Elsbeth Bothe Transcript

EE: Today is September 14, 2001. This is Elaine Eff, oral historian with the Jewish Women's Archive "Weaving Women's Words" Project. I am interviewing Elsbeth Bothe at her home in Baltimore, Maryland. Why don't we start by your – first of all, tell me who you are and why don't you tell me about your parents. What we'll do is we'll start with your – and then go into your earliest memories of growing up in Baltimore, where you lived.

EB: All right. Well, my mother's side of the family were fourth-generation Baltimoreans. I don't know exactly what year they came over from Hamburg, Germany. I think almost all of the family - the big name in the family was Hamburger – because Isaac Hamburger, my great grandfather had ten offspring and was the owner of Isaac Hamburger and Sons. My grandmother, my mother's mother, was one of the ten children. And they all didn't marry, but most of them did. Most of them had offspring. Many of them worked at Hamburger's, and we were all very close to one another. That includes kissing cousin distance and that sort of thing. I was actually born when my parents were living at 2412 Eutaw Place. Though I don't remember that at all because when I was about two or maybe one, they moved to Pikesville. That's where I was brought up until my father died when I was fairly young. My father's family came from Tallahassee, Florida, and were one of two Jewish families there. That was all. It was a town of 10,000 people at the time. My father went to medical school here, and that's when he met my mother. The house at 2412 Eutaw Place where I lived at birth was actually my father's parents' house – that they had just happened to have here because they spent so much time going between Tallahassee and Baltimore. His family came to Tallahassee, as I understand it from Ohio sometime in the 1870s or thereabouts. My father was born there. But he went to military school in Georgia, as I understand. His two sisters both went to boarding

schools here in Baltimore. And then both of them went to Goucher College, which my mother also did. Her two sisters all went to Goucher. Her one brother went to Wharton Business School. But they were all tied into Baltimore rather closely, though my father was a native of Tallahassee.

EE: Do you know where your father's family actually originated from?

EB: Some part of Germany. I don't know exactly where. But they were very snobby about the fact that they had all come from Germany.

EE: You mean both of your parents?

EB: Both sides of the family. And then, going back, they had come to the States relatively early for Jews. They weren't the Mayflower Jews, but they followed closely after them. One of my early memories of that situation was my grandmother being on the telephone with somebody. I must have been three years old, saying, "Don't you talk to me like that. I am a Hamburger." The only hamburgers I knew about were something that you put your jaws into. But they were very much – they were proud of being German Jews. They were not as snobbish about separating themselves from the Russian Jews or Eastern Jews. None of them had a lot of religion. In my father's case, there was no synagogue. Later, the family had something to do with remedying that. But there was no place to worship and I don't think much desire to worship. Now, [on] my mother's side, as I understand it, some relative had actually been a cantor at one of the Reform synagogues. Of course, nobody ever got near a non-Reform. In fact, they avoided them – much less didn't belong to them. But he got into some kind of argument. From there on in, nobody had anything to do with official religion. There was never a denial that we were Jewish. Then the name being Levy on my father's side – how are you going to get around that one? My grandfather, my mother's father –

EE: Tell me what his name was.

EB: He was Henry Krause, and he manufactured little cigars. I've got a big collection of the boxes. A couple of the little ones are on that shelf from Henry Krause and Company. He went broke in the ’20s when – I don't remember it happening, but it did. His company went out of business then. Actually, my grandmother didn't have much money the rest of her– they were quite substantial at one time. He didn't die with very much.

EE: Now, who are we talking about?

EB: My mother's father, Henry Krause, who made the cigars. Little cigars called "In-B-Tween.” As a matter of fact, there was a sign, until fairly recently, when you came into Baltimore, you'd see this Kraus & Company [sign] from the train. I know it's not there anymore, but it was there for years as you came to Baltimore through southwest Baltimore. I always used to look out from the train at it. I really didn't know him because he died about the time I was born. I knew my grandmother. She lived on until I was around twelve.

EE: So, she was the Hamburger?

EB: She was the Hamburger. I guess this is true in all families that certain ancestors are more immediate relatives are predominant in your existence. I don't know that that's true. In my case, both families were. It wasn't so true in my cousins’ cases. I didn't know my maternal grandfather.

EE: Well, tell me what you know about your mother and father meeting.

EB: Okay. I'm not sure I know how they met, except they both mingled with the same crowds. My mother was here for her whole life. I think she was rather an unusual person. Ahead of her time.

EE: Tell me what her name was.

EB: Elsa Krause. She was a wonderful person. Everybody loved her. She had been a social worker at one time. She never worked when my brother and I were growing up. But she did things like going to Arizona with a male friend. That kind of thing. She had her hair short and wasn't married all that young. I think she was in her late twenties and had known my father. It was sort of a family mingling of – especially Southern Jews, as you may already know, have a grapevine, networking. Most of them are German Jews, too. They sort of all knew each other. Not just Tallahassee, but Richmond and Greensboro – I mean all these Southern towns. The Jews knew each other. When they came into town, they had an automatic introduction.

EE: So, do you think of Baltimore as a Southern town?

EB: They did. It was the first border of northern civilization to them. They came up for doctors. They did their shopping here. This was the civilized city. And such Jewish life. They knew Jewish people. They didn't do much in the way of formal religion, but they had this network. So, I'm sure my mother got to know my father through some connection there. These were people you ought to meet if you lived in Baltimore.

EE: So, tell me about your mother's family. What were they like?

EB: Okay. I don't know as much about my – well, there were a lot of Krauses around, cousins – quite a few. But we just weren't as close. Now, on my mother's father's side, my grandmother was one of ten of Isaac Hamburger's children. There were a couple of maiden aunts and that sort of thing. But the others were all married. I think they went out of their way to try to find well-to-do spouses. But I had something close to thirty relatives in the Park School when I was there, including three in my own class of seventeen.

EE: What institutions were the Hamburgers connected to in the City?

EB: Well, the store, of course, was –

EE: Tell me about the store.

EB: Well, Isaac Hamburger and Sons. I think Isaac or his father – I'm not sure. Anyway, it started as a tailor shop, but it grew into a very large business. Congresspeople came over to get their clothes made. I think it was mainly custom-made. By the time I grew up, they had the store downtown, which was a landmark spot. It was the place for men to buy quality clothes. It just went out of business, though – it was no longer owned by the family. It just went out of business, I guess, around six or seven years ago. I haven't refreshed my memory. The Sun papers had big stories about how it was founded and how long it had been there. I think it was started somewhere in the 1880s, along with – I used to know all the – I never got anything free from any of them, but we were related to the Hutzlers, the Hochschilds, the Hamburgers – almost all the big non-chain – and there weren't that many chain department stores in the ’20s. I don't think relatives married each other. But they were so – they were already sort of family before they got united legally.

EE: So, you're saying that there was this sort of retail incest [laughter], for lack of a better word?

EB: Well, I don't know if that's right – because they weren't all retailers. There were a lot of businesspeople and some professionals. No lawyers, particularly. So, I didn't come on my profession through family connections. But there were loads of them. And they all stayed here in Baltimore until my generation, of course. Some left, but there's still quite a number of them here. I didn't realize that others didn't have the stream of relatives all in the same place and all having a lot to do with one another. I suppose that's unusual, but it never occurred to me.

EE: When did you all do together as a family? What kind of events did you share?

EB: We certainly didn't share Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur or High Holidays, although some were much more religious than others. I had a great aunt who observed dietary laws and all that. But I think that she got that through her marriage and not through her own family. We just knew each other. As I say, I had cousins on top of cousins that went to Park School, which my mother's younger sister was too old – but my mother's youngest sister, Aunt Bea, was in the first graduating class at Park School. My grandfather had something to do with the founding of the school, which was always non-sectarian. However, the reason why it was founded was that Jewish kids from that Jewish-German background went to Friends, which was the only private school that accepted them. Of course, a lot of them went to public schools. But those that didn't went to Friends. And Friends was very friendly. But they didn't see any reason why they shouldn't count on Jews to endow the place like the Quakers and others did. And when they suggested that maybe some of the other well-to-do could do more than pay tuition, they decided instead – and this would have been – I guess it was just 1910 or thereabouts. I'm not sure the exact date. But they decided they would start their own school. And not only start the school, but it was the day of Dewey and progressive education. They had founded a school that was quite unique in its educational theory. Very relaxed. You were supposed to – you didn't have grades. You lived up to your own potential. That kind of stuff. The thing that's gone out of style. But it was very much so. But Park was quite an original school. I mean, there are several Park schools around the country they were named after. It was named from Druid Hill Park, which is its original location. And then they built it before I started school, and I started there in low kindergarten at its nursery school in 1933, I guess, was my first year of school. Maybe it was a little earlier. But I was at Park off and on from Nursery School until I graduated. It was predominantly Jewish. Not all, but those were predominantly Jews of German origin who lived in the upper Park Heights corridor. Park was on Liberty Heights Avenue, where the Community College of Baltimore now is. I don't think there are any buildings left standing. It was a very original school design.

EE: [inaudible]

EB: Well, it was on Liberty Heights Avenue, which Carlin's Park was at Park Circle, and we could hear the trains and the amusement park things. The Hot Shoppe, which is where everybody went after dates, gathered in the parking lot where they had these girl hops who would bring out thick milkshakes and that sort of thing, was right there, too. There was a big hill. I don't know that it's there anymore. The school had nineteen acres. I know exactly the number, which was a very generous size piece of land. It was a very different area, of course, and a lot of Jewish people lived there, but not too many of the ones I knew. It wasn't the most fashionable place for the Jewish people to live. Most of the ones I knew lived in the – I'm getting confused – which is Upper, which is Lower Park Heights. That's what I guess you'd call it Upper, where most of my friends lived around, where the Suburban Club is. Most of them belonged to the Suburban Club. Park was built on one level. Each of the rooms went outdoors, as well as had corridors. A very novel design. Classes were small. People were encouraged to be creative and do their own thing. Of course, we were taught to print. The theory was that children shouldn't have to learn script and printing, both. So, we all started out printing. We never were taught script. I learned it when I went to college. I had to find some way to write faster. A number of my friends who went there with me still print. That was one of the progressive education notions. It was quite a creative atmosphere. Very different than the standard public-school curriculum, or the private schools, for that matter. It was a very stimulating place. Actually I was never that happy when I was there.

EE: What was it like socially?

EB: Well, it had more girls than boys because we didn't have a football team, and Soccer was a sissy sport then. We consorted a lot with each other. I guess that's true of most school kids, except that Park was so much smaller than our circle was. It was a large circle, when you added it up. But it was the same old, same old. A lot of the kids, at

least the ones that I knew, the families belonged to the Suburban Club, so a lot of social activities came there. We lived in a relatively small area. Well, the reason we moved in Pikesville, as I understand it, was that my father's family was quite prominent in Tallahassee. The Deep South, which I guess you can still call Tallahassee despite things that have happened more recently of a national nature. He came from a prominent family. They didn't concern themselves with Jews because they had the Blacks to pick on. His family's attitude was pretty typical of the Deep South, about race-relations. He wasn't accustomed to being treated like a pariah, which Jews are in some places. When they married and started a family, Eutaw Place had a lot of Jews. My mother had been born on Madison Avenue, just a few blocks away from 2412 Eutaw Place. I can't remember the address where she was born. But he didn't want to live amongst the Jews. So, we moved to Pikesville. And, of course, within a – I can remember Pikesville – how we had a four or five acres with a hill on it. None of this exists. Other kids, the non-Jewish kids, used to sled there. There's some nasty kids on our property yet. Pikesville became fairly solidly Jewish – not solidly – not too long after we moved there, so it was kind of ironic that you have one, and they all – this neighborhood, of course, had no Jews at all in those days. In fact, they were restricted out of it. There are a number now.

EE: What neighborhood is that?

EB: Well, this is part of Homeland. It's Northeast as opposed to Northwest, the same parallel. I think Barry Levinson or one of his movies emphasized that. This is the side where your Gentiles lived. Jews lived on the West.

EE: What made you aware of the differences between where Jewish Baltimore –?

EB: Oh, it was built-in from the time I can recall anything. It didn't bother us particularly because we had our country club, and we had nice houses. And they were very similar – like Dumbarton, if you are familiar with it, was very much – it was built and developed by the same people around the same time as Guilford and Roland Park. A little later, but it

was a similar kind of neighborhood. So, we had ours, and they had theirs. We had no particular envy. I don't recall ever being subjected to any antisemitic – I never even had a reason to think of myself as somebody who had to watch out or who was discriminated against in any overt way. There were a lot of Gentiles who were much inferior. [laughter] On the whole, I'd say that we thought we were better, and they didn't think differently. Or, if they did, they didn't tell us.

EE: How would you describe the religious delineations of the City?

EB: Alright. Well, the Forest Park area – where a lot of Jews – and the Ashburton area were originally Catholic to a large extent. Of course, Baltimore is largely Catholic. At the time, I was elementary school age. And a number of Jewish families moved in, and the area around Lake Ashburton was well-to-do Jews. One of the Hoffbergers lived there in two houses. I think they were of Russian origin rather than [German], but their were fancy houses there were occupied largely by Jews. I think they all got – practically all of them got out of there. Windsor Hills was a big German-Jewish area – large houses and well-to-do substantial Jewish people. Then, the dividing line was between – well, West of Falls Road had a lot of Jewish friends. Mount Washington, which is still, miraculously, fairly mixed, although I guess has more Jewish than any other type of family. A lot of the kids that I went to school with and knew lived in Mt. Washington. At one time, I guess I could tell you who lived in every house. I had some relatives. My father's sister lived there, her family, my cousins. I don't know if any of my mother's [family] lived there. The dividing line – Mt. Washington is west of Falls Road. That was pretty much the dividing line. Now, Falls Road itself never had any Jewish families. Never has and still doesn't, I don't think. But there was a pretty sharp divide there. Roland Park and Guilford were solidly non-Jewish, and that's where the upper-class, non-Jewish people lived. When you went into Upper Park Heights Avenue, starting around Pimlico, it had gotten to be very Jewish by the time of my bringing up and got more so as you went South, went past Park Circle. I think someone mentioned the other day Whitelock Street. That was

middle-class, not working-class. I don't think I ever knew a working-class Jew. Or many of the working-class anybody. But, that area was more dominated by Russian-Jewish families. Of course, the synagogues were all there, both Reform and Orthodox, or what's in-between. But Reform, Orthodox and –
EE: Conservative.

EB: Yes, right. Now, the Jewish synagogues, or the Jewish places of worship – they would never call them "synagogues." They were "temples." They were also on Bolton Street. Yes, down on Eutaw Place. They all built out on Upper Park Heights, I guess. Started doing that, I guess, post-World War II. So everybody who went to synagogue or went to Temple would go in that area. Of course, the very Orthodox who had to walk on Saturdays, and so forth, stayed further Southeast, Lloyd Street and those areas. But by the time I was aware of any of it, I don't think that too many Jewish families lived there anymore. I have a number of Jewish friends who were brought up in that – people my age who were brought up in that part of the City. In my childhood, I never associated with anybody who lived South of North Avenue.

EE: So what did North Avenue mean?

EB: Actually, it meant it was – I won't say North Avenue. You have to go further South, now Bolton Hill, which is now pretty much a mixed area religious-wise, never had hardly a Jew. My cousin, Walter Sondheim – I guess you know him – was one of the many cousins who derive from the Hamburgers. They lived on Bolton Street – Bolton Hill. There were, I guess, a few Jewish families there. But, for the most part, Eutaw Place was considered aristocratic. The Emerson and the Esplanade – the big apartment buildings there at Lake Drive. You know what I'm talking about? Well, they were all Jewish and pretty well-off Jews. I had four or five sets of relatives who lived in one or the other of these buildings. I used to get the names mixed up. I still do. It was solidly Jewish and pretty substantially fixed Jews. Lake Drive had a lot of well-to-do. The

Hendlers had a big mansion there. Several other Jewish families of note lived there. I guess none of them much does anymore. It's all gone North and into the county. Now, you see, I lived in the county. We were over the county line.

EE: Now, what year did you move to Pikesville?

EB: '28, I think it was.

EE: What was it like when you lived there?

EB: Well, first of all, it was one-horse village. I mean, nobody had offices or businesses there. There were Fields' Drugstore and Fader's Drugstore. Fields' was owned by – people considered Fields antisemitic. So, we did all our business with Fader, who was a block South on the West Side of Reisterstown Road. But there was no movie house. I remember when the movie house was built [and] when the Five-and-Ten was built. They had The Old Soldier's Home, which, I think, some remnants of it are up there. They still had some – I think they may have been Confederate, or certainly World War I veterans who lived there – friendly old gents. That whole side of Reisterstown Road was the West Side. Pikesville had no businesses at all, except when you got up as far North as Fields' Drugstore. There were, I think, a couple of country office buildings there. On the other side of the street – let's see – well, there was Sapp's General Store, and they were very nasty people. They were the boys that used to sled on our property and beat up my brother. I don't know if it had anything to do with religion. Then, there was Pikesville School, which was just South of the Old Soldiers' Home. I don't think it went through high school, but it certainly had no college preparatory program. One of the reasons we went to Park was that if you expected your kids to get college preparatory class education, you had to send them to the city. I mean, there wasn't any county school. There was no county school at all that was of any quality or expected to prepare anybody to go beyond high school, if that far. You had to pay tuition in order to go to the city schools. I don't want to switch around too much, but my mother went to Western High School and to

School #49, and she had a little covey of Jewish friends; they were best friends all their lives, most of whom became professionals. There were five or six women – Dr. (Lucille Levers?), Dr. (Bessie Moses?), and (Hilda Blatstein?), who came into the story later. Well, there was this little group of six or seven women who were like sisters and stayed friends all their lives. My mother was the first one who died in the group. But they had gone to Western High School and Goucher College. I wasn't part of that era. My mother always wanted me to follow in those footsteps, but I didn't. They were quite an advanced group of women, really. All went to college. Most of them went to graduate schools. Not all of them married. Bessie and Lucille, the two doctors, were originals at Hopkins Medical School before Dr. Finkelstein, in fact, by some years, were quite unusual women and very, very close to one another. They were just like sisters all their lives.

EE: What did Park School mean in comparison to the public schools? Did you feel like people treated you differently because you went to Park School?

EB: When you say "people," which people? The other Jewish kids?

EE: Or other kids in the neighborhood.

EB: Well, Baltimore, of course, has a big – okay. I had seventeen in my class, and that was it. The largest one, I think, maybe had twenty-five. The whole school was around three hundred when I graduated. It's now built up to – I think it's close to a thousand. I know it's tripled in size. Of course, it's on a different campus and has a lot of amenities we didn't have. As far as being – I mean, I had a lot of friends that went to Garrison Junior High and Forest Park Senior High. I'm very vague about where they went to school before they started in the last half of their secondary education. And we can sort of – I guess we really thought we were a lot better off than they were. I don't know how they looked at us. There were also some not-too-bright kids whose parents made great sacrifices to send them there because this was all the Depression years. I graduated in '45. Up until the Pre-War period, people weren't that prosperous. I was a doctor's

daughter. My father was a physician. Most of the children were [from] businesspeople, and some of them very wealthy, like the (Blatsteins?) and the (Rosenbergs?). They all had businesses. Lebow [Brothers Clothes]. In fact, I have this memory of (Sammy Lebowitz?), whose family were Hendlers who made Hendler's Ice Cream. You had to consume the things your classmates – in fact, I think Amoco Gasoline was blue-colored. In those days, the automobile glass gauge had a – you could tell what kind of gas the person was burning in the car by the color of the glass in the gas gauge. You daren't have pink, which was Standard Oil's. You had to have Amoco Blue; it wasn't right otherwise. Well, (Sammy Lebowitz's?) family owned Hendler's. I can remember walking to Pikesville, which we could do – pretty close to where he lived – with my brother and Sammy, who was visiting and went to Park. They sold Meadow Gold Ice Cream. Sammy wanted a Dixie Cup. I guess we were about seven or eight years old. He wanted a Dixie Cup. We cajoled him into buying an ice cream cone because you could tell the brand if you bought a Dixie Cup. We were walking back. I can still imagine the scene – or remember it. We had told Sammy he had just consumed most of his Meadow Gold Ice Cream cone, and he threw it down on the ground. We were on a dirt road; he threw it down, and he rolled and screamed and howled as though he had just been told it was strychnine. But there was a lot of that. Of course, there were Hutzler's – Hamburger's made only men's clothing at that time. So, the kids didn't wear them. The store labels were all somebody's parents. Doctor's children, as we were, were looked upon like preachers and teachers. They didn't have the money. In fact, we wouldn't have gone there if my grandparents hadn't been pretty well-to-do because he couldn't afford the tuition off his physician's income. Things have changed now. I think it's about half physicians.

EE: What kind of practice did your father have?

EB: He was a neuropsychiatrist and quite a pioneer in his field. We didn't have much of that then. He wasn't a Freudian. He believed in the physical origins of mental illness.

He also treated multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's, a type of neurological disease. It was a combination. In fact, the mental part, they used to call "alienness" in those days. I haven't heard the word used in many years. He was a psychiatrist, the early vintage.

EE: I've never heard the word "neuropsychiatrist."

EB: Oh, well, you wouldn't because now the two fields are pretty well separated. But he was pretty well-recognized in his field.

EB: He taught and practiced both.

EE: I'm going to move this back just a little in time. Was your mother and your father – how did they meet? How were they matched? Was it a marriage –? I would assume that your mother's family would have – that it was very important that she marry appropriately and well.

EB: Well, of course, I suppose that that's true of all families. One thing I think that dominated both sides is that my mother and father were more approved by both sides than the other sibling's marriages to aunts and uncles. Everybody thought they were a wonderful combination. They were. But they were quite well-integrated from a background point of view. Of course, they were both Jewish. There was very little intermarriage then. I think now it's grown up to fifty percent. Of course, I engaged in it, but then it was very, very rare. It didn't happen. Although one of my father's sisters married a non-Jew. They adopted Judaism. They didn't bring up anybody as Christian or anything like that.

EE: Now, did you say that you married out of the religion?

EB: Yes, I did.

EE: Tell me about that.

EB: Well, we're skipping a few years.

EE: Well, as long as we're there.

EB: Well, my husband came from a sort of the next thing to the Mayflower. He wasn't typical. His family were bankers and manufacturers, that sort of thing. But he wasn't. He was an organizer for the United – well, he was the Regional Director for the United Auto Workers. Very liberal and very involved in early Civil Rights and things like that. But his family was not. In fact, his mother, a nice, insulated, isolated old lady, who – I think I'm the only Jew she ever met. She was tolerant of it but was quite skeptical. She would send me Hanukkah cards and things like that, because she figured – I never sent them to anybody else. We got along all right. We didn't see a whole lot of each other. Of course, my grandchildren –I call them that, but they're not natural children – who are the children of his son, who died very young, they're Christians. I think, in some respects, they think I'm different. I've never been a very good Jew in terms of observance. I guess today, more of my friends aren't Jewish than are, both because of my husband's associations and the ones I developed. I don't feel that today as though I'm a part of the Jewish community. I mean, I'm Jewish, but I just don't, as a Jew, integrate very much with the community and such as I do, I've got a few friends that are Jews. In fact, all my Jewish friends are better Jews than I am.

EE: And how old were you when you were married?

EB: Well, I lived with Bert for eleven years, which was something else – it's no longer very unusual. But for various reasons, we couldn't get married. He had been previously married. That was pretty tough. From my family's viewpoint, they didn't like it, needless to say. Of course, likes drift to likes, and we knew a number of others in the same category. We met in '52, and we didn't marry until '65. I had known him quite a while by then. I guess we held the record among people, at least among the Jewish friends.

EE: What was the reaction within your family?

EB: Oh, they were very unhappy about it. I can see their viewpoint. I mean, my grandmother, my mother's mother, had died by then. My father's mother, at that point, lived in Baltimore. "He looks like he drinks too much." [laughter)] All kinds of unhappiness. I guess some of my friends were estranged for that reason. But I never really cared that much because if they were going to be like that, I wasn't interested in having them for friends.

EE: Elsbeth, tell me, growing up Jewish in Jewish communities or even a tight Jewish family, how and when did you actually start to meet people who were not Jewish?

EB: I guess not until I went to college. I mean, I knew some, but not until I went to college did I really consort with a lot of people. Well, my family did to some extent. My father had a lot of colleagues who weren't Jewish, but they weren't over at the house much, or there wasn't a whole lot of intercourse of a social nature. Neither of my parents ever built this wall that you see so much among most Jews, I guess. I mean, I think my family was a little more open to everything than most of the others I observed. So, it was never "them" and "us," and never the line gets crossed with my family. I didn't feel at all intimidated or discriminated. I never really felt any discrimination. I knew it was there, but it didn't really matter. It didn't count. No incidents. I don't remember. I mean, I was aware that there were certain hotels and certain places that didn't take Jews. But it didn't seem to be that painful.

EE: Where did you go around the city as a young girl?

EB: Well, of course, the city itself – Lexington Street, Howard Street – that whole retail area was the center of the city. They had first-run movie houses, and shopping and that kind of thing – were all downtown. And the Number 5 streetcar ran to Pikesville down to – in fact, I think you could probably get there as fast then as you can today – o from

Pikesville to Howard and Lexington Street. That's where we headed, that way. The Suburban Club was the big center of social activity. It was only open then in the Summer, about less than half a year.

EE: Tell me what it was like. And actually you probably remember some of the early building, as well, don't you?

EB: The Suburban Club? Yes, I haven't belonged myself. I'd been there, of course, but I haven't belonged to it since I came back from college. I wouldn't belong to it now on a bet. The structure is not all that different. They've made some changes since my day, of course, but they haven't made radical new buildings. You've been there, I'm sure. The big clubhouse was outside, pretty much the same thing. Inside, I think they've messed it up pretty neatly. It used to be much less formal and clubby. I think the swimming pool is the same one. They've improved it, but the same one. I was out there for brunch one day not so long ago, and I looked out the window – it's all glass – and it was deja vu – except the next generation. But they're sitting around that swimming pool, in the same posture, children of the same people. Of course, they're more liberal about who they'll take. Then there was the Woodholme Club, you see. The Woodholme Club was the Russian Jewish well-to-do's club. It was much better physically because there was more money. But never the twain met there. I mean, you either belonged to the Suburban Club or the Woodholme Club if you came from a certain income category in Baltimore Jewry. You rarely went to the other club. It was quite a dividing line. In those days, most of the German Jews who belonged to any club belonged to the Suburban. The Russian Jews belonged to the Woodholme. The Suburban Club people, even though their facility was much less elaborate and not as good, thought they were much better. Much better idea to be a Suburban Club member. It was quite a divide. I don't know if anybody else of my age from Baltimore came from that category, but it was quite a striking delineation. Many more of the Park School kids belonged to Suburban.

EE: Did you ever see any of that tension?

EB: I saw much more of that than any Jew-Gentile. Much more. Which I guess is one of the reasons I was never that aware of being discriminated against because there was enough of it among ourselves. It was very sharp and, in certain areas, not penetrated. There were some of both at Park. But there were certain inherent differences that we were aware of, I guess, more subliminally than overtly. But there was a definite pecking order then and didn't involve any non-Jews. In fact, we had a few Christian kids who were teachers' children mainly. They weren't in the pecking order at all. They were sort of outside of it altogether. Of course, I mean, I knew some non-Jewish kids from Park, and we were friendly. But they weren't on the same wavelength, exactly. Of course, they didn't go to the Suburban. I mean, once school was out – in fact, one gal in my class – I don't what ever became of her – Elizabeth (Ainsley?) and I were very friendly, but Elizabeth lived in Catonsville, and her mother taught at Park. So, we were friendly. But when it came to the more intimate side of family and people close to family, she was outside. I don't think we ever – I mean, she'd come to my house for lunch or for oatmeal cookies. Her father had been a minister. He died before I ever knew him. And there were a few cases in the Froelicher family who were – the first Froelicher was in Aunt Bea's day and then Hans Froelicher who was head minister. He came about the year I did. The faculty at Park – very interestingly, there were practically no Jews on the faculty at all. Now, I think there's a Jewish headmaster, but he's the first. And his name is Jackson, though he's Jewish. But I don't know what the idea was that you didn't have Jews teaching Jewish children. It even went that far.

EE: Do you stay in touch with Park School? Are you still involved?

EB: Not much. First of all, I don't have any kids in there – which a lot of the ones who do, have had children go there. Aunt Bea, my mother's sister, who was in the first class – the fourth generation’s there now. Her daughter was there with me. Then, her two

daughters went there. Now their children are there. I don't know if there's another generation yet or not, but that line was pretty solid. I stay in touch with a few. In fact, we had a – was it a fiftieth reunion? I guess so. It was here at this house a few years ago. Almost all of them came – those alive – a couple of them aren't. And came from all over the place because not too many of them live here now.

EE: Have you maintained any of your friendships with your Park School friends?

EB: Well, Ruth Rosenberg Marder. Anyway, she's had several names. She and I still see each other a lot, and she lives here. I don't see Joan Bette Seff Offit very much. But she was in my class. We see each other rarely. Efrem Potts, I don't see him much, but he's a close friend of some relatives. He was in my class. Well, my cousin (Caroline?), my first cousin, lives in Flint, Michigan. We stay in fairly close touch. Margaret Berney Mack, who's a cousin also. We see each other. She lives in New Haven now. My cousin Peggy was in the class for a while. Peggy Stemmler. She's in Florida now. But she's a cousin. I mean, the ones who were relatives – and quite a few were in both categories of schoolmates and relatives. In fact, I saw Billie Leibowitz Kotlowitz, who died. Her sister, [Peggy], I just saw at Lois Feinblatt's in Cape Cod a couple of weeks ago. So, I see some of them. We don't have all that much in common, frankly. It gets kind of funny because we get back talking about Park School since we haven't had that much to discuss since, and the third parties in the group get pretty fed up with it. But I see them. I don't feel as though they are as much a part of my life because I just don't lead a life that's that close to their lives.

EE: What kind of student were you?

EB: Pretty good. But when I went to college, I was dumbfounded by how dumb I was. I thought I was the smartest thing in the world – because of the seventeen. We had some bright kids, and we had some rather dumb ones. I won't name who was who, but, as I started to say, some parents sent their kids there because they weren't doing that well in

the public schools. They made a big sacrifice to send them there because they got a tremendous amount of individual attention at Park, much more than most private schools, much less public schools. On the whole, my class wasn't too dumb. But I thought I was really smart. And then, when I went to the University of Chicago, I was taken down a number of pegs. One of the reasons you could think you were smart if you weren't is that Park didn't give grades. It was always “Elsbeth is living up to or not living up to her potential.” They were non-competitive. They didn't give prizes or do anything to line up people in order of their superior skills. When you got to the real world where everybody was characterized, especially I went to the University of Chicago, which was very, very academically inclined, I found myself struggling to stay at the bottom of the class after thinking I was so smart for so long.

EE: What made you go there?

EB: Oh, it was a wonderful school. It was very radical. I was radical. Well, I wouldn't say – I guess maybe it is fair to say that.

EE: How did you become radicalized?

EB: Just did. I don't know how, really. Just one of those things. Like why do I love skulls and skeletons? It was relatively easy in those days because the racial divide was the thing that separated the good people from the bad ones. I mean, the ones that were bigoted against Blacks particularly. I mean, it was as simple as that. They’re human beings. I didn't know any socially until after I was in college. But I don’t know. Fair is fair. Park School is kind of – it was liberal. I mean, the kids were taken around to see how the other half lives. Of course, these were the Roosevelt days. And one-third of the nation is – we were made socially conscious to some degree. Though some of my – when I got old enough to have joined the Communist Party, which I never did because nobody ever told me about how to go about doing it, some of my Park School friend's parents were very unhappy about my politics. The parents tended to be businessmen,

Republican by today's standards. Chicago was a hotbed of activism, and scholastically, it was on the cutting edge. You probably may not be any more aware of the Hutchins Liberal Arts Program. It was quite a novel place to go. Fascinating school. I mean, I should have –

EE: Well, what kind of involvement did you have in political activism in Baltimore at Park School in high school?

EB: Well, actually, I guess we were too young to have that much then, I think. I'm trying to think now when real awareness of – because in those days, of course, it was the restaurants, the hotels, the business places – you wouldn't go to Hutzler's if you were Black. First, they were "Colored," then they were "Negro," and finally, they were "Black," and now, they're "African-American. I think they were "Negro" then if you were polite. A Black woman couldn't try on a hat in Hutzler's. And the facilities – it was funny. I spent a lot of time in Tallahassee, which, of course, was pure Southern. And the things that – and, of course, we had Black help in the house. If I recall right, they didn't use – they had their own bathroom. You lived in close proximity to them, and certain things were okay for them to do, and others were not. And the trains, for instance, have been desegregated, I guess, since World War I. The Southerners didn't mind sleeping in a Pullman that close to a Black person. But then they had no social connection with them at all. The first really social connections I had with Blacks were in college. Well, when I came back after college, the Civil Rights Movement was really getting underway. I guess I was about nineteen or twenty when I got activist. But I engaged in picketing, and in sit-ins, and all that sort of activity. There were others that did too. I guess the Jewish community, as far as whites were concerned, was the bedrock of Civil Rights activities. But exactly where it came from – I think that my parents were fairly liberal.

EE: Where was your brother? Where does your brother fit into this?

EB: Well, my brother's a year and a half older.

EE: What's his name?

EB: William – Bill. He lives in Annapolis now. Bill and I never fought. Because we never had a whole lot in common to fight about. We got along all right. We still do. But we are quite different. Most people think that I'm the oldest. Of course, there's only a year and a half difference. He's been in business. He's one of these – he's got wonderful kids. He's got three who have gotten advanced degrees, have responsible jobs, and that sort of thing. We've had little enough in common. I've always bossed him, and he's accepted it. He's a very nice guy. I mean, everybody says he's sweet. Of course, he went to Park. He was in the class ahead of mine. In the early years, we mostly had each other. We were living in the country, and it was country. You couldn't go outside on the sidewalk and play with other children or ride without being transported. We went to the same school, and the same school was small. But we've never been soul mates, exactly. I guess that's a good way to get along if you – some people that I know that are so close to their siblings, they fight all the time. We've never had a big argument ever.

EE: How did he respond to your activism?

EB: I think he was a little embarrassed about it. He certainly never engaged in it. But it was one of those things where sister knows best. He would never tell me to stop doing anything I was doing because he always figured out – I knew better what I was doing than he knew – or knows. And it still goes on.

EE: Did he follow any more of a Jewish path than you did?

EB: Well, it's funny. He married a Jewish woman from somewhat the same crowd and who was a little more religious. When they were living in Washington, she became head of the Sisterhood. I forget the name of the Temple, but a big Reform Temple. They sent their kids – they had three children. They sent them to Sunday School. All three of them

now have married Christians. One is married to a minister. Another one has since divorced her and married another non-Jewish woman. The third one has a rather standard marriage with a guy that she met in college. She went to Tallahassee to college. But none of them has observed – I don't know how their kids regard themselves because they're aware of being part Jewish and all of that, but they're much – I guess, if anything, they're worse Jews than I have ever been.

EE: Oh, do you want to finish talking about your brother?

EB: I guess I've pretty much talked about it. Like me, he and his wife are Jewish. They live in Annapolis. I don't even know if he's got as many Jewish friends as I do because of the children who are sort of a-religious. We rarely talk about religion. In fact, I never talk about it – almost ever. Now, the holidays are coming up soon. I've never belonged to a synagogue. When I was a kid, you sleep over at other kid's houses. Well, the only time I ever went to Sunday school or synagogue was with kids that were Jewish whose houses I spent Saturday night in. They were mostly members of Baltimore Hebrew, or I understand that my grandfather Krause was one of the founders of Har Sinai. I only learned that when I was campaigning for office, and the Jewish vote in Baltimore is quite influential. Aunt Bea said to me, “Send flowers on Rosh Hashanah,” when you're supposed to send them, and I did. They announced them, and it was very smart of me. I said, “My grandfather was one of the founders.” So, I've taken a little advantage of my Jewish identification when it's helpful.

EE: Do you observe the Jewish Holidays in any way?

EB: Well, Yom Kippur, for instance – I'm not so sacrilegious as to go to work as usual. So, I've usually spent the day, and it's always Indian Summer. It's always a beautiful day. It's a little late in the season for gorgeous weather, but I stay around the swimming pool or someplace. I throw my sins in there. Ruth Carol Rosenberg, who I used to go to Sunday School with when I stayed there – the families are very close. She has break-

fast on Yom Kippur. She always invites me, and I often go. And then, she wants to have other people – of course, she's got a big family. So, I usually bring a couple of Christian friends. Now, this Yom Kippur, I'm due to go to England that day. So I won't be celebrating as hard. I've never initiated it. I've gone to services. I've had to campaign a couple of times. Then I get much more religious.

EE: How's that?

EB: Well, a Jewish vote is – I didn't realize it – as a matter of fact, it was my Christian husband. I almost lost the election when I first had to run for Judge. He kept saying, "Now, go to your people." I kept saying, “I don't need that.” And I did. I almost lost the primary. And then, the General, I really resurrected my Jewish identification.

EE: [inaudible]

EB: I don't know whether I – I think I am a rather honest person. I mean, I don't like to be things I'm not. I find it very hard to – well, I am Jewish. I find it very hard to claim my Jewishness to my advantage, which it certainly is when you’re running in Baltimore City and, I guess, any other city this size. People vote. People care. Of course, most of the Jews have moved out of the city. In fact, in the course campaigning, some lawyer friend of mine’s kid was being bar mitzvahed, and I thought that this was a great time to get my licks in. First of all, it was an Orthodox congregation. But somebody told me to get there late. And I did. I saw no cars around, and it was out in the county. Of course, what is it you have after a bar mitzvah? I mean, they also had a party, but there was something right after the services at the synagogue. I realized that there was nobody there that could vote for me because I was running in the city. But then, when I drove off in my car, and they'd all walked – if they could have voted for me, I don’t think they would have. It's a different breed. I mean, I'm afraid to say that the Park School background embedded in me a disdain or dislike for very observant Jews. Right now, the Orthodox Jew – and I are not that close – but the way they treat women, the enormous families, the rituals, to

me, meaningless – I never was a religious –

[END OF CD 1]

EE: Today is September 21, 2001. This is Elaine Eff, Oral Historian for the Jewish Women's Archive "Weaving Women's Words" Project. I am at the home of Elsbeth Bothe in Baltimore, Maryland. This is the second disk that we are recording and the second day of recording. Elsbeth, we kind of got you to college in our last conversation. So, why don't you tell me how it is – I still think it is interesting that you should go from Park School to the University of Chicago. Maybe you might tell me how you might have even known about the University of Chicago, why you went there, and get us from college to some of the decisive moments in your life, that early part of your life.

EB: Okay. Well, as for the University of Chicago, people say, “How did you get there?” At the time, and I think still, it was one of the best-known universities in the country if not the world. It probably turned out more Ph.D.’s and famous academicians than any other institution in the country, at least statistically. There were other Ivy League schools that were better known. At that particular time, there was Robert Hutchins, who had instituted a Liberal Arts program for undergraduates that was quite unique, though it was copied somewhat from the Great Books Program at St. John's College here in Maryland. I had heard about it. I was enthused about it. They had an early admissions program, which I was able to get into. It was just a wonderful situation because you didn't have to go to class. You had survey courses in the various areas of knowledge. The two years was no choice whatever. Everybody took the same Liberal Arts program, which was a comprehensive one. Instead of taking the History of the United States from 1890 to 1900 or something like that, you'd take a global-size course, which makes sense to me, and still does. Right now, my grandson is taking Advanced Percussion and getting credits for that in college. This is the kind of thing I never thought well of then, and it's gotten worse. But it was a liberal arts program in its true form. It was fascinating – very leftist at the

time. It's turned right in recent years, very much so. It was a very exciting school with a lot of marvelous teachers. You were assigned to classes. You didn't have to go to that class or any class. So, professors who didn't come across to students, you just didn't go to their classes; you went to somebody else's, and they didn't last long. So, I had top-rate teachers. There were a marvelous bunch of people going there from all over the country and the world. There were a lot of foreign students. Chicago was a fascinating city. It was just about the right distance from home. You could get home, but not for minor reasons. So, I only came home at Thanksgiving, Christmas, and that sort of thing. I didn't always do that. But it was probably the best two years of my life. I won't say that necessarily. It's packed away a long time ago. But it's always been a big part of my thinking and attitude. I still have lots of friends from those days, none of whom happen to be in Baltimore.

EE: You were only there for two years?

EB: You could get your BA in that time, which I did. Everybody went to graduate school. It was unheard of to stop at a BA. I planned to go back and did go back for a short time to study – well, I had a big battle with them because they had four divisions: Social Studies, Humanities, Biological Sciences, and – what was the fourth? – Physical Sciences. I wanted to study History in the Soc. Department. Don't ask me why. [inaudible] I had a big fight all the summer after I got my degree to be admitted to that division. I won the argument, and they admitted me. I went back to Chicago in the fall to be a History major. I was in a campus bar or something in September. All of a sudden, it had dawned on me that I'd won the argument, but I didn't really want to reap the profits. Some students were going to study Anthropology at the ETH in Zurich, which is sort of like the MIT of Europe. Of course, I wasn't a scientist, especially. But they said, "Why don't you go? Why stick around Chicago?" This was post-World War II. Europe was very exciting. I'd never been there. I decided that's what I wanted to do. I wrote [the University of Zurich] in English. They wrote me back and said, "You speak German, don't

you?” I said, "Oh, sure,” in English." I had studied German at Park School. I hadn't taken any of it in Chicago. So, I went over there with a big handicap – which was aggravated by the fact that the Swiss common language is Schweize-Deutsch. In the University, they speak HochDeutsch. As soon as they get out the door, they revert to Schweize-Deutsch, which sounds a bit like Yiddish. Anyhow, I persuaded my family to foot the bill, partly because I had an uncle, Jonas Hamburger, who had two daughters. One of them still exists, so they’re older than I am. He lived in the Arlington Park apartments where my mother moved and other members of the family. Anyway, he dropped by, and he had sent his daughters to finishing school in Switzerland before the War. He thought that was a wonderful idea because my manners weren't too great. That's what persuaded my mother to say that it was okay to go. And I went. That was a wonderful year. Of course, Europe was very exciting then. People didn't casually travel there. Switzerland is right in the geographic center, so you could travel. I caught onto the German finally. I never caught up with the – well, a Swiss or a German student have the same type of university and secondary school system. Know more American geography than I know right now. They were equipped to deal. They all spoke three or four languages, including English. The courses of professors would lapse into one language. Only English was I able to comprehend. But it was a lot of fun and very interesting. I stayed about – I guess it was about fifteen months, maybe that I was in Europe. But all over the place, not just in Switzerland. I was in Austria for quite a long time and Czechoslovakia and England, of course.

EE: Where was the school?

EB: In Zurich, Switzerland. Switzerland is beautiful – have you been there? I assume most people have. Beautiful country, but very dull. The landlady gives you hell for taking a bath afterwards she'd washed the tub. Everything is so orderly. I spent a good deal of my time there with other foreign students, and they had foreign students from everywhere, making fun of the Swiss. Do you want me to proceed from Europe?

EE: Yes, tell me, what did you decide to do when you came back?

EB: Well, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I got a job with the – I thought all labor unions were worthy of working for because they were supposed to be left-wing, which I was. I got a job in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, which is an AFL-Craft Union. A Professor at college had contacts with them in Chicago, and he got me the position with a high-flown title of Research Assistant in Washington. It was absolutely the driest. They were essentially an insurance company for Electrical Workers and had no social or political ideals except to make more money for electricians. Washington, in those days, was not a very stimulating place. There were a whole bunch of old maid secretaries. I was living in the – [RECORDING PAUSED] The labor unions have become second social forces now. But, in those days, the working man and the ideals of America and all that sort of thing were reflected largely by the growth of the Labor Unions. I, at the time, didn't know a whole lot of difference. I later found out what the differences were that anybody who was in a Labor Union was a Progressive type. Of course, Jimmy Hoffa was around then. He wasn't the kind I was thinking of. I just wanted a job where there was some social activism, and I got exactly the opposite. I would have been far better off working for an insurance company. Washington was a place I thought I wanted to be, but I ended up coming home weekends and whenever I could and living under fairly depressing circumstances. I had a room in a house at 15th and M Street, which now, I think, the Hilton Hotel is located there. It was sort of a refuge for respectable women, which I didn't think I was. But hey were a good bit older than I. They didn't have any men much in their lives. I had a well-to-do Aunt Sara. Well, I have a little interesting aside. My grandmother and her sister married two brothers. So, I was doubly related to Aunt Sara, who lived at what was then called the Wardman Park Hotel. It's now a Sheraton. The Wardman Park Hotel – a lot of high-up politicians lived there. They had tennis courts and an outdoor swimming pool and, of course, all the hotel services. She spent some time away from Washington. When she was away, I could use her quarters there. So I went from the sublime to the ridiculous living-wise. I was making – I think it

was thirty-five dollars a week – and bored as hell. The job only lasted six months; it ended at Christmas. Because of the Christmas – I guess it was '49 – Muzak was just coming into popularity. Of course, the Electrician's Union was quite anxious to promote it. So, they took this floor of an office building there, and they put Muzak in everybody's office. I had a private office, but they put a loudspeaker in the corner, and all day long, I had to listen to it. I shared the office with another woman. Incidentally, we weren't allowed to smoke. I was a smoker in those days. We had to go to the Ladies' Room to take a puff while these men would walk in with their cigars, stinking everything up. We couldn't even light up a cigarette in our own office when they came visiting it. It was a terrible atmosphere, the whole thing. I got up on my desk and cut this wire to the loudspeaker because the Christmas Carols – I never did like to hear these repetitive Christmas Carols. It had nothing to do with my religious thinking. I cut this wire, and every light on the floor went out, except the one – the speaker kept playing. There must have been fifty electricians within calling distance because they all had been at work there. Well, finally, I had to confess because nobody could find out what the problem was, and they fired me. But that was a good idea, anyway. So, I went over to the other side. I got another job with Locke Insulator Corporation in their Employee Relations Department of the company, which is actually was lot better job than I'd had with the Union. I, in large part, had taken it because I wanted now to be a businesswoman. In those days, part of my job was editing the employee newspaper. It was right after World War II – unskilled labor – or some of them were skilled. They made porcelain insulators – I think still do – that you see them on the poles if you look, though you probably don't. They made them like the Egyptians with potter's wheels. The plant was terribly hot because they were baking. Well, my job was to keep the employees happy. I edited this little newspaper that they put out – house organ. I went to all the Bowling Leagues in Brooklyn, most of the employees – Brooklyn, Maryland, right around the Hanover Street Bridge, which is where most of their people had come from. It was a fun job. General Electric was the owner of the company. They would never think of advancing a woman

beyond the junior executive level. So, I only worked there for about six months and decided I didn't want to work anymore. School was – I guess it still is – a lot more fun than working. Then my family said, “Well, go back to school if you want, but we are not sending you out to the University of Chicago or any place not near home.” I started to look for places to go to graduate school. Hopkins didn't admit [women generally]. The medical school took women. They didn't have a law school. I wasn't equipped to go to medical school even if I’d wanted to. There were very few schools in Baltimore where I could live at home which took women. Now, the University of Maryland Law School did. I really had no serious idea of going to law school. It's just that it was convenient to go there because they were in downtown Baltimore. It didn't seem very hard, and it never did. I went through the three years of law school with guys that held jobs, already had children to support, had to make it on all these fronts. Here I was, having a ball. I only had classes in the morning. Everybody said, “Oh, it's so wonderful.” Because in those days, a woman who proceeded to do anything in the man's world was looked up to as innovative, smart, hard-working, and I wasn't working hard at all. So, I started law school. I didn't like it one-whit because it was all rote. The professors stood up and spit it out. You were supposed to regurgitate it and send it back. It wasn't at all like my experiences in Chicago or Zurich, where, incidentally, I mean my academics in Zurich amounted to nothing because you have to get a doctorate or nothing in Europe, and I was a long way from a doctorate. Anyhow, I didn't like the program. There were two other women in my class, one of whom is still about my best friend, transferred to GW in Washington, leaving me with one other woman, who, incidentally, had gone to Park School – Mae Green Sinsheimer. She was the other woman who went through law school with me. I said I didn't like it academically, though I liked being in school. It’s a three-year program as you know. So, the second year, I went back. By then, it seemed foolish not to complete the third year. So, I did that, though I did the third year in night school. The reason was that that winter, I met the man who I eventually married, who was with the United Automobile Workers – became Regional Director eventually. He

wasn't then. That's an interesting story. I don't know if you wanted to stick to academics or romance. That was my third year of law school, and the Korean War was going on. It was 1951/2. Fairchild Aircraft in Hagerstown, which was an enormous plant at that time – I think it hired twenty thousand, thirty thousand – enormous numbers of workers, among other things, made a little plane called the "Packet," which they used extensively in Korea. I'm not much of a flier, but anyhow, that was their principal product. We were at War. They had a strike. But it was a principled strike. It wasn't for money. It was over working conditions and various other things that are important to a workingman and not just a dollar and cents type of strike. It was a very hot item because they walked off the job, and they were making this important war material. By that time, I had gotten very involved in the Americans for a Democratic Action, the ADA. It was very hard to talk sequentially because everything kind of mixes up together. While I was in law school, with all that spare time and interest, I became involved in fortunately, anti-Communist or non-Communist outfits. I was lucky. I had not gotten too far to the extreme left. But any rate, I was active in those things. The UAW was – still is, I think – the most progressive, decent union this country's ever known – I think that Walter Reuther, who was then president, had ideas of becoming President of the United States. He became involved, or the UAW infiltrated a lot of left-wing liberal organizations. I got to know some UAW staff people from that contact. I asked one of them if he would let me go up to Hagerstown with him during this winter break. I just wanted to see a real strike, and they had real strikes then. I don't think they do anymore. So, it was February – it must have been '51. I drove up there. He was already staying there, this fellow I knew. So, I drove up there, and he met me in Hagerstown, which was a very hot place then. The townspeople who weren't Fairchild workers were quite up in arms about the strike. Very tense atmosphere. He took me over to the picket line. The way that I understand it, my later-to-be-husband was in charge of the strike. The way I understand it, somebody said, "Peck Windsor," the UAW person I knew, "has a woman over there observing the picket line" to Bert, and Bert said, "Get that pig off the picket line." That's where we met

because I was sort of delivered up to him like the warden of a Prison. We pretty much fell in love right away. To make this story more exciting, Ellis Baker, who was the Sun paper's reporter – he and his wife had been very good friends of mine. Ellis later went to work full-time for the Newspaper Guild. At that time, The Sun had just organized. I think he was head of the unit. But The Sun had given him leave to go up to Hagerstown to do PR on the Strike. The day I got there, he had been rushed to the hospital with double pneumonia. In fact, they thought he was going die. The snows came. You couldn't leave. So, I spent a week in Hagerstown substituting for him and developing my relationship with Bert. It was a very exciting way to meet. I still think of Hagerstown as a romantic place, which it surely isn't. The hotel was being picketed. We were putting out – well, actually a newspaper circular. We were doing radio broadcasts with paid time to try to ameliorate the situation and so forth and so on. Fortunately, "Punk" recovered. They called him – "Punk" was his nickname. I think I performed a useful purpose there. I couldn't get home anyway. It was just a dreadful storm. Of course, I didn't have any other clothes with me, or anything else, and no way to get them. In fact, I still have the suit I had on, which I wore the whole time I was there then. So, it was all very exciting. When it was said and done – well, Bert was living in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania then where his – well, he came from Charleston, originally, but his family had been in Chadds Ford for quite a while. So, he wasn't here in Baltimore. But his work covered Region 8 of the UAW, which is all the way from Delaware to Puerto Rico. He spent a lot of time in Baltimore. I spent a lot of time with him. But eventually, they put on this Union Shop Drive – Glenn L. Martin which was, and still is a UAW organized plant and was very large at the time. So, he hired me that summer to work on the Union drive which required doing a lot of – I've always done a good bit of newspaper type stuff. I did it in college. I worked on that, that Summer. The drive wasn't over by the time to go back to law school, so I decided to continue working at the UAW and transfer to night school, which is what I did. So, actually, I spent that year doing both working and playing in law school and spent a lot of time with Bert and did for the next twenty-some, thirty years almost. So,

where do we go from there? Turn off your machine long enough. [RECORDING PAUSED]

EE: I'm curious why it is that you saved that suit you wore?

EB: Just sentimentality. I'm very fast to get rid of clothes. I've got a rule, in fact, that if I don't wear something for a season, it's gone, except for sentimental things. The outfit that I got married in, I have that, and I guess a lot of women do. But that ranks with it. I don't think I can still wear it, because I'm heavier.

EE: Do you have any pictures of you in it during that time?

EB: I may. I've got a lot of pictures of various things and times. I've still got it within – it's in here somewhere in the house.

EE: What was your friend's name in law school. You said you had friends –

EB: Joyce Hens Green, who now lives in Baltimore again. She was from Washington. She became a Federal Judge in D.C. Now, she isn't totally retired. Her son became my law clerk. The only nepotistic law clerk I ever had and about the best one. But she's moved here fairly recently, so we see one another.

EE: Let's talk about sort of how your education, career, and your personal life moved ahead.

EB: Well, when I finished law school, one interesting [inaudible] is that I was working on this union shop drive during the days, and that job terminated because they amended the Taft-Hartley Act, which is still the governing law of labor, to do away with the union shop elections right when I was working on one. So, of course, there was no need for me to continue that. My my labor law professor – that third year of law school, I took whatever courses I could get in night school to be able to get my degree within the three years. In

fact, I graduated one credit short, but they let me. One of the courses was labor law about which I thought I knew a lot. The professor who taught it was not a labor law specialist. They used to double up professors. They'd teach Torts. They'd teach Contracts. If it was a second-rate course like labor law, they'd learn enough Labor law to teach it. So, when Mr. (Farenthold?) reached the point to discuss the union shop elections, he made no mention that the law had been amended. I raised my hand and said. “I think that we don't have that provision in the law anymore.” He said, "Is that so?" Never corrected it. I think downgraded me a grade. I didn't get a very good grade in labor law. So, the two merged to some degree. I finished law school and didn't have a job. My mother died that year. My father died some years earlier. She [went] very quickly of leukemia. So, I did not go to my graduation. In fact, the only graduation of mine that I ever attended was Park School. For some reason, I've just avoided making it official. And then, I went to work for the Legal Aid Bureau of Baltimore, which, today, I think, has several hundred lawyers. But in those days, it was eight in the Baltimore office. It was a Community Chest-funded outfit. They had two internships, except we did exactly what the regular lawyers did. They just threw us in as extra. I didn't know much practical law. I know my salary was two thousand dollars a year, which, even in those days, was picayune. I was only there about a year – during which I was fired twice; once because I didn't – they wanted to tithe the Legal Aid staff. We were supposed to give ten percent of that miserable two thousand dollars back to the Community Chest as a contribution. Being as close to the Unions, this type of activity, where you extract money from out of the sad pay, is anti-union, of course. So I wouldn't do it. I happened to have other funds because I wouldn't have been eating on what I made. I gave it from home. I wouldn’t give it that way. I got fired for it. My cousin, Walter Sondheim, was on the Board of the Legal Aid Bureau. So, he was a little instrumental in getting me restored. Then, I got fired a second time because most of the advice and legal work we did was domestic. We weren't allowed to get divorces free for poor people unless there was a question of legitimacy. So, it was mostly consultation, Ann Landers type of stuff. We

weren't just going to do much legally for them. This woman came in – those were the days when Hollywood stars got some enormous alimony, and every time your husband cheated on you, that was worth so much money. Of course, these people had no money. This woman comes in carrying her husband's underpants that she discovered his adultery through. They had five children, and he was otherwise a good husband. She wanted to leave him for his adultery and get alimony. I said, "Oh, forget it. Just go on. Don't tell him you know." She didn't like my advice, and she went running to the chief attorney, who was a very straight-laced man. He called me in, and he asked me if it was true. I told [inaudible], “You want to condone adultery?” He fired me. That was the kind of a place it was. At least I got my feet wet because a lot of young lawyers today, and then and forever, just never get an opportunity to go with these big law firms. By the way, there was no major – there was no law firm in Baltimore who would hire a woman. There was no judge who would take a woman for a clerk. The employment opportunities were very limited. Social agencies like the Legal Aid Bureau had – as a matter of fact, I guess I was the only woman at that time. They used to have one woman, just a sort of a show woman. Most of those agencies now are more than half women lawyers. But back then, women didn't have much to apply to. The big law firms just automatically wouldn’t even consider them. There again, they're about a third women now.

EE: Did you encounter any discrimination because of your religion?

EB: No. No. As a matter of fact, it may be that I just ignored it, and it happened. I always thought it was the best policy not to assume that things were happening to you because you're a woman or a Jew or anything else – more beautiful. I've always proceeded on the assumption that it doesn't make any difference to the other person, and it works much better that way. Overt anti-Semitism? I haven't even encountered a lot of anti-womanism. I've certainly lived through a time where professional women were second-rate members of the occupation. But my parents didn't seem to have been subject to much – they rated fine in the Jewish community. They were happy where they

were. They had a lot of non-Jewish friends. People who weren't their friends – and probably for antisemitism didn't concern them. They had plenty left. I always took the same attitude, maybe foolishly. I'm sure I've lost and gained opportunities both ways. But I've always figured it'd work out. There's no sense in going around with a chip on your shoulder looking for trouble because you'll find it. I mean, all you'll have to do is just look. So, no, I really don't think I ever encountered any overt antisemitism. Of course, Jewish lawyers, in general, in those days, were kind of distinguishable. I mean, there were some quite well-recognized and regarded lawyers, like say, Reuben Oppenheimer, who was a friend of my family's. When I wanted to get into law school at the last moment because I hadn't even decided to go until – I think the school was going to start in two weeks. He was somewhat instrumental in getting me in. But their law firm – it was the big Jewish law firm in Baltimore. They had non-Jewish – some Jewish firms might have non-Jewish members. But the reverse wasn't so much the case, or at all the case, and no women at all. It was all very subtle, and nobody said anything about "You're a Jewish lawyer" or not. But everybody knew it. And criminal law, which was always my favorite, was dominated to some degree by Jewish lawyers.

EE: Were there any women who inspired you?

EB: Well, I'll tell you a woman I always liked. She followed me, and I followed her. My mother's friend, Jeannette Wolman – I don't suppose you were able to get Jeannette for this project. She would have been ideal. But no. Are you talking about women? None of my family were lawyers. No. I really don't think there was any – I mean, there were a lot of people that I liked though, not especially women. I was never a woman follower. I mean, from the first I can remember, I never assumed I would be unable to do something because I was female. I had – and I guess – still do rule out being an engineer or what used to be a wholly masculine and still largely is a masculine profession. I never wanted to do anything physical anyway. I didn't want to be a telephone repair person, climb poles, or any of those typical male occupations or professions. I realized, for instance,

right now, and always, schoolteachers are mostly predominantly women in this country. Physicians were predominantly men. Go to Russia, and it's the other way around. I mean, there's nothing built in about it. Teachers are males, and doctors are females in Russia. But intellectual things, things that required professionalism. I never gave it [a thought] – I really didn't. In the days I was in law school, I think that some of the other women did. There weren't that many there, and the prevailing thought among them was, "I might not find myself a man, so I'd better be able to make my own way." They were fairly unattractive physically because that was the way that it was looked at. You have to be able to take care of yourself. Now, Jeannette Wolman, for instance, who was a little bit younger than my mother, but they knew each other, was a very good-looking woman who had a husband and children and all these things. But that was not the mold. A tremendous number of the women that I knew from law school days never married. Some of them made a very nice living. But you did that so that you'd make more money than a teacher would if you turned to being something like an old maid schoolteacher. I got along fine. I mean, I was one of the boys as far as I was concerned. I they did talk about me behind my back, as a woman, they didn't say it to me. I never had anybody get down on me for being a woman. It was 102 to two. That is Mae, me, and a hundred-plus males, which is nice. I thought it was great. And I've always been – I've just never assumed that I had a problem because of my sex or religion.

EE: What did you know about Jeannette Wolman?

EB: Well, Jeannette, at the time, her husband was a lawyer. Her two children, Paul and Benjy – well, Paul was my brother's age, which was close to mine. We played together as kids. I think my mother and Jeannette liked each other, and the families were close as families are that had kids the same age. Benjy’s younger than me and Paul, who died some years ago. They would come over to play sort of thing. Of the mothers, of course, all kids know their friends' mothers. I thought I was very lucky. And I thought they were lucky. Most of my friends’ mothers I could do without.

EE: Did she ever talk to you about the law?

EB: No. When I decided to become a lawyer, she, of course, was the only woman lawyer I knew. I mean, there were so few of them. She'd been there. For a long time, they had a rather dull business-type practice. Paul, Sr. became head of the Parole Board. But he was a big veteran. I have never had much use for these veterans organizations. He was a big veteran and a rather conservative person. She wasn't. I mean they had a wonderful marriage, and lovely family and all of those things. I never wanted to follow what she was doing. I just liked her and thought that she was out there in the real world when most of my friends' mothers weren't. Nothing special. The idea of going to law school was mostly just borne out of the fact that I thought I liked the law. It was something that I could go to school and get a degree in. It wasn't until much later that I –

EE: So, I want to know where you went from the Legal Aid Bureau and what was happening to your relationship with Bert.

EB: Well, we were living together downtown in a coach house behind Mount Vernon Place. I mean, most people knew it. I mean, people we were friendly with knew it. My family knew it and were very unhappy.

EE: Tell me why.

EB: Well, in those days. Today, I don't think it excites people that much. In fact, it seems to be the pattern. They live together a couple of years. Plan their wedding in –

EE: Now, was he married?

EB: Yes, he was that's why we didn’t marry. We would have married much earlier than that. I think she just – well, I got to know her a little bit because his mother lived with her, which was a very convenient arrangement. But they lived in Chadds Ford. They were

separated when I met him. She didn't want to get a divorce. She was living on the Eastern Shore. They bought a house, an old turn of the – it was a 1700's house. She moved there, and his mother moved there with her. She didn't want to get a divorce. As a matter of fact – well, I guess this shouldn't be for publication, but when she became fully aware of the situation when there was an article about our apartment on Park Avenue. After Mt. Vernon Place, we bought a house on Bolton Hill, 1406 Park Avenue. Both his and her families were very early American families with heirlooms and all that stuff. In fact, they were distant cousins, and she was older than he. A piece of furniture that belonged to – I don't know to which family – was in the Sun papers along with – I've got the article in the hallway up the stairs from here. You can see where it talks about how Mr. Bothe advised Ms. Levy about the furnishings. Of course, it didn't say about any of them belonging to him. But that's what really set her off when a valuable family antique came up in the story in The Sun. In fact, she ended up with most of his worldly goods as a result of their settlement. They owned this valuable place in the Rock Hall. And a house in Philadelphia, Chadds Ford, and a big farms. Everything they had, she got. In fact, he used to kid me when – and alimony. I'd never been surveyed by Internal Revenue until after we'd been both, of course, filing our separate income taxes. Every year after we were married, they would not audit them but because he paid her alimony, which he declared – it was silly. Somebody would have to go to the Internal Revenue and explain why he took that deduction. He'd say, "Well, it's your fault. You go." But anyhow, we were not married until '64. We met in '51 [and] started living together in – I guess it was '52 just after I finished law school. That was no help either. As a matter of fact, one of those pet woman jobs was the Attorney General's Office. And Mary Arabian was the pet woman who went on the bench from there. That job was supposed to be – I was sort of earmarked for being her successor there. I got a phone call one day from Mildred Otenasek who was a big wheel in the Democratic Women's – there were these Democratic Women's Clubs and that sort of thing. And Mildred was – I guess she's no longer living, but she lived a long time. Mildred was, I guess, the biggest woman

Democrat in Maryland. She called and asked me to have lunch. She had a lovely home in Guilford – butler and all that. I didn't know why, but naturally, I went. She said, "I understand you are living with a man," which I didn't deny. That was the end of my opportunity to go in the Attorney General's Office. Now, of course, I think it's more than half women. Much larger office. Half of the women are sleeping with half of the men. There's been quite a lot of romance grown out of the Attorney General's Office. But I was a little early for that. And there, I did face some discrimination. I don't know if you'd call it that, though, because society's society. I mean, if you want to break the rules, I guess you can't complain when they bite you. But they did bite me a bit hard at times. But, as far as discrimination – again, I'm not sure that's the right term to use. That's the one area that I really suffered under, but I asked for it.

EE: So, what was your next job when you left Legal Aid?

EB: Okay. I went into law practice with Bernard Link and Edward Mogowski. We weren't partners. I knew them from law school. They came out ahead of me. We were very good, personal friends. They had been bosom buddies from Catholic grammar school. Bernie handled a lot of labor stuff. Ed did a lot of real estate and that type of law. And I did what men would be normally doing. I mean, there are more women in real estate and not too many in labor. I was the one that did all the tough, macho stuff. We were together for ten – well, let's see – more than that. I wanted to do criminal law. About nine-tenths of the criminal cases were because criminals don't get away with the money they steal. They don't have any when they're caught, so they had to be represented by appointed counsel. The judges would appoint lawyers to represent the indigent defendants. I went around trying to persuade judges to do it for me. I got appointed a few times to represent women defendants, but not men. That wasn't something a woman ought to be doing until I was appointed to represent a defective delinquent, that is, a person who had been committed to Patuxent Institution on an indeterminant sentence because he should be confined until he was cured. The poor

fellow that I was asked to represent – his name was Eugene Woodland. Well, the clients in cases I've had – I'll never forget Eugene, his name, or anything else – was a little, light-skinned Black fellow from Calvert County who had an I.Q. of about 65 or so and had been committed to Patuxent because he was a pain in the neck. He just stole or got drunk [and] laid down in the middle of the street – did things like that. They just wanted to get rid of him. In order to qualify for Patuxent, you had to be either convicted of a serious felony like murder, two not-so-serious felonies, or five misdemeanors. He was under the five-misdemeanor qualification. I looked at his files and found out that one of the five crimes was stealing bathtubs had been valued under a hundred dollars, which meant that he didn't have enough criminal background to qualify, and here he was there. So, I said, “Eugene, I'm going to get you out of here.” I think it was the first case anybody had gotten out of. It was a new institution, and they won their cases one after the other. But I thought I had a sure shot with Eugene Woodland because he doesn't qualify to be detained there. So, I went to see Judge Cullen, it was. The bench, by the way, at that time, only had about five or so judges. He was the one handling defective delinquent cases and had appointed me to represent Eugene. I said, “I'm going to file a habeas corpus to get him out of there. He's illegally detained. I want your permission to do it in the forma pauperis, which means without paying because you're poor. The Judge said, "No, I'm not going to do that." So, I paid the six dollars to file the habeas corpus myself. A few days later, Judge Cullen calls me up, and he's laughing. He says, “I got a letter from Eugene Woodland. He doesn't want any woman lawyer.” He thought that'll teach me. Of course, [Eugene] couldn't write. So, somebody else wrote the letter, obviously. Besides that, I had a sure shot he couldn't lose, whether he liked me or not. So, I insisted on keeping the case, which, of course, I won. After I broke that barrier, everybody at Patuxent wanted me to be their lawyer. So, that gave me my break into criminal law. I became the savior of the inmates of Patuxent Institution. I started getting quite a few referrals. Then, I started getting cases that the judges didn't pick me for. I got quite a lead in criminal law that way, which is what I like. I like jury trials. In those

days, they didn't have them very often. They were so rare that when one was going on, the press, other lawyers, everybody came to observe. Of course, today, there are probably ten going on at once. But then, they were a novelty. I picked them, and I won some cases that I wouldn't have otherwise because the judges convicted everybody. It was just a show. The shoe was quite on a different foot with criminals in those days. You didn't get many of them off, and they didn't have anywhere near the constitutional rights to get away that you now do. So, I did a lot of criminal law and a lot of jury work. The public defender's office was started up in 1972, which Maryland has been quite a pioneer in. You read all these things about the lawyer asleep at the trial table while his client gets executed. Maryland has a very superior system. It all started in – well '72 was when it began officially. There were commissions and committees and that sort of things. If Marvin Mandel never did another little thing – he sure was a tremendous supporter of the of the public defender's system. I don't think it ever would have happened when it did if he hadn't been governor. It's a statewide office. The original lawyers – we weren't civil servants. Allen Merrill was the first and famous leader of it. He had been quite a sardonic practitioner of criminal law who – well, getting out of sequence again, I was very involved in the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] when I was privately practicing. I was chair of the legal panel. Then, I became chair of the statewide organization for a while. So, I did a lot of mostly pro-bono Constitutional cases for ACLU. One of which involved a police captain in Ocean City, who was fired for espousing the rights of his fellow cops. Allen Merrill represented Ocean City, and I the cop. So, we got to see each other in action quite a bit in that case. He asked me to join the original staff of the public defenders. I was the only woman in the whole state that was a lawyer for a while who were doing adult work. Women [lawyers did] typically juvenile, domestic, and that sort of thing. That's always been the traditional women's role if they were in the profession at all. I don't even think there were women doing any juvenile work. I know I was the first who did serious criminal cases like murders, robberies, and rapes, and that sort of thing. Allen hired everybody, saying, "I can fire you. You don't have any rights to your job."

But he was wonderful. I mean, he kept a very close eye on what lawyers were doing. We got along fine. He never fired me, or for that matter, anybody else. He was very apprehensive of women. It was very obvious that he was quite uncomfortable with women. We got along fine. It was a very exciting day because when I had represented criminal defendants before privately, you had no resources. You couldn't hire an investigator. You couldn't really spend a lot of time and effort on a case because you didn't have the money, and neither did your client. But the public defender was wide open. I mean, you could investigate and get experts and spend and concentrate on the case. All the overflow because there weren't enough staff lawyers – instead of a judge, you picked a private lawyer. That lawyer would handle the case and get paid by the state. So, you could pick your cases, and you could really prepare them to the best of your ability. We even got paid more than the state's attorneys. So, it had more position and prestige. It was a very good office. I stayed there five years before I went on the bench.

EE: Now, tell me about going to the Bench. Was that something that you lobbied for?

EB: No. As a matter of fact, I was very hesitant because I had so much fun in the courtroom on the other side, and being a judge is somewhat stiff-necked. I mean, you can't do what you want to do, and I really liked trial work. While judges are the ultimate people there all the time, you don't get out there and work up cases. You're supposed to be impartial, and that's kind of dull. It was about the time that women were coming into their own or starting to. At the time, Shirley Jones had the first – actually, Shirley wasn't the first woman in the State. There was a woman whose – I think she's married once or twice since, and probably isn't alive anymore named Catherine Lawlor, who McKeldin appointed in Montgomery County. She was the first Maryland judge who was a woman. She was a dreadful judge. She was reversed more than any other judge in the history of the state. Altogether, she wasn't a very good example of why more women ought to become judges. But then, Shirley was appointed early on. She was an excellent Judge

from the Eastern Shore. Mary Arabian had become a judge. I became the third. I don't think any other women have been – I may have been the third in Maryland. I was certainly the third on the Baltimore Circuit Court, or the Supreme Bench as it was then called. I'm sure I got the job because of my sex. Blair Lee, who was acting governor, Mandel having got into the troubles that I think we all remember. So, Blair Lee was governor. I represented one of his son's co-defendants. They got picked up on a big narcotics case in Montgomery County, a whole group of them, including the governor's son. I represented one of the others, a lesser light. The case was removed to Cumberland. No. What's the farthest Western County in Maryland?

EE: Garrett.

EB: Yes, it was removed to Garrett County because of the notoriety of the governor's son being involved, and the governor's wife came with her boy and his high-powered Washington counsel. We were all up there for a week or so. Won the case. The judge dismissed it. It wasn't a jury situation. But Mrs. Lee was a big Girl Scout, literally, and she was a woman's rights advocate, and so was he. I got to know her during that period there, and that didn't hurt matters because she thought somebody like me – she was very much in favor of women going on the bench, and so was he. He appointed a record number of women all around the state. I was the beneficiary. And then, my husband had some – I don't think I could have gone on the bench without being legally married. Since then – well, I don't want to talk current gossip, but there were several gay women on the bench, both district [and circuit]. It's almost a qualification now. I don't think that one's personal life holds any barriers to becoming a judge anymore, but I don't think back then I would have – by that time, I straightened out my personal life.

EE: Now, when was that exactly?

EB: That I was appointed? In '78. February '78. Of course, by that time, I had been married quite – and the unions had a lot of influence then, and still do with Annapolis. I'd

fooled around with Democratic politics – liberal Democratic politics. So, I wasn't a stranger to them. I think my sex was probably the dominant reason I got the appointment.

EE: Now, tell me at what point in your career you got married and about your wedding and about your marriage.

EB: We sent out the wedding invitations before the divorce was final, though it was uncontested and a sure thing. We didn't have any worry. Once they agreed, they agreed, and it just took a routine amount of time before it was official. But we sent the invitations out before. We were married by a Unitarian minister, Irving Murray. We were married on July 24, '64. On July 1st of that year, after much struggling, in which I was involved as counsel, Maryland decided you could engage in a civil marriage. Up until then, it had to be a religious ceremony. I mean, those Justices of the Peace in Elkton were actually ministers; they got these degrees from – but you had to have a religious person officiate. No longer, though – our wedding was scheduled several weeks after the new law had gone into effect. You had to be married in the clerk's office in the courthouse. It wasn't a very celebratory way to do it. In fact, I think today, you're only allowed three or four witnesses when you get married in the courthouse. In fact, just after the law went into effect, I happened to be in one of the clerk's offices where they married people, and so was Paul Dorf, who later was on the bench, too. They grabbed the two of us, and they were going to marry us to each other. Of course, Paul had a wife and family already. But that's the way it worked. It was so machine-operated. So, I didn't want to get married [that way], even though I was partly responsible for the fact that you could get married without a member of the cloth present.

EE: You were involved in that law?

EB: Oh, yes. I was all for it and worked on it and lobbied for it and all the rest of it. I didn't want to get to be the beneficiary of my civil libertarian acts. I knew Irv Murray pretty well because he was President of the [Maryland] ACLU before me. In fact, he was then. Unitarians will do anything. I mean, you make up your own service. You can leave God out if you want. In fact, Irv had been making – he wasn't going to charge us, but you can, of course, charge to perform ceremonies. He had been making a nice little living on the side. I still have a copy of the service, but we told him what to say. We were living on Park Avenue in the apartment [that] the Sun paper publicized, which had a garden in the back. The plan was that we'd have the wedding with just a few family members and very close friends and then have a reception at Elaine and Herb Fedder's new house. They were very close friends of ours. They just built this house in – I know it had a big atrium. A well-known architect had done it. Anyway, they were going to have the reception afterward in their house, where we had a fair-sized crowd.

[END OF CD 2]

EE: Today is October 22, 2001. This is Elaine Eff, Oral Historian for the Jewish Women's Archive "Weaving Women's Words" project. I'm interviewing Elsbeth Bothe at her home in Baltimore. This is our third interview and the third disk. So, Elsbeth, we left off at your wedding. You were just starting to tell us about your wedding at the Fedder's house. So, why don't you –?

EB: Well, the wedding wasn't there. The wedding was in Bolton Hill at our house at 1406 Park Avenue that Bert and I bought together before we were married. Had a rather nice apartment there. We rented the rest, and being a landlady was the worst experience of my business life. Let's not dwell on that. We got married in the garden of our apartment there. And then, the Fedder's had the reception at their newly-built house. It's a very involved story because I had been quite active in trying to get civil marriage introduced into Maryland. Up till then, you had to have a minister marry you. The guy

that had a twenty-five-dollar certificate from Elkton would do. But still, it had to be a religious ceremony. I had worked very hard to get a civil marriage proceeding in Maryland, and we had just succeeded; on July 1, 1964, it went into effect. We got married on July the 24th. So, legally, we could have gotten married in one of those ceremonies that I managed to make legal. But I didn't want to because you have to go to the courthouse and get married by a clerk of the court. I was almost married to Paul Dorf by mistake one day when I was in the clerk's office. But anyhow, didn't want to get married in a civil ceremony. I didn't want to get married in a religious ceremony. My husband wasn't Jewish. I wouldn't know a Rabbi who would have married us anyhow. So, Irving Murray, who was then the Unitarian minister – and I think half his congregation were former Jews – would do any kind of a ceremony. So, we drew up the ceremony. He just went – [RECORDING PAUSED] – we had tenants upstairs.

EE: Why don't you start that over?

EB: So, there was a foyer and then our front door. And then a stairway going to the apartments upstairs. I had arranged with one of the tenants on the second floor that I could put on my fancy gear and do all those things that way. I went up there. It was a very, very hot day. July 24th. I went up there to change and all those things. Everybody is settled in the patio. The apartment was ninety feet long. It was one of those deep buildings. So, they were all out there waiting for the bride. I was up there changing. And my brother – I was going to walk down. He was going to meet me in the hallway, except the door had been locked; I couldn't get in. He came out to the second floor, and we couldn't get back in. He'd locked it. So, we had to go around the block and climb over the patio to get into it. Well, the ceremony came off as we planned it. We wrote the – I still, of course, have the ceremony. I don't know if I should put this down for history or not. But a couple of weeks later, Irving Murray ran off with the wife of the President of Haverford [College] and the ACLU's Treasury. So, my ceremony was a little [over-shadowed]. But, anyhow, the Fedder's, who had just built this lovely house – I don't even

know where it is now. They don't own it anymore. They've been divorced for years – is where we had the wedding reception. I got drunk. The only time in my whole life – it was real hot, and I started drinking gin and tonics and champagne. I have no memory. We were going down to the shore that night. We came back home. We left the next day. I don't remember a thing. It's the only time in my whole existence that I just woke up and [said], “Where was I yesterday?” But the marriage worked out in the long run.

EE: How old were you then?
EB: Oh, I wasn't that young. Let's see. Well, when I finished law school, I was twenty-three, and that was '52. We didn't get married – we were together – I was in my mid-thirties.

EE: So, what was the culture of the times when you got married?

EB: Well, just after we got married, I went to Mississippi with the Civil rights Movement. So, I don't think I'd been married two weeks when I spent the month of August in Mississippi. So, that was the climate of the times. The Civil Rights era. Bert was very involved with social issues. He was the UAW Regional Director. So, I had a lot of contacts through him, as well as the ones that I'd acquired over the years. But we didn’t even spend the time together. He didn’t go down there.

EE: What did you do in Mississippi?

EB: I was a lawyer for what they called the LCDC [Lawyers Constitutional Defense Committee] – I can't remember what the acronym stood for anymore. It was an ACLU/NAACP – they put together a group of mostly young lawyers to represent Civil Rights violators. When I say civil rights violators, you went one mile over the speed limit, and they arrested you and sometimes put you in jail for it. These were all most – practically all college kids from the North. Well, it was the summer that Goodman, Chaney, [and Schwerner] were murdered. I thought the worst part of Mississippi,

besides the red-necks, was the heat. It was just unbearable. I was in Holly Springs, Mississippi, which is a garden town. I think that I've already talked about my father's family being a Southern Jewish family. Holly Springs had its little quota of Jewish businesspeople, the general store and the usual things that you'd find Jewish families doing. They were very antithetical to the Civil Rights movement. In fact, one interesting phenomenon was – well, here in Baltimore, sad to say – when you get into a Black neighborhood, you can be a little uncomfortable. There, it got to be that in less than three or four days, I was feeling safe in the Black neighborhoods in Holly Springs and very apprehensive in the white. None of the Jewish people that lived there had a thing to do with – there were quite a number of Jewish lawyers, as you know, who went down there. I had the sheriff – I had a great time legally. We had the sheriff arrested. They were going to lock me up for cursing in the courthouse, but they didn't have any place for white women in jail, so I was saved by that. It was very exciting and interesting and horribly hot. I was living in a Black teachers' college that was located there on the third or fourth floor, where the heat rises. Of course, the girls never went to bed. There were a bunch of little college kids there. I went back the next summer for a short time to finish a case I was involved in. But that's the way that I spent the summer of my marriage.

EE: But you had talked about the Jewish community in Holly Springs. Did you identify yourself then as a Jew?

EB: I didn't have a chance to. Well, I was using my maiden name of Levy, so I don't think any of the Jews I ran into had any doubt I was one of them. Of course, I wasn't alone. The number of Jewish young kids that participated in the – it was called COFO [Council of Federated Organizations] – and what does that stand for? I can't recall. But the college kids group – they had a very well-organized group that came mainly from New York, but other parts of the North who went down there to organize. It was mainly, of course, a voter registration situation. Because the idea was that if you could only vote, then you could change things. The Blacks down there couldn't. So they were registering

and holding meetings in churches and getting arrested because all you had to do was to slip slightly, or not even do that; somebody would swear you had, and you were behind bars. One of the other things that we did was to try to get cases transferred from the local court to the Federal Court, which involved writing up a lot of petitions. But the minute that happened, if a federal judge would agree, the case was in federal jurisdiction, and the locals had to let them go, temporarily, at least. That's how I got the Sheriff locked up when he refused to do it. The federal judge got irate, not so much because of the cause but because the locals weren't listening.

EE: So, what was the effect on you of locking up the Sheriff?

EB: Oh, I had a great time. I was hiding in the bushes when the federal marshals came to collect him. He was an arrogant, typical, really almost a comic type of Southern sheriff. But that's why I went back the next summer. They brought suit against me. We won it, of course. We hadn't done anything wrong. But it was a side antic, though, of his claim – using that. That was also the year that Johnson came in and the Civil Rights Act was enacted. A good bit of what we were trying to accomplish was, at least, in the law books, the way that we wanted to do it. I think that summer and the activities of the Civil Rights people in the South was what broke the chain [and] made the big difference.

EE: Do you remember any of the people that you befriended or associated with during that period?

EB: You mean –? Let's see. Well, of course, (Fanny?). What's her last name? She got to be a big Democrat. She died a couple of years ago. There were a lot of Civil Rights people and Blacks that went onto greater fame. I've got several lawyer friends from New York that I acquired at that time. Well, Bill Kunstler's daughter was one of the workers. So, I got friendly with him as a result of knowing her. In fact, the week before he died, he wrote me – I hadn't heard from him for a long time, and I ran into him. He wrote me a very nice letter about the daughter whose had practically grown twin kids and both go to

Yale, and so forth. But there were a lot of people. They had one big reunion a couple years ago that I couldn't go to. But somebody did a booklet on the LCDC and various lawyers. If you want to see it, I could show it to you. It stuck, and it still does. I mean, considering the time part of my life it occupied, it had a big effect in terms of friendships and adventures.

EE: How did you feel about coming back to Baltimore after that?

EB: Well, I knew I was going to. I mean, it wasn't one of those things, where you become a missionary, which I wasn't. It was just so that – of course, I had been working in the Civil Rights Movement in Baltimore for quite a while, which is why I ended up going there. That was the focus of that part of the Civil Rights era. I certainly never regret that I did it.

EE: Now, let's talk about your career. We talked about a lot of the jobs you had. We kind of got into your judgeship. I'm not sure that we really talked about what it was that made you want to make the jump between –

EB: The law?

EE: Yes, the law and the judicial. So, why don't you talk about that? We did talk also about the other – the sort of ratio of male and female judges.

EB: Yes, right.

EE: What was it that sort of made you want to be –?

EB: Well, actually, I didn't know that I wanted to. I was leading a career, pretty much in constitutional and criminal law, and I liked it. I've always liked the courtroom. Of course, there were a lot of restrictions on judges, which don't apply to lawyers. I was enjoying being a trial lawyer. Some women urged me to apply because they wanted more

women. There were two on the bench before me in Baltimore: Shirley Jones and Mary Arabian. I'm skipping around a little. I'll never forget when I was sworn in. The chief judge always makes remarks at the ceremony. Anselm Sodaro, who was the chief judge then – well, he wasn't a misogynist or anything, but he didn't really understand. He kept talking about the comparative ages. I was the youngest of the three. He devoted a lot of his remarks about how I was younger than and possibly prettier than Mary or Shirley, which, of course, they resented. But, getting back to – I had represented a man who was charged, along with Blair Lee's son. Blair Lee was the acting governor after Marvin Mandel went to jail. His wife was a champion Girl Scout type. I think there were about eight Lee children. She was one of those types that were all for women, especially athletics and doing things like boys do. Her son, my client, and about five other young men were dealing – I think it was either heroin or cocaine. I think it was cocaine – out of the Lee's barn in their farm in Southern Maryland. They were all arrested in a wiretap scheme. My client was actually the biggest of the lot. He was the one that had the conversations over the wiretapped phones and so forth. But Lee was the centerpiece of the case – otherwise, it would just have been another narcotics case. Because of Lee, it was moved up to Cumberland for trial. Oh no, it wasn't Cumberland. What's the furthest western county in Maryland? Over where Deep Creek Lake is.

EE: Garrett County.

EB: Yes, Garrett

EE: Yes, we talked about this earlier.

EB: Yes. Well, anyway, I met Mrs. Lee. She and I got along just fine. The male lawyers were all living in some other place. We stayed in a hotel there. Actually, it wasn't until I applied that her attitude toward me made any difference. But people urged me to. I didn't really particularly expect to get the appointment, and I did.

EE: So, you were appointed under Blair Lee?

EB: Yes. Who appointed several other women. I think he made the break. I had some misgivings because I was enjoying what I was doing, and I certainly wasn't constrained. Actually, it didn't turn out to be all that constrictive. But I had a feeling that I'd have to be better behaved and more dignified and things of that sort. So, actually, I guess I wasn't as much of a proper person as I should have been, even after I went on the bench. But I certainly liked being on the bench after I got into being a judge instead of a litigator.

EE: So, who influenced you? What made you decide to apply?

EB: Well, some women. Yes, it is certainly prestigious and a much easier life, by the way. I mean, you never lose a case. You don't agonize over whether you say your client should be put on the stand. There are all kinds of really agonizing decisions that criminal defense lawyers need to make. Sometimes, they can even add up to costing the life of the person. Once you're a judge, it’s usually up to the Jury. I never did have many qualms about sentencing people. I knew what I thought was the right sentence, and I imposed it. It wasn't my fault; it was theirs. I wasn't one of those judges who tossed and turned and agonized over what to do when I had a person to sentence, which, of course, is the thing that judges claim is the hardest. I think I knew my law pretty well, so I didn't have a whole lot of problems deciding how to rule on various things. The worst of it was to sit there and have to tolerate bad lawyering and shut up. I got into some trouble with the appellate courts because I did not always tolerate it.

EE: What are some of your more memorable moments on the Bench?

EB: Well, I guess - and I may have talked about this before – Mrs. Parrish. She was charged. In fact, the Sun papers had carried a long series. She was the voodoo woman. She took out small insurance policies on bums, who ended up dying, and she collected the policies. She was quite a character. She was a grizzled, looked much older than her

age, Black lady – did look like a Voodoo woman. In fact, the case is written up in David Simon's Homicide. I think he did an episode of the TV show on her. Of course, I like murder. Maybe I've become a little less enthused since September 11th, but she was the epitome of the kind of cases that you enjoy hearing. Of course, a lot of people love to watch trials, as witnessed by the fact that there's a whole TV station [devoted to it.] I think they're playing the trial of the rabbi in New Jersey right now. Though I haven't looked. I don't know why I've always liked murder and murderers, especially – poisoners and plotters – not the shoot-them-up-on-the-street type that seem to dominate Baltimore cases in recent years. I had a number of interesting trials. A realtor got murdered by a man who scared the heck out of people in the real estate sales business. But it was a well-tried, interesting case. I represented Panthers back as a lawyer, not a judge. Remember the Black Panthers? Well, there was a very interesting case here where – I guess I shouldn't use that word – hey thought this man was squealing on them. First, they burned him with hot sugar [which] is a very incendiary item. They made a mess out of him and then ended up shooting him. My client, whose name was Ochika Young, was a charming guy and had mostly white girlfriends who were associated with Morgan College on the faculty. He went there. They dug up the skeleton of the victim in – what's the matter with me? What's the park in Windsor Hills?

EE: Where they dump all the bodies?

EB: Yes, right.

EE: Leakin Park.

EB: Yes, Leakin. I don't know why the name slipped me. But the body was found in Leakin Park, or the skeleton because it was a year later. They had all these experts from the Smithsonian and various places trying to show whether Eugene's – whatever his last name's – body was that skeleton. Of course, I like skeletons. In the end, it turned out that the dentist was able to identify him because he had a full-mouth x-ray, and he had

an infected tooth that showed up. Well, we lost the case, and Ochika went after me. He changed lawyers, lied, and said, “I told him to say this and that.” But it was a very, very interesting case. He could have gotten the death [penalty]. I never had a client who got the death penalty when I was his lawyer. I represented a number of them later on who went up to the appellate courts on their appeals and post convictions. But no one that I represented ever ended up on death row. It was much more frequent. There were twenty-four of them on death row when they handed down the decision in 1978, I guess it was, that temporarily abolished the death penalty. I had about twenty of them, all of whom escaped [execution] because of that Supreme Court case. [RECORDING PAUSED] I don’t know why [I collect skull and skeleton artifacts.] There's a certain instinct to collect – it's kind of silly. I'm sure you possess it. I don't know what you collect. My birthday is near Halloween. At any rate, I just like Halloween, and I liked things that go with it. When I got older and more sophisticated in collecting, I started – when I spotted a skull or skeleton, I would reach for it. In those days – now it's become much more popular. Halloween is a much more prominent holiday than it used to be in my childhood and things that are artifacts and have to do with skulls and skeletons and macabre items are more frequent. So, I don't buy everything I can acquire anymore. I'm particular. But why it is? The only explanation that I can give you is one that of a friend who does horoscopes and all of that. He's a Hopkins Professor. So, I guess he's not too anti-intellectual. He did my horoscope, and he claims that it shows that I would have all those inclinations. I don't know. But whenever I see one, I like it. I then see them, and then I don't [inaudible]. Off in a distance, I say, “Oh, there's a skeleton.” When I get closer, it’s a tomato or something.

EE: What was the first one that you collected? Do you remember?

EB: A better thing – because I wouldn't remember the first. It was probably some Halloween decoration. I do remember the first collectible, so to speak, was a meerschaum pipe with a skull.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

EE: – your collection.

EB: I forget exactly where I left off. Of course, I like the human form stripped. I mean, anatomy, I think, is fascinating. I mean, people used to paint skulls as exercises in the fine arts, as you undoubtedly know. So, it is not an original reaction with me. But, of course, I collect all kinds of artifacts and photographs and paintings and whatever. I just like the underworld of the macabre, of which I guess they're the finest example of. I've been doing it so long. It's nice to collect something. Like I was going to – there's a big flea market in Renniger's. Have you ever been there? Well, I was going there one day, and I've reaped some good rewards from those visits. But a friend said, "I've got somebody who collects Scottie dog figurines and what-not. I want to give her a birthday present. So, see if you can find something." All of a sudden, I must have seen fifty Scottie dogs because I had my eye out for them. I don't know why that friend collects Scottie dogs, or my Aunt collected dachshunds, or [why] I collect skeletons. I think mine are more interesting, at least.

EE: Do you have a favorite?

EB: Well, that fellow behind you, which I bought in Mexico during the Day of the Dead, is maybe my favorite.

EE: Describe him.

EB: Well, he's an iron found object put together with his ribs – let's see. He's got garden tools in for various – of course, I couldn't carry him. I bought him in some little town in Mexico. It was an original artist's piece. I couldn't carry him with me, so I had it shipped out. I told them that I wasn't in a hurry and just ship it. It wasn't too cheap in the first place. It came very fast. Almost before I got back. I got a notice that it was down at the

airport. I had to pick him up. He’s about four or five feet high. It took me a while to find the chance to go down to BWI and get him. I had to go to Mexican Air, and they told me I had to go – he's a piece of folk art, so I didn't have to pay duty, but I'd have to get some clearance to take him away. So, I went with a young lawyer I enlisted. Had to do what I [was] asked. We went over and went through the Customs application and so forth. When I got back to Mexican Air, all the people that worked there in the baggage were standing out there with him. He was in a crate. They'd been watching him for weeks, wondering what kind of a nut had this piece in there with this skull head staring out at them. But I've always liked – he can move. He's got joints. I still treasure the pipe that I first bought. It was a good piece. People collect Meerschaum pipes you know. I've got a bunch of skeleton bands that I love, and I'd buy another one if I saw it right now. But I keep those on a shelf. Everywhere I look – I've got a skull, netsukes, those are in those two boxes up there. Then, of course, the changes. I just showed you what I got for a birthday present last week. Now, of course, he's not a fine piece of –

EE: And what is he? Describe that for the tape.

EB: Well, you know what that song is that he plays? At any rate, he's got a skull head and a stuffed sort of body. He’s electronic. So you push the button, and he dances, and his eyes light up. He turns. I have several things of that nature. They're too big to keep around. My house has no place for them anymore. Those paintings, I don't know if you saw the oil paintings. A guy that does – what's that cartoon character? But doesn't do anything like those. But he did up at Yale Law School. His stuff is selling for forty-thousand a crack and all that kind of money. He let me buy those because he wanted to keep them together, and he changed dealers and he went back to California. I love them. I think they're very good art. So, I've got paintings. Of course, the other thing I collect are true crime books. I don't believe that you went [downstairs]. Well, these are better ones than the ones, but these are almost all true crime, except for the poetry.

EE: And do you read them all?

EB: Oh, sure. I hardly own a book I haven't read. Well, I've got about five thousand true crime titles, most of them downstairs.

EE: Do you buy them all, one by one? Or how do you buy them?

EB: Oh, one by one because you can't buy them any other way. The only person I know around here, or maybe anywhere that has a much better collection than I do is John Waters. He clues me in on what's new.

EE: Tell me about your relationship with John Waters.

EB: Well, that's kind of funny because I was involved with the ACLU – how many years ago has that been now? When I first met John, he was in his early twenties, and he was working on his first movie called Mondo Trasho. He was using the Hopkins campus, which was much less crowded and busy than it is now, for some scenes in the woods. There's a building there now. He chose Parent's Day to do a scene which involved a limousine, Divine, and most of his basic crew. I don't know exactly what they were doing. I've have never seen John with his sleeves rolled up. He's almost prudish. While all those characters were stripping and carrying on with the dirty words and dirty deeds, John's immaculate. But his characters, a lot of them, were naked, running around the woods. They didn't know it was Parents' Day. [Hopkins] ended up calling the police instead of just [security,] and the police came and chased them. They landed in front of the old Rex Theatre – in the limousine – on York Road, Baltimore's porn Movie house. They were arrested for – I don't know exactly for what – trespassing, indecent exposure. I don't know that it really wasn't an ACLU case, although it was certainly funny. Ridiculous prosecution. But that's when I met John because the ACLU decided to supply him with counsel. Freddy Weisgal and I represented him. I can still picture the scene. I'd say that he was in his early twenties, and I was in private law practice. I had a

rather fancy office. Well, that's where we became friends. Well, I guess it's thirty years ago now, or something close to that. He's equally interested in murder. He attended some trials. He taught at Patuxent where I was on the board. I don't know. We just kept up with each other through the years. Well, I don't know. We're on the same wavelength. I'm not anywhere near as clever as he is. He is one of the nicest people in the world. You know him, I think, don't you? He's just a lovely man. He one of the people that I genuinely like most in the world. I don't quite understand why he seems to like me. That's for him to say.

EE: Does he covet your collections? Your books and your skeletons?

EB: I'm more likely to envy him. Now, the books, I don't know where in the world he hears about books before the writers wrote them. It's just incredible. He's very orderly about the way he gets and keeps his collections. Now, he's not interested in historic classic cases. He likes the contemporary stuff much more than I do. But I don't think that there's a book about a true crime in years that John hasn't got.

EE: Now, what's a true crime?

EB: A real one as opposed to a mystery novel, which I find nowhere near as interesting.

EE: Have you ever thought about writing?

EB: Yes, but it's so tedious as you probably know. In fact, I had a book review in The Sun yesterday. It doesn't look like anything. I must have spent well over a day writing it and then cutting it. I think it's decently written. But, my golly, if I were writing a book, that occupies about a page of a book. So, I guess I'm too lazy. Actually, the computer's been a revelation. I mean, the ability, the physical ability, to change things without taking the paper dramatically out of the typewriter. Maybe I'll do it now that I can do it physically without as much headache. Because I didn't get too much into computers until I left regularly being on the bench. I don't know how I'll live without them. Certainly can never

in the future.

EE: Now, why did you retire?

EB: Well, that's too long a story. In fact, I think I still have some copies of the old City Paper that had a big story about it. I don't want to put it on tape. I would have had to about two years later than I did. But it's a big story.

EE: Never mind.

EB: Okay.

EE: Tell me about your marriage.

EB: Well, I think it was a very good one. I mean, we had a lot in common, and we had a lot that wasn't. I mean, my background and his were – he came from a society family, actually, though he didn't pursue the family traditions. I never met Bert's father because he died before I met him, but his mother never met a Jew. She was one of these little old ladies who – he was an only child. She was one of these little old ladies who just never had any – and she had all kinds of ideas about what a Jew was like. She was living with his ex-wife. Because their home on the Eastern Shore, his mother had put a lot of the money into. They had a home in Rock Hall, a restored 18th-century house. So, she was living with his ex-wife under some arrangement, where she had her home there the rest of her life. They got along fine. We used to visit. She knew I was Jewish, but she couldn't quite reconcile herself to the idea that I didn't have horns, wear black, or do something weird. She used to send me cards for Hanukkah and other Jewish Holidays; nobody else did because I've never been very observant. She was observant. I guess she just thought that I dropped from someplace where others like me weren't to be found. I think I probably was the only Jewish person she ever knew. We didn't see her all that much. So, she didn't play a big role in my life. Kind of amusing. As for our marriage, Bert was quite an extraordinary guy. You'd have to talk to other people to maybe get a

less subjective view of him. He was a poet. He was an architect as well as a union guy. He wrote very well, which may have scared me off. Anyhow, he was pretty good looking. He was a suave guy. Incidentally had been in the Spanish Revolution; he went to Spain. He was nine years older than I am. He was a very interesting guy. You either loved him, or you couldn't stand him as far as our friends went. But we had a rather mixed group of friends. As far as the Jewish-Gentile-whatever, first of all, we had a lot of friends before we were married who were in like circumstances living with each other, which is not something people did in those days. I guess when you think about it, a lot of our friends were mixed couples, religion-wise, more so than my Jewish friends, at least in those days. I've seen statistics where almost half the marriages of Jews are to non-Jews. It wasn't like that then. It was not all that unusual, but it wasn't frequent. So, I liked that aspect of it. I've been so buried in being Jewish here because Baltimore is such a – not in college at all. In fact, most of my friends in college weren't Jewish. Here in Baltimore, you could tell from an address what the religion, the income, even the social outlook of people was. I never liked that. In fact, I've sort of broke away – not angrily or anything, but just broke away from my Park School friends, who were mainly Jewish and the Forest Park ones who were also. Of course, Bert had Jewish friends, but he wasn't buried in them like I'd been. I was glad to get out of the hole.

EE: I'm sure you would characterize yourself as a fairly independent woman, so did but, did being married present any problems for you?

EB: No, it solved some because my only living grandmother was really upset about – she used to say, "He looks like a drunk." She was not at all happy about it. But on the other hand, she didn't want to lose me, so to speak, so it wasn't like one of my college friend's parents who sat shiva when she ran off with a goy. Nobody in my family was – well, they would have far rather I married a Gentile than a Russian Jew, I can tell you that. So that part wasn't as bad as it might have been. There was very little feeling about his not being Jewish. It was more not being married to him until I was. There's a lot of

intermarriage in my family, quite a bit [on] the Jewish Southern side, my father's. In fact, I've got third-generation Catholic cousins, though my own bloodline didn't involve it directly. But there are a few Catholics in the family. You may or may not know it, but Catholics in the South are worse off than Jews, socially. I don't know why they wanted to embrace a couple of minorities. But, I had a rich, great-aunt who was childless. My grandfather and his brother – I may have told you – married two sisters. So, the other sister, Aunt (Sara?), who had a lot of money – because she had as much money as everybody else in the family together, and she would give these annual birthday parties for herself in Washington where she lived. In fact, she was born in Washington. The Catholics and the Jews would all be invited. And, when it fell on a Friday Night – they were all quite observant. They had to decide who were the Catholic ones and who got the prime rib, which is what she always served. You could see the waiters looking around the table, trying to measure noses or something. The Catholics were more Semitic-looking than the Jews. But it was really kind of funny because they didn't want to ask. So, I say that there was intermarriage in my father's side of the family, but the Catholics have never been that close. In fact, some of his cousins, I know, they weren't first cousins though whatever your cousin is. They were removed a generation.

EE: Let's talk a little about your immediate extended family.

EB: Well, I've never had children, as you know. I have a brother who's got three kids, who each have three kids, so a lot of nieces and nephews. But getting to my husband's side, when we were married, his only child, Christopher, was about five, I guess. Or maybe it was – no, he was only about five. Turn off the thing a minute. [RECORDING PAUSED] And Chris – wonderful guy he turned into. He spent a lot of time with us. I loved him dearly. He was a wonderful guy. And then he went to – he finished high school down in Rock Hall, which is where he was brought up and went to Western Maryland College and did very well there. He was quite talented. He wrote well. He had a lot of Bert's characteristics. He looked a good bit like him and had the sensitivity and

the arty – and he married a classmate, Susan (Siebert?) – well, he and Sue first lived together for a few years [inaudible]. Her whole family had been at Western Maryland. Her mother, her father, her sisters, her brothers, etc. and so forth. [Chris] worked for some small-town newspapers in Westminster and in Ocean City. He spent a year in St. Croix. Random House, or one of the big publishers, owned this plantation in St. Croix, where they put up artists. It was a great job because all they had to do was maintain this mansion. All kinds of important people visited. We visited once. When they came back to Rock Hall, he and two classmates started this little printing and publishing house on the Eastern Shore. They won some awards, and they did very nicely. At the age of thirty with two kids then ages two and four – or three and five – he dropped dead of – not a heart attack. It was one of those things that they thought Len Bias had when he turned out to be taking drugs. I never knew much about the phenomenon until it happened with Christopher. It was devastating. He had a wife and two kids and was doing so well. So, the two kids are now twenty-one and nineteen. They're wonderful children. They call me "Grandma" because I'm the only grandmother they have now, anyway. They're wonderful kids. Bert provided trust funds for them. I'm closely tied with them economically but also emotionally.

EE: Was Bert living when his son died?

EB: I think it hastened his death quite a bit. It was a horrible business and just totally out of the blue. In fact, they did an autopsy on him and didn't find a cavity in a tooth. It's not an unheard-of condition. Some electrical – within a minute or two you can be saved if the life-saving equipment happens to be handy. It's usually after [exercise]. It was New Year's Day that he died. He had been out ice-skating over on the Eastern Shore or playing ice hockey is what he was doing. He had the kids and his wife, and he was just driving back from there when he had this attack. He was dead in two minutes.

EE: So, what does family mean to you at this stage in your life?

EB: Well, my mother died when she was fifty-seven. I was in the last year in law school. My father died young. So, I didn't have parents after age – what was the year that I graduated from law school? Twenty-three, I was. So, other than my brother, I don't have any immediate family. My mother's two sisters, Aunt Mary and Aunt Bea – Aunt Bea just died a few years ago. She was the longest survivor. We were very close. I really loved her. Aunt Mary, I did, too. I got a brother whom I'm not – I think I may have mentioned – we're not all that close. We see each other, and we are fond of each other, but we've never been close in terms of –

EE: So, when you say "family" now, are you thinking of your blood family? Or do you think of other relatives?

EB: Well, as far as family, I feel a responsibility back and forth with, I guess the Bothes, who are family because they are there, and they're immediate. I follow them closely. It's hard to say. I mean, having lost both parents before I was that old, I guess it's different because your parents hold you – their relatives and their children. I didn't have that. It all came up also at the time that Bert and I were somewhat – not estranged, but just not family-oriented.

EE: Well, in closing, why don't we just talk sort of about your life now in retirement and what you are doing? If the dogs will allow us.

EB: Okay. Well, the dogs are some part of my life. But I'm not such a dog nut that I would put them ahead of other things. Well, I do some occasional book reviews for The Sun. I travel some. I've got this handicapped walking, or I'd do a lot more traveling. I just came back from a "Jack the Ripper" conference in Bournemouth. It was wonderful. I had a great time. Of course, my devotion to true crime and so forth, continues. I feel very fortunate to have this house because I think I can stay in it a long time. A lot of my associations are with younger people. I'm not close to anybody who's older than I am, and quite a few are younger. I had a little birthday party last night. Besides me, I don't

think anybody who is over, say, fifty-five or sixty. I don't like getting old.

EE: But consider the alternative?

EB: Well, yes, that's the line. I've got a lot of friends that are in retirement [homes], and the whole idea haunts me. I don't know if I wouldn't rather be dead. Of course, people say that; if somebody wants to kill them, they're not in any hurry to oblige. I try to keep active. I like to swim. That’s the only exercise that I can really do competently. So, I do it. I swim almost every day.

EE: You have your great pool here.

EB: Today happens to be pretty fortunate – here it is, October 22, and I was swimming an hour ago outdoors. But that's lucky.

EE: Yes. Well, I'll say thank you. This has been great. I've enjoyed it.

EB: Most people like to talk about themselves.

EE: Can you think of anything that we should talk about that we haven't talked about?

EB: Well, there are probably lots of things that we should talk about, but I don't want to.

EE: All right. Thanks, Elsbeth.

[END OF INTERVIEW]