

Kathy: Our dad was in the navy. When he retired he was senior chief petty officer so he had marching order to go to Cuba and so we spent four and a half, probably about four years in Cuba. for us, from a child's point of view, it was like one big wonderful playground. Our parents would pretty much on the weekends, when we did not have school, send us out - as soon as we woke up in the morning after breakfast until we had to be back at five for dinner. So we felt like we ruled the island. I just remember us having a marvelous time and thinking it was the greatest place ever.

Michael: The water there was beautiful. I think people still go there now, or try to go, because parts of Cuba are just gorgeous. But we had a cove practically to ourselves that we would go, Mom would take us down, big rocks, beautiful water, nice, clear, and clean. And then also where we lived in navy housing, there was a big fence right in our backyard and that was the communist side of Cuba that you did not go on, nor could we. I mean the fence was what, seven feet high with barbed wire at the top.

Kathy: Yes, and land mines. They planted land mines so we were told, "Do not ever, ever cross the fence." You know we never felt like we were in trouble. We never felt scared that something was going to happen to us. I mean, it was a pretty happy life for a kid. I do remember we had a hurricane once while we were there. I go and I end up having fun because the house flooded with probably two, three inches of water coming in under the door and so we turned the whole house into a slip and slide. It was great [laughter].

My mother was the kindergarten and nursery school teacher so she had all the kids in Gitmo in her class and there were murals across the kindergarten. We were in barrel-tight buildings for probably nursery school through sixth grade

Michael: The quonset huts.

Kathy: Uh huh, oh is that what they are called? And my mother, she would do the artwork. She would draw her designs on paper and then she had some of the navy personnel that would actually get up there with ladders and paint the murals.

The most fascinating thing probably, for Michael, were the land crabs.

Michael: They had some big ones!

Kathy: They would... they were like lizards. you just saw them everywhere and they could get about this big and you cannot eat them. They are not like the real tasty crabs you get out of the gulf. And they would scraw pretty fast sideways and they would go up the side of peoples' houses and we had jalousies and at night, their claws were so powerful that they could actually push those jalousies open. And then they would get in them and you would lay in bed and you would see these little eyeballs rolling around [laughter] looking at you. They were something and Michael was the land crab hunter! My parents gave him a bow and arrow and if I wanted to

know where he was during the day, if they sent me off to find him, I would just look for all the little arrows and the land crabs until I found him.

One time a land crab grabbed onto the back of Michael. He bent down to play with one and the other came up behind him and just grabbed his little bottom and Mom had to take off those shorts and she just flung it around her head until that land crab went flying [laughter].

Michael: Like Kathy was saying it really was like a Disneyland for us and a lot of that had to do with how creative our parents were and that is a great example on Mom's side - arts and crafts and great with kids. On Dad's side, being in the supplies section, if he had a weather balloon he could get it filled up with helium or whatever and we would hold on to it. He had box kites that we would fly. He would get these one man life rafts like pilots have to strap on to and fly under. We put them out in the yard. We would fill them up with water. That was a... we would play with that for days. Then he would bring home some bigger six man life rafts. Remember that? And he would fill them up with the...

Kathy: Oh yea! instant swimming pool for us in the backyard!

Michael: Yea!

Kathy: Every week we would go buy groceries and we would have to get on the ferry and of course Mom had to entertain us for about fifteen minutes to half hour while the ferry pattered across the inlet and I would bring all my dolls and line them so... And they would watch Mike and I fishing. We each had a string, not a pole, just a string, and we would put it in the water and hope a fish would bite. So that was our entertainment on the ferry. And everybody, you know how you have a thousand cartoons now on Saturday morning? We had one. What was it? [singing] *Felix the Cat*, the wonderful, wonderful cat [laughter].

Michael: How do you remember that?

Kathy: I do not know but that was the only cartoon and I was so scared that I would miss it because you had to be right there, do your thirty minutes for a cartoon, and that was it, it was over...

Well I remember guns and hand grenades just laying around and we did not think anything about them. You know, Dad would have a couple of hand grenades on his desk and we just knew not to pull the ring out [laughter].

It was fun. Our dad actually took us back there - the first fence - one time, us and a lot of kids. He took us on a survival mission to show us what we could eat and what we could not. And do you know, there was everything growing back there. Cactus! He opened a cactus and showed us how we could suck on the jelly and supposedly live on that a couple of days if you had nothing else to eat.

Michael: So living there for us was just fantastic. We never knew anything about the politics of the entire situation and how critical their mission was.

Kathy: The politics, we never knew what was going on. Even the missile crisis, we had no idea how serious that was, that we were on the brink of nuclear war.

Michael: Great parents!