

Paulina Joseph (Farnsworth House)
Interviewed by Zena Nieves (2002)

My name is Paulina Joseph from Trinidad, a beautiful country. I was born in November, 1927. My nickname? They used to call me Corey. Well it came from my grandmother. She had a big book that looked like a Bible. She would look up the names to see what the name means and everything. My name was Paulina, but she called me Corey.

I came from a real large family. When I was young, I lived with my grandmother, so I was very spoiled! My grandfather was Irish and he kept a very strict life. He had everything, and we had all the privileges he had. So we could play games and have fun, but he was strict, so you had to be good.

After school I had to come home ... straight. We had three teachers in the house and I had to go home and work with each one. It took us about fifteen minutes to get to our house, and then back inside, and then we had — like a council. We'd spend time on how you should treat people It was really nice.

When I was young I got around by walking. I went to Catholic school. What did I like to do when I was young ... sixteen? Oh! Those were my favorite years ... my dancing years. My father used to teach me to dance. He'd go out with us. He would take us out and just stand around and watch us dancing. He was our chaperone.

Yes, I had lots of friends, because my parents teach me to have friends. What did I do with my friends? We played around the house, mostly ... both of my parents were very strict. Outside we played basketball or buddy ball. And I loved music, especially I like the love songs, "When I grow Too Old to Dream" ... We knew a lot of Irish songs because my grandfather was Irish. So we played "Danny Boy" and all the nice Irish songs. I use to play the piano ... I could play by ear, but I loved dancing the most. Dancing was "#1."

When I was about twelve year, I started to get headaches ... headaches, headaches, all the time. And they couldn't find it all. So many doctors — they talked about it, but nobody ever really knew what made it happen, until my father got in touch with a special doctor and tell him about his girl. So he said, "Bring her in." I went in and the end of it was, "You have to find a cooler place to live. you better go to New York ... Yes, it was too hot! And what's strange enough, that when I came to New York I never had headaches again!

So when I came to New York, I came to be a "tracer" ... doing drawings and plans. (The doctor didn't want me to have any hard work because it might cause the return of the headaches.) And when they saw that I was good at it, they gave me a scholarship to art college, so I studied art! I had been a house painter, then I painted signs and murals. I also taught art. One time I did a huge canvas of a seascape for scenery here in Brighton. So I made my living mostly as an artist and a teacher. I still have some of

my paintings upstairs!