

Hi my name is Mary Shepherd and I am Joseph's maternal grandmother. I grew up in Beech Grove Indiana in the 70's well in the sixties. I was born in 1961. Growing up in Beech Grove as probably pretty well known was not very diverse at all and it was even known to be racist. However I never really witness that but I grew up in the neighborhood that was a closely-knit neighborhood lot of kids. We were all pretty good friends and parents all knew each other we had campouts and sleepover, and it was the neighborhood where you felt safe to be out after dark playing hide and go seek. So that's the type of neighborhood I grew up in. I went to Catholic schools all my life. I was an active child but I was kind of a loner. I didn't have a lot of close friends. I'm had friends in the neighborhood but at school I was more of a more withdrawn, and you probably can call me shy. Going into highschool I actually felt like I was kind of coming out of my shell. Eighth grade I was very active I played basketball. I started playing basketball in 6th grade and that was kind of a good social outlet for me. I was tall and athletic. I started out good but then going to Roncalli high school and playing basketball for years there I did develop a few close friendships. However I always felt more comfortable being alone. Like on my lunch hour I would go to the library and that's where I kind of started becoming more educated about the black race I would read Jet Magazine, ebony, and I was very much into the black music and listen to Black radio WTLC was the station then. So it was after high school that I met some African Americans, and it was really my job where I would have more interaction with African-Americans. I was working at a ice cream store called Linder they aren't around any longer, but there was African American that came in there and you get to know the regular customers and that's how I met my father of my children who's name was James King. So we met and started dating and he would come in to Linders and you know flirt with me and so you know we dated and ended up getting married and I have two children James and Marielle, and unfortunately our

relationship didn't last he was quite a bit older. I was 19 and he was 38 when we met and, it wasn't the age so much. I think I was too young and not mature enough for marriage. So then I move back home to Beech Grove with my two children who are biracial. So when my parents found out I was dating Jim they they were not pleased. I think it was because he was black but also his age since he was quite a bit older than me. They were always pretty protective of me and you could say I was a daddy's girl. My father and I was very close and he tried to explain the culture differences, and try to you know make me see his side. However I was kind of in a rebellious phase in my life you know I was out of high school I was eager to just live my own life so I ended up just moving out of my parents house and moving in with with Jim before we were married. So you know we married two children my parents love my children, but they were the the first grandchildren and they totally accepted them and when they knew that I was going to be with Jim they accepted him, and we would come over on the holidays. There's never any issue and even the neighbors they knew me and they were fine and I never experienced any sort of harassment or racial instances of discrimination or aggression. So in summary being married to a black man in the 80's I don't feel that it was any challenging than being married to a white man. I think relationships in general are challenging. So i would say that it was a good experience, unfortunately it didn't last, but it did make it more aware of the black culture. And I feel like it made me more of a person who can relate to people of all different cultures and ethnicities. I view it as a positive.

Joe: This has been Joe for WHJE and you're listening to Identity Crisis.