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Boys and Girls Clubs of
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Cocke: What I want to get you to tell me again, just because I was thinking about it last night after I got back, was just how your life got set on this course of working with kids and art. How does this thread weave with your life?

Butzine: Yeah, it's really interesting because I really didn't put this in perspective until about two years ago and I had to do a reflective paper for a course that I was taking about Why Are You Where You Are Today? I had never put it all together. And what was the one thing that wove through your life over the years and where did it start? And I think I started with the whole idea of understanding other cultures because of my grandmother and my grandmother was born on a wagon train coming to the _____ Mountains and she gave me all the stories—the very respectful stories of the Apaches and the Mexican people. She had a very positive reference of those stories and myths and she passed down those legends to me at a very early age and I was able to reflect on those when I got older. But my parents, in a need to struggle to be solid middle-class citizens would never—my mother had Indian jewelry, she threw it away. My Navaho rugs—disrespected—they were stomped on. They were part of the... Oh, my gosh....

Cocke: We just witnessed a truck blowing out its tire—smoking on I-10 going west.

Butzine: Anyway, in 1955, being born in Arizona and Phoenix, living in this wonderful, outdoor space—going on picnics. No TV set, 1955, moving to Germany having been an idealic childhood life. No dysfunctional family experiences. I moved to a country that was leveled by devastation—by war, and I had to have an explanation for that. And my parents took me to the concentration camps where—it gives me shivers to this day, I remember initially walking in and it was before they had made them into museums,

obviously. We walked into the areas where the ovens were and then into the—I still have hard time. I have a very deep respect for—I saw that people were inhuman to other people as a nine year-old and then coming out of the—leaving the gas chambers and going into the one room that they had that was their exhibition space of what had occurred were the photographs of the people that they had as a result of opening of the doors by the Allied forces, and then at the very end of that hallway were the drawings of children and I just had to stop and look at them because they were just—crayon drawings, little sketches. Sometimes pencil drawings. Very crudely, very—it was child drawings. But I thought it very strange that so many of them were happy pictures—sunsets, flower gardens, children playing. And—of course, I later went on to understand that that was a child survival to go into a dream like state to recreate something that they were looking for to make them feel good. And then within the next six months because of the woman that we had that was our nanny, she took us, since we lived very close to Cologne, to a retrospective of (Katy Callowitz?), who was a famous German engraver who had lost her first—she lost a son in World War I and a grandson in World War II, and she had been the daughter of a very wealthy physician in Berlin and when her father would go into the tenements in Berlin, she went with him as a child and she would record the sadness in the children's and in the family's eyes and she went later on to record that whole sadness, that struggle, that human struggle of survival that people have in deprivation. And I saw these in these, again, woodblock prints and these sketches she'd done, so I knew immediately that art was just not a very decorative thing, that it had a lot of power and a lot of statement and it talked about social change. It made things that you'd have to look at and have to visualize and have to contemplate, reflect on and what would you do with those reflections? So anyway, all of that went into my childhood memories, and of course, then from there we went to nicer museum spaces and pretty things in Europe and came back to live in Arizona again, and went through my childhood and really not—never gotten involved in art as an artist because it was not an acceptable form to secure a livelihood, so I went into nursing. And in my nursing, I found that I used a lot of times art because I knew that when you go into a state of pleasure, it can go inward and help a healing process and because I had been able to have been exposed to far eastern culture and philosophies through my father, after being in India, I knew that there was another

state that was other than the physical being. That you could cure the physical self through the emotional being and that could be brought on by something pleasurable that you could create and that got back to art. So when I worked in rehabilitative care with chronic lung disease patients, I many times helped them to go through that period of no longer being able to be physically active but still very vital adults and very caring adults by sharing their stories and journaling for their grandchildren. And then also by painting or doing expressions that would help them to have a recreation that they could be still and do and not have to be up and running around, but get into their creative self, because I knew that that did create a very powerful physical healing at the same time. And that was all the concept of alternative art. Well, going through that, getting out of nursing and going then into a period of my life where I now had a second family and wanting to give back to the community for all the wonderful things that had been given to me during the time that I had been a single parent. A friend of mine asked me to get involved with an art organization, knowing that I had, again, in my young teen years, and young adult years, lived in the museums and never did take an art course or an educational course but always was very involved in going to the art museums, living in Washington D.C., going to New York, living all over in Europe. And so I took all that art experience and helped an art organization that was struggling to develop a program that helped people to understand that art was not just decorative but that it was also for healing, it was for social cultural change, and it was something that could enrich people's lives in multiple ways. And I became the program developer to help to write their philosophy and to help them to develop an organization from an administrative point of view. And in that process, they wanted to do a children's program and I felt very thrilled because I'd always wanted to eventually come back to the inner city because I knew that during the process of my working with my children, going through my divorce, and going through being a single parent, that the one thing that we did together, the three of us, my two children and I, was the arts. I took them to museums; my daughter studied classical dance. We did martial arts together. All in that sense of again, the ability to go inwards using your creative self to deal with your struggles in your life. And that if we were able to focus inside and deal with the issues in a way that was expressive, it would also keep away the bitterness and the anger and be a creative outlet for all of those negative

feelings. But instead of in a negative way where it became physically harmful, which I saw with people having coronary diseases and things was that they didn't have an outlet for inner pain, from frustration and an emotional and lack of spiritual life. And that the arts can provide that. I know that. I know that from the children, the concentration camp. I know that from what (Katy Callowitz?) did. I know that from going into Gothic cathedrals and being in those incredible ethereal spaces that were built to allow pilgrimages to come to heal peasants and to answer their problems and so to me, the arts are what give us our humanity. They are what make our culture and they are the thing that if we have questions about anything in life, it's the creative process that can answer those questions and artists are the ones that do it continuously. And we need to understand that process. And only by studying artists and allowing artists to give us direction can that also then transform over into our everyday life. You take that same creative process of understanding a composition that you write, or your music, or your journal that you document something in, or a painting that you do, and that same process then allows you go through your own life and creatively construct your own life. So that's why I'm working with the children in the inner city and to me, the arts is going to be their survival. It's going to give them that advantage for healing and also take them into other places when they may not have the money. Because to me, you can teach a child to take a single flower and bring them into their tenement home and focus on that flower with all its beauty and everything's that's been given to it from Mother Nature, then that will enlighten and fill their home and to create it that way or to continuously go inside to fulfill them and to enrich them. And of course, the theater is one way of doing that, too.

Cocke: What is your position Boys and Girls Club exactly?

Butzine: With the Boys and Girls Club?

Cocke: With the Boys and Girls Club.

Butzine: I'm the program developer and the coordinator for all of the different arts programming now that are within the Boys and Girls Clubs of metropolitan Phoenix. And so I have to make all the decisions about the multiple arts programming that we do, how it's structured, how we secure funding for it, how we market it, how we put it out into the community, how we get it accepted by the policy makers. I mean, it's that whole gambit of what you need to do to develop a program from scratch to make it reputable within the organization that you work, especially when the organization has been primarily focused on sports. What is the value of arts? It's not fluff. It's not pink bunnies and it's not macramé projects. It is something that will help these children to survive in their life and do it in a way that gives them grace and humanity.

Cocke: And how many years were you in nursing?

Butzine: Twenty.

Cocke: Twenty years in nursing.