

Final Talking Portion 1.wav

[00:00:00] My name is Katherine Elizabeth Calloway Ray, and I'm from Dodge City, Kansas. My parents are Aquilla and Wilba Calloway, and I was born in Pratt, Kansas in 1941 and lived in Dodge City until I graduated from college.

[00:00:17] I was about probably three to five years old, my dad introduced us to music, and we had thirteen children in our family. So, we were basically a small choir.

[00:00:29] I was the high soprano, so I would sing the melody most of the time.

[00:00:33] And then the other kids, we had all- all the parts, basses, tenors, altos.

[00:00:39] We did different things as children. We would sing little children's songs first off. And then my dad would rearrange those children type songs- 'Jesus Loves Me' little things. And then we would sing those songs. And then he would teach us some spirituals and some show tunes that he knew.

[00:01:14] Since their faith reflected what kind of songs we were going to sing, the songs that we sang were mostly spiritual, religious, but there were some tunes that, you know, classical tunes and things, but they did determine what we sang.

[00:01:32] And that actually probably still determines how I view music.

[00:01:37] And sometimes our faith will determine what we sing.

[00:01:51] In high school, I didn't get a lot of lead parts because they didn't want to mix the races or anything like that, so I just always sang in a group or solo by myself.

[00:02:04] And so it's when I got to college that I got to experience a lot of things that I didn't get to do while I was in high school.

[00:02:11] College began in '60 and I graduated from college and '63.

[00:02:18] I went to a little college in Dodge City, Kansas, called Saint Mary of the Plains. It was a Catholic college run by St. Joseph's nuns and a very good little school. Of course, my major in college was Voice.

[00:02:38] During my college years, I think I just wanted to sing all the time, I didn't want to do schoolwork. I didn't want to do anything else.

[00:02:46] That's what I loved doing, was singing and acting.

[00:02:52] When I was a freshman, you know, segregation was really kind of weird then.

[00:02:57] And even as I played roles, I played opposite white people. So when I was first approached to do the role of Julie in Oklahoma, they asked my mom and dad if I would be upset to be to play opposite a white guy. And- Because they were doing something that had never been done in Dodge City. But it was fun. And after that, they expected good things from St. Mary's, you know.

[00:03:36] I won the San Francisco Opera auditions in 1966 to get to do a six-week program in San Francisco as an intern with their San Francisco Opera. So, it was really a great thing for me.

[00:03:54] And it so happened that my grandmother lived in San Francisco at that time. So I stayed with her, which was really, really a blessing. And then I would travel by myself up and down from the opera house to my grandmother's house.

[00:04:12] Now, you- you asked me if I had ever felt like maybe I had some prejudice against me.

[00:04:21] And there probably was at that time, but I was kind of naive. And they were doing the Marriage of Figaro. And there was a role that I could have played. But they didn't give it to me. They gave it to somebody else. And that person didn't do a very good job. So they came and told me they should have given me that role.

[00:04:48] And so then we stayed there, what, six weeks, and after that it came home. And then I said, well, I've got to do something else.

[00:04:57] That's when I decided that I would audition for the Bulgarian company.

[00:05:06] I went to Bulgaria in '73, I think it was, and that was an aud- that was a good audition too. You're just auditioning, to- to see how far you could go.

[00:05:20] But you had to learn how to sing in Bulgarian and you had to do one of their art songs. You had to learn a role. I learned the role of Rigoletto. And if you won you got to do that role, of course I didn't win, but it was still fun to be there.

[00:05:36] I stayed in Bulgaria for three weeks. They paid for a full week, so I had to pay the last two weeks myself. But that's okay. I planned that. But yeah. So that was really, really quite interesting being that a communist country. And I felt like they didn't want the Americans to win much, you know. So everybody knew that the Bulgarians or Romanians or Russians or whoever was there was going to win and the United States was not.

[00:06:08] And it was kind of interesting because while I was there, this little family kind of adopted me and they would bring me flowers and come into my performances and all that. And they were just really sweet little people. And that was my fan club.

[00:06:27] Then after that time, I auditioned for the Washington, D.C. Opera and. I didn't get roles, but I did sing with their choir. Their chorus. And that was a paid position. Was to sing in the chorus. So we did a lot of operas every year. And I was with them for, what, two or three years?

[00:06:48] The Kennedy Center was really a special place because it was brand new when I was there. So at this time they were performing a mass that Leonard Bernstein had written for the whole let's see, there was Alvin Ailey dance. There was Washington Opera. There were who else? Anyway, those two. And we all merged together and sang and danced to open up the Kennedy Center.

[00:07:22] So after that kind of slowed down and I didn't do a lot of anything except freelance, in other words, I would think for a lot of funerals and weddings and things like that. So that's how I kept myself going for a while.

[00:07:42] So then we moved here to San Antonio in the '85.

[00:07:49] And a lot of things changed at that point.

[00:07:53] Our kids were all growing, and they were having kids had a lot of grandchildren around and the.

[00:08:01] And then I decided, well, maybe I might want to be a church director here in San Antonio.

[00:08:09] Then after that, that year 1998, I decided to go ahead and see if I could get the job that the Grace Presbyterian Church.

[00:08:21] I was there for about, what, 21 years. We did different things. They were never exposed to it, that church. And they found out that they could sing all kinds of songs.

[00:08:44] And so now I don't do a lot of singing anymore, I don't have my piano here with me. But I can still sing, you know? And maybe one day I'll do something different. But with this Covid-19 thing came around.

[00:09:02] We can't do much.

[00:09:04] You know, as far as performing or singing or anything like that.

[00:09:08] And I'm just praying that the Lord will- will intervene and show us what we can do at this time.

[00:09:17] Maybe concerts on Zoom or something like that, you know.

[00:09:23] But I still, I'm so happy for the experiences that I've had.

[00:09:27] And I'm glad that I can tell it to my granddaughter.