Mildred Rosenbaum Transcript

RB: Hi, this is Roz Bornstein. I am with Mildred Rosenbaum at Mildred's home in Seattle, Washington. The date is August 8th, 2001. I'm meeting with Mildred today to gather her oral history for the Weaving Women's Words project of the Jewish Women's Archive. Mildred, do I have your permission to interview you, and tape you?

MR: Yes, you do.

RB: Thank you very much. Why don't we start today with where and when you were born?

MR: Okay. I was born July 3rd, 1920, in Greenwood, Mississippi. My father was the rabbi there, and I lived there until I was almost four when we moved to Aberdeen, South Dakota. I mostly claim that I was raised – I have an affiliation – and my growing up was in Aberdeen, South Dakota, which was quite different. And then, went onto other places.

RB: And who were you named after?

MR: I'm named after a sister of my father named Malka. We never knew her. She died in Europe. My father was the first one to come from Europe. He had been a Yeshiva student in Lithuania, although he was from the Ukraine. Whenever there would be rumors that the Czar in Russia was out co-opting young boys for the Army – Jewish boys from Yeshivot – then everyone would get frightened. His parents thought that he should leave. And so he did. Only two other siblings came from his family that he brought. They were actually too young, but he did bring them. Quite a story in itself.

RB: What was your father's name?

MR: His name was Aaron Michel.

RB: And what year did he come over to this country?

MR: He came in 1914. He was married in 1918. Yes, that was it. He came to Canada. There was an aunt in Canada. He and two other young boys – cousins from other families – went also. Their parents, for the same reason, wanted to be sure to get them out of Russia. So they went to an aunt in Edmonton. And she immediately – it's a very interesting family situation. I hadn't heard about it much from others doing the same thing. She and her husband had come early to Edmonton. I think were cattle people. She put the boys to work – the cousins – when they came. They would bring her their checks, and she would give them a small amount of money to spend and save the rest. When there was enough for a ticket, she would call the boy and ask who they wanted to bring from their family. And so they did this. My father brought a younger sister and a brother who really was too young to have come. I think he was about twelve or maybe fourteen. He never forgave my father for taking him out of Russia, which seems a shame. When we know about the Holocaust, he never would have made it at all. She ended up with a lot of money. They couldn't bring anybody else out of Russia because the war intervened. And so, what she did was take the money and buy property. First, she bought property where the family – the three families – Hardin, Rodnunsky, and Satanov – they called themselves the HRS Society. She bought a building so they could have a Yom Kipper dance and Pesach Seder and so on. It got too small so she bought a bigger building and just kept investing. The money was accumulating, and they couldn't bring people out. The group got the idea of offering boys in the family either a chance to be put into a business or to go to college. One of my cousins went through medical school on the Society. They decided they would make weddings for the girls in the family so that every girl's wedding would be identical. The girl could choose any wedding dress she wanted at any price. They didn't want [being] rich or poor to stand in the way. And so these two things continue to this day. They had a meeting some years ago, a reunion of many generations, and thought they would disband because there was so much intermarriage. They thought they would send the money to an institution in

Israel that everyone would vote on. We went to that meeting – my granddaughters and Betsy. It turned out that no one wanted to dissolve the Society. They no longer were meeting as much, but the weddings were still taking place. It was quite a sight to see this – each wedding exactly identical. You couldn't tell who was rich and who was poor.

RB: And all this was organized by?

MR: By this one aunt.

RB: And what's her name?

MR: Her name in English was Honor. H-O-N-O-R. Aunt Hodeh. It was quite a demonstration of solidarity. My father was the only one who went to America from Canada. He had several placements at first. He was a Rabbi in Medicine Hat, Saskatchewan, and Brandon, Alberta, and – I'm trying to remember – Moosejaw, Saskatchewan. But he went to a Zionist meeting in Winnipeg that Herzl had started the Zionist Movement, and great names of Jewish history existed then. I should have found out, and maybe we still can from the Jewish Archives or one of the big Jewish libraries, whether the speaker was [Menachem] Ussishkin, the great Zionist was coming to Winnipeg. My father went there because he wanted to hear him. My grandfather –mother's father – was a rabbi in Grand Forks, North Dakota. He had ten children, and mother was the oldest girl. He had heard that there were a lot of young men rabbis in Canada coming to this conference. And so, he went. He, himself, was not a Zionist, as a matter of fact. But he went there. When the speaker was speaking, he would stand up, enthusiastically helping add facts while taking an overview of lots of young men like my father who was there. Then he kind of interviewed them. He liked the fact that my father – except for the aunt – had no relatives in Canada. So, he invited him down to Grand Forks, North Dakota, to visit. And through that – the interesting thing – mother's sister, a younger sister – was a blond. And Dad liked that. As soon as my grandfather noticed it – dad said he never saw her again when he visited Leah, my mother, until the wedding.

It was always Aunt Zelda was visiting an aunt. She was away. So, he and Mother were married. And that's how he got to the United States. But all the rest of his family stayed in Canada.

RB: What was your mother's name?

MR: My mother's name was Leah Rebecca Papermaster. It's an unusual last name.

RB: Do you know the origins of it?

MR: The origin was – my grandfather was one of maybe five or six brothers. Two of them had the same name, and the others did not because this was a time where families who had no boys were taking someone else's boys – so that the Czar didn't draft the only boy. There were several names in my mother's family – all of which are her uncles and her father's brothers. But, this was, I think, done a lot in the Ukraine. I think a lot in Russia and in Lithuania. I don't know how many other countries did that. But the origin of that name, I don't know. There is another Papermaster brother. Whether that was the original name or not, I'm not sure.

RB: Now, how did your parents come to be reside in Greenwood, Mississippi?

MR: Dad wanted to get to the United States. Mother did. Yes, that's kind of interesting because at that time, when they were married in 1918, Mother lost her citizenship and became Russian by marrying dad even though she was born and brought up in North Dakota.

RB: Really?

MR: As it turns out, it would have been illegal today. But, in order to gain her citizenship back, she did live with Dad in Canada for – I'm trying to remember. Maybe it was Moosejaw – one of dad's jobs. But then, they took – then he was at Dickinson, North

Dakota, which was near our grandfather. He didn't care for that too much. My grandfather was a very overbearing man. He took the – and, also, at this time – now, I hope somebody can talk about the meshulachs, the emissaries, the representatives of orphanages, and Jewish newspapers, and so on. I wish I had listened or kept more track – and these meshulahim – they would travel the United States and stay in different kosher homes, like in my father's house. They always talked about the (goldeneh gliken?) [golden rewards] and what was so good somewhere else. They told my father you could make a fortune in the South because the rabbi, who was not only the shochet and mohel for bris and weddings so on also handled the kosher meat, and you could make a lot of money with that. So, Dad went to Greenwood, Mississippi, to make a lot of money. But also, in Greenwood something terrible happened, and my father and my mother, I think, couldn't get out of there fast enough. That was one of the big influences on my life. I fell into a burning fireplace when I was about two, a toddler. I wasn't minding what I was told about staying away. The girl who helped my mother – my mother was nursing a new baby – left the rod out of the fireplace, and I could hardly wait to get over there to put some paper in like a big shot. I tripped over the rod and fell in hands and face first. I was badly burned. I think that colored my mother's opinion of the South totally. We spent a lot of time going to various hospitals and medical centers in the South and twice to Mayo Clinic with no results. They didn't know as much about burns. After World War II is when they learned the most about burns. And so, anyway, we moved to Aberdeen, South Dakota. My father had the idea that we should go to Vienna. That’s where the great medical scientists were. He was a funny guy anyway. He believed that calamity was around every corner, and he raised us that way. He knew about Freud and all these great men in Vienna. He would take me to Vienna to see what to do about my hands. Our family doctor must have thought he was a nut. [laughter] But he called one day to say that he was reading an interesting article about a doctor in Chicago. He thought that he'd like to write to him to see – I couldn't open my hands at that point. The Mayo Clinic had done some things – first, I couldn't close them. And

then, when they did it again, I couldn't open them. So he wrote to this doctor in Chicago, who had a theory about a different kind of skin graft. He had the feeling that you could do a free skin graft by taking some skin off. He wrote to this doctor about my case. The surgeon in Chicago said he would take my case. It would take as much as a year with all the surgeries, but he would do it. So, my father advertised in the Yiddish paper for a Kosher home near the hospital where he was going to be taking me because, again, it was interesting how these families had to think of these things and find where to go and where to stay.

RB: Excuse me for just a moment. I'm so sorry to interrupt you.

MR: Sure.

RB: At this point in time, your parents had how many children?

MR: By the time I went to Chicago, they had four other children.

RB: Okay. And at what age did you go to Chicago?

MR: At six and seven. I went twice. Either seven and eight or six and seven. The first time I went for the surgery, they found that they thought they should remove the right kidney because they thought I had kidney problems. They didn't know that with severe burns, it could look like that on the tests. My dad called Mother to say the hospital wanted to remove a kidney. I think it was the right kidney. Mother talked to her father, a powerful Rabbi. He looked up Jewish Law on shechita, and on butchering – how do they determine what's kosher and what isn't – and about the kidney. It was very interesting. I mean the amount of medical connection, even though we wouldn't consider it representative medicine. And he said, “No, you don't remove a kidney for that. Bring her home.” And so, I went back. I went home. They said, in that case, don't have any protein, or eggs, meat, fish, or cheese for a year, and come back. I did go back, and I still have two kidneys. I could have been with one if my parents hadn't been so

innovative in terms of not accepting this great doctor's advice. I always am so grateful because I still, seventy-nine years later, still have two kidneys

RB: That is remarkable that they went through such careful consideration, and turned to –

MR: They were themselves not very knowledgeable and certainly, terribly upset. They had these children. I did want to tell you about what the other children at home – that what happened in Chicago that is the way the hospital ran with the children's ward – when the child had surgery, they would put them separate from the ward in case you were incubating something. I ended up with a girl my age who was from Chicago and brought in for an appendectomy. In those days you were in the hospital for two weeks. And not like today – I think you're home for lunch. In any case, my father could stay just a few days because his congregation was waiting for him. He'd been back and forth a lot. So, once I got settled in the hospital and ready for surgery, he left. I was in this room with a girl my age and hordes of people. The thing that I remember most was a large red-haired woman, obviously her mother, and a white-haired woman, her grandmother. All I could think of – I wish I had pursued it more for information – was that they must have been talking Yiddish, because after they left, I asked the girl what religion she was, and there would be no reason in the world why I would have had to ask her religion otherwise. And when she said Jewish, I told her I was Jewish too. So, that night, when all her family came again, I was in my bed, and I heard her say, "Ma, she's Jewish." This woman looked over and said, "Nah, she's not Jewish." I was shaking. Pretty soon, she comes over and says, "What's your name?" I told her, "Mildred Hardin. H-A-R-D-I-N." And she said, "You're not Jewish." I said, "Yes." So she said, "Where do you live?" And I said, "Aberdeen, South Dakota." She said, "No, where do you live in Chicago?" And I said, "Nowhere. I live in Aberdeen." And she said, "Well who's here with you?" I said, "No one." Well, then she was furious and decided I was a mental case or something. She went out to the desk to the nurses and said, "Tell me about that kid

that's in with my kid. Where is she from? Who's with her?" So the nurse said that Daddy had to go back, I was there alone, and I was from South Dakota. This woman sat down and wrote a “poison pen” letter to my mother and told her that there were authorities in Chicago for people like my mother. I mean, today you would call the –? what's that terrible –?

RB: Child Protection Services?

MR: Child Protection Services that we have and report in terms of child abuse. But she thought it was just terrible and worse for a Jewish mother to do that. And so, Mother was just unbelieving and quite upset about that. She wrote back – "If you'd like to come to Aberdeen and take care of four other children, I would love a year in the Big City. That's always been my dream." And then Mother said, "And P.S., your name is the same as a member of our congregation who comes in for Rosh Hashona from the country." It turned out it was her brother-in-law. These two ladies kept up a correspondence. I'm trying to remember how old I was when they met because I was going to the University of Chicago that summer. It must have been about eleven years, or twelve years, that they corresponded regularly –almost daily – about every little thing until they met. But what happened was that this woman, when she got the letter, decided that she would visit me every day, even after her daughter went home. Because she said she knows a lot about hospitals, and they wouldn't wash my hair, take good care of me, or give me a bath often enough unless you had family there watching. So, she was going to be the family. I think they rued the day they ever put me in with that family because she was very much there, she had a loud voice, and I was terrified of her. But what she did do, and which I think has colored my whole life, is that she talked to the doctor about whether I could go home to her house earlier, save my parents money on hospital bills, and she would bring me in to change bandages every day. So, I went. It turned out that they were poor people that ran a little delicatessen in the Jewish section in Chicago. It seemed to me that we traveled for hours on the streetcar every day to go to the doctor. She did that

with me. It shortened the time of hospital stay. This was really something when you think that a total stranger would do that all because I was Jewish.

RB: That's remarkable.

MR: It is a remarkable story. I owe an awful lot to an awful lot of people in terms of this woman doing what she did for me. Even though I think that I remained terrified of her my whole time. But we did – we later – I still keep in touch with her daughter once a year. But it was a remarkable story.

RB: What was the name of this family?

MR: Pittel. She was Hanabelle Pittel. I think H-A-N-A-B-E-L-L-E -P-I-T-T-E-L.

RB: And how long did you stay with them in Chicago?

MR: Well, it must have been – I was in Chicago pretty near a year in all with all the surgeries and back and forth. It's all so different today compared to what was done. This doctor gave me back the use of my hands, which I wouldn't have had. He was going to do my face too. He wanted to wait until I was sixteen. And then, the year I was sixteen, my parents wrote to him; he had been killed in an auto accident. He was a famous, famous hand orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Arthur Kanaval. But I got “his” hands, and it's made a big difference in my life.

RB: Tell me how staying with the Pittel family impacted you.

MR: It didn't at the time because I really, for one thing – here was a child alone, and far from home and all. I didn't think much about it, except that, as I think about it now, I realize it has to impact when you feel so lucky to have been Jewish, on the one hand. I think that if I weren't Jewish, I doubt that she would have come over at all – if her daughter didn't say anything to her. I've always felt that whatever I do, whoever I take in,

and whatever – it's partly for Hannabelle Pittel.

RB: Is that right? So she really shaped your later years?

MR: Well, not meaning to, nor was I aware of it. But I know, many years later, when Harold and I were married, and he had to go back into the service – into the American Army – because he was in the Canadian Army – as both a Canadian and American Citizen in World War II. When they put through the doctors and dentists draft in the Korean War, they listed Allied Armies, and they proceeded to list France and England and Belgium, and so on. But they forgot to list Canada as an ally. And so, when the law came in, we were kind of laughing, and Harold called the Draft Board. They said, “Of course, it doesn't mean you because you were in the Canadian Army.” But the fact is that he did have to go in a second time and into the American Army, or we had to hire a lawyer and put through a change in the Congressional Record and change the law. I mean, we were starving to death as students. It was cheaper to go [into] the Army again. We had some wonderful experiences [with] that. But one of the things was that I worked for the National Council of Jewish Women in the National Office and was doing conference planning for different regions. And so, they asked me if I would – since I was going – Harold was stationed near Geneva, New York. We were living in Ithaca. They asked if I would come once a month, and make a report to the Board, fly into New York, give a board report, and keep my job. It was a nice salary. So, I did that. But I found that I've never liked flying. But the Greyhound bus went right from the Air Force base where we were living to the end of the center of New York City, very near the Council Office. I could sleep anywhere, any time. I've always been good about that. So, I would sleep all the way into New York City on the nine-hour bus ride in, give my report, and go back that night. On one of the bus trips, there was a woman dressed very bizarrely. I always thought of her as something like Sissy in “A Tree Grows in Brooklyn,” the prostitute sister. She was all in gold and glitter and so on, telling the bus driver that she had been left by her husband, and she was left with this boy who was in the Air Force,

and she was going up to the base to visit him. He was obviously a new recruit, eighteen years old. I was kind of listening to her chatter away. I knew there was no place for her on the base. And then, I said to myself, “But, don't get involved, Mildred. Don't touch it.” She told more and more of her sad story to the driver. She was looking forward to being with her son. I realized we were going to get to the base at about two or three in the morning. She would not be able to get on the base, and she would have to stay either in Geneva or in Ithaca in a hotel on either side. Obviously, she didn't know that. And so, when we stopped for coffee, I felt that I really had to tell her. Her name was Rose, she told the driver. She was obviously Jewish. When we stopped in Binghamton, New York for coffee, I sat near her, and I told her I was pretty sure she wouldn't be able to get even on the base at wo in the morning, that she better stay in one of the towns. She said, “Well, I don't know where to stay. I don't have any money.” I said, “Well, you can stay with us in Ithaca, and my husband will take you tomorrow to the base.” I got off the bus in the middle of the night – about three in the morning with Rose. I introduced Rose to Harold. He was looking at this vision. And he said, “I didn't know Rose who …” And when we come into our little housing, I wanted to show her that we had two bedrooms upstairs, and she said, “Oh no, that's all right, I won't sleep, I'll just smoke.” We both looked at each other. I said, “Well, we don't smoke.” This was before the real "No Smoking." But she said, "Should I just go sit in bed and smoke?" I said, “Well, we'd rather that you stay downstairs if you are going to smoke.” We didn't have a – I mean for years now – and Seattle is a wonderful town because we're very much No Smoking. "But, no, no, no – that's okay," she said. It was getting pretty late, and Harold is looking at me like, “What have you done?” She said, “I don't know why you took me home. You don't know anything about me. I could steal you blind.” We were more worried about the fire than we were about being stolen from. But still, finally, Harold and I decided that what we would do is we would take turns staying awake and listening for Rose under the smoke and get her – and downstairs. Of course, what happened – I think I may have taken the first watch, and I was asleep in two minutes I was so exhausted. I was trying to

have this watch so that we would be able to smell smoke if Rose should fall asleep with her cigarette. I immediately fell asleep, and Harold didn't get awakened on his – I think it's a miracle. In the morning, when he went to the base early – and we kept hearing noises during the night, like furniture being moved and didn't know what was going on. But in the morning, finally, I knocked on her door and got no answer. I thought, “My God, if she's committed suicide or something, I wouldn't even know what to tell the Police. I don't know her name.” So, I finally kept knocking and kind of opening the door a bit, and there she was, sitting up and sleeping. She was in a new gold outfit. She jumped up and [was] ready to go. I gave her breakfast, and she said, “Do you think that my son will be proud of me?” She was in gold sandals, about to go into this muddy Base. I asked her if she had more practical shoes that she may want to carry those – I didn't have a small suitcase to lend her. But no, no, she was going to wear those shoes because she got them special for her son. So, Harold was in a carpool. I remember he went out to meet the other guys and introduced Rose. I have no idea what they were thinking, but they went off. What I didn't realize until a couple of weeks later when we got a new general on our base, and the procedure was that when top personnel changed, the general and his wife would give a dance or a party or something. We're told what colors the wife does not like for our formal. I learned a lot about the service being with my husband, and that was one of the things. She didn't like pink, and she didn't like lavender. Those were the two formals that I had. In any case, I thought, “Well, maybe I'll see if I can dye one of the formals.” I opened the extra closet, the guest closet door, and the formals had gone with Rose. But I decided that she really needed them worse than I did. So, we never did hear. I always wished I had some idea of what happened.

RB: That's a great story.

MR: But people think that – and I realized that, today, I can walk away from people like that. But I realized that even then – that somewhere – even as I wasn't going to get involved, I felt, if I don't, who will? What if something happened to her? Or she was

standing out in the middle of the road all night? I would not have been able to take that. It's thanks to Mrs. Pittel, I think, who showed – I mean, I know all Jews would do that. Jews do take care of each other. But some are better about it than others. And I think this woman Hanabelle Pittel was exceptional. And yet, she was ready to call the police on my mother. I think it is a wonderful story.

RB: It's a wonderful story. It says a lot about who you are as a person as well.

MR: And how it influenced us. I was very lucky. I had a husband who went along with it, except he was a little bit non-plussed by the look of Rose.

RB: Well, if we could take a step back in time a bit. I wanted to just ask you – it sounds like your early years were tragically influenced by your burns. I wondered, on a personal level, how it impacted you as a young child.

MR: That's an interesting question because I didn't really realize anything about my burns until I was in college when someone commented something was on my face. I think it was because my parents took it in such an off-hand way – that no way were they going to get involved that this is a handicapped child or special. And yet, the very fact that I was going and coming so much to hospitals and doctors and all that had to influence the family. The congregation was really wonderful. They always came with gifts. So, even though I was not aware of it as such, it was really special. But it didn't really impact – I didn't even realize that anything looked different until I was older. That's a great tribute to my parents. My father paid the bill [for] the surgery for twenty years, every month. This was during the Depression, and they were not rich people. I am a very lucky person. Many years later, when Harold was in the Air Force, in the service, the head of our base was a man who had been Eisenhower's aide-de-camp, Colonel Fuller. His wife was what they call an Air Force brat, and her mother had been a general's wife. Had gone down through the generations. And her mother visited often. I liked her very much. A very elegant lady. One day, she asked me about my hands. I

told her that I'd fallen in a fire. She said her second daughter had also, like this, been badly burned. But she said that she couldn't open her hands. And I said immediately, “It was just too bad you didn't know about Dr. Kanaval.” About the doctor in Chicago. Because she had said they went all over. Her answer to me was – oh, but we would have had to pay for that. We had gone to all of the free doctors in the Army, and nobody could do it there. I never was able, after that, to look at her. If anybody, during those years – it was the Depression – could have afforded it, it would have been the Army people because they got regular salaries. Having exhausted all the freebies of going to the Army Hospitals, none of whom could do any more than the famous Mayo Clinic did for us, which was nothing except making problems. But it always affected me when I looked at her. How lucky I was. And my poor parents. Everybody went without while they used the best and paid for it and, again, showed me the difference, I think, between Jewish families and – because the Air Force family, and certainly an elegant general's family would be – with all the parties, all the elegance, and what-have-you. But when it came down to it, her daughter could not use her hands. It was out there. Because the daughter and I were the same age. It wasn't a matter of that it happened afterwards. Dr. Kanaval came up with that theory. So I've often thought about that and wondered where they are. Where that woman is. I never met the sister, that second daughter. We had to be nice to Col. Fuller because he could send my husband to Korea if we weren't careful. But even then, I always felt influenced by knowing that.

RB: Isn't that something?

MR: Yes.

RB: How many siblings did you have in all?

MR: I have three brothers and two sisters. Five of us are a year apart. We always said that we always thought that Wrigley's Gum knew about us – because they were packaged in five. When my father would get a treat, he would get a package of gum and

give us each a stick. We never thought about why my parents didn't get any. When I think about it, I'm ashamed. My sister was born when I was in junior high. I'm fifteen years older than she. We were more like her parents than brother and sister.

RB: And what are your siblings' names?

MR: My oldest brother is Malcolm. They are very romantic names. My mother was a romanticist and a teacher. Malcolm, and then there was Mildred. My next brother – my next sibling – was Byron. And then Sam. I don't know where he came from. And Adelle. My youngest sister is Beryl, B-E-R-Y-L.

RB: Your father was a Rabbi. Did you grow up in an Orthodox family?

MR: There was only Orthodox. There was Reform already in America. But it wouldn't have impacted the small towns. I remember when the first Reform family – a sister of one – yes, I think a sister of one of the people in Aberdeen came from the South. I remember Mother saying to my dad, “Dad, she's Reform.” So, obviously, that wasn't too usual. That stands out in my mind. It was one kind of Orthodoxy. Not the division, like today, where we've got strata – even of Orthodoxy – Orthodox, more Orthodox, and so forth.

RB: Yes, isn't that something?

MR: It's too bad. I feel very bad to see it.

RB: Why is that?

MR: I feel bad because I think, in general, we are very polarized. And then, even within the Orthodox community, which I thought I knew well, there are these various gradations where you judge people on whether your house is kosher enough. And so, when I grew up, there was just one – either your house was kosher, or it was not. Today, with this

extra dimension – we see it here at The Summit too.

RB: For those outside of Seattle, could you describe what The Summit is?

MR: Oh, The Summit is a new building that was put up by the Jewish Community and associated with the nursing home that the Jewish Community has long had, the Kline Galland Nursing Home. A year ago, the Jewish Community built a building with a second floor that is Assisted Care for people who need some assistance. There's a nurse on duty on that floor. They have separate dining rooms, although they can eat in the main dining room if they care to, or if they are able to. And then, the other floors are all private apartments of various prices. On the non-assisted living floors, there's one meal a day furnished. It’s a kosher facility. A dinner each night. Those who are in assisted care on the second floor get three meals a day. It’s a very attractive building with an excellent staff.

RB: When you mentioned The Summit, you were referring to?

MR: This building.

RB: Okay.

MR: Yes, I should – I didn't even think about the fact that I was throwing that out so loosely.

RB: No, that’s quite all right.

MR: Thank you for calling me on it.

RB: It’s great to describe it on tape. Getting back to your family, it sounds like your father was – as a Rabbi, he traveled when you were a very young child, and then he settled in Aberdeen.

MR: And I grew up in Aberdeen. When I was a senior in high school – it was the custom in the small towns for Jews to stay in small towns to make money, and then when their children – particularly their girls – were through with high school, they would move, usually to Minneapolis, being the nearest big community so that they would meet a Jewish boy. It's amazing. Because when I think back on it – and even when I was there some years ago for a reunion – it seems to me in the small towns, they did a better job of keeping their families together, knowing they were Jewish, than we have in the large towns. Somehow assimilation has been both our friend and our enemy – having the Jewish community disappear in some ways.

RB: Could you describe the Jewish community and climate in Aberdeen as you were growing up?

MR: There were, at first, no professional people. All of the Jews were – almost all of them were in business. There were several very fancy women's shops. Extremely fancy. They would take their place with anything that a top American or European store. I guess this is why when I started book reviewing later, I could understand about the "Uptown Jews." Who wrote that book about the different kinds of Jewish communities? Because we had two or three families of the uptown Jews that were very fancy. Then we had a fair-sized group of families where the men had been yeshiva boys in Europe and were running a men's work-clothes shop. Aberdeen was a railroad town. I think there were five railroads that went through this little town of eighteen thousand people. We were also a county seat. The farmers came in for their banking business, and so on. There was a lot of contact with that. None of the wives – well, a couple of the wives worked with their husbands in the store, or they would take lunch to their husbands and stay and work while their husband ate. But there weren't any working women when I grew up. I was trying to think. There was a Ladies Aid. Then later, one of the Uptown Jews, as I call them, (Mrs. Sudow?) went to Minneapolis when Henrietta Szold came to America and spoke. She was very turned on and came back and started Hadassah in

Aberdeen. They were very, very much related to Jewish things. Almost everybody got a Yiddish paper.

RB: What was the name of it? Do you remember the name of the Yiddish papers?

MR: Oh, there were several. My father got the Orthodox papers which would be The Jewish Morning Journal. And Der Tagebalt which went out of business first. I'm trying to remember. There was one – Der Tag – The Day. Those were three Orthodox papers that came to our house. Most Jews got The Forward, which still exists, but in an English edition, as well as a Yiddish edition now. I know that my parents would never have anything to do with it because it was Socialist. I'm just in the process now of signing up for The Forward because I miss a good Jewish paper. I think the fact that they exist really amazes me. I don't know if there's even a Yiddish paper stand now. We have one indigenous Hebrew paper that's been quite remarkable. My husband has kept track of that because he was a really committed Hebrew student in Montreal, which is where he grew up. He always wanted to support it. Then, in addition, we got the Jerusalem papers and those that come from Israel.

RB: So, your dad received many papers?

MR: Yes, in Yiddish. Yes, that's how we heard – we probably knew about the Holocaust before other people did. I'm trying to remember how old I was. There was one time just before Passover. It must have been when the Nuremberg Laws went into effect in Germany because my father was telling us from the Yiddish paper that the Jews in Germany could not have matzos. Now, I do remember us kids – the five of us all got together and worried. We operated on sin. My mother was an orthodox Rabbi's daughter. She really, more than my dad, was devout. We worried. "How could they not eat matzo? It's a sin, and then, they'll die." I mean, little realizing as we said that what was ahead in terms of how they would die. But that was really my first association with the Holocaust, even though I didn't know it as such. I didn't put it together until much

later.

RB: Isn't that something?

MR: Yes.

RB: In Aberdeen, what were the interactions like between Jews and non-Jews?

MR: It was primarily a Catholic community. Heavily, heavily Catholic. And there were two big Catholic churches, which, I realized when I became a university student interested in world affairs – and much later, it was unusual because in a town that small, there would have been just one church and church school. But this had a very large proportion of what are known as “Volga Germans.” The Volga Germans were German farmers who were invited by Catherine the Great in Russia to come to Russia and teach farming to the Russians because she despaired of their ever being able to feed the people, and she thought they [the Russians] were stupid. So, she offered great incentives to German farmers to come to Russia, and they stayed. As a matter of fact, they are really the heart of the Ukraine. When Hitler came to the Ukraine and was rounding up all the Jews he could find and all – what he didn't know about – we call them (geshakes?) – mother must have called the (Rushakes?) – Russians – helped the Germans and would point out who else was Jewish. Dreadful, dreadful people. If I meet a Volga German, I know I just have nothing to say to them. We were involved because my mother, growing up – my mother was born and brought up in North Dakota. That was a heavily German state. She knew German, and she took it in school. The Volga Germans in Aberdeen were not literate. And so, they would come and ask my mother to write a letter in German to their parents for them. But it had to be addressed in Russian because the parents lived in Russia. They would come back at night to my father, who wrote the envelope in Russian. He would divide the envelope in half. On one side, write the address in Russian, and on the other, in English. I remember, really, my parents were very, very serious when these people would come – I suspect terrorized – terrified.

But didn't want to cause any problems. They never came with even a potato as a gift. They just took it – and I know my mother always had an angry face as they did this. But they did it. So, all I know in putting it together was that these were illiterate people – very large proportion of Volga Germans. Their church was directly across from our synagogue, where the Hebrew school was. Their kids used to throw stones at us and call us names. As I think back now, the priests should certainly have come out and called them on it when you think that because of my father, their grandparents got letters from America. But there was none of this. And my father certainly wasn't going to speak up about it. My father had lived through pogroms and everything. It was very – there was a lot of underlying fear. I could relate to that part of Fiddler on the Roof. As I know, for you young ones, it must have been hard to think of it as being true.

RB: How did that affect you over time?

MR: Well, it affected me in that when we moved to Minneapolis, I was going – I went to the University of Minnesota. There was a very good Jewish Community Center in Minneapolis, one of the best in the country. I led a group of teenage girls. As a matter of fact, I had a very fine girls' group, AIM; Achievement, Initiative, and Merriment was the name they chose. There was a very fine St. Paul group of boys that were Young Judea. They had gone to conventions, and so I suggested our girls look into joining Young Judea, which they did, so they could exchange parties. Marriages came out of it later, I'm pleased to say. But I learned – I went into the Zionist Movement as a leader from then on. My parents were not Zionists. Not active Zionists. I think my grandfather would have been an anti-Zionist religious person had he lived to see the State. But I did become involved more because of that. Now, maybe because my background in Aberdeen was such, and I was unaware of it, but it was really from the Zionist movement. My husband and I were in on the founding of the State of Israel. In fact, he came from a very Zionist family in Montreal. When we were going to graduate school in New York, it was just at the beginning of the State. Ben Gurion had come to the United States to form

an organization here of American Jews to stand by and help finance a Jewish State.

RB: What year are you referring to now? Or what year is that?

MR: I'm talking now about '47 - '48.

RB: And this is when you were newly-married?

MR: We were newly married. We were going to school at Columbia. They asked if they could use our apartment as a drop for a mail offering guns for the Jewish State because it was illegal. President Truman had declared an embargo on arms to either Jews or Arabs. It was a plague on both your houses. Anything to do with arms was illegal. We were asked if we would help because the woman in the organization that was receiving the guns was being followed, and they didn't know whether it was by the FBI. I don't think we had the CIA yet. Or by the Irgun, the extremist Israeli group. This was Menachem Begin's group. Menachem Begin was part of the Irgun. And so, since they thought she was followed, they asked if we would let our apartment be used for this mail. All we had to do was – they gave a different middle initial to my husband. It was very dramatic. We felt very proud that we helped. We were there when they declared the State in Madison Square Garden, New York, when they celebrated the State the day after the Friday that war broke out in Israel. Israel was really a State – wonderful memories. I remember afterward – I think today this is why I couldn't accept the Vietnam kids who didn't want to go into the War, and we did join Shalom Achshav. We were one of the first people in Seattle for the Peace Now – to take a chance for peace. We just felt we were committed from that day on. And even today, I don't start – and my husband certainly – we never started the day without listening to see if Israel is okay. And these days, the news is very bad, and I'm worried. I never thought I'd have to worry again so many years after we achieved a State.

RB: One thing that really strikes me is that when I asked you about the effects of antisemitism as a young child, you responded by describing, over time, your increasing passion for the State of Israel and working for various Jewish organizations along the way. It sounds as though the connection for you –

MR: It would have had to impact, I'm sure, because as I think – I did go back to Aberdeen for the fiftieth high school reunion. When we left Aberdeen after I graduated, my father had already taken a job in Minneapolis. Mother stayed behind with the rest of us children until I finished high school. So it was a year that was kind of dissipated. I didn't really feel a part of anything. I thought somehow I would go to Aberdeen and see closure. And so, I didn't – should I go? Shouldn't I go? My brother, Sam, who had already been in Aberdeen a couple of times and was a writer and had connections, said, “Don't go. It's the most antisemitic city in America, and you'll be sorry.” At first, I wasn't going. And then I just decided that I would. When I got in touch with the reunion committee, there was only one plane – a small plane – that went out of Minneapolis. It was already full of graduates. So, I went early. The community asked me if I would do a book review when I was coming early. I thought that would be interesting to see what was left of the Jewish Community. So, I got to Aberdeen earlier than most people. I walked around this little town of not many blocks. I was walking around the town. I remember Bob Burkhart was the son of the bakery owner in town. One of the people that he had – usually the Catholic students went to Catholic school until after 8th grade. They didn't have a high school. And then, they came into the public schools. I remember Bob sat in front of me, and he used to mumble under his breath, “One, two, three, four. Who are we for? Rabbi. Rabbi. Rabbi." Now, when you think about it – it's not even such a terrible thing, but it just devastated me. It just absolutely crippled me, and I wouldn't –

RB: How so? In what way? What was –

MR: Well, it was meant so antisemitically. It was meant as a taunt. There were many of these kinds of things. But I did remember Bob Burkhart. As I was out walking around, I remembered Mother had told me that she had heard that he had taken in a friend's children – six children – the parents [the Trish parents] had been killed in a car. I kind of vaguely remembered this anyway. I thought, “Well, I'll stop in the bakery,” not knowing what was going to happen. And I don't, obviously – as you raised the question, I think I have to agree that something was in my mind because Bob Burkhart came out of the back. I did recognize him, and he recognized me. I said, “You know, Bob, you made my life miserable.” I just immediately started this story which I wasn't going to do. It was like a flood. I said, “I was so impressed when I'd heard what you had done – taking in the Trish kids. But I said, “All I could think of is how you made my life so miserable.” I told him why, what it felt like, and how – so many years later – I was still thinking about it. H stood there for a minute and said, “Oh, you would remember,” giving me a little poke on the arm. He turned around and walked in the back and didn't come out again. I thought possibly we could talk a little about it. Because I said, “I hope maybe you'll tell your kids and your” – and that's when I said – “You're raising the Trish kids too – that these things really hurt a lot.” You may not think it's important. Even as I say it, it's kind of funny. "One, two, three, four. Who are we for? Rabbi, Rabbi." But I said, “It's hurt these many years.” I don't know what he said at night if he said anything. There was no answer, and he just turned on his heel. I waited a little while in the bakery, he didn't come back, and I left. He wasn't coming to the reunion because they said he had emphysema so bad that he couldn't be around smoking. The room was blue with smoke in Aberdeen. That I do remember – compared to living in Seattle. It must have had a lot of impact without me thinking about it.

RB: You know what's really incredible to me is that you described how, as a child, and even with your parents, there was a tremendous amount of anger and fear.

MR: Not anger. It was a combined angry fear, yes.

RB: And then, years later, you were able to go back to this bakery and, it sounds like, in a very decent, but up-front way, confronted him.

MR: First of all, many things had happened by then. It was very interesting with the reunion because in talking with people – I never really felt much part of that class. But everybody asked if they could have lunch with me or dinner with me. I was voted the "One with the Most Interesting Life" because so many things – no one, of course, wanted to hear about Israel. As a matter of fact, the funny thing was that that guy North, the Marine – that awful –

RB: Oliver?

MR: Oliver North's hearing and trial was on –

RB: At the same time?

MR: Yes, at the same time. I kept wanting to get up to my room to listen. Because I was hoping that he would get, at least, strung up by the thumbs. And so, I kept telling people, “I'll be back, but I want to hear about the North trial.” And they said, “North trial?” I didn't find anyone there interested. It was such a – like nothing had changed in Aberdeen. Almost all of the people returned. We were the wartime generation of – I can't remember if anybody was killed in the war from my class or not. But almost everyone returned to this boring, hot town. It’s been interesting to me ever since. I've followed this in terms of communities. But I did feel good that people thought I had an interesting life. I'd been to more places than most of them. I wished I had had a chance to talk about Israel and what it meant to me. But it seemed – my brother had warned me so much, he was sure that I was going to be the victim of a pogram or something. But, in any case, it was interesting to see what happened. Certainly, in my life – and I think in the lives of all of you who aren't even aware of it, having the State of Israel has made a tremendous difference. I hope that none of you will let it go. I mean, it's really going to be yours to

hang onto because we're very near losing it right now. I worry about that. I never thought I'd have to say that. I thought that having the several wars, and having it established, that eventually that we'd be able to make peace, but it doesn't look like it.

RB: Israel means so much to you. I wonder if you could describe for us some of the origins of your passion for the State of Israel and –

MR: Well, certainly, having been in on the founding of it and having seen that night –

RB: Yes.

MR: The outpouring in New York. We've been [to] Israel several times. My husband volunteered when they were bringing Ethiopian children – he was a children's dentist. He volunteered to staff a clinic there to take care of the children's teeth because they were so bad. He went every day [to] the University district – his office was there – to learn Amharic, the Ethiopian dialect. He was a linguist. He could learn a language in minutes. He went to learn the dialect of the Ethiopians so that he could talk to them in their language when we got to Israel. It was the first time that we were in the Negev. We were in Sderot, which is on the border. We overlooked Gaza, which I wouldn't like to do today. Up until then, we had always visited friends at the University and in mostly Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Suddenly, here we were in the desert with a town that was ninety-seven percent Moroccan. It was very, very different. I'm glad we saw it, although it wasn't the fun thing that we'd had before going in. I was pleased that our daughter and son-in-law have taken their children several times. They want them hooked on Israel too. I think it's terribly important that we be committed to Israel. We can't let it go, and when we didn't have it – our life, as I was telling you, was terribly different. There was just nothing that I had to hang onto in terms of what was mine and being ashamed of and sitting and listening to this name-calling and stuff – “Dirty Jew” – who we were. I think although Israel isn't getting a good rap at the moment in the press; it's still something that we can hang onto with pride. I hope always your kids will, and their kids.

RB: Thank you. Now, you mentioned that incredible story of how your apartment was a mail-drop. How did that come about? And how did you get approached?

MR: We knew the woman who had been doing it. Who was working – we have no idea about how big the operation was. All we knew is we were asked if they could use – because we had no relatives in New York. The object would be to get people that wouldn't talk.

RB: How did they know to approach you?

MR: We were friends of the woman who had been doing it. She was a paid worker, and she gave our name. And then in addition, later – they asked if my husband would be willing to go to a number of different banks. Once the war started, there were these many, many soldiers of fortune – mostly non-Jews – fliers who had been in World War II and learned to fly and who wanted to keep going and the excitement. They wanted to sign up with Israel. They got paid. The money had to be sent to their families in cash. So, they asked Harold if he would go to different banks. He carried thousands of dollars in a suitcase, and he would go from – down on Wall Street up to the Bronx to different banks because you didn't want to buy more than one or two money orders in any one bank. The thing that Harold and I were sad about is that we didn't realize and didn't keep – I wish I had kept a journal. A number of the checks went to the Northwest, to Seattle, possibly to Portland, and stuff. We would have liked to have known and looked up the fliers who flew for Israel so long ago and see what they were doing today. We don't remember the names. But it was interesting to know that this kind of money was being raised. What we didn't know until a book called The Pledge by Leonard Slater was written some years ago – a non-Jewish newspaper man – who collected all the information about what America and Canada did to help the Jewish State. All we knew was this little, tiny piece of what we were doing. I had no idea that Helena Rubenstein, for instance, the cosmetician – in her factory, she made compacts which would go to

Yeshivot. Or, the little boys, instead of while they studied the Torah and singing in case the FBI or anybody walked in – were putting wires inside compacts ¬– making them as bombs – as cherry bombs. They were doing that at the very same time, as Harold was going from bank to bank. And people who came back from World War II that still had Army uniforms turned them in. Mr. Ben Asia, here in town, was mailing them off to New York to be sent to the Haganah fighters. This was a tremendous operation in almost every town in one way or another of people who passionately wanted a Jewish State. We had no idea until this book came out. Our boss was written in it. He was a big shot of RCA at the time. We knew that he was a very rich man, and he went with our friend. It was just a long time ago, and a lot of things that we've only put together in retrospect.

RB: Now, you grew up Orthodox, and I believe that Harold did as well. Is that so? At what point in time then –? How much support did your Orthodox background give to the State of Israel? Or the creation of Israel? Or was there a transformation that took place?

MR: I didn't think of it in terms of Orthodox or what. It was more a matter of what synagogues you belonged to. We were very lucky because Harold was – his extremely good friend. Harold had gone for fourteen years to Montreal Talmud Torah after school. He was fluent in Hebrew. But was also a linguist. He could learn anything. But he was very good friends with Willie [Wilfred] Schuchat, who became the Rabbi at Shaar Hashomayim in Montreal, the largest Synagogue in Canada. Willie had told him about Mordechai Kaplan. Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan, who was an orthodox Rabbi, was thought of as a renegade because he started Reconstructionism, that was different. Harold was very taken with it. When we went to New York as students, we were part of Rabbi Kaplan's synagogue. We were Reconstructionist Jews. That was a little bit – certainly away from the mainline.

RB: And what years?

MR: This was in – let's see. We were in New York from '47 to '50. Inn 1950, he had to go back in the Army – in the Air Force.

RB: So, this is all, again, about the same time that you were describing earlier?

MR: Yes, yes.

RB: Concerning the mail drop?

MR: Yes, right.

RB: So, at Mordechai Kaplan's synagogue, was there tremendous support for the State of Israel at that time?

MR: You never felt like you do today from the synagogues. It's just that you knew it. I had been lucky because I told you that I was a Young Judea leader. Before Brandeis Camp was formed, they had a Zionist Summer Camp Institute. And they sent over a Dr. Bardin from Israel. And after whom later, the Bardin Camp was named. He was sent over to run the camp. He had been in the Haifa Nautical School, a director of sailors' training. I was there for a month with a girl from Minneapolis – Shirley Raskin, later Abelson – married to the well-known Rabbi in America, a conservative Rabbi from Minneapolis. We were at this camp with mostly New York national people and very impressed by the Jewish songs and dances and everything that these kids knew. But what Bardin did was bring extremely famous people to address us, to give courses. One of them was Mordechai Kaplan. Dr. Abraham Revusky, one of the greatest of Jewish historians, had spoken. All of these names – again, I so wished I had kept a journal –

RB: Yes.

MR: ¬– of these famous people. But they all had to have an impact. Because I knew that when you were Jewish, it was interesting and it was wonderful. I've never lost it.

RB: Could you spell the names of those two men that you just referred to?

MR: Revusky would be R-E-V-U-S-K-Y. Abraham Revusky. I'm trying to think of –

RB: And Bardin's?

MR: Bardin is very well-known. Shlomo B-A-R-D-I-N – after whom the Bardin Camps were named. Irma Lindheim spent a Shabbat with us. She was a woman who traveled through Palestine with the Arabs on horseback – L-I-N-D-H-E-I-M. She's a very interesting woman. Very tough. A little bit like some of our American pioneer women. I wondered whatever became of her. I had her book for the longest time. Unfortunately, I gave away a lot of books, and I have many, many more that I must give away, because there's no room here, as you can see.

RB: Excuse me. I think our tape – this first tape – is almost over, so I'd like to stop the tape for a moment.

MR: Sure.

RB: And put in new tapes.

MR: OK. All right. Should we take –?

[END OF TAPE 1]

RB: This is tape two of the oral history that I am gathering today. The date is August 8th, 2001. I'm in Seattle, Washington, at the home of Mildred Rosenbaum. We are gathering Mildred's oral history for the Weaving Women's Words Project of the Jewish Women's Archive. Mildred, do I have your permission to continue interviewing and taping you?

MR: Yes, you do.

RB: Thank you very much. I thought it would be helpful to talk a little bit about your educational background. I wonder if you could tell me where you went to school as a young child? If you wanted to describe that experience for us?

MR: As a young child, until I finished high school, I went to school in Aberdeen, South Dakota, in the public school system. My father conducted a Talmud Torah after school in the Synagogue with a couple of college-graduate young women who taught Jewish history. The boys had bar mitzvahs. But we did not have a bat mitzvah. And also did not learn – we went to the Hebrew School, but it was the boys who were really learning, and they were the ones who were at Synagogue mostly.

RB: How did that work? Did they have different classes than the girls?

MR: No, it's just that they were called on more often. They were the ones who had the bar mitzvah. Mostly, we were left at home. I think even at my brothers' bar mitzvahs, we were not there at the synagogue – as I try to think back on that. But we were in the same room, and we heard. My father was a great storyteller and told us a lot. Of course, he was always studying the Talmud and giving us stories from it or examples. But mostly, we weren't interested in that. We always felt we were more kept down than other kids because we couldn't go to the athletic games, the high school parties, and this kind of thing on Friday night and Saturday. But the other Jewish kids did. And so, in that sense, we felt separated and, in a sense, more picked on. We were the ones who were more obvious about it.

RB: When you say "we," are you referring to yourself?

MR: Yes, I should have said my family. I don't know if that was true of my mother, who was also a Rabbi's child and grew up a generation before, and in North Dakota instead of South Dakota, because Mother was not very willing to talk about it. Her answer was usually, “Never mind.” Like those were silly questions. When I got to the University of

Minnesota in Minneapolis, my parents had moved also. So they were getting settled in Minneapolis. I did not join a Jewish sorority. My parents could not have afforded it. It wasn't even a thought or an issue. But all of my friends were Jews. That was the most amazing thing to me, to see –

RB: How so?

MR: I think I will never forget my day on the streetcar in Minneapolis, going from home to the University. When someone was holding a newspaper that had the word "Jews" in the headline. I remember being very embarrassed. I wasn't used to this kind of thing. And it must have been already, as news – this was '38 to '42 that I was at the University of Minnesota. It might have been the beginning of what was coming out of Europe, about what was happening to Jews. But this was not the Yiddish paper which, when I saw somebody carry on the streetcar, I found terribly embarrassing because we simply weren't used to that. These were sort of all “in-home” things.

RB: I see.

MR: I'll never forget that, this sort of nerve to read a Yiddish newspaper on a streetcar. As a matter of fact, I'm sorry, I should have given that person a lot of credit for that. But Minneapolis was a large Jewish community. There were already many different synagogues. I'm sure that these were not people that had to deal with the issues that I thought I did.

RB: It's very interesting. So, in Aberdeen, where you spent most of your childhood, it sounds as though being Jewish was really kept within a home and synagogue.

MR: And ashamed.

RB: Okay. And then, once you moved to Minneapolis?

MR: It kind of didn't matter. But the point is that the Minneapolis people didn't take it seriously. I don't mean they didn't take it seriously. They didn't have the same outlook that I had – I have to say that. Even among the women, it wasn't anything that we talked about as such. In the Young Judea group, the material coming out for the kids was all very Zionistic – which involved the Holocaust. I was asked to address the Hadassah Group several times. These were a group of “fancy” ladies, at least I thought so, and they had luncheons and all the things that I thought were very fancy. It was a stratified life, in the sense that women and men were separate, but not separate, like Orthodox synagogues. Or there wasn't a “mechitza,” a division in the Synagogue, or this kind of thing.

RB: Are you referring to the synagogue you attended in Minneapolis?

MR: Am I what?

RB: Are you referring to the synagogue in Minneapolis?

MR: Even in Minneapolis, there was not a division in the synagogue. I think there was [one] in Michra Kodesh that my father was at later, but I don't remember. I wasn't going much. As I got older, the synagogue wasn't my thing. I always felt Jewish and very involved, and we always followed news about Jews. In one of the questions where you mentioned it, I didn't realize how much of it revolved around Israel. But it was really the State of Israel that opened the way for Jews to feel Jewish publicly. At least in my lifetime, I think it was that. It’s probably not true today. As a matter of fact, I know that it still bothers me when I hear Jewish people – and more likely, young people critical of Israel and taking the Arab side. It’s like a lack of loyalty. I always say that if I weren't Jewish, I would be able to say, "A plague on both your houses." to both sides because of the intransigence. But being a Jew and having remembered that six million of my people were made into soap, I feel I have to take a stand of loyalty. I cannot turn my back on the Jewish people, right? Even though there are times where I wished they would do

something differently. I think with women, we're more involved or would be – because women are the ones who raise the children, who raise the boys. I think often about Israeli women in the Army. I remember when I met friends of mine – someone I had talked about being at Brandeis Camp, and they went to settle in Israel. He came to the United States with his son at a big Boy Scout Encampment. He was telling us about his older son who had wanted to be a paratrooper but had been injured and couldn't continue. I said, not even flippantly but because I meant it, “Well, it's not such a great thing to be in. It’s dangerous to be a paratrooper.” He got very angry and said, “You don't understand.” Suddenly, I realized the gulf between American and Israeli Jews. This was very early. Because there it was a shame and an insult. We're of the attitude that the Army is no place for a Jewish boy. If your kids can be out of the Army, it's great. In Israel at that point, it was a disgrace even if you were sickly and couldn't go. I’m glad I was called on it. Because I tuned in early, I never made the mistake again. But I remember almost sounding flippant about it. It was kind of nice not to have to worry about your kid in the Army.

RB: Yes, isn't that something?

MR: And it is. I think American Jewish women are much more like other women, as far as mothers are concerned, and that there isn't the difference anymore. But it may be that I'm not tuning in on the young ones.

RB: Well, you know, speaking of women and their roles – I wondered – and I've been wondering – how you took the step to attend the University of Minnesota?

MR: My parents lived there, and I got very, very cheap tuition. We couldn't afford for me to go away. I lived at home. So, it was just natural. It was a very good university.

RB: Was education a value that your parents had?

MR: Oh, of course.

RB: Was there –?

MR: My mother's family all had gone and been educated too – the generation before her. So, she was a teacher. Even at my time, the thing that women – Jewish women, in particular, were taking – was teaching – I'm trying to think of some of the other things. Social work was a big one, and a little later, the sciences. Not too many women were in medicine, or even going toward – maybe doing medical technician started, but not a lot. Everything opened up in your generation. And the next generation about what – and there, as I said – I think I said it – that there weren't even any Jewish engineering students in the University of Minnesota at my time. They were just starting. And yet, when Boeing took off here in Seattle, and after the war – a lot of Jewish engineers. I mean, Seattle is just full of Boeing workers.

RB: That's really something.

MR: Yes.

RB: Were Jewish students able to enter any sorority or fraternity?

MR: No, no. They were strictly separate Jewish sororities and separate Jewish fraternities.

RB: I see. okay.

MR: Now, they might – no, I'm not even sure that they would have gotten in. I don't think they would have – in my time. Today, they can't have separate Jewish fraternities and sororities, you know that. They can't be separate. The whole point of the fraternities and sororities was social. So you would meet Jews. And this thing of going into other sororities and fraternities and run the risk of bringing home a non-Jew was kind of a big item.

RB: Was that right? How so? What was it?

MR: Well, parents wanted their kids to marry Jews. If you're in a milieu where you're meeting non-Jews, and easy to fall in love – then this is why I said earlier that – in a way, the open society assimilation, having things so open to the Jews is not our friend, it's an enemy – because it is wiping us out. The amount of intermarriage today, which you must know also, is tremendous. And then, you see, with family – I talked a little bit about the Hardin Rodnunsky Satanov, the HRS in Canada. When we went to a reunion some years ago; most every family was inter-married. It didn't feel like Jewish relatives at all. And in just a few generations.

RB: That's really something. You mentioned that your family – the expectation was that you would attend school.

MR: Yes.

RB: And college?

MR: We all did. Yes.

RB: What other values – or let's see – was marriage part of – was there an expectation about marrying a Jewish man?

MR: It was never said, but I think it was always there. I think that's in the Jewish literature too. But for that matter, I think it's true of all Americans. We're much more accepting today that people can make it single and in a career, and many of them make it easier and better.

RB: Yes.

MR: Marriage isn't necessarily a goal, and, of course, today, we have diverse points of view which would never have been accepted early on.

RB: Some of the women on this project have talked about how many of them went to the University to find a mate. Is that –?

MR: In a way that was implied, yes. It was expected, but it wasn't the purpose. I can't ever believe that – maybe an occasional family. But, essentially, by going, just like today – when you are in the University, and you go on for advanced degrees, you earn more money. That's a good incentive. So, it's not terribly different, just a different reason.

RB: Now, during the time that you were at the University of Minnesota, I recall reading that you were influenced by some professors who were wanting to serve in the Lincoln Brigade.

MR: A number of them signed up for it and went to Spain. Some didn't come back. A tremendous number of Americans were killed in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain. Wonderful people volunteered, and it always influenced me in terms of their liberal point of view. Although there are many who would call them out and out Communists – and when you said "Communists," that's an automatic enemy. And those are problems. But it colored my point of view. And Harold, too, was very much leaning toward accepting a liberal point of view. So, between us, there was no problem. We got caught up in that. We were in the Anti-War Movement. It was very hard during World War II to be Pacifists because Jews – I remember even thinking about it one day as a Jew on the one hand, I should be glad that America is in the War. And yet, as an anti-war person, I was not glad. This is where one is aware of real ethical dilemmas – and that was one.

RB: Could you describe some of the roots of your Pacificism?

MR: The fact that I felt war was – well, I had read a lot. Since I was alone a lot and in the hospital [for] so long and all, I did a lot of reading. And I admired Gandhi very much. I know that he had said that even he would agree that one fights to defend one's house and family. A lot of people think that – because I know recently when Israel came up with

Peace Now, wanting to take a chance for peace that divided a lot of the community. I remember listening to see – is it going to be like our group of American kids from the Vietnam era where they just weren't going to fight for America? They went to Canada and still wanted to be accepted back home with all the perks that others got, which I don't agree with. But I realize that these people in Peace Now – was not a matter of not defending Israel; it was a question of being able to take a huge step to say – I am willing to take a chance to give up land for peace. I know how much – we went to Israel at that point to talk to some of the leaders of it to be sure that theirs wasn't just looking heaven-ward and taking a chance, and then, Israel could be wiped out. And we felt better to know that. Although today, I must say that if I had to vote today, I think that I would vote for Sharon, although I felt very anti-Sharon in his early years.

RB: Excuse me. What year did you go to Israel?

MR: We've gone to Israel several times.

RB: But for the year that you were just describing – Peace Now Movement?

MR: Let's see. That would have been 1978, ’80 – in the ’80s. That was our last time. When Israel was taking in the Ethiopian Jewish kids, Operation Moses, it was called. We searched out the Peace Now people to talk with them directly – rather than to get a third-hand interpretation. One of the things that we tend to do – not just as Americans – but I think people – is when you have a different point of view, or you know somebody who has, unless you've talked directly with them, you don't quite repeat it right. You tend to color it with your own point of view. So, we try not to be that way.

RB: So some of the roots of your being a Pacifist started when you were in the hospital, and you started reading about the –

MR: Oh, no, not really. No, no. It just always – I was on the side of the underdog. But I think a lot of us were. I don't think that's unusual.

RB: So, after you got your degree at the University of Minnesota, then what happened? Actually, what year did you get your degree?

MR: In 1942.

RB: And what was your major?

MR: Psychology and pre-social work. I went to work – my first job was in Hartford, Connecticut, at the Hartford Retreat, which is where, I think, Spellbound, Ingrid Bergmann's movie, was made. It was a mental hospital. It was on – I remember it was on Asylum Avenue in Hartford. I, and another psychology graduate, Lucille Lilienthal, were the two from the class who got jobs. It was a very hard time for jobs. I remember we never thought anything about it. But when we filled out applications, her minister got a letter [asking] how long had the family belonged to his church and all about the Lilienthals. I didn't have such a letter. What we didn't know was that they [the Hartford Retreat] didn't take Jews. But with the name Hardin – H-A-R-D-I-N – they didn't investigate. But with the name Lilienthals, they wanted to be sure she wasn't Jewish. It was a very interesting and traumatic experience. But that was my first job. Then, I went to work at Columbia University as the Assistant Counselor to Jewish students. Later, I worked part-time nationally for the Council of Jewish Women. Oh, it's got a different name now: the Tubercular Hospital in Denver.

RB: Now, that's quite a switch from the Harford Retreat to –

MR: Yes.

RB: – being at Columbia and also serving in the houses.

MR: Back to Jewish things.

RB: What motivated you?

MR: Well, when I found out that Hartford wasn't taking Jews, I didn't feel comfortable there. I needed a job, and I didn't want to go back home because I got a lecture for running off and taking a job without my father looking into it. And he would have found out that they don't take Jews. My mother gave a lecture when I wrote about what happened. Lucille's parents sent her a ticket to come home immediately. I thought she was better off. But I had more interesting experiences as a result. She just ended up staying home after that. I don't know what really motivated me. I think just the fact that I always listened, and I always wanted to be sure that everybody got a fair shake. I guess I was a busybody is what you'd call it. Maybe that started from Mrs. Pittel, I don't know.

RB: I'm not sure what you mean. Could you describe it?

MR: Well, in the sense about caring, you know? It wasn't because – and, undoubtedly, when you're on the side of the underdog, it is usually the liberal point of view. And so, more and more, I got into that kind of thing.

RB: How did you hear about the work at Columbia?

MR: I'm trying to remember how I got the job at Columbia. It's a good question. Probably someone from – Columbia and the Seminary were always connected. I had friends in the rabbinical school at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Because otherwise, I can't – that's a good question. I never thought about it. How I got there.

RB: What was the work culture like at Columbia at the time you were there?

MR: What kind of ¬–?

RB: What was the work culture like to be –

MR: Well, first of all, Columbia had a large Jewish population even though they had the “numerous clauses” – the ten percent – because Columbia College was an Ivy League

School. The university itself had a medical school, science, and so on and so on. And that was open. And there were a lot of people from Yeshiva University. And the so-called "Second Class Universities" – because Columbia College was so fancy. I learned a lot about that. I didn't know how this was stratified. And later, when Harold was in the Service, and we lived in Ithaca, we became friendly with the Hillel Rabbi at Cornell. We learned the same kind of thing. Cornell had the college, which was Ivy League and ten percent Jews, and then, the rest of the school, the Education School, and so on, was funded by the state – state money – and it had to be open. It was heavily Jewish. That's how we met the number of students. I'm sorry. I don't remember.

RB: That's okay.

MR: On the Columbia connection.

RB: So you worked for how many years prior to meeting Harold?

MR: A year. Or a little over a year, maybe. Then, we got engaged. And then, when we married, we came back to New York to live. And some of this I'm picking up because I had already had some New York connections. We had a hard time getting an apartment because it was during the time of no housing. Harold and I both were very moral about not wanting to pay for key money to pay extra in order to get a key for an apartment. We kept saying no, and we didn't have a place to live. We finally heard about one that we could get. But we did have to pay for the key – it hurt a lot.

RB: Could we take a step back, just for a minute, to hear about how you met? And your courtship?

MR: Okay. When I had told you that when I found out that Hartford Retreat didn't hire Jews, and I was there, and I didn't feel maybe safe – but that isn't quite the right word – I decided to take a – I didn't want to go home. I knew if I went home, I'd get lectures and also be disgraced. At that point, there was Cejwin Camp, which was the largest Jewish

Camp in America – a couple of thousand kids and staff – because it consisted of five sections. And they were particularly interested in getting – they always guaranteed that their counselors were college graduates. It was very hard. The war was on, and it was very hard to get men counselors because they were mostly in the Army. They didn't want to get high school graduates. But Harold had been in Dental School already in Montreal, and he came down and worked at Cejwin during summer vacation. He had already been there one year before. And then, the second year – and came back during – well, he was already in the Army, but he had a little time off. And meanwhile, I got a job working with the senior girls – the oldest girls' group. The girl counselors didn't have to pay much because we knew we were going to meet college graduate boys. And so, they got us for a pittance. Today, they have to pay a lot more for counselors. So that is how I got involved. I met Harold when he was pinch-hitting on his two-week vacation. He was working. We got to talking, and that's where I learned about Reconstructionism. Reconstructionism, which I told you about – Mordechai Kaplan. I had already heard him at Brandeis Camp, and Harold was excited. We started to write, married, and lived in Montreal for a year until he finished dental school. Then, we moved to New York for Graduate School.

RB: Where did you marry?

MR: We married in Minneapolis. We went to live in Montreal and then went on to New York after Harold graduated.

RB: What was it like going and moving to different cities along the way? You started out in Aberdeen and then Minneapolis.

MR: I never thought much about it until I was thinking about my life and making a few notes, or mental notes. Then I realized how many places I had been and how much I had moved around. I really hadn't thought about it much before. And so, I don't know what it was like. It was just a lot – and interesting. Always interesting.

RB: Yes, it's fascinating to hear. You lived approximately one year on your own in New York City?

MR: Yes.

RB: What was it like making the switch to married life? What was that?

MR: Well, living in Montreal was very different because, first of all, they had very heavy rationing, which we did not have. Canada was in the war several years before America, so I had to get used to a country at war when my country was not, which was a different kind of thing. We didn't have a place to live, and instead, we rented a room from a family who lived across the street from Harold's mother. It was a great mistake. And this lady – Mrs. Steinberg was her name – had told us that she didn't just rent her rooms; it was the whole apartment, which, actually, she didn't mean that at all. She would watch – she wanted me to re-use matches by lighting them from the pilot light because she thought I was very wasteful that I kept taking a new match, which I hadn't really thought about in terms of waste before. She was also very interesting. Her children were Communists. She, herself, was from Czechoslovakia. We talked a little bit. As a matter of fact, when we left, she gave me an Elijah's cup that had been in her family for many years because she could see that Harold and I had Shabbat every week. She just assumed – I think the reason she thought she was going to make a "big killing" and a lot of money was because we would eat all our meals with his mother. But I was raised [that] you don't go if you are not invited. Harold's mother never invited us. So, I made all our meals in Mrs. Steinberg's house, which must have gone through her like a knife with all those matches. I also didn't know how to cook. So what I did was watch her make things, and a few days later, I'd make the same thing. That's how I learned with Mrs. Steinberg's style. Because I never cooked at home – my mother did it all. But it was interesting. Her children were part of the Canadian Communist Movement. I don't know if they were Members of the Party. You have to be careful when you say those things. But I know

that they were – it must have been a disappointment. She never talked about it, but she did give us this imported glass rather than to one of her children. I think of her every time I see it.

RB: Yes.

MR: Yes, it's a long time.

RB: So you mentioned that you had Shabbat every week. I wondered what traditions you've carried on from your family of origin to your married home.

MR: Oh, just about all of them. Just about all of them. Because I grew up with it. I never had the number of charity boxes that Mother had – what they call “pushkas.” I don't know what the origin of that name is. But people with JNF boxes from the Hadassah Jewish National Fund – those blue and white boxes that a lot of our young people have. It's really the same kind of thing. But these were people. And, again, you think of – during the Depression, I think my mother put change in at least seven boxes every week of different things. I do I have – no, it's at home. It's for orphans and poor orphans. It's just a very heart-rending name of a Jewish orphanage in Palestine. And I still have that box – I wanted to give it to – if Seattle ever has a Jewish Museum – to have it. But those were traditions. And, of course, the giving. And then, this thing of being responsible for each other. Unconsciously, Jews have always – even things like when you read the headlines – somebody murdered someone – unconsciously Jews would wonder if he was Jewish – the murderer. I don't think that other people do that. I don't think Lutherans worry about whether the person's Lutheran or not unless they're a relative or something directly connected with the family. But this whole idea of Jews being responsible for each other is a basic line in Jewish life; it is terribly important and gets passed on.

RB: And how did that concept play a role in your early married life?

MR: Well, early married life, not so much, because we had such a hard time surviving – living through one – and I worked in the Montreal YMHA. I worked in the evening at night. Harold went to school during the day, so we didn't see a lot of each other. We didn't do much. All of our friends were Jewish, but we didn't do much in Jewish life, or with the Synagogue. And then, when school was over for him and he graduated, we moved to New York. I already knew a little bit about New York because I had been in that area. We stayed there for two years and then moved to New Rochelle – because there was an office that a dentist wanted to sell, and Harold thought maybe he'd open an office outside of New York. It was not a good idea. He didn't make any money, and then he had to go into the service again. so that was a favor. After the service, we came to Seattle.

RB: Maybe this would be a good place to ask you why you came to Seattle.

MR: We came to Seattle because when Harold was in New York, he took the State Boards. The New York State Dental Boards were being given. We were very proud he passed them, even though his interest was children. He kept going. When he was getting out of the service, we had to decide where to go. My father, by then – my parents had moved to Oklahoma. Dad thought we should come to Oklahoma City because people in the congregation could help. There was a dentist there who would help Harold get patients and take the boards, and so on. So, Harold applied for the Oklahoma Boards and was ready to go out there to take the State Board exam when he got a telegram from the Secretary of the State Board saying, “You don't qualify. You can't take the State Board.” He enclosed a copy of the law, which said you have to have either graduated from a recognized dental school – Harold went to McGill, which wasn't exactly a slouch. But they weren't recognizing it. It was a foreign dental school, and he didn't qualify. But the other half of that Law that he sent said – or have a license to practice for five years in an American state. Well, at that point, the five years of Harold with the American license from New York was up. I said, “Harold, your five years was up a month

or so ago. You qualify." So he went to Oklahoma to take the boards, and he had the following experience. He went to see the secretary in this little town of McAllister, introduced himself, said that he was going to take the boards, and thanked him for the telegram. And the man said, "Let's see. Dr. Ro-sen-baum – am I pronouncing it correctly?" Harold said, "Perfectly." He said, "Well, Dr. Ro-sen-baum, let me tell you that no one has ever taken the boards from that second part of the law that you are talking about." Or he said, "Taken them and passed." When Harold called me, he said, "I'm going to take it anyway because I'm here." I was really scared, and I hated to see him flunk it. It seemed so pre-ordained. So he took it. But it was interesting – two things. First of all, Harold and I decided he would use the address of my folks, an Oklahoma address, because we had nothing behind us, like parents in New York or anything. Second of all, he was a Mason. I suggested that he wear his Masonic pin to take the Boards. One of the examiners was a Mason. We don't know if that helped because Masons are supposed to help each other. But we'll never know. The amazing thing is that Harold did pass on that first try. Now, there were several other Jewish boys with him. Two that came to the Seattle area much later, when they finally passed, and both of them had already failed once and failed again with Harold, but they were New York Jews. And so, we'll always feel that this was our good fortune. It was a very good reason that Harold came out here.

RB: But how did you decide Seattle versus Oklahoma? What happened?

MR: Oh, actually, he came to Seattle and took the Washington State Boards.

RB: I see.

MR: And he did pass. These other two New York Jews did not. Seattle, too, was quite antisemitic.

RB: I see.

MR: Interestingly enough, one of these two men – I wish I could think of his name – had already taken the boards. He was waiting and had gone to Montana to wait to take them again, something for the government. There, you could work for the government without needing the boards. But when he did pass the Washington Boards, Governor Rossellini was the Governor, a very political man and a lot of Jewish friends. This fellow went right to the state and met Governor Rossellini and asked to be on the State Board Examining Committee to keep some of these others out. So, he was quite a guy, a real fighter. But Harold – it was a good thing for us to have done. We didn't know anyone here except for a Mr. and Mrs. Stern – Bernice Stern and her husband. I knew her from the Council of Jewish Women.

RB: I see.

MR: Yes, and she was a National Vice President.

RB: I see.

MR: A very fine woman. They were very nice to us.

RB: So you had heard of Seattle through Bernice?

MR: Well, actually, we heard of Seattle from some of the people who came out of the service who had already been in Korea. Some friends had stopped off to visit us in Ithaca in the Service. Or New Rochelle. Harold was out of the service for several years. They had already been in Korea, and they knew from other dentists that Seattle was a good place to open. It was a very knowledgeable and educated city, dentistry-wise. The East was not. So we came here, and the rest is history.

RB: Yes. What year did you arrive in Seattle?

MR: '53.

RB: And you mentioned that it was quite antisemitic.

MR: The political structure of passing – the medical situation was, too, as a matter of fact. Students were not getting into medical schools and even into dental schools. I think the first Jewish dentist who was taken was a woman. I think they didn't know she was Jewish – Dr. Doris Stiefel. And then, this guy passed – took it for the third time, and he really shook up the place, and then, lots of Jews came. But it was very different. Yet it was always a good place to live.

RB: Can you describe Seattle, back in the early ’50s? What that was like? How did it differ from New York?

MR: Well, I can't say I knew New York because we just knew the University area. I mean, we were pretty much running to museums. The good thing about New York is so much was free. We just had a wonderful time. We didn't have any bills because we didn't have any money to run up bills. But it was a nice life. In Seattle, it was interesting. I can talk about the Jewish dental group. They had just started a Graduate Jewish Dental Fraternity – or really encouraged by a dentist in Minneapolis. Ernie Tanzer was a Seattle dentist who had gone to the University of Minnesota Dental School. He brought this back from Dr. Cohen at the University of Minnesota that they had to have a Jewish Dental Fraternity. The Jewish dentists were very nice with each other. The wives were friendly. They had social affairs. They gave cocktail parties. This was the age of big cocktail parties, where you had that way to get patients. This was not our thing. Number one, we had no money anyway. Second of all, we weren't cocktail party people. But we did go along with it because we were included in this Graduate Dental Fraternity. As a matter of fact, even the day before Harold died, he was with members of this group – together, they decided to go to lunch. They all were retired. Decided that they should go to lunch. It was sort of a start and finish of his Seattle time. But they really helped each other. I remember two of them – Dr. Nick Berman and someone else – came to see

Harold about whether he needed any money to finance his office. Harold was too proud to tell them that we didn't have the vaguest idea. We paid a fantastic amount of interest to buy equipment – like twenty-four percent a year, instead of the going rate. It was through a shyster kind of set-up. But the one thing we can always say is we did it ourselves. We didn't do it through cocktail parties or anything. It took a lot longer, but we supported ourselves. But Harold couldn't bring himself to say that he needed help. And yet, it was a great tribute to this – Alpha Omega Fraternity – was a Jewish Dental Fraternity, and they were very fine in doing their job. Harold was the only one who was – I won't say observant because it sounded like Orthodox – but the only one who kept kosher. And yet, the Jewish Dental Fraternity had three parts of its triangle – Alpha-Omega was shaped as a triangle – and one of them was Judaism. And yet, they didn't kind of honor it. The interesting thing is that so many years later – today, the Fraternity has a number of Jewish dentists that are observant, who belong to the Conservative and Orthodox Synagogue, besides Reform. It's quite different. It's like from this – we were in on the start. At the finish, it was nice to see. I tip my hat to Alpha-Omega. We owe a lot to them. They were very helpful.

RB: How did you find the Jewish community in Seattle at that time? What was it like?

MR: Well, there was only one Conservative Synagogue, and Temple De Hirsch was the only Reform Temple. Bikur Cholim was the largest Orthodox synagogue west of the Mississippi. And they had a small one – Machzikay Hadath, which later merged with Bikur Cholim. We didn't have any trouble mixing – first of all, because Harold had a lot of patients in all the communities. But also because we knew the Orthodox way as well as the Conservative and Reform. There were no Reconstructionists out here. Even Dr. Mordechai Kaplan himself was teaching at the Conservative seminary. So, that was where we ended up. It was not really a very Jewish community in the sense they had organizations, and Federation was just getting started. It had several names. But I think about our biggest givers. I think about in Hadassah – we had a couple of people who

gave or pledged three hundred dollars, which seemed like an awful lot of money. And then, I think about us today with our several very charitable and very wealthy people. It's a whole new town now. We had just started a Hebrew Day School out of what was the Hebrew School, the after-school Hebrew School down in the Central Area. That really took off into an Orthodox School. Each of the Synagogues had their own schools. So, Jewish education has really flourished in this town, and the synagogues – I think we have an edifice complex of buildings because we've built a lot of things.

RB: Now, you and your husband, Harold, were among the founding members of the Congregation Beth Shalom in Seattle?

MR: Yes. And Ner Tamid was formed in our house.

RB: Really?

MR: But that didn't last long because only two families – three families – were the only ones who weren't part of Boeing. The Stiefels and the – I have to think of their name – and us. Everybody else was Boeing people. Boeing went into a decline shortly after. And so Ner Tamid was in trouble. And that's when they merged with Herzl. We took off because Herzl was building in Mercer Island, and we wanted an in-town synagogue. We felt it was very important to have a Conservative Synagogue in town. And that's how Beth Shalom got started.

RB: How did you choose the Conservative movement eventually at that time?

MR: Well, I have several friends from college and from Brandeis Camp who were at the seminary which was Conservative. And we really didn't have much to do with the Orthodox Yeshiva. But in the Bronx – I had a cousin there – but that was about it. So that was how we kind of got started, and we stayed with it.

RB: How was it for you, making the switch from Orthodox Judaism?

MR: I wasn't really aware of it. It didn't seem – it wasn't a deliberate switch as such. I think if it had been one town all the way through – if anybody grew up in Seattle and nothing else, and then went from either Ezra Bessaroth to temple or from Herzl to temple, you'd feel a deliberate kind of question. But not the way we did it. We were moving around a lot. We always went to a synagogue wherever we were. The first thing we did was go to the synagogue, partly to sense it, to see what the rabbi was like. We're always critical of rabbis. Aren't we all? And, so that was how, and we just stayed in the Conservative Movement.

RB: So, how did you start Ner Tamid? What did you do? Did you talk with friends? How did that come about?

MR: We were not happy with some of the politics at Herzl. And we thought it could be more of an open Conservative Synagogue if we started another one. We were always renegades in the sense of being open to start new things. As I looked back, it wasn't smart. It worked out well in certain cases – but we just were too quick to always take another point of view. I think I wouldn't do it again. I'd go along with the mainstream more if I had it to do over again.

RB: Is that right?

MR: As I think about saying that, though, it would have been quite boring.

RB: [laughter]

MR: So maybe I wouldn't have gone over that after all.

RB: So you were unhappy with the politics at Herzl, which, for those outside of Seattle, was the Ashkenazic Conservative synagogue at that time.

MR: Right.

RB: What was it like, trying to form a new synagogue? That's a huge project.

MR: Well, what happens when you're dissatisfied, which you must know in some respects, is that you talk with like-minded people. Or when you find them at a party or something – you meet again. Before you know it, we had a little core group. Several of them were people who already had experience. One of them was Norman Rosenzweig, who I think had been the president of the Men's Club at Herzl already, so he had real synagogue experience.

RB: What were some of the main things that you disliked about the community at Herzl?

MR: We felt that it wasn't open enough to peoples' ideas. They kept all of the past presidents on the board with a vote, which kept things pretty static. Pretty static. Just very, very much without movement. It always had to be the same way. There was no room for openness. So, it seemed to us that we should try to work to open it up and get other things. As I said, sometimes I think maybe it wasn't such a smart idea.

RB: What year was this that you tried to form Ner Tamid?

MR: That we did – let's see if I can think back on that. Maybe '66, or '65.

RB: And then, you mentioned at the following session, had a huge –

MR: Shortly thereafter, yes, it didn't last long. Ner Tamid didn't last long because of Boeing. It's interesting. Because in Europe, synagogues – they were called shuls, and they were actually little, small wooden buildings – existed on the basis of your profession. The shoemaker's shul, the tailor's shul, and so on. And here, we could have been the Boeing Airplane Shul, but we didn't last. It was just a very short while.

RB: What happened then? How did –?

MR: Well, then the people – when Ner Tamid went into Herzl, there was talk about Herzl going into Mercer Island because that was where the Jewish Community was living and going to live. That was going to be the big population growth. There was a lot of feeling about that. The in-town people didn't want to go to Mercer Island. Those of us who had been in Ner Tamid – and Ner Tamid met in Bellevue away out near the crossroads. We were crossing the bridge. In those days, it was nothing compared to today. So that was really how it was. I think that getting a synagogue in town was terribly important. [Recording paused].

RB: This is Roz Bornstein – and the date today is August 9th, 2001. I am continuing Mildred Rosenbaum's oral history for the Weaving Women's Words Project at the Jewish Women's Archive. Mildred, do I have your permission to continue interviewing and taping you?

MR: Yes, you do.

RB: Thank you very much.

RB: Where would you like to start today with your interview?

MR: I thought I might start back with my grandmother, who came to North Dakota – my mother's mother. My grandfather was from the “shtetl” in Lithuania, in Kovno, the center of Jewish life in the late 1800's, 1900's. Anyway, what I didn't know is the Yeshiva that my grandfather went to, where the major and famous teacher was Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan – Isaac Elchanan Yeshiva in New York is named after him.

RB: Excuse me. Could you spell his name for us?
MR: Yes. In English, it would be – Y-I-T-Z-H-A-K. Yitzhak. And Elchanan. E-L-C-H-A-N-A-N. In New York today, I think it's the Isaac Elchanan Yeshiva, the famous one in New York City, to which so many of the Seattle young people have gone. What I didn't know is that this Yeshiva was for married students. As I thought about it, it was true. My

grandfather was married and had four little boys. Rabbi Elchanan had received a ticket from Grand Forks, North Dakota, asking for a Rabbi to come to their community, and they sent a steamship ticket. Rabbi Elchanan gave the ticket to my grandfather. I always thought maybe he was a problem, and they wanted to get rid of him. But in any case, he left his children with his wife and went to Grand Forks, North Dakota. Although he stopped, as they all did, in New York City, when the boat landed. Many of his compatriots of his former classmates were there already. He was very taken with New York City. He was made for the big time. I always said if times were different and he had had more English and a little more money he could have been like a John L. Lewis. But, in any case, he wanted to stay in New York. He liked New York very much. The Grand Forks Community kept writing to the Yeshiva – where is their Rabbi? They had already bought the ticket and sent it. Rabbi Elchanan kept saying, “He's coming. He's coming.” And finally, they hired a detective in New York to find him because they realized that he had had more than enough time to come. And when they did find him, probably by asking around and found ex-Yeshiva boys who knew him or something, that he either had to give back the money or appear in Grand Forks, North Dakota. He didn't know how to make a living because New York was full of rabbis. They didn't need any more. He had to go to Grand Forks. He never got to New York again. He never left. But one of the things he did do [was] he ended up having ten children in his life. Each one of them, he made them be a pen-pal to someone in the East. Made his children – he would find them through the Yiddish papers. So that they had an Eastern connection, so they could all see and possibly settle in New York, although none of them did. They all stayed in the Middle West.

RB: Isn't that interesting? What were your grandparents' names?

MR: He was Benjamin Papermaster, P-A-P-E-R-M-A-S-T-E-R. My grandmother turned out to be a second wife because while my grandfather was in Grand Forks in North Dakota, his wife died. Her fourth child was very small.

RB: And was this in New York City?

MR: This was back in Lithuania.

RB: Lithuania, I see.

MR: And so the question was – first of all, my grandfather was already the rabbi in Grand Forks. He had four little sons and no wife. His brother, who was a powerful influence in the family – and, incidentally, that brother's name – we talked yesterday about names. That brother, the older brother, was Rappaport. Another brother was Fox. And another brother – so each of them, obviously, was given to another family who didn't have a boy to avoid the Czarist Army Service, as I talked about yesterday. But this brother, who really called the shots for the family. This brother was already in America, and he was the chief rabbi of Springfield, Massachusetts. He told my grandfather that he should marry his sister-in-law – his wife's sister. She came over, this young woman, Anna, and her last name was – I'll think of it in a minute. Anyway, she came over with the four little boys. The oldest was ten. And came to North Dakota. I think about this a lot because she was a second-hand wife in every way. I mean, my grandfather – [telephone rings] as I said, I call her a second-hand wife because, on the one hand, she came here to marry my grandfather. She was chosen by her brother-in-law. She came with four ready-made little boys. This proved to be a problem because, first of all, the oldest boy was ten – a very sweet man. My Uncle Nate. But nonetheless, he remembered his mother well. They also, I'm sure, in the course of talking, and maybe without even ill will, mentioned she's not their mother. In any case, my grandmother was married in Grand Forks. She was a very quiet woman. For years, I thought possibly she was defective or not too bright because we never heard her talk. She mostly talked to herself. But I learned a lot about her from a man here in the Summit Building who grew up in the house next door. He said that he was paid a quarter a week to milk her cow. She wanted her own cow to have her own milk and butter and everything kosher. She

came from a wealthy family, which I also didn't know a lot about until later when I did research and study. And this was shown by all of her dresses had lace on it, even her housedresses. And, even in Grand Forks, North Dakota, twice a year, she hired a dressmaker who would move into the house and make clothes for everybody. [She'd] take whatever house dresses my grandmother had bought from the dry goods store in this little town and add lace to them, to the cuffs, and so on. I guess it was a way of showing that she came from a high-class house. I do remember I never saw her do a stitch of housework. I didn't see a maid around the house when I visited. It was a very big house. But obviously something – I obviously – I'd see her over the stove. She was a tiny woman. But I never really remember her cooking or good food. I would have liked to have known more. I'm sorry I didn't. Although I think about how hard it must have been. My grandfather was powerful, bossy – from the group of rabbis that told people what they should do or what businesses. He was a friend of James Hill – the empire builder – from the Railroad Company – who talked to him about wanting to open a railroad going to the West. My grandfather told him it was a crazy idea. I think maybe he even implied that my grandfather could invest money with him. The Republican Party did want to run him for office because they thought that he was – he was very conservative. I always said he would be up there in Jerusalem rolling down rocks on people today. But maybe he would have been able to change.

RB: [laughter]

MR: Not all rigid people stay rigid. And I shouldn't say that for the record because I might be maligning him unfairly. But (Harry Ash?) tells me that whenever there would be someone at the door, my grandmother would look out a lace curtain at the door – see who was there and then run to the back and tell her husband, and then, not appear again. Because I had asked him – did he ever hear her talk? We remember when they would come to Aberdeen, to South Dakota, to visit – that she mostly – she would talk to my mother when we were in school. She mostly lectured at us with things like "Mind your

mother and mind your mother." But it was kind of like we didn't have anything to talk with her about. I'm sorry because I would have liked to have talked to her. Her family name was Novick, N-O-V-I-C-K, probably, or N-O-V-I-K. We did meet some relatives of hers later. But mostly, it was my grandfather's – the Papermaster family that we knew because he had two sisters in Grand Forks and then this brother in Springfield, Massachusetts. As a matter of fact, I mentioned yesterday about when I fell in the fire, and then, later, in Chicago about taking out a kidney – they immediately consulted this brother, Rabbi Rappaport – he was kind of the titular head of the family – who determined who would do what. Much like we read – if you know My Name is Asher Lev – if you know the story of the Hassidic Community – and who could go to college. Very few were chosen by the rabbi. Neither family was Hassidic. But a lot of their music is – so they must have had some touch with the rabbi. My grandmother raised these ten children, and the interesting thing that I didn't know until later is that the house had a porch on it, that the roof lifted off. It had slats in the roof. That was the Succah. On this porch was a built-in long table. Because they not only were twelve people before they started, but like I told yesterday about the meshulachs, about the emissaries of the Jewish newspapers, and orphanages in Palestine, and all. They all stayed at my grandfather's house as they traveled. This whole thing had a kind of pattern of how the Orthodox Jews would travel on railroads. Where they would stay overnight. One of the things that my grandfather, Rabbi Papermaster, worked out was that he very much liked the Norwegian farmwives. Now, North Dakota was, as I said, primarily German. They raised sugar beets. James Michener did a wonderful job of telling about that in his book on the Colorado River, about the sugar beet farmers and about how they followed the river. Anyway, my grandfather had worked out with these houses that he would pay the non-Jewish wives. He left some pots and pans and silver, and so on there. So he could make a little meal for himself when he came. And then, he allowed these – meschulachim they were called – M-E-S-H-U-L-A-C-H-I-M – emissaries, or representatives. He would travel around. As I said, take care of the Jewish farmers who

had had babies, or wanted to get married, or sons were going to be bar mitzvahed – and then move on to the next farm.

RB: I'm curious to know if you ever heard how your grandmother managed ten children while her husband was traveling a lot. What was that like?

MR: I wondered that too. Because I don't – as I said – I never felt close to my grandmother. And yet, it was very interesting. I'll tell that part now, although I'm jumping ahead. When I was married, my grandmother could not come to the wedding. She was widowed and alone. She lived in Fargo, North Dakota, by then. Her son moved her because he lived there. But he was the one who was a friend of Rabbi Levine's of Seattle, the Reform Rabbi. She couldn't come to the wedding, but she left orders – she wanted me to have her pocket watch, which I have here. No, I didn't bring it here. I am sorry. I should show it to you. I liked it because it fit into – she had a little vest over her skirt, and it had a special pocket for it. She remembered that I always wanted to get my hands on it as a child and a young person. That made me think that she obviously noticed me. Now, she must have because I was the first granddaughter – and the tragedy – when they heard I was so badly burned, and they ended up – I think I told you – that they sent my blonde aunt to pick up my brother at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester because mother and dad had gone there. And then, mother had this new baby, which was the reason why she couldn't watch me. Aunt Zelda was a “character.” Anyway, they sent Aunt Zelda to Mayo Clinic to Rochester to pick up Malcolm, and she came and scooped up this little boy who was already traumatized by what had been going on. Took him to Grand Forks. Dropped him off with her parents. And they – my grandparents – were mostly Yiddish-speaking. He came back home a few months later, speaking only Yiddish – but totally traumatized – I'm sure, without explanation or what. But the question was – if you had to weigh it today, you would say it was more of a – of course, today, you'd have psychologists, psychiatrists, and a million other kinds of people trying to interpret to him, which wouldn't have helped at all. I think we have come such a long way

of stupidity in some of that and to think nothing of expense. And so, Malcolm went there, and he was with my grandparents. Now, I don't know how she was with him at all. There were some younger brothers still at home. My other aunt, I think, might have been quite young. Whether they related to him, I don't know. I know that I just didn't have a chance to ever check that. But I was touched by the fact that I got the watch because there were lots of grandchildren as well as her children. And everyone was quite angry that I got it. The watch must have been the wedding present from my grandfather to my grandmother. Remember, this was a second wedding. And I don't know if there was a – there had to be a ring involved because there's a ring in the Jewish ceremony. I don't know what kind, and I don't know who got that ring. Also, I got her candlesticks. Although when she died, there was a tremendous falling out because the first four sons insisted that she had their grandmother's candlesticks and that it should be theirs. So, my grandmother's children all insisted they weren't. I look at these candlesticks, and I think of that story. I wonder who was right. There would be no way for us to know. It must have been a very hard life – although, as I said, she was always – the first time we saw a wig or a shaytel, S-H-A-Y-T-E-L, that Orthodox women wore – hers was reddish with red hair. All I wanted to do was get my hands on it to see how I looked with red hair.

RB: [laughter]

MR: And I do remember when I was twelve, I had told my younger sister – I was having trouble with my parents. I was going to run away from home. And I wanted her to say goodbye for me the next day after I was far from home. So they wouldn't find me. And she right away – we always called her the “quisling.” She right away ran and told my folks. So they arranged with a family who was driving up to Winnipeg, going through Grand Forks, that I should drive along and be with my grandmother. She was newly widowed at that point. And so I spent the summer with my grandmother. Mostly, my mission was to get my hands on that Shabbat sheitel so that I could try it on when she wasn't looking. That woman must have had ears in the back of her head. As little as she

talked and as little communication – she would appear from nowhere. I'd maybe get this beautiful box down – they all came in that, the kind of special hats that men wore. They were called “Stetsons.” I mean, the name "Stetson" is still a big hat company. But the Stetson was the Shabbat hat. And it was very brushed felt and quite thick and like fur. That was my grandfather's hat. And then the other one was the tzlinder, T-Z-L-I-N-D-E-R, which is like a cylinder. That's the top hat. And that's what my grandfather wore when he presided at a divorce – some monumental thing. And then, here were these – I don't know if the tzlinder was already gone. I don't remember even seeing it. Although I remember my grandfather wearing it at one time when we were visiting. But this sheitel – I never got my hands on it, but I got close. And yet it was interesting because we didn't really communicate – just that she watched me every minute. I remember that I couldn't find her one day, and I thought, “My God, she could have – something could have happened, and she's dead.” I wouldn't know what to do. I went looking around the house, and in the back, besides a barn in the very back of this big house – was a kind of little, long house. I never really thought about it. The door was slightly ajar, which I had never seen in the years that I visited. I went over there, and it had a Passover smell of all kinds of spices. It turned out that this was always called "the shtiebel" – I think I write it – S-H-T-I-E-B-E-L – which is like a little house. It turned out that it was full of Passover things with a huge table and benches built in the center. It was a special house for Passover, with a stove and all – and into which my grandmother and family moved, so they had none of the work that my mother had in changing dishes or cleaning up and the Passover things, like spices and all, which were emanating from this thing. I have never seen one since. But there must have been – I doubt that she would have known about a shtiebel if she hadn't come from a place in Europe where it was done. But what a luxury, when you think about it, not to have to touch a thing on Passover. But just move across the yard.

RB: Isn't that something?

MR: And eat and cook and all in this. So I'd like to recover that – now there might be other families. I'd be interested to hear from anybody who knew more. I wish I had investigated all of this because these just come back tangentially to me without a lot of information. But my mother grew up in this house, of course, as the oldest daughter. Mother, I think I told you, ended up marrying Dad because he didn't see Aunt Zelda again.

RB: Did you ever hear what that was like for her?

MR: Well, I often wondered. No, Mother wasn't one who talked easily. Actually, she must have learned from her mother that the best thing you do is keep quiet. Mother had the rare gift of never telling stories, even from one to the other of us. We were never split by her in terms of – we all thought that we knew who she liked best. Each one of us thought it was the other one. I don't mean themselves. But we all had a different view of what we were sure that Mother preferred – of whom we were sure Mother preferred. So I don't know whether she learned this from her mother or whether she was just naturally silent. Unlike my father, who talked not a lot, but talked freely or characterized people. Mother had a gift of describing people – like Shalom Aleichem did in terms of if she'd want to talk about someone, she would talk about them in terms of being the lame, or he limps – or so-and-so, the limper. This was all in Yiddish, which reads much better. I understand Yiddish, as I told you, but I don't know it. I've always regretted not knowing it. So, her way was very different because it was one of silence. But, as a result, the people in Aberdeen – let's see, I think every family, but one – besides ours – had relatives in the town. We always regretted that we didn't have aunts or uncles or cousins or something. Although I think we were lucky. They all were at odds with each other and calling Mother and reporting on this sister-in-law, or this so-and-so, or somebody else who looked at them cross-eyed. Mother never said a word and never spread anything. She was a rare person in this. And maybe it was bad because she didn't have anybody to unload on. She never unloaded on her children, either. That was an interesting thing

on her side. And whether she learned it as a Rabbi's child –

[RECORDING PAUSED]

RB: This is Roz Borenstein, and the date is August 9th, 2001. This is tape three – or rather mini-disk three. I'm meeting with Mildred Rosenbaum at Mildred's home in Seattle, Washington, to complete her oral history for the Weaving Women's Words Project of the Jewish Women's Archive. Mildred, do I have your permission to continue interviewing and taping you?

MR: Yes, you do.

RB: Thank you very much.

MR: While I'm talking about a Passover house, let me tell a little bit. In Aberdeen, South Dakota, in my home – my father – we had a fairly large house, nothing like my grandfather's, but it had a porch. My father ordered the Passover things for all of the people in Aberdeen, including the surrounding small towns and farms. It would arrive early. This was during – some of it was during the time of Prohibition when the Jews had permission – the Rabbis handled the kosher wine, in spite of Prohibition – of none of it being available. As a matter of fact, Dad said there were several people in the town who wanted to talk to him about converting. They wanted to find out about becoming Jewish. And the very second question was, "Now, tell me about that Jewish wine, Rabbi," which is what they wanted to get their hands on. But in our house, it was on the front porch. And Passover was in the Spring, often still very cold in South Dakota. But all of these things would pile up. And the thing, in particular, that I remember was the Passover candies that were so very, very good. Well, certainly, it was the Depression. So everything was considered expensive when people were poor. But we talked yesterday about the beautiful people in Aberdeen. Those special "up-town" people. They always ordered a lot of the Passover candies. I remember the five – again, I talk about the five

of us, even though I know we were later six. We would watch each other to see who was going near the porch because what we would do would be to try to sneak a few pieces of candy, hoping the orders wouldn't be short. My mother never believed in us having candy. As a matter of fact, I'll just tell this as an aside. There was a Gross Family who sent their boy every week on the train to live at our house over the weekend. My father would teach him for his bar mitzvah. They owned a general store – a grocery store. For a gift when he had his bar mitzvah, they sent a huge crate of every kind of candy imaginable. Hershey bars and little silver kisses. I can name the penny candies to this day. They were also beautiful. My mother gave them all to the woman across the way that would light the fire and keep the furnace going for Shabbat. Because she considered that the candy would be bad for us. She was a little bit ahead of her time and knew about a good diet. We had coleslaw every Monday while she was doing the ironing. Later, we discovered coleslaw prevented scurvy. We never had candy, so we felt quite deprived. But I do remember the Passover candy like yesterday. The same smell. I think that's when I realized when the “shtiebel” door was open in Grand Forks, a generation earlier with my grandmother that – to poke my head in, and then, I realized what I was in. I have never seen anything like it or heard anything like it again. But I suspect that families in Europe must have done it. My grandmother's father was a leather merchant who made things for horses and whips and clothing. So, they must have been considered well-to-do. Whether she was a snob or not, I don't know. In a way, I think she must have been because my mother was a kind of a snob and, in the same sense, with less reason to be. But also, maybe because they both were so close-mouthed, they gave the impression of snobbishness. It must have been very hard to be a rabbi's wife. You couldn't confide in anybody without worrying about the story being told all over town. And both Mother and, certainly, my grandmother, from what Harry Ash tells me, never did anything even to answer the door. She just went and hid. My grandfather handled it all. Mother never had a washing machine until we were all older. She did the washing in boiled water on the stove. I remember for baths, my father

carrying pails of hot, very hot water up the steps to the bathroom for us to have baths. I look now, and I think everything we have is so handy, and we're always inventing newer and newer stuff. And here was Mother with six kids. And then Dad was away for several weeks and in Chicago with me. She must have had to carry these pails up herself. Because everybody was younger than I, so none of the boys could have helped her. It must have been a very hard life. But I never heard mother complain about it. She was a teacher in, I think, Wishnick, North Dakota. She and her sister, and a cousin, the same age – all taught in towns where my grandfather liked the farmers and where he left kosher dishes in their homes to use. He stayed there also when he went around to do the same thing. Very interesting how planned it was, this circuit-riding kind of business and keeping the Jews Jewish. There were a number of North Dakota Jews who lived in Seattle. One of the things that happened with me and my husband was – when people heard that we were Rabbi Papermaster's grandchildren, they just literally fell on the floor. That man had such an impact.

RB: Is that right?

MR: In terms of controlling the lives – and this would be someone that he had done the circumcision for earlier – and they remembered his name. And then, when this book was written – and Mrs. Calof's notes – and he was in that. He was very interesting to see. I regret very much – I'm glad you're starting young on the oral histories and on collecting information because I wish I had. As rabbi's children, in our generation, we were aware of how limited we were. We couldn't go to the sports things on Friday night. We never had a car. And so we didn't ride or drive in any case. What I didn't appreciate was that my father would walk us to parties and everywhere. And, in Aberdeen, we had twenty below zero weather very often. It was exceedingly cold. If someone would say there was a party from seven to nine, at nine o'clock, promptly he was there to call. It was mostly me – I was very embarrassed and angry. Because the other kids were still there. But as I tell my grandchildren the story now, what I know is that they cared for us. It was

a terrible thing at the time, and you really wanted to “ray-gun” them. If Buck Rogers had been real, we would have “melted” my parents out of embarrassment.

RB: Well, I'm wondering if you consider either your grandmother, your mother, or both role models?

MR: No. Because mostly I was critical of them and embarrassed. I certainly didn't appreciate – when I think how Mother now – when I was in college. I mentioned yesterday that the doctor who had done my hands was going to do my face, and he was killed in an auto accident. When I was at the university, someone mentioned that a plastic surgeon at the University of Minnesota was interested and would try to work on the scars on my face. When I had it done – my parents lived in Minneapolis, as I said, by that time. I remember waking up from the anesthetic, and Mother was there. I remember thinking how very sad she looked. She never did anything like – of course, by then, I was older. I had to prepare myself. But even young I never went through this thing of the preparation for surgery. But some years ago, when Betsy was small, people would call me to ask if I would talk with their family because one of their children was burned, either in an accident bending over the stove, trying to make breakfast when everybody was asleep, or something. The thing I remember differently was that there was so much preparation for this kid – psychologists and parents were talked to, and everybody was brought in, and hoopla. I had none of that. It had to be done. I went to Chicago, and I knew I was going to have – I didn't know how many operations. I don't know if they knew. But it was just all because it had to be done. I think that there's much to be said for that. I think we do – when I see people with their children now – there are all these little things – we don't take tonsils out anymore. We did more so earlier. But maybe we haven't come a long way in this much preparation. Because we really raise questions, I think, in the children's minds – why such a big deal about this, and not about something else? I remember, as I talk with a few of these families – and the burn things – when the psychologists came in, or there's the hoopla. And they had games, and dolls and

whatnot. Essentially, the thing came down to – it's a tough deal. It's got to be done. It's for your sake. And away we go. But this was not done. It was a big change. And yet, I do remember waking up thinking that maybe tomorrow that maybe it was a dream and tomorrow I would wake up, and it wouldn't be true with my hands. But my hands – they made little aluminum splints. I wish I had saved it because I think it was the earliest material used for early airplanes. They had heavy aluminum. My hands were splinted with a leather piece on each finger. I would wear it. I guess the only reason I remember it so vividly is that in the children's ward – there must have been Ladies Aid Societies or something – making clothes for the children, and some of them were very pretty and very cute. But because these splints wouldn't go through the sleeves, there were two kinds of ugly dresses. They must have been old. The sleeves were split so that I could get my splinted hands in. So I never had pretty clothes. I do remember that, in order to get the splints – and they splinted just one hand at a time. Because that was a plan that my grandfather okayed. That they should do the left hand first and see how it came out because I was right-handed. And he sent his youngest daughter, my Aunt Hazel, whom I haven't talked about. She was, by then, the only one in the family with a master's. She had gone on to graduate school because she was left home when the other nine were on their way already. Aunt Hazel was chasing after a man, a medical student who was interning in Chicago.

RB: [laughter]

MR: So they decided she would be sent to Chicago to check on my surgery, and just by the by, happened to be in Chicago, and he was there. I do remember she was the quintessential flapper with the clothes with the ruffles and the beautiful clothes, and giggly over this man. I remember the kind of thing that we had with the clothes. Because she took me home from Chicago and out of the Pittel's house. I told you that I went to the Pittel's at the tail end. I went to her hotel, which I thought was the fanciest living. I guess I'm the one who had the most taste for “uptown living.” Because we would go out,

and I remember she ordered “Cherry Cokes” or “Lemon Cokes.” That seemed so fancy to me. To this day, if I have one, I think back so many years now, seventy-two-years, ugh. I do remember it. This woman, Aunt Hazel, was very important to me, partly because I thought she was so fancy, and she had money to buy – we sat in these chocolate shops and these ice cream shops – things that my family, of course, could never afford to do. We did live through the brunt of the Depression. Aberdeen was a banking town. The farmers who lost their farms – most of whom did – did you ever read Grapes of Wrath? Well, we were with the tumbleweed sticking to our stockings. We were the heart of that. The farmers who came into Aberdeen and their children came into our school. I remember, and I'm ashamed when I think of it – their children would be called out of class in the middle of the morning and get graham crackers and milk because they didn't have enough to eat. They were so skinny. And I remember envying them. And wish I could get – they had blue stamps, which they would turn in. When you think about how horrible that was – in labeling, and all I wished was that I could get my hands on a couple of blue stamps. [laughter] I think about it now, and I am so ashamed.

[Recording paused.]

MR: But it was quite wonderful when you think the community did that. I think we do wonderful things today, too, in many ways. I suspect we still look down on the same kinds of things in terms of our kids looking down on other kids. But I do remember being ashamed of myself, on the one hand, for these interlopers who came into our town and into our schools. We're hearing that – we certainly hear it in California with the refugees or even in our town with the refugees. So, history repeats itself. And it's been very interesting.

RB: One thing that I've noticed as I'm listening to you is that on the one hand, that the women in the family – they had to deal with very powerful, charismatic rabbi father figures. At the same time, education was very important for women in the family. So,

you had an aunt that went on to receive a master's degree, and, as you mentioned earlier –

MR: And the others were all teachers.

RB: Yes.

MR: And went to school. My mother was unusual because my grandfather had her go to Talmud Torah with the boys. Usually, it was just the girls who were home.

RB: Yes.

MR: I tried to think about that, that it was unusual, and whether she was – and she must have been a good student. She was a smart lady. But there was an older brother. When I think about – oh, who was that singer? Yentl? "If I were to be a boy" – because girls didn't get an education. I thought about how Mother went to Talmud Torah. And then, many years later, I remember in the congregation, when they didn't have a Hebrew teacher, Mother substituted. She was very nervous about it. But the point is that she had known and had gone to school, which, at her age, when she was young, was unusual. Or at least my grandfather wouldn't have – the other Aunt Zelda did not go to Talmud Torah. Zelda was only two years younger than Mother. They came along pretty much like we did, kind of like boom-boom-boom, too, in ages.

RB: It sounds as though the expectation was that women could and should continue their education.

MR: Yes, I don't think – my grandfather believed very much in the "Dream of America." He must have given my father, who was his son-in-law, a lecture on it. Because my dad was very busy. I remember he believed in this that you should have a second profession. He wanted my brother farmed out to a shoemaker, I guess, because they had lived through the Depression. If times were hard, they could be a shoemaker,

besides just a college graduate. This must have all been motivated by that dream of America. On the other hand, Malcolm went through a particular trauma – because I talked yesterday about the Volga Germans and their kids were – they had earlier been put up to it. I think the priest was as much of a motivating factor as their parents. They had been threatening Malcolm to cut off his ears, and he'd keep promising them a quarter – we didn't know about it for years. One day, when we were going to the movies, the Rabbi's children got into the movies for free – as did all of the minister's children. Every Shabbat afternoon, we would get to go. There were these Tom Mix movies and names that probably you don't know, but very important. Every week, they would be a part of it. And my father, who I mentioned to you, believed that calamity was around every corner, [and] wouldn't let us go unless we had a fire drill every week. There were only two movie houses. So you can imagine how many fire drills we had every week. And the kids in the movies already would groan. Today, I think they would shoot us, and they'd probably have hand-guns and do us in. But you'd hear, "Oh, the Hardins are here." Because Dad would walk us to the movie, come in with us, and then say, “Now, Malcolm, you will go out that door with Byron. And Mildred, you will take Sam out this door.” To this day, I still see every exit in a building. I'm not aware of it. But I don't come into anyplace new that I don't notice where the exits are; we were that well trained on fire drills. And later in Montreal, when I lived there with my husband for a year, and then, went back two more years from New York in the summer – directing the children's camp. The first thing I did – they hadn't had a fire drill from the camp before, but I instituted that. They had to be able to empty the dining room or wherever we were in minutes. And yes, I'm very much hooked on safety. And I can thank my father for that.

RB: What lessons did you learn from your grandmother and mother?

MR: Well, from my grandmother, I didn't really learn any lessons because the relationship was one – she would come twice a year to Aberdeen. My grandparents came. We were very embarrassed because they always visited school. They would

come to each of our rooms. My grandfather had a beard. One kid looked out the window and said, “Here comes Santa Claus.” That was my grandfather, and I died of embarrassment. But the point is, they had an interest. And then, invariably, the teachers would call on us, so we would show off to our grandparents what we knew. We mostly forgot what we knew because we'd be so embarrassed. But I don't think that anyone else's grandparents ever visited school like that. And they were visitors to the town. We went there for special things like weddings and stuff. But us kids were left in my grandparents' house with a sitter. We didn't go to things. We weren't part of family things. I think the rest of the family – there were a lot of relatives in Grand Forks, North Dakota. I think when we came, land values went down. People who didn't have to be in town left because the noise was so great from our family. We all had loud voices and hollered a lot. So I don't remember being really part of these things. And my grandmother was just – as I said, I thought she was muttering to herself. But mostly, she was talking. She did talk to my mother. She must have felt bad seeing her daughter have to work so hard. I've never saw my grandmother help. I never saw her even make a bed, let alone pick up a dust cloth. She would be very upset that my mother would be on her hands and knees scrubbing the kitchen floor. But I never saw her help. I tried to put her together after reading your notes – your questions. I realized that coming from a rich family where she probably didn't do anything in Lithuania at all, and she must have been thinking, “If my parents could see me now, how sad they'd be.” I mean, many of these stories of this kind of – and if they'd know educationally – it's a reverse, where the daughter has married a rich man and raised herself. So I can't an answer on that. I can answer for my mother. I think Mother didn't even have time to be sad. I could never talk to her. Aunt Zelda married a rich man and lived rich. And raised her kids. They went to a fancy girls' college and away from home. They treated us snobbily. Aunt Zelda would come to visit, and she would always give lectures. She also never lifted a dust cloth or anything to help. My brother beneath me, Byron, it turns out he was really just a very gifted person. He was sick one day at home. I had been taking piano lessons, partly

because my folks wanted me to keep using my hands, so I took over a year's lessons. He was home sick one day. Mother's plan was that each of us would play a different instrument. She thought she'd have an orchestra in her family. So she gave Byron a few little pointers on the piano. In nothing flat, in minutes, he went through the whole two years of my work. He ended up being a student of Rudolf Serkin's at Curtis School of Music in Philadelphia. Unfortunately, during the war, he had to be in the Army. But, when the Battle of the Bulge – when America was doing badly in Europe – instead of going to England to be trained, they sent the boat directly over toward Germany, and he was captured. His whole unit was captured by the Germans [within] fifteen minutes of landing. His knuckles were broken when they – he was trying to keep his hands moving just on the bedstead and so on. He didn't go back to piano. Instead, he became a plastic surgeon, which I think is kind of funny. Because it's still his hands.

RB: Yes.

MR: I remember I was away. My sister told me this story. I think this shows the caliber of my mother. Only my youngest sister, Beryl, who I consider my child, was at home. The rest of us were all away. My sister tells that the doorbell rang. It was a telegram from the Government, regretting to inform them that their son Byron was missing in action. Beryl was getting ready to go to school. She was about six or seven. Adele tells me that Mother didn't say a word. Didn't say anything. Just put the telegram away in her pocket, got Beryl off to school, and then, she sat down and said, very sadly, "The light of my life is gone." Because Byron had already – was on his way with so many honors and so many things. But she didn't go to pieces. When she read it, she didn't start to cry. She wasn't going to make a problem for Beryl. And I think it shows a lot of caliber of this woman. Fortunately, in some ways, Byron escaped from the prison camp at one point. He didn't know the war was over. There was another musician in the group. A violin student from Cleveland, Ohio. He decided to save him. Took him with him, although the boy was already becoming mentally ill from the treatment. They were hiding out. They

went toward Russia. Because Byron said when they were taken prisoner, the Russians were moving faster than the Americans. They were hiding in Czechoslovakia in a haystack when the Russians found them. The war was already over. My parents had gotten this missing-in-action telegram – no other news. But the Russians turned him over to the Americans. My brother had lost ninety pounds in the prison camp. The Americans fattened him up enough to put him on the boat. They talked to my brother. It was very interesting. The other boy was already in pretty bad shape. They talked to my brother about, “When you get back to America, people are going to ask you all kinds of things, and you want to be careful what you say because, superficially, it sounds very bad.” In other words, we were already starting – there was a wonderful song in World War I – "Let's Not Be Beastly to the Germans" – and this could have been the same song in World War II. They were already talking to him about – “Don't repeat these stories. Because it looks terrible.” But it really wasn't. In other words, we were already starting to cover over – and this was before knowing about the Holocaust. This is just strictly in terms of “muzzling” an American soldier. Byron did have the names of the Americans with him in the camp. What happened when they were taken within the first fifteen minutes – because their Lieutenant didn't know what the German uniform looked like. He said they were in a church. He said, “Does anyone know what the German uniform looks like?” And Byron looked out and saw spikes on the helmets, and said, “Well I know in World War I they had spikes on their helmets. That must be Germans.” The Lieutenant said, “Well we're supposed to get reinforcements very soon. They may be Americans. We'll wait.” And in that little bit of wait, the Germans took over, and they had 365 boys – Bud said one for every day of the year – captured in minutes. He was just very bitter about the Lieutenant, the Army, the everything. It turned out that when the Lieutenant was taken away – the officers – and also Jewish kids were picked out by their names. His name was Hardin. As they were following the Germans, once they were captured, he put his dog tag under the water, when they went through the river, so he didn't have – that's why they couldn't identify who, or where anything that he was. Some of the people

knew because they had their dog tags. But if the American soldier had a Jewish dog tag, they separated that soldier, and he wasn't heard of again.

RB: Wow. I wanted to ask you how – the effects of the war and Holocaust – what effects those had on you.

MR: I was already into book reviewing. I felt, early on, as this information came out. I remember the first book was House of Dolls. I don't even know if it can be gotten today. It was a powerful book written by a woman who was a beautiful Jewish girl who was picked by Hitler. They took the Jewish ones when they were in the camp, those that were pretty, and put them in what they called the (Feld Corps?), the Prostitution Corps, and they were prostitutes for German Soldiers. Instead of a number on the arm, they had a number and a heart tattooed on their chest, which was all the more unkind. She was one of these with this number. Her book was House of Dolls. And I decided that – I felt very guilty that we were here, and so many of the European Jews were there. And that what I could do is review as many of these things that came out as possible and bring the news. So, when I started reviewing for Jewish groups – anything – that group was the first. There was a wonderful book written by a Jewish newspaperman, I think from Germany, by Donat – D-O-N-A-T. I did his book. I wanted to bring all of this information to our people here. And so, I was very much caught up in it. I should tell a little bit about how I started to do book reviews. Because that was a story. I had always been interested in reading and talking, as you know. But I got a call one day from Hadassah. Hadassah always had a book review tea on a Shabbat once a year. It was very fancy and one of the big Seward Park Houses. And I got a call from a Minnie Bergman. Mrs. Bergman asked if I would do the book review for Hadassah next week or the week after because their book reviewer was on a boat that got beached near Hawaii or something on the way – but whatever it was, she wasn't going to make it, and they had this big tea coming. But I said, “It was nice of you to call, but I'm not a book reviewer.” She said, “But you read so much. And would you just tell about it?” I had just been

reading a book by Molly Lyons Bar-David, who wrote a column every month in the Hadassah newspaper called "Diary of a Jerusalem Housewife." She was a wonderful writer. She and her family had gone very early to Palestine. And lived through the '47 War – and it was most moving. She wrote this book about Jerusalem, My Promised Land. It was extremely important. I'd like to re-review it now because so many things now are so similar. And I thought – well, I'll just tell about it. So, I went to the tea and told about Molly Lyons' book. After that, I kept being asked, and I liked it. I chose books of social significance that could be talked about. I never like to tell people a whole book so they think they don't have to read it. I like them to listen. I have questions about the book. I want to know what they think. They don't have to agree with me. And it's been extremely interesting. Very rewarding. Unfortunately, my vision now is very poor, and it is extremely hard. I no longer can read a book a night, which I used to read and do the book reviews that I enjoyed so much. I also used it to launch current events' discussions. I like political discussions. That's mostly what I had been doing. And that's the way that I've kind of ended my life as a book reviewer and political discussion leader.

RB: That's very fascinating because I had asked how the war impacted you, the effects of it.

MR: Yes, I was very much involved with all of these things.

RB: Yes, yes.

MR: Of course, mostly because I was thinking about them and felt touched by them all the time. We took a child during the Vietnam War in Seattle. Two children were brought here for surgery. Two Vietnamese children that we were told were burnt by napalm which turned out not to be true. Not that their burns were not bad. But I felt used because this was – I felt my team – these were peace people. And we took the girl because they said her hands were burned by napalm. She had run through a trench that had caught on fire and was very badly burned. She stayed with us. But my heroes

became people with feet of clay. And we were upset because we didn't want to lie. It was an ethical question. We did not want it to stand that she was burned by napalm when she was not. That was to embarrass the American Government. We were the only ones with napalm – if you know a little of history – you probably don't; you're too young.

RB: Well, actually, it might be helpful for the historical record if you wanted to describe bits of it.

MR: Okay.

RB: So that it's for the record.

MR: Excuse me for just a minute.

RB: Sure.

MR: And I'll start there.

[Recording paused.]

MR: When we heard that Seattle was getting two children from Vietnam, we didn't think about the fact whether this was a good idea to bring them here. Later I have rethought, and I thought we – there was a girl and a boy, and the girl was with us. They were brought by a woman who was sort of quasi-governmental. She was a nurse/social worker, it turns out on the oil fields at Nhabe – N-H-A-B-E – outside of Saigon. We didn't realize there were oil fields. A lot of things became clear to us in terms of what America was doing there. We seem to follow oil.

RB: How did you know about this?

MR: We read in the paper that they were coming.

RB: I see.

MR: We called, and it was a very bad experience with the Committee. This was a "Peacenik Committee" that we thought was our team. We had a very good experience with the plastic surgeon whom we were allowed to choose. We chose Dr. (Blue?) for whom we had a lot of respect. But he was very much for the war. At one point, when we talked, I had to tell him – he and I had to agree to disagree, so we wouldn't get off into the politics. Miss Pha, P-H-A, the woman who brought the two children, was – well, I'll just tell briefly. When we were at the airport, no plans had been made for her. I asked what was going to happen to her, and they said, "Oh, do you want to take her?" And I said, "Well, no, she's going back to Vietnam, and we're going to be left with this little girl." They told us she was twelve. We wanted her to learn enough English so that we could communicate. But I ended up taking Miss Pha home because there were no plans made for her. I should have had my suspicions about this committee, that it had only political motives. They wanted to embarrass the American Government. Harold, my husband, made it quite clear that we would volunteer to take a child, but we wanted absolutely no publicity, and our names should not mentioned. Our daughter was in high school, growing up herself, and we didn't want her to be tarred with our politics. People felt very strongly at that point. We no sooner got back that I got a call from one of the committee [members] that the Seattle Times, I believe, was on its way over to interview, and so on. I said, "Mm-hmm." "Well, they're on their way. And we can't stop them." I said, "Well, you better have people on the four corners of our house because we are just giving the child back." The answer was very definite about that. Well, then they had the interview at the house of the other family who really took the boy out of the goodness of their hearts. They had no political interest at all. It was quite interesting. We lived near each other, as it turned out, but we totally came at this from different points of view. And from that point on, I began to realize that we were going to have to contend with the committee that we didn't approve of – and we worse than not approve, we were sad because it seemed to be on our side. Miss Pha, the interpreter, was quite an unusual woman. We did have to tell her since she was around our house a lot – since she was Catholic, I

made arrangements for her to stay with the sisters at Villa Academy, a Catholic school in Laurelhurst. She had thought of becoming a nun herself. It was quite near and right across from the hospital. It was a very good set-up. But we had to tell her that we were against the war which, I think, made her uncomfortable at first, but she respected us because we didn't want to talk in code with people that were calling since she knew English. She went back after three months. It was sad to see her go. We tried to tell her that we would like to leave a ticket at Northwest Airlines, that she could always call on [us] because we felt that she should get out. But she told us that she couldn't leave, that she had nephews there and that she wouldn't leave them. Very wonderful woman. The interesting thing is that once she got back, she obviously re-thought a lot of things. Because we discovered – and I have saved all of her letters – we discovered that every letter that had a return address on it was just kind of social, telling about her, about Vietnam, and so on. Every letter without a return address that came to us was a political letter, telling that she understood why – because the Cambodian incursion had taken place. And Nixon bombed Cambodia when we were told no way would we go near there. We were terribly upset at my house. She wrote, and that was the first sign, I think, that she said that she understood us on Cambodia. I wasn't quite sure, but we corresponded a lot and then lost touch with her. We were sending her money which was very hard because the Vietnamese Government took at least seventy-five percent of it. But, recently, about a few years ago, a Seattle family went and looked her up and brought her some money. Unfortunately, somebody in the compound there sat in on the discussion. She said to tell us that she didn't know us and she didn't want further contact. We don't know what happened to her, and we're very sad about that.

RB: What committee were you working with, exactly?

MR: It was called CALCAV, Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam. We weren't working with them so much as we always sent money. We tried to support things that we thought were worthwhile. Unfortunately, today, I'm sad about so many things that I can

no longer support. Some good ones exist now that are new.

RB: How long did this child stay with you?

MR: Well, she stayed six months because they wanted to make a big political publicity issue with her, and we wouldn't allow it. They simply said they were taking her away. It was very sad. It was very sad for her, very sad for us, and for our daughter. We found the ugly politics of our own side. The Berrigans – Father Berrigan – my husband and I thought were at least saints there in New York. And yet, I think about it – they're the ones that invented that idea of the war protestors pouring cows' blood on the draft records in New York. Like we told Betsy afterwards – Betsy was very upset when they took Yen away. She also turned out to be much older than they told us. Instead of twelve, she was about the same age as Betsy in high school. She was given too much anesthetic. As a result, every time that she had surgery – we did learn and meet the Vietnamese Community. They all came out for the first surgery – all of a sudden, all of these people were at Children's Hospital. They all came home with me and Harold afterward, and I had to wrestle up a dinner out of 'Nam – I know almost nothing. But wonderful, wonderful people. And very devoted. We are still friendly with many of them today and keep track of each other. At the same time now, David is from China – from Hong Kong. He was one of the Chinese boys with us. And they would take in this Vietnam girl oriental food and so on.

RB: And how would you spell her name?

MR: Y-E-N.

RB: Okay. Now, you mentioned David. He called just a few minutes ago to say hello. I was struck by that. I remembered you have a whole life of –

MR: Forty-two students lived with us –

RB: Could you just –

MR: From different countries.

RB: Could you describe that?

MR: Yes, that started, interestingly enough – I told you about my brother who was a piano student of Rudolf Serkin at Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. Well, one day, somebody from the Music Department at the University of Washington called me that there was a Chinese girl – a Formosan. At that point, we pretended there was no China – Taiwan was China. The girl named Agnes had been a student at a Bible college where the freeway is now. She had come to the Bible college thinking she could major in piano. She got here to discover that there was not even a piano and that the teacher was an old missionary who played the organ down in the basement. Agnes had bought Seventeen Magazine to know the right lipsticks and the right everything to be American. And they told her no make-up, no movies, no dances. She was in this fundamentalist training school. Very miserable. And here she had come as a piano major. So, she got herself to the university. It's very interesting. She talked to people in the Music Department who said they would give her a scholarship to the university, but that she'd have to find her own place to live, and she had no money. So, somebody remembered about my brother, and they called and thought we would take her. I thought, when they called – I figured you'd have to be crazy to take a piano major into your house.

RB: [laughter]

MR: The practicing all the time. So I said, “No way.” And then I hung up and started to think, “But if we don't take her, who will?” Back to Mrs. Pittel. We knew what a piano major needed. We didn't have a piano. But I said, “We'll go to the university and meet her, and then maybe we'll know somebody that would be good with her. We'll farm her out.” So, we went to the university, and there was this pathetic little, tiny girl out there

who knew almost no English, just kind of hiding there. I thought, “I can't give her to anybody. We have to take her.” We took her home, and we rented a piano. And God was with us. We put the piano in the unfinished basement so that she would have privacy. Her room was upstairs with us. What we didn't know is that she had only modest talent.

RB: [laughter] Oh, no.

MR: She was a continuous practicer. She practiced all the time. She was at the piano most of the time when she wasn't in school. Harold took her to and from the university, and I did the cooking, her laundry, and so on. But what she saw one day – she would get up early in the morning and put the same things on the table. She was helpful, most amazing, and I didn't expect it. Having her in the house with Betsy, who was then about two, was as if I were there all the time. Harold and I went to every lecture, every play, every concert – anything to get out of the house. People must have thought we hated our child. But we didn't want to say anything. It just killed me – the wrong notes. She was studying with Professor Geismar, who was from the Old School German. Agnes was terrified of this woman. I remember having Miss Geismar over for dinner, thinking that I'd lighten things up and explain to her about Agnes. That was even worse. But it started us hosting foreign students. She sent us her brother, whose fiancée was the daughter of the mayor of Taipei. Then another brother, and little by little, the Chinese, the Taiwanese Counsel used to call us about students. And then, I thought, “Well, this is silly. We don't want to get deported to Taiwan if we do anything wrong.” So we branched out and started taking students from other countries. Over the years, we've had forty-two students get their degrees and be part of our family.

RB: That's amazing.

MR: Our Chinese child, who was born in our house, was sent from Formosa to Betsy and Jason's wedding to represent the family. Two of the Chinese, one from Malaysia and

David from Hong Kong came to my husband's funeral. On one day's notice, they just packed up and came. They are very much part of our family.

RB: What were the rewards and challenges?

MR: Well, the challenges were [laughter] that we went through a lot of problems. We had to have a shotgun wedding for one of our students. One of the fathers, who was worried that his son wouldn't come back to Formosa after he got his Ph.D. – a brilliant son – wanted to get the contract for putting a tunnel through the mountain in Formosa, and his son would do it as a mechanical engineer. He wanted us to buy a million dollars' worth of dynamite for him. I knew nothing about dynamite. But I called. I remember calling Dupont and wanting to order dynamite. And they asked, "What kind?" And I didn't know that there was more than one kind. Anyway, I learned [about] that. He didn't get the contract. That was a new experience.

RB: [laughter]

MR: There were a lot of new experiences. But as I said, wonderful families – well, a couple of Jewish boys. A French girl, who actually, we would consider not Jewish, her mother was Alsatian. Her father was an Algerian Jew, living in France. She was born there. Well, we have contact with almost all of our students still, and a Jewish boy from Mexico. His father was originally from Lithuania. That was another experience. But Betsy always said she wasn't an only child. She had all of these brothers and sisters. And now, she and her husband take in foreign students and have done a wonderful job.

RB: That's great.

MR: And we're very proud of our daughter. She has done so many things. When she went to Russia with the Amherst Group, she was Russian-speaking. One other girl from Smith went along. She went because she wanted to take Hebrew and Jewish material for the beleaguered Jews by pretending that she wasn't Jewish. She made contact. To

this day, still with most of the people that she was with – the Refusniks, those who were refused permission to leave because they wanted to go to Israel – got out. She saw them in Israel when she was a junior, greeted several of them at the plane, and is still in touch. When Sharansky spoke here, and his wife came, she was the interpreter because she had known Sharansky in Russia. She's done some wonderful things and very much taking chances in her own way.

RB: It's incredible to see how the theme of caring for others in need has really passed on through the generations in your family.

MR: But I think it does to all Jews. I think we have an obligation. Because each Jew is responsible for another. As I said, we are extremely proud of Betsy and that she has done a – she was unique for a while because she was fluent in Russian. When the Russian refugees came here, they loved her because they could tell her what their daughters-in-law did wrong and who looked at them cross-eyed and could do all that in Russian. She was young, so they didn't have to worry that it would be spread about. She worked with the Russians in Kline Galland in the day center until last year, or the year before, when they asked her to be a social worker, and with mostly the Alzheimer's [patients] and those who were not quite with it. She's very good at that, and she likes it. We're extremely proud of her. She's quite a good gal.

RB: I can imagine. She has two children?

MR: She has two daughters, twins, identical twins. Same face. Same voice. Same talents.

RB: And what are their names?

MR: Amanda and Ariel. A-R-I-E-L. I think they both have the potential for being artists, which their grandfather was, as well as a linguist, which their mother is too. She knows many languages. She worked with the Russian immigrants in Italy and came back

speaking Italian, as well as the French she learned in high school. Russian, she learned in college. And Hebrew she learned in Israel. Yiddish she studied at Amherst to try to be able to speak to the Russian Jews when she went to Russia. She had hoped to talk to the older ones about whether life was better under the Czar than under the new regime. As I said, we have a lot of “naches” [pride]. But we have had a very interesting life. I feel extremely grateful. I can think about the downs in my life, too, and there are days when I can be down about it. But, by and large, I have to remember that I was very lucky. And had a lot of opportunity. We tried to give as much opportunity as possible to our daughter. We made her go to the National Hadassah Camp against her will in New York. She was attached to Camp Solomon Schechter, which Harold and I helped start – for the Northwest Conservative Jewish kids. Whereas our kids were very nice and Camp Schacter is wonderful on the one hand, there is a kind of sameness to it. We're middle-class, and everybody is attached to each other and knows each other. We wanted her to see the highs and the lows that we saw. So, against her will, she went to camp in Barryville, New York, near Port Jervis with kids from all over the country. She does say that if she hadn't been at Camp Tel Yehudah, she would not have been able to last at Smith College with the Eastern Establishment. Because our kids are not taught to be, or were not, at that point in her age group, competitive with the Easterners. So, we did something right. I was disappointed that she didn't do it with her kids. Her kids did not go – I wish they had gone to Tel Yehudah just to see more. One of her daughters just came back from the summer in Israel working in a kibbutz to help when Israel is so beleaguered and so sad about very few visitors. I was very proud of her for that. As I've said, it's been a wonderful, interesting life. And when you're Jewish, there's a connection that you can't get away from. We really are one people, one family. I hope all of our kids know that. I realize I think I can accept intermarriage because I'd rather have our kids have partners in their lives. Somehow, we can all accept each other as Jews. When you have one-half of your family as non-Jewish, an explanation is necessary. It's not impossible. Tt's not that they're not nice people. But it's not the same thing. I think that

we've got to teach more and more that truly we are one people. We are responsible for each other.

RB: Wow, Mildred. It's been so wonderful talking with you and learning from you.

MR: Thank you. I enjoyed talking with you.

RB: Thank you so much for this time. We really appreciate it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]