Esther Eggleston Transcript

[Editor's Note from Oral Historian Pamela Brown Lavitt: Due to a recording mishap, the first minute of this interview was lost. In that first minute, Jewish Women's Archive narrator Esther Eggleston agreed to be recorded then stated she was born in St. Louis, Missouri on September 1, 1905 until 1912 when her family moved to Seattle, Washington and she was between six and seven years old. The interview continues with Esther Eggleston recounting her only memories of St. Louis.]

ESTHER EGGLESTON: – between six and seven years old. The only thing I remember about our home is the lightning storm; a tree was unrooted in front of our home. Great big oak tree, and it just missed the home by inches. It was quite a frightening experience. And lightning frightened me for a long, long time afterward. But at the age I am now, I've gotten over that fright.

PAMELA BROWN LAVITT: How old were you when you remember that experience?

EE: Maybe five. Between five and six or something. Because I came here to Seattle when I was seven.

PL: What kind of neighborhood did you live in? Was it a Jewish neighborhood? Do you remember anything?

EE: Not really. There wasn't any segregated areas. It was across the street from a big park. I remember that and all the trees. I remember the front oak tree particularly. Other than that it was just a normal – everybody's neighborhood.

PL: Did your parents go to synagogue? Do you remember?

EE: I don't remember.

PL: Too young. But you remember the lightning storm.

EE: [laughter]

PL: Is there anything else that you remember about St. Louis?

EE: No. Except my father had a big saloon restaurant combination. I remember that they served practically all cooked cold cuts – not kosher – and beer for five cents in those days. That's all I remember.

PL: How did your father get involved in the saloon business?

EE: I have no idea.

PL: Was he born in the United States?

EE: No. In Hungary.

PL: Hungary. And your mother?

EE: My mother also. They came here and settled in New Jersey. From New Jersey, they moved to where I was born.

PL: How did they wind up in New Jersey? Why New Jersey?

EE: I guess that was where they were told to go. When they came over. It must have been that. I have no other idea.

PL: Do you know why it was that they wound up in St. Louis?

EE: My father had some relative or something. My mother had a brother. I remember my uncle. He was an attorney. He used to learn his law under the streetlights because the electricity in the homes were so dim that they lived in. That's how he became a

lawyer through studying that way. A very brilliant lawyer, I understand. Of course, I don't remember him personally, but that's the story I heard.

PL: How do you remember the saloon? Is that through stories that were told to you, or do you remember exactly visiting?

EE: Vaguely. Very vaguely. I don't even remember my grandmother. She wasn't in the saloon. Wherever she was. My mother would never let me take any money from anybody. Or anything from anybody, especially money. But I always walked with my hands behind my back with my grandmother, and she always gave me a nickel. A nickel was a big thing in those days. And with that nickel, I bought a pickle. [laughter] Crazy thing. Turn it off.
[Recording paused.]

PL: Were you actually very fond of pickles as opposed to candy?

EE: I still am.

PL: You still are?

EE: Oh yeah. There was candy and everything available – candy, cookies, everything. I always bought one great big sour pickle.

PL: What do you remember about your grandmother?

EE: Well, I only remember her, not from there, except for that. At that age you only remember good things. When I was twelve, and we lived in a home in North End, she came to live with us, and we were fortunate to have her for one year. But she was very orthodox, very kosher. We were Reform, and we belonged to Herzl. It was always Conservative, but more reformed, and I guess that where I avoided Conservatism – I was Reform in my thinking as well as my actions. [inaudible] my life at temple. But there my

grandmother lived with us for one year, and she passed away. I loved her – my two sisters and I. We gave her our bedroom. And we slept in the small bedroom – the outdoor porch that we slept in.

PL: And where was this? What neighborhood in Seattle was this in?

EE: North End. Between the University and Lincoln High School. In that area. Because I walked to Lincoln.

PL: You walked to Lincoln when you went to school there.

EE: When I went to high school. She was only with us one year before she passed away.

PL: Do you remember your mother having a relationship with her?

EE: Oh, it was wonderful. She was wonderful. I don't know if we hated her or admired her, which way it went, because [inaudible] turned the house up-side down – dishes, linens. Anything that we used, she threw out. [unclear] live with us – put away – especially dishes. I loved it because I never did a thing because I'd get them mixed up all the time. So, they didn't dare let me do a dish. [laugher]

PL: You're talking about the milchig and the fleishig.

EE: They were separate. Silverware – everything was. My mother didn't know just how far to go, so she went all out – pots and pans, dishes, everything, even glassware. She changed everything.

PL: Changed how?

EE: To being very kosher. Very Orthodox in our diets. The diets – I guess that was for changing the dishes and everything. She was so afraid of making a mistake and not

doing the right thing by her mother. We all admired her for that, so none of us objected to it. But I did the least objecting because I never did a bit of work anymore. [laughter] They didn't trust me. I was only a kid. Twelve years old.

PL: You had older siblings.

EE: I had two sisters. My sister Tillie was my [inaudible]. My mother favored my older sister, who was eleven years older than me. They were very close, and my sister, the other one, the middle one –

PL: What was her name?

EE: Tillie.

PL: Okay.

EE: Tillie. She was everything as far as I was concerned. When I needed something, I went to her. She was just wonderful. If she buys a new dress and I was going to a dance, she'd let me wear it the first time. That's the kind of sister she was. One time, without her permission, I put her shoes on – high heels – and went to high school. I forgot to take the cotton out of them because they were too big. [laughter] [inaudible] that night when she went to put them on. I was pretty much of a brat when I was a kid. [laughter] Anyhow, that took care of that. If I ever wore them again, which I think I did, I remembered to take the cotton out.

PL: You said that you looked to Tillie for everything.

EE: Yes.

PL: Why not your mother, or why Tillie?

EE: It was just natural. She spoke my language. Mother didn't.

PL: Explain.

EE: Well, I guess my mother expected too much. My sister realized I was growing up. I don't know why. We just got together. We were very, very close. Closer than most sisters were at that time.

PL: Do you know who you were named after?

EE: My mother's mother.

PL: What was her name?

EE: Oh, her name was Lena. It was her middle name. Or middle initial – something with an E in it that I was named after. It was her mother.

PL: Have you thought about why Esther? Have you thought about Queen Esther, or was that part of your –?

EE: [inaudible] I didn't go that far. [laughter] No way. No, I just accepted it as a biblical name. There were no questions about it. There was an Esther in every family.

PL: Was that because that was a popular Jewish name?

EE: It must have been. There is a Josephine in every family when you think about it. I don't know where that came from.

PL: Your sister's name is Josephine.

EE: Yes. And a Tillie, too, in every family. Horrible names.

PL: Everyone had it here in Seattle or you're saying –?

EE: No. I was the only one born here. No, I wasn't born here. St. Louis, Missouri. Lived here that length of time, though. My sister Josephine came after my Dad. He went first because his family lived here. You know Johnny Cohn the florist on North End? [inaudible] He's still there, though. Good florist. His mother and father – his mother was my father's sister. I've got to think. Get it straight. Yeah. So, that's where that came. That's why we came here – for his family because my mother didn't have any family here.

PL: So your father made the decision to come?

EE: Oh, yeah. All the decisions.

PL: And he came here.

EE: First.

PL: First and you were still living with your mother?

EE: Yes.

PL: And your other sisters in St. Louis?

EE: Then, my older sister came here, and she went to work. My other sister and my mother and I came.

PL: What was it like when you first came to Seattle? What do you remember? Do you remember any stories or images about what Seattle would be like before you came here?

EE: Well, it wasn't like it is today. That's for sure. It was horse and buggies and streetcars. No buses. Just streetcars. Not cars that many either. You didn't have a car for a long time. My father didn't have a car. I don't think his relatives – his sisters had – he had another sister here too. Big family. I was with them more than with any other

relatives – with his other sister. There wasn't any just growing up.

PL: Do you remember your first reactions or your mother's first reactions to Seattle? How did you like it?

EE: I just accepted it. I had to do it. I was only seven years old. I had no choice. It was strange going to school because they wouldn't accept me; I was so small. They didn't believe they knew what I did know as I was only five, six, somewhere in there. Each time I say it, [inaudible] how old I was.

PL: What do you mean by you were so small and they didn't –?

EE: I was short.

PL: You were short. Shorter than the other kids.

EE: Short. Yeah. I was never asked to be on a team. [laughter] If I was, I was the last one chosen. So, I never [inaudible] anymore.

PL: Was that difficult or upsetting?

EE: Oh, yeah. Made me very shy. Yeah, very shy. Because I was rejected. That's how I felt. But I absorbed it. I went along my own way. I could do without it. You don't have, you don't have it. That's been my attitude all my life. You don't have it. During the Depression, I didn't have it, so I didn't spend it. I had money, I spent it. [laughter] That's the best philosophy anybody should have. I've never lived up to the Joneses, trying to get something I couldn't have. It was hard to get or too expensive to get. That's still the way I feel. That's why I was never confirmed. [laughter]

PL: Yeah, I read that in your pre-interview that you weren't confirmed at Temple de Hirsch.

EE: Just don't put this down.

PL: You want me to pause it?

EE: Yeah.

PL: Okay. [Recording paused.] I want to ask you a little bit about your parents. You said your mother didn't understand you. Was that because she spoke a different language?

EE: Oh, no. They spoke German until we found out what she was talking about, and then they stopped speaking German and only spoke English. So, I never learned German except a few words here and there. Enough to know what she was talking about, though, which is dangerous. Some of it was private, some of it was how bad we were that day, or I was that day [laughter] because I was so young, it was only me.

PL: Do you remember what words in German you particularly remember?

EE: No, I'd have to hear you repeat them. I don't remember them because I never speak it or anything.

PL: So how did you feel –? At what point did you feel that you were part of the Jewish community? Or that you were Jewish at all?

EE: Well, as far as going to Temple was, I always felt Jewish. My parents were always Jewish. We always went to the synagogue on all the holidays and we went on social affairs that they had and did. I was never comfortable there. I wasn't comfortable not sitting with my parents, not being with them. I went to several affairs at Temple de Hirsch. I went to several – one of my best friends was Catholic. I went with her on Easter, and she came to things for Pesach. It was a Catholic association, a very close Catholic association. She was Italian. Real Catholic. She was one of my best friends.

PL: Now, is that as an adult or was that when you were younger?

EE: That was when I was in school. I walked to – when I was in high school – with a Japanese girl. One day, we walked in snow. We walked about fifteen blocks, and school was closed. [laughter] So we walked back, and it was no big deal. School was closed, so [inaudible] and she went home. But I mean, I always associated with anybody who was a friend. I never checked into religion or anything. Religion didn't mean anything to me as long as you were a nice person and I could enjoy your company. That was enough for me as a child even. I guess I grew up that way.

PL: So what synagogue was it that your parents went to?

EE: Herzl – Conservative.

PL: So when Herzl first formed, though, in 1930 –? Is that correct?

EE: Oh, it must have been before then because it was open when we came here to Seattle.

PL: So when you were here, Herzl was already a Conservative, or was it Orthodox at that point?

EE: Oh, it was organized. The whole family belonged there. My father's family. They all belonged there. They were charter members whenever that was.

PL: Can you tell me a little bit about Herzl? Help me understand what it was like to go there.

EE: I really can't tell you because I never enjoyed it, and I sort of blocked it out of my mind. I went to please my parents when they wanted me to go on the High Holy Days. And for anything else, I had a choice, I didn't go. If I had a choice, I didn't go. I wasn't comfortable. So, I had something Reform in me someplace down the line that I didn't recognize at the time. So that's why I think they sent me to temple to go to Sunday

School because I did not want to go to Herzl.

PL: So you wound up – they sent you to Temple de Hirsch Sunday School, and you went there starting at what age?

EE: About ten, I guess.

PL: Until what age?

EE: Until fourteen. Confirmation. Thirteen, fourteen.

PL: And did your sisters stay at Herzl?

EE: No, they were working. Oh, they went to Herzl's, yes.

PL: So maybe we can talk a little bit then about – since you said that you felt there was something Reform in you –

EE: Must have been.

PL: – were there other kids that felt the same way, or that you related to?

EE: No.

PL: Did you relate better to the kids at Temple?

EE: During school days? Yes, except to socialize. I just didn't feel – I didn't fit. Like I said before, I just didn't feel like I fit there because I was torn between the two conservative and reform. I didn't know what I should really belong to. I felt I was being a traitor to my family by getting too familiar at Temple. I felt, I guess, a little bit guilty about being comfortable there. My parents were at Herzl's. I guess that's the first time I've really expressed myself that way. Yes.

PL: But when you were in the home, what were the expectations for the girls in your family in terms of your Jewish education, or in terms of your Jewish identity?

EE: We didn't have very much because my parents didn't have any. Just the High Holy Days, and when they [inaudible]. They never made us do anything that we didn't want to do. We were pretty free in our family. My two sisters, pretty much.

PL: Do you remember your relationship with your mother?

EE: It was good, except I was really closer to my sister. But my mother and I got along fine. I mean, I loved my mother. I loved my [father]. I loved my mother more than I did my father, though.

PL: Why was that?

EE: Well, she worked too hard for him. He was a tailor, and she helped him all the time. She worked too hard.

PL: So your father had a tailoring business, or he had a grocery store, or both?

EE: He gave up the tailoring.

PL: So he came, and he was first a tailor?

EE: Yes.

PL: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

EE: Well, they had a home. We had a home when we moved here. The back room was his shop. He did it all at home. My mother was there working with him, working in the kitchen, and working with the kids. She was working too hard. I always felt that, even as a kid. So, I think that's why I went to my sister instead of her.

PL: Did your mom express any of those feelings?

EE: I don't think she ever knew it. I don't think she ever recognized it.

PL: What in your mind –? Did you think she was working too hard? She worked long hours?

EE: Yeah, she was working. The only one working.

PL: It said that your dad made home-made vests. Was there something specific about that that you can tell me?

EE: He cut the pattern and had measurements and all that type of thing. Just like you'd make a dress for – a seamstress makes a dress. He made the vest. Men all wore vests in those days. Yeah. It's a long time back.

PL: Did he teach you how to sew? Did your mother teach you how to sew?

EE: I never liked it. My daughter sews. She's come back [as] my mother. [laughter] I never liked sewing. I knit a lot.

PL: Can you describe to me a little bit about what the North End neighborhood was like in those days? Who were your neighbors?

EE: Not Jewish. I can only describe it that way. They were all non-Jews. I don't know what they were. What people were never occurred to me. Swedish or German or Italian – I didn't care what they were. They were people.

PL: Did they seem like immigrants or had been there for a long time?

EE: Oh, they'd been there a long time. They might have even been American-born, for all I know. We don't know. I never checked into my neighbors.

PL: Do you remember any particular distinctive landmarks in the area?

EE: No. As I said, centrally located close to the school, close to the University. My mother, in fact, did have that in mind when I graduated high school. But when I graduated, we moved to the North End. I was going to T. T. Minor School up here on Capitol Hill, and my friends were all there. It was my graduation class. I came by two cars to get there because I wanted to graduate [from] there. So, they were pretty lenient. I mean they were really modern people that they let me do that. Take two buses. I was thirteen years old, and that's how I got there and graduated from T. T. Minor School. And then I went to Lincoln High School.

PL: So you had moved from the North End neighborhood?

EE: I had moved from – where were living there? – on 13th and Marion, I think. And this is South, in this area. I don't think that's Capitol Hill anymore.

PL: Then you moved to the North End after that?

EE: Yes.

PL: You went to – T.T. Minor was an elementary school?

EE: Yes.

PL: Through junior high years?

EE: Through ninth grade.

PL: Through ninth grade. So, who were your friends in school? You mentioned your friends. Who were they?

EE: Lillian (Kline?) and all Jewish people. [laughter]

PL: So, what was that like since you had a lot of Jewish girlfriends in school, but your neighborhood was not Jewish?

EE: Not Jewish, no. I had both non-Jewish and Jewish people as friends. I was pretty – I don't know what I'd tell myself today. I guess I'm still that way.

PL: How would you describe that way?

EE: Just people. Everybody is good until they prove themselves bad. [laughter] How's that?

PL: Terrific. You were drawn to this school, though, because you had a lot of Jewish girlfriends? You wanted to graduate from there because –?

EE: Well, school friends. They weren't all Jewish, no. I don't know if anybody was Jewish. I never questioned it, to tell you the truth. I really never thought about it.

PL: What do you remember about going to school?

EE: I always liked school. I never had any problem. Except when I had to do something in front of the class then I always had a stomach ache. [laughter] Once, I had to give a piano recital, and I was really sick. Yeah, I was sick. But my mother stuck right with it, and I got up there, and I played my heart out. [laughter] I've had a bad time with it.

PL: You said that your sister Josephine taught you how to play piano.

EE: Yes.

PL: Can you tell me a little bit about –? Did you have a piano in your house?

EE: Oh, yeah, sure. She wasn't a teacher. She only taught me. She was a good pianist. I don't know where she learned it from because that was before my time or after

my time. I don't remember that. But I had to take lessons from her. That's all I know. And she taught me classical music – Tales of Hoffmann, all the operas, beautiful music – and I played well. As soon as she was gone and my mother was busy, I turned it all into jazz. The same music. [laughter] And then, when I went out on dates, I often wondered if they were asking me to play the piano or really wanted me as a date. Because that's all I did all night long was play the piano. [laughter]

PL: Were there pianos at people's houses?

EE: Yes.

PL: And that's where you would play?

EE: Yeah.

PL: Why would you take everything and turn it to jazz? What was the –?

EE: I enjoyed it. I didn't like classical music. I didn't like opera. It was heavy and hard to do. Who likes to do hard things? Jazz came easy.

PL: How do you turn it to jazz? What do you do?

EE: Just stepped up the tempo.

PL: Does it become syncopated?

EE: Yeah. You've got to fit extra notes in where they didn't belong.

PL: Where do you think you learned that? Where did you hear it?

EE: Just out of the air.

PL: Was it on the radio?

EE: Might have been.

PL: Song sheets? That's interesting.

EE: We had piano seats. I sneaked a couple of those in, I remember doing.

PL: Was it considered a bad thing if you had to sneak it in?

EE: Well, my mother didn't know I was doing it, so it must have been bad. [laughter]

PL: What do you think she might have thought if she had –?

EE: I think she knew all along. Personally, I really think she knew it all along. Just let me have my way. As long as I played the right kind of music. As long as I didn't give it up.

PL: Were there others of your peers that thought jazz music was a lot better than classical music?

EE: Well, they must have all thought that. My friends. Because I was invited to a lot of parties. [laughter] That's why I began to wonder, why? It was a good childhood. I mean, it was okay. Nothing spectacular. I didn't think about it at the time, like I'm doing today. Must have been better than I thought. Yeah. No stress. No problems like they are having today. No gun shooting. None of that stuff going on. You could leave your doors open. You didn't even think of anybody stealing. None of that went on in those days. Those are the good old days. Might not have been financially good, but healthwise and scare-wise, it was good.

PL: Do you remember much or hearing about anti-Semitism here in Seattle, or did you feel it in any remote way as a child?

EE: Not at all. Until I went to work. I think that's in my other report. The American Can Company.

PL: I don't know anything about that.

EE: Maybe I didn't mention the name. I was on vacation. When I came back, I had the notice that I was no longer working there. From the conversation I had was why because I was such a good secretary. I was excellent in shorthand and typing. I finished three and four in one semester. My teacher – I remember her name – Mrs. (Voltas?) didn't even remember what to do with me in the second because I was the only one in the class doing fourth-grade work – not fourth grade, but the class four instead of three.

PL: There is a level?

EE: There's a level.

PL: Levels of different classes?

EE: When you are learning the second, advanced learning, the third, when you are good, third and fourth are in the same level. It didn't make sense to her. She didn't know what to do with me.

PL: How old were you at this time?

EE: I graduated at thirteen, so I must have been –

PL: So you were already in high school or junior high school?

EE: This was in high school.

PL: And you went to work for the American Can Company?

EE: No, this was when I was in high school. In high school. I was fifteen when I graduated.

PL: How long did you work for them?

EE: American Can Company? Oh, it must have been over a year because I had a vacation. Because when I came back, that was my first vacation, so it must have been over a year.

PL: Do you remember getting the notice? How did you feel getting this notice?

EE: Horrible. Because I thought I was pretty good. I felt I was a good worker.

PL: What in your mind made you relate to it being potentially anti-Semitism?

EE: His attitude. There's always an attitude. They don't tell you out right. It's just an attitude. Tone of voice. If you're perceptive at all, you can't miss it. I had an experience with anti-Semitism. Can I bring that in? When I was in my home, working at Temple, and had my car service at the station. It was a block away. It was so easy for me to get to, and I was going back and forth to work. [inaudible] get a new car, so I asked him, "What do you recommend?" This was after the war, and I wasn't able to get a car. The car I was driving – this has nothing to do with [inaudible]. Yeah, it is. The car I was driving was my father's. A little Ford. Model A Ford. Two-seater.

PL: What year is this?

EE: What year?

PL: World War I or World War II? You said after the war.

EE: Two. World War II. It must have been World War II. I was working at Temple. He started telling me where to go on Jew row. All the automobile owners – all the

automobile dealers are on Jew row. "Where's that?" So he told me down on Westlake. He knew all about where to go, which dealer [inaudible] and everything. I said, "Do you know he's Jewish?" He said, "He thinks he is."

PL: What do you think he meant by that?

EE: I was afraid to ask. [laughter] I don't remember asking what he meant by that. I just accepted it. I came to work forty-five minutes late that day. I preached Judaism to him like he never got preached in any Catholic church, I'm sure. I told him all about it. He was so wonderful to me after that. He did everything for me. Best he could do was don't charge me for something. If I had a flat tire, he came to the garage – he came to my home, took the car out of the garage, and brought it back to me. Things like that – no charge. That must have hurt him a lot not to charge.

PL: What do you think happened that made him feel that he wanted to treat you so well?

EE: Something I said. I never know what I say to people. That's my problem. I should remember what I am saying. [laughter]

PL: When you were talking to him, and you said that you gave him a lesson in Judaism, what do you remember telling him? I know you said you can't remember what you tell people.

EE: I can't.

PL: What might you tell him if you could tell him something today?

EE: I think I must – I feel the same way. Like I said before, I think of people as just people. How do you know a Jew when he's a Jew, or he could be Italian with a big nose? Italians have big noses and black eyes, too. I think I remember saying that. It comes back easy, yeah. Things like that. How can you tell? I bet there isn't a Jew on

Automobile Row down there. They go in for jewelry; they don't go in for cars. [laughter] I remember telling him that, too. Now it's coming back to me. Yeah, they go in for jewelry. And there are still a lot of non-Jews in the jewelry business. It's a fifty-fifty thing in all trades. That's what I remember telling him, too. I can't remember. I'm stressing now.

PL: That area in Westlake, was that in your mind before he said this –?

EE: Never.

PL: A Jewish?

EE: Never gave it a thought. I don't care what they are. I wasn't buying a car there anyway. I was only talking of buying a car.

PL: So, how many years did this mechanic –? Did he have a particular business? Do you remember the name of the business?

EE: Name of the gas station?

PL: Yeah.

EE: I do remember, but I don't want to mention it.

PL: That's okay. How long did he service your engine for free for?

EE: I bought a car and [unclear] until I moved into an apartment. Twenty-three years. He did my service when I moved in there and until I moved. He did everything for me. He always asked me. Checked my tires? Did it go off?

PL: No, just have to check and make sure we have time left. Continue. So in terms of – I'm sorry, go ahead.

EE: He couldn't have been any better. If he tried harder he couldn't have done any better in his treating me. We were equals.

PL: Do you think that that is – that what you did and the way that you responded to him is how you've responded to other people in your life that didn't know about Jewish people?

EE: Must be. Must be. I still feel that way. As I think you can tell. I don't think of religion. I mean, I don't have to go to Temple every Friday night to be a good Jew. I mean, that's how I feel. It's only a building, as far as I'm concerned. Of course, I did tell Rabbi Levine I was only there six months. I worked at the Port of Embarkation for the Army during the war. I lost my patriotism. There was so much politics going on and discrimination. I don't mean religious discrimination. And female against male. And salaries. The whole [inaudible] discrimination. Just all politics. So, I lost my patriotism. I didn't care anymore. I come here to Temple. I'm gradually losing my religion. I told this to Rabbi Levine. [laughter] He laughed, too, like you're laughing. He thought that was cute. He didn't realize what I saying. He didn't understand at all.

PL: Why not? What were you saying?

EE: I was telling him I was really losing my religion. I was getting too political, too. That's what I was trying to tell him. It was too commercial. Not long ago, it was too commercial. It kept getting worse all the time. That's why I took on so much on my own. I could see it going.

PL: You probably need to help me understand that when you say that you were becoming too political, you meant that while you were working at Temple de Hirsch, you felt that Temple de Hirsch was going in a particular direction.

EE: No, just commercial. Money was too, too commercial.

PL: In terms of the fundraising pitches and things like that?

EE: Yeah. A lot of the men there lost track of being human beings.

PL: What were they behaving like?

EE: When I accepted a member with no dues, they never thought of it. This is the dues. Take it or leave it. You know? I felt that. Nobody said it. But it was in me. I was feeling that. They'd come to me and say, "I guess we can't join Temple." I said, "Why not?" [laughter] I found out why not.

PL: Why not?

EE: They couldn't afford it.

PL: What were the dues at that time? How much were they?

EE: Still too much for a lot of people. That's twenty-three years ago. Yeah. I worked there twenty-three years. Now, it's gotten out of sight.

PL: Let's talk a little bit about that. Well, you mentioned the Port of Embarkation. So, let's start there for a second. When did you work at the Port of Embarkation?

EE: When my husband died.

PL: Which was in what year?

EE: Years, dates I can't remember.

PL: How old was he when he died?

EE: He was thirty-nine when he died. I must have it in one of those reports.

PL: Around 1942.

EE: Yeah.

PL: So you started working for the Port of Embarkation. What were you doing there?

EE: Right after he died.

PL: Why did you take that job?

EE: Well, any job. I took any job. I was thirty-six. I was too old already.

PL: For?

EE: Anywhere. But this was recommended to me by somebody who was working there. So that's how I got the job. When I got the job, it was strictly – I guess political is not the word. I don't know what the word is for that. Sexist, I guess. Because this youngster was taking the same exam I was. I took the exam, part of the Constitution shorthand, typed without an error, a portion of it. This girl took the same one full of errors. My rate was .6, the highest one. She got a .3 and got the job. So what would call that? Discrimination? Some kind of discrimination?

PL: Would you say that discrimination was because you were Jewish and she was not?

EE: No. I don't think it was religious. I think it was because she was good-looking, that's all. She was good-looking and young. [laughter] At least, that was my interpretation of it. I didn't think anything else.

PL: So, did you not wind up working there at all?

EE: Oh yes. I got [inaudible], and I took it. I remember what the salary was – I lived with my sister at the time – which wasn't very much. I worked for Colonel (Aarons?). He was an older man and a doll. He was just a gem to work for. I loved working for him. I working with about four other youngsters – eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old. They

spent most of their day playing tic tac toe and stuff like that. I was working like a [inaudible]. The work was there, so I did it. I think they must have sneaked some of their work over to me because they had so much time to play, and I didn't have any time to play. So anyway, that was their doing. I didn't care. I did my work, and I got it done. I worked for a Coca-Cola salesman. He was wearing his stripes, whatever he had as a lieutenant [inaudible]. So I went to Colonel (Aarons?) – he was like a father. I went in and told him – I said, "It's hard for me to work with that man. He just gets me." So, he said, "What shall we do with him?" I said, "Send him up to the North Pole." And by golly, he did. He sent him up to the northern part of the [unclear] in Alaska. Sent him up there and never heard from him again. [laughter] I really have some tales to tell – experiences. Nobody else would have such nerve.

PL: What was your response to the fact that he took your suggestion?

EE: I thought it was wonderful. He listened to me. He knew I was right. He knew the lieutenant was obnoxious. He didn't like him either, so it was easy to convince him because he didn't like him either. I knew it was okay for me to approach him.

PL: What gave you the nerve to say that?

EE: I don't know where I get my nerve from. Someplace down on the report, you asked about my nerve. You want me to tell you?

PL: Absolutely.

EE: Women's American ORT. I was on the Board, the National Board. When they came to Seattle, they needed somebody to sit on the pulpit. Nathan Gould was the director of all the ORT. Every place. And he was the speaker. He kept on speaking. We needed somebody that would stop him. So they go to Seattle, and that was me. [laughter] I didn't stop him; all I did was pull his pants, and he stopped. He finished what he was saying, and he got the message. I never opened my mouth. Nobody knew I did

it. Nobody to this day knows that I did that.

PL: Were you sitting on the stage with him?

EE: Of course.

PL: Could anybody see you do this?

EE: No. No. I guess they saw me get up. But they didn't see me pull his leg. [laughter] I'm sure they didn't because nobody told me about it. They wondered why he made such a short speech, though. A comment was made about that. How wonderful the speech was. It was short. That I remember.

PL: The Port of Embarkation, what did they do? I don't know what that means.

EE: Well, it was a hard time. They were sending material up to Alaska. That was their goal. They were sending recipes for cooking and directions and stuff like that. We were transcribing – put together in book form. That's what I was doing.

PL: Was it the US Army?

EE: It was the Army. [inaudible] Army.

PL: I mean, what was the purpose of sending the recipes and information to Alaska?

EE: That was government. Don't ask me that. I don't know why they did that because as soon as they got it all up there in Alaska, they changed the program. [laughter] That was the government. They're still doing it. I don't think they've changed much. A lot of waste.

PL: Is that right?

EE: All the waste.

PL: How long –? You were there for a year. Do you remember working with this other woman that had beat you out on the –?

EE: Never saw her again. I don't know where she went. I don't know what job she got even.

PL: You mentioned that it was a fairly devastating experience for you. And you're not letting on, so I'm just wondering was it a devastating experience for you.

EE: Not bad. Well, it was hard for me to get out of there because that Colonel (Aarons?) had to sign so many things – why you had to go. I finally ended [up] saying my daughter was calling my sister "Mom." I was losing my daughter. That's what I ended up saying. Colonel (Aarons?) didn't want me to go. He had a good thing, and he knew it. But he said, "That's where I realize now that you really should go. You have to take care of your daughter." That got to him. My daughter was calling my sister "Mom." But she wasn't. It was a little white lie. I got out of the Army. Took me about three, four months to convince him that I really had to go. That was a hard three or four months. I felt I was fighting the whole United States to get that lousy job gone. Get rid of that lousy job. [laughter] It's quite an experience. That's where I met – and from there, I went to Temple. [inaudible] the railroad, then I went to Temple. The Army was the first job I had. From there, I went to the American Can Company. That's when I went to the railroad from the American Can Company. I worked there. I got in trouble there because I kept dusting. It was the baggage department. Filthy. How can they work in all this dirt [and] dust with trains coming and going? The baggage coming and going? The people coming and going? Never cleaned the place up. And my desk was back-to-back with the boss' desk. His desk was littered with dirt. Not work. So, I brought Pledge down, and I started cleaning up. Boy, did I get in trouble with everybody.

PL: Were you working in mostly a male-run office? Were you the only woman in that office?

EE: Oh, no. There were a lot of women. They could have dusted, too. But I guess they felt what's the point. It gets dirty again. So they just let it accumulate.

PL: So, did you feel proud that you'd cleaned up the office?

EE: No. I'm sorry I did. I felt terrible because I was the only one there that was doing it. Why should I be different? I was sorry I ever knew what a mop looked like. [laughter] It was horrible. I was lucky that this Gertrude Wolfe – she's gone now. She was an old, old friend. I knew her parents, her grandparents. She wanted me to talk to Rabbi Levine And then you know in the report that I wrote there that I was afraid of him.

PL: You were afraid of Rabbi Levine?

EE: Yeah because I had never worked in a Temple. I had never worked with a rabbi. All I did was go to Sunday School and didn't know anybody. Just the teacher I was working with. I don't even remember seeing a rabbi. Work with him. That's quite an experience to go through. I turned the job down.

PL: Initially, when it was offered to you, you turned the job down.

EE: With Rabbi Levine. I told him I was fit for the job. I didn't know anything about it. So he says – it's in there what I did tell him.

PL: Who originally recommended you for the job?

EE: Gertrude Wolfe.

PL: And it was Gertrude Wolfe. And how did she know about the job opening? Was she a member of temple?

EE: Oh, yeah. Her parents were charter members. Yes. She was a member of temple. I think she was teaching then. Sure she was.

PL: Why did she recommend you? Did she know you?

EE: Oh, the whole family. Oh sure, I knew her when she was a child growing up. Her brother, Billy Wolfe, became my office boy. We got caught in a storm once there, Billy and I working late. That was during rationing time. We ran out of oil, and there wasn't any fuel. So Billy went out into the woods. It was all woods around there at that time, and I don't know what he chopped them down with. We didn't have any saws or material. We broke them off. Maybe had a pocket knife. I don't know what he did. He came back with an armful of wood, and we built a fire in the fireplace. So, we worked until the work was done. Then, I called my brother-in-law to come and get me. [laughter] He took Billy and me home.

PL: Do you remember meeting Rabbi Levine for the first time? Did you have an interview with him?

EE: That was my interview.

PL: And when you turned down the job –

EE: Well, he said to me that's a good thing because you know what you don't know, or something like that.

PL: Why were you –?

EE: I gathered that he would be teaching me, but he was never busy enough. I was too busy, I meant.

PL: How did he convince you finally to take the job?

EE: I guess I just wanted to get – I was thinking mostly – thinking back, I took a hundred-dollar deduction in my salary to start with.

PL: From your salary?

EE: From where I was working.

PL: At the railroad?

EE: Yes. A hundred dollars less at temple. The money was – I needed it because that was during Depression times that I went through. I was thinking of Annette.

PL: Your daughter.

EE: She was in Sunday School. I could bring her to Sunday School, and she could have an education. I'd be there. I have to be there anyhow, so I'd be able to take her and bring her, so she's not home alone. My first thought was of her. I took a hundred-dollar cut, it must have been her that made me do it.

PL: How much were you making a week when you first started at Temple de Hirsch?

EE: By the month. I don't know but my salary was so low it was just pitiful. I can't remember it was so low. A couple hundred dollars? It wasn't anything more than that, I'm sure.

PL: Did you try to negotiate it at all?

EE: Oh, not until I became an administrator. I told him right away that I was getting a hundred dollars less than what I was making. But I was coming here because it would give my daughter an education. So I didn't pay for Sunday School. I remember that clearly.

PL: What do you remember about that?

EE: I wasn't a member. I went to [inaudible] my folks were associate members. That's when you only used the Sunday School. You weren't members of temple – no voting

privilege.

PL: Was that because Rabbi Koch had created an associate member so that the Sunday School –?

EE: That was there when I came in. It must have been.

PL: What did you know about the sort of politics of Temple de Hirsch in the sense of the transition between Rabbi Koch and Rabbi Levine? You were there during the last year before Rabbi Koch died. Correct?

EE: No, Rabbi Levine came just a few months before me. That's all. I was with Rabbi Koch for six months.

PL: What was that like?

EE: He was very pleasant, and I liked him. He used to come and pat me on the back. He did that to all the school kids. He comes in and pats me on the head, too. [laughter] These I remember. But they were very significant. I was very honored that he did that. I was one of the kids. Thirty-six-year-old kid. Yeah. It was with love that he did that.

PL: Where was your office?

EE: Well, in the old Temple – you wouldn't know where that was. That's been demolished and is a garden now and everything. It's all gone. It was on that corner. That was the old temple, right there on that corner where the chapel is now and the garden, the whole bit is there now. That was the old temple. My office was as you walked in the doorway to the left, and behind me was Rabbi Levine's office. To the left of that was the library with a fireplace in it, where we built the fire to get the heat to stay. No over-time. No pay. I lost the question.

PL: I was just asking for a little bit of the lay of the land, which was where did you work in relationship to the Rabbi?

EE: Right from his office and my office.

PL: Did you see each other through a glass panel?

EE: No, nothing. Just a door. I closed it when he had a member talking to him. I always closed the door.

PL: When you were hired by Rabbi Levine you knew at that time that Rabbi Koch was leaving?

EE: I didn't know Rabbi Koch. Period. I wasn't involved with Temple at all. That's why I was afraid to take the job. Yeah. It was quite an adventure for me to step into a synagogue with a thousand members. Maybe it was about eight hundred at that time.

PL: What did that feel like?

EE: I didn't see that. I just saw this little office. I wasn't aware of what I was getting into. Completely unaware of what I was walking into. A whole new deal.

PL: How so? What were the duties that were outlined to you that you'd be responsible for?

EE: That's the joke question. No duties. As you can tell from the reports I gave before. My duties developed into.

PL: It's important, though, for the oral history. People listening to this may or may not ever get a chance to read this report. So, whatever you feel comfortable with would be great. If you could explain and assume that's just background work between you and I.

EE: To start with, they had an auditor, Friedman, Lobe, and Bloch, to audit the books, do the bookkeeping. Ludwig Lobe was the bookkeeper. He was supposed to come down there three times a week and do the books – take care of the payroll, take care of the bookkeeping. That was it. From Friedman, Lobe, and Bloch [inaudible] –

PL: That's a well-known accounting firm?

EE: Oh, yes. One of the best. In the Jewish community, at least. Well, I don't know about the Seattle community, but the Jewish community, they were the firm. This Ludwig Lobe was supposed to come down and do this. So, I thought that was his job. My job was going to be Rabbi Levine's secretary. Well, I was good at shorthand and typing, so I didn't care what I was doing. I knew I could be able to do it. If not, there was a Bible there; I could look up the names and read how to spell and all that kind of stuff. I knew that I had sources if I got stuck. So, that didn't worry me. The books were supposed to be done. Rabbi Levine didn't tell me this, though. I had already taken the job. I didn't know this. I was going to be a bookkeeper, too. This guy never showed up. After three weeks, I never saw him. Then, I called him up, and I said, "How about these books? What's going to happen?" He says, "I'll come down and show you." So, I became the bookkeeper.

PL: In that moment, what did you think when he said, "I'll come down and show you?" Did that seem –?

EE: Should I express myself or turn that off? [laughter]

PL: I think you should express yourself. It's about reflecting back.

EE: I don't want to use the word I was going to use. It wasn't very nice. It was terrible. I wouldn't do such a thing to a stranger. I was a stranger there. I didn't know the people. During the week, there was nobody there – no kids, no Sunday School, no nobody. Just the janitor. I never saw the janitor either. I'd have to look him up in the furnace room to

see who was working around there, to find my way around the Temple. I really had to make a tour all by myself. There was nobody there to show me. Was I Topsy? A little colored girl. That's what I must have been like.

PL: From Uncle Tom's Cabin?

EE: Uncle Tom's Cabin. Making my way around. Yeah. Rabbi Levine, I didn't see very often. He dictated his sermons to me. Some of them, I thought, "This can't be right." I didn't say anything for about a month. It didn't take long, though, before I started talking to him. [laughter] I said, "This is going to hurt somebody, Rabbi." The little innuendoes would be in there. Somebody is going to think it's me. You know? "Oh, you're right." From then on, that was my job.

PL: So, if you were to define that duty what you say that that duty was? To be an advisor to Rabbi?

EE: Well, I think that's inadequate. [laughter] I don't know what I was really. I was just there to do everything, like little Topsy. Just do it. I happened to be the bookkeeper. Make the payroll out. It just happened. Like I said in one of those other reports, that was my first mistake, assuming things. That's exactly the word I used in the other report. I learned not to assume things. Just do it. Yeah. It was quite an experience there at Temple. For the last twenty-three years I only did it because I felt I was useful. I knew I was doing a good job. Nobody else could have done some of the things I did. Wouldn't have taken the time or the patience and insight into people. You had to know people and to regard them as people, not Jews. That's really why I did all these things. I don't care who came to my office. If they needed help – if I couldn't do it, I always referred them to somebody who could do it. I knew what I couldn't do. That was one thing; I was really careful. What I don't know, don't tell. Like directions. You tell me to turn right, I turn left. I know what I can't do and can do. So, if they didn't get help from me, they got it from someplace. If they didn't get it from someplace, then they came back to me. [laughter]

PL: What were examples then of people that you gave insight to? Just to go back to the Rabbi Levine example, this first time that you were taking the dictation for his sermon and you reflected back to him that you thought certain things –

EE: He thanked me.

PL: Yes. Did you continue to serve that purpose for him?

EE: Yeah.

PL: How did that relationship –?

EE: For years, he was a sick man. Nobody really knew it.

PL: He served from 1944 until when?

EE: Oh, he died about – let's see, Rabbi Starr has been there thirty-one years.

PL: So how long did you have this relationship with him where you transcribed his –?

EE: A good ten, twelve years. All of that was over fifteen years. Because at fifteen years [old], I got a gold bracelet. My reward. In place of a raise in salary, I got a gold bracelet instead of a watch.

PL: Out of fifteen years.

EE: Instead of a watch, yeah.

PL: I want to hear more about that because I know that was a big event, the fifteen-year marker. But your relationship with Rabbi Levine then, working as – you were secretary to the Rabbi for how many years before your title changed?

EE: Just two.

PL: Just two years. And then how did you become an executive administrator at that point?

EE: After two years.

PL: How did your title change?

EE: Just by name.

PL: How did that come up? Did you ask for a title change?

EE: Never dreamed of it. But they were looking for somebody. They were looking for somebody to do the administrative work. I must have complained to somebody, I don't remember who. I must have said something that I was doing all these things, and I really needed some help. I didn't know what I needed, but I needed some help. A secretary to me is what I really needed. Now I'm saying it. I didn't realize it then, though. Didn't have sense enough to know what I really needed. I think that's what came up with the administration in two years.

PL: Because at that point, if you could describe all the duties –

EE: Two or three years.

PL: – all that duties that you had that made you think I need to hire another person. Can you list for us some of those duties? What were they? So you dictated the sermons. What else did you do?

EE: I didn't dictate it.

PL: I'm sorry, you took dictation.

EE: That went on record. I have to deny that. [laughter]

PL: Important. My mistake.

EE: Up to the end, until I retired. I've been gone thirty-five years, so that's a long time ago to remember so many things. I took Rabbi Levine's – I was his secretary. Only his secretary. He wouldn't have anybody else. Then I started, I just developed throughout the years, just something that was like in the family. You just do things. They were my family, really.

PL: Let me refer to this. You wrote something in your report about [how] you were initially asked to work nine to five, and you quickly realized then –

EE: I assumed yes.

PL: And then in the Temple Tidings, when you retired, this is what they wrote, and I want to read this because I'd like to get your response to it. They wrote here – and they were talking about how involved you were in temple that you were called Mrs. Temple, and the like. "She was not content unless she was in the heart of every temple project. Her job was twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week and now Esther decided to retire July 1."

EE: I didn't write that.

PL: No, someone else wrote this, and I believe this was in your honor and that was written in the Temple Tidings of May 28, 1965. So, it seems like there was obviously – they thought you – they told you were going to work nine to five and clearly you worked twenty-four seven.

EE: Seven days a week.

PL: So what were you doing, Mrs. Temple?

EE: [laughter] Some place down in there too, they called me Mrs. Temple. They called me Esther, they called me Mrs. Temple, and some names I never heard about. Something like that. They must have been calling me a lot of these. I'm sure there were a lot of people who didn't like me, especially if they were [inaudible] dues, and they started getting their dues back. One person, particularly a very wealthy person. You had to have paid up dues to vote. I was there with the voting to register as they came in. This man comes in, and he hadn't paid his dues. Everybody knew me by Esther, so I called everybody by their first name. It's good enough for them; it's good enough for me. They weren't superior to me. To me, they were the same people. Anyhow, I knew him from way back. I know a lot of these people from way back. I told him, I said, "If you give me your check now, you won't be wasting any out here. You can go right on in." Well, he got mad. I remember that's exactly the way I put it. Very tactfully, as much as I could be tactful, asking for money, which is a hard job. He blew up. He paid his check, gave me his dues, went into temple, and wrote a nasty note to the board. What did the board do? They tore the note up. What can they do? They got his money. [laughter] He stayed a member until he died. Paid his dues after that. Never had another word out of him. But he had to let it out on me.

PL: Did you have to chase after people about money all the time?

EE: No. That's the only time I asked for dues. I refused to do that because my relationship with the membership was good. I didn't want to spoil it by asking for – I asked for donations, though, and asked members for discounts on retail stuff for everybody except myself. When I wanted something, I paid full price. I never could ask for myself. But whenever anybody asked me, "Esther, do you know so and so? Could you do something for me?" "I'll try." Generally got something off. I hated it, but I did it. But for myself, I could never ask. I don't even ask my daughter for anything. She gets mad at me; I'm so darn independent. I guess she told you that too last week. Anyway, it pays off to be independent because that's why I've lived so long, I think on my own. I

don’t depend on anybody. I don’t assume anything anymore. I learned a good lesson there. You don’t assume anything. There was another thing that was in there that you probably haven’t read. The board used to meet downtown at the Olympic Hotel it was at that time. I had to go to some of these meetings, most of the meetings. Sometimes, I wondered, “Why do they need me?” Of course I always have my two cents in some place down the line. So, there was a reason. Anyhow, I couldn’t go to one meeting, and I said, “Well, why don’t you eat up here? I’ll have Fred set up the tables here, and I’ll order a delicatessen lunch.” Fine.

PL: Fred was the janitor?

EE: That was the janitor, Fred. He was a doll. He was a father. If I was the mother of temple, he used to call me the mother of Temple; he was the father of Temple. He was a wonderful man, and he only stayed because of me because every Monday and Thursday, he was quitting. He couldn’t take the buff from the kids. Superior. Snobs. He was a janitor. That used to grip me until I laid low on some of the kids. I really gave it to them one time. Oh, gosh, I forgot that was on.

PL: You can restrict it if you choose after.

EE: Okay. Okay. He stayed, I’m sure, until he died. As long as I was there, he stayed. He was equal. I told him once – he was quitting again. I said, “Fred, you just can’t. If you quit, then I’ll have to quit. I can’t do without you.” I said, “We’re the only two holding this place together. If we don’t have heat, what do we got? If we don’t have me solving everybody’s problems, what do we got? So, you got to stay.” Well, then he stayed. [laughter] That’s why I think of myself as not recognizing anything as anything. Talking to you, you’re a person, and that’s all that’s important.

PL: Do you feel that, at what point –? Well, you were telling me about the Olympic Hotel, so I want to get back to that. But at what point are we talking about in the Temple

de Hirsch's period? How many people were members at this time that you're referring to? Because it grew significantly while you were there.

EE: Oh, yes. But when I first started, I think there were about 750 or 800 people, something like that. Anyhow, it was a thousand. That's five thousand people I had to contact. Each one is figured four in a family. That's around five thousand people. You never know where it is going to come from. Where your contacts are going to be. What's happening. Like the Falasha family that came in. You never know who you are going to be in contact with when you come to Temple. Nobody else would accept them.

PL: What was the story with the Falasha family?

EE: Oh, you don't know that one?

PL: And what time is this? What year around?

EE: The holidays. School time. Just before the holidays.

PL: Was this in the '70s, '80s, in the '60s? What period of time?

EE: Geez, it goes back thirty-five years when I was there.

PL: Oh, this is when you were there.

EE: I was working there, yeah, so it must have been in the '80s. Wouldn't it be? Over thirty-five years. Yeah. Must have been during that time. It was during the war. The '70's. Yeah. Because my husband was in the Navy. He was transferred from New York. It's this Black Falasha colony they have in New York. When you were living in New York, did you know about them? Here, I'm telling you about what happens in New York. This woman comes to me with three children, all different ages, one year and a half, two years apart. Different school classes, different teachers, different kids, so they had gone

to every congregation, both Sephardic, Bikur Cholim, Herzl's, and at that time, I don't think Rabbi Mirel's temple. I don't think there was an Eastside at that time. It was just one temple, Temple de Hirsch. They came to me. I was in the old temple. Yeah, I was in the old temple, I'm sure. They came to me as a last resort. Very orthodox those Falasha Jews. Very, very orthodox. Okay. She didn't know where else to go to get their kids in Sunday School, and her husband was in the Navy. So I said, "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do; don't put them in this Sunday." This was during the week. "But come down the following Sunday. I'll have a chance to talk to the teachers, to tell their children that these children are coming in, and to be kind to them." Don't let nobody say anything that would hurt them because they are Black children. I was telling the teachers. Each teacher I had to call all three teachers and explain to them very definitely – be sure you tell your – I mean, I was pretty hard on the teachers to be sure they got the message from me to get to the kids the right way. You know kids are mean. They are horrible. They really go out to hurt others that they feel are not equal to them. They survived the whole Sunday School sessions until the High Holy Days, and I gave them seats in the balcony so they could see and hear the Rabbis good. Fortunately, I had seats. They came that early. [inaudible] the holidays, so I gave away seats that I shouldn't have given away, but I did.

PL: So you didn't charge them?

EE: No, no charge. The kids went to Sunday School – no charge. They went to High Holy Days – no tickets, no charge. Got tickets, but no charge. Then, I went to the board. I told them what I did. They could have fired me. [laughter] And if they did, it was good riddance. It wouldn't have hurt me any if they would fire for something like [that], but they didn't. They were wonderful. Every one of those. That was wonderful that they had no problems. They didn't say I was wonderful. They said it was wonderful that it was taken care of. Rabbi Levine would never tell me I did anything.

PL: Rabbi Levine would what?

EE: Never would tell me I was – there's something in there, too; I don't know if you read it or not, that he and another – the president at the time were buddies, long-time buddies. Some members come in and tell them what I'd done for them. They go to Rabbi Levine to tell him how wonderful I was. And then I'd go in to see if everything was okay because I didn't finish my job, so I went into the Rabbi while they were still talking, and then he says to me, "If you only wore pants." [laughter]

PL: What did he mean by that?

EE: Oh, I don't have to tell you.

PL: Well, I want to understand the context.

EE: I should have been a man. If I only was a man, what I could do. [laughter] I was doing all these things for all these people, and he says, "If you only were a man." The two of them.

PL: Do you think that he meant that if you were a man, you'd be doing something else?

EE: I have no idea. All it was was sex. I was female, and I shouldn't hold a position like that. I should be home. I'm assuming. This is one thing I do assume. You shouldn't assume anything but this I did assume. I should have been home washing dishes. What else could he have meant? That would make sense.

PL: Did he make you feel –? People are complimenting you. They're saying wonderful things about you.

EE: Yeah. He was jealous.

PL: Oh. So, that must have been somewhat demoralizing.

EE: No, it went right over my head like a duck. [laughter] I didn't care anymore by that time. I knew I was right. As long as I know I'm right, I stick to my guns. When it came to the temple again, so much of my life was spent there. The worst part of my life, after my husband died, I was [inaudible] after he died. I was still going through the throes of that and trying to find a niche for myself and my daughter. So, I did what I thought was right and I didn't let anybody stop me from doing it if I could possibly help it. If I was wrong, tell me where I'm wrong, and then maybe I will stop. [laughter] But when it came to the allocated seats, that was when the new temple started getting built –

PL: Hold on to your thought because I think I'm going to change this tape. We are running low on tape, so I'm going to stop here.

EE: Getting a new story.

PL: I want to hear this story. [Recording paused.] This is the second tape of the oral history interview with Esther Eggleston. And this is Pamela Brown Lavitt, oral historian for the Jewish Women's Archives Weaving Women's Word Project in Seattle. Today is Tuesday, April 3, 2001. We are continuing with the interview. Before we broke for a moment, you were talking about the unallocated and allocated seats.

EE: Yeah.

PL: Can you explain? How big was the main venue where people were sitting?

EE: Well, when I started working there, it was still just about the same, between eight [and] nine hundred people. Seven hundred people. Somewhere in through there. I've forgotten, really. It was so many years since then. This Morton Schwabacher – I brought his name up. His family bought seats; they're charter members. When they passed on in the years following, his family – Morton Schwabacher inherited the parents' seats. And now his children get those seats. They were passed on from generation to generation. So, I joined temple. I'm using myself as an example. I've been a member for forty

years, and I'm still sitting in the balcony behind a post because all these seats were sold downstairs. The "good" seats were all gone. So, this is certainly not democratic. That was my theme for the nagging that I did. Because I put in there, I nagged. Meeting after meeting to convince them that it's time to make a change with the new temple going on. There are no seats to be sold. We got pledges to build the temple. It didn't say anything about selling seats. If you had them there [inaudible]. Nothing was said about selling seats. And now's the time to make a change. I said, "If you're a member for forty years and you're still sitting behind a post in the balcony, so you come down here – where are you going to sit?" It's one floor. There is no balcony. Where are you going to put these people? All in the back. So, now is the time to make a change. I went on and on and on. I don't know how many meetings. Really, Pamela, I don't remember how many meetings we had on this [inaudible] seats while the temple is being built.

PL: Who were you convincing?

EE: The whole board.

PL: Which –?

EE: Eighteen people.

PL: Men? Women?

EE: Men. There were no women on the pulpit in those days.

PL: Were you the only person, the only woman who was in this meeting?

EE: Yes, always. I was the only one. Lunches – everything. I was the only one. There is nobody else there. Board members were all men. They didn't have any women sitting in the pulpit like they do these last few years. They've accepted women finally. Morton Schwabacher had all of us there at the meeting at his home for dinner. I started my spiel

again. I said, “If you don’t do it now, you’ll never get it done because where are you going to put these people that are always sitting behind a post? You don’t have any posts in the new temple. They all can’t sit in the last row.” [laughter] I remember him saying, “Esther, you are just like a bulldog. You never give up. I vote we have unallocated seats [inaudible] president Morton Schwabacher.

NN: He was the president of the congregation.

EE: He was the president of the congregation, and he’s voting for unallocated seats. So, he gave up his privilege. I was so proud that night. I can’t express my feeling that they finally did something that took a long, long time. But inside of me, I was mad. Why did it take so long to convince them? Inside of me, I was just seething that I had to convince them at so many meetings before they went along with it. I think all these presidents that were there at the one meeting are gone. They’re all dead. So, it’s really history. I can talk about any one of them. [laughter] They are not here to tell me, to sue me. Everybody’s being sued these days. [laughter] Anyway, if you don’t have a sense of humor working there, you’ve got nothing. Nothing to back you up with is a sense of humor.

PL: So, what do you think you did that made them listen to you?

EE: They got tired of me, I think. [laughter] I wore them down. I really think that’s the only reason that Morton Schwabacher called me a bulldog. “You never give up.” I think they just got tired of listening to me. I just wasn’t going to give up. If they didn’t do it, then when were they going to do it? Build another temple?

PL: So they were building another Temple. Was it going to increase in size as well?

EE: Yeah. A thousand people downstairs. It seats a thousand people.

PL: Had they heard it from anywhere else? Or had you gotten the idea to convince them because the temple members came to you instead of the board members or the rabbi to complain about the situation?

EE: Nobody complained. They were glad they didn't have to do it. At least I never heard any complaints from anybody from the board. When I came to them about this Falasha family that I did [inaudible] permission, I mean that's unheard of. You always go to the board for everything. There is one thing in there that I did go to the board for – to buy a new grave digger for the cemetery. The caretaker was one man out there taking care of that big cemetery. No help.

PL: The Hills of Eternity?

EE: The Hills of Eternity. It's a big cemetery. He kept it up real good. But I told him, when you need help, call The Millionaire's Club and get some help.

PL: What is The Millionaire's Club?

EE: It's not a Millionaire's Club. They call themselves because they take care of jobs [inaudible]. What should I call them? People without jobs can go there. They have a list of people, like housekeeping, and I think they're under bond because I've had them up at temple. That's another story. I've got so many stories you couldn't give another two seatings. Nobody is going to talk so much like me. But so many things have happened that haven't happened to anybody else. I know they haven't happened. I'm at the cemetery now. Anyway, I got them to okay the bill.

PL: Why did you need a gravedigger?

EE: When a person is buried – well, you're young yet. Have you ever been to a funeral?

PL: Yes.

EE: I'm sorry to hear you say yes, but sometimes you haven't. You've been lucky and haven't had to go to a funeral. But you have to dig it by hand. That's hard work. The ground is solid, rock-like. Clay. Solid as clay. That was hard work doing it alone so I used to get him help to do it. So, I figured out the cost of the whatchamacallit, the gravedigger automatic. Just push it down; it digs. I bought one, and they okayed the bill. Of course, they never asked [inaudible]. They had nothing to – they couldn't say no to me because I'd never asked for one before. I didn't realize they were available. How do you know these things unless you get stuck with something? You don't know about it. The caretaker told me that he wished he had something to make it easier. He didn't even [inaudible] about that either – something to make it easier. Because you can't always get help when you need it. That's the trouble. So, I bought one. I went around the hardware stores. I didn't know where else to go except to a hardware store and bought him a gravedigger. It was expensive. I can't remember – three, four hundred dollars, or something. Made him happy. He stayed until he had to quit, too. Got sick. Everybody stayed with me. Nobody quit [with] me.

PL: Now, do you think the gravedigger would have – I don't want to say complained but suggested that he needed such an object to anybody else. Was there anyone else to talk to, or was it Esther? Ask Esther?

EE: That's how it was. At least they didn't tell me they went to anybody else. Nobody ever told me that. They came to me right away. Somebody told somebody else. Word of mouth. Like a good bakery or show or something. It goes from word of mouth. Because I never told him to ask me. I was surprised that they came to me.

PL: So, you presented the bill to the board and they didn't know about it until it was already purchased? So, how'd they respond to you?

EE: They were glad. They didn't realize we needed one.

PL: I also understand that when you were hired, there was no healthcare.

EE: No, nothing. That shocked me. Rabbis didn't have healthcare. Rabbi Levine didn't have healthcare. Nobody. Even from the top. Nobody ever thought about it. There were three doctors on the board, so why would they think about that? Doctors are supposed to – so, I had to sell that idea, too. The healthcare.

PL: Why did the doctors oppose it?

EE: Well, it's opposition to going to a doctor instead of a group. It's money. Instead of going to Dr. (Kline?), they went to Group Health to have their babies. There is good reason to [inaudible]. I think Dr. (Kline?) was the first one that agreed to all the contracts. They sent all the contracts that I brought to them from Blue Cross. There were three or four outfits I contacted. I always contact first before I go to the board. It's solid when I get there. I mean, they don't have a leg to stand on, really, to object to anything. But three doctors explored all the things – they didn't trust me to just take my word for that because they didn't want it. They finally agreed that it was the best contract moneywise that they could get for health. So, they've been on that ever since.

PL: So you went with Group Health.

EE: I was a member already. So, I was so surprised that everybody wasn't. Yeah.

PL: So, therefore, how many people received healthcare after you –?

EE: Not many. Just the permanent people. There weren't that many permanent people there.

PL: Who was there?

EE: Sam Goldfarb, the director, the rabbis, myself, and two more people. I can't remember who they were. Four or five. It wasn't that many. It wasn't that costly. Not to

have them covered with some kind of a health –

PL: What did that mean for people, and what did they say to you? Did they respond or say thank you?

EE: No.

PL: Did they know that you had initiated this?

EE: Probably not. Nobody knew what I did. Really, a lot of the things, these things that I'm telling you about, nobody knew, the Board got the credit as they should have. Because they're the board – what they are there for. They're there for that, not me.

PL: Have you always felt that way, that the board should receive credit?

EE: That's why my name's not on anything. I never signed anything.

PL: That's interesting that you say your name is not on anything. So, where was your name attached to Temple de Hirsch?

EE: Word of mouth. [laughter] Really, that's how it was. Public relations. Really, I can't think of anything else.

PL: So, when you got feedback, what did people say? Do you have letters or things that people wrote to you or –?

EE: No. This Falasha group – I never got thanked from her. Just took it for granted. After all she went through to get there, just took it for granted. I accepted that, too. To me, it's ignorance. People don't know any better.

PL: Do you think that today if you were working at Temple de Hirsch – because now I understand there are quite a few women who work there in administrative roles – it would be any different?

EE: No.

PL: Why not?

EE: People just expect you to do these things. Expect it. Like a waitress. It hurts me sometimes the way people treat waitresses. They expect that service. They might be rude. I mean the customer. They will be really rude and everything, and why would they expect a waitress to be sweet when they are so rude? They just think they can do anything they please if they're paid for it. If you pay for it. At least, that's my interpretation. I could be wrong. I hope I'm wrong. Yeah.

PL: Well, you had written – and I'm going to read this. It was in your report. You said something earlier about this as well. You said, "I firmly believe that no man would have done some of the things I did so automatically, like being awakened at 2:00 AM in the morning because of a death and they didn't want to bother the Rabbi."

PL: What were the kinds of things that you did so automatically? And why did you do them so automatically? What is it about you, Esther, that makes you do them?

EE: How could you decipher that? How do you explain something like that when that's your nature?

PL: I guess you can look at the way you were brought up or think about the way that you were taught to be a person or your values.

EE: My mother was very kind. She wouldn't say no to anybody for anything. She'd give the last nickel in her purse if she had to. She was very good. Very generous. I don't remember her ever arguing with anybody. I don't take after her. I take after my father. [laughter]

PL: How so? What was your father like?

EE: He was wonderful to people, too. Everybody called him “Pop.” If they called me Esther, they called him Pop. My mother was more conservative, more dignified, very sweet, gentle, and got no place with it. Maybe that’s where I learned all this from. Because she got no place with it being so kind.

PL: So if you were to describe –?

EE: My sisters aren’t like me either. Neither one of them. I’m the something or other in the family. The alien in the family. [laughter]

PL: Why alien? Are your sisters very different in terms of their temperament? You’re very shrewd, it sounds like, or that you could make very savvy decisions.

EE: Yeah. Even in my family, any arrangements had to be made, I had to make them. My older sister was a yes person. And definitely, I’m not a yes person. Completely the opposite. Even there, when my Grandmother was with us – I told you I never did a dish because I would get the towels mixed up or something I did was wrong. I was always doing something wrong. My job was to dust the apartment. That wasn’t when my grandmother was with us; it was when we lived in an apartment. My oldest sister was doing the vacuuming. I was doing the dusting. Well, after I was all through dusting, she dusted afterwards. So, I never dusted. I’d go to the bathroom and read a magazine. [laughter] I was very shrewd. I was a con girl. I’d guess I’d call me that today. That’s what I mean. Today they’d call me a con girl. But why dust twice? Doesn’t make sense does it? Lost our place, huh?

PL: Well, I just thinking about what you were saying about so many of the things you have done has made other people’s working lives easier, and perhaps even more worthwhile having healthcare, having something to help you out. I’m wondering how it is that you made your own work life easier for yourself given all the challenges.

EE: Well, my life was all with my daughter. I mean, anything I did to make my life easier, I did for her. My first trip to Alaska was with my niece. Her sister babysat her. Annette was twelve when we went to Alaska on my vacation. I went on vacation because I had surgery. I was home convalescing before I went. Rabbi Levine and one of the board members came up with some work for me to do at home. I didn't know they were coming. I was in a bathrobe lying on the couch relaxing, and they came with some books. How do you respond to that? What do you do? I'm not going to do it? How do you respond? So, you just do it. They came and got the work when it was finished. I never saw them again until I went back to work. That's a rare thing.

PL: That must of –

EE: You lose respect.

PL: Did they ever know that you felt that had taken advantage of you in that way?

EE: Definitely, lots of times. I'm very rebellious. But what can you do?

PL: Did you ever express yourself to them?

EE: No. It wouldn't have done me any good. I didn't feel it would ever do any good. It would only harm me getting mad. Yeah. So, lots of times I just kept still when I would have liked to shoot my mouth off. But I only shot my mouth off when I was helping somebody else. I could do it easy then. But for myself, I never could. Like getting wholesale. I always paid cash. [laughter] No discounts.

PL: So, who was more your confidant at Temple de Hirsch?

EE: Nobody.

PL: Were there friends or members or did you keep your private life separate from your work life?

EE: All together. Even visiting. Even for dinners. The only time I went to anything social was when I was invited for baby naming, bar mitzvahs, or anything. But that's another thing I didn't even mention. Every time there was a wedding, the girls asked me to help them – show them how to walk down the aisle. So, I had to be there. I went to all the pre-dinner rehearsals for dinner, followed by the rehearsal. It was late at night. In the meantime, Annette was older here then. I forgot to mention all these meetings that I went to, and they were night meetings and everything. I never accepted any night meetings. They had to do without me until she was old enough for me to leave alone or with somebody. She was about ten, twelve years old. I worked five or six years at Temple before I went to anything at night unless I could take her with me, which I never did. There was no place for kids. I was told I could bring her, but I said, "No, I can't do that." I could say no when it concerned her. But if it concerned me, it didn't matter; it didn't make any difference to me. I was kind of dumb. [laughter] That's natural.

PL: So these weddings, women from the congregation, or children –

EE: Married in temple.

PL: Married in temple and they would ask you, did they approach you at home? Did they approach you in the administrative offices? How did they –?

EE: Oh, no. At Temple. "Gee, Mrs. E., can you help me?" I mean, kids. Getting married, what would you do?

PL: Do you particularly remember feeling that they were all the same or did you particularly enjoy doing it at some point?

EE: It doesn't make any difference. They were still the same people at the Temple always. I'm saying these things now, but I didn't realize how I felt myself. I didn't know what I was doing. Like I just said, I was dumb.

PL: So at the time, your feelings were different than they are now about that experience?

EE: No, I'm not sorry. None of that. I'm not a bit sorry. Of anything I did I felt it was right, and it was appreciated. Because if it wasn't appreciated, I would have heard from them. If there was something wrong, then I would have been told.

PL: Let's talk a little bit about how you were recognized as being so important and such an integral part of people's Temple de Hirsch experience. When did you first –? When were you first honored for your dedication and commitment to the Temple?

EE: With that bracelet. Gold bracelet, fifteen years.

PL: So you had been there for fifteen years.

EE: They honored me by making me executive administrator. Big deal. [laughter] Oh, that was a big honor.

PL: Can you tell me the story about how you changed your title and them honoring you?

EE: That was a surprise. That was a very big surprise. Because I knew they were shopping. Al Shyman was president at that time. He said, "What do we got here? We've got an administrator right here. What are you shopping for?" Or something to that effect. I wasn't there when they talked about it, but that's what happened. I didn't know anything about it. No mention was made of a raise, which I also said in there; I had to ask for it. That was after several discussions before I got it.

PL: So your title was changed when they realized that they didn't need to look for someone else. What were the new duties associated with your changed position?

EE: Nobody told me. [laughter] I was never coached about what an administrator is supposed to do. Whatever happened, it was done. I did it.

PL: In your mind, what did the change to administrator mean?

EE: I knew what it was supposed to be. You're supposed to be like an auditor. You're supposed to keep the building in shape. You're supposed to tell other people what to do. You're supposed to tell the board what they should be doing. [laughter] I knew what I should be doing. What I did do was something else again.

PL: Know this was in 1946?

EE: Yes.

PL: Correct?

EE: Yeah, close enough.

PL: Were there other women administrators of temples in Seattle?

EE: No No place. I don't think there still is.

PL: So you were the first –

EE: I don't think that anybody has an administrator. I haven't heard of any in the other synagogues.

PL: But you were recognized by the –?

EE: Union.

PL: By the Union of American Hebrew Congregations?

EE: I had to be accredited.

PL: To be accredited for this position?

EE: Yeah.

PL: Was that immediately after your title change?

EE: Yes.

PL: You were honored as being the first woman or you just knew you were the first woman?

EE: I knew I was the first on the West Coast. When I went to the first convention, there were women on the East Coast. So, it wasn't new to the union; it was new on the West Coast. I don't know if there are any on the West Coast now. I haven't heard. I mean, I haven't kept up with it.

PL: Did it mean a change in respect, that title change?

EE: Not really. Because I was doing it anyway. Nobody recognized that I was. [inaudible] Rabbi Levine' it had to come from him. There was no respect for the title. I was still a secretary. Until he died, I was a secretary. He never recognized it. I wasn't a man. He said it all. "If you only wore pants." He said it all in that one four or five words.

PL: When you were awarded this fifteen year, who decided to honor you?

EE: I have no idea.

PL: How did it come about, and how did you learn about it?

EE: They had a reception for me. I sat on the pulpit, and that was an honor.

PL: Did they say anything? Make any announcements?

EE: I have a beautiful something or another, I don't even remember if I kept it. [laughter] Didn't mean anything to me.

PL: Why not?

EE: It's just superfluous. I mean, it just doesn't mean anything. It's a piece of paper. Framed paper. That's all it was. When I retired, I felt the same way. Just a framed thing. It's in the bottom drawer.

PL: What did they do at the Oneg Shabbat in your honor when you retired?

EE: Oh, the Sisterhood baked beautiful cookies, and everybody was congratulating me. They didn't know what they were congratulating me about. But I'm sure they didn't. It was the thing to do. It was the thing to do when being honored. I'm being very cynical about these things because if I had gotten thanked when it happened, that would have meant something to me. If I did something spectacular – that was an honor being called a bulldog. That's a crazy honor. But to me, that was coming from Morton Schwabacher, and it was sincere. That was a pat on the back. He meant that. I don't give up. Otherwise, those things are immaterial to me. Just like talking religion to anybody. It's immaterial. It's one person talking to another person. Like that gas man. Yeah. That's all it means. I still feel the same way about all these things. I don't know where that came from, though. My parents weren't that definite and determined about things like I am. It's all important to me. It must have come from my uncle in St. Louis, who was determined to be a lawyer. Must have come back from that generation. [laughter]

PL: Do you think if you could have had a different career, perhaps using your skills as a bulldog, [laughter] you might have chosen a different career today?

EE: Yes, I would have been a public stenographer. If I had the money, that's what I was going to do when I retired. I'd meet people in the hotels; I'd be doing a service to these people that come in with no place to go except to the public stenographer. But I didn't have the money to do it. It's expensive. I checked out several places – hotels where the money would be. I didn't have the beginning to do it – the publicity. It's expensive. Very

expensive to rent a space in a hotel. Very expensive. Then, I was still a little girl. Yeah.

PL: How old were you when you retired?

EE: Oh, when I retired, she was married and everything, not then. But I was thinking that all the time. It was in the back of my mind. I'd love to be a public stenographer.

PL: What is it about the public stenographer position –?

EE: Just to be with the public. Just people.

PL: What's the service that a public stenographer provides?

EE: Secretarial work. Salesmen come in and dictate letters. I was excellent at it. I knew I was excellent. I knew I was able to do it. I always had a dictionary with me to be sure I spelled right. If I didn't know the names, I'd ask them when he was through dictating; I'd say, "Can I back up a little bit? Would you please spell this person's name for me so I don't make a mistake?" I did that with some of the [inaudible Supply Company when the president and people came from San Francisco up to visit here. I always ended up [collecting] money. I always ended up as a creditor. When I was twelve years old and my father was still making vests, he had menswear on Third Avenue. That was the thing to do is have homemade suits. Handmade suits. His part was the vest of the suit. Some of these fellows were bad pays. This one was particularly bad pay – wouldn't pay my dad. He'd go down there several times with the garments, all done, and all the ones he had finished – "Next time." He would give him some more work to do. My dad was a softy. He was a bad businessman. So, I'd take the streetcar, go down there, and collect the money. I always got it. [laughter] At the [inaudible] Supply Company, the credit manager would say, "Esther, would you do me a favor? I can't get this man on the telephone even." But I was a kid in high school. [laughter] I worked for them after that for several years. And wherever I ended up, I was always collecting money. Still, now I'm asking for money. All the fundraising, I'm always the top [inaudible[

in the fundraising. Then, we built a temple. I went to one of the family members, and he pledged ten thousand dollars. Yeah, it was ten thousand dollars he pledged to me. The president at that time – I won't mention names – went with me the second time. He thought, "I better go with you." I said, "No, you don't have to go with me. I did all right. I got a ten thousand dollars pledge." He settled for $7,500. He didn't ask for ten thousand. He didn't say it was ten thousand. He undercut me. [laughter] How about the competition at collecting money?

PL: Now, this was at Temple de Hirsch?

EE: Temple de Hirsch, the new building.

PL: Did you often meet with prospective donors? You did a lot of fundraising work for them?

EE: No. Just people I knew that couldn't say no. No.

PL: So do you feel that maybe because [you're] a woman or because you're a small person, people underestimated your capabilities?

EE: The board did. I think the board did. Not because I was small in stature, but [because] they were small in thinking. That's what it was. They didn't acknowledge the fact that I was a woman doing all these things. They recognized it by accepting everything I said. Like with the mausoleum. Outdoor mausoleums. You don't know about that?

PL: A little bit. You mentioned that was one of the things you were proud of.

EE: Oh yes.

PL: So tell me what that's about.

EE: I'd gone to Portland to a cemetery for a funeral and saw that they had their mausoleum with crypts on the outside. Space. They were talking for years of buying property. Never could find property that they could afford, or it was too far away or some reason they couldn't buy it. [inaudible] talk. Talk, talk, talk in all these meetings. Just like the government is doing now. Same thing. I saw this and then I went out there to Washelli's to see what they had. They had them on the outside.

PL: Which place?

EE: Washelli Cemetery.

PL: Where is that?

EE: North End. Straight out north on Aurora. They have them. So then I told the – did this get disconnected?

PL: Yep. I'll plug it right back in. It actually has a battery, so we can keep going. So you went up to Washelli's.

EE: I went to Washelli's, and I talked to the manager there. Gee, this is great. You don't need any property. It's got all these four walls. That took not quite as much as the unallocated seats, but almost as much conversation about it. I made them go see it and talk to the manager. I didn't go when they went to see it. They did it on their own. I said, "See it on your own." I didn't want us to be talking out there, too. That didn't make any sense. If they can't see it for their own value, what good am I? So anyway they came back, and now they have it. Most of them are sold. There's lots of room for more. They're sold but not occupied. That's good.

PL: So, in terms of your suggesting things, were you privy to other board meetings around these subjects? Did you listen to the conversations that happened? Did you feel that they weren't effective? You said that they were small in their thinking. What did you

mean by that?

EE: That didn't accept it. They had to have so many meetings. How else can you think? It was never done the first time. I think the only thing they accepted was that gravedigger. They paid the bill. There was no discussion. But all these other things, especially the seats and the mausoleum – those were two big projects.

PL: Yes.

EE: Terrific projects to have accomplished. But nobody ever heard my name of having originated it until now – in there for anyone to see.

PL: Well, do you think about how, in Jewish tradition, we talk about the mitzvah, and oftentimes, the greatest mitzvahs are those that people don't know you've done?

EE: Yes.

PL: Do you think about that?

EE: No. I just do them. [laughter] I said previously, which I'll repeat: I'm very dumb in my own good way. I don't see these things ahead of time [inaudible] other people. But most people, when they are doing anything, you hear about it. Their names are all over the place, and their money is coming [inaudible] next week.

PL: Do you feel that Temple de Hirsch –? Can you talk about two things? One is the class relationships at Temple de Hirsch. The classes of Jews over the period of time that you were working there. Did it stay the same?

EE: Oh, it's changed. You go into temple now, and there are yarmulkes and there are tallises, and they are praying and a lot of singing. Everybody sits together. That hasn't changed; they always sat together, but you never saw a yarmulke, especially when Rabbi Koch was there – or a tallis. Forbidden. They never met at temple. I don't know if they

ever asked to meet at Temple because they knew Rabbi Koch was anti-Zionist. I don't know if they ever asked before [inaudible] put my two cents in there – and my ignorance. [laughter] To me, it was a Jewish organization. Why should they go someplace else and pray and meet? I was really set back about that. I felt really bad about it – to Rabbi Koch.

PL: What was that?

EE: Well, I didn't know that he had been asked and had objected. I didn't know anything about anything. I just thought, why aren't you here?

PL: You didn't know about his anti-Zionist feelings?

EE: Well, I knew that, but I didn't associate it with a meeting. Why should one have anything to do with the other? To me, see, it shouldn't have had.

PL: What meeting was that?

EE: Hadassah meetings.

PL: Oh, the Hadassah meetings that –? Because Temple de Hirsch was home to lots of clubs and societies.

EE: Everything.

PL: So, the Hadassah asked to meet there. What happened?

EE: I don't know if they ever asked. But they knew he was not a Zionist. I won't say anti, but he was not a Zionist. We'll put it that way. We have to be tactful.

PL: Yes. While you were there as the administrator you were in charge of scheduling? Correct? Scheduling [inaudible] clubs—

EE: People could use the Temple before the community center was built. They all could.

PL: Yes. So before the community center, you were in charge of –

EE: They had to check for me because these kids go into basketball and everything, and if I know they are coming, I'll tell them not to come today; there is a meeting going on.

PL: So, everything went through you?

EE: Yes.

PL: What kind of groups used Temple de Hirsch?

EE: AZAs. The fraternity boys. They used it a lot. The college kids. From all [congregations].

PL: What was the name of the fraternity?

EE: AZA was their club.

PL: AZA. And that was at the University of Washington?

EE: No, that was just a group of kids.

PL: A group.

EE: Because a lot of them were in college. Not a fraternity. I don't believe in fraternities and sororities. I guess you'd gather that I wouldn't. But Annette went for one year. She joined a sorority first year of college. She went for one year, and I let her be the judge. I said, "You know I don't approve of them. But if you want to find out for yourself what's going on, maybe I could be wrong. It might have changed." She went, and she dropped out. She stayed a year, and then she dropped out. She thought the same thing I did – they're all snobs. [laughter] She dated. She had a good time. But she saw beneath the

surface. She's her mother's daughter in a lot of ways.

PL: I want to talk a little bit about your being a mother so maybe we can shift gears a little bit and backtrack because maybe this will be the last part of the interview today.

EE: You're going back into temple so much.

PL: We are. We'll back up.

EE: Because so much happened to me in those twenty-three years, I just never wind down. [laughter]

PL: I'm sure many other things will come up. I want to actually go back to when you met your husband. I'm just wondering, where did you meet?

EE: I was working at Sears. I guess I never mentioned that, but I worked at Sears, too. Yeah. During high school during summer. On a blind date. Just like you. No, yours was a blind, yeah.

PL: No, we met through someone, though.

EE: Oh, no. Well, this was through his brother. He was dating one of the girls that I worked with, so we double-dated on a blind date. We hit it off right away. I liked him very much. It was mutual. We just dated for a while, nothing serious, and finally, it got to be more than that. Introduced him to my mother. I went with him for ten years off and on, off and on. I always came back.

PL: Now, is it a ten-year courtship –?

EE: Finally, I won my battle with my mother.

PL: Now, what was the battle about?

EE: Religion.

PL: Can you elaborate?

EE: Yeah, but I don't want it in print, though. Turn it off.

PL: You want me to turn it off?

EE: I want it turned off, yeah. [Recording paused.] – by Rabbi (Lang?).

PL: So, ten years later, you dated off and on. When did you get married?

EE: In November of 1934. I was twenty-four when I met him. Must have been. [laugher] Ten years. We were married in the synagogue, and then we had our dinner and everything down at the Mayflower Hotel, which is no longer there. Some other hotel is there instead. Mayflower Hotel. It was the stormiest weather – rain and storm in the city of Seattle. Frederick & Nelson's was on Second Avenue at that time, and all of Second Avenue's windows were blown in by the storm – crashed. All the damage was almost as much as this earthquake from the rain at that time. We had our wedding in that, and it was difficult. Parking wasn't so bad at that time. There weren't too many cars on the road – garages that you could park in. A big full-course dinner. It was a beautiful wedding.

PL: It was a Jewish wedding?

EE: Oh, definitely. Rabbi (Lang?) was there for the dinner and everything.

PL: Did you get married under a chuppah?

EE: Yes, real Jewish wedding in the synagogue.

PL: Do you have any particular memories about either the reception or the celebration?

EE: The reception was down at the Mayflower Hotel; all of that was there. There was a bar and a regular dinner – turkey, I think. It was something. Poultry anyway. Because one of my cousins, one of these jokers, went into the kitchen and came out with the carcass. I was mortified. [laughter] I could have killed him. Isn't that a horrible thing to do at a wedding reception? But they all enjoyed it. They broke it apart there at the table. It was horrible. These are well-known people in the Jewish community. The son of this guy who did it has this flower show – Johnny's Flower show now. I don't know if he'd even want me to remember that. He wasn't alive at the time of course.

PL: So, you were married. You were thirty-four years old. Is that right?

EE: Thirty.

PL: So, you were thirty. And how old was –?

EE: Thirty-two.

PL: What was your husband's name?

EE: Ralph.

PL: Ralph Eggleston. Your maiden name was?

EE: Mine was Pearl.

PL: Where did you move to after you were married?

EE: Right here on Broadway. Winters Apartment. It still says Winters Apartment, but the owners are dead, so they must have bought the name. They had the tuxedo place in there. All formal wear in there, and they sold out [inaudible] rent got too high, I guess, because they're in the middle of the block now. From there, we moved to – when I was pregnant with Annette, we moved to a court on – gosh, where was that? – on Marion

Street, not too far from where we were living when we first came to Seattle, and there were a lot of Jewish people living there, too.

PL: Did you keep a Jewish household?

EE: No. Never kosher because I was Reform. In my heart, I was Reform before I was conscious that it was a religion.

PL: And how did he feel about –? Did you go to temple, for instance, with your family, or did you observe the High Holidays?

EE: Not after confirmation, no. There was no reason to go. My parents didn't go. I went to Sunday School to please my mother. I got a Jewish education, and confirmation wouldn't have got me any better. For some reason, didn't really go to Temple for any reason except for things I was invited to – a wedding or something like that that I was invited to.

PL: Given that you were –

EE: [inaudible] to do with it.

PL: – courting for ten years, do you have any particular stories, things that you remember about your courtship? Things that were touching or sweet?

EE: Only that we broke up so often.

PL: Is that right?

EE: I don't know what the arguments were all about, but something broke us up. Mostly because of my mother because he wanted to get married, and I couldn't get married, and that's what the arguments were all about. And then finally I stood firm. But those conditions only. He was a wonderful guy. All my friends liked him more than they liked

me. He was wonderful. He observed all the holidays. He did everything. I did, too. When my daughter was born, she was in the hospital with me – my mother. She was in Providence Hospital, the floor above me. She died the day Annette was born. She never saw her. So, that's another experience. That doesn't have to go in there, though.

PL: When did you get pregnant with Annette?

EE: Well, about a year, year and a half later. Yeah. It must have been because she was born in '36. Must have been. A year later, anyway. A year and three months later. [laughter]

PL: Do you remember much about your parents' expectations for you as either a wife or a mother?

EE: No. I was never that close to my mother. My sister either, for that matter. Not really. No dreams of anything of that kind. [inaudible]

PL: How did you feel when you found out you were pregnant?

EE: How did I feel? Happy. Yeah.

PL: Were you trying to get pregnant?

EE: I guess we must have been. I don't think it was an accident.

PL: How was your pregnancy?

EE: Fine. No problem at all. I had no problem. But my mother dying after pregnancy – and my water broke as I was visiting her in the hospital. It was a horrible time. But the most horrible part of that time was she was supposed to come down and see the baby that day. Is this being recorded?

PL: Yeah.

EE: She was supposed to come down and see the baby that day. And she didn't show up. Even then, I had a lot of insight into what's wrong before this ever happened with people. The doctor was [inaudible] careful with me. The nurses were careful – in and out. "What can I do?" I said, "What's wrong? Did my mother pass away?" She had come in with a heart attack. She had angina. Had gone in with a heart attack. I told them, "Did my mother pass away?" Nobody would tell me because they didn't want to upset me. I was going to nurse the baby, of course. Then nothing happened. I had to put her on the bottle right away. The most horrible part about it was this family, my father's family that we followed out here, all came to the funeral, of course, and then all came up to see me at the hospital. They were all talking over my bed about the show they were going to see, the dinner they were having, and all this conversation. Please go away. It was a renewal of when my grandmother died, and she was sitting shivah on the box. That was Jefferson – my grandmother – and my mother did this. The same people came to this funeral when I was twelve years old, and I went through all this in my mind when they came to see me at the hospital. All this conversation about the good times they were going to have. So senseless. People are so insensitive. They don't realize. They're still doing the same thing. I've been to many of these affairs, and there's no mention to the person who is bereaved. You don't even see where they are in the room to talk to them or anything. They talk between themselves, over their heads. It's awful how people are. So senseless. Lack of sensitivity. Really sad to see people go that way.

PL: How did you deal with it? Did you talk to your husband about it? Did you talk to your friends about it?

EE: No. About me being that upset? What good would that do, talking about it?

PL: Did you have to sit shivah? Did you feel in deference to your mother that you needed to?

EE: No, she wouldn't want me to. She wouldn't have wanted me to. I say that to Annette, too. I always say to Annette, "Remember, I never had a …". What do you call them? It's such an easy word to remember. Can't you help me?

PL: What word are you looking for? You never had a –? Describe it.

EE: Well, somebody does things [inaudible] all the time. Somebody who drinks or something.

PL: I'm not sure. [laughter]

EE: There's a word, anyway. As long as it's turned off, I'll think about it. But I always say, "I never had 'that' daughter because you have 'that' mother." [laughter] Crazy.

PL: How was Annette when she was a baby?

EE: Oh, good. Wonderful.

PL: What kind of child was she?

EE: Oh, she's been good all her life. Because when I was working at Temple, that was a hard thing, you know. Of course, I would stick her with me on Saturdays and Sundays when she went to services or Sunday School. She went to everything I could take her to at temple – the things I was invited to. I just hate when they bring little kids to these things and annoy everybody. They steal the show because the attention is paid on the kids instead of the bride or whatever it is. I always had somebody stay with her. I never left her alone.

PL: Do you remember anything in particular about the birthing experience itself? Do you remember things the doctors told you? Or nurses told you? Did they encourage you to nurse or not?

EE: No. I can't remember really. You're sort of numb at that time. I take it you don't have children yet or you would know your own experience. It's the same experience I'm sure everybody goes through – their feelings. You're either happy or not happy. If you want the baby, then you are happy. It's over with. That's the main thing. You're happy it's over with. That's your first impression. Everybody I've heard of.

PL: So, you then took her – you lived on Capitol Hill with Annette until she was –?

EE: No, when we first got married. Then I moved, before I had her. I had her in this court. It was on Marion Street, too.

PL: I guess I'm leading up to wanting to know when, how old was she when your husband passed away?

EE: Well, we were married eight years. She must have been eight years old.

PL: Do you want to –?

EE: No, she wasn't even that old. She went to kindergarten because I remember I called my sister-in-law, Ralph's sister, to come down and take care of her to get her to school – kindergarten. From there, then I went and picked up my sister, Tillie, and then I went to the hospital. I did all this. The doctor told me my husband died in the ambulance on the phone. I never saw him.

PL: What did he die of?

EE: Pneumonia.

PL: Was he ill for a period of time?

EE: No. No. Not at all. About three days.

PL: And you had seen him that day, that morning?

EE: Yeah. He didn't feel good. So, he came back, and he was working in Bremerton, like I said.

PL: What did he do?

EE: Electrician. That was his profession anyway. He was an electrician. That's when he went to work – he wasn't eligible to get into the Army or in the service because of being married and having a child. They weren't accepting married men at that time. It was right at the beginning. So, he went to work at Bremerton in the Navy. He came home sick one day, and three days later, the doctor came to the house and went to take care of him. He said he should go to the hospital. I said, "Well, send him to the hospital. Don't worry about the money. That's no problem. I can't take care of him. I've got this little girl here. I've got to get her to school." So that's what we did. I called my sister-in-law, and she came and got Annette. I went to my sister's, went to the hospital, did all the necessary signing and the legal work, and all of the rest of the stuff that you have to go through at this time. Like something inside of me went outside and did all these things. I can't remember except the top details of what I did. But feel? I had no feeling at all. It's like it happened to three other people. I went back to my sister's, and I fell apart. Then I realized what was going on. I lived at my sister's – that was a – do you want all this?

PL: It's part of your story.

EE: Anyway, she did the best she could. She didn't always do what's good for other people. It wasn't good for her either. She had me move in with her. She had three children and a small house. I had to share a room with the two girls. I stayed there a year. That's when I was working at the Port of Embarkation. As I said, her aunt was being called mom and all that. It ties up with that. I was sharing things with Fern. She was the oldest girl. She was nine years older than Annette. Annette was only five. I didn't remember what happened. But the next day, when I came home from work, I went right to Beacon Hill, and the young couple was there with two children. They had their

home. They were buying the home on Beacon Hill. It was a little home. Two bedrooms. A back porch with a door and everything to it. What would you call that room? Anyhow, I had my dog. I kept my dog out there. Anyhow, he had a little doghouse. My refrigerator was out there. I bought the house at night two weeks before Thanksgiving.

PL: So you were living with your sister. You were living with Tillie.

EE: Yes.

PL: For almost one year. How did you happen upon this home? You just saw this couple selling it?

EE: Clear blue sky. I was filled up living at my sister's. I've got to do something about this. On my way home from work. I didn't tell her. I never told anybody anything in my life, it seems like. I do things first. I went up there, and they wanted a deposit and I did that. I wrote them out a check. This couple was there. They were still selling it. The front of the lawn – it was a new house. It was only two years old. They were building all these houses for the war because [inaudible] it was an easy road to go down Pearl Street and turn right directly into Boeing. This is Georgetown. A long way to go, but there's a strip through it. So, the front lawn was all nice and green. This was after work, it was late at night – November. They had two azalea bushes on both sides. It was lovely. I didn't see the rest of the yard. I didn't know how big it was. I paid my deposit.

PL: How much did that home cost you at that point?

EE: Five thousand dollars. [laughter] That's sixty-five years, sixty-four, sixty-three years ago.

PL: Had you been saving?

EE: Yeah, I lived there for twenty-three years there, too. I worked at the temple all the time I was living there, though, because I lived at my sister's for the Port of Embarkation. From there, I bought the house. Anyhow, I went out the next morning. The yard was a 120 by 180-foot lot, this way and that way. 120 this way; 180 that way. Another 320 in back. Full of asparagus stalks. Do you know what those are?

PL: I know what asparagus is.

EE: Not asparagus. These were weeds that grew about four feet high. The whole – here, the front was beautiful green, that's all I saw. I was desperate. I make fast decisions. [laughter] Chop, chop. But that was no mistake. The mistake was when my father came out and saw it. That was November. By February, I had had it with my father. Got to do something. Got to do something. I said it's not time for that. When I'm ready, I'll have it done. He couldn't wait. So, he hired a man with a plow and plowed it up. That's wonderful. But what did he do? He didn't seed it or put new new dirt in it – nothing. Just plowed it up, evened it off. What did I get? A bunch of weeds. [laughter] If the urge to kill was then, it was then. What an experience that was. I saw this yard –

PL: Here you are, a single mother and a new homeowner.

EE: All in a year.

PL: All in a year's time. What was that like compared to other friends of yours? Were you unique?

EE: Definitely. There's nobody like me. I haven't met anybody like me since. [laughter] When I'm talking to you, there's nobody like me.

PL: What prepared you to take that step?

EE: I just got crowded living with my sister. It was crowded. Three in a room. Annette was getting her way too much. Getting spoiled. My brother-in-law yelled at her and then gave her what she wanted anyway. It just wasn't living right. Two families can never live together, no matter how well you get along. My sister and I – what she did was wonderful. She did everything she could. She'd give everything away. I had at least a thousand dollars' worth of camping equipment. Fishing. My husband was a good fisherman. The three of us would go out on weekends, put Annette in the potty chair with the strap, and we'd go fishing every weekend. Every Sunday, Saturday, whenever.

PL: Where did you go fishing?

EE: On Lake Washington. I forgot what the name of the lake was. Yeah. It was good. It was a good rowboat, a big one. You could seat four people in it. I guess it was more than a rowboat. I always called it a rowboat because it didn't have a top on it. I wasn't a fisherwoman. I think I almost fell out of the boat the first fish I caught. [laughter] Anyway, I gave it to my brother-in-law – his brother. But I needed the money to sell that stuff. It was all practically new. How often did you use it? Linens were kept because she needed the extra bed. They needed a kitchen. Well, she had all that stuff, so she didn't need mine. So, she gave it all away. So, when I bought my house, I was like a new bride. I didn't have a darn thing. Nothing. No sheets. No pillowcases. No towels. No nothing. It was all used up in that years' time, which is fine because I was using them. But the other stuff, I could have stored it. My brother-in-law said, "You won't need a car because you won't be going out at night very much," and I'll take you. Well, that's the last I saw – he sold my car. He sold his car and kept mine because it was only two years old. It was an Oldsmobile. Good car in good shape. He sold mine. I think he gave me the money. That's a detail. He must have given it to me. But I had no car. I needed a car. I never saw my car again because he uses it. Never took me any place. [laughter] Isn't that like a man? [laughter] Anyway, that's why.

PL: Where would you have gone? If you had had a car – well, actually, I'm wondering more about what it was like then to be a single mother. Were there agencies to help you? Friends to help you? Who drove you places when you needed to go? Did you take the bus? Can you paint for me a bit of a portrait of what being a single mom was like back in those days?

EE: I don't know how it was with others, but as far as I was concerned, I was completely independent. Completely on my own. Nobody offered to help because I was doing all right. I never asked for help. I don't blame anybody because I never asked for help. My sister did what she could while I was working there, but she didn't drive. She never did drive. You can't blame anybody if you don't ask. I've learned that if you don't ask, you don't get. That's why I get money because I ask for it. I get volunteers to work because I ask for it. Nobody volunteers on their own to do anything. I'm not an asker, so you just manage.

PL: Was there any kind of –? Did people respond to you as a single mother differently than they would if you were a married woman with a child?

EE: They dropped me from their social lists. If you don't have a man to go with, and I didn't have a car at the time, but when I moved out there, my father had a grocery store by that time. He gave up driving because he ran into a strawberry patch. It was a miracle that he didn't die. That he wasn't killed. Because he jumped. This was the street. He jumped the curb and went over the lawn; this next street was on an incline, like a block incline; that car, I don't know how it got into the yard – next block, into their backyard. Not a scratch. It's just a miracle that his number wasn't called up.

PL: How old of a man was he when this happened?

EE: About sixty-five, seventy. He should have been off the road anyway. He was always a bad driver. [laughter] So, he junked the car. Knew I needed a car. He junked it.

So, I went down there because I couldn't buy a car during the war. I don't know if you remember this or not or heard people talk about it, but you were rationed with everything. I didn't have a refrigerator. My sister had an old icebox. She bought twenty-five pounds of ice; that's all it held. That's what I had in my utility room. That's the word I was looking for. Utility room in the back. That's where I put this little icebox. That was the cleanest place in my house. I had to scrub the floor every night because the water overflowed if I forgot to empty it. [laughter] That's what I had for ice. I had a stove. Oh, I don't know what kind of a stove it was, but it was horrible. I needed a stove badly. This friend I had lived in Port Angeles – he was in the – what do you call that kind of business? – refrigerators and stoves and that type of retail store. So, the first one that came in, he only got three; he bought me a stove and a refrigerator. That was a good friend, a really good friend during the war because I was not on the list at all. He only got three to start with, so they were like a million dollars to somebody. He charged me just for the cost of the equipment. He paid for it. I saw the bill, so I knew he really was a good friend. So, I had a stove and a refrigerator, and I didn't have to mop the floor anymore [laughter] before going to work. Annette was going to school at Cleveland – I forgot the name of the grade school there. Then, this car business, back to the car. I went to the junkyard. My dad told me – and I bought it for fifty dollars. It cost me fifty dollars to repair it. I drove it to temple. I wasn't too proud. These kids showed up in Cadillacs, Oldsmobiles – big cars. I think one kid had a Pierce Arrow, if I remember. Big [inaudible] –

PL: Was that a fancy car in those days?

EE: They all wanted to buy my Model A car. They all wanted to buy it. [laughter] But I couldn't afford to let them buy it. I had to have a car. I still couldn't buy a car. So, finally I was able to get a car; I bought a Chev, a brand new Chev. And didn't really know how to handle it after that Model A Ford. I was really nervous when I first started running it. So, that's how I got to temple for a long time, that Model A car. I guess that's how I got friendly with the kids on account of my car. [laughter]

PL: Is that right?

EE: I don't know. A lot of them wanted to buy it though. I wish I had kept it. I finally sold it. What did I sell it for? Four hundred dollars to the gas man who I gave a Jewish lecture to. Same man. His mother-in-law lived on Mercer Island when it was all woods. It was all woods over there. So, she wanted a car to get around Mercer Island so he bought it. It wasn't a total loss.

PL: Did you think about at any point, or were you just too busy –? Did you think about dating after?

EE: Not really.

PL: After your husband passed away?

EE: Not really. One of the men that he worked with dated me a couple of times, and then I got busy. When he asked me again, I got busy, and then Lillian (Kline?) introduced me to a man who wanted to marry me, but I had to go live in New York with his mother. So, that was it. That was out completely. I liked him. Annette liked him too. He'd come in every weekend. I'd go down to the station to pick him up in my Model A Ford. [laughter]

PL: He was coming from New York?

EE: No, no, from Fort Lewis. He was stationed at Fort Lewis – from New York. He was stationed [at] Fort Lewis. He was supposed to go overseas. I don't ever know whatever happened to him. I didn't get married.

PL: Was he Jewish?

EE: Yes, he was Jewish. The one he worked with from Bremerton was not Jewish. But I didn't care what he was. I just couldn't see Annette with a stepfather because they

looked at her cross-eyed. I took offense to that, and I said, “This will never do.” I know me and I wouldn’t put up with anything, and it would be war all the time, no matter who I married. It wouldn’t be a happy one. That’s why I never got married. A lot of people at temple asked me why I don’t get married again. I said, “How can I marry any man when I buried his wife for him?” [laughter] That’s the way I used to answer them because they used to [inaudible]. Well, then I went out to the cemetery and helped him buy the crypt and everything. He was just helpless. He was so helpless. I arranged this whole funeral for him. I don’t know who should have done that for him. [Telephone rings.]

PL: Should I pause it?

EE: Yeah. [Recording paused.] I hope all your others weren’t as talkative as me. [laughter] I don’t think they had as many experiences that I’ve had in a lifetime.

PL: Probably not. So, I do want to talk with you a little bit about, I guess – did you ever think that you wanted to have another child?

EE: I did and lost it.

PL: Was this before Annette or after?

EE: After Annette. I had company for dinner – living at this house on the North End and going into the bathroom, I slipped. I was four months pregnant. If I'd fallen, she’d have fallen and hit her head on the bathtub. She had to go to the potty. If I had fallen with her in front of me, she would have fallen and hurt herself, so I stopped myself from falling, and she didn’t get hurt. She went to the bathroom and came out. So, my company left for the evening, and I had a miscarriage – something tore apart or something like this. I called the doctor. It was a boy. It’s fate. I’m quite a fatalist. When my number is up or is not up, and things happen, there is a reason for it. I don’t know what I would have done with a boy and a girl. I’m still living the same life I did live with one. What would I do if I had two? So, it was a blessing. I guess that’s a philosophical way of looking at things,

too. There's always a bright side if you look hard enough for something good to come out of it. Because I don't know how I could have managed two and had that job I had.

PL: Now, at this time that you had the miscarriage your husband –?

EE: Was working.

PL: So you were alone when you learned about the miscarriage?

EE: No, he was there.

PL: He was there.

EE: He was there, yeah. I never got pregnant again, though.

PL: Did you try again after that?

EE: We did not try or did try – either way. But I never got pregnant. Something could have happened. I tore something in there that prevented it.

PL: How did you feel that your way of raising Annette was influenced by your own upbringing?

EE: These questions you ask, you don't think about them until you ask them. I wasn't going to be like my mother. That's one thing. I was very close to Annette at all times. I told her everything I did. I wanted to know everything she did. When she smoked a cigarette, was caught up a tree with another girl – up the same tree. Annette found the matches, the girl found the cigarettes, and they combined and smoked one cigarette between them. The minute she came home, I smelled it. I said, "There is one thing I want you to do: if you're going to smoke, do it openly. I want to know about it. I want you to do it when I can see it. Did you like it?" "Not really." "Okay, then don't do it again. If you liked it – I hope you don't like it, but if you do like it, wait until you are older." That's

what I told her. [laughter] She never smoked again. Her husband doesn't smoke, either. I smoked. Like I told you, I smoked out of the ashtray. [laughter]

PL: When did you start smoking?

EE: My father's sister – we went there for Thanksgiving dinner, and she had two girls in the bedroom upstairs. My sister, Tillie – she's always with me. I was eighteen, seventeen, sixteen, somewhere in there – teenager. They were all smoking, so I tried a cigarette. My aunt and my mother came up the stairs. We heard them coming. They were smart. They ditched their cigarettes. I was sitting right by the window and was paralyzed. I just froze. I couldn't move. I just remember. My mother comes in. My mother was wonderful. She never yells. She never scolded, but she just looked at me. And that was enough. She had looks that were daggers. She was one of the gentlest kinds and doesn't have to talk. Boy, I was scared to go home that night. She never did say anything, though. And I continued to smoke. If she said something, I think I would have stopped. I smoked until about – oh, must be thirty years ago at least when I had surgery on my throat. I had polyps on my throat, and I couldn't smoke. I couldn't eat. I couldn't drink. I had to have everything through a straw. You can't smoke through a straw. [laughter] So, cold turkey. I've never smoked since then. It was a good thing. See, there was a good thing for that, too. If you look hard enough.

PL: You mentioned that you smoked at Temple de Hirsch to give you pause during conversations or when people came to you for things. Can you describe that?

EE: How do you mean?

PL: When somebody called and said they wanted something from you, that's when you lit a cigarette.

EE: Yes.

PL: When did you smoke? Did you smoke in public? Did you smoke privately?

EE: I used to enjoy smoking and having a drink when I went to – no, I never smoked privately. I never smoked in a car. I never smoked while I was driving. And never smoked when I was eating. I never inhaled if I could help it. See, my smoking was easy to quit. If you don't inhale, there is nothing there anyway. So, when I quit, it was no great big deal. I could quit cold turkey. I don't give myself credit for that. Yeah.

PL: Were there a lot of women who were smoking?

EE: Oh, yes. A lot of women. Three of them smoking there taught me how to smoke.

PL: At Temple de Hirsch?

EE: I was only seventeen, no. I was only seventeen years old. There was a lot of women. They smoked cigars, too, in those days. Stinky cigars.

PL: Was it fashionable?

EE: I don't know. I never tried that. Annette never smoked again after that; at least I never caught her. And she never smokes at all now, and her husband doesn't smoke either. So, I'm grateful for that. They don't drink either.

PL: Were there parts of your childrearing of Annette where you came into conflict because you were so close? Because you wanted to know everything about her?

EE: No, no. Because it was natural for me to tell her what was going on. It was just one thing. She was wonderful about this. She listened to me. When I'd come home from work, and I'd have a bad day, a really troublesome day, especially with Rabbi Levine – he was a sick man. This was later when I was there quite a long time. He was sick, and I had to put up with that, too ,because he didn't say he was sick. Not physically – mentally. I had to watch his sermons real close. This isn't on, is it?

PL: I can turn it off or you can restrict it later.

EE: Yeah. Well, turn it off.

[Recording paused.]

PL: So, you'd come home to Annette after having a bad day.

EE: Just a bad day was enough. I never said anything against the rabbi to her. He was the rabbi. I'd tell her, "Just give me five minutes." If it was winter, I'd go in my bedroom and just relax. Just sat there or something on the bed. But in the summertime, I'd go out in the yard. I had a swing and an umbrella in the outside living room.

[Recording paused.]

PL: Okay. So, we were just talking about how you used to come home and take five minutes and go down into the yard when you had a bad day.

EE: Everything was peaceful. I knew I was going to let it out on her. I just knew. I was waiting for somebody to throw it out on. The first one you talk to, you're mad at them. Everybody goes through that. I know it. Talking to so many people at Temple, I could get mad at; it would be easy. [laughter]

PL: So where did all that energy go? How did you deal with it? Did you have exercise? Did you have an outlet?

EE: No, just be quiet. I guess meditate. Try to close my brain off. Stop thinking. Must have been doing that. I've never thought about that until you asked me. Some place down the line.

PL: Is that your key to sanity all these years?

EE: That I stayed that long? Yes.

PL: I think we'll end here. I think it's a good place to end. It's been a while, so I'm going to shut this off.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

PL: This is the continuing oral history of Esther Pearl Eggleston. And today's date is May 3, 2001. We are at her apartment at 533 Harvard East, Apartment 404, Seattle, Washington. This is Pamela Brown Lavitt. I am the oral historian for the Jewish Women's Archives Weaving Women's Words Project. This is the continuation and the third mini disk of the oral history to date, and I just want to go ahead and make sure that you have the agreement and understand that you are being recorded today. Do you agree to that?

EE: I do.

PL: Wonderful.

EE: Taking an oath. I do.

PL: Wonderful. So, let's begin. I wanted to start today talking about your volunteer service, and you have quite an outstanding and extensive career in community and civic service. So, have you ever served as a volunteer for any organizations?

EE: Women's American ORT, American Lung, Council of Jewish Women, Federated Fund – they're the major ones.

PL: Which one would you like to start talking about?

EE: ORT is my baby. I've been with them when I retired from Temple de Hirsch. That was my first offer to be president. I was a member for two years thanks to a very, very good friend of mine who was also president at the time. So, I joined the Women's American ORT. And was asked to precede Ruby, who was an excellent president. And I

said, “I don’t even know what Women’s American ORT means.”

PL: Can you tell me who the person was that you just mentioned?

EE: Ruby Webber.

PL: Ruby? Can you spell her name?

EE: Ruby W-E-B-B-E-R. And she was all ORT. That was her baby, too. And she got the enthusiasm for ORT very much instilled in me. [inaudible] about the other organizations that I was asked to be president of after retiring from Temple that I would join would be ORT. I also declined then as president right after Ruby because I, as I said, had to ask what is Women –? What does it mean? I joined because Ruby asked me to. I soon found out, very soon exactly my sentiments also were involved with ORT. Education to me was very, very important because I always was sorry I didn’t go to the University of Washington. I was working, and the money was good. It was bad times. I gave up. I had all the credentials accepted to the University of Washington, but I never went. I’ve always regretted that because in my working at Temple, I was often [told], “If you only wore pants.”

PL: So can you tell me a little bit more about your –? What did you think that ORT meant? What did they tell you it meant, and what does it mean to you? Can you describe what Women’s American ORT is?

EE: The main thing was there was no discrimination. Money was no object. If they couldn’t afford it, they were taken care of. If they could afford it, they paid. Most of them were Jewish naturally, it was a Jewish organization. But I don’t remember anyone ever being not accepted. It’s strictly for education, which I said before, I was sorry I didn’t finish mine. Although I had all the credentials, I didn’t do it. I’ve always regretted it. After many years of working I still regretted it. So, I am for anybody if they have a chance to

go to the University or higher to be given that choice.

PL: Can you describe for me –? Assume I know nothing about what ORT is and you were interested in getting me involved. It had to do with education or other projects that interested you, how would you –? What would you tell me? How would you describe the organization?

EE: I thought I had previously. I thought I expressed what it meant to me.

PL: Just, if you were to write a bio of what Women's American ORT is, what would it say?

EE: I would go into detail of how many schools they had. How many pupils they had. I can't say that today because it's getting more and more schools. Moneywise, it's been very difficult. People don't understand; if it's in Europe, they don't want to do it. They want to be here in the United States. We fought Congress a long time before it was admitted here into the United States. Now we've got three schools here. That's the West Coast, East Coast, and the South. All three sections have an ORT school.

PL: So what is American ORT –? If I understand what you're saying, it was a Jewish-begun organization, but it was non-sectarian, meaning that they accepted all peoples of all –

EE: I believe they did. It started in Russia.

PL: What do you know about that history?

EE: Not too much.

PL: Can you share with me what you do?

EE: Well, I know one of our Women's American ORT members became a member because her grandfather was a graduate. Went to an ORT school in Russia and came to the United States. Through that, she became an ORT member. Through her grandfather, who dated back that far. But other than that, I really have never gone into the – I was just satisfied doing what I can to further the progress of ORT as it is today.

PL: So they were involved with, how were they related to education in these schools? What did you do and what was your involvement with the schools?

EE: Well, they did everything possible. Like when the war – the big war with Israel.

PL: What year was that?

EE: Oh, gosh. Years.

PL: Are you talking about '67?

EE: Somewhere in through there. Well, these are very bad for me. I forget them. They come, and they go. So fast. In the fast generation. Everything going so fast. But – I lost my trend.

PL: During the big war with Israel.

EE: They left Germany, and they were accepted here fully, especially at Temple. A lot of the German refugees came to Temple de Hirsch and were treated loyally. Family Child Services was wonderful in setting them up in their house – housing, money, and expected, of course, to be paid back so they could [inaudible] same service. I had a German girl working for me. Her husband wasn't working. Personally, I think he was allergic to work. He seemed perfectly capable to me. But she was working as my bookkeeper. Excellent. She was a wonderful girl. She worked for me for several years and time to pay back. She was amazed she had to pay back the money. I told her how

were they going to support another family if you don't pay back what you owe so they could give it to somebody else. She didn't see the logic in that at all until I mentioned that I would have to deduct it from her salary. So much every month at her convenience, what she could afford to give back. But give back something to the Family Child Service, which she did because she really did. She knew it would pay for her to give it back in the long run. That was my impression – the bad impression I got of the Germans getting so much help here, how much they expected it of them here. Actually, we weren't obligated to take care of everybody that came into Seattle, but Temple accepted that responsibility. As far as Temple de Hirsch was – I did because I did because I hired her. Nobody else ever applied so I didn't have an opportunity to do anymore. But that was my reaction with her. But she was a wonderful bookkeeper.

PL: So let me just get this straight. This is while you were still at Temple de Hirsch, but it was related to your work at ORT at the time.

EE: Oh, yes. Everything relates to ORT.

PL: When did you first start –? When did you first join ORT? What year was it?

EE: Gosh, how many years back is that? I've been a member of ORT close to thirty-five years.

PL: So you retired from Temple de Hirsch in '65?

EE: Yeah.

PL: So it must have been about '63?

EE: Something like that.

PL: Something like that.

EE: [inaudible] No, that's way back in the '40's someplace. Let's see. When was Ruby president? I was still working when I was president of the Seattle Chapter. Dates [don't] mean a thing to me; they just go and gone.

PL: Why did you choose to get involved? Before you became president, why did you choose to become involved with ORT? You're describing here something about their philosophy, which, as I understand it, has to do with that they believe that charity wasn't a good thing. It was more that people were meant to earn and work and should be self-reliant.

EE: Self-reliant. That was it.

PL: So is that a reason why you got involved with it?

EE: Yes.

PL: Can you describe –

EE: Most of it.

PL: – your motivations for joining?

EE: Well, that was one of them. And their principles.

PL: So your motivations then for becoming president were what? How did you decide to undertake that job?

EE: I was [inaudible] ORT for two years that Ruby still was president. And I joined the committees, and I learned what was going on in the national place not here in Seattle. A lot of it I didn't like particularly, but nobody ever likes what National does. That seems to be universal. Just like an employee can always tell the boss what to do better. And just everything about it is my thinking. To help others help themselves. That was their creed.

It finally came to me what it was. To help others, you have to help yourself first and then help others. Anyway. There's a lot of motives to joining ORT other than just plain education. It was the girls I liked. The company I was in. Their own ideas about ORT. It was very inspirational. I mean, I had a lot of reasons to become president when they asked me to because I felt I knew what I was doing. When they first asked me, when I first, I didn't even know O-R-T meant – it was ridiculous to even ask me, which I felt was. But I learned enough to know that I think I could do a good job. Which I did. Lasted much longer than I expected it to last because it was repeated three times in a row. That's six years going. There was no limit on how long you could be president. Gradually, everybody got older as I got older, and the Seattle Chapter finally, after about five years of dealing with national to do something with the Seattle Chapter because I was tired of being president and handling so many things myself and not getting help, finally they became the Greater Seattle Chapter [inaudible] American ORT. We combined all three. There were four chapters at the time. One of them was going all ready – going or gone – and combined all of them together as Greater Seattle.

PL: Were they in different parts of Seattle?

EE: Mostly. [inaudible] Bellview. That was a big problem. A few people would stop coming to the Seattle Chapter because they were in Mercer Island. They were buying homes there and in Bellevue, and they wouldn't come into Seattle any longer. So, it was difficult. Not only that; it was difficult finding places to meet. We met at Frederick of Nelson's for a long time. I made arrangements with the manager there to get a deal in their main dining room. It was wonderful while they lasted until they left us. So, then I went to the Bon Marche which is also very good and very cooperative. Then I went to Council House. Council House wasn't as cooperative as Fredricks and Bellevue, and they accused us of breaking things. We left it. We had to clean up when we moved in, and we left it cleaner even then when we moved out. Then we went to – gosh, so many places. I couldn't find places to go to anymore. Finally, it dissolved. It went into one

chapter. Then, they had meetings all on Mercer Island or Bellevue, which we weren't able to go to. By that time, I'd given up driving, so I couldn't take passengers with me as I did. Gradually, it's come to the point now, too, where – this is not for the record. It's slipping again. It's going downhill. But all the organizations are slipping downhill. They don't have volunteers. They're all working. It's a big problem getting volunteers to do anything. So, we're back to the same standstill, the same handful doing the same things. But I still do all I can for ORT if possible. If they hang in a little longer. Yeah.

PL: What did volunteerism mean back then to you? To your friends?

EE: Well, \all you had to do was ask them to do something, they'd do it. Now, they're working, or they are having babies, one or the other. So it means a lot. If you don't have them.

PL: So when you were asked to become president, Esther, what were the things that you did? How did you begin your presidency?

EE: I don't understand the question.

PL: What kind of things did you do? You were suddenly in a leadership position. What were you in charge of?

EE: It seemed to me like I was chairman of everything because I was helping all the committees get started. There is where I got the feeling, and they expressed their feelings very openly, that I inspired them. I'm working so hard they have to follow me. They have to do what I'm doing, too. I had a lot of cooperation, so I had no problem. But now, people aren't there to have problems with. They're all working or having babies, like I said. Yeah. Our past president is having a baby. That's the age group I was working with. Wonderful age.

PL: What age group is that?

EE: Well, under forty. Yeah. Under forty and a lot of fifties.

PL: I mean, did you have any mentors within the ORT community that taught you how to deal with all these committees and –?

EE: Temple de Hirsch. Dealing with about twelve hundred members and their families, which is over five, six thousand people I was working with at Temple and all the community. That was before the Community Center opened up. Everybody met at temple. Hadassah finally met at temple. I think I wrote that in one report. Council always had their own offices. They were always independent, and they were a political office. They [inaudible] everything out of Washington. Out of Olympia. City of Hope, of course, is non-sectarian. So they met at the Scottish Rite Temple all the time. Then they had the Community Center. That left Temple de Hirsch half of it, but they said it's someplace else to go. Yeah. It was a wonderful thing when the Community Center opened up.

PL: Can you describe to me what some of the committees were that you were overseeing?

EE: Well, I'd call the memberships who did not pay their dues in January or February, which is long overdue since [inaudible] fiscal year. I would call – we have a donor membership, which is a hundred dollars additional to dues – $125 to pay with their dues or whenever they could. I was donor chairman. I wasn't chairman, but I was doing the calling. For the Seattle Chapter, I organized all the activities. We went to the races. We had a fabulous membership to the races. Good money on that. We went to the Indian Village across the Sound for salmon lunch., which was terrific. One time, it wasn't that good, and they gave it to us free. We didn't have to pay for it. They realized themselves it was not a very good deal. See, I've got this all written down some place. Now what did I do? [laughter]

PL: I'm curious just about what the activities were that bonded you to each other? What kind of activities?

EE: Well, I had good help on these things when I was Seattle Chapter President.

PL: I see here that some of the activities and the fundraising events –

EE: Card parties. We had card parties. Bake sales and fundraising. Anything that came to mind. We sold jewelry. Lots of jewelry. On the trip back from the Board of Convention from New York, I met somebody from Florida there. [inaudible] Florida for jewelry at a jewelry shop in New York. So, I went with her to see what she was buying. The vice president – one of the members of the committee anyway – went with me to New York as a delegate. She and I together sold most of our jewelry to the stewardesses on the plane coming back. [laughter] Really felt we were taking them, but they all seemed to like the jewelry. It was very inexpensive. I have a watch here that I still use, and it's still running, that I only paid twenty-five dollars for. Somebody thought they were real emeralds. It was really good buys. We made a buy on selling and buying, and we made a better price on selling. We did good. All those things when I was president I instigated.

PL: What did you do with the money that you raised?

EE: It all went to National ORT for the different funds that we were going for. Depends upon what is going on at the time. The horse races was for some project sponsored by National, and it went into our chapter's money, though [inaudible]. We all had assignments to make, and we always made it.

PL: I understand that there was something called Honor Roll?

EE: Honor Roll.

PL: Can you describe what Honor Roll was and the Golden Circle? I understand that you were the Golden Circle chairman at one point. I think it was in 1977-78. And that you were –

EE: No, I was never chairman. I was just working hard at it.

PL: What was Honor Roll?

EE: Honor Roll was fifty dollars accumulated. If you bought condolence cards or sympathy – or any kind of sympathy card or anniversary card, birthday cards, our chairman would mail a card with your name and address on it to be acknowledged. That went towards our scholarship fund. All the money raised on these cards went to scholarships. All the money raised for any of these [inaudible] went to some project. Donors would go for the donor project. National had their project. All the money went into the Seattle Chapters, and it still does. It still goes that way, whatever we're doing.

PL: Were there any projects, national, in Israel, or in Seattle locally, that you felt as president was particularly important?

EE: Oh, they were all important as long as they made money. One very funny thing happened with the races. I'll mention the name because they [inaudible] had a family – Morris Alhadeff became a very good friend of mine by working at it [laughter] because I knew he had the fish company here. When we had the races, they had a buffet and served fish. They always had prime rib or something. A good buffet is what I ordered but no fish. So I talked to Morey Alhadeff one time, and I said, "Would it be possible to include in the same price a fish," which he donated? So, every year after that, I'd call and say we were having the races." Morey, are we having fish?" "No doubt of it." He used to send me a case of tuna, and I refused to take it unless I paid for it. Well, from then on, he never sent me anymore after I paid for it. I felt obligated if I didn't pay for it. I'm very independent when it comes to paying. I don't like to take anything for nothing.

Anyway, I had Sally Poll, a very prominent member –

PL: Can you spell her name?

EE: P-O-L-L. Sally Poll, and she was very prominent in the Seattle chapter. Her husband had (Tragers?). Men's furnishings. I was a friend of Sally when I was a junior member of the council when we were kids. The both of us. I asked her to be chairman that year. I wanted somebody else to share the honors.

PL: What year was this? Approximately, what year was this or how far into your presidency?

EE: Oh, maybe eight years or something like that at Seattle Chapter. This was all Seattle Chapter when I was president.

PL: So this was the 1970's?

EE: Somewhere in there. Yeah. And so she was honored. I'm afraid of horses. Every time I did this, I had to go down and pat the darn horse. [laughter] Somebody else had to put the wreath around his neck because I couldn't reach it. Anyway, she was honored. She was tickled to death to be chairman. And so she talked to Morey Alhadeff about the menu, which is always the same: a good prime rib and the fish. He said, "What's the matter with Esther? Isn't she doing it anymore?" She said, "Oh, yes she is." "Well, you tell her if she wants the fish, she'd better call me." [laughter] Nobody could get a fish unless I asked for it. [laughter] Which sounds kind of silly, but it's what happened. He was only dealing with me.

PL: Where was the racetrack, Esther?

EE: Longacres.

PL: Is it still in existence?

EE: Oh, no. It's long gone.

PL: Can you describe –? Was that a leisure activity that you would have done other than with ORT?

EE: Well, I don't like horse races. I'm not a good better. I'm a bad loser. [laughter] I don't like anything I lose at.

PL: So what was it like for the women to go together to the horse races? What was that like?

EE: Well, I can only say from my daughter – she had a station wagon. The backend opened up with the back to it so you could use it as a seat. Well, that was loaded. Not only would she do that – pick us all up at the meeting place, but she seat-belted everybody. She took care of everybody to [inaudible]. Everybody had a kind word for her, too. They thought it was wonderful. She took such motherly care of everybody. She was working. She didn't belong to ORT at that time. I don't think. I don't think she belonged to ORT, but she took us to the races. She took us every place we had to go. She was our chauffeur. No cost. That's how we got there for transportation. Those who did not have cars, we arranged for it.

PL: Why was that, why was that such a special event? Were you fundraising there? Or that was about –?

EE: That's fundraising. [inaudible] fundraiser.

PL: How did you raise money doing that?

EE: What did we charge? Twenty-five dollars or something to go. That was a clean dinner. Admission and dinner. The dinner was really – he gave me a good price on the dinner, including the fish. [laughter] No charge for the fish because he didn't give it to

anybody else. Nobody else who went out there got fish for their dinner. Buffet dinner. We ate in their private club. Got the day saved for us in that private club.

PL: Do you remember what happened during the races? Did women gamble?

EE: Sure. Bet on every horse. So did I. [inaudible] I didn't win. If I won, I lost it the next race. [laughter] It was fun though. It was a fun affair. And everybody got there, and everybody got home. Everybody enjoyed their lunch. It was a delicious lunch. You could buy anything you wanted out there too at the concessions, drinks or something, on your own. But they all got transportation to get there. No problem.

PL: What other ORT activities, or perhaps you can continue with this one, did you find were particularly memorable to you? Are there stories or things that you remember from your ORT days of events that you went to?

EE: Stories? Well, I just told you one, on the fish. [laughter] Well, this salmon deal at the village.

PL: At the Indian Village.

EE: Indian Village.

PL: Can you describe that? I've never heard about that.

EE: Oh, it's a ship, I'd guess you call it. I was going to say boat. But it's a real ship that goes back and forth across Puget Sound. I don't know if they still have them or not. I think they are still advertised as having this. Have you seen it? No. I think they still advertise it as doing that. I don't remember what we charged to go, but it was a good profit over what we paid. Especially the one time where we didn't pay anything because it was not – they promised me – some people don't eat fish. I don't like fish because I'm afraid of the bones. It was salmon, and there's always bones in salmon. You can't fillet it

good enough. It was entertainment. They have these Indian war dances and everything out there. It was very entertaining. Wonderful ferry ride across the Sound, back and forth. We met at the dock. People had to get down there on their own because it's right here in Seattle. There was no problem. We always had a boatful – shipful, whatever.

PL: What do you remember about the Indian Village?

EE: It was good service. It was a nice outing. It was done in the summertime, and the weather was good. It was good timing for it. It was fundraising in the mid-season when there is nothing else going on. I was careful checking all these affairs with Federated Fund. We didn't conflict with any other organization. I always wished that the others did the same because there is always a conflict with one or the other organizations [who] seemed to deliberately do something on our day. Federated Fund was not always so careful about their calendar that they would give it on the same day somebody else was giving it. To me, [inaudible] about timing – whoever was handling the advertising/publicity wasn't on her toes to put it nicely. So, we got around. They were all fundraising. Everything went to ORT.

PL: When you went to the Indian Village and you went to the racetrack were there other people there?

EE: Oh, sure. It was open to the public. Sure it was.

PL: Was there anything about being a group of women on an outing since it was at the racetrack or the village that was unique?

EE: Yes. That they had never gone there before. Then the same people always – I called the same people every year. Very seldom did I have anybody new because we were filled up. They could only hold, I think, maybe – I think it was forty or something. Oh, no, no. It was more than that. We had eighty or ninety at one time when it first started, the first time we went out there. Eighty or ninety people – seventy-five people. It

was a big turnout. Gradually, it wore itself out. Everything wears itself out.

PL: Going to these affairs, was it considered something that you would not – it sounds like you would normally have not gone on your own?

EE: I would never go to the horse races until I saw somebody that had went to the horse races and was all excited about it. I said, “How’d you get to go there?” They said they just go all the time. I went out there one time to see for myself just what it was all about. I could see the excitement. I talked to Morey Alhadeff about the luncheon and made arrangements before I talked to anybody else. I don’t know if that was good or bad, but it generally worked that way. Check it out first before I got all excited about it myself, so I could excite other people. That’s what I had to do. The races? None of them had ever gone the first time. This was the first time they had ever been to the horse races. So, it was a good selling deal.

PL: Was there enthusiasm around it because it was considered not a women’s venue or a risqué venue?

EE: No, it’s just something different to do. It was on a weekday. We got a better deal on a weekday than on a weekend because they didn’t need anybody there on the weekend, it was always so crowded.

PL: Can you describe the culture of ORT?

EE: Well, it’s strictly educational, the culture. I mean, that’s it. That’s my way of thinking, anyway. That’s it. They have schools, like [inaudible] these immigrants coming over. They wanted to come to the United States. They have a class for teaching them English. If they had to go to France, if they had to go to Israel, they taught them the language of the country that they wanted to go to. They had a choice where they went through ORT when they left Germany.

PL: So how did that translate into that ethos of education being at the forefront of your fund-raising activities? How did that translate? Did you have educational events yourself within ORT? Lecture series or people coming to talk? Or did you visit the schools?

EE: I did in Israel. We went to Tel Aviv. We went to – you name some of the names, I pronounce them anymore.

PL: Jerusalem.

EE: Oh, Jerusalem. We lived there. When we went to one convention, Nathan Gould was director at that time. He was with them on there, and they moved into a new unit – motel, hotel – whatever they called them there. Anyway, everything was complete. All the rooms were wonderful except Nathan Gould's door was left off his room. [laughter]

PL: Explain what this is. This was an ORT hotel –?

EE: Convention.

PL: ORT convention in –?

EE: When the college was dedicated – the groundbreaking was dedicated.

PL: Okay. Explain to me the relationship between ORT and the groundbreaking of the University. This was a University in Jerusalem that ORT was responsible for one of the organizations, or the organization that got it off the ground?

EE: ORT. ORT Union is located in Italy. Headquarters was in Italy. They started it, I'm sure, with the coordination of getting the Americans interested in it. I'm sure it started with them. Nathan Gould was instigated in getting us there.

PL: How does he spell his last name?

EE: G-O-U-L-D. Nathan.

PL: What year was this that you traveled to Israel for the convention?

EE: Oh God, when it comes down to years, I'm just lost. Yeah. I don't remember, it's so long ago.

PL: I think on the plaque that you showed me earlier, it says 1980.

EE: Yeah. 1980 something.

PL: How did you hear about this convention, and how did you decide to go?

EE: It was through national. All of it came from national. Then we found delegates here from Seattle. I was one of the delegates to go.

PL: Who were the others of the delegates?

EE: Annette.

PL: Your daughter.

EE: Yes. She started through my work with the Seattle Chapter. She was young. She didn't belong with us. And so I started a new chapter. [inaudible] She started the [inaudible] Chapter, which lasted – I think she was two years and somebody else was two years – good leader – and then the third leader they got a fail. A bad one. The whole thing went to pot. She was just terrible. You can't imagine how bad a person can be. How could she think up some of the things she wasn't doing?

PL: What kind of things made this woman a bad leader?

EE: Just leadership. She just didn't have it. If you don't have a good leader, you're lost. Everybody is a follower. Nobody wants the responsibility of being a leader. If you have a bad one, there is nobody to follow. So, it fell apart. They just separated into Mercer Island and that's when that started [inaudible]. Then they had one in the North End, too,

that broke loose because it wasn't strong enough to begin with.

PL: Were you and your daughter leaders at the same time or different?

EE: She belongs to my chapter, and then she dropped. I had her start the – or I didn't have her start, but she was voted to be the president of the [inaudible] Chapter.

PL: Did you go to activities together?

EE: No.

PL: But you went to this convention together?

EE: Yeah.

PL: Tell me about your decision to go to this convention.

EE: And they had the wrong thing.

PL: You had never been to Israel? How did you decide to go to this convention?

EE: Well, I was [inaudible] I was delegated to go.

PL: What does that mean? How does one get delegated to go?

EE: Through the chapters voting you in. I think in ORT, automatically, if you are president, you go. President always goes, and the others are nominated. You are allowed so many nominations. That changed many years ago. You get more nominations now, more people. I think it is going to be dropped down again these past couple of years because there aren't that many people available or that want to go even.

PL: What did it feel like that you were on a trip to Israel for the first time as a delegate of an American-Jewish – well, an American-Jewish-originated, but not necessarily always, fully represented organization? What did that mean to you?

EE: The only opportunity I'd ever have to go there. I was glad to pay whatever I had to pay to go because I was asked to go. I wouldn't even have thought of going. At that time, there was peace. Well, there wasn't peace because I remember on our trip from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a bus had to stop to pick up a soldier. That was kind of frightening then and everything. It was kind of a frightening trip going. My first impression there was on this side of the trip – I don't know if this has ever been told before because I was very impressed – was all olive trees and things. It was just beautiful. All green and all these beautiful olive trees. On this side, there was an Arab on a horse in the sand. A complete division. I was really impressed by that. That Israel could do this as a new state. Get all this cultivation done. With so little help. Financially, physically, any which way. It was little. And get this all accomplished in such a short time. On the other hand, the Palestinians were in the sand on horseback and Arabs. Yeah. It was kind of frightening.

PL: What were your other impressions of Israel for the first time?

EE: Well, it was loud, and it was dirty. [laughter] Yes. [inaudible] One street is, I don't remember what it was, where the marketplace was so crowded. One time there was enough for me. Yeah. Another impression I had was my son-in-law's mother has a cousin living there. Very orthodox. She had us for Friday night Sabbath for dinner. Of course, the cooking was done all on Thursday. She kept them hot, warmed up, so it wasn't to our taste eating on Friday, but it was wonderful that she did it for us. We got a cab to take us there because she couldn't come and get us. It must have been during the Sabbath already. Couldn't come and get us. So, we had this cab driver who is an Arab, and he was just wonderful. He took us to this cousin's home. And said he would wait for us. I said, "Well, we will pay you now, and then we will call you." "No," he says,

“I’ll wait for you, and I’ll tell you.” [inaudible] It was hardly anything at all. I know I gave him more than he asked for, whatever it was. [He] waited for us for three hours. As far as I was concerned, I have a good impression. [laughter] He was wonderful. You can’t judge a whole people by one person, or otherwise. And she had a lovely dinner. She apologized for not calling for us because it was the Sabbath. She couldn’t pick us up. She said, “It was all right if he waited outside for you.” She gave us permission, which I was amazed at. Why would she have to give permission if the guy was willing to do it, but she gave us permission to have him sit outside her door – not out her door, on the street? She was very, very orthodox. Food tasted like orthodox. [laughter]

PL: What did she serve you? Do you remember?

EE: A roast. It wasn’t chicken. I expected chicken. [laughter] I remember it was roast. That’s why I remember that because it was something – I was surprised it was meat. Not chicken on Friday night? Wouldn’t you expect it, too? I don’t know what else she served. I’ve forgotten.

PL: How long were you visiting in Israel?

EE: We were there – well, we were on a real tour. I think five days.

PL: So you were –?

EE: Coming back was awful. We had that El Al plane. It was full of [inaudible]. It was so dirty. It was just awful. The toilets were overflowed. There were no toilet facilities at all until you got to New York. It was the most miserable trip. I will never fly on that. I don’t mind mentioning their name. It was so bad. Overcrowded. It was terrible.

PL: Tell me a little bit more about Israel. You mentioned that you were – what were your responsibilities as a delegate for ORT?

EE: None there. I had no responsibility there at all. Just to attend the conference and report on ORT's doings and financial status and that kind of stuff.

PL: So, there was a conference. What conference was that?

EE: National conference from all over the country.

PL: What was it like to attend that conference in a foreign land?

EE: To go to Israel for the breaking – part of their creed. New school there in Israel.

PL: What was that new school called?

EE: Jerusalem.

PL: Jerusalem University?

EE: Yes.

PL: You mentioned that Golda Meir had attended that. Can you describe your experiences? What was that groundbreaking ceremony like?

EE: Every groundbreaking service. To me, that's all it was. It's a groundbreaking service. It really didn't mean that. Meeting her was everything as far as I was concerned. But as far as the groundbreaking was concerned, it was the usual. There was nothing special about it. What was special about it was being there. Some committee had organized, from all the schools, the sports group. All these kids came from all ages and performed for us. It was thrilling. All in ORT uniforms. It was really thrilling to see all these youngsters going to school there in Jerusalem learning whatever they signed up for to learn.

PL: What kind of performance was it? Were they dancing? Doing sports?

EE: Marching. Mostly marching. And there were so many of them.

PL: Where did it take place? Was it in a large field?

EE: Field. I guess a practice field or something in Jerusalem near the groundbreaking.

PL: Was there anything that you felt particularly Jewish about the event? Was there any ritual involved?

EE: That we were there. It was all Jewish. I just assumed it was Jewish. Didn't question that.

PL: What did Golda Meir's participation –? What was her participation in the event?

EE: She spoke. She delivered. I have an envelope with her name on it. I think I gave it to Annette to put away. She's got a lot of that stuff that I don't have. We combined everything, and she put it away. Living in an apartment, you don't have room for all that stuff.

PL: So, can you identify some of the satisfactions and rewards that you've gotten through ORT through the years?

EE: Other than the fact that they must think I'm doing a good job. [laughter]

PL: How do you know that?

EE: They wouldn't be doing all these awards, especially that one service award, the first one to be given. That was very special.

PL: You're talking about in 1993 when they gave the Esther Eggleston Outstanding Service Award?

EE: Outstanding Service Award.

PL: Can you talk about that award? How did it come to be?

EE: It came to be as a surprise to me, for one thing, because I didn't know what was going on until the invitation came or something. That was announced at the board meeting someplace down the line. They had a vote on it, and it was unanimous. There was no competition at all I was told. That's strictly hearsay. That's what I was told. There was nobody else that they even thought of. I was the most surprised of everybody that they thought about it because it's not been done. I was very proud to be the first one to start something like that.

PL: So that award was the first service award that ORT Greater Seattle Chapter gave, and then they named it after you?

EE: Yes. It wasn't the first award, no. It was the first one that they named after me. That was the thrilling part of it, that it was named after me. They have it recorded in the library back East some place. I've forgotten where it was. I know it was in some library in one of the ORT schools.

PL: They recorded it meaning they put a plaque up?

EE: It's someplace there in their library. Yeah. That was donated from different people.

PL: So, tell me what your involvement has been in the Service Awards since receiving it.

EE: As far as I'm concerned, I'm just the same person doing the same things. Collecting money. [laughter]

PL: Do you award it to others?

EE: I don't, no. The president awards it to the incoming award recipient.

PL: So, since 1993 that's an annual award now? The Esther Eggleston –

EE: Except they skipped the one after me because they couldn't seem to find anybody. That was really a sad deal, I thought. I straightened them out. They don't have to represent me. They don't have to be me. They have to be themselves – what they've done. Award them for what they're doing, not what I did, and they're not doing or something. Each one does their own thing. So, that's what's been happening.

PL: What are some examples of other women who have been awarded this?

EE: They've all been worthy of it, I felt. Every one of them. They've all worked hard to the best of their ability.

PL: Who in particular –?

EE: Everybody doesn't have the so-called energy that I have. They are all much younger than I am, but they don't seem to have all the energy that I have in getting things done. That's where I got the name. I guess I inspire them. [laughter] Which I laugh. Yeah.

PL: So, who has told you that you inspire them?

EE: They tell me.

PL: Who's they?
EE: At an open Board meeting. Anybody. They pop up, and all of a sudden, I'm inspiring somebody. [laughter] It's strange, isn't it? You're shaking your head. Yeah.

PL: What's strange to you about it?

EE: Because it's so natural for me to be doing things. I'm not pushed into anything. I'm not making a big thing out of anything. They're making a big thing out of it. I'm not. Sometimes, it's embarrassing.

PL: Is there a particular time when it was?

EE: No. Because it happens often.

PL: Have any women come to you or have declared that you were their role model?

EE: Well, the present president has told me years ago – I think she was president once before. Told me many years ago. I was still at the Seattle Chapter [inaudible], so it must have been eight or ten years ago. She came up to me, and she said, “I just hope one day I can work with you.” That was very complimentary. I enjoyed that. Listening to her tell me that when she was president. Now she’s president again.

PL: What is your advice, then, to other women, how do they do what you do? How do they keep the energy and the vitality –?

EE: I’m generally working with them, so I can’t tell. I’m still their leader. I’m still at the head of whatever they’re doing. I'm there. They know they can call on me.

PL: So, what advice do you give to women now since you’re saying that volunteerism is trailing? What advice would you give to volunteers or women in general about volunteering?

EE: I can’t give them any advice. That’s their business. It’s their lives they’re leading. They have husbands, they have families, they’ve got little ones coming, and they’re working. I can’t give them any advice. That would be wrong of me. Tell them not to work?

PL: Well, how did you balance your community work and your family obligations? You were a single mother.

EE: I know, but I was able to do it. Everybody is not able to do that. I was young when I started doing that. That makes a difference, too.

PL: What's a typical day in the Eggleston household after you retired? Describe your typical day from waking until sleeping.

EE: Well, let me think. Every day is different. Every day is – not lately. Over the summer, it is quiet. There's no meetings. There is no anything. Now, my everyday has changed, too, because there is only two people left of my friends. They are all gone. So, my days are very private. Very alone. But personally, I'm not a lonely person. I enjoy my own company. I can eat alone and enjoy it with or without the TV going or a book. I don't have to go all the time. That's kind of a relief. Not to be pressured into doing something all the time. Or [inaudible] about other people's problems all the time. Nobody listens to mine. I don't get a chance. I know all about them. And I listen. Especially some friends of mine know living at the Summit House. One person in particular, I hope she reads this. I'm not mentioning names. I hope one of these days she'll read it, but she's not the kind of person that goes into this type of thing, going to archives to read these things. So, I'm safe in saying she always called and complained about this and complained about that. I listened to all her problems [inaudible] at my door or somebody is on [inaudible]. I've got another phone. I only have one phone, but I'd say, "My phone's ringing." I'd hang up – listening to her problems. It was always her talk. She moved to Summit House. I never hear from her.

PL: Summit House?

EE: That's the new Kline Galland Home down here on Seventh Street.

PL: Why do you think you never hear from her?

EE: She's too busy now. She doesn't need me. That's my only excuse for her. So last week, my neighbor who lived next door to me, I knew him for many, many years when he and his wife lived in Fremont, and they moved here. She got me my apartment. His wife got me the apartment here when there was a line up at one time to get into this building.

I'm here twenty-five years. There was a lineup at that time to get in. She got me in through the manager. He moved to Summit House. He invited me down to see him. "You call me when you can come because I know you're busy. You call me." So, he did. Annette and I went down last week to see him – last Friday because they had an open house Sunday, and I had to go see him before the open house. No, Tuesday we went down and showed me his apartment. Beautiful apartment. It's a beautiful building. You really should go take a look at it and see what's going on through the Kline Galland Home. It's just beautiful. I'm not ready to go there yet. I'm too busy to go there. I don't like that many people around me. That regimentation, I don't go for that. Everybody asks me, "Esther, when are you moving in?" I said, "I'm not ready yet. I'm too young." [laughter] You don't have to be old to be living there though. His apartment is beautiful. He's got a one-bedroom. I got all this apartment. He has a three-bedroom apartment here, and everything fits into his except his bicycle. They have a gym there, so he didn't need it. He showed me the whole building.

PL: What are the activities, what are the hobbies, and the interests that you have retained over the years that keep you busy?

EE: All this volunteering work keeps me really busy because I'm always on every committee, most of the time chairman, except American Lung; I was not on any committee there because I refused to. I didn't want to be tied down to anything.

PL: When did you get involved with the American Lung Society?

EE: Well, they were already on Broadway, and this friend told me to come in and visit with her. That's all.

PL: So there was no driving reason why you particularly wanted to volunteer for that particular organization?

EE: No, I liked their medical program. It's for cancer [and] TB, which was very prevalent at one time. There was a lot of TB going on. I liked the program. There was no particular –not this friend that asked me – she didn't influence me in any way. I was living here, so it was easy to get to her. No buses or anything. Then they moved to Eastlake and I took the bus to go there. And then they moved further out on Westlake. I took buses to go there, too. I was too involved with ORT at that time, too, to go down there every week. It's once a week here, and once a week there, and once a week someplace else, and I wasn't having any home life at all. So, I gave that up because they had plenty of volunteers. And mostly, too, quite a few handicapped people is why I was interested there too.

PL: Why did that particularly interest you?

EE: Because my granddaughter is handicapped. So, that's a personal interest that I wanted to help out there.

PL: Can we talk about that a little bit? You mentioned in your pre-interview what it's been like over the years being the grandmother of a challenged granddaughter. So, when was she born?

EE: She was forty years old last Saturday. She's forty years [old].

PL: Is that right?

EE: When she was two –

PL: What is your granddaughter's name?

EE: Roslyn. R-O-S-L-Y-N. Roslyn. When she was two, two and one-half, my grandson Jack, like a genius when he was two, three years old. He was a walking, talking, and mind-your-own-business kind of guy. You know what I mean? Very independent and on

his own. This one comes up, and she wasn't doing anything. Nothing. She wasn't talking. She wasn't walking. Annette was very concerned because she was so different than Jack. She took her to the doctor. She took her to Norman Klein, who was one of the best baby specialists. The Kleins were one of my best friends all the way around. Norman took Jack on his yacht for a trip – not me, just Jack, all alone. Not his mother or his grandmother. Just Jack went on this. Highly honored. "The doctor took me on a trip on Lake Washington." He was well-known through the Jewish community. He was a very, very, good doctor. There is nothing wrong. Give her time. Well, Annette wasn't satisfied. She took her to the University of Washington, and they found out she was mentally partially handicapped. She couldn't retain anything. She sang a lot. She was humming all the time, but she wouldn't talk. So, Annette took her to the University of Washington's classes and now she's working. She's been holding a job down at the Kodak firm until they went out of business. For years, she worked for them. She got a full salary. Minimum wages. Full paid salary. It was wonderful. Then, in her growing-up period and when she started to work, she called me every night after work. Every afternoon, when she'd come home from work. She took the bus here. From the North End, he'd take the bus. I'd meet her down the street and walk home with her from there when she wanted to come for dinner or something. That's when she was working already when she was seventeen, eighteen years old.

PL: What did it mean for you, or how is it different being the grandmother of a mentally challenged granddaughter?

EE: Well, she gets special interest.

PL: What does that mean to you?

EE: Well, to start with, when she was born, Jack was two because he's forty-two. Yeah. I bought him a dog so he wouldn't be jealous of Roslyn. So, that started that. [laughter] Annette and Ed didn't want a dog. But they got a dog anyway. They loved him. A

dachshund. This dog had bad breath and sat in the backseat with me. So, what did I do? I put a tic tac in his mouth. That took care of that. If he swallowed it, I don't know what happened. But he was better. [laughter] That's a dog story. They always had a dog after that too. When the dachshund got sick, they had to put him away. They did get another dog. Roslyn was pretty grown-up by that time. But as far as she was concerned, when she was five or six – no, she was that old. I think maybe three or four years old. I was in Chicago at a convention. I was going to New York. That's with Temple when I went to all their conventions – Sisterhood and temple and administrators conventions. Then, I took my vacation as long as I was back East anyway. I went to New York at that time. I called Annette always when I got someplace and when I left. I called her. The next day, I was leaving for New York. She didn't sound good to me. She sounded funny on the telephone. I just didn't quite like the tone of her voice. But she wouldn't say anything was wrong. I had a feeling, that gut instinct that mothers get, I guess, and I changed my plans. I called my brother-in-law, and he met me at the airport when I got home. Roslyn was in the hospital. I just had a feeling that something was wrong by the tone of Annette's voice. That was so down. Annette is a very joyous person. She's always on the up-grade. She's great that way. That was my experience really as being a grandmother because I was working. I was busy. I didn't see her too often.

PL: What was wrong with Roslyn that she was in the hospital? What had happened?

EE: She had an attack of some kind. It wasn't pneumonia or anything like that. But some kind of attack that scared Annette, and they took her to the hospital. She came out of it okay, though. She was fine. As far as the mental capacity is concerned, it's always stayed the same. She's still maybe five or six years old. But she can read everything on the TV. She can hear. She sees. She's physically fine, except she [inaudible].

PL: What were your roles as a grandmother?

EE: Well, it must have been good because she calls me every day when she comes home from work. She still does. She's forty years old, and she still calls me. But now she doesn't do that so much because she goes swimming when she goes afterward. This group home has been a wonderful thing. She stayed with Annette until she was twenty-one. Jack moved out when he was twenty-one, and since then, she has was nagging Annette to go. Annette wasn't letting her go until she was ready. She started nagging Annette and then start shopping. She went to every kind of group home that was available that was convenient for them to get to, too. This home proved to be a Godsend. The staff has been wonderful. [inaudible] but the leaders are still there. The owner is the mother of the group, and she's been there all the time that Roslyn's been there. That's her first home. She lives there. That's her home. So, they had a birthday party for her Friday. Every year, they have a birthday party. I guess the others have it, too, but Roslyn makes a big deal over her birthday. One year, she was in the hospital on her birthday. She always remembers that. She feels good this year. She remembers that. She phones me [and] tells me all her problems because Annette's working. Here again, I sell myself short. She's not calling me because I'm her grandmother' she's calling me because she can't reach her mother. She's not home. [laughter] That's what I say to myself. I'm so glad that she calls somebody, that she calls me, and gets herself settled. That she gets home and she's all right. That's the main thing.

PL: What has been your greatest rewards as well as the biggest with being a grandmother?

EE: No problems.

PL: There haven't been any difficulties or difficult situations you've been in?

EE: I mind my own business. That's the best thing you can do is mind your own business, especially with my grandson. This is my own thinking. Annette says no, but I think differently. I think he resents my association with Roslyn when I correct her. Well,

I'm used to doing that. Annette's not around. She needs correction sometimes. Now, I don't do it as much as I used to because now she's older, and Annette's with her not working. She's with her more. Now, it's her business and not mine. She's letting things go. She's on a diet constantly, and Annette gives her second portions. I sit there gritting my teeth. Not saying anything. Sometimes, I walk away from the table. I can't take it. Here's this kid, she's trying so hard to lose weight. She's over two hundred pounds, and it's hard for her to walk. Finally, she got on this diet through the doctor, and she's walking. I kept telling her, "Roslyn" – this was before she went to this doctor – "You do a lot of walking. Grandma walks every day. That's how I keep my weight down. I walk every day. If you walk every day, it won't be so hard for you to walk because your legs get chapped. You're always complaining about problems with your legs because they're too close together. If you lose weight, they'll be farther apart." I should know that. [laughter] Where does it come from? But you think of something that you hope will help. Well, that's what she's telling me now. "I really walk good now, grandma." She's telling me she walks good. And she does. She's walking straight. She really does. I can tell the difference in her walking. That's on her doctor's list for the staff there to take her for a walk every day. On weekends, she goes with us for walks to the park.

PL: Is there anything else that you want to add about your experiences being a grandmother?

EE: No, they've all been good; that's the best thing I can say, as far as I'm concerned. My daughter might think different, but as far as I'm concerned, they're good.

PL: You're talking about the differences in child rearing between you and your daughter.

EE: Yeah. They're too lenient. She's too good to me. She's too good. There is such a thing as being too good. A second portion is not good. If you're on a diet, you don't get second portions. She gets too much the first portion. It's enough for a second portion.

PL: Are there other ways that you look at the way that your daughter has reared her own children?

EE: Oh, no. Otherwise, she is wonderful.

PL: Just even in terms of comparing your similarities and differences, what advice would you give to young mothers today about rearing children?

EE: Don't be so lenient. Don't give them so much. I think they've got, my two great-grandchildren, you can open a department store in their place with toys. All over the floor.

PL: So you're a great-grandmother as well.

EE: Yes.

PL: How many great-grandchildren do you have?

EE: Two.

PL: What are their names?

EE: Michael is the oldest; he's eleven. And Daniel will be ten in June. Daniel.

PL: What does it feel like to be a great-grandmother?

EE: I don't see them very often. It's not good. They live in Briarwood? Which is almost to Everett. To me, it's almost to Everett. It's a long ways from Everett, but to me, it's not far from here. He's always complaining of coming here, so I don't remind him very often because I'm tired of him complaining that he can't park. Even the parking is taken. What time is it?

PL: I'm fine.

EE: Are you fine?

PL: Yes. I think what I'm wondering a little bit about since we're getting into areas which have to do with caring for family members since Roslyn needed some care over the years.

EE: She sure got it. She's getting good care.

PL: What role did women play in particularly caring for family members in your family? She's a disabled daughter, so did you or Annette – were the expectations different around women's roles in taking care of Roslyn?

EE: I don't understand just what you mean by that.

PL: I guess I was asking if there were different expectations about women's roles in taking care of ill or disabled members of your family.

EE: I wouldn't know. We do the best we can. That's all anybody can do, I think. At least I do. I know Annette does. She's very good. Her husband is very cooperative. He's wonderful with Roslyn.

PL: I guess I'm wondering if you could contrast some of the attitudes of members of your generation versus your daughter's generation with respect to health or with respect to even issues around sexuality. Things have changed so much.

EE: I have no idea of other people. I have no idea.

PL: Well, what are yours? I'm asking about yours.

EE: Yeah.

PL: Over the years, what do you see about women's roles that have changed?

EE: I think the generation is way, way spoiled. Way too much spoiled. They have too much. If the parents have that much money to spend, I don't know. But they are spending it anyway. Somebody's money. Credit cards, I think, are a hazard. They overload on credit cards. They charge and charge and charge on credit cards from what I hear. They deny it, of course. But even reading the newspapers, you can tell. My great-grandchildren, I mean, it's sad to see the stuff that they get because I bought them their first pair of skates. Well, they were ready for it. Second pair, their parents bought themselves. I try to do the best I can, but you can't keep up with them. My son-in-law spoils them lousy. Whatever they want – "Buy this building," he'd buy it for them if he had the money. All he would need is the money. But the indication is to buy whatever they want. I don't think that's healthy. If they ever went through a Depression, the way this country is going, something is going to happen. Something is going to burst with the stock market going. Now, they want to take Social Security away from the older people to give it to these kids so they can save it and spend it. That's a ridiculous way to get money. They are all for it, young people. Sure, they're all for it. Gets the money easy.

PL: You're alluding to the differences between your living through the Depression and –

EE: That's right.

PL: – and the creation of Social Security during your life-time.

EE: That's right.

PL: You're seeing that it's in jeopardy today. Can you elaborate a little bit about what Social Security meant when you found out about it for the first time?

EE: Well, I just thought it was a very good idea. When I was at temple, my insurance man recommended taking part of my salary out and invest it like a stock. If I wanted to draw it out at any time at no cost. So, when I left temple, I had a nice piece of change to take from that. I think I had to take it out when I was seventy. Yeah, I had to take it out.

That was their limit – up to age seventy. It would expire. I wasn't working at the time anyway when I was seventy. I was sixty-five when I quit. I was sixty when I quit. So, I took it out when I was sixty because I wasn't working anymore, and there was nothing to take out of my salary. You certainly couldn't take it out of my pension; I had no pension left.

PL: Did living through the Depression at all affect you?

EE: Well, you have to be the temperament to go along with what is going on. You really have to live with those kinds of things to know. With me, it was no hardship because I've lived without money, or I could live with money. When I had it, I spent it, and when I didn't have it, I didn't spend it. I didn't charge anything. We were allowed a pound of butter a week, so I'd delegate so much for each dinner or breakfast or whatever it was. A pound lasted me a week. For the two of us. After that, I was on my own. I still had the same stipulation. You have to be built for that kind of thing.

PL: Were there other –?

EE: You have to be strong enough to live with it.

PL: Were there other historical events that come to mind that you think had a significant impact during your lifetime?

EE: Oh, my sister, the one that's close to me, her family had the same impact I had. We used to walk to save our shoes. It was so bad. Because you couldn't buy anything. She had an old ice box in her basement that you put a pan of water underneath it. That she gave to me when I bought my house because I couldn't buy a refrigerator. There was an old stove that they left me, the people that had – they only had the house two years. A brand-new home.

PL: The home that you purchased?

EE: Yes. It was only two years old. They left the stove because they couldn't move it, I guess. I don't know why they left it. It was a good stove. Lasted me as long as I lived there. I left it to whoever bought it. No refrigerator. So, I had this icebox – that was the cleanest room in my home – in the utility room scrubbing the floor every morning before I went to work because I'd forget to take the water out every night. You had to find the water. You wouldn't know about that. [laughter]

PL: And this for you was during the Depression?

EE: Yes. Sure. Because after the war, my husband was gone. I was alone then. By myself.

PL: Are there any other particular events, such as the Civil Rights Movement or Japanese Internment here, that you strongly remember? Or particular Senators, like Henry Jackson, that you feel had a significant impact on your thinking?

EE: Not really.

PL: How about the formation of the State of Israel? What were your feelings around that?

EE: I was very glad it happened. Other than that, I'm too remote, too far from it, and too busy with my own problems to worship far away. Not really understanding all of it. That many years ago.

PL: We have a few minutes more on the tape. When you visited Israel just to return, what were your feelings about Zionism at the time? Do you remember?

EE: Strictly against it. They always were against it.

PL: Who's they?

EE: Me. I was against it. I was against Zionism particularly because I told you, I think, about Hadassah. One of the members – and I didn't blame Hadassah for that member, but she must have gotten that notice from someplace through the membership because she was on the board that if you weren't a Zionist, you weren't a Jew. I pay my dues, and that's all they get from me.

PL: Where did your feelings then about Zionism –? Where did they emerge from?

EE: I don't know. They were just born in me, I guess, to be not discriminating. To me, that's as much discriminating as if you're Japanese, and I don't like you just because you're Japanese. It's the same thing to me. If you're not a Zionist, I'm not a Jew. Who makes sense out of that? No sense.

PL: Was there a strong Zionist movement within the groups that you were involved in, or were there strong non-Zionist people that you associated yourself with?

EE: Not really. I didn't associate with them that I knew about. I didn't know it. I mean, people didn't go into politics so much in those days like that. You weren't that religious yourself. I didn't [inaudible] people who were violent about their religion and trying to impress me. In fact, I had a janitor at temple who was a – what was he called? They didn't approve of doctors, they didn't approve of medicine, and they had a daughter who needed medical care badly, and I begged him to go to my doctor. I'd pay the bill even, I told this guy because he said he couldn't afford it. She died for lack of attention.

PL: Was he a Christian Scientist?

EE: No, it wasn't Christian Science. It was a real radical group. Yeah.

PL: This tape is about to end. So, I'm going to pause here, and I'm going to put another one in. So, hold on.

EE: Ran out, okay.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

PL: We are continuing with the oral history of Esther Pearl Eggleston. This is Pamela Brown Lavitt of the Jewish Women's Archives Weaving Women's Words Seattle Project as oral historian. Today is May 3, 2001. We are in Esther's kitchen and we are continuing on mini disk number four. I wanted to talk a little bit about your hobbies. What hobbies have you had over the years?

EE: Well, other than knitting which you've already expressed, I think. We talked about it. My making afghans. I've done a lot of – that picture on the wall, I did that.

PL: Is that needlepoint?

EE: No, it's not needlepoint, it's cross stitch.

PL: What is that called?

EE: Cross stitch. That's what I call it. Maybe it's my own stitch. I don't know. It's a cross stitch. My grandson was working in a frame company. He framed it for me. He bought the best one he could get and charged me forty-two dollars for it. Big favor. But he did a beautiful job. Anyway, I did that. I've got another one in the bottom of the closet not finished, but an hour's work will do it. I just can't get around to finishing that and getting it framed. It's big, and I don't like it anyway. I did a lot of that. A lot of that kind of work. A lot of knitting those. Never sewed for Annette. She took sewing up at school, and she sews for me.

PL: So the afghans and the cross stitching, to start there, how did you get involved in doing those? Where did you learn how to do those?

EE: See, I hardly remember these things. Who started you? Somebody was doing something and taught me how someplace way down the long because I was doing that – knitting when I was very, very young.

PL: What is the experience of knitting an afghan?

EE: It's very relaxing. That's what I did it for: to relax. [inaudible] the radio. That was before TV. It goes back a long way before TV. That would really relax [me] when I'd come home from work. All my jobs seemed to be very stressing. Always with problems of some kind that had to be solved. So, I'd sit down before – well, when I was working at temple especially, I'd come home – I wasn't quite up to handling some of the things when I first started there. I'd come home completely frustrated, angry, and full of stress. So, I'd tell Annette, I said, "Don't talk to me. Just give me ten minutes until I get under control. I don't want to fight with you tonight." She was smart. She left me alone. She would go outside, or she would do something to get out of my sight. So, I calmed down, I had a glass of water or something or read a book, whatever I did to relax, and everything was fine then. We never had an argument. I had had sense enough to know that I was going to fight with her. That took a lot out of me to know to do that. I didn't know I had it in me to do it when I worked at temple. I didn't want the job to start with. I didn't think I was capable. What did I end up doing? Cemeteries and mausoleums? [laughter] Ended up doing things I've never in my life would have dreamed of doing.

PL: So, how did the afghans and these colorful knit things that you have in your home here –? Would you call them a therapy? What would be your word for it?

EE: I would use that word. Therapy. Yes. Because it relaxes me. Until my fingers got full of arthritis, and I can't do it anymore. That's what stopped me doing it.

PL: When would you do it? When you came home from work?

EE: Yes.

PL: Did you ever do it socially the way that quilters have clubs?

EE: In a group? No. I don't like group work. Only for volunteering, that kind of work as a group, I don't particularly like. That's why I'm not moving down to the Summit House, other than I can't afford it. I can't move down there. But if I could, I wouldn't move down there anyway, no matter what I could afford, because I don't like to sit down to dinner between 5:00 and 7:00. I don't like to be seated at a table of six or eight. A table of four with three strangers. I just don't enjoy that. That's not me. A lot of people. I'm around people all the time – all this volunteering work. You're always around people. When I'm alone, I enjoy my own company. I think I'm very lucky because I have one friend who just runs. As soon as she is up and around, she's outside. She's downtown shopping. The thing I hate the most is to go shopping. I got to buy a dress for that picture. [laughter] I don't dare show up in that except when I'm a hundred years old. Then I'll show up in that picture in that dress.

PL: Are you talking about the dress that you've worn for every –

EE: Every five years, I wear that dress. [laughter]

PL: So, they have a birthday party for you. You had a seventy-fifth, an eightieth –

EE: Eighty-fifth.

PL: Ninetieth and then a ninety-fifth, and you wear the same dress for every event.

EE: That's what it says there. Did you take a picture of that?

PL: I will do that after.

EE: You can't; it's too big.

PL: Why is that significant to you other than you –?

EE: I just like it. It fits me. That's what's so [inaudible]. After all these years, it still fits me. [laughter] I haven't gained any weight, and it looks good. I feel good. That's the main part about it. I feel good in it. It gets laugh [inaudible] everybody sees me now anyway.

PL: So it's kind of become a ritual to wear that dress.

EE: Tradition.

PL: What other things have you done that are your hobbies?

EE: Well, to start with, my recreation at night was playing cards. It wasn't a club. We'd just got together for dinner.

PL: When did you start playing cards?

EE: Oh, my father taught me pinochle when I was a kid, but I never won because he'd get so mad when he lost. It took all the enjoyment out of the game. He'd get so mad. He'd throw the cards when he lost in a game of pinochle. I wasn't any good at it, but I won once in a while. I fixed it so I always lost rather than have him get mad. I didn't enjoy the game. I didn't want to play with him in the first place. I was doing him a favor. [laughter] Then I played poker in a club.

PL: How old were you when you started playing poker?

EE: Oh, I played bridge before that. I played real late at night. Bridge after work. It was like tournament bridge. I'm a real good bridge player. Really good. And the same four people played all the time. We didn't go to these chores that they have now. I don't think they had them in those days. We didn't go to them. A [inaudible] where people would

get together.

PL: Were you a master?

EE: No.

PL: They call it a master bridge player?

EE: No, I was never that good. I was good for the four of us. We were all on the same level. Good.

PL: Who are these other four women that you were playing with?

EE: Two women and two men. Date. That was my bridge date. That's the only time I saw him was playing bridge and this other couple, who were also just dating for bridge. We were good players. Then I went into poker at the women's group.

PL: You said women's group. What women's group was that?

EE: All women.

PL: Was it Jewish women?

EE: All Jewish.

PL: All of these were Jewish.

EE: All Jewish. When I went to T.T. Minor School, I think I brought that in some place. We lived in the North End, and I took two streetcars to get here to graduate with my friends – all Jewish – at T.T. Minor. They weren't Jewish there. But when I went to high school, they were all at Garfield, and I went to Cleveland, and we got together. When I was in the North End, we always in the North End from then on. We used to meet at my place for parties and everything. They went to college except me. There was one other

that went to work, too. We met at my mother's place – my mother's and dad's. They always convened first in the kitchen with my mother. She always stayed in the kitchen. She never joined us, but they all came into her. She was really social that way. A good person. She listened to them. That's what makes a person good when you listen.

PL: These poker games lasted for how many years?

EE: Years until Pan came in.

PL: What's Pan?

EE: It's that gin rummy? Have you ever played gin rummy or anything like that? Yeah? Well, it's like gin rummy. It's the same idea only you have more cards to hold on to and more money to lose.

PL: How did you hear of the game again? You said it was when it came in?

EE: Somebody was playing it in Portland that came here to Seattle. And brought it in, brought his game here they taught somebody, and somebody taught somebody, and somebody taught me.

PL: So you had – is this a folklore of Pan? Or how –?

EE: It's national.

PL: Or you met someone that – you knew the person who came from Portland.

EE: Yeah. I didn't. Somebody else did. She taught this person who this person taught and that person taught me. It needs eight people to play it. Seven or eight. Eight is a better game. They're all gone. All those clubs have broken. There's nobody left.

PL: Those clubs, did any of them have names? Did they name themselves?

EE: Yeah. I was treasurer there.

PL: What was the name of the club?

EE: The last club that joined, we called them the – wait a minute now. When you complain a lot, what do you say in Yiddish?

PL: Tsuris?

EE: Not Tsuris, no. That's the problem itself.

PL: That's right.

EE: This is complaining.

PL: Let me pause the tape. We'll think about it.

[Recording paused."

EE: That's the word. I called it Kvetch club.

PL: To kvetch.

EE: And that went into the bulletin.

PL: Oh, so you had –

EE: They hadn't named the club, so when I had to write the article for the bulletin, the City Hope bulletin, at the City Hope's group as a chairman of the guild – guild chairman, I'm there at the City Hope. We didn't have a name, so I'm naming it temporarily in case somebody objects to it, the Kvetch Club. [laughter]

PL: The Kvetch Club.

EE: That's all we ate for lunch is kvetch.

PL: Is this your poker club?

EE: No. This is Pan.

PL: This is the Pan club.

EE: These were all Pan clubs. They're all gone.

PL: Were these with money? Did you gamble?

EE: Definitely. A lot of money. If you lost a dollar, it was a lot. No, you could lose four or five dollars in it. A lot of money.

PL: What other social aspects of it were they? You said that the woman for poker came into the kitchen and talked to your mom.

EE: Those were all college kids.

PL: So, what is it about women's friendship that had to do with the poker and the card clubs?

EE: Nothing. Because most of them didn't play cards at all. [inaudible] The Klein girls – the doctor. Did I say Norman Klein? His two sisters – Ruby – got me into ORT, and Lillian Klein belonged to ORT. She never liked ORT. She always complained about everything. She was a [inaudible]. [laughter] She didn't complain about medicine. She complained about everything going on. She was an objector. That's what she was. Different than Ruby. She agreed with everything, and Lillian objected to everything. Ruby comes and analyzes it. Lillian objected to everything Ruby liked. There are sisters like that, I guess.

PL: You were good friends with the whole family?

EE: The whole family.

PL: And they were part of your card circle?

EE: Yeah. Gin rummy.

PL: Gin rummy. So besides Pan, were there other card communities that you were involved in?

EE: No. Not communities at all. I never went to any clubs or anything like that. For gambling? Nothing. I wasn't a gambler. I never played bingo unless I had to.

PL: Do you remember other kinds of activities that you really enjoyed, even today?

EE: I don't have any, really, because I was so busy working and doing this work for all these organizations. Because I was really at the top of everything I did, I was at the top of it. I was working for it.

PL: You mentioned baking. I noticed that a number of the ORT cookbooks have your recipes in them.

EE: That's right.

PL: So why is baking an important thing?

EE: It's not important. It just comes up when you bake it. It's not important. [laughter] My great-grandson – I made those. Oh here, you didn't put them on the table. Did I? No.

PL: I'm going to pause.

[Recording paused.]

EE: These are brownies. Okay. So this is one of my – is this baking? That's what we're talking about – baking. He ordered brownies but no nuts. Because I said, "Brownies always have nuts in them. The ones I've eaten." Well, he said, "Then put in chocolate chips." That's an order. Okay. These my granddaughter wanted for her birthday. I've been making these for her house. A double batch of chocolate chip cookies for the house. That was for twenty-one people I had to bake chocolate chip cookies. A double recipe calls for six dozen cookies. A batch is one hundred and twenty cookies. So, that was my hobby last week. My daughter was chairman of her bowling – each one takes a chance – not a chance but are supposed to take care of the bowling dinner at the end of the year. Last week was the last day. So she baked these. These you have to taste. These are delicious. You can use that. While I'm talking, you can eat one of those.

PL: How often did you bake? Or do you still bake?

EE: I just baked these.

PL: So you bake once a week? Twice a week?

EE: No. That I make for my grandson mandel bread whenever I have the strength to do it because it's so hard mixing all that flour. It's hard to do now. It's getting harder and harder.

PL: Now, last time, I left here with some zucchini bread, that was incredible. You seem particularly proud of your zucchini bread.

EE: Well, because everybody tells me so. [laughter] I didn't eat it.

PL: Where did you get the recipe from?

EE: Gosh, I've been baking zucchini bread ever since my son-in-law plants some. Now, my grandson bakes some. So my grandson, no nuts. So I have to make my son-in-law

with nuts and my grandson no nuts. Try to remember all these things, yeah.

PL: That's amazing. Over the years, have you experienced any kind of health issues that have been significant or had an impact on all these wonderful things that you do?

EE: Well, I do them anyway in regards to pain. Right now, I've got arthritis so bad it's awful. I wear a brace. This happened a year ago when I broke my wrist.

PL: How did you break your wrist?

EE: I fell off the bus. I stepped on one step on the bus to get on with this hand, got to the railing, reached for the other one, lost my balance, and went over backward. That one step I took on the bus – you know what that is. It's a high step. It was only one step. But I lost my balance, and in that falling in that second, I said, "Don't fall on your hip." Because everybody I know is breaking their hips. So, I was going to be different. I don't know how I did it, but I turned over and fell on my face instead. Somehow or other, I managed to turn around while I was falling, and that one step – that's all I had time for. So, I broke my wrist. I was operated on a year last March one year ago. Now, I went back to the doctor. I was lucky he left a – see that little thing sticking out? That's a stitch. He didn't cut it off. [laughter] That's my souvenir for a broken wrist. Thank God for a sense of humor. If you can't laugh about something like this, you're crazy. No kidding. So, it's been hurting. I know why. Because I'm doing all these things. There's a good reason for it to hurt. So, she put a brace on [inaudible] on my arm. So, it gets some rest. But that iron thing sticking – so, I've been doing that at night.

PL: What's the largest or the most significant thing that you've recognized about being a woman and the aging process?

EE: I haven't had time to get old, as you can hear me. [laughter] I think that's the best answer I can give you. I don't think about my age, especially I don't think about my age when I've got that picture that I invited everybody to my hundredth birthday. I've only got

four and one-half years to go. [laughter] So, I don't think about it. That's why I listen to other people tell me how old they're getting.

PL: How old do you feel?

EE: Seventy. I've been telling that – a lot of times people ask me that. It's an easy answer.

PL: What's the secret?

EE: I think doing all these crazy things I'm doing. Not thinking about my age. I'm not despondent about it. I'm glad I'm getting old. Yeah. I hope I reach one hundred and wear that dress. [laughter] I've got to wear that dress one more time.

PL: You will, and you will look beautiful in it. I think, Esther, I'm going to ask you if you have anything else to add. I have many things I could ask you about. Perhaps my last question, then. I have one last question, which would be if you had to say – if you had to sum up or talk about what it's like to be a Jewish woman in Seattle – this is a big question, so I want you to think about it. What has it been like being a Jewish woman in Seattle, having witnessed a good part of the twentieth century? What would you end this interview with?

EE: I've never denied I'm Jewish. I've never emphasized that I'm Jewish. I don't wear it on my arm that I'm Jewish, but everybody knows I'm Jewish by my actions, I think. Because religion almost always comes up someplace. Like when I was driving and I had my house, I took my car to the gas station man to ask for advice on buying another car. And he gave me a story about everybody – did I tell you this before? Okay, so you know that story. So, he knew I was Jewish, and he treated me like – rolled out the red rug every time I came for gas. He came to my house to service my car to change my tire for me. I didn't have to drive it on a flat tire one block away. So, how can you describe your Jewishness? If you wear it on your arm that's a problem. You don't know who

you're talking to.

PL: Well, you just said that your actions spoke about what it was to be Jewish, so how would you then say that your actions were said or announced –?

EE: Yeah, because I belonged to all Jewish organizations, but I just slipped in the American Lung Association anyway. I talked about that equally with my Jewish organizations. So, there was no difference to me where I was working. It was what they were working for. That's always the reason.

PL: As a Jewish woman living in Seattle, what would your advice be as I grow to be, hopefully, one hundred years old?

EE: Well, you're working at it, that's for sure because I think you have a really hard job to do. Meet and distinguish what each person – I'm sure you're asking other people different things you're asking me. Entirely different. Different lives than I've led. A lot of them haven't done anything all their lives. So, what are they going to talk about? It would be very difficult just being a housewife. What can you say about a housewife? They were never recognized as anybody until lately. They were just there, doing your laundry.

PL: And you were doing something else?

EE: I was working. Makes a big difference [in] your feeling about what you are. There was only one time I was aware of being Jewish, and I think I wrote that down when I worked for American Can Company. They fired me because I was Jewish. I had it on my application. It took them a long time to find out I was Jewish before they read the application. But other than that, I've never had any backfires, except like this automobile deal. All Jews on Westlake are owned by Jewish people.

PL: I would like to thank you very much for spending the time with me for this interview. I thank you very much. I think we'll end here.

EE: Good.

[END OF INTERVIEW]