. Did I mention any of them that were highlighted?

WHITE

No, the majority of historical photos— No these were supplied by Mayme Clayton of the Western States, it says that. It doesn't indicate that. It just indicates the photographers that contributed their work and then the exhibit team and then the resource center. And it says that, "The major eras of music history—gospel, spirituals, ragtime, blues, jazz, soul, R&B, funk, hip-hop, rap, reggae, and the influence of Latin American music—were documented on the panels and framed within the photographs."

TOBIN

That's right, we had everybody from Whitney Houston to, you name it. They were all a part of that, and then we continued this theme with stars from yesterday and today, where we had the Sidney Poitiers. So people from all walks of life, not just entertainment, but the sports area. We had the Williams sisters [Venus and Serena]. We had all, yeah. We had the display with photographs from people from all walks of life, so that's been a real good project for us.

WHITE

Definitely. What do you foresee in terms of ongoing projects with Toyota?

TOBIN

Well, hopefully, I don't know how long I can be a consultant. I'd like to be a consultant to them as long as they'll have us, because there's always something to do. You can always come up with something wonderful. I'd like to see them host the book signing for this wonderful documentary that you're compiling here. [mutual laughter] Documentary, see, I'm already taking it to film. Yeah, but this, chronicling of the Tobin & Associates background. We are continuing to come up with great ideas for Toyota. We work as a team, they're getting involved with all these wonderful programs— The Essence Awards, the NAACP conventions, the Urban League—so each time, we either have something that's educational, maybe book signings, so maybe we'll come up with a book signing. We've had people like Benjamin Carson of Gifted Hands. Dr. Benjamin Carson from Detroit, he's been at the Toyota booth where we autograph books and have the author there. That's something we like to do and Toyota's real big on education. We've had George Fraser, Success Runs in

Our Race. So I don't know. When you sit down with a young lady by the name of Tracy Underwood, who's my manager now at Toyota, and we brainstorm about different ideas and what we want to do. So we'll be talking about some new things coming up. Since diversity is such a major, major concern with them, we have a new Vice President of Diversity, an African American gentleman by the name of Guillermo Hysaw. He's just been named Vice President of Diversity, so—

WHITE

Really? At Toyota.

TOBIN

At Toyota Motor Sales.

WHITE

My goodness!

TOBIN

So we'll be doing a lot of interesting things.

WHITE

Collaborating, that's great. So it's a terrific, terrific client, for sure.

TOBIN

Oh, one of the best, I call them my bread and butter account. [mutual laughter] My anchor client. Fourteen years.

WHITE

Okay. Well, from that point, I'd like to talk a little bit more about some of your other clients. You have some real interesting lists of people that you have worked for, or continue to work with. One area I wanted to ask you about, the Minority AIDS Project. You worked with that project.

TOBIN

Oh, that was wonderful. You heard me mention my friend Bob Jones, Mr. Bob Jones, [vice president of communications and media relations for] Michael Jackson Productions. He's really a big supporter of Minority AIDS, and Bishop

Bean, Bishop Carl Bean. They were doing a fundraiser to raise money for the Minority AIDS Project, because all the focus was on AIDS, and not necessarily on how many African Americans were affected by AIDS. There wasn't very much being done for minorities in AIDS and I think Dionne Warwick and some other people have tried to help shed some light on that. So Bishop Carl Bean and one of his leading ministers—I forget her name right now, a woman, it will come back to me—they were honoring Nancy Wilson. It was a salute to Nancy Wilson to raise money for Minority AIDS, and I helped to coordinate that. It was fabulous. It was a wonderful event, many celebrities turned out, and I think we raised some money to help find a cure for AIDS.

WHITE

That must have been real gratifying to work for an organization such as that.

TOBIN

It really was.

WHITE

That's terrific. Let's see now, other large companies that I noticed, like AT&T. You've worked with them.

TOBIN

Now that was an exciting project. Renee, it's interesting. Sometimes Tobin & Associates gets involved because there's controversy. At the time that AT&T came to us there was some negative information about AT&T, because there was a newsletter or some publication that sort of depicted different cultures around the world. And for every place they had a symbol. For instance when it got to Africa, they had a monkey. Every place else, it was either a person dressed in that native wardrobe or whatever, but when it came to Africa, the person wasn't thinking and they just put a monkey up there. Well that wasn't the best way to depict African Americans.

WHITE

Not at all.

TOBIN

So as you can imagine, it generated much controversy. There were many people threatening to do all kinds of things, and it resulted in boycotts and just not a good feeling at the time for AT&T. So our company along with another company, LAGRANT Communications, a gentleman by the name of Kim [L.] Hunter, we were retained to help with the African American outreach and to make AT&T a little more conscious and aware of the significant contributions that African Americans have made to this country. So that wasn't a good thing that somebody made a mistake in their judgment and put that monkey there. But in Poland, they would have had somebody dress in Pol—I don't know, they had Alaska. All around the world, they had these different clothing that would show you some semblance of the country, but when they came to Africa they had a monkey.

WHITE

Oh my goodness. Okay, someone was very short-sighted.

TOBIN

Very short-sighted. And it cost them a lot of money.

WHITE

Is that right? So what do you do in a situation like that, because that's sort of a crisis management. Crisis intervention, or what have you.

TOBIN

And that's one of our strengths, I'd like to say, crisis management, because it seems like we're always in a crisis. There's always something going on when it comes to African Americans. We're always being confronted by one thing or another. You have to turn the situation around. You have to educate the people who made the error, so they can understand what not to do next time.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

There's been some incidents with Toyota where people haven't made the best judgment, and we've had to help educate them.

WHITE

Okay

TOBIN

And that's what it's all about. That's why this exchange and dialogue between different cultures are so important. So you can understand what's politically correct.

WHITE

Right, exactly.

TOBIN

And how do you handle that? You start being a little more sensitive to African Americans' needs and concerns and our culture, and you learn about the good things that we do and you start highlighting the good things that we do. So AT&T, as you can see, I think AT&T now has many African Americans in commercials.

WHITE

Absolutely.

TOBIN

I think at one time they had Whitney Houston singing on their commercials. And not just putting money on commercials, but they underwrite technology training centers and things of that nature. So you turn that around by getting them to put their dollars into something positive and help them to become better educated about African Americans. Many of the managers at AT&T, maybe they didn't have many numbers of African Americans in key positions, but that changed too later on.

WHITE

Okay, interesting. So you begin by educating them, of course, about perhaps their error, or how they might do things differently in the future. Then do you go to the community at large, and is there a sort of an apology that's given, or do you just advise your client to do bigger and better things in order to sort of outweigh that error that they made? How do you revise that?

TOBIN

A little bit of all of that. Definitely there was an apology made about that, that incident with the monkey. There were press releases written, and there were panel discussions held throughout the country with different organizations at various conventions.

WHITE

And would you orchestrate that?

TOBIN

Along with the management team inside of AT&T and also with our company and LAGRANT Communications, whoever's involved.

WHITE

Okay, okay.

TOBIN

We would have meetings and brainstorm and talk about a way to turn a situation around and how to handle it, along with writing press releases and going to certain events, and making sure you have a presence at major black conventions [like] the Congressional Black Caucus, the National Urban League, the NAACP, [and] the National Association of Black Journalists. One good thing AT&T has done, I remember they compiled a directory of African American websites that people should know about, and that was a real good thing. They continue to publish that on an ongoing basis. They have their own little book that they put together of African American websites. And they've done a lot of other things too. They continue to keep that going. So one good thing about that, once they learn what they've done wrong and how to correct it, then they continue to grow and do bigger and better things. AT&T is a major sponsor of the NAWBO, National Association of Women Business Owners. I think they've given an award there. They were a big sponsor of the Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund. They put money in some significant programs and continue to do that. That turns it all around and makes it better.

WHITE

Absolutely, that must be really gratifying for you.

TOBIN

Yeah, you feel good, when you can turn around and do things. It's just all about educating. A lot of people don't know, they just aren't aware. But once you make them aware and they understand, then it's a win-win situation for all of us.

WHITE

Really. Yeah, it's really important to be able to help other people to shift their perspective about how they see things, how they might market to a particular group, or what do they think represents a particular group. In that case, a monkey was not the case, not a good choice.

TOBIN

Not the case, not a good choice.

WHITE

Yeah, so that's great. That's great to have those kind of clients because it's helping them on a social level as well as a political level. And it's just making real significant inroads for the African American community, or just for communities of color at large.

TOBIN

And they have to remember, they meaning the AT&T people, many of which use the long distance service. Many of us use AT&T, so you don't want to be incorrect when we're your consumers and we're buying your product or using your service.

WHITE

Have to be mindful

TOBIN

That's right.

WHITE

That's right. Okay, now I know that you have had a number of clients in the entertainment industry. I know for instance, Twentieth Century Fox and Walt

Disney Feature Animation and Sony Music Entertainment. Can talk a little bit about the kinds of interaction you have with those sort of entities—I would imagine it's a bit different than the AT&Ts and Toyota Motor Sales.

TOBIN

Oh, the Walt Disney, let me tell you a little bit about Walt Disney Feature Animation. That was exciting because a gentleman by the name of Peter Schneider, who was heading up the Animation department for Disney, invited us in to make a presentation of what Tobin & Associates might be able to do to help highlight the African American animators. Because there were so many of these animated films coming out, and you had no idea who the animators were.

WHITE

Okay.

TOBIN

I mean, there has been black, not many, but black animators at Disney since the beginning. There's a gentleman that's been there for so long, I can't remember his name now, but the one person in particular that I was most fascinated with was a young gentleman by the name of Marshall Toomey. Marshall Toomey created Rafiki in The Lion King.

WHITE

Okay

TOBIN

He also worked on The Hunchback of Notre Dame. Marshall Toomey is an animator at Disney who's very talented, and until The Lion King came out, I had no idea, and a lot of people had no idea that he was a black man. So that's what our job was, to highlight some of the African American animators at Disney. There weren't very many, but the ones that were there, we wanted the children and other people in our community to know that there were African Americans behind the scene getting paid big dollars to create these characters. That was an exciting project for us. One of the fun things we did was to get Marshall Toomey out in the community because he's so busy working. He has a family. We wanted to get him in front of some kids. We had

an event at the Baldwin Hills [Crenshaw Plaza] Mall, where students came in and they drew pictures, and he talked to them about animation, and photos were taken. It was a great event. So that was exciting.

WHITE

That sounds really terrific.

TOBIN

And of course I have a grandson who had a chance to meet Marshall Toomey. That was another highlight for me because my grandson [Aaron Michael Tobin Curry] loved Lion Kingso much, that when he found out there was a black man who helped create Rafiki, the monkey in Lion King, he was just, "Wow."

WHITE

Wow, that's really inspiring.

TOBIN

Oh it is.

WHITE

For so many people that just aren't aware of that sort of thing.

TOBIN

Yeah, so that was a good thing. And then there was another one, you mentioned Sony, Sony Music Entertainment. There was another gentleman by the name of [H.] LeBaron Taylor. He's still very dear to me. He's passed on now. But LeBaron Taylor was a disc jockey in Philadelphia way back when, and our paths crossed again when I started working through Toyota and other clients going to these major black conventions. The Congressional Black Caucus was one of the major conventions that I always attended with clients, Toyota or Coors or whatever client I was working with. And LeBaron Taylor was an advisory board member, or something, with Congressional Black Caucus. One of the things LeBaron was responsible for was the entertainment and raising funds for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, where scholarship dollars where generated for young people interested in politics. So LeBaron Taylor and I, our paths crossed again. And here Toyota and Sony Music joint-ventured on some of these major events at the Black Caucus.

LeBaron always had this event every year at the Black Caucus where he would put on just a fabulous event with major entertainment, major food, and it was called Le Grand Affair. That was the event that everybody wanted to go to. Of course you had to be invited. So, because I knew LeBaron, and because LeBaron worked with some of the Toyota people with our relationship, we were partners at a few of those Le Grand Affairs, where Toyota would put up a portion of the money. It would be Sony and Toyota. Certainly we got to work, helping with the guest list and working with people like Isisara [Bey]. Isisara is still with Sony today, she's a wonderful young lady. It was just great to be involved with such an upscale high-class event. Each year, LeBaron would come up there, he and his team would come up with a theme. One year we would have it at the embassy and we'd have a Morocco theme. One time he had it at the Library of Congress or some place. Each year he'd have a different theme, and it was always elaborate. It was always fabulous. He passed away, and they no longer do that, but they should continue doing those wonderful events.

WHITE

Absolutely.

TOBIN

It brought people together.

WHITE

They really, obviously made an impression. Yeah.

TOBIN

All walks of life, from Congress people, political people, entertainers, business people, journalists, it was wonderful.

WHITE

Oh! Terrific.

TOBIN

Major corporations, yeah.

WHITE

Those are obviously very fun. And there was Twentieth Century Fox as well.

TOBIN

Now that was exciting, Twentieth Century Fox— They were doing some survey about theaters where they needed some help. I don't know whether this was before the Magic Johnson Theater, but Fox was doing some sort of survey to find out the ratio of the mileage between certain theaters. If you were at the Baldwin Hills Theater or if you were at this mall in—where is that—Hawthorne Mall. I mean, we were just doing the survey, and asking people about what theater they attended, and it was just sort of like a special project that we worked on for them at the time. That was exciting, just knowing where people went to the theater and how far they drove to get to a theater. I think that has something to do with a lot of these new theaters that are springing up today, but years ago, everybody had to go to either Westwood or Hollywood or someplace to go to a movie.

WHITE

That's true.

TOBIN

We didn't have neighborhood theaters.

WHITE

Oh, that's interesting, so it was sort of a study of the demographics.

TOBIN

Study.

WHITE

And what have you, and where people are going, particularly the people of color.

TOBIN

There you go, and we spend a lot of money.

WHITE

Yes, on entertainment.

TOBIN

At theaters, at the box office.

WHITE

That's right.

TOBIN

When the reviewers talk about [how] the blockbusters sell out at the theaters, how much money they make, they got to remember that many of those dollars are African American dollars.

WHITE

That's for sure. That is for sure. Speaking of theaters, I know that there was a large project that you had with the Baldwin Theater.

TOBIN

Oh, that was so exciting.

WHITE

Yeah, tell me about that.

TOBIN

Every time I go past the Baldwin Theater, which is no longer there— The building is still there, but it's no longer Baldwin Theater. We were so excited about that. The gentleman who owned the theater at the time wanted to do something much like the Chinese Mann Theater where they have the hand and footprints in the cement, so Lonnie Sims and Nelson Bennett— We came up with this idea where we'd have our African American stars and celebrities put their hand and footprints, so we had something called Path to Success.

WHITE

Oh, okay.

TOBIN

So the Path to Success at the Baldwin Theater, we had Louis Gossett and Marla Gibbs and Roxie Roker and Rosalind Cash and, oh God, you just name

the African American celebrities— Judy Pace-Flood and others. They would come out and have their hand— Madge Sinclair, and we would have photographs of them inside the theater, and we'd have an event at the Baldwin Theatre.

WHITE

On that note, we just need to pause for a moment.

TOBIN

Sure. [tape recorder off]

WHITE

Okay, so we're continuing from there and you were just talking about the Baldwin Hills project.

TOBIN

And even now, when I pass the Baldwin, I always think about how wonderful that would have been, but then after that, I think the gentleman by the name of Ken Lombard, who was working closely with the Baldwin, he teamed up with Magic Johnson somewhere along the line and took that concept and now they have the Magic Johnson Theaters with the Sony partnership. So there's no more Baldwin Hills Theater.

WHITE

That's true. Now, is it a church or something?

TOBIN

It was a church for awhile. And now it's up for sale, or lease. So it's just vacant now, and they're hoping to sell or to do something with it, but it was such a historical landmark, right at the corner in our community, at Coliseum and La Brea, the Baldwin Hills Theater, a black-owned theater. And one of the things I remember most about that project, Lonnie Sims and the other partner, Nelson Bennett, those guys had to fight to get first run movies. I remember it was Purple Rain, Prince's movie Purple Rain, that broke it for them. These gentlemen had to fight with Warner Brothers and other studios to make sure they got first run movies just like the other major theaters. That's another reason why I'm sure a lot of these surveys were done, because this black-

owned theater in the community couldn't get the first run movies when they broke out.

WHITE

Yeah, right, exactly.

TOBIN

But then after a big lawsuit and a lot of controversy, and black people rallying around, it changed all that. So when something broke in Westwood and all these other places, it also broke at the Baldwin Theatre.

WHITE

Exactly, which is a great opportunity.

TOBIN

And certainly, now you know, with Magic Johnson, there's no problem with him getting first run movies.

WHITE

That's for sure. [mutual laughter] That was a real nice addition to the black community.

TOBIN

Oh yeah. And his is one of the highest grossing theaters in the Sony chain of theaters.

WHITE

Is that so?

TOBIN

Oh, yeah. He's got one in Houston, and I'm not sure where else, but this one in Baldwin Hills is the highest grossing.

WHITE

My goodness, I think I heard something to that effect about Friday's restaurant in fact. It's the highest grossing [inaudible] in the country.

TOBIN

Because we, African Americans, we're consumers. What is it, six hundred billion or more that we spend? We're consumers. We spend our money.

WHITE

Yes indeed. We do. Okay, well I wanted to talk a little bit about, we talked a bit last time we spoke about political organizations that you had worked with and are affiliated with. And we didn't get a chance to speak very much about the NAACP, National Association [for the Advancement] of Colored People, and Kweisi Mfume, your interaction with him. I understand that you guys are colleagues. And I understand that you won several awards through the NAACP. Will you tell me a little bit about how you became involved, if you became involved first as a member of the organization, or was it more through your business, a business liaison, and then what kinds of things have transpired as a result of your interacting and relating to the NAACP?

TOBIN

First of all, I was a member, yes, always a member. Got to join these organizations, got to put your money where your mouth is. Back in Philadelphia, my play auntie, C. DeLores Tucker, the highest ranking woman in Governor [Milton] Shapp's office. Remember, she was the highest ranking black woman in Governor Shapp's office. She's a national board member in the NAACP. In California, I was very involved with the Beverly Hills/Hollywood NAACP, very active with that chapter. When I hosted my Media Night events at the Speakeasy, I always had the Willis Edwards, the Sandra Evers-Manley, Carl Collins—who has now passed away. Carl was a good friend of mine, we'd always have events. Billy Green of the NAACP. We'd have all of them come to the Speakeasy and we'd have events highlighting the Beverly Hills/Hollywood NAACP. One other thing that really sticks out in my mind, I was representing a young lady, Donna Cheek, back in the eighties. And Donna Cheek was the equestrian, and I may have mentioned she would have been the first black equestrian in the history of the Olympics. [It was] the 1984 Olympics. We were doing fundraisers all over, trying to get her money for horses and travel, to compete in the Olympics.

WHITE

Fascinating.

TOBIN

Well, Donna's story, her quest to become this first black equestrian in the 1984 Olympics, her story was so interesting that—her family, her parents, her father Don Cheek, who's an educator by the way, he's a professor at Claremont College, and he's written several books—the story about Donna Cheek was written, and I took it to NBC television.

WHITE

Did you? Okay

TOBIN

So NBC hired a producer, and I had to fight for associate producer's credit on the project, because here I took the project to them, and they gave it to Fern Field to produce it. Neema Barnett, who's an African American woman who directed it, we all worked together. The NAACP helped me to get my Image Award. That project, it was called One More Hurdle: The Donna Cheek Story, it won an award. It won an Image Award, it was one of the highest rated afterschool specials [in the NBC Special Treat series] that NBC had.

WHITE

Oh really?

TOBIN

And I was so excited, because here I took the project to them and I wasn't going to get any credit! Willis Edwards, I think he was the president of the Beverly Hills/Hollywood NAACP at the time, and he helped me to get my Image Award. I have an Image Award in my office from the Donna Cheek story, One More Hurdle.

WHITE

That's great.

TOBIN

And I'm still in touch with Donna Cheek today. She's still an equestrian.

WHITE

Is she really? Great. That's an appropriate name, One More Hurdle, because you have the equestrian.

TOBIN

One More Hurdle, yes, and she's still trying to get over those hurdles.

WHITE

Let's see now, I think in 1991 you received the Legal Defense and Education Fund Award, which is a prestigious bronze medallion on red, black, and green ribbon that previous winners wear at future luncheons, of course, if they attend.

TOBIN

Yes, every year the women come to these luncheons and they wear their medallions, sort of like a sorority or a club. Once you get these medallions, you're so proud of them, because they're really very nice, and we would all come in every year and wear them. But I don't know if the luncheons, I think they've been discontinued for awhile, because the women who coordinated that, they were all volunteers. These were high-powered business women, major corporations. AT&T was a major sponsor of that event. The women who used to coordinate that to help raise funds for the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, they just didn't have the time. They're thinking about bringing that back again, because there were so many dynamite women who were honored. I think Suzanne dePasse and others were part of that long list of women who received that award. So, yes, I was very proud to be a part of that group.

WHITE

Nice company to be in. Well, let me see, in terms of the political causes for the NAACP, to what extent are you involved in that aspect? Have you worked with the NAACP in marketing or promoting some of their events or causes?

TOBIN

Well, mainly through clients and, for instance, Toyota is a major sponsor of the ACT-SO, NAACP ACT-SO awards [Afro-Academic Cultural, Technological,

Scientific Olympics]. So I get to work with a lot of people, the NAACP and the Toyota managers, each year at their convention. It is so funny that you should ask that question, because May 19 of this year [2002], I'm receiving the Verna M. Canson Award at the NAACP luncheon, May 9. Because of Frank [L.] Berry—Frank Berry is the Regional Director of the NAACP here in California. Frank thought that because of all my work in the community and the things I have done to help the NAACP, that I was deserving of this award. So through major sponsors and clients, I've worked with NAACP. It's so funny, Kweisi Mfume, when he was a Congressman in D.C., being the Congressman from Baltimore, my niece Donyatta Tinson, graduated from Morgan [College] and I think Kweisi went to Morgan. So we always had that to talk about. When my niece came to one of the conventions and she was leading a delegation of students from Morgan, and Kweisi was involved. They all went up on the hill, Capitol Hill to talk with him, and she was talking about her aunt, who was involved with Toyota, and he remembered Toyota sponsoring many events for the NAACP. So we've become very good friends. Many of the Toyota executives have had, they have had an opportunity to sit down with Kweisi and talk with him about business when he was a congressman. Even now that he's head of the NAACP, they had their regional conference out here just last year and Toyota was one of the sponsors of that event.

WHITE

Okay, interesting. Now just from a—

TOBIN

Oh, I might add Myrlie Evers-Williams, one of the first people that I met when I moved to Los Angeles was Myrlie Evers, through C. DeLores Tucker and others. Myrlie Evers, I was at her home, had dinner, sat down in the living room, had greens and had a good time. So I've known people like that on a personal level, and Myrlie's daughter is the same age as my daughter Lauren [Tobin], and we've all been able to just act like family. Even now, when I see Myrlie Evers—she was the chair of the NAACP and of course, married to the late Medgar Evers—so when I see her now, she's in Portland now, but we often talk about the good old days, first early days in Los Angeles, and our kids growing up.

WHITE

Interesting. Now, I know that you are in the business of image developing, among other things, and marketing effectively to various communities of color. I'm curious, as it relates to the NAACP, your thinking on the name, National Association of Colored People. What are your thoughts about that at this juncture in our history?

TOBIN

You know, Renee, I'm glad you asked that question, but I don't know if I have the answer, because we've been colored, we've been Negroes, we've been niggers, we've been black. I mean, we are people of color, we are African Americans and descendants of Africans. If people just take enough time to trace their roots, there are people who say, AOh, I don't belong to Africa. I'm from Detroit. Well, if you go back far enough, and you remember Alex Haley and Roots, Aunt Kizzie had somebody, somewhere, who finally got to Detroit, okay? So that pisses me off when people don't want to admit that, "Yeah, we were colored, we were black, we were many things. But we're African Americans." I kind of feel better about that because we are descendants of Africa. Everybody else can relate to their culture and their past. Go back to China and Japan, go back to England, go back to whatever, and here we are nobody, we're displaced. But no, we're Africans, descendants of Africa, so I don't know if they're going to change the name or anything, but it is the National Association, what is it, the NAACP? National Association of—

WHITE

Of Colored People.

TOBIN

Colored People.

WHITE

Which is interesting, because colored people, of course, represent so many more people than just African Americans.

TOBIN

You're right, because now, with all this diversity and people of color— People of color are no longer black people, so it's a good thing. Maybe they should keep that, because when we talk about diversity, we're talking about people

of all colors—brown, red, black, and interesting enough, there were major white players in forming the NAACP. When you look back in the history, there were white people who helped to found that organization.

WHITE

Interesting, so maybe in this day and age— Because, like you said, diversity represents so many different things in people, in ethnicities and what have you, that it's more apropos today than it might have been ten years ago.

TOBIN

Ten years ago, you knew you were talking about black people, but now you're talking about people of color. And you and I both know that all the struggles we've won and fought to win, they've benefited so many other people. Women, and everybody else. So black people may have gotten out there and led the way, but certainly everybody has benefited.

WHITE

Absolutely. Interesting. Okay, well let's see now, other organizations I know that of course, you're very involved with the youth organization through Toyota Motor Sales, and I know that you also have been active in the Boys and Girls Club?

TOBIN

I've helped some. Lou Dantzler does a great job at the Boys and Girls Club here in Los Angeles. Youth are just key. I mean, they're real important. I'm always excited about getting young interns in my office to work. If they're in school, I always go to colleges and speak. I have a career day coming up April 22. Audubon, I think it's Audubon Junior High, where I'm speaking. I just like going out, talking to young people and motivating them. I was sitting at a lunch meeting just earlier this week after a presentation at the Essence Awards, the three Carols and April, a young lady named April, we were sitting after lunch. And this woman knocks on the window, through the window of a restaurant. I didn't realize who she was. I didn't recognize her, so I told her to come in. Here she was someone who interned with me.

WHITE

Oh, you're kidding!

TOBIN

A young lady, who is now a mother. She has a three year old. And she's working in some kind of finance office, but she wants to get back into PR. So she's going to school, taking classes, and she was just one of the interns who worked in my office who didn't forget. It was just good to see her. So I took her name and address down. Of course, I'm going to put her on my list. And one of the things I might do, speaking of young people, is bring back all the young interns and students who have come through Tobin & Associates and see where they are today.

WHITE

Oh, that would be a great affair.

TOBIN

Wouldn't that be great? Because I know many of them are doing great things now.

WHITE

Pat Tobin alumni.

TOBIN

Pat Tobin alumni, there you go. Well, I am really interested in the Pat Tobin scholarship. So I want to start the Pat Tobin Foundation, and really give scholarships to young people who want to pursue a career in public relations. So, yeah, I'm going to bring back all those young people that come through.

WHITE

I can certainly see that fitting into a nice little package, because you had indicated that you were interested in purchasing a building.

TOBIN

Eventually. When I look at how long I've been in the same building [since] 1984 and here it is 2002—I'm in the same building.

WHITE

That's a long, long time. Eighteen years.

TOBIN

I could have bought a building. Well, you need money. And there are the pros and cons of owning a building and being your own landlord and all of that, but down the road, that's probably my next step. Nelson Davis and I talk about that all the time. Nelson Davis is the producer of Making It: Minority Success Stories. And we sit every now and then. We just had lunch recently to talk about, "Where are you now? What are you doing? How's that building coming along?" So before you know it, we're going to have that building.

WHITE

Oh, that's great, that's great. I met him once before, of course, because Larry [McCormick] works on Making It: Minority Success Stories.

TOBIN

That's right. That's right.

WHITE

Because I did meet him.

TOBIN

Did you ever see the tape they did on Tobin & Associates?

WHITE

I did not.

TOBIN

Oh, you've got to ask Larry about that. As a matter of fact, Nelson Davis should send you a copy. You know how they log the shows in and they have a number of the show that you're on? So Pat Tobin was on Tobin & Associates, Minority Success Stories, Making It. I forget what number it is, but I was on one of the shows, and he has it. So, yeah.

WHITE

So how did that flow? Did he come down to your office?

TOBIN

Oh yeah. He came down to the office. Did I go to the studio? I don't even remember now, it's been so long. But I know I'm on one of the shows, and I have to think back how long ago it was. But yeah, that was a very good interview.

WHITE

Actually, I'll look into that. See if I can get a copy of it or what have you. Okay— I wanted to digress a little bit here. Actually, before I do that, I did notice the invitation from the NAACP indicating that it is with great pleasure that they're announcing the [Twenty-Third Annual Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics] ACT-SO.

TOBIN

ACT-SO, yeah.

WHITE

ACT-SO.

TOBIN

Yes.

WHITE

Hosted by the Western Regional Office of NAACP on May 9. And that you would be honored. You have been nominated to receive the Verna M. Canson Award, which is an award to a company, organization, or individual that has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to youth, a persevering dedication to the ACT-SO program, and a continuing projection of a positive image for African American youth. Ms. Verna Canson, the award's namesake, was a staunch supporter of the program, who initiated this region's tradition of raising money to assist the local branches, to take their first place finally to the annual national convention. So that's going to be very, very exciting, I'm sure.

TOBIN

So you have to put that on your calendar, you have to be there.

WHITE

I would certainly like to be there and—

TOBIN

As my guest.

WHITE

Okay That sounds wonderful. And it's signed by Frank L. Berry, the Regional Director for the NAACP.

TOBIN

And I worked very closely with Frank when he was at the Los Angeles branch of the NAACP. We coordinated their Freedom Fund dinner and Toyota has been a sponsor of that. Tobin & Associates coordinated it one or two years.

WHITE

That's great. Your organization is so far-reaching from what we just described and what you just described—your interaction with the entertainment industry, your interaction with the youth organizations, with corporations like Toyota, some of the smaller business organizations. So it's incredibly far-reaching.

TOBIN

Community groups, I love community groups. I love that, and I think going back to Philadelphia, when I was growing up in Philly, Operation PUSH, back then it was People United to [Save] Humanity, serve and save humanity. Just growing up to do work in the community, and that stuck with me. I just liked getting involved and volunteering and doing those kinds of things. It's important, somebody's got to do it. I think back about this. A gentleman was making a speech one time, and he said something about riding, he told us everybody was riding along in a car with his son. And they came to a road and there was this tree in the road. The little boy said, "Dad, somebody ought to move that tree," and the father looked at him and said, "Somebody? They?" So they stopped the car. "You do it. You get out." So the little boy got out, they got out, and the kid moved the tree. And that kind of did something for that kid. Not somebody, they, you!

WHITE

Absolutely, you take the initiative.

TOBIN

Thank you.

WHITE

Step up to the plate.

TOBIN

There you go. So I kind of like to think of myself as sometimes being one of those people to step up to the plate and do things, rather than just talk about it. Just get it, just do it. Just get it done.

WHITE

Lots of people take so much time talking about it.

TOBIN

Talking.

WHITE

When you basically could have done it and all that for the same amount of time. So I notice that it's definitely one of your characteristics.

TOBIN

Thank you.

WHITE

Now, let's see. I wanted to just, like I said, I wanted to go digress for a few minutes, talk a little bit about, more about things that were going on in your personal life? We're talking at this point, around the late eighties, the beginning of the nineties. I don't know, at a certain point during our interviews, you'd mentioned a relationship that you had with a gentleman from Los Angeles. We talked about Joe Duckett many, many times. And you mentioned someone who had, had an impact on your life, and your eyes sort of glistened when you spoke about him. I wonder if you wanted to talk a little bit about that.

TOBIN

This gentleman—bless his heart, he's quite an elderly gentleman by now—but we dated for about six years. He was a big help with my business. He owned several businesses. He was a smart businessman, and he saw potential or saw promise in me. He actually worked with my company and helped me a great deal. Finances were one of his strengths. He knew money and stocks and investments, and he was very good at advising me and counseling me along the way. He was an avid golfer, and I hated golf. But now, after Tiger Woods, I love golf.. And we're still friends today, of course, he's been married several times. He's married again, this gentleman, but we're still friends and I'm in touch with his family. He was just very instrumental in helping me to focus and become more businesslike. Because I always like fun. I don't want to do the things that aren't fun, but in business, sometimes you have to do things that aren't fun. You just have to do what needs to be done. So he was very important. He owned a travel business. He also owned a contract cleaning company. And I sort of helped him, because even though he was well-known and popular, he was kind of shy. He didn't get out, but when we started being friends and dating, we went everywhere. And everybody got to know us as a couple. I'd take him to awards, and big events, and it helped his business as well. But I actually met him through networking. Someone recommended a travel agent and we were doing something for Jesse Jackson, PUSH, somebody, and we got tickets through his travel agency. That's how we all got to be friends.

WHITE

Oh boy. Six year relationship from getting tickets for an event! So you just never know.

TOBIN

Never know.

WHITE

Who's going to come into your life. I just wanted to, again, be mindful of the balancing act that you have in your life, and in your world, and so I—

TOBIN

But, Renee, it was hard. It was even hard then, because your mate or your friend may not like movies, and outings, and they may want to sit home as opposed to going to a theater. They may not want to go to an awards event. They might not want to go to another dinner. So it was a challenge, because I'm the goer and the doer. I love to go, I love to do. Even though it's tiring, I know that networking is important. I have to be out there. Many times it's work related. I kind of go because it's my job, it's what I do. And, there are people who would rather sit at home and not go. So it's been hard.

WHITE

Makes it a little bit challenging, because it has to be an individual who either likes to go also, or feels very comfortable with your going.

TOBIN

And that's the point, feeling comfortable with my going. Now sometimes, there might be a person who's understanding, but then there comes a point where they're going to get bored of always being home and not going. So either they're going to have to go, or be upset with your going, and then that would create a problem. So today I say, AForget it. @ I just go by myself. [laughs] Not worry about how anybody else feels.

WHITE

Absolutely.

TOBIN

Except my grandson. I have to pencil him in, because I don't want him to not spend time with grandma.

WHITE

Oh, okay Well, I know that you have been keeping a journal for quite some time. I know that there's some significant things that occurred during this period of time. I wondered if you could talk about a few of them that you've documented—

TOBIN

I'm sitting here laughing, Renee, because I'm looking through my family [Bible], this Bible my daughter gave me. Lauren presented me this Bible, "With

love," it says. "Presented to Patricia L. Tobin, by Lauren Tobin, with love on February 28, 1986." So this is my birthday, February 28, 1986. And since she gave it to me, what I started doing back in '86 was listing, writing down some of the things. And when I looked back at some of the things that happened in the late eighties, I'm like, "Wow!" May 15, 1986, Lauren leaves for Europe. That was a highlight. She was at USC, and she went to—I never in my life have been to Europe. Lauren, my daughter, went to Europe, studied over there. That was exciting. Of course, she kept calling home for money, so I don't know if I lost my credit card then, or when, but that was exciting. Then Lauren graduates from USC, December '87. Now that was exciting. In 1987 she graduated from USC.

WHITE

In journalism, correct?

TOBIN

Yes, mass communication.

WHITE

Were you excited at that point in time?

TOBIN

Oh, yeah.

WHITE

Anticipating that she might follow in your footsteps?

TOBIN

Yeah, well, she wanted to be a sportswriter. She was interested in sports. So she wanted to be a sportswriter, and we have a very good friend, Pam Moore, who's an anchorwoman, one of the best anchorwomen. I met Pam Moore in 1983 when she was an anchorwoman at CBS television, here in Los Angeles. Pam is now at KRON San Francisco. Pam and I have been best friends since 1983 and Pam is like family. So my daughter has always admired Pam. And I always thought that Lauren would be another Pam Moore, but Lauren is doing very well. She didn't follow the sports entertainment thing, but she's doing very well as Director of Publicity for ABC Television.

WHITE

It sounds like a great position to have.

TOBIN

Yeah, I'm really proud of her. And then I was excited about my purchase of my Mercedes. Everybody talks about cars and things, so back in 1988 I had a Mercedes. Maxine Waters's husband, Sidney Williams, was one of the top Mercedes consultants in Hollywood, at the Hollywood Mercedes-Benz. Because of my relationship with Maxine, and because of her husband Sidney being a golfer and he was a friend of the gentleman that I dated, I got my Mercedes, bought my Mercedes in '88. But soon after working with Toyota, that Mercedes had to go.

WHITE

Oh!

TOBIN

So I drive a Lexus now, thanks to Toyota.

WHITE

Competitor's car.

TOBIN

So that was in '88, and I was excited about that. And then my daughter— Well, one of the down sides of things that happened back in the mid-eighties, I'll never forget this date, October 15, 1988. My daughter had this car that she wanted so bad. And I'm always working with her and helping her to get what she wants. And she's always worked hard to get things too, so we were a good team. So she bought this Mercury Merkur. She had to have this Mercury Merkur. It was beautiful, 1988. Well, she and her friend at that time, her boyfriend, God, they totaled the car. And I said, "Oh my Lord!" So that was in October of '88. That was a down. I said, "Oh my God. But thank God she's okay."

**1.10. TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE TWO
APRIL 5, 2002**

WHITE

When side one ended, Miss Tobin was just talking about some significant events that had occurred in her life.

TOBIN

I was talking about my daughter and this car that she loved so much. Oh, 1988, we talked about the Mercury Merkur, but then, January of '88, she moved. That broke my heart. I think that was the first time she left home.

WHITE

Oh, no.

TOBIN

You know, she was a young adult, and she wanted to move out. That didn't last very long. She came back in 1988. I think she came back the same year, so that worked out. She did finally get her own apartment, which was a big deal. She moved into her own apartment. That was kind of nerve-wracking for me, to think that she was on her own in some apartment. The moving thing kind of shook me up a little bit, but I had to realize that she was a grown up and that she was moving on. Speaking of moving, I had a significant purchase in '89 myself. In 1989 I closed escrow. February of '89, I closed escrow on my little town home. And I just thought that was a big deal, living in California, being able to afford property. Because even back then, it was almost two hundred thousand dollars, I think it was one hundred and sixty nine thousand dollars just to buy a little townhouse.

WHITE

Was this a townhouse, or was this a studio, that—

TOBIN

Townhouse. I still have it, as a matter of fact. That was in February of '89. Actually, I moved in in March of '89. I moved into my little townhouse in Studio City. Remember I said, thanks to Spike Lee, I was able to make enough money to finally buy something.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

Thank you, Spike Lee. So I moved into my town home in March of '89. Then— You talked about Japan. That was in the nineties, when I got to go to Japan. But the person who helped me a great deal to handle all the paperwork and prepare for my purchase of my little town home was my dear friend Pat Hankins. Pat Hankins, dear friend of mine, she had an aneurysm in '96. I'll never forget that day. April 24, '96, she had an aneurysm, but prior to '96, back in the eighties, she was a stock broker. She had worked for Merrill Lynch and many of these major stock firms. So she was really good at finance and figures and she helped me to go through all the paperwork for the purchase of my home. She helped us to start an investment club too. We still had an investment club today. It's called Ujamaa. It's about ten or fifteen of us women, we have an investment club.

WHITE

Terrific. Lot's of interesting things happening for you during that period of time.

TOBIN

Yeah.

WHITE

And I'm not quite certain of the time frame, but I wanted to touch upon—I'm sure somewhat of a sensitive subject—the loss of one of your family members.

TOBIN

My brother?

WHITE

Your brother [Britz Randolph "Dusty" Williams].

TOBIN

My brother passed away, oh God, a year ago, two years ago? This is 2002, 2001, I guess it was 2000. I guess it was July of 2000.

WHITE

Oh, 2000, okay.

TOBIN

I think. You know, one of the things about me, I blank on things that, I don't know, I just don't want to remember.

WHITE

You've talked about that before.

TOBIN

Because, I don't know. Well, I'll always remember my brother. I have a picture of him, I have all kinds of things from the funeral, I have his programs. My friend, Carole Wade, who works with me, she wrote a poem. So I have all that, I still have all these things. But yeah, I had to go home to Philadelphia to bury him. I remember holding him in my arms, him taking his last breath. That was so hard. He died of multiple myeloma, cancer of the blood.

WHITE

Oh my goodness! Really?

TOBIN

When he was eighteen he went to Vietnam, and having been in Vietnam, and living whatever life he was living— I had been in California for so many years, but when I left Philadelphia in '77, came to California, I hadn't seen much of my brother. I don't think he ever came to California, the whole time I lived in California. So I did get back and forth to Philly. He died of cancer of the blood, multiple myeloma. And we don't know if this is from the Agent Orange or whatever they developed over in Vietnam, I don't know. But he was in his fifties. He passed away, he was fifty, I think. So that was—

WHITE

A real challenge for you.

TOBIN

And it's still hard for me, because every time I hear Patti LaBelle sing "Wind Beneath My Wings", I cry. When I went home on one of my trips to see my brother, when he was really ill, Patti LaBelle was on one of the flights. We were on a US Air flight going to Philly, because she's from Philly.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

And Patti's just so warm and friendly, and we were always, "Hey Girl!" Because she went to Bartram, I went to Overbrook [High School]. We kind of knew each other from the Philly days and the Patti LaBelle and the Blue Belles thing. So when she saw me on the flight and we got out to get our luggage, we talked and I told her I was going to see my brother. In Patti's family, all of them have had some sort of cancer or something. So when I told her what my brother had, she hugged me and cried, I cried, and she prayed for me. At the funeral I requested that they sing "Wind Beneath My Wings." So every time I hear that song now, if I break up, you know why.

WHITE

We'll know why.

TOBIN

And that was my baby brother. Yeah, he was six years younger than I am.

WHITE

I had read that in your literature, and it didn't have a particular date.

TOBIN

July, July— God I should remember, because it's July, you know I have it some—

WHITE

July of 2000, yeah. I have it written down.

TOBIN

July seventh. I think it was, I think the funeral was on the seventh. But it was early July, because I remember being home on the fourth of July.

WHITE

Yeah. Yeah. I wanted to be sure that you had an opportunity to honor him in this work.

TOBIN

Oh yeah.

WHITE

He was my Marine. You know, when I see that—the commercial, "The Proud, The Few, The—" Whatever that thing is—I have a picture of him in his Marine uniform. Oh, God was he handsome.

WHITE

I'll bet he was, yeah.

TOBIN

Eighteen years old when he went into the Marines. And he had second and third degree burns all over his body, so he had a pretty rough time, getting injured in the Marines.

WHITE

It's a challenge.

TOBIN

Yeah.

WHITE

Okay, well, on that note, I think we're going to go ahead and end the interview for today. Thank you.

TOBIN

You're welcome.

1.11. TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE ONE
MAY 16, 2002

WHITE

The last time that we spoke, which was last month, we talked a great deal about a number of your clients that you've been working with. Particularly, we discussed Toyota Motor Sales [USA] Inc., the Minority Aids Project. We spoke of the Walt Disney Feature Animation Project; Sony Music Entertainment; the Baldwin Theater; the documentary that you worked on, which is called One More Hurdle; and some interaction with NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], among other things. Since that time, I've had an opportunity to attend a number of events that you were hosting or sponsoring, and to shadow you as you go through sort of your daily operation. That's been very insightful and helpful for me, and we will begin to talk about some of those things as we move forward toward more current events. In the meantime, today I'd like to talk a little bit more about some of the other clients that you have and continue to work with, and the kinds of experiences you've had in reaching out to the community and being involved just in general in the community in Los Angeles. The first thing I want to talk to you about and to ask you is about Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign in 1984. I wanted to find out about how that relationship came about, the kinds of things that you did in terms of public relations, and the overall experience of that opportunity.

TOBIN

Renee, that was such an exciting time, working with Reverend Jesse Jackson and Congresswoman— Well, Maxine Waters, she's Congresswoman Waters today. Back then, Brenda Marsh, Brenda Marsh Mitchell, at the Brotherhood Crusade, Brenda and I had had a good long working relationship through the Brotherhood Crusade. Danny Bakewell. And because of our relationship and the networking, and because I'd worked with Congresswoman Waters, I was part of the team. I wanted to be part of the team that they were putting together in Los Angeles to run the Jesse Jackson office, the presidential campaign office, so I was real excited and wanted to be a part of something that was history in the making. I mean, this was an African American man that was making a serious run for the presidential office, and I saw it as history in

the making, and I wanted to be a part of that. So through those relationships and networking, I was hired as a fundraising director, the California statewide fundraising director for the Jesse Jackson campaign in '84. It was a wonderful, wonderful experience. It was hard work. We had very little money, of course. You know a lot of these presidential campaigns have millions, but we were truly a grassroots campaign. I was instrumental in working very closely with Brenda Marsh, and we ran the office. It was right on Wilshire Boulevard, a very nice office. Someone donated space. A good friend of mine, Bob Jones, was at Motown at the time, and he helped to donate office furniture and supplies, things that they were no longer using, that was just kind of like old stuff, but good stuff, and he donated. I mean, people just came out of the woodworks to help us to set up the campaign headquarters. So that was a wonderful experience, and I think we raised over \$500,000. Back then, in '84, that was a lot of money.

WHITE

Absolutely.

TOBIN

That was through spaghetti dinners and little receptions at the headquarters. We'd have those little Friday night get-togethers at the headquarters with some fried catfish. [White laughs] I mean it was a real grassroots campaign.

WHITE

A grassroots campaign.

TOBIN

We had skating parties that Stevie Wonder helped to pull together. A big event at Casey Kasem's home. Casey Kasem, the wonderful radio personality, and his wife Jeanne Kasem, they're involved in all the wonderful, right causes, all the right causes, and they saw this as an opportunity to be part of history in the making. So we had a wonderful event at Casey Kasem's home, and just all kinds of people, you know, Judy Pace[-Flood], and I mean, just— Beverly Todd. You name all those celebrities, they were all part of this. So the fun job for me was to raise funds, of course, in the State of California, and it was real exciting because people came from all over the State of California and other areas to

help. I remember one day working at the campaign office and there was some negative stuff that came up about a threat to Reverend Jackson. Some group, some anti-Jackson group was going to bomb the campaign headquarters, and the Muslim, the Nation of Islam, the brothers, they were sort of helping to protect us and watch the headquarters, and I think Brenda got on the phone and told them that there was this threat and somebody was going to do something. The next thing I know, the brothers were standing outside with their arms folded, with their shirts and their bowties. [White laughs] They said, "You touch those sisters—" I mean, because there was a group outside marching around, you know, saying whatever they were saying about Reverend Jackson, and the Muslim—I just felt so safe and secure. Because it was mostly women, always women doing the hard work, with some guys, too, but it was mostly women and young people at the campaign headquarters, and it was so good to have that kind of protection and help. We did a great job. We raised the money, and Reverend Jackson, if you remember, that '84 campaign was a pretty significant campaign. I mean, he made that speech in—I guess it was San Francisco, about his reasons for wanting to be president, and everybody—It brought tears to people's eyes. So I was real excited. It was more than just a project; it was just a love for being involved in the right thing.

WHITE

A really good experience. I'm sure it was very exciting at that point in time, because no one would have thought that he would have garnered the number of votes and gained the amount of momentum that he did at that point in time. To even think about an African American president in 1984, it's unheard of.

TOBIN

And no one used to say to young black kids, "Do you want to be President of the United States?" But after Reverend Jesse Jackson, certainly Shirley Chisholm, I think she made an attempt to run before that, but he really got involved and really had a campaign. It was really serious, and little black children all over were saying they wanted to be President of the United States.

WHITE

It made a significant difference in terms of role modeling for young people.

TOBIN

Right. Right.

WHITE

And just changing the way in which they may aspire to do great things. So that's really terrific. That's great. I just wanted to touch base with you on that.

TOBIN

That was an important part of my life and, of course, in all my background information, you will see the Jesse Jackson 1984 presidential campaign, right behind the '84 Olympics, so I was quite involved in '84.

WHITE

That's right. That's right. Yes, you were on a roll there. And then, also, because I knew that you'd been involved in Operation PUSH [People United to Serve Humanity] with Jesse Jackson, so that linkage just continued on, as it does for you, more often than not, you know. So that's great. That's terrific. Okay. The next thing I want to talk to you about is your affiliation with some of the black churches in Los Angeles, and I know that at one point you coordinated the press room for the Congress of National Black Churches, which I understand is a coalition of major historically black denominations, during their national convention in Los Angeles. Can you tell me a bit about that and about this coalition, and, if you can recall, the eight churches that are actually affiliated with it.

TOBIN

That was done kind of recently, a couple of years ago. That was in, I guess, early nineties, or, yes, through networking, Lon Walls of Walls Communications in Washington, D.C., has that. That was his client, and they were coming to Los Angeles to hold their national convention. Rather than commute back and forth, Lon wanted to have a contact person here in Los Angeles, so he sent his lead person, "Missy" [Edythe] Daniels. I love Missy. She's a serious Christian woman and a hard-working PR lady. And having good relationships with Lon Walls and some of his staff, when they looked at coming to Los Angeles and who could help them with this event and who knew L.A., they called me, Pat Tobin. So Carole [Eileen "Kidogo"] Wade and I

worked on that account. One of the exciting things was that we had an opportunity to take the Metro downtown every day, and that was an experience for me.

WHITE

Oh, yes, that's exciting.

TOBIN

We hadn't done that. So, yes, we were able to work with that. I knew many of the ministers and bishops and, you know, religious leaders in Los Angeles. I certainly knew the press, having worked for CBS Television and having been involved with the black journalists, so it was just a win-win situation. So that was a great experience. We were responsible for documenting some of the media, you know, press releases and contacting the media and making sure that the photographers took the right pictures during the conference, and just little things that Missy Daniels may have needed, a car service and who to call, a photographer, who to call. And being here and being local, I was able to assist, and it was a wonderful experience.

WHITE

Great. Do you recall which churches are affiliated with the coalition for black churches?

TOBIN

Actually, all black churches— I don't know if it's all Baptist black churches, but I'd have to research and find out, but it was just all black churches, and they're headquartered in Washington, D.C. It's actually a national organization based in Washington, D.C., a coalition of black churches. I think it doesn't matter what denomination. I think it's all black churches.

WHITE

Okay. That's really exciting, because black churches obviously can be very influential.

TOBIN

Very influential.

WHITE

You know, in terms of getting the vote out and, you know, making inroads and taking a stand and having a voice, particularly in the political and social arena.

TOBIN

Political leaders, religious leaders, and certainly we all know from being involved in many things, that without the preachers, the ministers, you know, I mean, on any given Sunday in Los Angeles and around the country, most black people, you know, are really serious about their church. I mean, there are certainly mixed denominations and, you know, non-denominations, where people are— You know, for instance, we went to Agape and other churches, you know, even Faithful Central [Bible Church] and others, they have mixed worshipers, and that's a good thing. So, yes, on Sunday I'm really proud to be a church-going woman, a Christian woman, and I try to do the right thing and live up to what these ministers say, because I really do believe that when you do the right thing, what you do in life comes back to you.

WHITE

That's right. That's for sure. That's for sure. I know that you've worked with Reverend Cecil [L. "Chip"] Murray, and then Bishop [Kenneth] Ulmer. Can you recall any particular events that you worked with either of these individuals on?

TOBIN

Now, Bishop Ulmer— I'll start with my pastor, Bishop Ulmer first, because my daughter Lauren [Tobin] was instrumental in taking me to Faithful Central Bible Church. Because I'd been involved with Maranatha Community Church, Billy Ingram, over at Crenshaw area, and that was my church. But my daughter had said, "Mom, you've got to go with me to Bishop Ulmer." While my daughter was at USC [University of Southern California], she met Kenneth Ulmer, who was taking classes or something in music, or something; I can't remember. And she met this minister who was just wonderful, and she said, "Oh, Mom, you've got to go. You've got to go." So I went and, honey, she was right. Not only is he a wonderful man, a lovely family man, and just adorable guy to be around, and just the way he teaches, you just really understand what it's all about. So I joined Faithful Central, and it's been a wonderful

experience and I'm an active member there. One of the real exciting things was the Easter service, the sunrise service. We always have such a large gathering, that it was a major project to coordinate. We work with Bishop Noel Jones of Greater Bethany, and Kenneth Ulmer. I think for years they had joint sunrise services on Easter. So my daughter, being in publicity, she would help, and of course Mom got involved, and I would help. So being members of the church, we used to help with the press and publicity for the sunrise service on Easter.

WHITE

Okay, now, this is— No, no, this is Faithful Central. This is not the church that's at the [Great Western] Forum currently.

TOBIN

Oh, now it's currently at the Forum, yes. We still have the Inglewood address over at the 333— What is it? Florence? Yes. They outgrew that facility. We called it "the living room." Faithful Central Bible Church. It used to be Faithful Central Baptist Church and now it's Faithful Central Bible Church. But, yes, we recently bought the Forum, maybe a year or so ago. Back then, when I joined them, a few years back, we were over at "the living room," and we still have that facility in Inglewood. When we outgrew that, it was a matter of building something new, but why build something new when they took a look at what it would cost to build something, and whether it was going to be adequate in terms of space, it made more sense to buy the Forum.

WHITE

What are your thoughts about that in terms of having, say, the place where you go to anchor our spirits, or what have you, at the [Great Western] Forum, which is obviously known for—

TOBIN

Basketball and concerts.

WHITE

Right. Concerts and what have you.

TOBIN

You know, Renee, if you are true and you're real about church and whoever it is you pray to or worship, then it doesn't matter where you are. For instance, there are people who were concerned about that large facility, "Oh, it's too many people, 10,000 people," but there are people that don't even go to church on Sunday at all, but within, they know that God lives in them. I don't care where it is, if you really worship, you worship no matter where it is. Outside in a tent. And I've been in tents before when I used to go to Maranatha. Before we had a home, we were in a tent, we were at the Y, you know, all these different places, before I joined Faithful Central. Yes, it's big, it's huge, but there's so many people that need the Word, they need nurturing, they need feeding, until there's never enough room. You want them to come. You want as many as you can get, so there's no one place— Look what Bishop [Charles E.] Blake has done with West Angeles [Church of God in Christ]? It's 5,000 people that fit in that beautiful cathedral. So some people did not like going to the Forum. They thought, "Oh, this is not—", you know, known as a place of worship or whatever. But it's not where you go; it's about you and the message that you get when you get there. And the fact that I'm a businesswoman, looking at this from a business standpoint, there's a lot of money that goes to the black churches, and what do we do with it? Do we own anything? Do we control anything? Do we have our own building? Do we have a place like the Forum where you can expand? Yes, when it's not Sunday worship, they can use it as a venue for concerts, and that's a way of generating revenue. I just see it as a— Yes, it's large and it's a little unusual, but it's just a wonderful— And that's another historical landmark kind of thing.

WHITE

It certainly is.

TOBIN

What black business entity do you know that owns something like that?

WHITE

We actually outright own that.

TOBIN

Own the Forum.

WHITE

That is terrific. Wow.

TOBIN

The Great Western Forum is now owned by Faithful Central Bible Church, Bishop Ulmer, and the team over there that put that together. I'm excited. I remember when they were talking about it and when we were praying over it and wanting to get it and buy it and make sure that the deal went through. I remember marching— Jericho. We marched around the walls of Jericho till they came down.

WHITE

Oh, really. You guys marched around?

TOBIN

So we had services where we marched, we walked from the old facility and marched over to the new and walked around seven times.

WHITE

Really. Wow. That's really, really exciting.

TOBIN

It was exciting. Very exciting. So I believe. I believe no matter where you are, you know, God is in you.

WHITE

That's for sure. That's for sure. Now, are there other opportunities for the community to take advantage of that facility outside of the membership of the church?

TOBIN

Oh, for sure. For instance, the Great Western Forum has the Forum Club. Now, the Forum Club is a restaurant, it's a place where you can go eat, and certainly I believe there's going to be black caterers or— Not necessarily black. Let's just say diversity over there at the Forum, where people who are interested in maybe using that kitchen or using that restaurant for— Well, we've gone out

after church on Sunday looking for a place to eat, and thank God for Magic Johnson and his [T.G.I.] Friday's restaurant. Many people go there on Sunday, but I can't remember going anywhere and not having to wait. Everywhere you go, there's a long line. So maybe we can use the Forum Club as a restaurant or after-church facility where you can go and eat, because I'm a single woman, I'm not thinking about cooking. [White laughs] So on Sunday I want some— Yeah, I want some fried chicken, some greens, some catfish, some whatever. I've got to watch my diet, though. [White laughs] Then the award shows that come there. I mean, they would have had the Latin Grammys, only certain things happened, unfortunately, and it cancelled it out at the Forum, but it was going to take place at the Forum before the 9/11 situation. There were a couple of other major concerts that's gone on there, and that's a revenue, generating revenue to help that mortgage.

WHITE

That's right. The Stevie Wonder Children's Toy Drive.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah, the toy drive was there, and we were involved in that, too, thanks to my friend Al Ward, Al Ward at KJLH. He's always looking out for me. And Karen Slade. They try to make sure that I get involved in all the right things. So I know one year we volunteered and helped to do some press release outreach for the toy drive. The House Full of Toys, Stevie Wonder House Full of Toys [annual benefit].

WHITE

Exactly. Yes. Now, I know that you're a member of this particular church and that you work with a number of other reverends and bishops. Does it ever cause any sort of conflict or anything for you, professionally or personally?

TOBIN

No. No, because many of these ministers are friends. I'm so glad to see that. For instance, Bishop Blake, Bishop Ulmer, Noel Jones, they're always working together. They're usually on Aundrae Russell's gospel radio program [Spread the Word] on KJLH. So no. I see it as us working together. When we talk about unity and peace and all of us working together, we have to work together. I

say that all the time. Help each other, network, you know. You're not taking anything from me because I give you information, and it's not taking anything off my back to help you or give you something. I don't know, I was raised that way. You help the people and you look out for people, and it doesn't hurt; it helps. So those guys are buddies. I mean, many of those bishops, they're friends.

WHITE

Oh, good. Good. They share meals together, I'm sure. That's great. Okay. Good to hear. Now, I know that there was some other opportunities or what have you, that were associated with the church that I believe you were involved with. For instance, there was a church-based technology initiative to expand access to Internet services and technology in communities, particularly in communities which lagged behind in growth and development, in those important areas, and I think some of the churches partnered with Sprint?

TOBIN

Oh, yes, you're right. Oh, you know more about my clients than I do. You really do your research, Dr. White. I'm so proud of you.

WHITE

Well, good. [laughs]

TOBIN

Yes, Sprint was a client, not long enough, though. I wish we'd had Sprint a little longer, because they certainly were a good account. But, yes, through Bridging the Gap, one of our consultants on that project is Myron Curry. Myron is very knowledgeable about the Internet and bridging access to African Americans, and he's very knowledgeable about this new technology. Actually, Myron was the first one to encourage me to build my website, or have a website built, back many years ago. I think I'm one of the few African American-owned PR firms that had a website. People were talking about, "What's a website?" So, yeah, Sprint was a client, and one of the things Sprint wanted to do was bridge the digital divide, help to bridge that gap and close that digital divide. So through Sprint, there was a special program set up for the churches, where I

don't know if Sprint actually donated the equipment, but, yes, that was something that we were involved in with our client Sprint.

WHITE

Okay. Terrific. Then also with Sprint, I know that there was a partnership at one point with United Negro College Fund. It was called Sprint Scholars, and they actually donated \$375,000 to enable ten students to receive scholarships and summer internships and mentoring with Sprint. Now, were you instrumental in navigating that?

TOBIN

Well, you know, that was probably just one of the programs that their marketing and community relations people wanted to do, much like the Toyota Scholars. Toyota has the same kind of thing with United Negro College Fund, where they fund scholarships for students and follow them for the whole four years, and give them internships in their junior year, at Toyota. So that was very similar to what Toyota's doing, too. So many of those corporations see the opportunity to not only get their good name out there by doing a good deed like that, but young people—I mean, they're the ones that's going to get out of school and run the country, hopefully, so we want them to be educated, and those corporations can give back by doing that, setting up those scholarship programs. That was just one that Sprint had, I'm sure.

WHITE

Yeah, I thought that was real exciting when I saw that in some of your records, and I wonder and hope that they're still continuing in that effort in reaching out particularly to youth, because, like you said, they are the business leaders of tomorrow.

TOBIN

Business leaders of tomorrow.

WHITE

I'm glad to hear that Sprint is doing those kinds of things. As we've spoken about some of the larger telecommunications companies, AT&T, and then, of course, you know, large corporations in general, Toyota Sales, and the way in

which they're reaching out, and the fact that you've been instrumental in helping them do so, I think is important.

TOBIN

Now, you know, AT&T was a client, too. You remember that, right? And we talked about the monkey and how we got involved with that situation.

WHITE

Yes, we did.

TOBIN

But they turned that around.

WHITE

Yes, you helped them turn that around and see the error of their ways and give them some tools to work with in the future. I do recall that conversation very clearly. Now, I know, also, thinking of just reaching across and touching people, in 1986 you participated in Hands Across America.

TOBIN

Oh, that was exciting.

WHITE

What about that event?

TOBIN

You know, I still have that tee shirt. I save everything. I'm a packrat, I really am. People who know me, "That woman saves everything." Hands Across America. Kenny— Was it Ken Kragen, Lionel Richie's manager at the time? Ken Kragen, Lionel Richie's manager, through my friend Bob Jones and others, you know, people that I'd know out there, whenever you see an opportunity to get involved with something worthwhile, I'm like the little red wagon. The sign on my church back in Philadelphia used to say— They had a picture of a little red wagon, and it was "Push, pull, or get out the way." [White laughs] If you're not going to push the wagon or pull the wagon, get out the way because I'm going to steamroll over you.

WHITE

[laughs] That's for sure.

TOBIN

So that's my philosophy when it comes to wonderful, positive projects. How could you not be involved in Hands Across America? Now, I don't know the politics on the downside. Some people say the money never got where it was supposed to go, or whatever. I don't know about all that. All I know, it was a wonderful concept. Can you see people all across America joining hands, red, green, black, white, I don't care what color, polka dot. I don't care who you were. If it was for a good cause, then we were involved. Then the thing with the entertainment. I mean, the Michael Jacksons, everybody, and Stevie Wonder, everybody in the world, and that "We Are America," whatever that song was.

WHITE

"We Are the World"?

TOBIN

The song, "We Are the World." Wasn't that the song that came out of this whole effort?

WHITE

Yes.

TOBIN

So I just wanted to be part of all those history-making, wonderful projects so that my grandson, Aaron Michael Tobin Curry, will have something to read about. He'll say, "My grandma, no wonder she was always busy and had to pencil me in." [White laughs] That's what he'll say one day. "Grandma," he calls me up and say, "Grandma—" I know, I'm know digressing. I have to mention him. But he'll say, "Grandma, what are you doing tomorrow?" And whatever I'm doing tomorrow, I have to switch it around, because he comes first. But, yeah, Hands Across America was another exciting project, and I think we were just instrumental in helping to raise money to get hands to join in and commit dollars and be a part of that very significant effort.

WHITE

Great. Good, good. Also speaking in terms of linking hands and bringing together people, you worked on a project called the Black Agenda, with Reverend Thomas Kilgore [Jr.].

TOBIN

Oh, Dr. Kilgore. Okay, Renee, you always bring tears to my eyes. Of course, you know Dr. Kilgore is now deceased, but my daughter was a student at USC, and you know the story about us not having any money or anything, so only by the grace of God and student loans, she got to go to USC. But she had an opportunity to work while in school, and she worked at the Ebonics office. Long before the Ebonics stuff that they're talking about today, Ebonics was the African American support group for students at USC, and Dr. Kilgore headed up that office along with "Mi Mi" Carmichael. That's still one of my good buddies. Betty Carmichael, but those who loved her and knew her called her Mi Mi. So my daughter Lauren had a chance to work with Dr. Kilgore and Mi Mi Carmichael when my daughter was a student at USC. She worked in the Ebonics office. So certainly I got to know Dr. Kilgore really well, and I certainly went to the Second Baptist Church a few times. Just another minister that I knew well and was active in the community with. And Dr. Kilgore was so wonderful, and got to work with him through USC and the black support group at USC and my daughter being a student there.

WHITE

Do you recall what the Black Agenda was?

TOBIN

Oh, those were the black ministers. Yes, you did ask that question. I'm just thinking about Dr. Kilgore and how wonderful he was, he and his lovely wife. Yeah, Black Agenda was the African American ministers that would meet. I think they would meet every Monday. They had an organization and they dealt with a lot of issues in our community. You know, as we said about the powerful ministers and how you put together all these churches and look at the number of people, there's power in numbers and unity, so when those churches came together, you had strength in numbers. So the Black Agenda was a group of ministers that would meet, and if you wanted something done

or you wanted to bring to them some issue, you would meet with them. They had meetings, I think every Monday or something like that. They've changed the name now, but I think it's still even active today.

WHITE

Oh, really? Okay.

TOBIN

Yeah.

WHITE

That's very interesting. I had not heard that term, and it could mean so many different things, the Black Agenda. I mean, what exactly is the Black Agenda, you know?

TOBIN

Well, you know, the black agenda is like the white agenda, people's agenda. It's like any other agenda. But when it comes to African Americans, we've always had special needs because for so long we've had to play catch-up. I mean, we don't want to go back to slavery, but we all know that you were hung if you read a book, when we were whipped or beaten or whatever because we wanted to read. We had to play catch-up, so that's why today, when kids don't read or don't want to read or don't want to get an education, I mean, people died so we could vote and read, you know. So, yeah, the Black Agenda, we always had something that we needed to deal with. Even today we still have a black agenda. If you're black, you need to be concerned about what's going on in your community and your world, and you're black, then it's your agenda, you know.

WHITE

That's true. That's true.

TOBIN

So I'm sure they had another real purpose for it, but that was one of the things we were real happy about, knowing there were some ministers out there concerned about what's going on in our community, and they would meet

regularly with community leaders and with each other to talk about issues that affected our community.

WHITE

It's a great organization to have, and I certainly hope that that is continuing to move forward. Speaking of community leaders getting together to talk about what's going on in their area and how they can improve services and what have you, I know that you worked on a campaign with the City of Compton.

TOBIN

Oh, that was exciting. Ooh, honey! [laughs]

WHITE

The City of Compton had a number of challenges. I think it was a two-year publicity campaign that you worked with them to assist the city in enhancing their image of Compton, and I know that you partnered with another PR firm. I think it was Valencia, Perez and Echeveste [VPE]?

TOBIN

Echeveste, yes.

WHITE

The PR firm. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about that.

TOBIN

And another communications company we worked with, who actually brought the project to us; it escapes me right now. But we were instrumental in just helping to shape the image of Compton. You know, people like Arsenio Hall, when he had his TV show, used to joke about, "You straight out of Compton," you know. But there's some positive things that go on in Compton. Some of those young people out there, I mean, they excel in athletics and in education, and there are really some good stories out there. The Williams sisters [Venus and Serena] today that everybody's raving about, they grew up in Compton. Kevin Costner, the talented actor. I just love Kevin Costner, the actor. He lived in Compton.

WHITE

Did he really?

TOBIN

Oh, yes, he did. One of the things we loved about working on that project, you learned a lot about the history of Compton. I mean, there were some people out there, if you go just search the records, you'll find some very, very interesting folks who lived there long before it became as diverse as it is today. There's some very interesting people who came out of Compton. And we had an opportunity, as I said, to help shape the image by putting on certain events. One of the things we did was we came up with a special newsletter or sort of like a book that kind of highlighted the events in Compton, and one of the things we presented was "Men are from Mars and Venus is from Compton," or something like that. [White laughs] I can't remember the name now, but when you think about the Williams sisters, we had this thing, "They're from Compton," or something like that. I can't remember the name now. "Men are from Mars and Venus is from Compton," or something like that. But we did have a good opportunity to work with them, but it didn't last two years, though. Unfortunately, there were some financial problems and the contract was cut short, because, you know, they have this casino out there, and, I don't know, there were some financial things, and it was always a challenge. But, you know, we rise above that, we move on, we accept the challenge, we do what we have to do, and move on. But the contract was cut short because the funds weren't always available.

WHITE

I thought it was kind of interesting to think about how you would approach, because I know that you have individual clients, and you may have a particular corporation that needs to enhance their image, or you may need to go in with some crisis management techniques and tools. But I thought it was very interesting that you were actually dealing with a city, a city that had an image problem. What were the strategies that you might use to facilitate that process for a city as opposed to, say, an individual, or even a corporation, for that matter?

TOBIN

Well, when you look at it, Renee, a city is made up of people, right? All these people. So you want to be able to work with the religious leaders, the community leaders, the different organizations, the different Chamber [of Commerce] groups, and it's all about getting that political group, the city council and the mayor, getting those people to all read from the same page, the same book, be stepping at the same time, and then you start there. One of the exciting things we did was when the Williams sisters were playing in the U.S. Open [Tennis Championships], or one of those major tennis matches, I mean, we had a chance to set up a viewing party on TV at the hotel out there in Compton. And I was so proud to have the TV stations, NBC, CBS. They all came out there to watch these black girls play tennis. I think they won then, too. We were cheering them on. So it was just good to just take whatever you learned in the field of PR in dealing with people and use it, whether it's for a city or an individual or a corporation. It all applies.

WHITE

It all applies, yes. Just the client base is a little bit different and needs to be a bit different. Okay.

TOBIN

And that shows other companies or individuals that may be interested in hiring you, that you have the strength to work with a team, first of all. I think the other company was Morris Communications. I want to check that name out, because it was a major mainstream company, a Caucasian gentleman, Hispanic firm and an African American firm. So that's one of the things I like about certain politicians who made sure that when there was an opportunity to get some business in this state and some other states, that there's a diverse group or ethnic mix of PR people, or communications specialists, or event coordinators. So there was three firms, and we were really happy to be a part of that.

WHITE

Well, that's really great, particularly given the fact that the demographics have changed so dramatically in Compton.

TOBIN

And that's a good thing. That's why this diversity and living together and we're all working together. Martin Luther King [Jr.] said it a long time ago, "If we don't live together, we'll perish together." You know, if you cut us, the blood is not any different color; the blood is red.

WHITE

That's right.

TOBIN

We all bleed the same color. So we need to live together, work together, and just get along. As Rodney King says, "Can't we all get along?" I really do love that. That's one thing the man did say right, though, "Can't we get along?"

WHITE

That's for sure. I think that'll go down in history.

TOBIN

It will. It will go down in history. "Can't we get along? Can't we all get along?"
[mutual laughter]

WHITE

Let's see now. I know that you also worked with another—I would say political organization, so to speak, and that's the Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce.

TOBIN

Oh, yes, yes.

WHITE

You worked with them on a number of campaigns, and I wonder if you could talk a little bit about what exactly the agenda is for the Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce.

TOBIN

Well, you have seen Mr. Gene Hale. I think this was a spinoff. Mr. Gene Hale was very active with the Black Business Association, you know, [Earl] "Skip" Cooper and those guys at the BBA. And like many groups, you know, they

splinter and break off and people want to, you know, start their own thing. So there was another group that wanted to start the Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce, and we saw it as a good idea, I guess, those of us who were involved in that. I know Toyota's always looking for opportunities to get involved in business and things that are positive, so one of the things I'm proud about, Mr. Bob Best, at the time Mr. Bob Best was one of our vice presidents at Toyota. He's now retired, but he saw that as a good opportunity as well, to get involved in something positive, and Toyota gave the first \$5,000 to help start, you know, seed money to help start the organization, to get it going.

WHITE

Did they really?

TOBIN

Yes. I have a picture of Gene Hale, Bob Best, and Homer Broome. Now, Homer Broome is another gentleman to remember. He used to be with the City of Los Angeles. Was he involved in the police? Homer Broome. Yes, you know the name.

WHITE

We documented his wife, Marian Broome, for the oral history project.

TOBIN

Oh, yes. Well, Homer, bless his heart. We worked together with the Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce. That was more than eight years ago. So as a result, with Toyota being involved in giving funds to help the organization grow and thrive, when it came to coordinating their event, every year they would have a economic awards dinner. Tobin & Associates had the opportunity to work with them and coordinate their dinner. For years we did that, along with a gentlemen named Clarence Williams. They call him C.W.

WHITE

Okay. Not Clarence Williams III?

TOBIN

No, not Clarence Williams III, not the actor, but Clarence Williams is a consultant that worked at Tobin & Associates, and that's how Clarence Williams got involved with the Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce.

WHITE

Oh, really. Okay.

TOBIN

I'm so glad for this opportunity to set the record straight. He now coordinates the Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce. The event is still going on every year. They have this wonderful awards banquet, and it's very nicely done, very elegant, and Clarence coordinates that. But he got the chance to work on that at Tobin & Associates when we had that account, and we worked on it for years together, but most recently I've been quite busy with so many projects. And here's another reason to say let's work together, let's get along. There's no reason for me not to work with Clarence because he no longer works at Tobin. He started his own company and people look at it as competition. It's not competition, you know. We can all help each other, we can all grow and work together because we all have different strengths.

WHITE

That's right. That's right.

TOBIN

So, thank God, I've been so busy I haven't had time to work on the GLAACC [Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce] Awards, and most recently, I was nominated. I was nominated for media professional award or something like that. I'll have to get the correct name. Because Larry McCormick won. Was it Larry McCormick or Warren Wilson? One of those media people won. I don't even know why I was in that category with those guys. I mean, I was in a category with some serious media professionals. Carole [Eileen "Kidogo"] Wade in my office will help me find the information on the GLAACC Awards, just recently, and I was nominated. It was March 21, this year, same night as the Black Journalists [National Association of Black Journalists]. I was busy working on the Black Journalists event and I was going

to go, and everything was right downtown. The Black Journalists was at the Greater Los Angeles Athletic Club, and the GLAACC Awards was at the Hyatt, where they always have it. And one good thing about the Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce, GLAACC, they always try to do an event where there's an African American head of catering or something.

WHITE

Right. Okay, that's good.

TOBIN

And that's Jessie. Jessie—I can't remember her last name now, but she's done our dinner for years. I think she's moved on to another hotel now, but she's been the person responsible for us bringing our business there through GLAACC. The Black Business Association and GLAACC, they all wanted to make sure that there are opportunities for ethnic-owned companies to get business, you know, and to grow and to get more corporate accounts and to make sure that we were recognized as serious players out there in the business world.

WHITE

And you have been very instrumental in helping others make sure that they are recognized in the black business world. For instance, I understand that you worked with the American Public Relations Alliance, consulting with black-owned PR firms, and you did a seminar called Making It Real, which provided training to aspiring urban entrepreneurs. I wonder if you could talk about that.

TOBIN

There, again, is that whole networking thing. Making It Real—Actually, the African American PR Alliance, back to Lon Walls of Walls Communications in D.C., he had this wonderful idea to pull together some PR professionals from around the country and form this alliance, so I'm one of the members, and there's Terry Williams in New York, there's Lon Walls in D.C., and Michelle Flowers in Chicago. I mean, it was just beautiful to see. And there's Warren Jackson in New York, White Plains, New York. It's just great to see these companies come together and form this alliance. What we did in L.A. with this Making It Real, Philip Morris [Inc.] was sponsoring this seminar, helping—They wanted to find a new way to reach out to people and not necessarily talk

about smoking, but find other ways to be a good corporate citizen in the community, so they sponsored this wonderful— Because Miller Beer, I believe, is part of the Philip Morris family. Philip Morris is so big, I think they have Kraft Foods and Miller Beer. So with all these brands, you know, under the umbrella, this was one project that grew out of our relationship with Michelle Flowers in Chicago. Michelle Flowers, who's part of the African American PR Alliance, she had the Philip Morris account, so when they were going around these different cities with this Making It Real seminar, when they came to Los Angeles, it was about networking, relationships, who can we call on to help us with the outreach and the media relations and who do we know there that can handle this, and there again, Tobin & Associates. So, through relationships with people and friends, we got to work on that. And Muhammad Nassardeen of Recycling Black Dollars [RBD], he was very instrumental as a local grassroots community organization to help identify the businessperson or group that would put together the best proposal and win that— I think it was \$20,000 they got or something like that.

WHITE

Oh, really. Okay.

TOBIN

Yeah, that was really wonderful.

WHITE

Are you aware of collaboration with these other PR firms today?

TOBIN

Oh, yes.

WHITE

The African American Public Relations Alliance is still active?

TOBIN

Very active.

WHITE

Still going on today?

TOBIN

Actually, we have a website, and I think my good friend and webmaster, Mr. Victor Hall, is working on the website for the African American PR Alliance, because they had a website years ago, but I don't know what happened with it. But they're going to rebuild it again. And these fifteen companies are still very active. The companies—I didn't name all ten or fifteen, but there's a guy in Jackson, Florida. We're all over the place—Atlanta. We don't meet often enough because we're spread out and we're all busy running our own companies, but there's a firm in Houston, Debra [Brown]—Gilbreath Communications.

WHITE

Gilbreath?

TOBIN

Down in Houston, Texas. We continue to refer business to each other, to help each other in the different markets. We want to be like the major PR firms out there. They can handle things. They're international. They can handle things all over the world. Well, we want to be able to do that, too, to reach out and work together. So that's been a good thing. We still joint venture and work on many projects together.

WHITE

That's a terrific alliance to be with. I mean, you can imagine how powerful. Like you said, various PR firms, you know, particularly we're talking about African American PR firms, you have your strengths. Each has its strengths and, you know, to bring all those strengths together, it's a powerful coalition.

TOBIN

It really is. And look at the different resources. When you combine our dollars and when you look at the revenue generated by these fifteen companies, I mean, we're up there with the big boys, you know, and the years in experience. Jackson Expertise out in New York, they've been in business for thirty-some years. I mean, the son now runs the business for the father, Warren Jackson. His son now runs the business. So when you look at the history, I mean, my company alone, since 1984—

WHITE

Yes, you have made lots of history.

TOBIN

Then there's a Bruce Crawley in Philadelphia. He has a major marketing advertising firm.

WHITE

Oh, really. It's been in existence for quite a number of years.

TOBIN

Quite a number of years, and then we have Anderson Communications in Atlanta. So there's fifteen companies, and I certainly want to list all fifteen of them, because they're key to this alliance. It's very historical in the making. We are the charter members who came together with Lon Walls in Washington, D.C., to start this. New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles. There's two in New York, because one is White Plains, New York, upstate, then New York City is Terry Williams.

WHITE

Okay. Detroit?

TOBIN

I don't think we have anybody in Detroit.

WHITE

No. Okay.

TOBIN

Where else are we. Is it Jackson, Mississippi? I think we do have somebody in Mississippi.

WHITE

New Orleans at all?

TOBIN

Not in New Orleans. But do we want to find those fifteen. I mean, they're on the website or they're in the record. We can find those companies that are part of it.

WHITE

Okay. Now, in terms of helping one another, you also do other things in terms of other ethnic groups. The Unity Media Access Project, you were affiliated with that and you actually gave free seminars to teach the nonprofit organizations, the community members, how to get their news published or broadcast. I know you worked with the Asian American Journalists Association, the California Chicano News Media Association, and, of course, the Black Journalists Association of Southern California.

TOBIN

There again, networking with friends like Gayle Pollard. Gayle Pollard's been a friend for years, and she is an editorial writer at the Los Angeles Times, and Gayle and I go way back. I mean, she's probably been at the Times for eighteen years, and we've known each other since back in the seventies. Was it '79 when the Black Journalists started? They're over twenty-something years old, this chapter here in Los Angeles. I think I talked about it earlier on, about Tony Cox and Valerie Shaw and others starting, and Susan Kirvin, starting the Black Journalists. I'm one of the founding members. That's one of the awards I'm very proud of, that I have. Yes, Unity Media, UMAP. We called it UMAP, Unity Media Access Project. Ford Foundation funded that for two years and it helped— This also grew out of the unrest, I believe, where a lot of companies saw an opportunity to help bring people together. So Asian, black, Hispanic groups, journalist groups, we all worked together, and we had these seminars. We conducted these— Grassroots community-based organizations would come together and we'd have a speaker, guest speakers, and panels and lunch, and it was wonderful. I just wish they could have kept that going. There was a young lady named Tammy Outerbridge, who was at our company at the time, and she was very instrumental in helping to coordinate that. If the name Outerbridge rings a bell, Tammy's dad is an artist, a well-known artist, Mr. Outerbridge.

WHITE

Absolutely.

TOBIN

See?

WHITE

I have also done an oral history for Mr. Outerbridge.

TOBIN

See?

WHITE

With UCLA.

TOBIN

Now, Renee, who would have known that through Larry McCormick, you and Pat Tobin, you certainly— I'm so privileged to be a part of this. And many of these people that you've— There's that circle again and that networking. Well, Tammy Outerbridge is the daughter of— What's Mr. Outerbridge's first name? Her dad is a well-known artist.

WHITE

I can't recall. Yes, he is. [John Outerbridge]

TOBIN

Very talented. And Tammy was one of our best, best, best PR consultants. I mean, that woman was so— I think she started her own company.

WHITE

Oh, really. Okay.

TOBIN

Yes, and we worked together with the Unity Media Access and some of the other projects that Tobin & Associates worked on. Tammy was at our company for a couple of years.

WHITE

Wow, isn't that interesting. Very interesting.

TOBIN

Yes, so UMAP was a very exciting project, and Unity comes from the conference that the National Association of Black Journalists, every year they team up with the Native American Journalists [Association], the Asian American Journalists [Association], the Chicano News Media Association, or the Hispanic Association of Journalists [National Association of Hispanic Journalists]. Those groups get together every four years and we have something called Unity. Thousands of us, and we come together. Each of us have our own conference every year, like the NABJ, the National Association of Black Journalists. Well, the Hispanic journalists, the Asian journalists, they all have their own conferences every year, then every four years they come together with everybody and we call it Unity. Oh, it's fabulous.

WHITE

Okay. When will that due this year again?

TOBIN

You know, I believe it's coming up. This is 2002, so it has to be four—I think it's an even number. It's not this year, because NABJ is going to be in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, so it might be 2004. You want to be there for that. You want to be there. It's fabulous.

WHITE

Yes, it sounds really exciting.

TOBIN

Then one year we had Andy [Andrew] Young. We've had all kinds. Jesse Jackson. Everybody has been a speaker.

WHITE

That's really great you mentioned the Native Americans.

TOBIN

Native American. You know there's a whole—

WHITE

I didn't know very much about that at all.

TOBIN

You know what? This is why I'm so glad for the work that you're doing, I'm happy about what you're doing, you're documenting things, you're setting the record straight, because the Native Americans, people don't even think about them. There's a whole— I shouldn't say they don't think about them, but they forgot. As Richard Pryor says, "First the Indians, now us," meaning black people. [White laughs] I always like to add a little humor to everything so people won't be all bent out of shape. But the Americans, the Native Americans, who was here first? And history's right when what's-his-name, who discovered America, Christopher Columbus, I don't think he discovered America. America was already there. He found— When he came— Whatever. The Pilgrims were already eating when he showed up, or whatever. [White laughs] But the Native American journalists, they have an association of journalists.

WHITE

Really.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah, they're out there. There's a whole organization of Native American folks that are doing enterprising things. And back to Toyota, we just worked with J.L. Armstrong at Toyota, he was chairing the dinner for the— I think it's the [National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development]. It's an organization of Native Americans, and what they do, they have a dinner every year and they raise money for Native American young college students to get scholarships and go into business in different areas, and it's wonderful.

WHITE

That's true. I think I've heard of the Native American Bureau of something or other. I just came across that information in looking for scholarships for some young people, and was pleasantly surprised to find that there was a bureau that actually helps to fund college and things like that.

TOBIN

Yeah.

WHITE

That's certainly a good point to have documented, that there is an association.

TOBIN

And actually, if you would like to contact Shirley Dichirico, I have a phone number for you that I'd love to give you. Shall I give it to you now?

WHITE

Later.

TOBIN

Yeah, you want to call her, because there's a lot of information about that organization.

WHITE

Okay, it's called the Native American—

TOBIN

I don't have the exact name. I just know Shirley Dichirico heads it up, and it's in Mesa, Arizona.

WHITE

Okay. Terrific.

TOBIN

Mesa, Arizona, yeah.

WHITE

Now, we mentioned, just a moment ago, about the civil unrest and this is, of course, the tenth-year anniversary and there's been a number of articles and a things like that, that has talked about the anniversary of the civil unrest of 1992, and then, of course, the Rodney King issue. So I wanted to talk a little bit about that and see if you can recall the kind of impact it had for you as an African American, as a Los Angeleno, and then also as a public relations professional in Los Angeles. But I'm going to go ahead and table that

conversation until our next interview, because I know we have to end the interview for today, so we'll pick up right there next time.

1.12. TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE ONE
JUNE 6, 2002

WHITE

Last time we met was two weeks ago, and we had an opportunity to sort of reiterate what we had been talking about on tape five, talking about some of your clients, with Sony Entertainment and Walt Disney [Feature] Animation. Then we had an opportunity to talk a bit more about some other organizations that you had been working with, the Congress of National Black Churches [Inc.] and United Negro College Fund, and then we talked a bit about some of the other public relations organizations that you had worked with, Valencia, Perez and Echeveste [VPE], and the African American Public Relations Alliance. We talked about some of your interaction with Recycling Black Dollars and the Asian American Journalists Association, Unity Media Access Project, etc., etc. So we want to move on from there. The last time we ended, we were just talking a bit about some of the journalist organizations that meet once a year. I believe it is, and you were actually elaborating on the fact that there is a Native American enterprise [The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development], National Association of Black Journalists, and the California Chicano News Media Association, etc., etc., and the Native American Journalists that get together once a year. So I just wanted to continue from there, but before I move on with my next questions, I just wanted to highlight the fact that you had given me an article from the Tri-County Bulletin, from the Long Beach Leader, and it talked about the black church leaders. When we originally spoke, we weren't quite sure exactly what that was comprised of, but I do have this article in front of me and it indicates that the National Congress of Black Churches, I should say, was an organization that was founded in 1978 and it's based in Washington, D.C. It indicates that Dr. E. Edward Jones is the president from the National Baptist Convention of America; Bishop Roy L.[H.] Winbush from the Church of God in Christ; Bishop E. Lynn Brown from Christian Methodist Episcopal Church; Dr. [C.] Mackey Daniels, president of Progressive National Baptist Convention; and then we have Bishop Cecil Bishop from the African [Methodist] Episcopal Zion

Church; and then we have the founder and chairman emeritus, Bishop John Hurst Adams from the African Episcopal Church; and Dr. William [J.] Shaw, the president of National Baptist Convention [USA, Inc.]. I just wanted to have that as some clarity on what exactly that organization is about. The article indicates that together, these denominations represent 65,000 member churches and a congregation membership of more than 20 million people, so it's quite a large organization, and I'm sure that your work with them was helpful and actually made a difference and affected quite a number of people. Sort of to move on from there, there is the National Council of Negro Women, the first annual Black Family Reunion, that you actually had been working with in 1988. I wondered if you could talk a bit about that.

TOBIN

Renee, that was an exciting experience. Dr. Dorothy [Irene] Height, Congresswoman Maxine Waters, Danny Bakewell, a number of community leaders were instrumental in pulling off the first Black Family Reunion here in Los Angeles. It was a major undertaking with all the political involvement, community involvement, and our agency, Tobin & Associates, we were instrumental in working with the National Council of Negro Women. We had over I don't know how many thousands of people were in attendance over at, I guess it was Leimert Park, I think. We raised a lot of money, and it was a wonderful event. We worked very closely with a doctor from Procter and Gamble. I'll have to get her name, but she was on loan from Procter and Gamble, and she was instrumental in bringing sponsorship dollars from Procter and Gamble to make it happen. Of course, the city, I think, at the time— Was Mayor [Tom] Bradley still mayor back then? That was in ninety— When was the Black Family Reunion?

WHITE

It was 1988.

TOBIN

In '88, okay.

WHITE

I think he was.

TOBIN

Yeah, he was very instrumental in making that happen.

WHITE

Yes, he was. Because he retired, I believe, in 1990.

TOBIN

Okay. So we were instrumental in publishing a newsletter, working with the National Council of Negro Women to get families involved. They had different pavilions with health issues, family issues, and it was just an exciting event. Some entertainers performed on the stage. It was just a real good event. I think they continued that for a couple of years, but I don't think it happens any longer. But then it was a very exciting event to be a part of.

WHITE

And the National Council of Negro Women, is that comprised of just African American women or is it—

TOBIN

It's a national organization.

WHITE

—women business executives?

TOBIN

Women from all walks of life, all levels, all ages, predominantly, you know, African American women. Dorothy Height picked up where Mary McLeod Bethune left off, and Dr. Height has been the president forever, until most recently they just elected a new president. But I've been very involved in National Council of Negro Women because it's something positive and they're doing good work for women of color. So it's a national organization.

WHITE

Okay, terrific. Okay. Now I want to also just bring to your attention, just for the record, that in 1985, actually, the City of Los Angeles printed a birthday greeting proclamation. Do you recall that event, that occasion?

TOBIN

I think it was so exciting. The Speakeasy nightclub— I think I was still doing the Speakeasy nightclub event then, and it was a proclamation, I guess, from the city. It was beautiful. And I think it's hanging on my wall, even today I still have it. It was just exciting because of all the community involvement and all the different organizations, and for the city and for our politicians to recognize you, you know, it was great. Somebody was instrumental in making sure that I got one of those. So, yeah.

WHITE

Isn't that fine. Do you recall some of the people that were there?

TOBIN

Oh, my goodness, no. I'd have to dig up the records and dig up the photos. One of the things I do know, I have pictures of just about everything. I have so many photographs. I just have to go back through my archives and highlight some of the people who were there. But, yeah, that was an exciting time.

WHITE

Okay. Terrific. All right, we need to pause for now. [tape recorder off] Let's continue from there. So I just wanted to talk a little bit about some of your other affiliations, particularly with some of the black women organizations. Now, I know since 1982 you've been involved with the Black Woman's Network. You've been moderator for, I think, twenty years for the annual Breakfast Forum networking event.

TOBIN

I've been a member for twenty years, but moderating for I don't know how many years, but, yeah, quite a long time. Maybe ten or so.

WHITE

Okay. Tell me a bit about the Black Woman's Network. When was it founded? What is their mission?

TOBIN

Their mission is to enhance sisterhood through sharing. Actually, Carole [Eileen] Wade is the expert. Carole Wade, a.k.a. Kidogo, was the president when I joined the organization. I went to an event, a garden party or something they were having, and it was such a positive gathering of beautiful black women, I said, "I've got to join this group." And you're right, that was back in, I think it was '82 or something. They have monthly meetings, they have various committees that— They mentor to younger people, they give to the Genesis Center. I mean, they just do a lot of positive things. It's just like sisterhood, sharing, enhancing careers, and helping each other with business. We have a directory of our membership and we can utilize each other's services from accounting to nursing to PR to, you know, just all kinds of different careers that the women are involved in. One of the women, Marva Smith Battle-Bey, she is just an awesome, awesome woman. Marva runs the Vermont Slauson Economic Development Corporation, and she is one of the founders of Black Woman's Network, and just a dynamite woman. And I'm just really happy to be a part of that organization.

WHITE

How did they happen to choose you as the moderator for their annual event?

TOBIN

Actually, just being the outgoing, funny person that likes to make people laugh and just lighthearted and just being one of their members who didn't mind stepping up to the plate and being active. I guess it was such a success the first time, and I got such an overwhelming response from people and they really liked me, and the membership agreed that I could continue doing this, so I've been the moderator for years. It's like my annual one-day Oprah show, where I'm in charge. [mutual laughter] So it's been a good relationship, and I enjoy it. You've had the opportunity to attend, right?

WHITE

I certainly did. I certainly did have an opportunity to attend just a couple of months ago, and it was quite— You were quite engaging. I think a lot of people in the audience really appreciate your sense of humor. You just kept it light, you know, and it was really a great opportunity because there were so many powerful, accomplished women sharing their experience with other

women in the community, and inspiring them to move forward and maximize their potential. So it's a great organization, you know, the kinds of things that they endeavor to do, bringing particularly African American women together to network.

TOBIN

And they have a newsletter that they publish. I guess it's quarterly or maybe monthly.

WHITE

They have a number of committees, I understand. Okay, there's another organization, Black Women in Film.

TOBIN

Or is it Women in Film? There's a couple. Is it Black Women in Film or Women in Film?

WHITE

Women in Film? Are you on the board of Women in Film?

TOBIN

I'm a former board member, Women in Film, and I'm a member of Women in Film, and that's a predominantly white group of women, but certainly they're getting more involved with diversity and including more women of color on their board. The president of that organization is Hollace Davis, who's an executive at Columbia Pictures. But one of my clients, Deirdre Dix [Hunt], who owns a production company, is currently on the board of that organization, and Deirdre was instrumental in getting Janice Bryant Howroyd, another client, on the board. So we're starting to bring a little diversity to that organization. One of the women who was instrumental in getting me on the board is Candace Bowen, and Candace is a dynamite producer, a very active woman in the community. She lives in Malibu [California]. We used to always kid her about being out in Malibu and not really being involved in the community, but Candace was very instrumental in getting women of color on that board of Women in Film.

WHITE

How many boards would you say you actually are on?

TOBIN

Not many boards, but affiliated with a number of organizations. Being on the board of Women in Film was good, and being on the board of Bennett College, I'm just there by name only because Bennett College is in [Greensboro] North Carolina, and I've only been there once. But now that— Recently I read where Johnetta Cole is now president of Bennett College, so I may have to become involved now. I'm on that board, Bennett College.

WHITE

Was she president of Howard [University]?

TOBIN

Dr. Johnetta Cole was at Spelman [College] and then she went to Emory [University], and then from Emory, now Bennett.

WHITE

Okay. Terrific.

TOBIN

So not too many boards. I'm a member of many organizations, just to keep that networking going and keep the affiliation going.

WHITE

Absolutely. Well, listen, you mentioned a moment ago about Mayor Tom Bradley, and I know that before he retired, you received commendations from him. It was interesting, because I have an article from Jet magazine, from 1990, and it shows where he was getting a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and you were there. "Retiring Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley gets a star on the Walk of Fame, and he's greeted by boxer Paul Rodriguez, Ms. Pat Tobin, Robert Hooks, Brock Peters, and [Hollywood] Mayor Johnny Grant and Alex Baptiste of the Radisson Hotels." A very, very, very flattering picture of the group of you.

TOBIN

That's one of the things I cherish, and I have it on my wall today from that event because Mayor Bradley, as you know, was just—I don't know, you talk about a leader, a man for all people. Everybody loved him. Well, mostly everybody that I know. And he was just a good man. I was happy to have had an opportunity to work with him, you know, while living here in Los Angeles. So with that star, I don't know that many mayors get a star on the Walk of Fame, but he was one.

WHITE

Definitely. What was your interaction with Mayor Tom Bradley before he retired? What sort of things did you do with him? Or how did you actually come to meet him? How did your relationship begin?

TOBIN

It all started, I believe, back with Bishop H. Hartford Brookins, people like Wanda Moore, people that I've known and networked with. I remember Bishop Brookins, working with him on various projects. We had to go to Mayor Bradley's office to try to get Tobin & Associates more involved in some of the contracts from the city, and that's how I got to meet Tavis Smiley. There was this little young intern in Mayor Bradley's office, sitting at the front desk one day when I went down there for a meeting, and it was Tavis Smiley. So Mayor Bradley was just instrumental in making sure that some of the African American-owned companies got a piece of the action from the city. The city had many contracts from coordinating major events and shopping center openings and all of that kind of stuff, so we wanted to make sure that we were part of it, and Bishop Brookins helped to intro us to Mayor Bradley.

WHITE

Now, speaking of contracts from the city, has your organization been very successful in getting a piece of that pie, or to what extent does some of your work come from contracts.

TOBIN

No, not really. Not really. We don't get—I don't know why. We don't get too many. Maybe we don't go after them; maybe we don't apply. There's a lot of work involved in answering those RFPs, requests for proposal, and there's a lot

of resources needed in terms of research. Sometimes you have to spend a lot of money just to go after these things, so we don't get a great deal, but we were instrumental on working on a few projects through the city. And we worked with a young lady who was very instrumental in helping us to get some business, and I can't— Her name escapes me, but it'll surface again and I'll remember [Vicky Pipkin]. But there were just some networking people, people that we networked with that helped us a great deal to at least get in the door and get some business from the city.

WHITE

Good. Good. Okay. There was an article that I noticed in your archives. In 1990, you had, I guess, a program, I would say, called In The Know with Pat Tobin. It was launched with Janice Smallwood-McKenzie, who's a networking coach and author, and I guess it was a newsletter that you guys produced. It was by subscription only. You guys actually had a commitment to exclusivity, and you could be featured in the Tobin PR Report. I think it was updated three times a month, on exclusive events in the social, entertainment, business, and political arena. Could you talk a bit about that?

TOBIN

Janice Smallwood-McKenzie. She decided that with all of these activities and everybody wants to be in the know with Pat Tobin, they wanted to know what was going on, what was the next event, how could they get on our mailing list, so Ms. Janice Smallwood-McKenzie, the coach, came up with this idea that we would start In The Know, you could subscribe to In The Know, you know, for x number of dollars, become a member, get a list of all the events. And actually, it was just too much work. We didn't keep that going too long. In The Know is on my website, www.tobinpr.com, and you click In The Know and you'll see what we're doing, but keeping up with all the events and sending them to people on a regular basis— Someone else has kind of stepped up and had the same kind of concept. Sarah Harris, who's a dear friend, has Save The Date, the Save The Date publication, and that lists many of the events and that's her thing that she does, and we kind of just now work together and help her. But it was a good idea when we got it going, you know, just getting a list of people who wanted to be in the know and wanted to be invited to certain events. So it was fun.

WHITE

It sounds really interesting. I'm sure a lot of people would really, really appreciate that kind of—

TOBIN

Especially newcomers to Los Angeles. In terms of networking, if you're new in town, you don't know anybody or you don't know where to go or you don't know what's the hottest— You know, what's the hottest spot? Is it, you know, the Reign restaurant, or is it P'Shaw's Bistro, or is it Century Club nightclub? You know, it's just knowing where to go and being in the know. [laughs]

WHITE

That's for sure. That's for sure. I know also around that time, in Sophisticated Singles magazine, an issue, you stated, "We, as people, ought to pool our resources and become more business-minded," which is one of, obviously, the projects of that newspaper. This was the latter eighties, I guess, beginning of the nineties, was supposedly the Decade of the Entrepreneur, and you indicated that you'd never really be happy working for someone else. You wanted to own your own business, to be in charge, in control, making as much money as you could make. "You'll never get rich as long as you work for someone else," and that you set a six-figure salary for yourself and you were about two-thirds there. How are you feeling about where you are at this point in terms of setting your own personal goals, in terms of the accomplishments financially, from that standpoint?

TOBIN

I'm blessed and I'm happy and I've succeeded in that six figures, thank God, but then along with the income comes expenses. But I'm really happy to be self-employed and to own my own business, because when you work for someone else, your salary is controlled by them, your destination is controlled. If they decided to fire you or lay you off, then you've got to start all over again. But when you can count on yourself, then you know that you have to get out there every day and hustle. There's nobody to blame but yourself if you don't make it. So being self-employed is very rewarding, it's very challenging, but I'd rather be on my own and count on myself than have to count on someone else for my income, although clients are a major part of

this. Without the clients, you wouldn't have the income. But that keeps you going, that keeps you striving to get the bigger accounts, the better accounts, take on as many projects as you can to keep the income going, and the busier you are and the more popular you become, then you'll get more clients, because everybody feels that, well, she can handle this, she can handle that. So it's been good, and making that six figures, yeah, that's kind of nice to know that you can make a few thousand dollars a month and control your own bank account and sign your name on your check. I just love it.

WHITE

A real sense of accomplishment.

TOBIN

It's a great feeling, it really is.

WHITE

And you've always had an entrepreneurial spirit, you know, from jumping out with Operation PUSH and being the director of media communications.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah.

WHITE

As a volunteer initially, and then, you know, taking it as an assignment as a consultant.

TOBIN

All of that helped, you know, Renee. Working with all those community groups and watching people. Going to all those meetings with PUSH and hearing people talking about economics and how much African Americans spend and how we are consumers and we don't own anything. When you look around in terms of franchises and ownership and who has control, very few of us. I was just reading in Jet recently where a black man has a hotel, I mean a serious hotel. I've got to send him a note and congratulate him. I think it's Florida, somewhere in Florida, a black-owned hotel. So, yeah, when it comes to ownership and being in control, more people of color, hopefully, will do that or want to do that so they can leave a legacy, leave something for their

children. You know, when you think about those Duponts and Rockefellers and all those names, they have a legacy that they've left for their youngsters, and I want to do that. I mean, now that I'm a grandma, I really want my grandson [Aaron Michael Tobin Curry] to be able to say, you know, "I'm going to run this company when I graduate from school." That's if he's not off somewhere playing hockey.

WHITE

[laughs] Setting his sights high. That's really important. That's really interesting, too, that you mentioned, you know, one African American male that owns a hotel, and when you think about how much African Americans and people of color travel, you know, and contribute to that particular industry, as one industry, of course, we can sit and name probably ten to twenty that—

TOBIN

Clothes and alcohol and—

WHITE

Entertainment and films, and what have you.

TOBIN

You name it. We're a major part of the film-going industry, box office. When they talk about these big blockbuster films and how many millions they make on one weekend, I mean, thanks to people like Sandra Evers-Manley and Jackie Cox and John Forbes and others, part of the Hollywood resource organization [Black Hollywood Education Resource Center], they make sure that they send out notices for us to go see a movie, particularly if people of color are in this film. We go the first Friday. They call it the First Friday Club.

WHITE

Actually, the First Friday Club—

TOBIN

You know about that?

WHITE

Oh, absolutely. The First Weekend Club is what it's called.

TOBIN

First Weekend Club.

WHITE

We actually have them here in Los Angeles and in New York and in Detroit, Chicago, and Dallas, also, is another organization.

TOBIN

And that helps. Because you're right, we spend a lot of money going to these theaters.

WHITE

Exactly. So that entrepreneurial spirit within the community is very important. Have you in recent history met with or been a part of an African American organization or group that actually speaks about these issues?

TOBIN

Oh, yes.

WHITE

About reaching out to individuals and teaching them how to become entrepreneurs, and if they are entrepreneurs already, to teach them how to be more savvy in their business?

TOBIN

The Black Business Association with [Earl] "Skip" Cooper; the Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Gene Hale; the Southern California Regional Purchasing Council. All of these organizations, and certainly, like I said, Black Women's Network. And the Black Women's Forum, headed by Maxine Waters. All of these groups really have an area where they touch on economics and resource-sharing in our community and pooling our resources to buy things and own things and be in control. And one of the things that really got me motivated was, growing up in Philadelphia, Reverend Leon Sullivan started something called the 10/36 Plan. I think for ten years, or thirty-six months, you saved \$36. I can't remember exactly, but we

were the first, back in Philadelphia, first black group to own like a shopping center, through our church, through Reverend Leon Sullivan, out of the 10/36 Plan. They pooled their money for so many years and they bought a shopping center. So things like that just helped me to want to be in control and to own and to be self-reliant and independent.

WHITE

That's great. We can't have enough of those organizations out spreading that message to all groups, and particularly for communities of color.

TOBIN

And today one of the things that John Bryant is doing with Operation HOPE, teaching young people about banking and finance, and taking control of your own money, little kids opening bank accounts at a very early age. And that's a good thing that he's doing, so I'm happy to be associated with Operation HOPE, too.

WHITE

Great. Speaking of little kids, that leads me into another area that you've been quite involved in. I know for one thing— This is digressing a little bit, but in 1981, the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc., you won a Black Women of Achievement Award. I know you had worked with the Los Angeles Planning Committee for the Children's Defense Fund, and you've worked with the Children's Institute [International], the Sickle Cell Disease Research Foundation. So I wonder if you could talk a little bit about your interaction, your involvement in the community as it relates to young people, and what is it that you endeavor to do, and then what has your interaction been with some of these organizations that I just cited?

TOBIN

One of the things you mentioned, I wrote it down, hoping you'd mention it, Children's Institute. Children's Institute International in Los Angeles on Wilshire— I think it's on New Hampshire. I don't know how many years we have donated our time. It's one of our pro bono projects, where Aldore Collier, the West Coast bureau chief of Ebony and Jet magazines, Darlene Donloe, Joe Eure, Pat Tobin, attorney Reginald Brown, we just give back to these kids. We

have a toy drive every year. We've been doing it for, I don't know, fourteen, fifteen years now, and that's just a joy. I just got in the mail recently a certificate that says thank you, with a mouse-pad with pictures of some of the little kids' faces on it, the little kids that we've given toys to over the years. And they're kids from all walks of life, I mean all nationalities, black, Hispanic, Asian, you name it. And it's just something I love doing. I love being a part of that. You mentioned the Black Women of Achievement. Oh, when you get people like— I think it was the Legal Defense and Education Fund, with Marian Wright Edelman. When you get someone like a Marian Wright Edelman and her Crusade for Children, these are little people that can't fend for themselves and you've got to just get out there and be a part. You just have to get involved with somebody like a Marian Wright Edelman. And thanks to Harvey Lehman, that's how I got involved with the Legal Defense and Education Fund, through Marian Wright Edelman and Harvey Lehman. And there again, Toyota got involved when they saw what a wonderful program that was, and they sponsored that event every year, and I got to just be a part of what they were doing on the planning committee each year, plan a major event. They'd have people like Maya Angelou and Quincy Jones, and just wonderful people who really care about kids. One of the things that I love, Marian Wright Edelman's organization, they have a little saying, it's like a little logo with a kid, a little kid in a boat, and it says, "Oh, the ocean's so big and my—" I've got to get that saying for you. I'm messing it up, but it's something like the ocean's so big and I'm so small or something, I don't know. ["Dear Lord, be good to me. The sea is so wide and my boat is so small."] But just things like that, that just motivate me, I just love being involved.

WHITE

That's terrific. Now, you said Toyota had gotten involved with that organization. Were you instrumental? Did you approach Toyota and say, "This is something that you all need to participate in"?

TOBIN

The people that I worked with at Toyota, particularly a gentleman by the name of Bill Pauli, Bill Pauli was so good about being open and receptive to ideas and events and activities, and especially when it came to children and education, he was always there and always supportive. And Tracy Underwood,

who's now a national manager at Toyota, I'm so proud of her. She was always there, working behind the scenes and being a part of these. She, too, was on the planning committee with me, so we worked together on that planning committee, and that was one of the projects that was very dear to me.

WHITE

That's terrific. Now, how about the Sickle Cell Disease Research Foundation?

TOBIN

I'm on that board. That was some time ago. Spent time on that board, and that was because, I mean, I actually know people who are close to me who have had sickle cell traits and, you know, part of that. It was just rewarding to be helpful and to help raise money and to be on the committee to help coordinate major events for them, so I did that for a couple of years and I still am in touch with June Vavasseur, who's one of the board members, and Mary Brown and some of the other people. I still help them, go to their events and support their events, which is just another worthwhile cause.

WHITE

Great. Good for you. Good for you. I know that just in general, not only with children, but we've spoken a little bit earlier about your interaction in reaching out to other ethnic communities in Los Angeles. I know that you worked with a committee— You were a committee member of Prototypes. It was a social service agency. I wonder if you can talk a little bit about what that agency's about.

TOBIN

Prototypes is another one of those charities doing a good deed, and we got involved with that because of somebody that knew me, invited me to one of the planning meetings and I went, and when I saw what they were doing for families and children and giving back and helping those who couldn't help themselves, I got involved and I was instrumental in helping to coordinate a fundraiser that was very successful. I think we had a screening at the Magic Johnson Theatre one year to raise funds for Prototypes, and it was a big success. Andrew Hoffer, who happens to be a Jewish man, we worked together on several projects, and it was just rewarding to be involved with

people from all ethnic backgrounds, who wanted to do something good. And Prototypes is still very active in the community, doing things and having their charitable fundraisers every year.

WHITE

Speaking of which, talking about other ethnic organizations, I know that you also work with the El Nido Family Services, and the Japan-American Society of Southern California, and that you've been involved with the International Center for African American and Asian Relations.

TOBIN

Goodness gracious, you know, sometimes just lending your name or doing a mailing or showing up at an event, anything you can do to help, these people really appreciate it. So many times I was just saying, "Yes, you can use my name," or, "Yes, I can help raise some funds," "Yes, I can mail out some invitations." Whatever I can do to help to give back, I'm usually saying yes. So you're right. There's probably a list of organizations, too many to name.

WHITE

Absolutely. I know that numerous national community newspapers, they utilize you as a resource on the subject of ethnic marketing and community relations and networking. Do you find that other ethnic groups actually come to you to find out the strategies that you use to reach the ethnic and American communities so that they can perhaps emulate some of those strategies within their own communities?

TOBIN

Yes, and sometimes we joint-venture and help each other. Many of the Asian and Hispanic PR professionals will work with me on projects. We've joint-ventured to help our community, whether it's a black community, Asian, Hispanic, we've come together on projects, and that's been a really good experience. There's a woman by the name of Lynne Choy Yueda, we've been friends for years. She's an Asian woman, and she was instrumental in starting the Asian Public Relations Society, the Asian advertising organization, and then we have the Hispanic, and we just joint-venture, work together. Once a year, the Asian, Hispanic, and African American, we get together for our holiday

event with the PR professionals in the Asian, black, and Hispanic community. So, yes, we help each other.

WHITE

That's a good thing. It's a terrific thing to feed on one another's successes and speaking about how you might be able to reach your own ethnic organization as well as others. So let's see. Now we're moving forward. 1992. At the end of our last tape, I know that we had talked about the fact that we would discuss the civil unrest during that period of time. I know it was also a very profound and important year for you in 1992, because your grandson, Aaron Michael Tobin Curry, was born. Can you talk about those two events? The civil unrest, what it meant to you as a Los Angelena, as an African American, as an African American female, as an African American entrepreneur and business owner in this community?

TOBIN

I remember being hurt, first of all, by the whole reason for this thing, by the decision with Rodney King, the police officers who were involved with the beating. I just remember all that being just—I was just devastated. It was just awful. I couldn't really believe what was happening. Then with those of us burning and looting, I really felt bad. Certainly you don't want to destroy anyone's community, but we were destroying our own community, and there were older people who couldn't get to a pharmacist to get medicine because some of the people had destroyed the drugstore, the pharmacies in that area. It was just not a good time for any of us. Certainly now, looking back, I'm glad that some people stepped up and rolled up their sleeves and got involved, and people of all colors, people like Edward James Olmos. I'll never forget Edward James Olmos, Reverend Chip Murray, Cecil [L.] "Chip" Murray, others, out there cleaning up the streets, trying to get people to come together, and certainly with Rodney King and his statements about "Can't we all get along?" People joke about it now, but that lasted and it's still in the minds of many of us, saying, "Look. Let's get along." That's one thing Dr. [Martin Luther] King [Jr.] said, "If we don't live together, we're going to perish together." So I just remember, you know, certainly not—I wasn't involved in any of the negative stuff. You wouldn't have found me out there looting and burning and doing any of that, and the people who did that, I don't know, I guess with their

anger, they were just trying to show in some way how they felt about all of that, But thank God, now that we keep reflecting on that, we're reflecting on the positive things that came out of that. This whole thing about Rebuild L.A., I know, back to Toyota again, one of the things they did was that training center. They put money into the automotive training center in a joint-venture with the Urban League, and they're graduating students and teaching them to have careers in the automotive industry. That was as a direct result of the unrest in '92. Toyota took an old dealership that was vacant, renovated the building. They have wonderful facility at Crenshaw [Boulevard] and Coliseum [Avenue], and it's called the Los Angeles Urban League Automotive Training Center. So that, even today, is something that's still standing and graduating—I think this year, 2002, they're graduating 1,000 students from that program. So there was a lot of good that came out of that. Even John Bryant, back to him, with Operation HOPE, that's a direct result of what was going on back in '92 and what could we do to make it better, how can we put money back in our own community. And Marva Smith Battle-Bey with the Vermont Slauson Economic Development Center, she's done a lot in that community with building shopping centers. And many of the celebrities, the personalities, have built—I understand not only Magic Johnson, but others have put up shopping centers and stores and franchises. So unfortunately it was a bad time, but out of every bad there is some good. So I'm just glad that, thank God, we are moving forward. And even Reginald Denny, bless his heart, the man who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, he's even forgiven some people for what has happened to him, and thank God he's alive and able to talk about it today. But most recently—I think every year now you'll see on many of the TV stations, people who reflect on what happened back then and where we are today, and that's a good thing.

WHITE

Absolutely. There's been a lot of retrospectives, because it's been ten years, this year, about that event and how we have moved forward in the last decade. I was real interested in knowing what it must have felt like, because you have been so instrumental in reaching out to the community, and I was wondering if people called upon you at that point in time to help send out messages of resilience.

TOBIN

Yeah, we were all trying to send out positive messages and asked people to "Please stay at home and don't go out in the streets, and try to take care of your families," and don't do the things that some people were doing, so we were all just trying to make it better, you know, and not do anything that would just make it worse.

WHITE

Interesting point in history, that's for sure, for the community. So on a more positive note, your grandson was born that same year.

TOBIN

Ah, the love of my life.

WHITE

What month was he born in?

TOBIN

May. May 8, 1992. I was there. I'll never forget. I was busy as usual, doing something. My daughter [Lauren Tobin] kept saying, "Mom, you've got to get here." I think he was born at— Yeah, Cedars Sinai. "Mom, you've got to get here." I was so busy running around doing something, I almost missed the birth. "Mom, I can't wait. You've got to get here." [White laughs] So I got over there in time. I was doing something, at some meeting doing something, and I got there and watched the birth of my grandchild, and anyone out there who's a grandparent know what it's like to be a grandparent. It's the best experience in the world. Someone once said, if you could be a grandparent before you could be a parent, you wouldn't have children, you'd just be Grandma, because there's nothing like it. He's the joy of my life, yes, and I'm very active in his life, very involved. So that was an exciting time, yeah, just being a grandma.

WHITE

Another hat that you wear.

TOBIN

Actually, that's the priority, really. When I think about all the things I do, it's really for him. I've got to mention Carl Anderson. Carl Anderson, the singer,

actor, talented performing artist, he's written a song called "If I Could." I'm sure he wrote it. If not, he does a great job of—I think he did write it for his son. He does a great job of singing that song, "If I could—" Oh, Renee, if you have not heard that song, I have to get it for you, by Carl Anderson, "If I could, I'd protect you from all the—" Oh, it'll make me cry if I talk about it. But when I think about my grandson, I think about "If I Could." I just want to just help him to be strong and smart and bright, and just protect him and, you know, let him find his way, but yet— Bill Withers does it in a nice way, too, you know, "Grandma, don't you whup that boy." "Grandma's Hands," you know.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

So all of that just makes me smile when I think about my grandson. I love him dearly.

WHITE

Warms your heart.

TOBIN

And it also makes me think about grandparents who have to raise their kids. Many of them have to raise their children for whatever reason. Their own children have gone on to something maybe that's not too positive in their life, so the grandparents have to step in. I know what that's like. I mean, my daughter, thank God, isn't having any problems or anything. I certainly am glad she's doing well and she has a good position, but sometimes she's working and her schedule's so hectic, so I'm just happy to be there, just to lend a helping hand.

WHITE

And obviously so many people appreciate your interaction with them on a personal and professional level. I know that that following year, in 1993, your friends got together and gave you a surprise birthday party for your fiftieth birthday.

TOBIN

Oh, was that something.

WHITE

At Carlos 'n Charlie's on Sunset. Do you remember that occasion?

TOBIN

Fiftieth birthday party, yes, that was— Actually, the fiftieth was— I can't remember if that was the one at Carlos 'n Charlie's or the one at the Hollywood Roosevelt, where they all had fans. I walked into the room and I looked— There was a sea of faces, but they were all my face. Someone had— Carole [Eileen "Kidogo"] Wade—

WHITE

Carole Wade.

TOBIN

And Pat Hankins and others had come up with the idea to take a picture of me, put it on a fan, and when I walked in, everybody had a fan with my face. [mutual laughter] Yeah, and they had this big "Fifty? Who?" or something. It was a great— Yeah, I've had some wonderful, wonderful surprises and events, and everybody knows I love parties. You never have to guess when my birthday is, because every year I either throw a party, so they try to surprise me, which is hard to do.

WHITE

Were you surprised?

TOBIN

Oh, yeah, because I thought I was going to dinner or something like that. I'm not sure. But it was one of the best.

WHITE

There were some nice little items in your archive that talked about what a festive occasion that was, and, again, just reiterating how other people feel about your interaction with them and what a difference you make in their lives. It's nice to be rewarded with that kind of celebratory occasion to honor you in that way.

TOBIN

It doesn't hurt you to help somebody. It doesn't take anything off my back to help somebody, and that's really—I feel good about that. I mean, sometimes it's a little taxing because the more you do, the more you're expected to do.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

But as they say, God doesn't put on you any more than you can bear, so I guess I got some pretty big shoulders. [mutual laughter]

WHITE

That's for sure. Well, let's see. 1994 was, again, a busy year for you. I know you coordinated the 24th Annual [NAACP] Image Awards.

TOBIN

The NAACP Image Awards, that was exciting and a lot of work, but because of the positive images of African Americans in the entertainment industry, we really wanted to be a part of that, and it was exciting. People like Darlene Donloe worked with us, and others, and we certainly were instrumental in making it one of the best they've ever had.

WHITE

Good. Then also in 1994, there was another article in the Jet magazine, it was a Black Caucus weekend, and you were on the Week's Best Photo with Dr. Betty Shabazz.

TOBIN

Jet magazine, oh, with Dr. Betty Shabazz.

WHITE

The widow of slain leader Malcolm X, doing the electric slide in Washington, D.C., sponsored, once again, by Toyota, and held for the outgoing president of the Congressional Black Caucus, which was Amelia Parker at the time, I believe.

TOBIN

With Amelia Parker and Toyota and others, the Congressional Black Caucus was one event that we always attended every year. Toyota was very instrumental in making sure we were there at the right place doing the right thing. And Dr. Betty Shabazz. You know, when you're relaxing and having a good time, who would have thought that I'd appear in Jet magazine with Dr. Betty Shabazz, and we were just on the floor— She was so real and down to earth and such a beautiful woman, who would have thought we'd be out there doing the electric slide, having a good time? That was my favorite dance, the only dance I know how to do. [White laughs] And there we were, and I do cherish that photo till today. Even her daughter, Miss Shabazz, I'm very close with her. We've talked about working on projects together. But, yes, that picture, I save it and I have it in a frame and it's one of my personal prized possessions. I just love that and I'm really proud of that.

WHITE

It's a great photo. You guys look very, very happy. Like you said, she's such a pillar in the community, and she has had so much history and what have you, with, of course, Malcolm X, so this was a nice photograph to see on an African American magazine, and that even though you guys are very business oriented and have dealt with some heavy and weighty issues, it's nice to see you celebrating with the Black Caucus..

TOBIN

Just let your hair down and have a good time. Every now and then, you've just got to go have some fun. [laughs]

WHITE

That's right. That's right. So let's see, now. Other people were, once again, acknowledging your successes in 1995. Some black promoters gave you an award acknowledging your Speakeasy success.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah.

WHITE

From Media Night.

TOBIN

Speakeasy. I'll tell you, the Roland Wirts and I mean, just so many guys and gals out there who promote positive events and concerts and nightclubs, and I was just one of those people. Roland Wirt and I, we always talked about we're going to own a nightclub. Who knows, maybe one day we will. But I had promoted the Speakeasy Media Night for about ten years without fail. Every Thursday night was Media Night, and I guess the promoters got together and said, "Hey, we ought to acknowledge Pat for what she's done." So, yeah, that was one of the highlights in my career. That was an exciting time.

WHITE

There are so many highlights in your career, it's fascinating going through your records and wanting to talk about every little thing, but I know that I can't. Your résumé and your sense of accomplishments are so wide and vast. In 1997, in fact, there was a full-page editorial in Black Enterprise magazine talking about "Good press is on the rise."

TOBIN

Oh, yes, that's one of the things that I saved, too. I have that on the wall. That was really good. Actually, the photographer, Lester Sloan, Lester Sloan is a former journalist for Newsday or Newsweek, and he was freelancing and he had an opportunity to do a piece for Black Enterprise. He actually took the photo for that event. We went to Toyota and took pictures. That was exciting. So, yeah, it was just nice to be recognized for your accomplishments.

WHITE

Right. And perhaps there was a perception that maybe press or journalists or public relations professionals, or what have you, they were getting more respect, maybe, in the community?

TOBIN

You know, there was a time when PR people were thought of just as fluff and just partygoers. When you start looking at the real reason for public relations people, we want to disseminate information, we want to make sure we get the right story out there, we want to tell the truth and do the best for our

clients. And we were getting a lot of respect, you're right, especially African American people. You know, people used to joke about me being the Rona Barrett of Hollywood, the black Rona Barrett of Hollywood, because I was always making sure I was out there getting the story, getting the right story, and they would tease me and say, "Here comes Rona Barrett. She knows it all. She knows what's going on." [White laughs] But you want to make sure that it's a good thing, too, not just the Hollywood scene with the parties and the fluff and all that. When I started working with Toyota more than, what, fourteen, fifteen years ago, that really put me in a different league, having a corporate account such as a Toyota Motor Sales and working with, there again, a Japanese-owned company, which is certainly Americanized. They have a Lexington, Kentucky, plant and they have an Indiana plant and they're everywhere now, and certainly it was a big, big accomplishment, a major accomplishment, getting a client like Toyota Motor Sales. So, yeah, that showed me in not just the Hollywood scene with the Spike Lees and others, but now a major corporate client like Toyota put me in a different league, and I was really happy about that.

WHITE

As were others, because in 1994 and 1997 you were the honoree of the Sixth Annual PRAME, advertising and marketing excellence—

TOBIN

PRAME Awards, yeah, P-R-A-M-E. Public Relations, Advertising, Marketing Excellence. And here again, Carole Wade, who has been my friend since, what, 1982, we have to find a way to push the PRAME Awards. That's really highlighting and honoring the African Americans in advertising and graphics. We need to do something. I'm going to find a way to bring that back. It was something we used to do every year, but then, of course, coordinating it, it meant money and sponsorship, it meant time, you know, putting it on. You know, once again, when you're doing something pro bono, you don't get salary, you don't get paid, some people don't see it as important. So we've got to find a way to bring that back. But, yeah, I was a recipient of the PRAME Award.

WHITE

Twice.

TOBIN

A couple times, yeah.

WHITE

1994 and 1997. Do you know how one is chosen for that award? Because there's a lot of individuals in PR and marketing, and you obviously stood out from amongst your peers.

TOBIN

Well, when you look at the people who get the opportunity to vote, they look at your longevity, how long you've been in business, the kind of things you do, what kind of clients you represent, and I guess at the time, and even today, there aren't as many black-owned PR firms. There are starting to be more, of course, but I've been in this since 1984, full time since '84.

WHITE

Eighteen years.

TOBIN

Yeah.

WHITE

Eighteen years is a lifetime.

TOBIN

And when you think about people like Carolyn Jones, she was one of the dynamos in advertising. She passed on not long ago of cancer. Carolyn Jones Advertising in New York. One of the best. Then there's Carolyn H. Williams [Advertising] up in Oakland. She's one of the top, leading advertising agency. Thank God she's going strong. And Joe Muse, Muse, Cordero, Chen [and Partners, Los Angeles]. You know, you think about those black-owned agencies. Tom Burrell. Tom Burrell recently landed the Toyota account for the advertising side. An African American-owned agency now has the Toyota advertising dollars.

WHITE

Oh, good.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah, there's a lot of good things being done, and we want to make sure that the word— That it's documented, that our young people who want to go into advertising and PR know that this is going on. One of our associates at Tobin, Natisha Newberry, she loves advertising. She wants to get into advertising, so once a week she's at Saatchi and Saatchi. She researched this on her own and found an opportunity to meet with advertising professionals once a week and talk about billboards and advertising. And even though she's working at Tobin full time as a PR person, I've encouraged her to explore her career in advertising, to do what she could to find an opportunity that she loves, because I told her just recently, "Whatever you want to do in life, make sure you love it, because you're going to be doing it every day." So you've got to love it or you won't be happy.

WHITE

Absolutely. Okay. We're going to go ahead and end this side of the tape.

**1.13. TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE ONE
JULY 19, 2002**

WHITE

Hello, Pat. How are you doing today?

TOBIN

Just fine, Dr. White. And how are you?

WHITE

I'm doing really good, thank you. Well, we're about to start on our interview number eight. The last time we spoke, we covered quite a bit of detail. We talked about some of the organizations that generally get together and meet once a year—the Asian American Journalists Association, the Native American Journalists Association, the California Chicano News Media Association, and of course, the National Association of Black Journalists. Then we also talked quite

a bit about some of the programs that you have been involved in—the National Baptist Convention of America, the National Council of Negro Women function that you help to coordinate. Then we went on to talk about one of the publications that you used to put together, In The Know with Pat Tobin, and the fact that you were in a photograph with former Mayor Tom Bradley, on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. We talked about how some of the things that are being used to keep people abreast in the African American community, Save The Date publication and Sophisticated Singles magazine, and some of the other businesses that have helped to instigate communication, for instance, the Black Hollywood Education and Resource Center trying to keep people up to speed with the film industry. We talked about the Black Business Association, the Southern California Regional Purchasing Council. Then we went on to talk a bit about some of your interaction in working with children, working on children's issues at the Children's Institute, and your involvement with the Sickle Cell Disease Foundation. From there, we talked about the civil unrest of 1992 and some of the things that have taken place since then, like Toyota sponsoring the Los Angeles Automotive Training Center, etc., etc. We talked about your interaction with NAACP 24th Annual Image Awards, and some of the articles that have been written about you, in conjunction with other people you're working with, in Black Enterprise magazine and in Newsweek. Then we began to talk a little bit about some of the other public relations, advertising, marketing organizations, such as Carolyn Jones Advertising in New York and Carolyn H. Williams [and Partner] in Oakland. And we pretty much stopped right there, so I'd like to continue from that point, and before I move forward, I'd like to just follow up on a couple of comments you made on that tape, one of which is, you indicated that you were going to be working on some projects with Ms. Shabazz, and I wondered if you could go into some detail about your relationship, your interaction with her, and the kind of projects that you guys have forthcoming.

TOBIN

I'm glad you mentioned Ms. Shabazz. I adore her. She's a beautiful young lady. We were working on a project that Quincy Jones was going to be involved in, something called The Talking Drum. It was just a concept that Dr. Shabazz and Quincy Jones and some other people had put together and was going to do

with this international, this cultural experience in music. But I don't know, I think the project's been tabled, but I'm still in touch with Dr. Shabazz—Ms. Shabazz. I keep saying Dr. Shabazz because of her late mother, Dr. Betty Shabazz. I always look up and see that photo in my office of the two of us doing the electric slide at the Congressional Black Caucus. But Ms. Shabazz is still a very good friend and we talk often about projects. We're in touch constantly and, hopefully, we will be able to pull the next project off that we're going to do together, because we are exploring some new things, because she's a producer and writer, and she's just a talented woman.

WHITE

Absolutely. That's unquestionable. That's for sure. Something else that you had mentioned toward the end of the interview, discussing PRAME, Public Relations Advertising Marketing Excellence, and you indicated that you were really interested in bringing back the PRAME Awards ceremony. I wondered if you had any thoughts about that, if there's any momentum toward doing that, and actually to explain a little bit about why it hasn't taken place recently and what you or any of your colleagues are planning to do to bring that forward again.

TOBIN

You are so on time, Dr. Renee White. PRAME, as we call it, Public Relations Advertising Marketing Excellence, was a great concept that we came up with years ago, where we'd honor and highlight people of color in the fields of advertising, marketing, and public relations. Years ago the event was held in Philadelphia—I don't know, maybe three or four years ago, Bruce Crawley, of Crawley, Haskins and Rodgers of Philadelphia, took the event over and it consumed a great deal of his time, his agency, and it just wasn't profitable for him. So we didn't have the resources to bring it back to L.A. Carole [Eileen "Kidogo"] Wade in my office, myself, and some other people were instrumental in making it happen, and it's such a time-consuming task. It's very worthwhile, it's very needed, but you need money and you need people and you need the time to do it. But luckily, a friend of ours most recently said he would help us to pull it together. He owns a pretty successful advertising agency, and that's what we need, people in advertising, marketing, and PR. So Mr. Art Simms of 1124 Design Advertising [Agency], he just talked with us

recently about writing a check to help pay for the paperwork that's needed to complete the nonprofit status for PRAME, because it is a nonprofit organization. Then we're going to set about planning and getting that going again, so we're back on track with that.

WHITE

Good. I'm glad to hear that. I know that it seems like an excellent opportunity to recognize those in that industry, something that is not commonly done, so I'm sure the people that are involved in and those that aspire to be in it, would be most appreciative of having some sort of recognition and acknowledgement of the hard, very difficult, and challenging work for those in public relations and advertising and marketing.

TOBIN

Yes, you're right about that.

WHITE

Well, good. Okay. There's some other ventures that you have been involved in. I want to see if you could talk a little bit about 2by2.net, the e-commerce company that you have been involved in. I understand that you had quite a bit of success initially, and I'm not sure where you are with that project at this point.

TOBIN

That was a huge success, huge success, and I was so proud to be involved in something like that because it dealt with the Internet. Many people were afraid of the Internet, they didn't have websites, they didn't want to get involved, so in the eighties— When was that? No, I guess it was in the nineties. Well, it was only about two years old, so it was probably back in '99 or something like that, when we got involved. But it was a business where you would have your own home-based business, you were promoted on the Internet, and you would get other people to, hopefully, buy into getting a website so they could promote their business on the Internet. So that's why it was called 2by2, because initially, you'd get two people to get involved and they'd get two people. Some people said it was a multilevel marketing scheme, but it really wasn't. Everything is a pyramid. If you look at your life,

you're not your grandparents, your great-grandparents. There was always somebody before you, somebody at the top. But here this home-based business gave you an opportunity to build an organization where you would be at the top, because you come in and you get everybody else to come in, and they get these websites and be a part of it, and it was very successful. And, yes, I made a few dollars on that project, so I was really happy to be involved. But what happened, the young people got— The younger people at the college level, somehow they got involved and they got too carried away with the fancy cars, the flashy cars, and they were buying Lamborghinis. I mean, one year, this gentleman, Duke Tutman, was a pizza boy, delivery man or something, and next year he was driving Lamborghinis and making \$50,000 a month. So there was an investigative news report that kind of took a look at this business to make sure that it was legit and you weren't just getting paid to bring people in an organization, because that's not welcomed in the, I guess, the trade business or whatever. But anyway, so a lot of people who were older, more mature, and who were quietly making money, didn't feel all the hoopla and excitement and the fancy cars was necessary, so we kind of just fizzled out. But for two years, we worked with that and it was going very well. But it's still around. I guess they're just not as flashy and noisy as they used to be with all the fancy cars and all the big hotel meetings with hundreds of people.

WHITE

That's interesting. It really took off.

TOBIN

Yeah, it took off and there are people who still have the Internet. But the organization kept growing and changing. They wanted you to be using their own Internet service provider. Many people were already online with AOL or Yahoo or something like that. So the organization kept asking for a lot of changes and that turned a lot of people off, too. So I just moved on to the next thing.

WHITE

Okay. That's a really interesting and exciting—

TOBIN

Like I always do. We go on to the next thing.

WHITE

Sure. It was an exciting business venture, though, particularly just being more involved with technology.

TOBIN

And sometimes you have to take risks. No risk, no gain. As they say, no pain, no gain. But sometimes you take a risk.

WHITE

That's for sure. Now, was it part of this project, or is this something else? I know that you held chat-room sessions that were sponsored by Afronet.com. Was this linked to that in some way?

TOBIN

Not really. The client, Willie Atterberry, Afronet was his company, and a couple years back, Willie was the one who said, "You should be doing these chat rooms online talking about public relations," because the Internet was so big and people were doing these chat rooms, and I wasn't as familiar with it, so he had to walk me through it. One evening, I agreed to go online and sit in this chat room and have people come on and talk to me. But like anything else, Renee, you get people who come on, they don't know what it is that they're talking about and they take it to another subject, another level, that's negative or derogative. So one person got online; I don't know where he came from, but he was not talking about public relations. So we did the chat anyway, we held the chat room, and it was very interesting, but some people who just joined in didn't— Maybe they thought it was something that I would have never been involved in. Some of these guys had other things on their mind.

WHITE

Oh, really. Relating to the public in that sense. [laughs]

TOBIN

Yeah, they were talking some things that didn't relate to the field of public relations, but the people who were interested, they asked the questions about

how long I'd been in business and what is PR, what do you do with PR So that turned out really well. So Willie Atterberry of Afronet.com, I want to applaud him for taking the initiative to set that up and have me do that.

WHITE

Is that something that's still continuing in some fashion?

TOBIN

Well, you could continue that. I personally don't sit and do it any longer. You have to really have a love for being online and being on the computer, and I'm, as you know me, Dr. White, I'm one of these people that like to run around and be outside and be active. But to sit at a computer and talk to a bunch of people for hours, is just not my thing. But there are people who do that, and it can be done. So maybe if Carole or some of my other associates like to talk, maybe they can do that for me, just hold a Tobin PR chat and do that.

WHITE

Sure. Stay connected with you and what's going on, as long as people can stay focused on the topic at hand.

TOBIN

There you go.

WHITE

That is the challenge, I'm sure. People digress. They have lots of free time working on the Internet, and misusing it, I think.

TOBIN

That's true.

WHITE

Well, let's see now. There was something that was really exciting to you that happened in 2000. You were highlighted in Upscale magazine as one of the 2000 powerbrokers, and in that article you were recognized for your contributions as a powerbroker. You were cited there, along with Suzanne

dePasse of dePasse Entertainment, with Tom Joyner, with Oprah [Winfrey], with Russell Simmons, and Bill Cosby.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah.

WHITE

And that was a great opportunity.

TOBIN

Spike Lee.

WHITE

Spike Lee, absolutely. All the powerbrokers in the year 2000. Tell me how that felt for you to be associated with such accomplished, well-known, sought-after individuals. I mean, of course, you are one of the same, but they have such name recognition.

TOBIN

They have millions and trillions. I don't have any money.

WHITE

Exactly. [mutual laughter]

TOBIN

You know, I am still proud of that and I am still smiling, and actually, I used that supplement, that information, I added to our company profile and I send it to people who want to know a little bit about our company, what we do, and especially about some of the highlights of my life, and that was truly one of them. To be listed on that page with those people, I mean, just Oprah, Bill Cosby, and Spike Lee, and Russell Simmons, all of them put together. Just think how much money they're worth, so here I am with my little two dollars on the same page. [mutual laughter] So I felt very proud to be a part of that, and that's something that many publications still do. Savoy magazine just released their issue with their powerbrokers for the year 2001, 2002, whatever, so it's ongoing. So I was very proud to be a part of that, and I still

save that in my archives as one of the things that I'm real proud of, so my grandson [Aaron Michael Tobin Curry] will see that one.

WHITE

That's an excellent title, too, "The Powerbrokers."

TOBIN

Powerbrokers, yeah.

WHITE

To be associated with those high-level individuals is certainly an accomplishment.

TOBIN

But I guess you don't always have to have money to be powerful. Some people are just powerful because of their contacts and other resources and things that they can command in a nice way, so that's a good thing to be powerful, and you don't have to be filthy rich.

WHITE

That's true.

TOBIN

I mean, I'd like to be rich and powerful, but it's just nice to have that tag. It's a good feeling.

WHITE

Sure. You can exercise power in a number of ways.

TOBIN

Yes.

WHITE

For sure. During that time, you were also featured on the cover of Los Angeles 2000 Annual Black Directory.

TOBIN

You know what? I'm so proud of my brother, Muhammad Nassardeen. Muhammad Nassardeen of Recycling Black Dollars, who's a homey from Philly. Yay! That's my boy. My man. He's a nice guy, he and his wife and his children. I just love what he's doing with Recycling Black Dollars, so I guess it's an annual issue that he publishes and, yes, I was on the [cover] one year, so I was really proud of that.

WHITE

Did you get a lot of people contacting your office based on that publication?

TOBIN

Not really, because there are many issues that come out and they always feature somebody like a Reverend [Cecil L.] "Chip" Murray or J. L. Armstrong from Toyota or Janice Bryant Howroyd, many business leaders, community leaders. Many people are on it, so I guess people did get to see it and I did get some remarks or comments about it, but it's something that Muhammad Nassardeen and his team does on a regular basis. So I was just proud to be part of that issue.

WHITE

All right. Good. And on again, you were recognized once again in 2000 by the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO). You were the Member of the Year.

TOBIN

Now, that was exciting. There was about 2,000 women at this event, and not just black women. We're talking real diversity. Predominantly white women, women of color. And Toyota was very instrumental in getting me involved with NAWBO, working with J. L. Armstrong and Monetta Stephens at Toyota. So I was happy to be a part of this whole event and be honored as a rising star member, yeah. Member of the Year.

WHITE

Yeah. I wonder how they actually determine who will win that. I don't know, the person who has the most notoriety for that year, or that has accomplished a certain— Touched people in certain ways? It's interesting.

TOBIN

I'm not sure, but NAWBO is a very, very prestigious national organization and, like I said, the women are not predominantly women of color. People like Victoria Lowe, who I think is currently the president, and Betsy Berkheimer Credaire, who was the past president, somebody I've known for years, Betsy. So I don't know how they select you, but it is a process and certainly they don't just pick somebody because they like them. You've got to be doing something and you've got to be—I'd been a member before, but then I just think I just came back and got active again. And while I was active, I did some things to help the other members get exposure and do some things that were positive.

WHITE

Good for you. Congratulations on that, once again.

TOBIN

Thank you.

WHITE

Let's see now. According to some records that I researched, there's about 1.2 million women business owners. What, if anything, do you feel is being done to award or encourage major corporations or government to contract with women, with minorities, and small businesses? What's been done in that area?

TOBIN

I guess the former [California] governor, Pete Wilson, and now Governor Gray Davis, the governors here in California, they're always having these workshops and summits and meetings to encourage more contracts be given to women business owners, and I guess it's something we have to do on our own, too, as women. We have to just continue to lobby and to negotiate and deal with these major corporations, let them know that we are out there in large numbers and we do employ a large number of the employees of the State of California, because there are many small businesses that make up a large number, as you said earlier, of working people, so we're an important group to deal with. I'm not sure what—I don't think enough is—There's never

enough. Never enough being done, but I'm going to continue to do my part to, hopefully, stay in business, to, hopefully, grow as a business owner and hire more people and encourage other young people to go into business. I mean, I was talking to people recently, a young girl just graduated from college and she wanted to go right into starting her own dance company. I said, "Go for it." I mean, get some experience, maybe, and work with some dance studies just to see how they run an organization and operation like that, but do your own thing. Don't ever be discouraged to follow your dreams.

WHITE

Good advice. That's certainly excellent advice. Now, given the state of the economy, say in the last couple of years and particularly this year, or particularly since 9/11, just looking at the larger scope of the whole industry of advertising and marketing and public relations in Los Angeles, do you think that women and minorities are on an equal playing field in that industry?

TOBIN

No way. No way. How could we be when most of the dollars— When you look at the successful companies, you look at who has the dollars. I look at the L.A. Business Journal, I look at PR Week, I look at all these publications. Very few people of color or women of color that own their business are included in those listings for having successful business to the tune of millions of dollars. So it's an ongoing battle, struggle, something that we have to continue to fight for and get more, a bigger piece of the pie instead of the crumbs off the table. No, it's not equal. We're definitely not on the equal playing field, and that is because we don't get the big accounts. I mean, most recently I negotiated and my team negotiated for a major, major, major piece of business that would have been very lucrative for our organization and we weren't instrumental in getting that business, although we were very popular and the people were fond of us, but for some reason—I'd like to know who got that—the team we were talking to expressed that they wanted multicultural, but yet they were all white in the room, so I don't know.

WHITE

It's difficult to tell—

TOBIN

Very difficult.

WHITE

—how those decisions are rendered, who's making them, what criteria they use to make them, and it's always an ongoing challenge, and oftentimes we never get that answer. Not the real answer.

TOBIN

That's right. Not the real answer.

WHITE

Interesting.

TOBIN

But I think what we're doing and what you're doing, Dr. White, with this documentation, is so important because it'll be written, it'll be in the books. Somebody can read about this. My grandson—I keep referring to him. He's ten years old, but when he's twenty or twenty-one, even before that, I want him to read about this and know what his grandma went through as a black woman and a business owner, as a woman, struggling to get the piece of the pie. And it's not because we don't have the talent and the resources and the contacts and the know-how. It's just the playing field's not level.

WHITE

That's right. That's right. Let's see. I wanted to ask you about, well, this very thing in terms of getting the word out. Though the program comes on at a very odd hour, I know, Nelson Davis' Making It! Minority Success Stories, and that's one way to, of course, disseminate information about a number of people that have been successful in a variety of industries. I know he did do a profile on you. Can you tell me about that experience and what your thoughts are on the program in general?

TOBIN

It's a great program, but I wonder why it has to come at four or five o'clock in the morning. You know, those good programs that are public service programs or community-based programs, they get the worst time slots. I mean, thank God they are on the air. You get a chance to see it, but who's up at five o'clock

in the morning or whatever, watching TV? Some people are, like me, if I'm up all night and don't go to sleep. But I think it does have another time slot. Maybe it's at ten a.m. or something on a Sunday, but that's also church time, many people are in church. So I don't know if he gets the numbers that he should get for such a good show. He deserves better numbers, because it's a real good program. He highlights minorities that are doing business and becoming very successful. Many times we don't know about these people unless we see them on a show like Making It! So I was very proud to be included in that group. And one thing, Nelson Davis and I, we always talk about this building that I want to own one day. He keeps saying, "Well, you know, we're going to get you that building. Are you still trying to get that building?" And I joke about it. But minority success stories, if we could just pull together all the successful business people that he's had on his program and pool our resources, we could probably buy a building.

WHITE

I'm sure. Undoubtedly.

TOBIN

But we don't— Well, I shouldn't say we don't think. I don't think enough of us are thinking along those lines of pooling our resources and making something happen as a team, not necessarily just as an individual, because I know a lot of us could do— I, I, me, me, but what about we?

WHITE

And in just generally take at least a partnership, at the minimum, a partnership to bring some of these goals to fruition.

TOBIN

For instance, Magic Johnson's about to launch a new deal coming up in the near future, where he's going to own a whole— Well, part owner of a shopping center and a high-rise apartment living and all that. But, of course, he's Magic Johnson. I just wish I'd get somebody to partner with me.

WHITE

[laughs] I know, like Magic Johnson. Wouldn't that be real cool.

TOBIN

Yes.

WHITE

I understand that building is going to be not far from your office building.

TOBIN

Right down the— Three blocks. I can't believe it. I mean, I've been in Hollywood since 1984, and here we are almost coming up on the year 2004, I think, is when that big project will be complete. So I'm very excited. Maybe I'll have enough money to move in a high-rise and just live down there. They have the doorman and all that. That's when they've arrived, you know, when they have the doorman. [mutual laughter] As they say on The Jeffersons, "You're movin' on up." That's when you're moving on up. It's right down the street from my office. You're right, Renee, about three blocks.

WHITE

I'm sure it's going to be lovely, too. I understand there's going to be lofts and shopping and kind of one-stop shopping area right there on Hollywood.

TOBIN

I'm going to make a note to call Magic and see if I can see if I can set up an appointment and try to get in there now. Get a special deal.

WHITE

Good idea. Good idea. Yes. Okay. Let's see now. I understand also that you are on a weekly program with Levi Booker, on 102.3 FM, Rhythms of the Night, and I know that you go on there weekly to discuss a variety of things having to do with the industry. Can you talk about how that came about and what the goal is of that program, and some of the things that you've done or communicated and the kinds of things that you'd like to communicate in the future?

TOBIN

Well, I want to commend Levi Booker, first of all, for staying on the radio over thirty— I don't know how many years he'd been the radio, but it's got to be up

in the thirty-something, twenty-five, thirty years. But Levi and I have known each other forever. I've been in L.A. since— What'd I say? In '77. I've known him practically since I've been out here. He used to come to the Speakeasy nightclub where I was hosting my own little nightclub, where I was Oprah Jr. long before Oprah. I'd get my microphone. So I've always liked the mike and being in front of the camera, on the microphone or behind the scenes. I just like doing things. So Levi, with his weekly program, Rhythms of the Night, we started talking one day about my coming on and adding some PR tips to his show. I thought that was a great opportunity, highlight our clients and to talk about some of the current projects we were involved in. So it's hard to do it every week. I don't know how he does it every day, every night. He's on every night from nine p.m. till midnight, but that's his job. So with all the things that I have on my plate, I tried to do it on a weekly basis, and that didn't work because I travel, I'm out of town. But he's always invited me to come back whenever I can, so I've done it consistently for a few weeks in a row. Now I'm going to go back. Now that I've slowed down somewhat with some of the travel, I'm going to go back on the air again. It's just a good opportunity, and people in our community need to hear the kind of information that we bring to the program—"we" being Tobin & Associates—and the positive things we're doing in the community. And Levi gave us that opportunity to do that, and the door's still open, so I will be going back, continuing that.

WHITE

Oh, good. Is it a forum, where people can call in to ask you questions?

TOBIN

Oh, yes. Yes, they can call. Actually, he talks with you and his listeners are listening in, then they may call in and comment after you've finished. Some part of the program they do get a chance to call in. So it's a good program. It's 102.3 KJLH—[the call letters standing for] kindness, joy, love, and happiness—the station owned by Stevie Wonder. And Karen Slade, the general manager, she's a dynamite woman. That's another woman I don't think gets enough exposure. Maybe she doesn't need it, doesn't want it, but general manager of a station like KJLH, and a female, I think she's to be commended, and Stevie's to be commended for the team that he has in place. You know that Cliff Winston's been on the air forever, and others.

WHITE

That's for sure. I hope that at some point she does get more recognition so that we can see some of the things, again, that African American women are doing in the community at a variety of levels.

TOBIN

I'll have to tell her about what you're doing, Dr. White, because Karen Slade, general manager of KJLH, she would be a good topic.

WHITE

Okay. Good. Good. I'd like to follow up on that. Now, I know that you talk on the radio program and you've had literature that goes out and you talk quite a bit about PR and many of its elements. I was curious, there was some information in your archive about a hip-hop summit that was going to take place. I'm not quite sure when that was going to take place. This is the flyer. It doesn't have the date. But can you talk a little bit about if, in fact, the hip-hop summit came to pass?

TOBIN

It did happen. That was a few years back. Let's see. How long ago was that? It had to be in the early eighties, because my dear friend, Pat Hankins, was involved. She was still living in Los Angeles and now she's in Detroit. She's the one that had the aneurysm and she's been ill for a few years, recovering from that aneurysm. But this was back in the maybe eighties, yeah. Back in the eighties, this gentleman out of Philadelphia had this concept to bring the hip-hoppers together and to do a summit instead of them fighting and gang-warring and not liking each other, bring them all together and, hopefully, for them to work together and be friends. So it happened in New York. We had a hip-hop summit in New York. A press conference was held at the Tavern on the Green and we also had a press conference out here in California at the House of Blues on Sunset in their Foundation Room. So we had a press conference to kick it off, and I really would have to go back into the files and pull out the date and time and all of that and who was involved, but it was really successful. And it was something that was supposed to continue, but when you look at Russell Simmons now and some of these young rappers and what they're doing, evidently they're successful and they're continuing to

grow and expand and make lots of money. So back in that day, the gentleman who had that idea— I'm not sure what he's doing now or where he is, but he had a good idea and hopefully he's doing something positive.

WHITE

Okay, good. Good. I wasn't quite sure because, of course, something like that could take place today, and certainly they had the foresight to initiate something like that as early as, say, the eighties.

TOBIN

And one of our clients wanted to do that today. Ms. Janice Bryant Howroyd, she's quite involved with the town hall meetings that take place with this lady, Adrienne [Hall]— Adrienne. I forget Adrienne's last name right now, but Adrienne heads up the town hall meeting when they have all kinds of speakers. Jesse Jackson, Jr., and all kinds of people come in. They wanted to pull together this summit and they tried to get L L Cool J and Quincy Jones and some of the others, Russell Simmons, but the timing wasn't right. They just couldn't pull it together, but that's something— I think those summits happen occasionally around the country. You just have to know who's doing it and where. But it's a very good idea.

WHITE

Maybe it's just done by word of mouth and publicity.

TOBIN

Or either, if you're in that rap industry, you know what's going on, you read the certain publications that tell you.

WHITE

That's right. Then, of course, you— Speaking of African American men doing a variety of things, I know Lee Bailey from RadioScope actually interviewed you, I believe it was in April of this year.

TOBIN

April of 2001?

WHITE

Yes.

TOBIN

Was it? You know, I'm not sure. You know what I really need to do, and I'm so glad you're doing this project, I need to just pull all these tapes and videos and everything together and just have a compilation of my history. Because you're right, I was on RadioScope. I think LaRita Shelby— Who did the interview? LaRita Shelby or Lee Bailey? Anyway, they did interview me and I was on RadioScope, which is a nationally syndicated radio program. We call it "the entertainment magazine of the air" I don't know whether it was 2002 or 2001. Maybe it was 2002. I don't know.

WHITE

I wasn't quite sure.

TOBIN

That's something I'll have to find out. I'm going to call up LaRita Shelby.

WHITE

I didn't have the specific year on there, just — It was April 9. I know that much.

TOBIN

April 9. Well, it could have been this year. I don't remember. So much is going on. [mutual laughter]

WHITE

But that was a successful venture for you.

TOBIN

Oh, yes.

WHITE

It was more of a sort of an interviewing kind of a forum?

TOBIN

Yes, just about an update, sort of, "What are you doing? What's going on? What are you involved in?" Because the program is syndicated in about a

hundred markets, it's just another plus, another feather in our cap to be a part of something like that.

WHITE

I certainly agree with that. And your notoriety just continues and continues. There's one particular function that I want to talk with you about that happened on May 9 of this year, but before that, there was some literature in your archives that said that you were an honorary Nebraska citizen. [Tobin laughs] Can you tell me a little bit about that, your affiliation with Nebraska? I hadn't really seen anything prior to that, so I thought it was very interesting and wanted to find out how'd that come about.

TOBIN

I'm so proud. Now, Dr. White, you should have seen that honorary proclamation on my wall at the office as soon as you walked in. I'm so proud of that. This is another circle of life thing. This is another reference or friend or contact. There's a woman named Jackie Castillo. Jackie and her husband Jim, Jim Castillo, they're good friends. Jim's an executive with UPS [United Parcel Service]. I think you had an opportunity to meet them not long ago when we went to that beautiful service over at West Angeles. Anyway, Jackie's from Omaha, Nebraska, and the National Council of Negro Women, the Omaha section, they were having an event and they were looking for a keynote speaker. Well, Jackie recommended Pat Tobin. I'd never been to Omaha. I didn't know these women, and Jackie wasn't going to go. Jackie lives in L.A., of course, now, but she's from Omaha and she knew these wonderful people back home would just adore me and embrace me. So like you, Dr. White, they did their research, they found out all this information about Pat Tobin, and they wanted Pat Tobin to be their speaker. Well, they flew me into Omaha, Nebraska—I guess it was last August—put me up. These women treated me so—I mean, they treated me like I was somebody real special. I mean, I really was proud. And they even paid me, so it was one of my few paid speaking engagements. I did it for the National Council of Negro Women, and Carole Wade would have to give you the topic. Of course, we've got it written down somewhere, but it was such a great topic. It was something about women of color and, I don't know, but Carole helped me with my notes and I delivered a wonderful speech and they took me to dinner, and it was just a great event.

So I have photos from that and I got the honorary key to the city. Actually, they wanted me to come back this year along with Jackie Castillo, since Jackie recommended me, but Jackie wasn't able to clear her calendar this year, so hopefully, maybe next year in 2003, we'll get to go back.

WHITE

Oh, good. Good. I thought it was an unusual place.

TOBIN

Omaha, and you know that's the home of Malcolm X. When I was talking to Ms. Shabazz, she reminded me that that's their home.

WHITE

Oh, that's so. Lot's of history there. An honorary citizen. That was quite an interesting recognition there, and I was just more than curious at how that happened to come about.

TOBIN

Another referral from a friend, somebody that knows somebody said, "Hey," and here I followed through and did it. I mean, this woman could have called me out of the blue or sent me an e-mail and said, "We invite you." I didn't have to go, but I kind of wanted to go. It was exciting. I'd never been to Omaha.

WHITE

Yes. No kidding.

TOBIN

It's a real nice place.

WHITE

Is it?

TOBIN

Oh, I love it. Yes. People are friendly and it's a beautiful state. The State of Nebraska is beautiful, but Omaha itself is just really great.

WHITE

A great opportunity for you to be in some place that's kind of unusual.

TOBIN

And to expand your horizon and meet more people. Now I have friends in Omaha, Nebraska.

WHITE

Exactly. Who would have thought?

TOBIN

Who would have thought.

WHITE

Okay. Well, back here in Los Angeles, things have been quite busy for you. There was one particular event that was quite exciting and well attended, and that was the Tribute to An American Icon, for Bishop H. Hartford Brookins, held at the Beverly Hilton Hotel on May the ninth of this year. Of course, one of the highlights— Well, there were several highlights, but one of them was that President Bill Clinton came to speak, and of course, Magic Johnson was there, Congresswoman Diane Watson, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, Tavis Smiley. Tell me about that function. It was quite an event in Los Angeles. I guess all of the African American elite, as one might say, were there, wanting to give tribute to this individual, and I know that your organization worked with a number of other organizations to try to bring this about at the Hilton. Can you tell me a bit about the function, the level of importance, and your interaction with them?

TOBIN

Well, first of all, it was a very important event and I was really happy to be a part of it, not because of Bill Clinton, because I adore President Bill Clinton, William Jefferson Clinton; I just think he's fabulous—but because of Bishop H. Hartford Brookins. Bishop Brookins gave my daughter Lauren Tobin a PUSH for Excellence Award at the Greek Theatre in— She was twelve years old—so I have to do the math—when we came to Los Angeles. For the PUSH convention in '77. I've known Bishop Brookins since then, and through the

years, we became friends, and he was very instrumental in helping me with my business in terms of recommending that we, hopefully, get business from the City of Los Angeles. He opened some doors, you know, with his political clout. My former business partner— At one time I had a business partner named Bonnie Coleman, and she met and married Bishop H. Hartford Brookins through our business relationship. So I've had a long history with Bishop H. Hartford Brookins. So now that he's up in age, in his eighties— I'm not sure quite how old he is, but now that he's up in age and he's done so much for so many people, Lois Hill Hale and Congresswoman Diane Watson and others saw fit to honor him and give him this tribute, so he can receive his roses while he can still smell them. So because of my relationship with Congresswoman Watson and Lois Hill Hale and people like that, and Bishop Brookins, we were the ones that they asked to help coordinate this along with FAME. Reverend Chip Murray really was at the helm, and his staff worked very; very hard to make sure this was as a big success. Every week we had meetings over at FAME and the church, and one of the good things about the meetings there, the sisters can cook. We had a meal every week, a lunch meal that was like just nothing you ever heard of. I mean, one day we may have string beans and fried chicken and spaghetti. So the working meetings were great. The planning was wonderful. And Robin Mitchell, who's on our staff, who joined us from the Jewish Federation, Robin was instrumental in being the event coordinator because that's her area of expertise, events. And we pulled it off. I mean, we had over 1,200 people. I guess we raised over— I'm not sure exact amount of money, but I know it was well over \$100,000.

WHITE

Excellent.

TOBIN

And it was wonderful. It was a great event. Of course, there was a little confusion along the way. There always is when you have that many people. People came at the last minute, and some people didn't RSVP. I mean, there was some complications, but overall, when everyone finally got in and those who had a seat could get seated, and the few other hundred people that didn't have a seat, well, they stood. So we had standing room only, for sure. It was a huge success. So we were really proud of being involved in that project.

WHITE

It was a very, very huge success and, like you said, to coordinate the logistics for 1,200 people is quite an undertaking.

TOBIN

In Beverly Hills. [laughs]

WHITE

In Beverly Hills. Of course, you want it to be as smooth as possible. I know that was a great event for Mr. Brookins, one that he will always remember, and I'm sure a lot of the individuals in Los Angeles will remember that event as well because, of course, there was a lot of networking going on.

TOBIN

Oh, yes.

WHITE

Above and beyond the focus of the particular evening.

TOBIN

People came in from out of state. His sister came in and the female bishop, Vashti— I can't think of her last name now. But, I mean, there were people from all walks of life, from government, from business, from entertainment, you name it. So it was really something to be proud of.

WHITE

He certainly spreads his net far and wide.

TOBIN

Oh, yes.

WHITE

Across a number of industries and across a number of cultures, as well. Well, good. Good. I thought that was one of the highlights in terms of a special event that you and your organization and your colleagues put on last year. Now, I saw an article in your records and I wondered if you could discuss a little bit

about the state of the National Association of Black Journalists. There was a letter from a Condace Pressley that was dated September the tenth of, actually, 2001, and I understand she's the president from 2001-2003. She was asking for your support to ensure that the organization stays on track, that it's recognized, and that people, if they want information, individuals would know where to go to seek that out, and to enhance and expand membership. So can you tell me a little bit about that organization, the National Association of Black Journalists, your interaction with Condace Pressley, and your feelings about what has happened with the organization, and what is happening with it, and what may happen in the future?

TOBIN

I'm very, very proud to be a part of this organization since my days at CBS Television back in the eighties, '83. I got involved with NABJ, National Association of Black Journalists, and I've been a member since then, and I'm really proud of my relationship here in Los Angeles with the Black Journalists Association of Southern California, BJASC. People like Gayle Pollard and Tony Cox and Janet Clayton, all these people here in L.A., we continue to support that national arm by what we do here locally as a chapter of the national organization. So every year there's a national convention, and in July this year it's in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And again, back to Toyota, having Toyota as a client and making sure Toyota's involved in such wonderful, positive programs, Toyota's an ongoing sponsor of NABJ. They sponsor a gospel brunch every year at the convention, which is one of the highlights of the convention because many of the journalists are leaving the convention, going home, and before they go, we have this gospel brunch. [tape recorder off]

WHITE

Continuing from there, talking about the National Association of Black Journalists and the future of that organization.

TOBIN

And keeping the membership up is important, as journalists of color are leaving the newsrooms, for whatever reasons. They were not being, maybe, promoted or they're finding alternative careers to journalism, like public relations. So Condace Pressley, the president now of NABJ, is really concerned

about us keeping the organization in the forefront and remembering it and supporting it. And even though I'm in public relations, I was grandfathered into the organization when I worked at CBS. Because PR people and journalists, they have this little thing where if you're a publicist then you're not a journalist, and many journalists have turned to public relations because they write so they're good— In the field of PR, you have to write bios and press releases and all that. So I continue to support the organization, and thanks to Toyota, I continue to go every year to the conventions, no matter what city. Next year, 2003, I'm looking forward to going to Dallas. It's going to be in Dallas for next year. And it has helped me in my business a great deal knowing these journalists across the country. Another thing about contacts and resources, I mean, when you want to do something and you need somebody in Milwaukee, well, I just call the president of the Black Journalists in that city. Or Philadelphia, you know.

WHITE

Sure.

TOBIN

Yeah, so it's a good— People need to realize that if they're in PR or journalism, they certainly need to support NABJ, because it's the way to go. Not only that, every four years—or is it five years?—four or five years, there's something called Unity. Unity is a gathering of journalists of color, all journalists, Asian journalists, black journalists, Native American, Hispanic or Latinos, gay, lesbian, you name it, and we come together every four years and they call it Unity, where everybody comes together and unite, and it's fabulous.

WHITE

That's due to take place next year. Is that correct?

TOBIN

I believe it's in New York City in 2004. I think so.

WHITE

In 2004, okay. Good.

TOBIN

No, Washington, D.C., I'm sorry. Nation's capital.

WHITE

Oh, really.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah. You want to put that on your calendar. Actually, if you go to—I think it's unity.org, they have a whole website about it. Oh, yeah. You want to go.

WHITE

Okay. Sounds like a great event, a great event.

TOBIN

Not only that, the networking, and the people that come, people looking for story ideas, and producers, and people who want to get on the air, and recruiters who are looking for talent. It's just a good thing to do.

WHITE

Okay, good. Good recommendation. Now, I know that there is also a convention of the National Black Public Relations Society and last year it was in St. Paul, Minnesota, and there were a number of speakers and attendees. Now, I wonder, is there any interaction or synergy between the National Association of Black Journalists and then the National Black Public Relations Society? Are the conventions pretty cut and dried in terms of their separation?

TOBIN

They're separate, and that's why we have the National Black Public Relations Society, because there was a feud at one point, where journalists felt that PR people didn't belong in their association, so many PR practitioners could only be associate members of NABJ. They couldn't be a full member. There is a whole lot of history to this. Journalists felt that unless you were in print or broadcast and you were a real journalist, then you didn't belong as a full member. But a good example is myself, when I was working at CBS Television, certainly I joined the organization in '83. Well, they couldn't just kick me out; I'd been a member. And now that I'm in PR doing my own thing, I write a newsletter, I disseminate news, so I'm still involved in the business of news. So

we decided, the black PR professionals, we felt we had a need for our own organization anyway back in '83, when the Black Public Relations Society was first formed in Chicago in 1983. And Ms. Tobin here, I just felt, look, I love this. We have an organization that address our needs and, yes, there's PRSA, Public Relations Society of America, with thousands of members, but it's very expensive to join, and they do a good job for you and they have more resources and more money, and they've been around for probably a hundred years, so we just wanted to have our own. There's nothing like having your own and address the needs of people of color. So the National Black Public Relations Society grew out of my continuing to go around the country as I traveled with black journalists and other organizations, and meet people in PR, pooling our resources together, and thanks to Randye Bullock, who's a woman, Ms. Randye Bullock, and Meta Mereday, and our current board members in the National Black Public Relations Society, we have a real viable organization. We meet, as you indicated, nationally. Our convention this year, 2002, will be held in Washington, D.C., October the fourth through the sixth. Anyway, it's the first week of October. Before that, we were at St. Paul, Minnesota. The year before that, we were in New Orleans, I believe, and the year before that, we were in Detroit. So, yeah, and we're going to continue. Long after I'm gone, I want to see the National Black Public Relations Society grow to the level of the National Association of Black Journalists. I mean, NABJ started with about forty people in a room. Someone joked about it; you could put everybody in that first meeting in a phone booth. [White laughs] So that was twenty-five, twenty-six, well, it'll be twenty-eight years next year for NABJ. So we're only on our fourth convention, the Black Public Relations Society, but it's needed because journalists who go into the field of PR are no longer full members of NABJ.

WHITE

Oh, really. That's very interesting.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah. They have a lot of little politics with it.

WHITE

Sure. Now, do you have a sense of what some of the pressing issues will be for the convention that's held in October, some of the issues that people want to hear about or discuss?

TOBIN

We're certainly going to talk about technology and— You know what, I need to go online for you because there's a whole list of workshops and everything I should have brought with me to go over this with you, but I don't have them committed to memory. But nbprs.org has everything online—the topics, the panels, the workshops. So I can provide that for you.

WHITE

Okay. Excellent. Excellent. Okay. Going back to some of the other things that you were involved in, can you talk a little bit about the NAACP ACT-SO Awards? There was a luncheon that was held May 9. Interestingly enough, the luncheon took place on the same day as the event with Bishop Hartford Brookins. I can only imagine how stressful that day would have been for you. But if you can talk a little bit about that award and what it is here to recognize.

TOBIN

Well, I was the recipient of the Verna Canson Award. Verna [M. Canson], bless her heart, is in her eighties now, and she was very instrumental in starting, along with Vernon Jarrett and others— Vernon Jarrett of the Chicago Sun-Times, he was instrumental in starting the whole ACT-SO program, but Verna Canson out here on the West Coast was instrumental in keeping it going and she was a fighter to make sure that people put money into ACT-SO to take the young people to the national convention so they could be involved with their academic excellence.

WHITE

We need to turn the tape over right now.

**1.14. TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE TWO
JULY 19, 2002**

WHITE

— NAACP ACT-SO Award that she received in May.

TOBIN

So, yes, being a recipient of that Verna Canson Award, I was really, of course, honored and thrilled, and I do know Verna [Canson], having worked with NAACP for years. To be honored on that day and, yes, it was the same day as the Bishop Brookins Tribute, so thank God, I had Saturday and said, "Okay, I know I've got to do this. I'll just do it." But to get that award was really an honor. Ms. Canson fought to keep ACT-SO in the forefront of all the other programs with the NAACP, and since it stands for Academic Collegiate Technological Science Olympics for the people of color, I really am proud to be a part of that. I hope I got it right, but we'll look up the ACT-SO. One of the things I like about Mr. Willis Edwards, who is a national board member of NAACP and he's very active here in Los Angeles, he always says, "Well, you know about ACT-SO, then you know how to complete this. You know how to be excellent, then ACT-SO."

WHITE

[laughs] A play on words.

TOBIN

A play on words, so people will remember the acronym and try to remember what it stands for. It stands for excellence, Academic Collegiate Technological Science Olympics.

WHITE

That's exactly right. That's exactly right.

TOBIN

So I was real proud to get that award.

WHITE

Oh, good. Congratulations to you.

TOBIN

And I was so motivated that day I committed to my lifetime membership in the NAACP.

WHITE

Did you really?

TOBIN

Yeah, I wanted to be a lifetime member and, you know, those of us who've become fifty and sixty, not everybody, but some of us waiting till we're up in age to decide to do these things. I mean, I could have become a lifetime member early on in life, but now I'm a lifetime member and I just put my lifetime membership card in my wallet. I just got it in the mail.

WHITE

Oh, how nice.

TOBIN

So I'm really proud of that, because I don't know how many more years I have on this Earth, but one thing I'm proud of is carrying my NAACP lifetime membership card.

WHITE

Oh, this is terrific.

TOBIN

Isn't that great.

WHITE

Just to help you feel connected, connected to the community and that you've made the commitment to do so to the extent that you want to be there for the rest of your life.

TOBIN

And when you look at their mission on the back, that's just what I'm all about, too, so I really felt good about that.

WHITE

Just a real quick note, it says their mission is "To ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of minority groups and citizens; to achieve equality of rights and eliminate race prejudice among the citizens of the United States; to remove all barriers of racial discrimination through the

democratic process; seek to enact and enforce federal, state, and local laws securing civil rights; to inform the public of the adverse effects of racial discrimination and seek its elimination; and to educate persons as to their constitutional rights and take all lawful action in the furtherance of these principles." So certainly I can see how that mission parallels.

TOBIN

Inform the public.

WHITE

Informing the public about their rights.

TOBIN

Anybody who doesn't know about NAACP, what, they're ninety-three years old. And there were black people and white people and many people helped to form the NAACP, and that's one thing I'm proud of. There were people of color, I mean non-blacks, who helped to form this. So, yes, now I'm a lifetime member.

WHITE

Good for you. Good for you. Just in terms of spreading communication and keeping people involved, I know that also you were a keynote speaker at the Clark County Entrepreneur Conference at the Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas in May, at the end of May. May was quite a busy month for you. So I wanted to see if you could talk a little bit about that. As a keynote speaker for entrepreneurs, what kind of insight did you give them?

TOBIN

Actually, here again, the young lady who was responsible for this program, Ms. Kimberly Bailey, Kimberly Bailey-Tureaud, because she's married now, but Kimberly was an intern— Well, not an intern, but she graduated from Spelman College and came to work at Tobin & Associates. She wanted a job in public relations. This was years ago, back in the eighties. And Kimberly, we kept our relationship up throughout the years. I attended many events that she sponsored in Vegas, and this year she asked that I be the speaker at her banquet. Well, that was an honor. Especially at the Venetian, that fabulous hotel.

WHITE

Yes, it is terrific.

TOBIN

And you know me, Dr. White, I love Vegas. Any chance to get to go to Vegas, I'm there. So I was the keynote speaker. This whole project that Kim is responsible for, the Clark County Micro Business Program, is to encourage people to start their business, go in business, and help them with their business needs, you know, business plan, whatever they need, marketing, promotion, publicity. So Kimberly felt that I'd be a fit to speak to the young people, that I'd be good, young and old, depending whatever age they were, that I had the experience and I had the know-how, and I'd been in business since, full time, 1984, and prior to that, part time, living in Philadelphia, always doing little business things. So I've had some experience and I could talk about what it's like to be in business and get clients and work your contacts so that somebody like a Kimberly Bailey, who graduated from college and worked with me, now runs a program and invites me to be her keynote speaker.

WHITE

Was it really well attended?

TOBIN

Well attended. Companies like MGM Grand and Wells Fargo Bank and just major—the Venetian Hotel, and just major companies in Vegas were part of it. A few hundred people. It was very nice.

WHITE

A great opportunity to be the keynote speaker there for that event, not only because of the locale, but, of course, because of the message and promoting entrepreneurial ventures with everyone in general, but particular with people of color. It's certainly a rewarding and much needed, much needed affair that takes place.

TOBIN

Yes.

WHITE

Do you know if that's something that takes place every year?

TOBIN

Oh, it's an annual event. As a matter of fact, you're invited next year because I'm trying to identify a keynote speaker for her now. Usually, it's hard getting people to come and just give of their time. You're not paid to speak, so I don't mind doing that because, first of all, I like going to Vegas, but they do fly you in and put you up. So I'm going to help maybe recommend a speaker, and you're my guest next year. I had Bea [Beatrice] Lewis, my friend Bea Lewis was one of my guests. B. J. Ruffin from Toyota was one of my guests. Another friend, Kim Russell, who works for the House of Blues Foundation, was my guest. And Gail Moore. Gail Moore is the vice president of human resources for William Morris Agency. She was my guest. So I had half a table full of people.

WHITE

Oh, exciting people.

TOBIN

So you've got to go next year.

WHITE

I would love that.

TOBIN

It's a fabulous event.

WHITE

I accept that invitation whole heartedly. Thank you very much.

TOBIN

You're welcome. Just don't let me forget.

WHITE

Oh, I won't.

TOBIN

Write that down.

WHITE

This usually takes place in May.

TOBIN

The same time every year.

WHITE

Okay. Reaching out to the community, spreading information, keeping people up to speed on what's going on and the accomplishments, and this relates to another event that you were involved in in May, once again, the Essence Awards, 2002 Essence Awards at the Universal Amphitheatre on May the thirty-first of this year.

TOBIN

That was so exciting. First of all, when you look at Susan Taylor, I mean, we just love Susan Taylor. Who could not love Susan Taylor? And anything with Susan Taylor's name attached to it, and Clarence Smith and Ed Lewis and Barbara Britton. Oh, Barbara Britton's one of my best buddies, and she heads up advertising for Essence. For Essence to come to Los Angeles, after fifteen years, to have their awards show here, was a big, big thrill. First of all, many people don't know, but Essence Awards started in Los Angeles at the— I guess it was either the Biltmore or the Ambassador. I think it's the Ambassador Hotel, fifteen years ago. I was there. They honored Suzanne dePasse, and I think Marla Gibbs, and Richard Lawson was there, and it was just a dinner, it was another awards show with a dinner. Actually it was just a dinner and a program, but Karen Thomas took it to the next level back in New York, Karen with Essence. We were at a Black Journalists convention one day, sitting down and talking, and Karen said, "You know, I got this idea for an award show for Essence." Rather than have just a dinner and she wanted to really put on an award show and have people, you know, with the music and the dancers and the whole bit, and that was her concept. And Karen Thomas was instrumental in bringing the Essence Awards to a real televised award show. Once again, Toyota is a sponsor of the Essence Awards. So they were all involved, as usual, and they were there. And we, Tobin & Associates, were instrumental in being part of the team of people that pulled the Essence Awards off here in Los Angeles. I mean, there as so much to do in terms of reaching out to the

community, grassroots community, the churches, the religious community, and we had a good piece of that. And there were many firms that worked on that. One firm, Bragman Cafarelli, Whoopi Goldberg's with that firm, and I always remind people that Howard Bragman, who's a partner with Bragman, Cafarelli, this major firm in Beverly Hills, when he first hit Los Angeles—he came from Chicago—somebody in Chicago told him, "You've got to look up Pat Tobin." Well, who knew years later we'd be working on an event together. So, yeah, it was not only because of the stars and celebrities, Janet Jackson, Kenny Gamble, and all those people, it was just an honor to be involved with such a positive thing. You talk about our images and positive images of black people, you know, we're all not those negative types that you see sometime on TV. We're not all like that. And one thing I like about Susan Taylor, the significant contributions that we've made to this country, African Americans, and there are people that are doing things every day that you don't even know about. You get to learn about those people at the Essence Awards.

WHITE

That's right. It's a great event. Wonderfully orchestrated, very polished and professional, and then, like you said, the fact that it was held here in Los Angeles.

TOBIN

You know, many people may have missed it, Dr. White, because it was on TV and everybody doesn't make everything that's on TV. I think I'm going to call Candace Bond McKeever, who's the president and general manager of the West Coast office of Essence [Entertainment], get a copy of the tape, and have a screening in my newly renovated office on Sunset Boulevard, of the Essence Awards.

WHITE

Oh, good. That's a great idea.

TOBIN

Would you help me with that?

WHITE

I certainly would.

TOBIN

And you know that newly renovated room, that office building where we are, there's a big beautiful room. We could set it up theatre style, have light refreshments, maybe just popcorn.

WHITE

Yeah, just little snacks.

TOBIN

And do that, and have Essence be there, the staff on the West Coast come. It'll be great.

WHITE

That would be great, because you're right, a lot of people didn't—

TOBIN

A lot of people missed it, and it was such a fabulous show.

WHITE

Yes, to recognize all those that are accomplished in a number of different industries.

TOBIN

And here I grew up in Philadelphia with Kenny Gamble. I mean, Kenny Gamble went to West Philadelphia, I went to Overbrook High School, and here Kenny was— Well, he received one of the highest awards at the Essence Awards.

WHITE

Yes, he did. I think it was the lifetime achievement.

TOBIN

Yes, I think so. Look what he's done in Philadelphia, where he went into those communities and put his money where his mouth was, and renovated those homes and came up with programs for children. Oh, great.

WHITE

That's right, because they did show clips of him in Philadelphia, getting started.

TOBIN

I've known Kenny since we were in high school.

WHITE

A very special individual.

TOBIN

Oh, very special, very special.

WHITE

Oh, good. So you've been affiliated, particularly during that month, affiliated with the entrepreneurs in Las Vegas, and the people that are recognizing accomplishments in film and sports and music for the Essence Awards. On another level, you also had some interaction with Hubbard College of Administration International. I wonder if you could talk about your connection with that organization, what they're about.

TOBIN

Here again, here again, the Hubbard College of Administration, they were located in our building on Sunset, where I am on Sunset, 6565 Sunset. Well, they were there for years, and the Hubbard College people—Peggy Hilgers the president—used to watch me late at night, working, you know, weekends. And she would be there. The college was twenty-four hours, it seemed, so they always saw me, and we became friends. So when the Hubbard College people were finally at the point where they moved out of the office building on Sunset and got their own multimillion-dollar building on Vermont—they're now at 320 North Vermont—they invited me to the grand opening. So, of course, I went as a member or guest of the many hundreds of people that were there, I got a chance to be interviewed about the Hubbard—About their approach to doing business, because there's a whole history to this guy, L. Ron Hubbard, and how he goes about doing business, and it's really, really something to be proud of. Many successful Internet gurus and people like that have gone through the Hubbard College program. So they gave me a scholarship as a result of it, but I haven't been able to go. I got to find some

time to go. I have a free scholarship to take some business courses and get a business certificate from Hubbard College. It's so many nights a week, and I'm going to do that. You have to help me discipline myself to go, because— You need to really go see that building. It's fabulous. They would love you to come take a tour. It's fabulous. Newly renovated. I mean, they just took a building and gutted it, and they raised their own— I think six million or something, they told me. They raised their own money just through their sources.

WHITE

That certainly is a great accomplishment and something to be taken advantage of, you know, as time permits for you, because I know that that would be quite a commitment. It's not just going to an event or something like that on any given evening. It takes a lot of preparation and follow-up and what have you.

TOBIN

I need to do that, because it will help me with my business, too. They help you with your management skills and organizational skills, and I really need to do that, so God just help me to be disciplined enough to sit down every night. Well, I think it's two or three nights a week for so many hours. I've just got to do it.

WHITE

Yeah, it's a great opportunity and I'm sure that you will when the time is right.

TOBIN

Maybe the fall will be better, because I travel a great deal in the summer months.

WHITE

That's true. Okay. Now, you have extended your net quite far and wide, so I wanted to go back and talk about a few of your clients and some of the events, again, that have taken place for you this year. There are two in particular. One is Team Kool Green. I wonder if you could talk a bit about that.

TOBIN

I loved that.

WHITE

That's Kool with a "K." And then also, your interaction with the BET Awards this year, Black Enterprise Television.

TOBIN

Yeah, we were doing some awards this year. Thank you, God, this was my year. The Team Kool Green— Here again is another good example of being in the right place at the right time. Years ago, Myron Curry, one of my family members—actually, he's just like a son to me—said, "You need a website." Well, as a result of having a website and Tobin & Associates being online, there was a company in Canada—that's Ontario, Canada—looking for an African American PR firm to assist with the outreach and promotion and publicity of the Kool Green racing team and the program attached, the 100 Black Men of America, because— Kool Green racing team, the team members are Paul Tracy and Dario Franchitti. Well, Dario, everybody seems to know his name. Paul Tracy's pretty famous, too, but Dario is married to Ashley Judd, the actress.

WHITE

Oh, really.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah. So Deann Beck, a young woman out of Canada, was surfing the net, looking for a black PR firm, and who did she come up with in California? Tobin & Associates. So just talking to her over the phone I sold her on using Tobin & Associates and not looking any further, and that was a year ago and this is our second year working with them now. We went to Fontana [California] last year to the California Speedway, but this year we were able to work with them in six markets, Miami, Chicago, Milwaukee, L.A. Coming up in September, they'll be in Fontana. There was one other city. So, yeah, we are very proud to be a part of that project. You don't really have to like racing or even be a racer to enjoy working on something like this, because I never used to go to races. Only because of Toyota, I think, I've been to the Toyota Grand Prix a few times. But to actually work with the media, this is what we do, when it comes to outreach and disseminating information and people of color, letting them know what the 100 Black Men is, how they're benefiting from this racing

team, it was just right up our alley, something we wanted to do. So Libra White, who's one of our new account execs, is working with us on the Kool Green racing team, and of course, Derek Thompson, we still call him the intern, although he graduated from college. He comes in once a week and helps with our media calls and following up. And it's great to have a client in Canada who wires you money once a month. [laughs]

WHITE

Excellent.

TOBIN

That is good. It goes right to the bank. So the company we work with in Canada is called Torchia Communications, and Torchia has a contract with Brown and Williamson, and Brown and Williamson, you know, is tobacco, and of course they sponsor a lot of things, including the Kool Green racing team.

WHITE

Oh, really. That's interesting how that whole process unfolds.

TOBIN

Well, can I tell you that at Brown and Williamson Tobacco, there is a woman named Gail Strange. Gail and I have known each other for years, and years ago, Brown and Williamson sponsored something called Kool Achievers, like Kool cigarettes, and because of smoking and controversy and all that stuff now, they can't do some of the things they used to do, the smoking tobacco people, so years ago, Tobin & Associates worked with a woman named Charlotte Ottley and the Kool Achievers. This is where Kool Cigarettes honored people who achieved— This was years ago, and here, now, we're working with the Kool Green racing team, Brown and Williamson Tobacco.

WHITE

There you go, once again.

TOBIN

Once again, that circle. This is going to be my theme song, that "Circle of Life," you know, from The Lion King. I just love that.

WHITE

Connecting the dots.

TOBIN

Think about it. That's what's happening.

WHITE

That is so nice always to hear that you come upon these new opportunities that, more often than not in our conversations, has been with someone that you had some modicum of interaction with in years past, and they just come back into your life, or someone that they know has recommended you to get involved in whatever project.

TOBIN

That is what I like about, years ago, learning from relatives and people in my life. They always said, treat people right, because you never know when you're going to need them or see them again in life, and remember, on your way up, to treat people right because you meet those same people on your way down. I mean, I always remembered those things. I don't know if I told you this early on in our interview, when we first started talking, back in junior high school, one of things I remember is a little book— You know, when you graduate, they give you a little book and you get everybody's autograph. "Life is like a mirror reflecting what you do. Always face it smiling and it will smile right back at you." Honestly, I never forgot that.

WHITE

That's a great saying.

TOBIN

And I try to remember that. So all these people that I've met and interfaced with throughout my life, I've tried to make it positive and pleasant, so when people meet you, they don't run the other way and say, "Oh, my God, here she comes." You know, you want them to say, "Hey, that's Pat," and we have a pleasant memory of some things that we've done.

WHITE

And they will be interested in working with you in the future. That's great. Well, let's see now. The other event that I had asked about was the BET Awards, Black Entertainment Television Awards this year.

TOBIN

Oh, another exciting opportunity, and just think, somebody like a Bob Johnson, worth, what, billions, to be associated with this company. I mean, you hear some things about people who maybe didn't have such a happy experience at BET. Whatever. I mean, that happens everywhere. But because they're the black-owned network that's doing what they're doing around the country, I was proud to be a part of the BET Awards, and especially since I was invited last year in Las Vegas as a guest to the BET Awards at the—

WHITE

Bellagio [Hotel].

TOBIN

Bellagio, thank you. They call it the Moulin Rouge or something. It's fabulous. So you know me, any chance to go to Vegas, I was glad to be invited. So I was just a guest, and I was sitting around interfacing with people and helping the journalists to meet people. I remember the young lady doing an article and she mentioned in her article how Pat Tobin helped her meet everybody in the room. And this year, thanks to my good friend Tasha Whitten-Griggs and Michael Llewellyn at BET, and Rosalind Smith-Clark—I mean Rosalind Stevenson. Not Rosalind Smith-Clark. I got too many people in my life. But Ros Stevenson was in charge of the carpet, the red carpet, which is a big deal at these major awards shows, dealing with the media and the press from all over the country and just everybody, dealing with the red carpet where the celebrities arrive and the way they're greeted by the press. So we were involved in all that, and I think all kinds of people helped us with that. Friends came to volunteer. It was a great thing.

WHITE

Yeah, it was very exciting. Of course, that was televised, and that's another avenue.

TOBIN

And it's more work because it's going to happen every—I understand BET has committed to having it here in Los Angeles for another at least two or three years. So the team that they have in place now, hopefully, we'll all stay together and work together.

WHITE

That would be excellent.

TOBIN

I was just proud to be part of it.

WHITE

Speaking of which, you're wearing your volunteer tee shirt from BET Awards today. [mutual laughter]

TOBIN

It was June 26, 2002. Next year it'll be June 2003.

WHITE

That's right. That's great. Another way to recognize those that have made some inroads in their industry.

TOBIN

And when you try to convince another corporation that you're capable and you have the talent, you have the resources, you have the contacts, you got BET, you've got Essence Awards, you've got Toyota, you've got Torchia Communications, Kool Green racing team, you've got projects with Patti LaBelle and Bill Duke. I mean, you've got all these things. Come on.

WHITE

It shows your level of capability, you know, crossing over a variety of boundaries. So that's good, and I'm sure there are many, many opportunities like that on the horizon for you. You mentioned Toyota.

TOBIN

Always. Bread and butter. [laughs]

WHITE

I know they are your largest client.

TOBIN

Oh, did I tell you they just gave me a new car?

WHITE

Oh, congratulations. What kind?

TOBIN

A 2002 Lexus ES300.

WHITE

Really. Are you driving it today?

TOBIN

With a DVD player in it. Can you believe it?

WHITE

Oh, congratulations. How nice.

TOBIN

I said, "How do you get to watch a DVD player?" When you're sitting still; you cannot drive and watch a DVD movie. You can watch movies in the car.

WHITE

Really.

TOBIN

You've got to see it.

WHITE

Oh, that's so nice. Congratulations. They really take good care—

TOBIN

So thank you, Toyota Lexus.

WHITE

Yeah, I wonder if you could just give us an update on Toyota. I know that they appointed Guillermo Hysaw this year as the vice president of diversity, and they launched a huge campaign last year, Diversity Strategy Initiative. So I wonder if you could talk a little bit about that, about Toyota and the kinds of things that they have done in that area, the kinds of things that you have helped them to get involved in in the community, and the kinds of things you see them doing in the future.

TOBIN

Well, Renee, I think I'm still with Toyota after fourteen years because I was there in the beginning when Toyota first needed to hire an African American firm to help them with their outreach in the African American community. I was the one, with my team, people with Tobin at the time, back in the eighties, we wrote a proposal that talked about our experience with PUSH and NAACP and the Urban League and all the other religious and community organizations. So thank God for a guy named Jim Olson. Mr. Jim Olson's a vice president with Toyota and he said, "Well, come on in and talk." Because Toyota had an image problem back in the eighties, where the Japanese prime minister said something about Americans, and he said something particularly about African Americans that wasn't positive. So as a result, I saw an opportunity to take a lemon and make lemonade. I don't know where that came from, but I kind of like that. So I took lemon and made lemonade where, instead of being negative, I wrote letters to Japanese-owned companies that said, "Let me show you what we can do and let me tell you about some of the things we can do to help you with your image in the African American community." I also said, "Let me tell you about some of the significant contributions that African Americans made in this country." So Mr. Olson, he's an American gentleman, and he worked in Detroit with Ford, so he knew how important it would be to have this component, the African American, so he said, "Come in and let's talk." That was in 1988, so we've been talking since 1988. [mutual laughter]

WHITE

You've obviously had a lot to say to one another.

TOBIN

But you know, Renee, it's also about doing, delivering, bringing something to the table besides your appetite. Now, back to Bishop Brookins. He used to always say—I used to love sitting at meetings with him. He used to always say, "Well, don't just come hungry to the table; bring something. Bring a napkin or a fork or something. Bring something to the table. Don't just come hungry." So when I went to the table and talked with Toyota, I brought experience, I brought confidence, I brought knowledge. I knew that I could help them, and evidently, they felt that it was a good team and a good win-win situation, because we're still there. And I always brag—Well, not brag—Yeah, I boast about Toyota because they've been the bread and butter. What other client have I had for fourteen years? I mean, at least when I get my billing in on time, I know the check is good. I can take it to the bank, and it helps to run my business. So it's been a win-win partnership, and I hope it will continue to grow because Toyota is—I think they're the fourth largest automobile manufacturer in the country. They certainly make a very good product, and they're good people. I mean, Tracy Underwood, I've worked with her for years. She's now a national manager. I've watched many people get promoted and go up through the ranks at Toyota because I've been there, like I said, for fourteen years as a consultant. And Guillermo Hysaw, I'm really proud of his promotion, because Guillermo spent, maybe, eighteen years or so with Toyota. He's not just coming to Toyota; he's been there in different capacities. But when Toyota had a search for a V.P. of diversity, he was instrumental in getting the position. So I get to work closely with him and J. L. Armstrong and Monetta Stephens and Tracy Underwood and Michael Rouse. Oh, and Michael Rouse just informed us that Toyota's involved in a program at UCLA, and this is why, when you get new managers and you get new people, they bring new things. There's a Dr. Jon Robertson, head of the [Department of Music] at UCLA. Toyota gave them tons of money to sponsor some kind of a grant where they take these conductors and composers or something and they go through the schools. I'm looking into that because now we're going to get the word out about that.

WHITE

Oh, my goodness, yes.

TOBIN

Because this gentleman was born in Haiti, who heads it up. Do you know who I'm talking about?

WHITE

I have not met him.

TOBIN

Do you know of the name?

WHITE

It sounds vaguely familiar.

TOBIN

School of Music.

WHITE

Oh, School of Music, absolutely. His name is vaguely familiar.

TOBIN

Jon Robertson. Anyway, thanks to Michael Rouse, our new— He's new to this position at Toyota. He's been at Toyota for years, but he's now the corporate manager, where Gloria Jahn used to be. Gloria Jahn used to be corporate manager, and I worked with Gloria Jahn for five years, and she went on to another area at Toyota. But that's another thing about having a good relationship with the different people you encounter, because you never know when they're going to move around and come back full circle to be heading up a department that you're working with. So Michael Rouse was telling me about this program at UCLA, where Toyota funds it, and I've got to look into that because we want to get the word out about that.

WHITE

Sure. That's excellent. Toyota, they've got their fingers in a number of different things. Do you think that the appointment of Guillermo Hysaw will accelerate that, the appointment of a vice president of diversity will accelerate—

TOBIN

Vice president of diversity? Oh, yes, because Toyota's been in the United States for over forty-some years, and a company like Toyota now having African Americans at the level—They have a woman, Veronica Pollard, who's a vice president in New York with Toyota, and certainly they have other vice presidents. So they're doing wonderful things. It's a good thing, and I'm glad to be a part of it while they're making history. And, yes, last year, they launched this 7.8 billion, with a "b", billion-dollar diversity strategy plan. And, yes, I'm happy to be working with many of the managers and vice presidents at Toyota to make sure this happens.

WHITE

They have a list of strategic initiatives that they want to implement by a certain date or what have you.

TOBIN

Ten years, maybe. I mean, to spend \$7.8 billion is going to take a while, but over a ten-year period I think if you go online to toyota.com and look at the diversity plan, it's all there, spelled out for you. When it comes to dealer development, they want more people of color in the big dealers, and put money into various programs, into minority supplier, doing more business with suppliers and vendors.

WHITE

That's great. What a great client to have.

TOBIN

And I also work with them on the manufacturing side now. This is Toyota, TMS, Toyota Motor Sales, here in California that's the headquarters for the sales marketing. But in Georgetown, Kentucky, where the Camrys are made, that's the manufacturing arm, so TMMNA, Toyota Motor Manufacturing of North America. I get to work with them, too, in another capacity, and that's to help them with their Opportunity Exchange Program that they have every November. I get to go to Cincinnati, which is right next door to Kentucky. They have 1,500 people or more come to this Opportunity Exchange, where you get to hear speakers and you get to interface with the people who purchase

services, the purchasing people, on the manufacturing side. I've helped with recommending speakers such as— They've had Susan Taylor and Kweisi Mfume from NAACP. They've had Earl Graves. I got the opportunity to introduce Earl Graves at the event as the speaker one year, so I was thrilled to do that. Then Tavis Smiley, I had a chance to introduce Tavis Smiley when he spoke. So it's a great program, but that's on the manufacturing side in Kentucky, and here on the sales side, so I'm all over the place with Toyota and I just love it.

WHITE

That's great. They're moving and shaking in the industry.

TOBIN

Yes, they are.

WHITE

Those are the kinds of commitments that all the major corporations should implement, so I'm hoping they are setting a tone and setting an example for other corporations to follow suit. So that's great. Okay. I'm going to go ahead and end the interview for today, and we'll pick up where we left off next week.

TOBIN

Thank you.

WHITE

You're welcome.

**1.15. TAPE NUMBER: IX, SIDE ONE
AUGUST 30, 2002**

WHITE

Pat, how are you doing today?

TOBIN

Dr. Renee White, I'm fine. I always feel better when I see you.

WHITE

Oh, that's very nice. Thank you. Thank you. Well, last time we spoke, we had an opportunity to kind of go over some of the significant projects that you had been working on earlier this year, and the Verna Canson Award that you had received, and at the end of our conversation, we talked quite a bit about some of the projects you have worked on, the Essence Awards, BET Awards, the Kool Green Team that you work with currently, and then, of course, Toyota. We went into a bit of detail about your current work with Toyota and the fact that they have been very instrumental in your business affairs and that you have an ongoing relationship and hope to continue that relationship for many, many years to come.

TOBIN

Right. Yes.

WHITE

So from there, I just wanted to continue. I wanted to talk about another aspect of your life that we haven't had a chance to talk about, and it's your role as a teacher, as lecturer, as instructor. I understand in some of your literature that you were called upon actually to teach a course at Cal State [California State University] Dominguez Hills, in October of 2000, I guess.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah, I think I participated in a— Was I a panelist or did I— You know what? Cal State Dominguez Hills. You know what? I think I was asked to participate. Dr. Silver. Did you get a letter or something?

WHITE

Yes. There was a letter in your file.

TOBIN

Okay. Evidently, I didn't have the time to do it, but, yeah, that would have been something that I would have enjoyed. But my role as a teacher/lecturer, I had an opportunity to do some of that at UCLA, through the UCLA Extension Program, which I loved. I used to coordinate a networking and public relations seminar. I'd do it— I guess it was annually. I did it for a few years and it would

be an all-day Saturday kind of workshop. That was really fun. A lot of my friends in the industry would come and be part of the panel, entertainment industry or public relations business, they would come and participate. So that was something I did and enjoyed. And it was as a result of taking classes at UCLA, through that extension, one of my teachers, I'll never forget, he was so wonderful, he told me I was a marketing guru, that I should— Al Ginepra. Al Ginepra said, "You're a marketing guru. You ought to be teaching." So I did. I started some of those as a guest lecturer; I started some of those seminars.

WHITE

Okay. Good. Good. There is a program through UCLA Extension called "Preparing for a Career in PR," and I understand that you were part of that process. Can you tell me what are some of the things, if you can recall, what is some of the information that you would want to have imparted to the students? [tape recorder off] So let's continue from there. What are some of the information, if you can recall, that you would have wanted to impart to the students or the participants that attended that seminar?

TOBIN

The fact— I'm mumbling— The fact that this whole business of public relations is such an interesting field. Any of the young people today that want to go into this, wanted to pursue this field, I wanted them to pursue it passionately, to really have a love for it, much like I have. And most people, when they really love something, and you want to do it, they want you to do it the same way they did it. I want these young people to really feel passionate about the field of PR, not necessarily about how much money you can make, because, Lord knows, in my business, it's not only the money. Yes, you can make a lot of money, and you do want to get the big fat accounts and make that money, but you've got to love what you're doing. I really have a love for this whole business of PR because it's so interesting to get to work in so many different areas. So the young people, I want to let them know that— And if I were teaching, I'd surely want to relay this to them that you get in there, you do the best you can, you be the best that you can be, you do a real good job because there are some negative connotations to PR. "Oh, they're just schmoozers. They're just party people. They're just fluff." No, there's another side to this whole business of working hard and satisfying your client and going above and

beyond the client's expectation to keep the client, much like I've done with Toyota for fourteen years. And I just hope that I can be around to continue to help advise and teach and share some of the experience I've gained all these years in the business.

WHITE

Well, I understand that you'd like to write a book at some point in the future. Given the opportunity to do so, which I'm sure that will come to pass, what kind of book would you like to write? Would it be sort of a narrative? Would it be instructions on how to— How do you envision a book by Pat Tobin? How do you envision that to look?

TOBIN

Actually, I would talk from experience in my book. It would be about the history, the story. One of the things I really want to do, and I just said that to Carole [Eileen "Kidogo"] Wade in our office, I just said that to her last night, because you know Carole Eileen Wade publishes her little poetry— Not little, but she does a lot of poetry publications. And I just said to her, I want to write about the history of the Black Public Relations Society. The National Black Public Relations Society started twenty years ago. Well, the Black Public Relations Society started twenty years ago and we've become a national organization in the last four years, but I've been at the helm since 1983. So next year, if the Lord's willing, 2003, it will be twenty years. It'll be twenty years for Tobin & Associates' existence in business. It'll be twenty years for the Black Public Relations Society. So I was looking through some old photographs and I saw one of our first meetings back in 1983. A group of PR professionals got together at the Speakeasy, where I used to host my media night gatherings, and we gathered all these PR professionals, and some of them I still see today, like Ron Carter. He was one of Black PR Society original members. I just ran into him at the screening about—Standing in the Shadows of Motown, the screening I went to recently. So some of these people I still see, and twenty years later, I want to document and write the history of the Black Public Relations Society, because in telling the history of the PR society, you'll learn a lot about Pat Tobin and this whole thing, why I'm so passionate about African Americans, particularly people of color, in the field of PR, because all the struggles I've had is because there was not necessarily any real

outlet for us to go to; us, people of color. It was a real challenge when I wanted to get into PR, trying to find the right job. You know, certainly being offered positions as secretaries—and nothing wrong with being a secretary—but couldn't find the right job in PR So I want to document that. I'm going to do that; maybe with the right kind of professional help, I can just talk into a tape and have somebody do the real writing. Yeah, I want to do that and I'm going to make that a goal. Two goals next year is to have a big celebration, the Tobin twenty years in business and the Black Public Relations Society story, because I was there and I want to make sure that I tell it. And the reason I want to tell it, Renee, because there's a woman named Sharon Morgan.

Sharon Morgan worked at Burrell Communications, Burrell Communications in Chicago. Sharon now owns a restaurant in Paris, France. Sharon and I, we stay in touch. She just sent me an e-mail, and I forwarded the information about her restaurant on to one of the executives at Toyota, Irving A. Miller, one of our vice presidents. His secretary-assistant is going to Paris, France, in the next week or two and I wanted to share with her the Sharon Morgan restaurant. Bojangles, it's called.

WHITE

Is that so.

TOBIN

So this "circle of life" kind of thing. I mean, Sharon Morgan helped me start the Black Public Relations Society. She started it in Chicago and Helen Goss and I started it here in Los Angeles. So twenty years later, Sharon is running a restaurant in Paris, France, and I'm trying to tell the story of how this all came about.

WHITE

What an excellent opportunity. Not to mention, of course, the twentieth anniversary for that organization, twentieth anniversary for yours, for your business, as well as, hopefully, the printing of your oral history would come out next year, so what a time to celebrate, sometime next year.

TOBIN

Oh, that's going to be exciting.

WHITE

To honor all three of those occasions.

TOBIN

Yes. Yes. There will be a way to do that, maybe with the twentieth year in business, the launching or the debut or whatever. The oral history—

WHITE

Exactly. Exactly. The anniversary party or celebration and the celebration of life with your oral history coming out. That'll be an exciting time.

TOBIN

I'm going to make a note of that, because starting January 2003, it's going to be a year-long— Because I think my anniversary really is in September or somewhere like that, but starting in January, the oral history project is a major part of this whole twenty-year celebration.

WHITE

Absolutely. Good. Good. Now, I also know that you have some thoughts and ideas about developing a Tobin School of Public Relations. You've talked about that briefly. I wonder if you can talk a little bit about your vision for that. Where might it be housed? What would you teach? Who would you recruit?

TOBIN

First of all, the Tobin School of PR is something that I would just love to do, because I still get résumés and e-mails and inquiries from young people who are in college, who've read about Tobin & Associates, who've gone online and seen some of the things that Tobin's accomplished, and they want to know how did I get started, how did I get in business, how did I become the owner of my own company for twenty years. One of the things I've done already, Mark Ridley-Thomas, one of our councilmen, I went to his Juneteenth event recently. It was fabulous. I even paid to go, and usually I don't pay to go to anything. As a PR professional, you get comped a lot, but for Mark's event, I paid to go to that one because Mark Ridley-Thomas and I are good friends. We go way back. He even invited me to come to city hall and talk to some of the key people who are responsible for this whole renovation that's going on in

Hollywood. Hollywood is being revised, renovated. Even the building I'm currently in, I've been in since 1984, it's been renovated. It's beautiful. There are some opportunities in Hollywood where I could get a building. I kind of just like this whole Hollywood thing because black PR firms in Hollywood— You hear about Hollywood, but you don't hear about the people of color who are running businesses in Hollywood. So the Tobin & Associates story, the twenty-year history, the whole School of Tobin PR, if I could get a building— And I'm sure I can, with the right tenacity, not give up, stick-to-itiveness, I can find a building somewhere and, hopefully, write the proper grant proposal to get the funding to do that, because certainly it would be great to have a few million dollars, much like Magic Johnson's doing with his development deal in Hollywood right at Sunset and Vine. He's got 125 million that he and his partners are putting up. So I don't have 125 million, but I do have some resources that are willing to work with me and help me. Bob [Robert] Farrell, I've mentioned Bob Farrell. He is a former councilman. I mentioned him early on. He just talked with me the other day as a result of the Barbara Fouch-John Roseboro ceremony, memorial services. Bob Farrell attended, and he said to me on a phone call recently, "You know, I'm going to introduce you to some people in Hollywood. You've been in Hollywood a long time," and Hollywood is trying to become its own city, so we're going to talk about how that might help me as a longtime business resident in Hollywood. So there are some people like Mark Ridley-Thomas and former Councilman Bob Farrell, who are very interested in helping me to find this building and locate this building and proceed with the Tobin School of PR

WHITE

That sounds really, really exciting.

TOBIN

So it's a reality; it's not just something— Most of the things I've talked about are starting to happen anyway, and people say, "Oh, you're a success overnight." No. It's been twenty-some-odd years.

WHITE

It takes a while to pursue—

TOBIN

It takes a while.

WHITE

—these kind of endeavors because they are impactful to a number of people and the community at large. I can certainly see that idea unfolding and—

TOBIN

And people like you could give instruction. People like Carole. I mean, on anything to do with graphics and writing and research and marketing, I mean, all of that. I mean, when you have a school of PR, you're going to call in all your experts to lend their support and give their advice to young people, young and old people, people of all ages, pursuing a career in public relations.

WHITE

Sounds like a great endeavor, and I certainly look forward to that taking place. I look forward to that manifesting itself, I should say.

TOBIN

It's going to happen. It's going to happen.

WHITE

Good for you. Well, let's see, on a more personal note, I just wanted to see if you could talk a little bit about one of your latest celebrations of life, your birthday on February 24 of this past year. I know you gave a party and opportunity to share your life with your friends at Mixed Nuts Comedy Club here in Los Angeles. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about that, what significance that had for you, the people that showed up there, any particularly memorable moments for you.

TOBIN

That was so exciting. Most people who know me, know that I like to throw—I am one of these people who don't wait for people to give me a birthday gift, and I've gotten some very nice gifts, too, for that party, but I always just like to throw my own celebration because I kind of like to tie it in with client-related business. Patricia Belcher, who's one of our clients, is a talented actress. She does a lot of commercials, and Patricia and I were kind of like tossing around the idea of producing like this comedy thing, where I would emcee and she

would do her comedy, because I just love emceeing. That's one of my favorite hobbies. So the party was just another way to get clients out there and to bring people together. I just love bringing people together. I've always enjoyed just having some kind of event. But, of course, people like [Patricia Ann] "Posh" McIntosh looks at the expenses and said, "Why? Why do you spend money for postage and printing and paying for food, you know, and all of that?" But anyway, I'm going to continue to do this, and hopefully it'll grow into a fundraising idea, maybe, for the building fund that I want to hopefully get one day, get this building. So Patricia Belcher was key because she was doing her comedy, her one-woman show, and then I had people like Louis Dix. Louis Dix I didn't know in Philadelphia, but he has been in L.A. a long time and his family, his children, go to the same school as Aaron [Michael Tobin Curry]. At one point, they had gone to the same school as my grandson, so we're like family. So Louis Dix is a talented comedian. He always says yes and comes out in support, so he was on the program. Michael Colyar; it was great having him. And people like Harvey Lehman. Harvey Lehman was an executive with Sony Pictures. I love Harvey Lehman and his wife, Karen. I mean, Harvey showed up with Bob Billingsley, one of the highest-ranking African Americans at Disney worldwide. I mean, these kind of people came out for a little old celebration in the 'hood, Mixed Nuts Comedy Club, off of Crenshaw, Washington Boulevard. So it was just great to have people like that there. And I enjoy that kind of thing. It's not all about the gifts and the money or whatever they're going to give me. Just come and come together and meet people and network. And I'll probably do the same thing in February coming up. Do it again and again, as long as God will give me another year to celebrate and have another birthday.

WHITE

Yes. I know we've talked a couple of times about some of your celebratory events for your birthday at Carlos 'n Charlie's and things like that, so it's nice that you do take the time to honor yourself.

TOBIN

It's an honor to bring people together and to remind me, "Look, thank God you got another year. Let's celebrate."

WHITE

That's right. That's right. Now, I understand that— In some of your literature, I noticed that you said one of your fantasies is to be a comedian.

TOBIN

Oh, I love that. I'm a closet comedian. I really am. People don't know that I'm funny, but I'm funny. I love talking and just making people laugh, and I do that in conversation many times. I make jokes about a lot of things and people think, "Oh, you don't get serious." Well, they know I get serious sometimes, but I don't like being serious all the time. I just love— It's better than laughing. I always say I got to laugh to keep from crying because there's enough to cry about. There is truly enough to cry about, even running a business day to day, cash-flow problems, money problems. I mean, there's a lot, so I just like to have fun and feel good about it. So, yeah, I was asked to emcee an event in Miami coming up in September, down in Miami for Kool Green racing team. Kool Green racing team is going to have a Media Day in Miami, so I'm going to leave Washington, D.C., at the end of the Congressional Black Caucus, September 15, and fly to Miami for a Media Day, September 16, at a black-owned hotel, the Royal Palm Hotel.

WHITE

Really. In Miami. That's exciting.

TOBIN

Yes. I'm going to emcee that event.

WHITE

Terrific.

TOBIN

Oh, I love it. Yeah.

WHITE

I hope they videotape it so we can take a look at it at some point.

TOBIN

I would love a video of it. I wish they— I'm going to see if there's somebody down there that can do that for us.

WHITE

Okay. Well, just speaking about some other activities that are forthcoming for your organization, you're mentioning that with the Team Kool Green, which we talked about during our last interview. I know that another event that was particularly meaningful for you was the Patti-Pearls concert, Patti LaBelle and the Pearls concert. I know that you know her back from your days in Philadelphia. And I wondered if you could talk about that, what it feels like having known her for this number of years and then having an opportunity to do the publicity for her for her most recent concert here in Los Angeles.

TOBIN

It was just exciting. First of all, Patti, as I said probably earlier in our talks, she went to [John] Bartram [High School], I went to Overbrook [High School], and we heard about this group, LaBelle, we knew this group, Patti LaBelle and the Blue Belles. We were like, "Who are these people?" But Patti, all through the years, I've always followed her career and kept up with her, and our paths have crossed, whether I've met her at Vegas at some event or I've gone to see her concert somewhere. She knows me. One of the things I feel good about—Not that I know her and she knows me, because we were at the Soul Train, Lady of Soul Soul Train Awards recently, and my good friend Bob Jones—Thank God for Bob Jones. He invites me to everything in the world. And many of these wonderful events I probably wouldn't even get to attend if it were not for a good friend like Bob Jones. But most recently, Patti was at the—She was one of the special guests, she participated in the Lady of Soul Soul Train Awards, and afterwards, we were in the VIP room with Taye Diggs and Arsenio Hall and Patti LaBelle and just all these people, and of course I went over to her and she said, "Pat!" That always makes me feel so good. She knows my name. And one of the reasons I think she remembers me so well is because my brother, who passed away a year or two ago, was flying home to Philly for—He was in the hospital and I was flying home to Philly to see him. Patti and I were on the same flight, and when we landed at Philly, you know, I said "Hi" to her on the plane and everything, but when we landed in Philly, she actually stopped and talked with me at the luggage carousel where we were picking up our luggage. I told her I was going to see my brother, who was ill with cancer, and she hugged me and we prayed together right there in the airport at the U.S. Air carousel, picking up our luggage, and I

thank her for that. And one of my associates at the office, at Tobin & Associates, Katrina Hall, said I should probably send Patti our most recent piece of literature that Tobin's done, so one sheet that highlights a lot of the events and activities that we've been involved in, and one of them is the Patti LaBelle— Patti's Pearls evening at the— Where was it? At the wonderful West Angeles Cathedral over on Crenshaw. So, yeah, Patti, it's just exciting to know that somebody you went to school with— I didn't actually go to her same school, but growing up in Philly, and now fifty-some-odd years later, however many years later, I still see her. It's amazing; she's still performing.

WHITE

Yes, she is.

TOBIN

And looking great. So, you know, you never give up. You follow your dreams. It may take you thirty, forty years. If I get to be a comedian emceeing some event where she's singing or something, I would love that. You never know.

WHITE

Absolutely.

TOBIN

It's a possibility.

WHITE

Never know. Well, someone else that has made some significant inroads in their lives is one of your clients, Mr. Joe Dyer. I understand he's just published a book. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about your relationship with Joe Dyer, a little bit about his history.

TOBIN

Mr. Joe Dyer is one of the pillars of strength at CBS Television. He was there for over thirty-some-odd years, who recently retired, and he did launch his book, as you indicated. He told about the memoirs, his thirty-one or thirty-two years at CBS, and then coming from the cotton fields of Louisiana to CBS Television. He had a wonderful event recently to launch the book and certainly he said, "There was nobody else to do the PR but Pat Tobin from Tobin &

Associates." And luckily, Shawn Smith, a talented young lady I had an opportunity to meet, had a chance to work with us on this Joe Dyer project. And Joe was just somebody that I knew from leaving— When I left Philadelphia, somebody said, "You go to L.A., you look up John [W.] Mack at the Urban League, you look up Joe Dyer at CBS Television. As a matter of fact, I think I mentioned that Arnie [Arnold] Wallace, who was at WCAU in Philly, told me to look up— WCAU is a sister station to KCBS here in Los Angeles— And Joe Dyer was the guy that I contacted. We met and talked about job opportunities at CBS Television. Certainly because of Joe Dyer and the woman who interviewed me at CBS, Dolores [Christian]— I can't think of her last name right now, but we had an opportunity to follow up and get that interview and get the job and do the typing and pass the test, and thanks to Joe. I mean, he helped open doors, not just for me, but for many people at CBS, cameramen and just all kinds of things in his thirty-one years at CBS. So certainly working on his book was a thrill. He didn't have to have a lot of money. There again, this whole thing about money. If he didn't have the major bucks to hire Tobin & Associates, I would have worked for him for free. That's just how much he means to me and how much his career has meant. And his wife, Dot, I mean, we're just like family.

WHITE

Oh, good.

TOBIN

His children are the same age as my daughter Lauren [Tobin]. Now we all are grandparents, and Aaron, my grandson, is— You know, it's just a beautiful thing. So I'm still in touch with Mr. Dyer. He had been ill but he's recovering nicely and we're going to get back on track with promoting his book and continue his book tour around the country, because at his book signing most recently, he had former Chief of Police Bernard Parks, he had, oh, people like— Oh, God, you name them. They were all there. He had hundreds of people at his home, the backyard of his home. Many of the CBS employees that we worked together with, there was a group of black employees and we called ourselves the Black Employees of CBS. Many of us have all gotten together to promote and help Joe with the book. Larry McCormick was there.

It was just great. I mean, you might even want to see some of the names that were in attendance. I think you may have seen a press release about it.

WHITE

Sure. Mayme Clayton was there.

TOBIN

Oh, Dr. Mayme Clayton.

WHITE

The founder and director of the Western States Black Research Library.

TOBIN

Oh, it was awesome.

WHITE

Urban League president John Mack.

TOBIN

Yes.

WHITE

He couldn't attend due to commitments, but otherwise he would have been there.

TOBIN

Right.

WHITE

Well, good.

TOBIN

You know, certainly, they got a copy of the book. And I'm just excited about Joe Dyer just sitting down and telling about his life story.

WHITE

Terrific. Well, good. Well, tell me a little bit about— Bring us up to date on some of the other projects that you've been working on recently or that you foresee your organization working on in the very near future, throughout, say, the end of this year.

TOBIN

Well, one thing I'm real excited about, we don't have a deal yet, but I believe it's coming, I just have to believe. I just have to have faith. I just finished a phone conversation today with Artisans Entertainment. It's a film distribution company, and they distribute the film Standing in the Shadows of Motown. I had an opportunity to go to a screening recently, and much like the way I did it when I got Spike Lee as a client, I go to something, I see the movie, I get all excited, then I find out who's doing the ethnic marketing. You know they always have the mainstream marketing in place, but sometimes they don't have that ethnic marketing, that community outreach. So I'm always there to say, "Hey, here I am if you need it." And they need it, because this film, Standing in the Shadows of Motown, is about the Funk Brothers, who provided all that Motown sound, the bass, the guitar, all that good music. And forty-one years later, people have kind of forgotten who these people were and that they're still alive, some of them, and it's time to tell their story. So the Funk Brothers, Standing in the Shadows of Motown, it's about how they survived in Detroit and when Motown left Detroit and came to Los Angeles, how it just—I don't want to tell too much, you've just got to see it. And I want to be a part of that. So I've been in touch with the marketing people. They've been talking with me, and it looks like a real possibility that we may be able to do some work on that project.

WHITE

Oh, good. That sounds real exciting.

TOBIN

And one of the things I'm always pitching and I'm always looking for new opportunities, always out there, much like the black-owned hotel in Las Vegas, Fitzgeralds [Casino/Hotel]. A black man made over \$231 million last year. I want to work with Don [H.] Barden, the Barden Companies, because he's just somebody I'd love to be a part of. I mean I'd love to be a part of what he's

doing with his companies. So there's just some things on the rise, you know. I'm always pitching and out there. I guess that's what keeps me young, too, Renee. I'm always looking for another opportunity to just feel good about what we're doing and have fun about what we're doing. And when I look at these various publications that come out, and I'm always reading PR Week, because that's one of the trade publications in our industry. If you're in PR, you should really read PR Week. There's a drive going on, the Public Relations Society of America, which is a mainstream organization. It does have people of color in it as well, but there's a drive to create more diversity in the industry. And it's only begun. I mean, I've been talking about this for twenty years, and they're talking about it's only begun? When will it happen?

WHITE

My goodness.

TOBIN

Diversity in the field of PR So I definitely want to make a copy of that for you, because there's an article that I want you to have and make a part of what we're doing.

WHITE

Absolutely. That sounds really interesting. When was that article put out by PR Week?

TOBIN

It was published by PR Week in September, September 2 issue, 2002.

WHITE

Okay.

TOBIN

Yeah, that's a very important—

WHITE

Oh, just last week?

TOBIN

Yeah. It's brand—

WHITE

Terrific.

TOBIN

Yeah, I'm making copies to make it available for the public relations people that attend our conference in October in Washington, D.C.

WHITE

That's interesting. It does say that this particular woman that is pictured here, she will discuss Public Relations Society of America's Diversity Initiative in her keynote speech at the Black Public Relations Society Annual Conference. Well, that should be very interesting to find out what she has to say and how that organization plans to move forward in this area.

TOBIN

Yes.

WHITE

Good to hear. It seems like a little bit slow in coming, But nonetheless, it's good to hear.

TOBIN

It's slow, because I talk about the twenty years I've been out there on the battlefield, and we've been talking about this for twenty years, diversity in public relations. That's one of the reasons why we have the Black Public Relations Society. Certainly the PRSA, Public Relations Society of America, they have a diversity, multicultural division and all of that, but we just feel that African Americans in the field of PR, we need to address our concerns and our needs, and through the Black Public Relations Society, we are addressing that. And we do work with the PRSA, so we try to help each other in this whole field of diversity and multicultural and all of that, because you see there's still work to be done.

WHITE

There is much work to be done. That's for sure. Well, tell me, now, when you go about soliciting business—I know that you said you're always in the market for new contracts and things like that—how do you tend to distinguish Pat Tobin from other, say, ethnically oriented public relations firms?

TOBIN

One of the things about that is it's kind of easy because we've been around. First of all, I'm . And I stole this little quote from my friend Lynn Choy Yueda. We were on a panel one night. She's Asian and we were talking about Asian, Black, Hispanic. We were talking about this diversity stuff, and Lynn said to some young person, she says, "I have briefcases older than you." [White laughs] So because I'm older, I've been doing this for so long, I've been around, we kind of like have an edge. At least I'd like to think sometimes that experience counts, but not always. So the fact that we've been around for twenty years and we've been doing this for a long time and I still have the passion, even at my fifty-nine years of age, I still have the passion, the excitement, and people look at me and don't think I'm fifty-nine. That helps me a great deal. I just keep going, like the little bunny, like that little Energizer bunny. I just keep going and going. I want to go, go, go until the Lord says, "Okay, you don't go any more." But I will always be passionate and excited and thrilled about this business, and there are days, like you know for sure, there are days when I have tears in my eyes trying to keep it all together. I want to just throw up my hands and give it up, but, thank God you're documenting all this, because I'm not giving it up.

WHITE

That's terrific. So basically, your name, your reputation, your image, your personality, makes Pat Tobin & Associates most distinct.

TOBIN

And, you know, even with the bad things that may come about, you may mess up a few things, you may not do such a great job, but people understand that nobody's perfect. And when a mainstream agency does something wrong, you go back to them. So if people of color, if we learn to support each other even if something doesn't go the way we had planned, you don't just give up on them forever. So there have been a few things that we weren't so proud of, but—I

remember one person telling me— And I won't mention their name— "You'll never work in this town again." They were upset about something that didn't go well, and it wasn't really our fault, but we were part of it. And now they're one of my best friends and they call on me many times for advice and information.

WHITE

That's interesting.

TOBIN

Well, you know what? I must document this, Renee. Most recently, John Roseboro, the [Los Angeles] Dodger catcher, the great John Roseboro passed away. His wife Barbara Fouch-Roseboro, a dear friend. I've known them forever. I mean, our kids have probably grown up together. She hired Tobin & Associates to assist her with the memorial services because the Dodger players— I mean, Sandy Koufax, Tommy Lasorda, God, it was just wonderful. The L.A. Times did a big piece. We had eighty-something clips from off the Internet. And Carole Wade in our office— I was out of town at the time Barbara was trying to reach me, Barbara Fouch, and she kept calling and calling and couldn't get me. But finally— John Roseboro had passed away on a Friday, so that Monday morning, when she got to the office, she said to Carole Wade, "Are you the person that's going to make a decision and be next in charge? Because I need something." And Carole jumped on it and it was a big success. We got all this press, we wrote press releases, we wrote stories, and I'm so proud of that. I'm sorry that the great, legendary John Roseboro passed on, but he left a legacy. Oh, his memorial service was just wonderful. It was beautiful. The Reverend [Cecil L.] "Chip" Murray was involved, and Lura Ball, one of my dear friends, sang. I mean, it was just great. And Judy Pace[-Flood] and Beverly Todd and people that I've worked with, we were just all there making it happen, and it was wonderful.

WHITE

What a terrific event to be involved in.

TOBIN

So I want to thank Barbara for that.

WHITE

And very memorable.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah. My grandson, who loves baseball, he will remember. He didn't know anything about a John Roseboro, but now he does.

WHITE

He definitely has a legacy to leave behind.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah. Grandma wants to make sure that Aaron Michael Tobin Curry reads this book. [mutual laughter] He's ten years old now, and he can read, too.

WHITE

Well, good. Now, I know that you are a much sought-after speaker. You've emceed a number of things and as you indicated, there's something forthcoming that you're going to emcee in Miami. Can you talk a little bit about, say, the most memorable experience you had in your public speaking or as a speaker for a particular event or events?

TOBIN

Now, that's a good one, because— Oh, I know one of the things I was real excited about and I just happened to be thumbing through some things. I participated on a panel maybe a year ago— And since Toyota's such a major client, Toyota keeps coming up. This is really going to be the Toyota story, the Toyota-Pat Tobin story. But there's an organization, National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers, and I was asked to participate on a panel because of my thirteen, fourteen years with Toyota, being an African American woman in this business, in the automobile industry business. And I was so excited because I was on a panel with vice presidents and women of— Not just black women, it was white women, women who were executives, marketing executives at major companies, women in HR at automobile companies, and women who own dealerships. And I felt good about being up there. So I was on a panel recently— Well, maybe a year or so ago, I participated on a panel. It was at a what they call the Women's Circle, women

who are in the automotive industry, get together and have a session during this conference, this NAMAD conference that takes place. NAMAD is the acronym for the National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers. So I felt real good about that. When you see the kind of women that was on that panel, and I want to thank people like Sheila Vaden-Williams, who's the executive director of NAMAD, and a woman named Jackie Mitchell. I've known Jackie since she was a journalist with The Wall Street Journal, and now she's with the African Americans on Wheels [AAOW] publication and they sponsored this women's session. So I was real excited about that.

WHITE

Okay. Any others? Any other particularly profound moments as a speaker?

TOBIN

Well, certainly when I went to—I was thrilled about going to Omaha, Nebraska, and speaking for the National Council of Negro Women. I was their keynote speaker. I mean, they even paid, so you know you feel good about those paid speaking engagements. But I'd never been to Omaha, Nebraska, so that was a thrill. I probably can't think of them right this moment, but my goodness, I guess most of the time I get a chance to speak, I'm excited because I love to talk. [mutual laughter] But many times I participate on panels and with the Black Journalists and with the Public Relations Society and, like I said, through Public Relations Society of America, we usually have an ethnic panel discussion with Asian, Black, Hispanic. I remember one year I was on a panel with Steve Chavez, who's a Hispanic public relations consultant, and—I can't think of who our Asian— Maybe it was Bill Amada or someone from our Asian community, but it was a panel, downtown on the fifty-fourth floor of this beautiful high-rise building, a restaurant, and I was one of the panelists, and that was exciting. As a matter of fact, we have a videotape of that. I need to pull that out and get clips from that.

WHITE

Sure.

TOBIN

Would you make a note to remind me to get that video out of the panel discussion?

WHITE

Absolutely.

TOBIN

On diversity in PR Because I remember Lupe Luna— Lupe Luna who was one of the consultants with Tobin & Associates. She was there and she was really impressed with what we were doing down there, and it was quite a nice event.

WHITE

Terrific. It's nice to have those memorable occasions just to put into your files. I know that you have spoken, and see the number of events.

TOBIN

One thing I remember— I'm glad you reminded me. I hate to cut you off, but when you said memorable events, I just flashed back at some photographs I was going through and I saw myself standing up at the Anderson Graduate School of Management, UCLA.

WHITE

Yes.

TOBIN

I was their guest speaker a couple years back. I don't know how I forgot that. It was fabulous. Anderson School. And because of Mr. Al [Alfred E.] Osborne [Jr.]— He's a dear friend. I've known Al for years. And the young people, the management school team, they invited me to speak. Because I was the guest speaker.

WHITE

What did you speak on?

TOBIN

Probably being an entrepreneur, being in business. You know, these young management-type specialists, these smart folks, they all know about managing and business plans and all of that, and I just did the, you know, growing up and coming from my era, just did it my way. Now I can tell about it. Twenty years later, I'm still standing. So a few years back, yeah. It was in the early— Maybe late eighties when I did that. I have a photograph from that. The reason I thought about it because I was cute. [White laughs] I was thin and young, my hair looked good. I said, "Where was this?"

WHITE

You still do.

TOBIN

Thank you. I said, "Where was this?" And I remembered. I'm at a table with some of the members from the UCLA management, Anderson School of Management. Yeah. That was one of the highlights, because I mean, here I am speaking to these high-powered folks. It was about business and how you stay in business, how you manage your business, and what makes you last, and it's a number of things. Some people last because they've got a lot of money and they can just pay for everything. Some people last because they're liked and people will just keep coming back to them. Hopefully, I fit in that category, where people just like us. You do business with people you like. And I thank God, like I said, fourteen years with Toyota, so evidently, somebody likes us. Longevity, I mean, that's— Fourteen years with one client, that's pretty good.

WHITE

Well, there are certainly a number of ways to develop one's business acumen. It could be personal experience, could be through traveling, networking, could be through education, such as Anderson School, but I'm sure that you had a very interesting and insightful story to tell them. I'm sure they learned a lot, something that they would not have been taught in a class there at UCLA, if I had to guess.

TOBIN

Well, there's nothing like getting it from the school of hard knocks, the actual on-the-job training, as they say, from the streets, somebody who had to do it the hard way.

WHITE

That's true.

TOBIN

There was no book. Nobody said, "Here's the book on how to establish a successful PR firm. Here's what you do. Here's step one. Here's step two." Besides, you can't go by the book, you know. They always say, if you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans. So you can't go by the book because you never know.

WHITE

That's right. On that note, we're going to go ahead and end the interview for today.

**1.16. TAPE NUMBER: X, SIDE ONE
OCTOBER 14, 2002**

WHITE

Hi, Pat, how are you today?

TOBIN

Hi, Dr. White. I'm feeling better now that I've seen you.

WHITE

Oh, that's good. That's good. Glad to hear it. It's always nice to see you. You look wonderful and healthy today.

TOBIN

Thank you, thank you.

WHITE

Well, good. Well, last time we spoke, we had a real interesting conversation about some things that you've been involved in, and just wanted to continue

from there. I wanted to just get a sense of some of the things that you've been involved in since we spoke last. I know you had a number of different projects under way, one of which is Kool Green Team, some things you had going on there, which I understand you've just left from an interesting event having to do with that organization. Then, also, I know that you took a trip to Washington, D.C., and participated in the Congressional Black Caucus, and that you took a trip to Las Vegas. I know that there is a black-owned hotel there and you've been collaborating with some individuals there, and that you returned from a trip for the Black Public Relations Society. So I wondered if you can start there, maybe talk a little bit about Kool Green and what you've been doing since I saw you last.

TOBIN

Well, thank you, Renee, Dr. White. I'll start with the Kool Green racing team. Dario Franchitti and Paul Tracy are the gentlemen that race for the Kool Green racing team, and based on their laps and their performance, money is donated to the 100 Black Men of America. So November 3 will be the last race in the series out here on the West Coast at the California Speedway. So we had a Media Day today at the museum, the Peterson Museum. We invited all the media, mainstream, ethnic, and it was a wonderful luncheon sponsored by Torchia Communications. They have the Kool Green account, and we work with them. Tobin & Associates work with Torchia, and Torchia's based in Canada. So they came out here to do a Media Day, and Libra White and I were there. We assisted with the media, and it was a wonderful event. The drivers were there, Paul Tracy and Dario Franchitti, and the president of the local chapter of 100 Black Men, Dr. [Edward] Savage, and the Orange County representative of 100 Black Men, Mr. [Elliott] Sherrell, they were both there. So it was really good.

WHITE

Turned out to be a productive event?

TOBIN

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

WHITE

What do you see in terms of the future for you and that particular organization? What things are coming up?

TOBIN

Well, because of the Brown and Williamson Tobacco, Kool Green is a cigarette brand, you know, with the tobacco company, so we'll just have to see once Brown and Williamson company analyzes to see how well things have gone and if they're getting a return on their investment, whether they're going to continue this particular program. It's been a good program. The whole idea of just putting money in the African American community, with the 100 Black Men, setting up these training computer centers and giving young people an opportunity, young adults an opportunity to learn computers, it's been a real good thing. So it started last year, in 2001, and this was the second year. So hopefully we'll see what happens.

WHITE

Okay. Good. Congratulations. I'm glad the day went well.

TOBIN

It went well. Now, you said I was in D.C. for the Congressional Black Caucus. Yes, I was, and I was attending two events. Once I went for the Black Caucus, I had to turn around and go back in early October for the Black Public Relations Society, so once again, my dear lovely client Toyota sponsored the Congressional Black Caucus. Toyota had a table or two. They bought a couple tables, and they also gave, I think, \$50,000, yeah, \$50,000 to the fellowship program, where the fellows from various colleges want to learn things about the political life on Capitol Hill and they get an opportunity to do an internship, and companies underwrite the cost of the students coming and working and staying on the Hill. Toyota sponsored one of those.

WHITE

That's excellent.

TOBIN

Then, of course, Vegas. You know how much I love to play in Vegas and have fun and go to the shows and fool around down there with those slots, but one of the things I really want to do is get some business with Mr. Don Barden, and

Don H. Barden is the only African American that owns a major hotel and casino in Vegas. So I was invited to his Family and Friends Gala he had recently, where a lot of people came in from Detroit to see the facility and to spend time down there for the weekend. One of the things Mr. Barden did, he had an event for the locals, people to come and have like a barbecue and get food. They bought their little barbecue package, but the money went to two charities in Las Vegas. And the mayor of Las Vegas was there, so of course I got a chance to meet the mayor of Las Vegas and get a photograph with him and Mr. Don Barden. So that was a real good event. So now I'm talking to Mr. Barden and his marketing people about working on their February event. There's going to be a major Black History Month program with athletes and artists and all kinds of folks in February. February the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth, 2003, at Fitzgerald's Hotel and Casino, downtown Las Vegas.

WHITE

Oh, that's exciting. For Black History Month.

TOBIN

Yes. And it's fitting, being the only black-owned hotel and casino in Las Vegas. We're real proud of Mr. Barden. Then, of course, the organization that's near and dear to my life, the National Black Public Relations Society. I'm so excited. We just had our fourth annual convention. We've been to cities like Detroit and New Orleans and St. Paul, Minnesota, and this year, we were in D.C., the nation's capital. We had a wonderful turnout, hundreds of people at our luncheon, and the president of the Public Relations Society of America—that's the fifty-three-year-old mainstream agency, with 20,000 members—the president of that organization spoke to us. So it was really good. She was our keynote speaker at our luncheon. So we had a great time and we're going to New York City next year. And we're even planning far ahead. In 2003 we'll be in New York, and 2004 we're going to be in Chicago. We'll probably have elections somewhere along the line, so I will probably be immediate past president, unless I decide to run again. I don't know. But it's been a wonderful opportunity to see a national organization come up. We are 501(c)3; we get corporate sponsorship now. We're able to put on our conventions and job fair and Career Day, and it's just been real great. We had students come from

Temple University, Delaware State [University], Howard University, and other colleges and universities in the area.

WHITE

Excellent. What message did the president of the Public Relations Society—What message did she send?

TOBIN

Oh, I'm glad you asked that question, because the day after our convention, in the October 7 issue of PR Week, there was an article stating that Public Relations Society of America, PRSA, is joining forces with BPRS, the National Black PR Society, to help bridge the gap when it comes to diversity in the field of public relations. They're going to really get in there and roll up their sleeves and help to do something about the diversity issue when it comes to PR professionals. So we'll see. Hopefully, we will be able to make some accomplishments there because there are so many people in the field of PR, but not as many people of color in the field of public relations.

WHITE

Was she very specific in terms of how she might pursue that endeavor?

TOBIN

Well, one of the things she did— Her name is Joann Killeen. I have her card somewhere. But Joann lives out here in Brentwood, and she's a very successful businesswoman, and she wants to make sure that we stay in touch. One of the things she did right away was extend an invitation for me to attend the PRSA conference in San Francisco.

WHITE

Oh, terrific. When will that be?

TOBIN

November. And they're having James Earl Jones as one of the speakers. So we're going to work together to strategize on how to bring everybody closer together. But it's so funny, though, when I got back from D.C., I got a call from Public Relations Society of America local chapter here in L.A., and every year the Hispanic, Asian, and black PR people get together with the young

professionals of the mainstream organizations and we have a Christmas event, some kind of networking event. We did it last year and, unfortunately, we didn't have a large number. We hardly had any African American PR professionals at that particular event. But this year I think it's going to be better, so in December, we'll be with the Hispanic, Asian, black, and mainstream professionals in public relations doing a holiday mixer.

WHITE

Oh, excellent. And so you'll be instrumental in helping to bring that about.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah, we're one of the organizers.

WHITE

Oh, good.

TOBIN

I think Brenda Mendoza's the young lady who called and left a message as soon as I got back from D.C. It was real timely. So they're on it right away.

WHITE

Oh, good. Good. I'm glad to hear that there will be some collaboration between the organizations. There's quite a bit of need for that, obviously.

TOBIN

Yes.

WHITE

So that we can move forward just in terms of the public relations industry in general.

TOBIN

You're right about that.

WHITE

Okay. Well, you've been quite busy, quite busy these last few weeks, and I'm sure that you'll have lots of things under way.

TOBIN

Oh, I have to tell you about the Larry McCormick Walk of Fame. Thanks to you and Larry McCormick and all the wonderful things you've done with Larry, we were able to attend the ceremony celebrating his star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Then his lovely wife Anita [Daniels McCormick] put together a fabulous reception at the Wilfandel [Club] house on Adams, and that was just awesome. They had live jazz, and it was videotaped and we danced and partied and had a good time. So, yeah, I've been real busy with that. Then, of course, the good old Reverend Jesse Jackson was in town with his birthday party that he has every year. It's really a major fundraiser to raise money to keep his organization going here, the trade bureau, the Rainbow PUSH Trade Bureau. But he had Ray Charles perform. That was recently at the Beverly Hilton Hotel. Ariana Huffington and Warren Beatty and I just can't even— The list goes on and on. Berry Gordy. Everybody was there.

WHITE

Were you a guest there, or were you instrumental in some of the PR efforts for that?

TOBIN

I was instrumental in just helping. As a member of the trade bureau, they ask you to at least buy a ticket and show up, and Reverend Jackson had a luncheon on Monday to kick off the whole week of activities while he was in town, and I was instrumental in just getting people to buy a table. I didn't spring for \$2,500 for a table. Would have loved to if my budget had permitted it, but I committed to a ticket and other people stood up and they committed to tickets, so these were people that I knew, so we all just put together a table.

WHITE

Oh, terrific. Okay. I'm sure that was an incredibly exciting event.

TOBIN

It really was good. It really was. Because he held a press conference and he talked about war and not having war and this whole political thing about [George W.] Bush and, you know— No more war.

WHITE

Yeah, that's excellent. And of course, we're all very proud of Larry McCormick. It's nice to have been in attendance to see his star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. He is certainly one that is deserving of one. And, you know, that follows the dedication of the sound stage at KTLA, so he's quite an accomplished individual. We at UCLA are very happy to have had the opportunity to document his life story. It's quite a story, indeed, and it keeps going on and on. Too bad we can't have an addendum to his life story.

TOBIN

I know.

WHITE

Because it would have been nice to have included the sound stage dedication as well as the star.

TOBIN

And the star on the Walk of Fame.

WHITE

Yes. Yes, it would.

TOBIN

Maybe you should just issue a special press release or something through the UCLA newspaper or alum association, send out a special little edition. Maybe just like a one-sheet, much like I've done with my Tobin Times, you have that one sheet that kind of— You've seen it. You've seen that one sheet, right?

WHITE

Yes.

TOBIN

That might be a good idea.

WHITE

That would be a good idea.

TOBIN

Just something to update. Send it to everybody. Because, I mean, after all, that is so significant. Not many of us could get a star on the Walk of Fame.

WHITE

That's for sure.

TOBIN

So I would think a one-sheet would be a good idea.

WHITE

I know he must be so proud.

TOBIN

You know—

WHITE

Something similar to the Toyota—

TOBIN

You can keep that just as a sample. Tobin Times.

WHITE

Okay. Sounds good. Well, let's see now. Of course, your reputation precedes you, and time and time again, there have been individuals who tried to bring notice and to honor your achievements, one of which is, I understand that you've been invited to be a part of calendar that's being put together by RBD Communications, a Queen of Business calendar, where it indicates that you are one of the power women in Los Angeles. [Tobin laughs] So I wonder what your thoughts are about that.

TOBIN

I was flattered, and Muhammad Nassardeen and Jackie, the young lady that works with him, they told me I had to put on a bathing suit. I said, "Well, I will not be in that calendar if I have to wear a bathing suit." They were joking with me. But it's a good opportunity to showcase various women in business and to

hopefully get corporations to sponsor something like that. It's a good tool to have up on the wall. You know, we see various things on calendars, from good-looking men and good-looking women, to just whatever, and this is just a good way to promote these businesses all year long. So I was excited about it. Yeah, I'm going to be one of those women.

WHITE

Excellent. Excellent. Do you have a sense of when that calendar will be produced?

TOBIN

Well, it will have to be ready for the first of the year, because my page is February. I picked the February page. They gave us an opportunity to pick the page we want. I don't know how the other women chose their month, but I chose my birthday month, which is February, because it's a milestone for me, February 2003.

WHITE

Yes, it is.

TOBIN

Sixtieth birthday, twentieth year of the Black Public Relations Society— Not the national arm of it, but the organization actually started in 1983, in Chicago. And then just twenty years in business. Twenty years in business.

WHITE

That is going to be a significant year. I certainly had wanted to make mention of that in this interview today, of course, just celebrating Tobin & Associates and all the hard work and the precedents that you have set with your organization, and, of course—

TOBIN

But you know, Dr. White, we want to do what you're doing before people pass on. As you and I have said earlier, there are certain people that would have been just wonderful to document their lives, and now they're gone—Esther Rolle, Rosalind Cash, Lil Cumber, and, you know, people just leaving here. So, yeah, we've got to do this while we can.

WHITE

Yeah, that's certainly true. That's why I feel so honored to be a part of this project. And, you know, it is challenging trying to really connect with so many different individuals for whom their life has made a significant contribution to their industry, to the African American community, to Los Angeles in general, and so we will continue. We'll continue to endeavor to—

TOBIN

You've got to continue. This is so important.

WHITE

—get these people and document their life story. It's so important. Yeah.

TOBIN

Yes.

WHITE

And to say that you have twenty years, Tobin & Associates, is quite a landmark, and, as you indicated, your sixtieth birthday next year, and it is our hope, and my colleagues and I have talked about hopefully the possibility of having your oral history ready toward the end of next year, that will coincide with all these celebrations. Like we've talked in the past, much of it has to do with the follow-up, after we give the transcript to you and your staff to review, and then getting that back, but we hope to be a part of that celebration.

TOBIN

We're going to do everything we can. You will be a part of it, because we were just so honored to be included in your African American oral history program, so we're going to do everything we can. If we have to tie me down and sit me down somewhere and lock the door, "Read this!" we're going to do it because it's so important. I know Carole [Eileen "Kidogo" Wade] and Natisha [Newberry] and Robin [Mitchell], and Libra [White], they will all make sure. [Patricia Ann] "Posh" [McIntosh], too, all of them will make sure that I do this, and I will do this.

WHITE

Good. Terrific.

TOBIN

Because this is important.

WHITE

That's a good thing. Okay. Now, speaking of which, I know that you moved to the office, where you currently reside, on Sunset [Boulevard] quite a number of years ago, at the beginning of your career. I believe in 1984 or '85, you came to that building.

TOBIN

In '84.

WHITE

And I understand that there is some renovation that has gone on in your building as a part of the facelift and uplift for Hollywood in general.

TOBIN

To the tune of—

WHITE

Let's talk about that.

TOBIN

Oh, Renee, I'm so excited. To the tune of \$3 million, and, you know, sometimes you complain about things, "Oh, all the noise. Oh, all the dust. Oh, going up and down the steps. Oh, the elevator's not working," but now it's, "Oh, how beautiful." [mutual laughter] It is so beautiful. Harrison Ford— We love Harrison Ford, the actor. He just filmed a movie there, so we can't wait until it comes out, where they use the lobby of our building as a record company. They had all these hip-hoppers and rappers, and I don't know what the story's going to be about, but Harrison Ford is starring in it, and the young man who played in another movie—Carole would know the name—but anyway, another young talented actor was with Harrison Ford, and they filmed right in our building. And, yeah, a \$3 million renovated facility, and I moved to that building in 1984, 6565 Sunset. In 1984, and I used to always say

they ought to pay me rent, I've been here so long. So the management, Folb—Stanley Folb is the owner, but his sons run the building, Brian Folb and Brad [Folb]. I think it's Brian and Brad Folb, the brothers. I think they're twins. They look like twins. And they've known me for years. Yeah, I've been in that building since 1984, and I'm just proud to be in one place and be that stable and be able to last that long. So, yeah.

WHITE

That's quite an accomplishment. What are your thoughts about the transitions that have taken place just in the City of Hollywood as it relates to, say, African Americans and business in that area? Or do you see some sort of resurgence of energy, particularly as it relates to the African American community in Hollywood, just in general?

TOBIN

I've been in Hollywood since 1984, and I definitely see a major, major change, and particularly for African Americans. That beautiful facility, the Hollywood Highland project, it's an African American man that's the general manager there, Russ Joyner. Russ used to be the manager for the Fox Hill Mall, and he's a former athlete. I forget what football team he played for, but I've known Russ for years because Tobin & Associates did some PR work for the Black History Month Diversity project they had over there at the Fox Hill Mall. Now Russ Joyner is the manager for the Hollywood Highland project.

WHITE

Good for him.

TOBIN

So when Larry McCormick got his star on the Walk of Fame the other day, there was Russ Joyner. Mr. John [W.] Mack. Russ Joyner. The mayor of Hollywood, Johnny Grant, Gil Garcetti, I mean— Well, not Gil Garcetti, but one of our elected officials showed up. So you can see there's businesses coming back to Hollywood, facilities are being renovated. They renovated that wonderful dome [the Cinerama Dome], that theater down on Ivar.

WHITE

Called the ArcLight [Hollywood] at this point.

TOBIN

It's fabulous. You're right, the ArcLight is a fabulous new theater— Well, newly renovated theater. More people will be coming into Hollywood and doing business there. I'm going to get active again with the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce. I used to belong years ago, and you know how sometimes you get in something and you get out and you give up and you say, "Oh, well, they're not doing anything." Well, who's "they"? You've got to do it. So now that I see I've lasted in Hollywood twenty-some-odd years, so now I'm going to get in there and roll up my sleeves. I don't know when I'll find the time to do it, but I will at least put my money where my mouth is and join the Chamber [of Commerce] again and hopefully get involved, because they're going to be doing some wonderful things in Hollywood.

WHITE

I certainly can anticipate that. I know that the renovation that Magic Johnson is involved with, where they're going to put some shopping retail centers along [inaudible].

TOBIN

Oh, right down the street from me, like three blocks. I think it's \$125 million development deal, where there's going to be high-rise apartments and a bookstore. I don't know whether it's Borders, Blockbuster; everybody's coming in down there. It's going to be awesome. So hopefully I'll have some money and I can get one of those high-rise apartments, with the doorman. [White laughs] That's what I'm ready for, Renee. I'm ready for the doorman to open the door.

WHITE

I'm sure it'll be lovely. I can't wait to see that unfold.

TOBIN

Right on Hollywood and Vine. I mean Sunset and Vine. It goes the whole block.

WHITE

That's going to be real exciting. I know we've talked quite a bit in the past about the potential or your vision for having a school of public relations, and

recently, I think in our last interview, you talked about perhaps the possibility of having the school of public relations in Hollywood, and maybe along the way Councilman Bob [Robert] Farrell and perhaps [Councilman] Mark Ridley-Thomas might be interested in assisting in that endeavor.

TOBIN

Correct. As a matter of fact, Mark Ridley-Thomas just said to me—I just saw him at—Yeah, it was at the Jesse Jackson birthday celebration. I reminded Mark Ridley-Thomas that there were some people I wanted to talk with in Hollywood, who were representing that area, and Mark said to just call his office and he would be sure and set that up for me. So that's something I need to follow up on. I really need to do that, because there are buildings available, there's all kinds of money for special educational programs, and I definitely need to get some of that, because turning sixty is just one milestone. To teach and maybe educate and help young people, we'll just keep the legacy going, and that's what I really want to do.

WHITE

Good for you. And that comment just came up at the party for Jesse Jackson last week?

TOBIN

Oh, no, Mark Ridley-Thomas and I have talked about this. When all this renovating and everything started going on in Hollywood, Mark Ridley-Thomas had a Juneteenth party in June at the Raleigh Studios in Hollywood, and I said to him, "A lot's going on in Hollywood. I really want to do something here," and I told him about my idea. He told me in June to call his office and follow up. And I bought a ticket for that event. I don't usually pay to go to anything, but that was such a good event, Juneteenth. We had Bobby—Was it Bobby "Blue" Bland? Yeah.

WHITE

Oh, my goodness.

TOBIN

Oh, it was awesome.

WHITE

The blues sensation.

TOBIN

The blues, yeah. So I did talk to Mark Ridley-Thomas then and I talked to him again, so I really need to follow up and do that. Besides, one of our clients, Deirdre Dix [Hunt], her company is Edge of A Dream Productions. She's in Hollywood at the Raleigh Studios and she's doing really well with her projects. People like Danny Glover and Halle Berry and all have been approached to be a part of her special for— Her TV series for Discovery Health Channel. Our Health Matters is the name of her show. So, yeah, with all these people doing things in Hollywood, I'm really excited about the longevity that Tobin & Associates have, and I want to keep that going.

WHITE

That will be a great opportunity, during your launch, to do something there with your newly renovated building and all these various reasons for celebration. I can just foresee something really terrific happening next year, and moving closer toward your vision for having this school of PR. I certainly hope that I can be instrumental in that endeavor. [tape recorder off] Okay, we're going to continue from there. So there's a number of individuals that I have met since we've been interacting, that have spoken so highly of you and have talked about their interaction with you and the impression that you have made upon them, the influence that you have had on them. So there's a number of people that— A couple of people that I've had an opportunity to chat with that have some things that they wanted to share, and I just wanted to draw your attention to some of the things that were said about you, and perhaps if you wanted to talk about your interaction with them. There's a long list of names that I'll include here, but some of whom I had an opportunity to speak with personally. The first one, actually, you just mentioned her name a moment ago, so it's kind of apropos that we start with her, is Deirdre Dix.

TOBIN

Deirdre.

WHITE

I did have an opportunity to speak with her, Edge of A Dream Productions. I understand that she's down at Raleigh Studios and she's working, as you indicated, on a documentary having to do with African Americans and the health and health history and what have you, having to do with this community. So one of the things that she actually mentioned, she said that she had known you, gosh, since the early eighties while she was at CBS in the media department. She talked quite a bit about having the opportunity to go to Media Night at the Speakeasy.

TOBIN

Oh, Speakeasy. I tell you, that was my claim to fame. Everybody in the world, they've come through the Speakeasy, because that was something I did every week consistently for ten years. Every week for ten years without stopping. It was really a big success in this town. It was something new and exciting, and the fact that it was Media Night, the name Media Night just drew people because this is a media town. And I worked at CBS Television, so we had the Black Employees of CBS and ABC, and we had black employees from NBC. It was just great, yeah.

WHITE

She spoke about how she had such a wonderful time and she had an opportunity to get to know a lot of the people that were sort of moving and shaking, and the fact that you provided chicken and potato salad for everybody in the community for those many, many weeks and many, many years. It just made a lasting impression upon her.

TOBIN

Well, one of the things I told the owner, bless his heart, I hope he's still alive, David Curtin, I said, "You know, you can't expect people to come here after work and not feed them. A lot of these people are starving actors and actresses and trying to make a living. If they come here and spend a few bucks at your bar buying beverages, then you need to feed them." And that was the big success. This guy Jimmy, the chef Jimmy, heavyset gentleman, African American gentleman, everybody just loved Jimmy because he could cook. He made barbecue chicken, barbecue ribs, sometimes we'd have spaghetti, potato salad. I mean, he really laid out a feast, and it was from five to eight,

something like that, the happy hour, and it was a big success. People talk about that now. People across the country that I run into in other cities, "Girl, you still doing Media Night?" "Nah, they stopped that after seven years," because it's kind of hard to commit to something every week. When I started traveling with Toyota and other clients, my priorities changed. When I started traveling, I couldn't commit to being there. Then people didn't want a stand-in or a substitute. "Where's Pat Tobin? She's not here tonight? She's not at Media Night?"

WHITE

It wouldn't be the same without you spearheading it.

TOBIN

Thank you.

WHITE

That's for sure.

TOBIN

So it kind of dwindled away, went away.

WHITE

So, interestingly enough, twenty years later, two decades later, that was one of the first things that Deirdre Dix did mention.

TOBIN

Isn't that something.

WHITE

That really made a lasting impression upon her and helped to propel her in her particular industry because she met so many people that could assist her and that she could assist. And a couple of things she said, which I think that I already know by having an opportunity to interact with you, is that one thing she wanted to say is that Pat is "real"—in quotes—and that you really do try to help a lot of people and that you put your money where your mouth is. She recalled a Women in Film event that she helped to coordinate. Women in Film was directed toward women of all colors, and you felt it very important that

there was good representation of women of color, so you sponsored a table for that event and invited a number of women that perhaps she had not thought of inviting at the time, or that perhaps would have not been made aware of that, and so that made quite an impression upon her, that you reached out and tried to make sure that the networking continues, and she indicates that you endeavor to connect people and to give them exposure, and you're very good at that.

TOBIN

Well, one other thing I want to add about that, the client, Janice Bryant Howroyd, who has much more money than I will ever have, was kind enough to underwrite that table for us, so ACT I [Personnel Services] and Tobin & Associates were instrumental in getting the money for that event. And I just think that what Deirdre was doing is so important, those power breakfasts that she was coordinating for Women in Film. As a past board member of Women in Film, I know how important it is for women of color to be involved, because, as you said, Women in Film is an organization for all women of all colors, all backgrounds, but there are not enough women of color involved.

WHITE

That's true. She indicates that she is on her way next week to Jamaica to participate in the next Women in Film conference.

TOBIN

The international summit, yes. I really wish I could have gone, but, as you know, time nor money permitted this trip, but it's something they do every year, so who knows, Renee, maybe we can go down there and promote our book next year.

WHITE

Absolutely. Absolutely.

TOBIN

Put that down.

WHITE

That would be wonderful.

TOBIN

And we'll go next year for the international summit in Jamaica or wherever they hold it. We'll promote the book.

WHITE

That sounds terrific.

TOBIN

Because you know I'll need you as part of the team when they start asking all these questions. "Well, you have to talk to Dr. Renee White." [mutual laughter]

WHITE

Oh, well, certainly I would help any way I can. Well, she certainly had a number of wonderful things to say about you, so I wanted to make sure that I made mention of those things. She says that you guys have an incredibly strong friendship; she can share anything with you; and that you are a very, very dear friend; and she cherishes the fact that you are in her life.

TOBIN

Yeah, many times I've eaten over at her house. Her husband— They've fixed me dinners. Late at night when I'm too tired to go home and eat, they'll say, "Oh, come by." Just give me an excuse to come by and eat, I'll be right there. So, yeah, Deirdre and her husband, Luther Hunt, they've been wonderful friends throughout the years.

WHITE

Terrific. Terrific. I got another lengthy e-mail and had a conversation with Joan Crowner.

TOBIN

Oh, Joan Crowner, my girlfriend from D.C. Oh, my God, we go back thirty-some-odd years. I'm telling you, that woman is awesome. She's like a sister to me.

WHITE

Yeah, I understand you guys resemble one another quite a bit, too.

TOBIN

Well, that's how we met. Someone thought that— My daughter Lauren [Tobin] was about, I don't know, five or six years old or something, and she was modeling in this fashion show at the D.C. convention center or some big thing, and my sister Daisy used to travel with me to do my daughter Lauren's hair, because my sister Daisy was like my little child, you know, she's ten years younger than I am. So back in the day, as the kids say, when my daughter was growing up, doing all this modeling, my sister went with me to help with the hair and the clothes. So my sister was looking for me or somebody was looking for me, and they saw Joan and they thought it was me, and they said, "Oh, you've got to meet Pat Tobin. You look just like her." So that's what happened. Isn't that funny?

WHITE

Yeah, that's interesting. She says you guys met very early on, in the latter part of 1969, at a fashion show in Washington, D.C.

TOBIN

It was Friends of Distinction, Muhammad Ali. I mean, it wasn't just a fashion show; it was a major fundraiser for some cause, and my daughter Lauren used to model and do commercials and all that, and I had her in this show.

WHITE

Yeah, she said that Richard Roundtree actually was also modeling in this particular fashion show, way back then.

TOBIN

Oh, it was awesome.

WHITE

She talked about the fact that you guys do resemble one another and that people oftentimes mistook her for you and the kinds of interactions she had with people as a result of that, and that you guys had an opportunity to really engage in a lot of social activities in Philadelphia and D.C. A couple of things that she mentioned I thought were interesting and just sort of speaks to your

particular style, and she said that when she received her first Pat Tobin public relations lesson, she had to go to Warner Theater to give Gladys Knight a message that she had received from Muhammad Ali at that point in time, and she made an attempt to do so and called you to tell you that she was not successful, and the first thing you said is that you must go directly to the source, which I have come to find that you are very proficient at, going directly to the source, not beating around the bush, cutting to the chase, and I've observed that to be an excellent quality for you, and I'm sure it has benefited you in your public relations endeavor to go directly to the source. So she wanted to be sure that we made mention that that was one of her first Pat Tobin public relations lesson.

TOBIN

That's true.

WHITE

And I think a lot of other people along the way have also gotten that lesson from you as well, that it doesn't pay to beat around the bush, but—

TOBIN

Right. Cut to the chase. Be real and cut to the chase.

WHITE

Absolutely. Absolutely. She also talked about another quality that you possess, your tenacity. I think that there was a point that you guys wanted to see Muhammad Ali fight Joe Frazier at Madison Square Gardens in New York City and you didn't have tickets. Oh, you did have tickets—

TOBIN

We only had two.

WHITE

Oh, you did have tickets. You only had two tickets, and so you needed a third one.

TOBIN

And of course, this boyfriend at the time, this Joe [Duckett] guy that I mentioned early on, of course, I guess it was just the two of us, we were going to go, but my friend Joan— For some reason, I mean, I don't know, I just didn't want to not include her. She wanted to go. We all agreed. I said, "Come on, you can go." Well, I didn't know how three people were going to get in on two tickets, but as you learned, we were able to work it out. [laughs]

WHITE

Yes, you were able to work it out. As you did for another occasion, when you and she wanted to see Sarah Vaughn in concert at the Blues Alley. You guys didn't have tickets for that particular event, and because of your tenacity, you were able to get into, I guess it was called the Blues Alley, where the capacity was only 200 people, and there you and your friend were.

TOBIN

Yeah, it's a small jazz club in D.C.

WHITE

And just a lot of other occasions where, again, your perseverance and tenacity just prevailed. When you went to see B.B. King at the Carter Barron Amphitheater in D.C., and you guys had some difficult getting in there initially, and because of your perseverance—

TOBIN

Well, we weren't really professional crashers. It's just that I'm a public relations consultant and I've watched mainstream professional PR people, and their name just seems to open the door. "Oh, I'm so-and-so from Rogers and Cowan," or "I'm so-and-so from Edelman." Well, why couldn't that work for us? I'm Pat Tobin from Tobin & Associates, and if they didn't know then, they know now. And it does kind of open the door and it helps, because we have the credibility, we have a good reputation. We've done things with Spike Lee and Patti LaBelle, and you just name them, you know, Toyota and Kool Green and all these—BET and Essence.

WHITE

And Susan Taylor, etc.

TOBIN

So when you can pick up the phone and say to Susan Taylor, "Do you know Pat Tobin?" or Ed Lewis, "Do you know Pat Tobin?" Any of those people. So, yeah, we weren't just crashing. Joan, at the time, didn't necessarily have the contacts and resources, but now she has more than I have. She's really learned a great deal about PR and she's got friends in the media and friends in entertainment, and together we just kind of complement each other.

WHITE

That's terrific. She couldn't say enough about the impression that you've made upon her, and again, like you indicate, she has learned a lot about public relations I'm sure as a result of having interacted with you.

TOBIN

And she's one of the friends, when I'd mentioned early on about the Muhammad Ali-Khalilah Ali baby shower, back in the day when the twins were born, the twins who now one of them is a boxer. We did the baby shower at the home of Muhammad Ali and Khalilah Ali back in the day, and Joan was there. She was one of my friends and was part of all that.

WHITE

That's terrific. So she says that you've introduced her to so many wonderful people and she's very grateful for having the opportunity to be friends with you for all these years. Sometimes, she says, when she's out at an event and just when she thinks she's tired of looking for you, there you are.

TOBIN

There I am. It just happened in Washington, D.C. One of our clients, Barbara Johnson, an attorney with Paul Hastings law firm, I invited Joan to this reception and I had to leave because it was during the time of our National Black Public Relations Society convention and I had to go, and just as I was ready to walk out the door, in walks Joan, and we're at the Ronald Reagan Building. I mean, who would have thought?

WHITE

Who would have thought.

TOBIN

A huge building like that with Michael Jordan's nightclub and jazz restaurant and everything there. I mean, this place is huge. Who would have thought as I was walking out the door, Joan was walking in.

WHITE

That's interesting. I've actually had that scenario happen with you as well. I've looked around and looked around for you and just when I think, well, she's not here, there you are.

TOBIN

And not only that, but we were at an event recently and I didn't get to see you, and the next thing I know, there you were, walking down the street. I said, "Hello."

WHITE

That's so true.

TOBIN

So, yeah. I think it's that guardian angel. I always relate back to my mother [Bessie Randolph]. As you know, she died when I was twelve. So when good things happen to me, it's either her angel or somebody's angel is watching over me, and they always make sure— Thank God, I mean, all these years, I'm nearly sixty and I really don't have any— Well, you know, the bad things were early on in life when I was young, growing up without a mother, but it's been good.

WHITE

Seem to be at the right place at the right time.

TOBIN

Yes.

WHITE

Connecting the dots.

TOBIN

Guardian angel.

WHITE

That's terrific. Another person that I had a chance to talk with was Carole [Eileen "Kidogo"] Wade. I know she's worked with you. You guys have worked together in a number of capacities in terms of personal and professional. Carole had much to say, but some of the things that I thought were particularly profound is that she is most impressed, among other things, with your charisma, that you are a charismatic person and you're one of the most charismatic persons she knows; and that you know everyone and everyone knows you; that you are committed, you're dedicated; and that you are a maneuverer, which I thought was quite an interesting adjective; and that you make a way out of no way. And over twenty-five years, she says that you have been very instrumental in her own business endeavors, and that you have been a loyal and supportive friend, and that also you're just a lot of fun to cha-cha and do the electric slide with.

TOBIN

Oh, I love— The only two dances I know how to do are the electric slide and the cha-cha. Yeah, Carole has been a friend for a long time, long time. Through Black Women's Network, the luncheon we were just talking about attending, coming up real soon, Carole was the president of Black Women's Network in the early eighties when I met her at some garden party or something, and we've been friends ever since. She's a talented, creative graphic designer, poet. She does all these things. So when she needed an office, I provided office space, and when she needed graphic business, I certainly used her as our in-house graphic designer. So it's been a win-win situation. She's been there for me and I've certainly been there for her, as with Joan and most of these friends. That's what friends are for.

WHITE

Absolutely.

TOBIN

What good is it if you need them and they're not there and they need you and you're not there?

WHITE

Yes, she's indicated that you guys have a plethora of business and social memories that you have shared and that she will always cherish. It was nice to talk with her and get some feedback. And there's just a number of other people. I know that someone that you've worked with for quite some time, Joe Dyer, we've spoken about him and the fact that you were representing him and his book, and that he actually helped to open doors for you at CBS. I wonder if you just want to say a couple of words. I didn't have an opportunity to speak with him directly, but I know that you have indicated that he has had a particularly profound place in your life.

TOBIN

He's always been there, and I can sit down and talk with Joe Dyer about any matter. I remember telling him about my desire to go into business, and he would sit down at lunch with me and talk to me about making sure I knew what I needed to budget to start a business, to be in business, the kind of clients I needed to grow, you know, if I wanted to make \$100,000 a year, I needed to have at least ten clients paying me x number of dollars a month. He wanted me to be sure that I understood the business of it all, and his advice and counseling has been very helpful. A lot of things he shared with me stuck with me, and his credibility in the community helped a great deal, because knowing Joe Dyer and the kind of people that know him and love him, I knew I was talking to the right person and I knew that I'd better listen, too, because I knew he was saying what was true.

WHITE

Excellent. Excellent. Now, there's a number of names that I just want to rattle off to you. We've talked, and individuals that work for you have shared with me a number of names that they feel would be important. We would list hundreds and hundreds if we could, but I'd like to just name a few of them, and if you could just give me a couple of lines about your interaction with them or one of the reasons why you felt it particularly important to mention their names in your book. One of them is Frank Dawson.

TOBIN

Oh, yeah. Frank Dawson, we worked together at CBS Television, and when I met Frank, he and his wife were—actually, his wife Pam was pregnant with their son, they'd just had a son Raheim at that time. Well, Raheim is now probably a senior at Pittsburgh University or University of Pittsburgh, and Raheim worked with me one summer as an intern. Frank and Pam, they were just my dearest friends. I was involved with the Black Employees of CBS with Frank, and when I left CBS Television to go out on my own, I think Frank—Frank did, he gave me my first \$100 bill.

WHITE

Oh, really. [laughs]

TOBIN

Yeah, so he's special.

WHITE

Very, very special.

TOBIN

And he was a big supporter of Media Night and the Black Employees of CBS.

WHITE

Terrific. Okay, how about Marva Smith Battle-Bey? I know that she spearheads the Black Women's Network. She's a founder of it.

TOBIN

And Marva Smith, who coordinates this conference that we have every year, the Black Women's Network breakfast conference, Marva, years ago, when she was real active with the NAACP, our company, Tobin & Associates, would help with mass mailing and names of people that we should invite to the Image Awards, and we'd sit up all night mailing things. Marva always used to give me advice, because Marva's a sharp businesswoman, a real smart businesswoman. She runs the Vermont/Slauson Economic Development Center, and she's instrumental for shopping centers and all that wonderful stuff going on over there in the Vermont/Slauson area. She used to always tell me about business and economics and contacts and resources and what you need, and I'd just listen to her and I watched her. She's well respected in the

community, black and white, and well known. She's another friend and mentor. And to this day, I emcee that Black Women's Network breakfast, every year.

WHITE

Yes, you do.

TOBIN

For free, by the way.

WHITE

Are you emceeing it this coming Saturday?

TOBIN

Again this coming Saturday, with Virginia Capers and Victoria Lowe and Robi Reed and God knows who else.

WHITE

Sounds like a wonderful, wonderful relationship that you've developed with her. Let's see now. Another individual you indicated, Irene Stokes. You've known her for over twenty years, and I know that her son is Chris Stokes, who is responsible for the Ultimate Group, and they represent B2K.

TOBIN

And IMx. And Chris was really responsible for bringing Brandy to the attention of many people. He took Brandy [Norwood] to a record label when she got her deals with— Chris Stokes is a client. I do want to thank Irene for that, because for years she used to tell Chris, "You gotta use Pat Tobin. You gotta use Pat Tobin." And, you know, these guys get busy with producing and directing and videos and travel, and he wasn't thinking about PR. But when I had an opportunity to work with him, he made sure that he gave us a piece of the business, because even though he represents these hot new groups, and these hot new groups are under contract with various record labels, most of the record labels have their own PR people and their own choices. I think Courtney Barnes represents B2K or some other PR firm, but here, Chris carved out a piece of business for Tobin & Associates. He said, "Here, you can represent our company, the Ultimate Group, and get our name out there."

Libra White has been the account exec on that account. We've been able to get them in Billboard and the Sentinel and Hollywood Update with Wendy Wheaton, just all kinds of stuff.

WHITE

Well, good. Good. Sounds like another important contact.

TOBIN

And R&B, yeah, all kinds of magazines for him.

WHITE

Okay. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about Roy Campbell, interaction with him.

TOBIN

Oh, that's my buddy, now. He was supposed to send you an e-mail. I'm going to beat him up. That's my buddy. We go back to when Roy was just a young student. I think he was just out of college working in the L.A. Times. He had a job at the L.A. Times and he wanted to learn about PR. He came to my office through the National Association of Black Journalists while I was very involved with the local chapter here, BJASC, Black Journalists Association of Southern California. Roy came to my office for something. I don't know whether we were working on a project for Black Journalists or whatever, but I had him stuff envelopes and everything else when he came to my office. I do that to people, you know. If you come when we're working on a project, you've got to work. [mutual laughter] And we turned out to be the best of friends. He wrote a piece about me. It's part of my profile. It's "A Black Powerhouse in Hollywood," it has a picture of Hal Williams and Pat Tobin and Spike Lee. Roy Campbell wrote that.

WHITE

Oh, did he really.

TOBIN

Yeah, that was years ago. So he's known me for years, and through the Association of Black Journalists, we've worked together on many projects. Where Toyota may sponsor an event, Roy may put it together as the event

coordinator for Black Journalists and we all just promote it and make sure it goes the way it's supposed to go.

WHITE

Terrific. Terrific. Okay. Other individuals that you made mention of is Tavis Smiley. He's a longtime business associate of yours, and I know that he's recently opened up his foundation here in the Los Angeles community.

TOBIN

Well, the exciting thing about Tavis, years ago, when I was working with one of my business associates, Bonnie [Bonita] Coleman— Bonnie was married. She met and married Bishop Brookins through our working relationship. Well, she's no longer married to Bishop Brookins. But Bonnie and I had some concerns about not getting enough business from the city of L.A. or something like that, and Mayor [Tom] Bradley was kind enough— Through Bishop Brookins, Mayor Bradley made sure that we had a meeting with the right people to talk about this. So on our visit to city hall, we ran into— Not ran into, but this young man was in Mayor Bradley's office. He was sort of like screening people or working as a— He was an intern. It was Tavis Smiley. Well, one of the gentleman who was in the meeting with me, one of my business associates, Mr. Prince, Aubrey Prince, Aubrey and I were down at the city hall meeting, and there was Tavis. And to this day, Mr. Prince and Tavis are like father and son. And Tavis and I are like good buddies, you know. I go to his events; he supports us. So, yeah, out of that relationship, just going to see the mayor, I met Tavis Smiley.

WHITE

And a long-term relationship began.

TOBIN

And we've remained friends. I mean, he knows my daughter, he knows about my longevity in L.A. and the things I've accomplished. So, hopefully one day I'll be mentioned in one of his books, because you know he's written several books. He has all kinds of deals, television, radio, National Public Radio. One of the few African Americans I know that has a syndicated radio show on NPR.

WHITE

That's so true. You know, sometimes good things happen out of unexpected occurrences, like his departure from BET, and it's basically opened up a lot of different doors for him to move forward in the community and in his personal endeavor.

1.17. TAPE NUMBER: X, SIDE TWO
OCTOBER 14, 2002

WHITE

We were just talking about a number of individuals that have had a significant impact on your personal and professional life. Another individual that came to mind was Bob Jones from Motown, Michael Jackson Productions. You mentioned his name a number of times in the interviews. I wonder if you can talk a little bit about him.

TOBIN

Mr. Bob Jones, who is vice president of Media Relations Communications for Michael Jackson Productions, MJJ Projections. Bob and I met, and it was an unfortunate situation the way we met. A dear friend was coordinating the event and it was a private party at some wealthy Nigerians' or Africans' in Bel Air or Beverly Hills or somewhere, and only a certain amount of people were invited, and you really were supposed to just be an invited guest. You weren't supposed to tag along. Well, I was representing an artist at the time, I think Al McKay and some other people, and the young lady coordinating the event said, "Sure, come on. You can attend." Well, Mr. Bob Jones, you just don't show up at his event unless you're on the list and you're invited. So he politely invited some people to leave that weren't supposed to be there, and I was one of those people. Honey, I left. You know, I didn't want to argue or— I kindly just left. He said, "Well, those of you who are not supposed to be here—," and he made sure the people who weren't supposed to be there left. And we weren't friends, we didn't know each other, but later on, after he learned about the Black Public Relations Society, and somehow along the way we got to be friends. I invited him to take a part in that. He helped to raise money for the Black Public Relations Society years ago. While he was at Motown, he helped to raise money in our treasury for us. We had over \$10,000 in that treasury at one time. He just turned out to be one of my best friends, and to

this day, many of these high-powered events I get to attend, it's Mr. Bob Jones. I mean, I can't tell you about the Soul Train Awards, or the Lady of Soul. I mean, you just name it. Don Cornelius Christmas parties. Many, many things. AFTRA [American Federation of Television and Radio Artists], SAG [Screen Actors Guild], NARAS [National Academy of Recording Arts and Science], National Academy of Radio and Science— Radio, Television. Whatever. Anyway, that organization, NARAS. I get to go to a lot of events just through Mr. Jones. Standing in the Shadows of Motown, most recently, it's a movie, a documentary about the Funk Brothers, who put all that good music together for all the Motown artists. Some of them have died and gone on and many of them are getting older now, so finally, after years, this documentary was done, and I was able to attend the screening with an after party at the Knitting Factory with Mary Wilson and Rick James and Tina Marie and just everybody. Bob Jones invited me. So he will always be my friend, not because of all the good fun things we do together, but because I know he's a true friend; he has my back. He's a very private person and he doesn't— The whole world may not know him, but those who know him and know him well, love him.

WHITE

Sounds like a terrific guy to know.

TOBIN

He really is.

WHITE

A great colleague and friend.

TOBIN

Let's see. Other individuals. [Earl] "Skip" Cooper of the Black Business Association, he's the president and a longtime associate of yours.

TOBIN

Oh, I love Skip, and one thing that I love about Skip, he's always asking about my grandson. Anybody who knows me knows how much I love Aaron Michael Tobin Curry, knows that that's the love of my life, Aaron. And Skip and I, you know, through business association and through the organization that he

represents, many years we've been friends, and he's always been supportive of projects that I work on and that we're involved in at Tobin. I just adore him.

WHITE

As is the case, I understand, with Aldore Collier, who works with Ebony and Jet.

TOBIN

I have to tell you about Aldore. When he moved here from Chicago— He's another very quiet kind of person, doesn't like all this party hoopla stuff. I was hosting Media Night at the Speakeasy, and I said, "Let me give you a party. You're new to L.A." "No, I don't want no party. Leave me alone. Don't want to be bothered." Well, we got together and threw him a party, and those people who were involved in that party, we're some of his best friends today. Darlene Donloe, me, I think Sheila Eldridge was involved, we're all still good friends to this day. And we had a welcome party to L.A. for Mr. Aldore Collier, who's now the bureau chief of Ebony/Jet magazine.

WHITE

Terrific. There's a number of other people. I'll just mention a few more. Muhammad Nassardeen. I know that you have worked with him and been affiliated with him on a professional level and he's been a longtime friend. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about him and your interaction.

TOBIN

Well, actually, the exciting story about Muhammad, Muhammad Nassardeen is from Philadelphia. I had no clue. His mother used to come to the Speakeasy. His mom is probably close to my age or younger, I don't know, but she used to party at the Speakeasy. She said, "You got to meet my son, just for networking purposes," and her son turned out to be Muhammad Nassardeen, and we've been friends ever since, you know, with his Recycling Black Dollars luncheons and various events that he does. I've been honored through his organization, and we're just good buddies.

WHITE

Terrific.

TOBIN

And Toyota sponsors many of his programs, and I certainly get to attend a lot of things that he's doing.

WHITE

Well, good. And speaking of Toyota, there's a couple of individuals there. I know there are a number of people that you would like to make mention of at Toyota, but two in particular are Kymberly Strong, who I know that you have mentored over some time, and then Tracy Underwood, who was just recently promoted, if I'm not mistaken, at Toyota. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about those two individuals and Toyota and your interaction with them.

TOBIN

Well, Kymberly Strong used to work for ACT I, so I think we met when she was with ACT I. Then she got a job at Toyota in their diversity department, so we got an opportunity to work closely together. Then Kymberly is a tall, attractive young lady and she was interested in modeling, so she was a participant in this pageant, and I kind of coaxed her and helped her out and pushed her, you know, tugged there at her coattails and said, hey, you got to do this, you got to do that. I think she won Most Congeniality or something in that pageant. She was one of the top winners in that pageant. I'm just proud of Kymberly. She's very interested in sports, so anytime I get a chance to introduce her to somebody in the sports business or network with an organization like the Black Sports Agent Association, I've introduced her to those people. So we're just good friends, and networking means a lot to me and I like to help young people, because Kymberly's a student. She just graduated from Cal State, I guess Dominguez or Long Beach— Not Long Beach. It must be Dominguez, Cal State L.A., one of those U.C. schools, one of those schools. She invited me to speak to her class, which was exciting. Of course, I love speaking to students in the field of PR, so I was a guest at one of her classes before she graduated.

WHITE

Oh, that was a nice opportunity.

TOBIN

Yes. And Tracy Underwood. What can I tell you about Tracy? The fourteen years I've been with Toyota, 1988 till now, even now, today, Tracy and I are dear friends, and she's my manager, so she's a direct supervisor, you know, I work very closely with her, and I just adore her. I've known her before she had her two children. She's a mom of two. Her husband, Derrick, is a sweetheart. So through our professional relationship, through Toyota, and through our personal relationship as her friend, there's just not enough to say about Tracy Underwood. She's always there for me and I'm always there for her, and I make sure we do the best we can as a consultant to make sure that Toyota, and other clients, that they're taken care of.

WHITE

Good. Good. Excellent. Excellent. Then one additional that I just wanted to touch base on is Patricia Belcher. I know that she is one of your clients and a good friend. She's an actress and a comedian, a very adept comedian, at that, and I wondered if you could just speak a little bit about your interaction with her.

TOBIN

Well, I've always loved Patricia and loved her work. I mean, she's so talented. Most recently, people would see her out and they would think she was Patty Austin, so we would laugh and joke about that because she kind of favors Patty Austin. And Patricia has a great sense of humor, and she writes, and she's just wonderful. And Ted Lange directed something not long ago, Everything's Coming Up Rosie, it was a pilot for television. I just wish it would have made it, because Patricia, she added so much to that. Rosie Bloomfield was the— I guess she produced it or something. But Patricia and I put together— We co-produced a couple of events over at the Mixed Nuts Comedy Club and they were really fun and people enjoyed it, so we really need to get back to doing that again, but we're all so busy. When do you find time? So maybe in February when I kick off all this 2003 stuff that I'm going to do, I'll get Patricia involved.

WHITE

I've seen her perform, and I understand that she's an excellent actress. She's indicated that you have had a really important effect on her career and that

your interaction in terms of publicity goals has been quite successful for her, and she appreciates you and your organization.

TOBIN

One of the fun things we had to do with her, she won a theater award through the NAACP Theater Awards, and Danny Glover was a recipient of an award that night, and we made sure they got photos together. As a result, they were both holding their award and we took pictures and the picture circulated across the country, and we even said, "Patricia, you ought to put that in a Christmas card and send it to people." And she did, and people sent her notes thanking her for that, because you know everybody loves Danny Glover.

WHITE

Sure.

TOBIN

And then to see Patricia and Danny together, her friends who received the Christmas card was real pleased. So just cute little things that work, you know, that's a good thing to do.

WHITE

Absolutely. And you've done so many good things for so many different people, and, you know, it doesn't fail, each time I mention your name, as I tell them that we are documenting your life story, everyone wants to say something. And we both wish that we could have an opportunity to speak, even if just for one minute, to all the people that you know and that have influenced you and for whom you have influenced, but, of course, we can't.

TOBIN

We can't. You know, I'm glad you mentioned that, Renee, because I want to say this right now. For the record, every person that has ever touched my life, every person that I've influenced in any way, I just love them and adore them. I just wish there was a way to list everybody, but can you imagine in sixty years and, actually, my, what, twenty-some-odd years in Los Angeles alone, I don't know, I mean, there's no way I can remember everybody. So we love you. [mutual laughter]

WHITE

It's important to know that Pat has made mention of so many different people and she honors all the interaction that she's had with everyone. Like you indicated, we want to have that for the record. Now, I know that public relations, it wasn't an easy field to break into when you first began, and to a certain degree, it was closed to people of color. Do you think that the doors are open wider now?

TOBIN

Slowly. As I said to you, that article that was in PR Week magazine, talking about diversity and how PRSA is joining forces with BPRS, National Black PR Society, twenty years later, I mean, we're still talking about diversity and opening the doors for people of color in the field of PR. That's why we have the Hispanic Public Relations Association, the Asian Public Relations, the African Americans. We all have to address certain needs that maybe the mainstream agencies are just not aware of or just not seeing, or maybe they're just blind to it and we need to open their eyes, and that's what's happening. It's a good thing we're all starting to dialogue now and work together. So thank God for diversity, inclusion, whatever you want to call it. We all know that it's a win-win situation when we're all working together. When you leave a group of people out, you miss out, because everybody has something to bring to the table. Everybody has something to offer, and you just need to be receptive and open and listen to these people and hear what they have to say and work together. So that's starting to happen.

WHITE

Slowly but surely.

TOBIN

Slowly but surely, so maybe we won't be where we think we ought to be in my lifetime, but, as I said, my ten-year-old grandson, if he's ready to walk into a PR firm or play hockey or whatever it is he wants to do, I'd like him to have those choices. I'd like it to be there for him. I don't want him to knock on all the doors like I knocked on, and they were saying, "Oh—," whatever reason they gave me. But now look at it; I have my own company, so maybe they did me a favor by not hiring me in the field of public relations as a— Not a

secretary, but I wanted to be account exec in some of these big PR firms. It just didn't happen back in the eighties.

WHITE

Interesting how sometimes, as we've indicated before, one door closes and a larger, big, mahogany door opens for you, and you step right through it gracefully. So how does one step through gracefully and effectively in this industry? As I know and as I have witnessed, it is not a nine-to-five type of gig. What do you think it takes to really compete and succeed in this industry?

TOBIN

Tenacity, endurance, determination. You have to have a love for what you do, because if you're going to do it every day, you better like it. And it's not nine to five. Many days I leave at maybe eight or nine in the morning and I don't get back till nine or ten o'clock at night. It doesn't always have to be that way. Maybe I'm over-committed and over-involved, I don't know, but I do what my heart tells me to do and I do what I like doing. And the fact that I am single, I don't sit home and dwell about being single. I'm so busy until I don't even know that I'm single. Am I single? Oh, I guess I am. [mutual laughter] And my grandson sometimes— I hate to say this. My daughter didn't like I said this one day, "Well, I have to pencil Aaron in." She said, "Don't you ever pencil your grandson in. You make time for him." Now, on a Friday, we try to go to a movie. I've seen some of my best movies with him. We go to hockey games. I love hockey. Who would have ever thought a black chick growing up in Philadelphia and living in L.A. would love hockey? [White laughs] I love hockey. We just went to the Detroit Wings Saturday night, and we saw the Detroit Wings and the Kings, and the Kings beat the Detroit Red Wings. I have so many friends from Detroit that are mad at me right now because I love the Kings. And my grandson, he sits there with the adults and he talks about hockey, and he can talk intelligently and they like this little kid. I say he's been playing hockey since he was three. And I nicknamed him the Tiger Woods of hockey, so Tiger Woods, I don't care whether you like it or not, but my grandson— Maybe you're good with golf, but he's definitely good at hockey. So, yeah, it's just been— I'll tell you, it's just been wonderful, opening doors. You know, one of the things that one of these African American leaders said one time, "When the door is open, just don't be too drunk to stumble

through." So, knocking down doors and open doors, just be ready when they're open. I was taking classes at UCLA at night, I was working for CBS Television. I was not being locked up or in jail for any criminal acts. I was doing all the right things. What's wrong with this picture? You just have to persevere, you have to be a pioneer like many who came before me, open doors for others, and I want to be able to do that, too. You just don't give up. If you want something bad enough, you keep going till you get it. One of my favorite books is *Acts of Faith*, Iyanla Vanzant, for people of color. I read that almost every day. I try to read it every day, and just the other day, when I was feeling real down and low, didn't have enough money, the cash flow sometimes isn't flowing the way I'd like it to flow, and I read something that said, "Don't give up. Just when you give up, that's when you're about to make it." So if you never give up, you'll make it, because many people give up just when they're on the brink of success, whatever success is to you. If it means just having more time with your family, and I think that's what it means to me now. I'm starting to have more time with my grandson, time that I missed out with my daughter. But she's a director of publicity at ABC Television. Now she sees, working on *The Bachelor* and all these shows, she sees what it's like, what I was trying to do, and now she's leaving a wonderful trail for us to follow, people of color, working in major studios in entertainment industry. She's doing a real good job over there at ABC. And many days she's there at eight or nine o'clock in the morning and she isn't finished until eight or nine o'clock at night. So I'm just glad that Aaron's dad is supportive, and he's got his grandma and other people who love him and will look after him and help him out. So you just have to keep going. You don't give up.

WHITE

Very interesting.

TOBIN

And, yeah, you're right, this is not easy. It's not nine to five. Sure, you can get a job in PR as a nine-to-five person, hopefully, working on some project and some account and when it's over, you just go home. You don't have to take it home with you. But when you own the business and you're building a reputation, you're building a legacy, hopefully, to leave for somebody. Even

my daughter, if one day she decides, you know, "I'm going to run Tobin & Associates," it'll be there for her, hopefully.

WHITE

Absolutely. Absolutely. Very well said. Can I ask, how has your career in public relations shaped you personally and/or changed your outlook on life in general?

TOBIN

You know what? It's made me really happy about what I do, because I really love what I do. I know some days you may not think so, but interfacing with people, and some people say they love people and they really don't mean it. And I don't know, maybe sometimes I don't mean it. [mutual laughter] But when you work with a lot of people and you get to meet a lot of people and you interface with people, all walks of life, I'm not just talking about celebrities and personalities and major corporations, just little students who come up to me. I've saved notes from students who've thanked me for speaking to them at school and who are now doing major things in big industries somewhere, across the country, in my travels, whether it's the Black Journalists or Black Caucus or any ethnic thing that I'm attending or any mainstream thing and I meet people. I went to something one night, it was a listening party, and somebody from MCA Records, or Disney— Disney said to me, "Thank you for letting me intern with you," and this chick was working for Disney now, and she interned with— And she wasn't black. She was a mainstream— Claire. Claire was one of the few people who worked for me who wasn't African American that wanted to get into PR, and she thanked me. Many times I get notes from people saying, "Thank you. You helped me do this," or, "You helped me do that." The guy at the Kool Green event today, a guy named Ken Miller, he's a sports editor for the Sentinel. He thanked me for meeting people at the Speakeasy when he first came to town. He was just a little college kid. He probably shouldn't even have been at the Speakeasy. He was like in his teens or something, eighteen, nineteen, whatever, and he would come up there and mingle and meet people. Now he's a sports editor of the Los Angeles Sentinel. So I just feel good when I get— I save all this stuff. Plus, I'm a packrat anyway. I save all kinds of paper. But those little notes mean so much to me. I got one just the other day after the Black PR convention, two very

nice notes, one from Lynn Scott. Lynn Scott used to work for UniWorld, a major advertising agency in New York, and now she works for her own company, she has her own business, and she thanked me for just hanging in there and staying with it this long and helping to start the Black PR Society for people of color. Then another young lady who was at the event sent a note and said thank you. Just those kind of things. And for me, it just makes me complete. It helps me to feel good about what I'm doing and I'm passing something on to someone else. You know, if you can do something to help somebody else, then your living has not been in vain, and I really believe that. When people say, "Pat helped me do this," or, "I learned this," or, "You spoke at my class, and I picked this up from your class," you know, then I feel good about it.

WHITE

It makes an impression. Absolutely. If you had to, absolutely had to, choose another career, what would it be?

TOBIN

I would like to probably critique movies or something like that. I love movies. I love going to the movies. And if I had to sit and write about a film, that would be something exciting, I would think. You know, that's another field where there aren't many people of color. Why is that? We spend money— And I'm taking it to another level, now, I know I am, but that's okay. This is my story.

WHITE

[laughs] It is your story. Absolutely.

TOBIN

We African Americans spend in excess of, I don't know, what, \$600 billion in this country? And how much of that is spent at the movies? I go to movies all the time and I know I spend \$9 if you go to this new thing over here at the new theater, the Pacific Theater at the Grove. I mean, they're eight, nine dollars to go to a movie.

WHITE

Yes, they are.

TOBIN

And by the time you buy refreshments and park and all of that. So we spend the money, but we don't get to critique the movies. Very few African Americans are entertainment editors. I mean, I'm glad to see Shaun Robinson on Access Hollywood.

WHITE

Right.

TOBIN

And there's a woman in Philadelphia named Trudy Haynes. Trudy Haynes was the entertainment editor at KYW-TV forever. She was one of the few African American women that lasted that long in entertainment, and she just retired not long ago. But for years she was one of the only ones. So I would like to do that maybe. Maybe that'll be my second career.

WHITE

I can certainly see you doing that. What an influence you would have. All the people that you know, and they would absolutely open up their ears if they heard Pat Tobin says such and such about a particular movie. So that would be interesting.

TOBIN

Yeah, it would be a fun thing. Plus, I love going to movies, so it would be nice to be paid for writing about your opinion of a film.

WHITE

Sure. Sure. So tell me, do you feel that you've given up anything to pursue this particular career?

TOBIN

Oh, I'm sure I have. Some people who think that marriage and children— Well, I have a daughter and I used to be married, but I was much too young at the time. So for me, I have a daughter, I have a grandson, I have family, I have sisters and brothers, and relatives. So, I don't know. What have I given up? Maybe that one-on-one relationship. Maybe I'm just too busy to cultivate that,

and maybe I want to be too busy. Or maybe it's just not time. Maybe when I'm sixty or seventy, it'll be the time. You know, it's never too late. I've heard of people settling down and being married at all kinds of ages, you know, up there, eighty, ninety, whatever.

WHITE

Absolutely.

TOBIN

Just to have enough money to make sure my— If I could secure enough wealth so my grandson wouldn't have to worry about going to college, because by the time he's ready for college, it's going to be a few hundred thousand dollars.

WHITE

I'm sure.

TOBIN

So I'm trying to save toward that and I'm sure his mom is and his dad is, too. But I'm making sure I do my little part. And I own a condo. It's not a big, fancy mansion, but it's property that I own, so I have that. And who knows? If I keep going the way I'm going, maybe I'll be able to command those thousands of dollars for speaking engagements and then I'll have the financial wealth, but right now it's all about enjoying what you do, loving what you do.

WHITE

Absolutely. So tell me now, who would you say is really actively and consistently following in your footsteps? Who's your protégé? Who will take up the helm should you decide to retire in five years, in ten years?

TOBIN

Well, I always thought my daughter would be. She's got her own career and her own life, but I don't know if she wants to be an entrepreneur, but if she did, she's one of the best at ABC, I'm telling you. She's very good at what she does and she could step in and run Tobin & Associates tomorrow. But then some of the sharp young people that work with me. There's Natisha, there's Libra, there's Carole, there's— You know, students that— Derek Thompson.

He's just a young student that graduated from Cal State recently and he is very talented, just out of college. So there are people, there are young students out there, and through the Black Public Relations Society, we're going to identify those students and highlight them every year, because they're out there. The young people who really are serious about public relations and are committed, through our organization we'll be able to find them and identify them. So I haven't really named any one person or pinpointed anyone, but if I really needed someone— I get young people all the time saying to me, you know, "I'd like to work with you and I'd like to join you," and if I just had enough money to hire them all, they'd all be at Tobin & Associates. So, we can find them now. They're out there.

WHITE

Absolutely. I'm sure there are hundreds of people who would relish the opportunity to be considered a protégé of yours, and I'm sure they would do it for absolutely nothing.

TOBIN

Well, one of the young ladies I'm so proud of, Kimberly Clark, she used to work with us through our BPRS office and now she works for Drew Carey. Drew Carey. She works for The Drew Carey Show.

WHITE

Well, good for Kimberly.

TOBIN

And I have a list of success stories like that, where they may have started out at Tobin & Associates, got their start there, and now they're just gone on to bigger and better things.

WHITE

Terrific. Terrific. Well, you've spoken to this issue within this interview and in others, but in terms of the influence that you hope to have in the future, what legacy do you hope to leave behind?

TOBIN

Well, I just want to make sure that the field of public relations is a field where people who pursue a career in public relations are serious, dedicated, committed. Years ago, they used to have this bad image of PR people; all they want to do is go to cocktail parties and hold glasses and tell fluffy stories. And journalists and PR people used to have this battle going on where journalists thought that they were for real and sincere and PR people were all fluff. Well, I'd just like [people] to know that not only is it a serious career— And everybody who says they're in PR aren't necessarily in public relations. Maybe they've never written a press release or a bio or put together a press kit. There's some serious work that goes into being a publicist, and one of the things [is that] through PRSA, Public Relations Society of America, you can become accredited. So if you see somebody with APR after their name, Accredited Public Relations, they are serious. They've taken the test. It's like in real estate; if you want to become a realtor, you take a test and you get your license. So there's a real serious job here that has to be done, and people need to be prepared and qualified to do it, not just think you want to go to these exciting things and enjoy the entertainment, but many times if there are press kits that have to be compiled at one o'clock at night for something that happened at nine o'clock in the morning, you need to sit up all night and put them together. If you have a media event that's on a Monday morning, and it's the weekend, you need to call the press on Sunday because they're getting ready for Monday. Or you need to call them Saturday midnight so that— You know, there are things you have to do, and you have to do it in a timely manner. So many times—Back to sacrificing, yeah, I've made sacrifices. There were times when I probably wanted to do A, B, or C, but I knew that I had to go do D or E or whatever. So, yeah, you need to just know that it's a serious field. And I want young people and people who are interested in changing careers— You don't even have to be young. If you have certain qualifications, you can enter the field of public relations. Good communication skills, good writing skills, organizational skills.

WHITE

Okay. Okay. Wonderful things to— Points of reference and advice to leave behind for those that aspire to follow in your footsteps.

TOBIN

And one of the things, I would like for people to be able to find information about people of color in public relations. There's a gentleman named George Hill. George lives in Albany, Oregon. But he wrote a book about blacks in PR And young students today, Dr. Rochelle Tillery, out of Howard University, she's a researcher and she teaches her students all about people like Joe Baker and all these folks. Pat Gibson. Barbara [C.] Harris. Barbara Harris, as I told you, was my mentor in Philadelphia, at Sun Oil Company. She's retiring in November from the Episcopalian church up in Boston. She was the first African American woman to be a bishop in the Episcopalian church. She's retiring in November. She was my mentor years ago when she worked at Sun Oil Company. So I want young people to be able to find information about us. Many of them didn't know and still don't know. "Oh, I didn't know there was a black public relations organization. I didn't know there were black people in PR" We've got to change that.

WHITE

Now, you know, and certainly UCLA is endeavoring to help.

TOBIN

Oh, yes. That's where I got my start in terms of my real love for UCLA. The teachers that I've had there, Al Ginepra and others, that encouraged me to be guest lecturer at UCLA, to produce my networking in PR seminars, I still have some of those sheets from back in the eighties when I would do networking and public relations seminars. And some of my guests, Bob Jones has been a guest, and Al [Aldore] Collier, and others. I mean, it's just been wonderful. I need to get back to that. So, yeah, UCLA. I kid my daughter all the time because she went to USC, and I tell her I'm a Bruin and she's a Trojan, and we laugh about it all the time. But, yeah, I love it and I need to go— You're never too old to go back. Another thing on my agenda when I find the time is to take some more classes. I was just steps away from getting my professional designation in public relations, and I was doing really well. I just got busy and put that on the back burner. So Barry Bortnick, I hope you're reading this. Dr. Barry Bortnick, I'm coming back to UCLA to finish. [mutual laughter]

WHITE

And I know you will do that. So, yes, in terms of UCLA, through the extension program, of course, and through the oral history program, we're endeavoring to be sure that some notoriety is given to individuals such as yourself in this industry and other industries as well. So I would like to ask that you reflect upon a number of different things. There's four areas that I would ask that you just reflect upon and just share your thoughts. Number one is your feelings or reflections about being an African American female pioneer in your industry.

TOBIN

Oh, I'm proud of that. First of all, I'm like Paula Madison at NBC. Paula loves James Brown and his song "I'm Black and I'm Proud." I love being black, and people who know me, know I don't have a problem with that. African Americans have done so much with so little, that they can do almost anything with nothing, and that's how I've survived all these years, just being confident that knowing the color of my skin has nothing to do with the content of my character. I just feel good about it all, and I'm glad that you read in school about everybody else, and whatever they're doing all over the world, so when they instituted African American studies in various schools and colleges, that was a good thing. I mean, when you look at Black History Month, the only month that you get to read about our accomplishments— Well, now things are changing. You can go online and you can read about it all day long everywhere now, but years ago, you only had that one month and people just didn't know about the significant contributions of African Americans. A gentleman called me today. He was trying to pitch something to Toyota, Masters of Inventions. These Masters of Inventions are African Americans that invented all these wonderful things. It's a series that runs during Black History Month on television. So of course I referred him to the proper people, but my friend Bob Oliver was calling me about that. So, yeah, I feel good about who I am and what I've accomplished, and I just thank God that I've been able to do what I've done and I hope I can continue doing it a little longer.

WHITE

How does it feel, actually, when people talk to you, or it's written that Pat Tobin is a power broker in Los Angeles? What does that mean for you?

TOBIN

Well, when they're talking about power, they must just be talking about people power, because there's no money power here. [mutual laughter] They're not talking about that green power. It's nice to say hi to a Suzanne dePasse and she knows you. It's nice to speak to a Spike Lee and he knows you. I've met Oprah [Winfrey]. She doesn't know me. But there are people who are really powerful, with lots of money and influence, and you get to work with them or you get to work indirectly with them through their company. Even Berry Gordy, we're doing some work now with something that has something to do with one of his companies, and it's just nice to be able to be included among those. Whoever's on that list, I'm just happy to be on it.

WHITE

Well, you certainly are. I've seen your name on the list more than a few times. So that's an accomplishment.

TOBIN

I mean, there were times you go to the door and you try to get in and people say, "I'm sorry. You're not on the list." Well, thank God, that doesn't happen any more. If I haven't accomplished anything else in life, at least my name is on the list. [White laughs] And just recently, Sunday night at the Laugh Factory, when I went to Chocolate Sundae at the Laugh Factory, the young lady says, "Well, Pookie isn't here yet," and that's a funny name, but that's his name. "Pookie isn't here yet." I said, "Well, I'm Pat Tobin." And she says, "Oh, well, just a minute." It was like, "Okay, Pat Tobin's my guest. She's going to be here." And they sat me down, they gave me chips and sodas and whatever I needed. It was just so nice.

WHITE

It's a nice feeling to feel welcome.

TOBIN

And Chris Spencer, who used to host Vibe, he came over and made me feel like a queen. So, yeah, it's kind of nice to be treated nice.

WHITE

Absolutely. Absolutely. And then just in terms of your reflections about being a woman in business in Los Angeles, and also, on that same note, to have a black-owned business in Los Angeles, can you reflect on those two things?

TOBIN

One of the things, and I pick up a lot of things from when I do read, reading some interesting articles, we all know the best man for the job is a woman. And I really— Guys, I'm sorry, guys, don't be mad with me, but many times women have gone above and beyond the call of duty. They've had to be the mama, the daddy, they had to go home and take care of the kids, they've had to take care of people at work. I mean, it's just been rough. I'm sure there are some single dads out there doing the same thing, taking care of their kids, but women, for the most part, if you go back to way back when, when we weren't allowed to do certain things, women, that is, whether you were black or white, when they had this whole thing about women, our place was in the house and having the kids, well, when you get out on your own and you achieve and you become successful, many magazines like Inc. and Womenmagazine, Us, all those women have gone before us, it's just a nice thing that we can do what we want to do and we can have choices and not be pigeonholed, whether your black or white or if you're a woman. As you indicated, just being a woman is a challenge, because there are still some guys who are very chauvinistic, very— I think that's one of the reasons I'm single, because the guys I dated, they were real— You know, I'm older, so they were from the old school and they had these antiquated ideas about what we should be doing. Excuse me? [mutual laughter] I will just be single, then. So, yeah, that's the price you pay for this independent woman thing. But, you know, I was a real rabble rouser. Not necessarily a rabble rouser, but if there was a cause that I thought I needed to be marching for, I would do that back in the day. And even today, if it's something I think that it needs to be talked about, I will speak up. So we all have that right.

WHITE

Very well said. Very well said. So tell me now, can you talk a bit— Let me rephrase that. You have spoken a number of times about some of your endeavors for the future. I wonder if you can just say for the record, if you

have an idea, of your two-year plan, your five-year plan, and your ten-year plan.

TOBIN

Okay. The two-year plan begins January 1, 2003. 2003 to 2005, I'm busy building the Pat Tobin Scholarship Fund. I have my papers; I'm filing my papers for my scholarship foundation. I want to really be able to give just a thousand dollars, because I've done that in the past. I've given a thousand dollars to young students pursuing a career in public relations. I've given summer internships. That's something I always do, every summer. I have a list of just about everybody who's interned with me over the nearly twenty years. But to really set up my scholarship foundation and give serious, significant money to young people pursuing a career in public relations, particularly people of color pursuing a career in public relations. So that's what I plan to do in the next two years. Then beyond that, from 2005 until— You said ten-year or five-year?

WHITE

Two-year, five-year, and a ten-year.

TOBIN

Okay, then 2008, Lord, if I'm still here by 2008, maybe we'll be running the Tobin School of PR by then, really up and running and have a facility somewhere, where we're teaching public relations, the Tobin way. Because we all have different ways of doing things and we become successful because of our technique and the way we are and what we do. So what I've learned and what I've been able at use that worked for me, hopefully, I can share it with other people. So maybe the Tobin School of PR might be the next step after this scholarship foundation.

WHITE

And then ten years.

TOBIN

Oh, I need to be on my yacht with my grandson by then. [mutual laughter] I'll be seventy. But you know what? There are many people out there still teaching and pursuing their careers in their seventies and eighties. So if I'm healthy enough and the Lord's blessed me to continue, who knows? I do want

to kind of wind down and take it easy and maybe live in a villa somewhere, just have places where you can just go and live and be and not worry. So just still share, though. Always sharing, whether through books or tapes or online or something, some new technology way of getting information out to people, educating folks. Because we all know education is the key to success. If we can read, nobody can take that from you.

WHITE

Absolutely. Absolutely. And you mentioned, of course, your grandson a number of times and making sure that he's prepared and equipped to proceed with his college career and what have you, and your daughter Lauren. Would you like to offer any updates on your family, anything that you'd like to add or share about your children, grandson, or your siblings?

TOBIN

Well, my daughter's doing very well. I'm so proud of her. As I said, she's director of publicity at ABC Television. She gets to work on all these exciting shows, and right now Bacheloris one of her shows, The Bachelor. Then my grandson Aaron, of course, I'm real proud of him. We like public school and all that, but thank God he's able to go to private school and he's getting a real good education, and I hope he can stay there until grade twelve. He's only in the fifth grade now. He gets to play sports, which he loves. And as long as they're happy and healthy and doing what they want to do, I just hope that continues. I mean, money comes into play all the time because you need money to do everything. As Les Brown says, Les Brown the motivator, he says, "Money is right up there with oxygen." [mutual laughter] So I just want to have enough to help my grandson if he needs it and certainly if my daughter needs it. She's single at the moment, but who knows. She may marry and settle down. I just want to make sure that whatever they do, that they're happy and doing it, and if I'm here and have breath in my body, I certainly will help them to achieve their goals.

WHITE

Very well said. Well, tell me, in terms of your life and your many successes, how would you like to sum it up for this project, for this interview?

TOBIN

First of all, I'd like to say, Dr. Renee White, I'm so glad I met you because you've been just wonderful. I didn't even know that you were doing this until we heard about Larry McCormick and what you did with him. Look at him; he gets a star on the Walk of Fame. So maybe I'll get one next. You never know.

WHITE

I'm sure you will. It's definitely forthcoming, I bet.

TOBIN

But you know what? I'd like to sum it up by saying I've always dreamt of and fantasized and envisioned leaving a legacy, leaving something behind. Everybody talks about a book, "Oh, I'm writing my book," "I'm working on my play," "I'm doing this," "I'm doing that." Well, thanks to you and UCLA, I do have something that people can read and look at and say, "Yeah, there was a woman named Pat Tobin way back in the day, in 2000. She was in public relations." So my grandson, you know, he understands to some extent what I do. I explain to him, and he's licked envelopes and put stamps on and gone to events. Now he's gotten to the point where he says, "Grandma, are we going backstage?" It's like, look, unless we get a backstage pass, we're not even there. When he went to see Lil' Bow Wow, luckily, Patti Webster is the PR person for Bow Wow, among others she represents, as soon as we walked in and had a chance to get backstage, I saw Patti. I said, "Patti, my grandson Aaron loves Bow Wow." She says, "Come on. I represent him. I'll take you to get a picture." So he has a picture with Bow Wow. But little things like that. You know our kids love to be shown with the people that they admire. So if nothing else, if I could just leave something for him to be proud of, I'd feel good about it. So, what you're doing with this UCLA project, this oral history project, is so exciting, and I certainly will be here. Any doors that I can open for anybody you need to get to, trust me, I will help you because this is such a wonderful project. And our kids and our young people need to know about this.

WHITE

Absolutely. Absolutely. We certainly appreciate that. Is there anything else you would like to add before we conclude our interview?

TOBIN

I just want to say thank you for thinking of me and considering me. I'm honored to be a part of this.

WHITE

Well, on behalf of UCLA and our oral history Program, and from my own personal perspective, I've thoroughly enjoyed working with you and interviewing you and documenting your life, and we thank you for taking the time out of your very, very busy schedule to meet with me periodically, to make sure that we do have this particular legacy documented for future generations. So, thank you very much, Pat.

TOBIN

Thank you, Renee. Thank you.

WHITE

You're very welcome.

[Parent Institution](#) | [TEI](#) | [Search](#) | [Feedback](#)

Date:

This page is copyrighted