Malka Lew Transcript

Rosalind Hinton: This is Rosalind Hinton interviewing Malka Lew at her home at 1302 Broadway in New Orleans, Louisiana. Today is Thursday, October 12th, 2006. I am conducting the interview for the Katrina's Jewish Voices project of the Jewish Women's Archive, and the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life. Malka, do you agree to be interviewed, and understand that the interview will be video recorded?

Malka Lew: Yes.

RH: I'd like to just start out with a little of your background, as far as how you got to be here in New Orleans, and when you came, and a little bit about your family history, here in New Orleans -- and also, both your Jewish education here, and your education in the school systems.

ML: I was born in Houston. My mother was born in New Orleans. She moved to Houston when she married my father, because this is when -- [interruption]

RH: I think we can begin again with, you were just talking about where you were born, and how you came to be in New Orleans, and a little about your family, here in New Orleans.

ML: My mother grew up in New Orleans, and when she married my father, she moved to Houston. We were in Houston until -- that was '41, I was born in '43. The day after I was seven, she had a stroke. The baby, my brother was, probably was 18 months old. There were two in between then, and I had an older sister my mother had from a previous marriage, who was in college in Alabama. And because of the severity of her stroke -- it was her complete left side, and there was no therapy, no treatment at that time in 1950. Her family bought a home here, her father bought a house here for us to come back to

New Orleans so she could get more help. So we moved back here. So this is basically where I grew up.

RH: And you grew up not in an area that was typical of the Jewish community --

ML: No, it was not --

RH: -- which I think of as Broadmoor. You grew up --

ML: We grew up near Napoleon and Magazine and that area. I went to a public school, McDonough #7 which was, we were usually the only Jewish children there. I think sometimes there may have been some others once or twice, once in awhile. And then I went to McMain Junior High School which was, most of the Jewish children went there as a public -- that was the public high school that most of the Jewish children went to. If they didn't go to one of the private schools -- there were a few of them at that time that are -- there were a few other public schools that the children went to that were -- Fourche was like the high school that it fed into. I went to Benjamin Franklin School for the first year of high school, tenth, ninth grade, whatever it was. Yeah. The freshman year. You know, freshman's --

RH: Well, that's OK. Don't worry about those details.

ML: And I went there, and I only went there for one year, and then the next two years I went to Fourche, finished at Fourche and then I went to Newcomb.

RH: And you went to Newcomb College?

ML: Right.

RH: And what was it like to be Jewish in New Orleans in the '40's and '50's when you were growing up?

ML: It was so beautiful. We belonged to Beth Israel. My grandfather had been one of the founders and supporters of it. He was very active there. And we just -- it just was really a beautiful, warm community, there were a lot of families, a lot of big families at that time. Of course, you know, post-World War, there was a baby boom, so a lot of kids, we knew kids in different areas. At that time, the community was in transition moving from one area to the city, you know, as people became more prosperous they were moving up, they were moving out, they were moving out of the old neighborhoods into the uptown area, into Broadmoor, then later on further out, different areas. We went to Beth Israel Sunday School. It was an afternoon Hebrew school, which was twice a week, until early teens. And it was a nice, warm thing. We had big families here, a lot of friends.

RH: Tell me a little about, because you said your sister was one of seven, so you actually --

ML: My mother was one of seven.

RH: Your mother, I'm sorry.

ML: Yeah.

RH: And so, you had a lot of family here in New Orleans --

ML: Right.

RH: And just some of the businesses that your family --

ML: Well, we --

RH: -- was in that you were telling me about earlier, I found very interesting.

ML: My grandfather had come as an immigrant from Hungary into Pennsylvania with his family as a young boy, and he was the eldest. He left home to help as a boy, to help

support the family. And he wound up in New Orleans in this area. He started out selling, buying feathers for the quilts, from farms, and pick up a chair, he got a wagon, and horse would pick up chairs here and there. So this here, that there, and there were relatives in Nashville, and this is where he met my grandmother. She has relatives, she had come over as a teenage girl. Cousins brought her over supposedly to help her learn English, and somehow they were introduced, they got married, and then they moved to New Orleans. And at that time, the antique -- he was one of the ones, in the beginning of the antique business, they were, like, he would buy used furniture pick up here or there in the street, or whatever, from people selling stuff, much has, I guess, the flea markets do now here. And, or there were pawnbrokers, and people were selling off furniture. And he was very good with languages, he was very intelligent, he educated himself. He became one of the primary antique, early antique dealers here. Feldman was well known for importing fine European furniture. And my mother was the youngest of seven children. When she was born in 1910, there were still living above the shop, as they say on Wall Street. He had several shops, he had several properties. He had what was called, in the family they called it the factory, it was a big built place down there, where they hired all sorts of marble workers, and cabinet makers, and upholsterers from Germany, there were Italians, there were Creoles, they were all sorts of trades people like this, this kind of craftspeople, this big operation. They made, furnished, they restored, it was a big industry here at one time.

RH: And so, he hired these different kinds of people, too.

ML: He hired these different kind of people to do this work, and there was oil money in Texas and Oklahoma. There was wide open gambling here in New Orleans, which attracted people with money. So these early antique dealers did very well, as well because people -- for locally, the plantations were selling off -- people would sell their furniture, but also in Europe, there were depressions, there were, people were selling off castles. They would go over there and buy a whole castle full of furniture, a whole

estate, a manor, or whatever, a lot of furniture, a lot of things, artifacts and --

RH: And so, tell me a little bit about, also your husband's name?

ML: Morris.

RH: Morris, and I just found his business fascinating, too.

ML: He came here as a teenager. His mother's father died young in Europe, from tuberculosis and left the grandmother with several young children. Some of the older ones had already been married, and his father and mother married in Europe and went to Argentina because they had -- the grandfather had cousins here who were already in New Orleans, and were helping them to come over. And that was before World War II broke out. And then the war broke out, his parents got stuck in Argentina. They couldn't -- they went to Argentina first, because that's where they could get -- immigrate to, before they were -- they weren't able to get into America. This was in the '30's, early '30, mid-'30's, early '30's, I guess. And when the war broke out, they had papers, they were ready to come to America, and had to wait until after the war. So he came here as a teenager, and he worked for a relative of a relative in a business that specialized in dry goods, which was selling to, basically, the seamen. The ships used to come in for a week or so. There were 30 or 40 seamen. They sold to them, they sold to the longshoremen, because it was close to the riverfront on Canal Street. And from that, he went into wholesale, retail, selling cosmetics, and blue jean, big, a lot of blue jeans became popular in other parts of the country. And when his brothers came out of the service --

RH: Now, you said they sold --

ML: After we got married -- we were married in 1964 -- he became a partner, and we eventually bought out his original, the original owner of the store, Mr. Alec Dressman, who had become like a father to my husband, very, very kind gentleman. And then we

set up -- the younger brother eventually took over this business, the clothing type stuff and cosmetics. His other brother took, we put cigarette and liquor in bond to the seamen, to the ships, and he opened up an electronics business, to specialize 220 electronics and appliances. And that became -- the appliances were good, but what happened with the smaller appliances and electronics is that the manufacturers had been making them with a switch -- it could be 110 or 220, so you did need these things. And originally things like the Toshiba and Panasonic and Sony, these kind of things, sound equipment, and all sorts of cameras, they could buy anywhere. They didn't need a special thing for that, special place to buy. So he went into general ship handling, which is ship supplies, supplied anything needed to the ships. We had a building we had gotten as a warehouse, and set an office in there, and use the warehouse to buy stuff as we needed, and special order things, anything they needed, from toothpicks to cranes for the ship. It did very well --

RH: Fascinating.

RH: -- until we closed.

RH: It's a bit of a story that happens in a port city.

ML: Right, right. New Orleans port, what happened, when Roll-on Roll-off came along, which was invented by a Jewish, was developed by a Jewish architect here, Goldman I think is his name, I don't remember. That cut the shipping industry down tremendously. They didn't need as many longshoremen, there were smaller crews, very small crews on the ship. They didn't need so many people to handle and berth the stuff. And the ships would make a fast turnaround.

RH: So it cut down on the kind of businesses that would service the ships.

ML: Right, right, right. It's still a big port area. People don't realize, the port of Louisiana, of New Orleans, basically goes -- well, until Katrina -- was almost to the mouth

of the river. We'd hear Port Fourchon, which was this, basically this way, which is the mouth of the river, all the way up to Baton Rouge area, because that's the chemical area, and then in between you have where they load the grain, and it is all really one port. It's different ports and different authorities, but this is what the Mississippi River -- and this is what we service, all this area, and down into the Gulf Coast, and into Houston sometimes, the ships went. He traveled all over, into Florida, into Houston.

RH: So, let's go back a little bit, and I'm just curious about your experiences at Newcomb. What did you take at Newcomb, and what did you --

ML: I was a Political Science major. I took it. I had no idea what it was. I had never heard of it before. I was extremely naïve (laughter). I thought I would go to school and major in English, and -- but I didn't want to teach, because this was a little pre-feminism -- feminist movement. But I did want to get out of school and say, what do you want to teach, or how fast can you type, and be at the same levels people who had gone to not as rigorous training, or had not gone to college, not for teaching, but for secretarial-type work. But the idea was, at that time was, you know, you get a job, unless you're terribly talented or driven for some reason, you get a job that you can support yourself with until you get married, or maybe go back to later when your children are gone, you know, are old. It was just a -- it wasn't career-oriented as it is. Now, and I don't think it was for the, most of the boys, either. They just got a Liberal Arts degree, just like people get a business degree today. And along the way I got married, and continued. I graduated from school, and that was --

RH: You continued school and finished --

ML: I continued --

RH: -- even though you were married?

ML: Yeah, yeah. It was odd to get married at that time. I got married along the way, while I was still in school, and the only reason I took Political Science, I got a card that I was qualified to take the Freshman class, I hadn't heard of it, I didn't know the, I wasn't sure of the difference between Republican and Democrat, I said well maybe I'll go if it's interesting. I still don't know the difference between Republican and Democrat, and I don't think they do, either anymore (laughter). But --

RH: It's for different reasons. (laughter)

ML: And then when my children were young, I decided --

RH: Tell me how many children you have.

ML: I have two boys, and they were born in 1970 and '73, and in the early '80's, I -- was it early? No, late at that, because the young one was born in '73, and he was about almost three when I went back to UNO to take classes. I had decided I was going to go to med school. So I finished in Pre-Med. When I started, I had a woman working for me who was excellent, had my mother who was able to help, I had -- it was the days before child -- what do you call it -- daycare. And things disintegrated. My mother got, was more and more unable to help. The woman who was working for me had to stop working. I had other people helping, but things just tapered out. And several things happened with the childcare with the kids. And after a few years, I was ready to go. I took exams. I was invited to Tulane, what's called Second Stage, where you -- they invite you to come in for interviews. I had the papers for that filled out and ready to send it, and I tore them up because of incidents that happened. The kids weren't being watched properly. I just decided it wasn't worth it.

RH: So, what kind of decisions did you make about your kids? Where were they at school, and such as that in their education?

ML: The older one went to Beth Israel nursery for a year, and then at the urging of our dentist, who really was very big on a boy's school that was here, Sam Barth, I just put him in there, which we did. They went from three-year-olds through high school, and --

RH: What school was that?

ML: Sam Barth. It was a boy's school. And I was very pleased with it. I was in school at the time, and I started school around then, and I intended to send him to the day school that opened in 1970, the Hebrew day school, the Lakeshore. But I was so happy with this other school, and the other school, the day school had probably, it kept changing faculty and different, you know. And I just left. I said, well, let's, we'll just keep him here. And then he was there, Perry, the young one, Perry started there as a three-year-old, and Alex was there through second grade. That summer I, we made a decision. The Rabbi at Beth Israel, Rabbi Ben, came and talked, spoke with us. And we had no valid reason for not staying at the day school, really. There was nothing, no reason not to, other than they were happy where they were. So he talked to us, and we agreed to send him to the day school, which we did from that point on.

RH: You're still connected to the day school?

ML: Well, that school closed. The -- that is no more. And now we have, they, well, they had already graduated by the time they closed down, and now that there's the Torah, Hebrew, New Orleans Jewish Day School, Federation-sponsored, and then there's the, my grandchildren go to Touro Academy. So, there are two Jewish-based schools here now.

RH: What do you think of the New Orleans Jewish community? How do you perceive it as, in its relationship to the larger city, and such as that?

ML: Well, I think in early days, many, historically, the early Jews who came here did get into the community. They were merchants and craftspeople, whatever. And a lot of them

were a lot of single, young men who came over who married. They went into small communities, and a lot of -- in the Gulf, you'll find out this all over the South -- they, there was some intermarriage, or there was Jews who were in small communities that eventually got -- their communities died out, because people went away to bigger communities. And I am sitting here in New Orleans. I know that when my mother was growing up, there wasn't a tremendous separation early. But there was a lack of social interaction between the very Reform and the very newcoming, Eastern European immigrants, the more Orthodox. It was, there was not a lot of contact at one time between them. And there were different -- and then eventually, it got to the point where, I know, when I was in high school, everybody went out, yeah, we were friends with everybody. It just didn't seem to be a big factor, because I know for awhile historically it was. And then it seemed that people began to integrate and assimilate more into the community. There was a whole movement, this, not just with the Jewish people, but all ethnic movements, become American in this big melting pot movement -- social -- what do they call it? -- not social halls -- settlement house movements. You know, they came out, no one could speak their native languages, they had to have American names, they had to look like Americans. And this hurt the Jewish community very extremely. I really feel personally --

RH: You think. And do you think the Jewish community --

ML: My mother --

RH: -- in New York --

ML: -- of my mother's generation.

RH: Of your mother's generation.

ML: Because a lot of what was taught and lived at home was seen as old-fashioned, was seen, lived in Europe, or even if they were religious here, it was seen as old-fashioned.

RH: Well, how about with your generation, and you --

ML: My generation's pretty American. It was not really -- I mean, people kept Sabbath were, my age were, I don't know, I don't remember anybody who really did.

RH: Did your family?

ML: No. Well, we -- there were funny kind of things, like we had to be at candlelighting, when mother lit candles on Friday night. We had to be at the table when my father said Kiddush. And, but then, we would go out. I know my mother would fuss at us if we did certain things on Sabbath, like write or use scissors, or things like that. You shouldn't be doing it. But we did it, we should sew, don't sew, it's -- you know, Shabbos, you shouldn't be doing that. But these things weren't kept at home. My father went to work. There was an idea, there was a big pressure, you have to work six, seven days a week, you know, you have this -- for a lot of the businesses that people were in, people came here to America, and if you don't work on Saturday, you don't work. I know many people that, I've heard over the years, the father, the grandfather, would have one job one week, one job the next week. And it was hard to keep up, it was hard. It was a lot of pressure, economic pressure and social pressure, I think, on the families. But by the time we came along, it was just social.

RH: What is the center, now, of your Jewish community for you today?

ML: For me today? Our family is Chabad. We were at Beth Israel. I was very reluctant to leave, but this was a big, huge -- at one time the biggest synagogue here, was Orthodox, it was very -- but it wasn't practiced here. It didn't support people. There was no support of people, really, who practiced fully. Not the children, it was not -- because everybody was doing, off doing American things.

RH: So, tell me what you mean --

ML: It was --

RH: -- when you say practice fully.

ML: Practice fully means you keep the laws of Sabbath, you keep the laws of Kosher, you keep the laws as it should be kept, it's supposed to be, it was very difficult. Extremely difficult. When I began going to shul on Saturday, in the mornings, I was one of the younger people there, and I already had children. I mean, I was in my mid-'30's. There were a few of us 30 to 50, and everybody else was older, 60, 70, 80 years old (laughter), of parents and grandparents of our friends.

RH: Did you live near Beth Israel so you could walk?

ML: We moved there when, in 1971, when our oldest son was a year old, yeah, we wanted to walk. This was before we were religious -- like I said, I wanted, when I got married, my, I thought that when I got married, I would keep Kosher, I would keep, make the Sabbath and all that. But because of the clientele we had, my husband said he didn't know when he would come home, when we could eat, where we had to go out and eat, whatever. We didn't do it.

RH: Can you attribute anything to why? I mean, your wanting to do this is a little different than your friends and neighbors, who are -- what --

ML: Well, a lot of --

RH: -- captured you, your interest in --

ML: I --

RH: -- observance --

ML: A lot of friends that I grew up with did keep, in the older generation to myself, a lot of them, until the men went away to World War II, or to Korea. They went away, and you know, things were lenient. They became more lenient. They didn't keep the way their parents did. I remember a mother of a friend of mine being asked, why did you stop keeping Kosher? And she explained that it was the days the husbands were away at war, they were, had little children, it was hard to get to where the Kosher meat markets were. Maybe they lived in, they moved at different, they, whatever, I don't know. It was difficult, and the meat would be delivered. If you weren't home, you had to, they just delivered on their route. And people stopped doing it. A lot of people would keep Kosher in the home, they'd make the holidays, but they didn't observe the laws fully, and they would eat out, or they'd eat out, like, maybe not, that the food wasn't Kosher, as far as the meat, but they would order fish or salads.

RH: What made you go back to this?

ML: I think I always wanted to, as a child, always did, I enjoyed it. I knew about it. I always say, I was always frum. Frum means religious observant. In my heart, I just didn't do a lot about it. I don't, I'm not sure, a lot of things changed along the way. I had a friend who had, who was very, who had become religious, and I used to go visit her on Sabbath, on Shabbos afternoon, on Saturday, visit with her a lot. And she was instrumental in starting the, a bookstore at Chabad House here. And she asked me to come help out with the bookstore. I started doing that, I became friendly with Bluma Rivkin. Our boys were in school together. We were going, we were, sent the boys to the day school, and I knew, you know, to send them to the day school, we wanted to not send them to school and give them a different message. Although my husband, still, was eating out, and still was not as observant as I was. The observance came slowly and in steps. We'd do this, then that, then the next step, with Kosher, with the Sabbath, whatever. It's just in steps. But through Chabad I became more and more disillusioned with Beth Israel where we were. Our oldest son, when he went away to school, went to a

Yeshiva for a little while, and it didn't work out, wasn't the right place for him. Then he went to a high school in New York, and there was Lubavitch. And when he came home, we wanted to daven, to pray Lubavitch way, where we would come uptown and stay with friends in this area, and particularly the holidays. And then I began going to the Jewish women's thing, the Lubavitch conventions and different events. And I said this, Hasidic way of life is what I wanted. It was right, it was, it seemed the right, the best way for me, or for anyone, really. It was very, people think Hassidic, oh, yeah, dah dah dah dah dah, joy, joy, joy, foolishness. But it's not, it's foolish, it's not foolish but the fun, joyous aspects, which joy is a very big part of it. But it's very intellectual also. And that appealed to me, and meeting the Lubavitcher Rebbe really, over the years, seeing that all kind of people, it wasn't just one type of person. I thought when we sent the kids, one reason we didn't want to send them to day school, originally, because we had such a cosmopolitan group of people through business that we were social with, through all walks of life, from all over the world, that everybody would be the same, narrow way. And it wasn't a narrow way of life at all. I found it was a very, that the women, Jewish women, are very powerful, not subservient as the way depicted. There was a journalist, Liz Harris, for the New York Times, who wrote a book. She did a series of interviews with a family in Crown Heights, and she realized, you know, if she'd use especially, not all chained to the chicken pot -- soup pot (laughter). They were running barefoot and having children. Lubavitch women, I found, were very well-respected within the community. The Lubavitch Rebbe particularly promoted the women, he gave a lot of respect to them, very, very, extremely intelligent women, very learned, that it was just very, very personally touched. The first convention that I went to was a year after the Rebbitzin and the Rebbe's wife had passed away, and I just was impressed. I saw people said, you know, are you going to New York? You've got to get special clothes, you've got to dress nicely in fashion. I said, no, I said, I realize that you could see women in the latest designer clothes, the most expensive things you can imagine, down to people who borrowed, bargained thrift shop clothes from their friends to come, and from all walks of

life. And it's, everyone's the same, everyone's treated the same, and respected the same. And I think this really appealed to me.

RH: Well, I appreciate you kind of establishing who you are, before we get into the Katrina story, and I feel you've done a beautiful job with that. And so, I think that kind of sets the stage, so, to kind of say, now let's look at Katrina, and tell me when you first realized you had to do something about Katrina, and when you were first thinking about it?

ML: Well, we checked the news, of course, and right before Sabbath came in before, everything was fine, it was going towards the east. It wasn't coming this way at all. It's just like Betsy. It changed overnight. So, Saturday I -- it was Shabbos -- I didn't go, I couldn't go out. I was still on a gastric tube. I had had surgery.

RH: Oh, explain that.

ML: Oh, let's back up a little.

RH: (laughter) That might be an important --

ML: Let's back up to that. I had a cancer in my jawbone, which was diagnosed in the beginning of the summer, end of May, beginning of June. And I had been, gone to the hospital for surgery on July 27th, to have that. And I had just been home for a few, like a week and a half. The only outings I had gone was to the doctor. I think once I ran out of the car to run into Walgreen's to pick up a prescription. But I was basically sitting, because I had a tube, and I had to keep pouring the food in four times a day, and the medicine, and the liquids, and everything went through the tube. It was pretty time-consuming. And I had just begun to move around the house a little, and do a few loads of laundry, to run the dishwasher. And then, after the grandchildren were over to visit -- I didn't go out that day. I was sick. My stomach was very bad from medication I was taking. And as soon as Sabbath was over, I put on the machine to check the news,

because somebody said that they heard that the hurricane may be coming this way. That was the rumor in school that day. And we did not -- we had looked out, and Newcomb students, the Tulane students, were all over the place. And when I looked out in the afternoon, they hadn't left, I see all the cars. And I thought, we'll see what happens after. And my husband went to take the grandchildren -- well, I had called the doctor because of stomach troubles, and they changed my prescription. He took the grandchildren who were here playing home, and he went to Walgreen's to get medicine. And by the time he came back I said, we gotta go, gotta pack up and go. He said, no, it's not that, I'm going to sleep, your medicine's not going to be, they told me to come back in four hours. This was at 10:00. He says, I'll go get your medicine in the morning, don't worry about it. He has his truck basically loaded. He had some things to pick up. He had to make a delivery to Houston that day. That Sunday he was going to bring stuff to a ship. He had some stuff, and he had to go pick up the provisions, the food stuffs at the wholesalers Sunday morning. So, I kept listening to the news, and checking things, and back and forth with my daughter-in-law, and we'd say we had to go. So, I would pack a little bit of stuff, not knowing what I was packing, what I was doing, throwing stuff in the laundry, making sure we had a couple of clothes. Because my fear was that the hurricane hits, you're without electricity, you're without water, you can't do laundry, you can't -- so, I figure I'll do enough laundry for the week, and make the towels, and things that need to be done. And decided to pack a little bit of food, I had all my medicines, get all the medicines. OK, what should we take in case, because keeping Kosher, after our experience, we left for Ivan, we knew you need food on the road, you need food where you're going, you don't, and where you'll be stuck or what. And my husband went to bed in the meantime, thinking that, you know, he would go to use it in the morning, but, no, don't worry about it, it's not going to be so bad. So, I kept doing all this stuff, making preparations, and we, I said -- in fact, we spoke to the neighbor, and he said he was staying also. And then in the morning, he said, no, I'm leaving. So we said, and we told him we were leaving, he said, yeah, he's leaving also. And that was what happened.

We thought we would be back in a few days. We took, you know, I took two denim skirts (laughter). I convinced my husband we should take a change of clothes. But we went, it looked like the Beverly Hillbillies, because he already had the truck. They had put a tarpaulin over. I had a little, small carry-on bag. In the truck, I had to put a, I had a cooler bag like this with food. So, I'm sitting like this, because I had all my stuff at my feet. And we had to take a box with my liquid food, I had to take some clothes, medicines, I had some huge plastic syringes to feed. (laughter) It's fun going down the road, doing this, feeding yourself through the tube. And it was an horrendous trip. It wasn't as bad as Ivan, because it wasn't as long. We wound up in a motel. My daughter-in-law's brother went on the Internet and found a place for us to stay. They had left about an hour before us, with the kids. They get to where they're there, and the manager has no idea what's going on, Priceline, or Expedia, whatever these --

RH: Expedia, one of these --

ML: Well, what --

RH: -- online travel things.

ML: -- whoever had made the arrangements through didn't connect with the motel properly. So, there was no place. So, we happen to find a place that had two rooms. And it was on, way on the northwest side of Houston, way northwest area, industrial kind of area, it was a funny area. And we were there for a couple of days, and while we were there, my daughter-in-law's grandmother realized that she has a niece who has a cousin. Some -- one of these kind of relatives -- who has a house near an Orthodox synagogue, that they only use it for Sabbath, and the holidays. Maybe they would let us use their house. So, they made the contact, and they said, sure, go ahead, use the house. So, at the end of the week, we were able to get in there, and they said -- after the levees broke, he said, you know, just stay as long as you want. So it was really nice. We had a house. We were there, my son and his three children and his wife were there,

everything was set up, the synagogue was in walking distance, there were --

RH: And what was the synagogue?

ML: United Orthodox Synagogue. And then, Chabad was able to make arrangements at an apartment complex near the Chabad Center, the school and the synagogue. And they were able to get apartments for the families there, so we moved into that after about two weeks. But in the meantime, it was beautiful. The Chabad community made meals for us, dinner over every night --

RH: This was the Houston --

ML: -- for two weeks.

RH: -- Chabad.

ML: -- Houston Chabad. Fed us every night. We had dinner, a hot dinner.

RH: How did you find people? You're, the rest of your community, and who were you looking for that interim week, and --

ML: Well, we knew that the two Rabbis main, the two main, Rabbi Nemes was stuck in Metairie. And we knew that our Rabbi Rivkin was here, had not left. And of course, there was people with them, their children and whatever. Their families were still here, they didn't get out in time after the -- because you would think the levees aren't going to -- who knew the levees were going to break? This was a big problem, was when the flooding came in. They were able to get out, the Rivkin gang was able, the whole, with their two sons and families, were able to get out. Nemes got out a little bit later. They were in Metairie. They had a whole horrendous story. But, after the levees broke and we realized, you know, this is, who knows how long, and Rivkin was able to, came in and they were able to make these arrangements. So the end of that week is when we went

into these -- the apartments were totally furnished, it was a shock to walk in. They put beds, tables, how many people, you didn't have any chairs, sofas, everything. A pantry fully, fully stocked pantry.

RH: My God.

ML: There had been a Kosher food drive, apparently. And I don't know how much came from the food drive, how much, and I said the Chabad community, the other communities, what was donated, I can't tell you, I don't know. We had linens for the beds, we had towels, we had food. There was a little set of pots and pans. Everything was great. The kitchens were made kosher we could use, we kind of moved in. It was just so overwhelming. And the kids --

RH: And how did that make you feel --

ML: -- the grandchildren --

RH: -- when you --

ML: -- the grandchildren had already begun the school. They went to schools all over, opened up to everyone. It was beautiful. I mean, all the schools, that was all over the South, wherever people went. The commute from where we were originally to the school was very difficult. My husband said, you know, let's go, this is nice to have this house, but let's go to these apartments. It'll be easier with the kids, because it's just basically across the street, a block or two away. I had chosen to make this commute. So, it was nice. It was fun, because -- I don't like apartment living, I found out (laughter) -- I just don't, but it was nice because the grandchildren, we had the three children there, and we were there for a long time, watched the little one grow, you know, when you go with a toddler who learns to walk, and starts talking. And my little grandson learned to whistle, the middle one. He was seven, which is neat. We'd have in the morning, I'm an early riser, so I had this little -- on the door at 5:30, 6:30, 7:00 -- let's say 6:30, something like

that. It would be my granddaughter coming to have breakfast with us, and a little bit later the other ones would come. And they ran back and forth, and because it was, we were like at the back this way, in a parking area. And they were in another set. They were like across, the next group of apartments. All the kids played in that parking area, because it was a safe area. People usually come a lot. So there were our grandchildren, there were other children there from the community. And there was some children who lived there anyway, some families. And they all played together outside, and they were in and out of the apartment, and in and out of our place and their places, and it was just nice. We had an open, like an open house kind of thing.

RH: Well, did Rabbi Rivkin or Bluma get in touch with you, or did you find them, or how did you find out about the apartment, just --

ML: I think we had been in touch, and go -- you know, I don't remember -- I know that when they came to town, when they got to Houston, I went with my daughter-in-law that afternoon, which to pick up the kids to go see Bluma. You know, it was a few days after the -- when did they get out -- I think that the levees broke and they were able to get out that day, that Tuesday, I think it was. They were able to get out, so the flooding started. So, I saw right away.

RH: So, tell me what -- how do you feel to be on the receiving end?

ML: Very difficult. Very, it was very, very difficult. That's the only way I can explain it. I have a friend who went to another community. She said it was funny, they were sitting around one day at shul, sat with a group from New Orleans, she said, here we were, people, there were a lot of professionals, doctors, teachers, or whatever, you know, business people. And we're talking about getting food stamps, and going to the Red Cross, and this kind of thing (laughter), and it's unusual. But you come to terms with it because -- and I had to, for most people, you didn't know what was going to be financially. You really didn't know. You couldn't contact the finance, unless you had with

the National Institution. We had dealt with local banks. We dealt here with Whitney and Hibernia. We couldn't, you couldn't have access to your information, you didn't have access to your account, you didn't know what was going, you didn't know what bills you were going to have to pay. I mean, some, if you had your number, you know, if you thought enough to keep, have your credit card numbers and your account numbers or whatever with you, you could make contact. But the thought was so overwhelming at first until we knew what was happening. You had to pay a mortgage, and you have to pay a rent. You have to pay your light and gas at home. You're going to have to pay utilities wherever you are somewhere else. That's a big burden, not going what kind of repairs you're facing, what the insurance companies are going to do. It was just an overwhelming lack of information and knowledge, really. Whitney Bank that we dealt with, you'd go to these banks, and the lines would be long, long hours, an hour or so to see an officer, an hour to get a, make a deposit, get your money, whatever. It was just very difficult. I mean, who wants to work on credit forever, you know, I mean, how well can you do? But -- I think most people, even if you were OK financially, it's the lack of knowledge of what's going to be, and we see the flood waters coming in, not knowing when you'd get back home, what do you do in between, do you have a job, don't have a job, you have a business, you don't have a business. Who knows? You can't contact people. There was no phones. Most people grabbed their cell phones. Cell phones, you know how long they lasted on the road. They started going out already. The cell phone system was horrible.

RH: So, you had the added problem of being ill.

ML: Yeah, yeah. I had to, I had appointments that week. I was to go Monday to the doctor, and he was going to -- he was setting up appointments for me to take a swallow test, to see if I could have the gastric tube removed, if I was able to swallow enough. And I, because I had stitches that were inflamed here, I was going to see an infectious disease doctor. I had a small opening here under my jaw. It had originally been all the

way through from the surgery. It had to be changed twice a day. I originally had a home nurse who was coming. I had to put gauze in there, and for hours wrapped around with this stuff called Curlex, to keep it in place, all sorts of -- and he had to put on gloves, there was a whole rigamarole to clean it out. I was also going through that. So, I had an appointment on Monday with my doctor, and with the -- and I had appointments there with the infectious disease doctor, I had an appointment to get the swallow test, to see if the tube could be removed. In the meantime, because of antibiotic problems, was giving me stomach problems. When we left, I figure, all right, we'll get to Houston, we'll get -- in the morning we'll go pick up the prescription in the morning before we leave. When we went in the morning, Walgreen's was already closed here. And we got to Houston Sunday night, we were just so exhausted, forget it. Sunday morning, I mean, Monday morning we went, and -- to Walgreen's. They couldn't give me the prescription, they didn't have the whatever, you know, the records between one place and the other, showed that we had, the prescription was in New Orleans, we had picked it up but we hadn't. So, I said, I've got to get -- my husband had some business to attend to, so my son and his family, we went. I said, let's just go to the medical area, and go the ER. I was fortunate. I went to Texas Methodist Hospital into the ER. I told them, I said, look, I've got this flare-up. I looked like a teenager here (laughter) that was always doing things. I have to see an infectious disease doctor tomorrow. They gave me an, they put me on antibiotics. They made an appointment they told me who to call in the morning. I was able to go in the morning to see the infectious disease doctor, who said, look, you don't know what's going on at home. I'm not going to -- this is off the books -- I'm sending you to a plastic surgeon to check this out. So, who was able to see me there, that, right after that, who drained, who opened it, and took cultures, and it's come back fine. So, to make a long story short, I saw those doctors. They, I told them along the way, I had to take this swallow test, I have to see, it had a neck oncologist, who I did. And by that time, she asked me, are you able to swallow your saliva? I said, yeah, yeah. So she gave me a little water, I was able to swallow with water. Fine, you can take the

tube out. She made arrangements for me to get the tube out, we did that. All this in Houston with, in a matter of, like, two weeks. So it's been back and forth with cultures, and one of the beautiful experiences we had in Houston was that I had to go for some cultures at the hospital. And my husband had run out of one of his medications, and they told him, go to this clinic up there, they'll take care of it. They said, no, you have to go through the ER. We went down into the ER to see about his prescriptions, and this was when the first busload of people was coming from the dome. Horrendous, just horrendous, it was so sad, mostly old people. And the staff there was just so beautiful, and so accommodating. A one young woman, I don't know, nurse, whatever, she took us because it's a whole maze to go through to find from one section of the hospital to the other. Took us through -- the longshot, he, they had doctors, they had to take his vitals. By the time they gave us his prescriptions, a woman comes out with a list like this. Here are your prescriptions. Do you need help in getting these filled? He says what do you mean, I'll take them to drugstore, she says no, no, follow me. Took us to an huge auditorium. There was a table, must have been 12 feet of table along the whole wall, 14 feet, filled with huge bowls with fruit. There were this little hospital, you know, the jellos, and jellies. There were drinks, there were urns with coffee, with tea, with hot water, cold drinks --

RH: This is --

ML: -- sandwiches, cracker --

RH: The hospital did this?

ML: Yes. The hospital did this. They had this whole thing set, room set up with chairs. There were tables with social workers to take care of people. There were ministers, there was, there was one man starts sitting down with her head down. I don't know if I knew for how long, but we were waiting for the prescriptions to be filled. You saw the people coming in wrapped in blankets, whatever kind of clothing they could give them,

scrubs, whatever, waiting for family members. Families from St. Bernard told us what happened there, different things. The food was amazing. The way they treated -- then, when they finally bring the prescriptions my husband said how much do I owe you? And one woman said, oh, don't worry. We'll, it'll be taken care of somehow. We'll get reimbursed for it. And, do you need transportation help? Do you need help with transportation?

RH: Oh my gosh.

ML: And this is how they worked. And every doctor's office we went to, they were just so accommodating. In one place, the woman came out behind the desk and gave us a hug, because we were Katrina victims (laughter) or whatever. It was just amazing. You'd go in the stores in Houston, and people would, you know, just so concerned. Of course, after awhile, things die down. I mean, I think we all wore out our welcome after, you know, the first month or so. But it was just really beautiful, and the outpouring of love from all over the country, all over the world. We received gift cards were given, money was given, gift cards were given out to different places. We are a Chabad community. I don't know who else you got, and whether it was through Chabad or what. We were given gift cards to a place called Syms, which is not here. It's in other places around the country. Discount clothes, they're like, it's like T.J. Maxx, or one of these, Marshall's, one of these kinds. But things like upscale clothes, and all sorts of stuff. The people were able to get clothes for the holidays, because Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur were coming, and we were obviously stuck there. It was just an amazing, amazing setup.

RH: So, what was Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur like there?

ML: We were fortunate that somebody made arrangements to send, a whole truck load of food with -- there were contacts were made, because it was a student at Tulane who had family in Monroe, Louisiana, who had an hotel. We were able to get the Chabad community, whoever else wanted, who had evacuated to different places to gather in

Monroe, which was centrally located. We came -- the bus load came from Houston, a bus load came from Memphis, people drove in from Alexandria, and New Orleans, and I don't know where else. Bluma Rivkin can give you more details on that. It was the most lavish setup of food you can imagine. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, everything was catered, and these two young boys took from New York two young men came in with the truck. A woman from here who works for Bluma Rivkin was able to come in and help with the cooking, and make sure that everything was kosher, because there was no kosher kitchen in the hotel. They had to make facilities in the -- it was a --

RH: OK, we'll -- we're going to stop right now, and we're going to continue --

[END - PART 1]

RH: And we were just talking about Monroe and Rosh Hashanah, and what it was like. You were there for three days, is that right?

ML: Right. We had to go up, well, the day before, because that evening was Rosh Hashanah. So we went up that morning, our group. The bus got us there in the afternoon, but anyway -- a busload from New Orleans, I mean, from Houston. We went on the Houston bus. There were the Memphis, a bus came from Memphis and other people drove in from other places around Alexandria, New Orleans, wherever they were, I don't know, different, Baton Rouge, I don't know where people came from. And it was all Chabad people who some other people who happened to hear about it and know about it. It was unbelievable. You walked into the hotel -- first of all, a hotel that had an atrium -- and when the children saw each other, it was (laughter) -- I can't describe how beautiful it was just to watch them. And it was nice. Some of them already knew that their friends had, you know, some families had already made decisions they weren't going to come back, maybe they'd gotten a job, or for whatever reason. Some didn't know what they were doing. With that, saying most of us didn't know what we were doing. And the grownups, I mean, too, you know, it was extremely emotional. It was so

-- it was what they call the -- something with unity, I forgot the theme of it. That was the theme of it. And the different Rabbis took obviously different sections of the services over the few, of those two days of holiday. Food was -- it was in the previous tape -- there was an 18-wheeler of prepared catered food came in. Food was delicious and abundant. We had different sessions, as far as at the meals. Everybody ate together. Broke down the two, it was in a big auditorium-type place, ballroom, and it broke, then we had tables for lunch, they broke down the, move the chairs, whatever. They were able to bring in Torahs that had been -- and made a little arc out of something. And it was just a beautiful feeling of, in Hebrew we say achdos, unity. It was like a family, whether, no matter how close we were, some people we didn't know from before, there were different things where people would, that we had times where people would get up and tell their stories, some people would say what they hoped for, it was different, several different things we went through at the meals. It was just --

RH: Are there any --

ML: -- a tremendous feeling to --

RH: -- particular moments or stories that you remember that moved you while you were there, or part of the service?

ML: I don't -- too much to go into particular, one particular moment, I think. There's a woman we know who's a Holocaust survivor who -- they had, I mean, there was more than one Holocaust survivor who said this over the time, not just there -- you know, they ran once, what, I mean, we don't, you know, they don't want to run. They were afraid of, you know, it was not afraid, it was just, people just wanted to be back home in their own place, to know what they were doing, was the thing and people talking about what happened to them during the hurricane, there were some very dramatic rescues we could go in, and very dramatic story. Things were dramatic and traumatic as well. And you know, exchanging information, who was where, who they heard from, whatever. Jewish

Federation did a tremendous job. They moved -- they set up headquarters in Houston, and did a tremendous job. There was a great effort to try to reach people and find out who was where, and where they had evacuated to, the other contacts with different synagogues or whatever. In some cases, it was just -- we were getting phone numbers. Some people you had to get new phone numbers for, because the cell, the crazy cell phone business.

RH: What was it like to think about New Year's, when there was so much uncertainty in your life?

ML: It was such a time -- first of all, once you get in, and begin to pray, the services are saying this has always been. I mean, you know, the words are the same and everything. The rhythm of it's the same, the sequence is the same. There are no big changes there. But the idea that you can't prepare for it, most of us are used to having big family time and friend time, and friends we have over, I mean, people traditionally, like with anybody, any community when there's a holiday time. You have certain people you usually have over, or you usually go to. Not being able to prepare, I think, for most of the women, is very difficult. You're not preparing for anybody. You have no guests. And here we are, we're guests, we're not being guests, we're not having guests. You can't have your normal life, not even a semblance of a normal life. We didn't have our -- it just was -- you weren't in your place. But still there was a -- the gratitude -- I think there was a big sense of gratitude and understanding of who runs the world, and there's acceptance that He knows what He's doing. We don't have to like it, but we, you know, we just pray, and that's part of the Rosh Hashanah, that this prayer that's been traditionally recited for centuries, the Unasana Tokef, who shall live and who shall die, who's going to get rich, who's going to get poor, who will go this way, that way, by fire, by water, whatever. It was different calamities, God forbid. And the line is always, and the line, the thing throughout the holiday is with prayer and charity, and good deed. I'm trying to translate it into English. Will rescue us, we can, you know, the grief can be changed, and it's always

wishing, the theme there is to wish everyone should have a good, sweet year, we shall be written in the Book of Life, and the Good Book written for this, well, that should be well. And I think it's just hopeful looking forward, and as well as establishing -- the forgiveness is, at this time of year at Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur is, between us and it's -- oh, skip that. The theological stuff you don't need, from me anyway (laughter). It was just an unusual time.

RH: Well, it was an unusual time, and a sense of just trying to, the irony of trying to hope, and hoping for the future, but in this very intense moment of uncertainty, and it sounds like that you were experiencing.

ML: It was -- yeah, you know, even people know 100 percent their house is fine, their jobs are fine, that they can go back and just live life normally. Nobody came back to the city normal. There is no normal. There's a new normal. And I think of all of us realize, it's a thing that's a change. That's all, and you go through an event like this, you're changed. You know?

RH: Why don't we go back a little bit, and you talked to me about, you had to evacuate twice. You had to go with Rita.

ML: Yeah.

RH: And so, what happened?

ML: We really didn't have to, but (laughter) the complex we were in, I have said, we also had been hit by a tornado the previous summer. We didn't want to be there, didn't want to be in this situation. My husband and myself were there. I couldn't leave because the medical problems I had. There was a whole group that was able to go to New York that weekend, that week, because there was a wedding in New Orleans that was scheduled for right after the hurricane, and the family partially was able to reschedule, was able to be made in New York. The community there helped to make a, in Crown Heights, the

Lubavitch community, helped them make a wedding up there. It happened to be on the same day it was supposed to be. And there was someone who wanted to do something to raise the morale of our community, and contacted Bluma Rivkin, who told him about this wedding. So the person said, well, I will sponsor, pay for tickets for whoever, I don't know, whoever, whatever, for people to go up there. So most of the community went to this wedding. Our daughter-in-law went with the baby, and the other two children stayed in Houston with the father, and, because she didn't want to take them out of school. They had just started -- they had just started school in New Orleans, and they just started school in Houston, been there very, not to disrupt them so much. And we stayed, my husband was doing business, I couldn't travel. And so we decided, anyway, to go to Houston, to leave for Hurricane Rita, not to take a chance and stay around. By that time, I was eating normally, what passes for normally. Once the tube was out, I ate like a teenage boy, but that's (laughter) -- I don't know where my hunger --

RH: You went into the food --

ML: -- came. My hunger --

RH: -- at Rosh Hashanah with a gusto. (laughter)

ML: I don't know, I don't know where my appetite came from, but it came. (laughter) Anyway, we were fortunate to find a place that -- we called ahead to Houston, I mean, to San Antonio -- the arrangements were made where we were able to stay. And, but the trip from Houston to San Antonio was horrendous. Horrendous. I can't tell you. They said there would be gas along the way. They said there would be water. First of all, just to get gas to leave Houston took hours. Took hours. There was no water. One place on the road, there was some people, they had a bus, and other side, and they were throwing bottles of water over to the people. But the cars moved at a snail's pace. It took us, like, 24 hours to get there. It was supposedly a short trip. They were -- first of all, they had the HOV lines. Why they didn't let people use that, I don't know, those lanes, there were

the 18-wheelers were mixed in with the traffic, it was hot. We tried at night, we pulled over to the side of the road to try to sleep a little bit. It just didn't work too well. Also I had, also I forgot to mention, I have a sister who is undergoing chemo and radiation, and she had been to MA Anderson in May for consult -- she'd already been doing this awhile, almost a year -- and she had originally gone to San Antonio. But they live in Slidell, and her husband was able to go back to work on his house, so, to work at his job. And she was with us for two weeks. She was trying to get into Anderson to see what was going on for a week. So, she was with us also, to go to San Antonio. And it was an horrendous, very difficult trip, very hot, very slow, very miserable trip. But we had a beautiful Shabbos. We went up there for Shabbos, and with the shaliach was with the Rabbi in the area, the Chabad shaliach there and his family. And I happened to, they happened to have a guest for Shabbos who, I had grown up with, this woman, her brother was in my class, she was a little older, but I knew her from when we were teenagers.

RH: Oh, really.

ML: It was nice. We had a nice meeting. And it was very nice, and interesting people there. It was a break, it was nice. And people were very good to us, so --

RH: So, how long were you in Houston?

ML: We officially came back here in January, actually, middle of January, end of January. Our trailer was ready, actually were able to move it, have it fully ready was the end of January. Came back and it wasn't, we didn't know that you weren't supposed to go in until they find the papers. I was here, and I had come in town in the beginning of January, but with my son and his family, and the trailer was here. They said my, somebody said the trailer was here, so it was open, I went in, I see keys, I take the keys. So when I went back, I told my husband we can come back, we didn't know we had electricity, they were going to, that we weren't supposed to be in it. We signed paper,

we're in there, so we came back in January, mid-January.

RH: So, did you come back into New Orleans at all before then?

ML: Yeah, I had made, we had made several trips in October, I guess it was a few days -- I'm trying to remember.

RH: Well, what did you --

ML: We made trips in a couple times. I came a couple times by myself and with the Rivkins. We had to come in in mid-November to meet with the adjustor, a flood adjustor, and I got, finally got in November, got the house adjuster to come meet. And --

RH: So, how did you first find out about the damage to your house?

ML: When we were in Monroe, and we were preparing to leave after Rosh Hashanah that morning -- it was mid-week I think -- I have a son, my son, Perry, had stayed in the city. He's a paramedic with the city, he had to stay. And he had come in earlier and said the house was OK. It just didn't have electricity, but the whole neighborhood didn't have electricity, which seemed all right, other than the refrigerator, of course. And so, you know, he told the same thing, but Rabbi Mendel Rivkin told us he had seen, he had walked by and seen, the gutter pipe was off in the front of the house because a tree hit the corner of the roof. Well, it turned out that the tree not only hit the roof and knocked the gutter pipe, it tore the electric pole away. So we had to get an electrician, which took until November to get the electricity back, and to get -- of course, the city had to hook it up, had to get the electrician out here. And we found out -- Perry called us as we were leaving, getting ready to leave Monroe after breakfast. He had come in, he says, Mom, I gotta tell you. We've got water. Apparently we had, like, three or four inches that had come in, but when he had come in, it had receded, there was no water, and there was no electricity, so he didn't see signs of mildew, mold, or what, the mold was, it was growing, the bookcases were wet, but the closets, the coat closet, the closet under the stairway

and the walk-in pantry in the kitchen. He didn't open those doors. There was stuff he didn't see, the mold behind whatever was in the closets. And it hadn't started creeping up on the clothes or anywhere else. So he didn't see it, he didn't realize how bad it was when he came in, but when he saw the, we moved the refrigerator out, and he went to look for some kind of tools. He found a toolbox full of water, and realized something had happened.

RH: Well, when you first came back, were there any kind of things you wanted to go see, did you drive around, did you --

ML: I, my car was totaled by the insurance company, because of the level of water in it. And a couple times, I rented cars. I, my concern coming back was, first of all, to take my camera and take pictures and stuff for the insurance adjustors, and to see what I can move around and get out of the way, see what had to be replaced, what needed to be done, what had to be done. Started contacting workers and whatever, finally got -- I couldn't get workers until I knew what the insurance, you know, said to do, but so I didn't, I really didn't get out too much into other neighbors, but there was enough to see what was around here in back of us, an huge tree down across the street. I mean, you couldn't, the debris was everywhere.

RH: So, then, you came back to New Orleans in January --

ML: Right.

RH: -- and you had to settle in again. So, what were some of the things that kind of helped you -- because you're still living out of boxes -- you still don't have everything done, and it's a year later. So, how did you kind of -- what happened, what had to be done then --

ML: What had to be done --

RH: -- for you to kind of create your home again?

ML: It was a little difficult moving into the, even into the trailer, I didn't know what we needed because we had to give a 30-days notice in Houston on the apartment. So we had to -- we still had stuff there, we were using that apartment, because my husband was going back and forth for business, we weren't 100 percent settled here yet. So, I had to get stuff for here, and we were still stuck with the kitchen there, I mean, kitchen-type things, drainers, you know, the little things you need for everyday life, aside from paper goods. I mean, you can't live with only paper goods. You need some physical things, knives, whatever, cooking whatever. Food, going grocery shopping, even getting anything here was difficult, because at first, stores weren't open. They were (coughing) open a little bit, or for a few times they didn't have -- you'd go look for something, it wasn't there. It was not easy. Was not easy.

RH: And you said you also had trouble finding your doctors. What was -- take some water, here.

ML: Thank you, I -- once we located -- we couldn't -- well, I fortunately, had been seeing the doctors in Houston and the head and neck oncologist I saw, I asked, I said, when should I come back. She says, well, normally, at the stage you're at I would see you in two months. Come back. If you're still here in November -- it was September -- if you're still here in November, come back and see me in two months. And we both laughed, ha ha ha. (laughter) So, November's coming, and I have to find my doctor. I finally located and he had settled into Lafayette -- that he was working out of a friend's office there, so I was able to get back and forth to see him. We made several trips, Houston to Lafayette, Lafayette back and forth to New Orleans, Lafayette, New Orleans, Lafayette -- I mean from Houston to Lafayette, here it was -- we had to make quite a few trips, until he just recently came back here about a month ago we went, I saw him finally here.

RH: Were there other friends of yours that didn't make it back, and other doctors and such as that?

ML: Our doctor, we had a doctor who just really withdrew, but -- and his practice had been at Memorial, at, up at that hospital, in the office building there. And by the time we located where he was, and we located the practice he'd re-established, it turned out that where they were -- he was not with the practice anymore. He left, and we said, well, we'll discuss who we would go to in a practice, we said, well, let's go to this one, we'll find out -- it turned out, they did not take both insurance. We are on two different plans, because I have a Blue Cross plan, and my husband, because he's Medicare age, he's on a supplemental different plan that's a different plan. So, we had to find someone who would take both. So the time, it took us awhile to find someone and make appointments and start going, and you know, do that.

RH: Not the same as your old doctors, is it?

ML: No, I have no complaints about the doctors. It's just, you know, it's starting over again, and new tests and new things, and it's all right. But it was a problem, it was a hard problem. In January, when we came back -- my husband has bad asthma, he has trouble that time of year, he insists on going out in the back and cleaning -- he wanted to clean up, to rake the leaves, and sweep. I said, don't touch. Of course, he did, and he had a terrible asthma attack, he had to go to the ER.

RH: Where was the ER?

ML: We were able to go to Touro Hospital, and I was amazed because this was an evening, and there weren't people there. I don't know how we lucked out, but we did. We hadn't -- this is after we had already established we were going to the new doctor. But he wasn't able to see us right after that, but we were able to see the nurse practitioner in the office, who took care of the -- it was scary. Very scary.

RH: What did you like best about returning home.

ML: Home? What do I like best? As my husband says, there's an old Spanish saying, the wine may be sour, but it's my wine. It's home. This is, you know, it's a familiar place, you're not at someone else's mercy. Houston, for all of, is not New Orleans. It's just not, it's visually, I find it -- I don't want to slight Houston, so let's say nice about New Orleans. New Orleans is more visually exciting, and to me that's an important. There's a lot of variety in what you see, and people here are different. It's just --

RH: Can you put your finger on it, how they're different?

ML: I think particularly since Katrina. You know, even here you go in the grocery, the people talk to each other. You put your hand on eggplant, and you have three recipes, three people telling you how to cook your eggplant (laughter), you know, it's this kind of thing. It has nothing to do with who you are, what you are, how you dress or how you speak. There's a certain level of everybody knows everybody, even though you may not socialize with everybody. You may be here and they may be there, but you understand, you know who they are and what they are, and who you are. And yeah, going to the drug store. Drug store, for a while the Walgreen's over here -- there's a Walgreen's near us that we go to -- not that near us -- but there were only one or two that were open in the lines. There would be a long line, an hour and a half, two hours to get a prescription filled at the drugstore. And things just -- the lack, we just found out we're getting traffic signs put up finally. Traffic's, the fact that getting around was difficult. The traffic, there were no traffic signals, electricity wasn't working. But it's been a gradual, gradual change. The last area the other day finally got water. I mean, it's a big thing. It was just difficult coming back and not knowing, is it really safe, they say it's safe to drink the water, but is it? It still tastes awful sometimes. There's still people, you don't know if you're going to hit a pot hole and break your axle. You don't know if you're going go over nails. Tires are like a, everybody's always changing tires here, because they get ruined.

RH: What's your favorite thing about being back? Anything --

ML: Just able to get back into a normal life, to know where I can do, to know basically that life has its own rhythm again. It may not be the one we want, but at least, you know -- I was taking classes at the New Orleans Academy of Fine Art. When I got to Houston, I went to a place and bought some art equipment, some stuff to work with, and a friend of mine who's an artist gave me a bag of stuff. I wasn't able to do anything. I just wasn't able to. One day -- it had been there for months -- my granddaughter said, Bubbie, let's paint. I said all right, we'll take out the paints and paint, do a little bit of work. But I didn't feel so terrible, when I came back and went to the Academy, the teachers I was working with, that I was taking the class, one of the class, the class with said -- and he's 78 -- he said where he evacuated, he was unable to work. He just didn't feel -- he did one thing, it wasn't -- you know, so I didn't feel so terrible about it (laughter).

RH: So you're back painting again?

ML: I'm back working again, yeah, I'm taking classes in drawing. And it's a really, it really is good for me. I think finally knowing that we may be getting into this place one of these days is getting better. The not knowing is difficult, because you're at other people's mercy, with the workers -- when are they going to show up, when is the material going to be here, when is this going to be ready, are they really coming, not coming, you know.

RH: Have, has any of your circle of friends changed since the storm?

ML: Yeah, in a way, yeah. People aren't here who were here. I have a sister who, with her husband, went to California, and he really wants to come back. Their house was in Lakeview. It was ruined. They had celebrated their 50th anniversary before -- a few months before Katrina, earlier in the year. And everything was wiped out for them, everything. But they had a few solaces. The son was able to save a little bit -- not, really nothing in the house. What -- he's had two knee replacements. He's 83, she's in her

mid-‘70’s, and they’ve been back a few times. In fact, they’re coming back this week, next week. And he really wants to come back home. He doesn’t like it in California. They have to, it, the idea was to find a place their doctors are going. The doctor they went to isn’t here and the same old story. And you know, they thought they’d be better off out there where their daughter is, rather than where the son is here. Whatever, I don’t know, whatever decision they make. I don’t know what they’re going to do. And traveling back and forth is hard on him. Who knows?

RH: Has the center of your community changed? I mean, what is kind of the centering part for you now?

ML: It’s hard to say. We’ve been so wrapped up with just ourselves, with getting done what has to be done here. There’s a group. One of the women who’s very computer-savvy, and computer-friendly person, has settled in Memphis with her family. And she set up a group for the women here. We decided not to let the husbands read. It’s just for us. But wherever we’re scattered, and whoever, you know, gets invited to join. Most of the women who were connected to Chabad, and the day school friends, different way. And we just get on there, and whatever, we keep up with each other’s lives, who’s going there, what, what’s, things are going on in the world we’ll comment on.

RH: About how often do you do that?

ML: It depends. Sometimes I’ll go and check it every day. Sometimes it’ll be a week or so before I’m able to check and go on. A lot of people just read and post once in awhile, but some people never post any information, or just keep up. It’s just a good way to keep up. One of our families that had been in Memphis just a few weeks ago, just before the holidays moved to Israel. The husband’s from there, and the wife’s been there. She was originally from England. And they really had intended to go back there anyway. But he has a business here he has to close out. And there’d be -- there are a lot of families that have been commuting back and forth. It’s hard. We have fortunately been able to have

community events, which have all been just so beyond what they ever were, both for services, and for other things. And we see people -- there are people that you've never seen before come to these events, that have been coming. We had, Rivkins had a Sukkah party at their home the other night. They have it every year. But this year was really special. There were people -- my husband saw people he knew when he was a -- before we were married, they were his gang of friends. How'd you hear about it? The new CMA thing. Oh, we saw it on the internet, the Jewish -- they have -- Federation here puts out what's going on. There's been a tremendous effort of -- to keep up with the community in general.

RH: So, how do you think the Jewish community has conducted itself during this crisis, here in New Orleans, and also the national --

ML: Very supportive, very caring of each other. Nationally it's been incredible, the good will that's come out. I think not just us. I think everybody's benefited this way. We had a group come during the winter break here, and came into my house. They took all the -- they took things off the bookshelves, out of -- that's what these boxes are. Mostly my books, and things from the China cabinet, mostly these are the books, things off the bookshelves. Mostly my books that they packed up they gutted here, this area. They started gutting, taking wallpaper down. I didn't have anybody to do that yet. I hadn't lined up anything, because I was waiting to see what, you know, trying -- I had to wait with the insurance adjustor. What are they going to pay for? What do they want me to do? When are they sending me the money? It took over a month, because of the way it works. It depends how your mortgage company is, what they give you. But our particular one, over a certain amount, they'll send you back money, a certain amount, and they keep the difference. Well, they kept 1,800, a little less than 200, 2,000 dollars from my check. But the check that I had to endorse and send to them, I sent an Overnight Priority mail envelope so they could send it back to me so I could start working. It took a month to get back. (laughter) It tells you how life goes here. No mail,

no phones, no doctors, no groceries, the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker all gone. (laughter). It was a problem.

RH: So, tell me about, how being Jewish has helped you get through this year.

ML: Helped me? Knowing who runs the world, understanding that everything that comes of God's good, what we understand is good in it or not. It's a hard thing to say when people suffer, and who knows what good comes of it, saving lives later on? People understand that they have to leave for a hurricane, they have to be prepared, what to do maybe. I mean, it's horrid to say that lives have gone this way, I mean -- and I think it's helped me stay focused, and being Hasidic, to understand that joy pushes away trouble. You have to look at, understand, and try to be held positive about things. You know, it's only how you lost this, you lost that, you don't have this, you don't have a place to live. But you know, you keep going. You keep --

RH: Has anything changed as far as your Jewish identity, or your understandings?

ML: Not really.

RH: Even changed in the way of deepened, or --

ML: Well, I'll tell you what. We're waiting for Moshiach to take us all away, (laughter) and this is what's called a (inaudible) an allegory is given, how people approaching the castle want to get to the King. Well, we're out here at our FEMA palace, and here's our other, our real castle here, in trying to get in. I think it's made us understand what we call gulus exile, how it really is we really are in exile wherever we are, and not in a real home. And knowing this is -- is not the final end of it. There's more to it than, there's more than pictures, more than books, more than furniture, or clothes, or whatever. It's, it's not the physical.

RH: Now, I understand that you have continued your Shabbat with your grandchildren in the FEMA trailer --

ML: Uh-huh (laughter). Well, not having dinners with -- because our -- some of us are not far away, they, we basically go to them. They -- it depends on the weather, and how tired we're feeling, whatever. Sometimes we'll make dinner here. We used to walk over there. And the grandchildren like to come over and visit in the afternoon. They like to sleep overnight. They sleep on the (laughter) -- the FEMA trailer has what's supposed to be a bed. I can't use a bunkbed, because one has my clothes and the other one has disposables of the paper goods and the extra stuff, and different things, you know, we need for living. And whatever I have up there, microwave pots and different things -- because the little cabinet isn't enough to put everything in. He sleeps on the bench. Those little booths are supposed to make a bed. You're supposed to lift up the little dining table, take the legs, flip the dining table -- it fits on the ledge of the two seats, (laughter) and you put the cushions down. He just sleeps on one of the cushions, one of the benches. They sleep like that, they're all right. They're fine. They can come over. They come in the afternoon. They sing to us, they -- who knows, they enjoy, and that's --

RH: Do you feel, what part of the Jewish community do you feel kind of responsible for helping rebuild? How are you engaging now after?

ML: I don't think there's any. I mean, I'm not able to help any, because I'm not getting out and I'm involved with my own stuff. I just think it's a spiritual, helping people maintain their sanity. There's several things, their deep faith, as I said, Hashem, in God, knowing, you know, what's going to be. We've had friends, people from all over calling. The outreach, as we said before, from the whole world. I mean, there's a paper today that has this thing where France is sending masterpieces to the museum here in the summer. Companies, governments, individuals have reached out to our whole community, and this is -- and it continues. It continues. People come here for vacations.

They help. People call and ask, from all over, how things are going. I think it's just, it's a mutual support within the community, too. How are you doing? How, are you still in your trailer, are you this, what are you up to? I go to the classes at the Academy, the same thing. People, one woman had her house moved off the slab and she's moving her house back on, you know, this kind of thing. And the local media has been very good, too. I would particularly say I think a lot of people will say, Chris Rose, the columnist, has been, turned out to be a real treasure. He just expresses a lot of our feelings. On other levels, we the other week recently had one that was hysterical, we talked about changing the calendar to the carpenter's three-week schedule. Everything's in three weeks. (laughter). And too, you just have to have patience. I maintain, try to maintain sanity, by trying to make no more than two Katrina-related calls a day, which is difficult sometimes.

RH: Oh, well, that's true. So, you mean making calls to a contractor or --

ML: Contractors to --

RH: -- whatever.

ML: -- to people who are supposed to show up, and don't (laughter), trying to get people to come here, people who don't answer, who don't return calls, to make doctors' appointments, whatever. Finally got what's where, who has what, calling, to see if they have the merchandise you need, who's open, when, what, whatever, it's --

RH: So, you just keep that to two a day, or try to.

ML: Well, I try to. It doesn't (laughter) -- and when is the adjustor coming? You didn't send me a bill, where is, you know, things like that, things in the mail get lost. We're still don't have really -- they say we do, but we don't have consistent mail.

RH: How do you feel about the city, state, federal government, and the response to Katrina?

ML: I think that the --

RH: -- and have you --

ML: -- thing that has, if anything, this has just showed that disaster should not be dependent on government help. We can't rely on it. I mean, anywhere, disaster's magnitude takes help on all levels. It takes physical help, it takes financial help, and I think the fact that individual companies, rather than our government, and individual people, and individual foundations, and different societies are the ones that have to help, when a community has trouble. Whatever the community is, we cannot rely on government. It's, they should, but they don't know what they're doing. And the, I think it was the most appalling this is that, in this day and age, the lack of communication. God knows World War I, they were able to crank up a radio and talk from one part of the battlefield to another. And here with this, with 9/11, we saw the same thing, how modern technology that we depend on was proved to be a false safety net for us. But the government was horrible, I mean, I think on all levels. Part of it isn't their fault, if it's a lack of communication, lack of understanding. But certainly, a thing happened. I mean, people talk about what happened at the Superdome. People stranded on the interstate, out in the heat, or by the convention center. These weren't only people who had no means to leave. These weren't only people who did not leave. These were people who were absolutely stuck here. Maybe they, there are a lot of people who couldn't leave. Maybe you didn't have the means to leave.

RH: Well, as a person who was ill --

ML: Oh, I know.

RH: -- you know that there's a lot of people who may --

ML: One thing also, in that it made me realize, I was opposed to the idea of any kind of national health registry, or something like that, because of the possibility of the inherent

faults we came to be in. But it's the same faults that could be in written records as well. And I was also concerned about the lack of privacy. Now, I don't care who knows my medical history. I think that there should be some kind of way to keep -- and I realize this -- I have to be savvy enough to be able to tell my doctors, I had this, I was on this medication, I should have taken this, this is exactly what happened to me on this date. People aren't able to communicate. They don't know -- funny story -- my son was first a paramedic. He went to a place, and he asked, was the person on any medicine. He heard the person had said it sounded like peanut butter balls. Said what? Peanut butter balls, huh? At this point he said, Phenobarbital. So if you don't what your prescriptions are, and the dosage, or what treatments, or what tests you're taking, particularly who are in the middle of something, there has to be some kind of way to keep these records with a person in the hospital, they should be with them. People were evacuated from hospitals. No one knew what was what. I mean, I could have very easily been in the hospital and stayed. I was going to go to that extent. The doctor was thinking of putting to that extended care facility, the one where -- yes. And as it turned out, I didn't need to go in there. That's, you can go in there for a minimum of six weeks. And for future history, this is an area where many people died in the local hospital. It, I mean, it just -- just the idea of thinking that the physical conditions --

RH: Have you been, do you, how do you feel about the race relations here in New Orleans? Do you think they're worse. Do you think after the storm, are they --

ML: I think it's --

RH: -- do you have any thoughts on that?

ML: Yeah, I think a lot has been stirred up by people who don't know what they're saying and doing, and by a lot of stupidity. Even our old good Mayor, God bless him. (laughter) What comes in his head goes out of his mouth. He has been damaged by this. I think there is, the problem is that unfortunately where the waters hit, people don't realize, yes,

it was the lower Ninth Ward. And it was also areas in Lakeview, in Lakeshore, where there were people who were prosperous, people who had businesses, who had jobs, who after the -- like my sister -- had nothing. A lot of these homes, a lot of the homes in the lower Ninth Ward, where the heavy flooding was over there, and in Gentilly, a lot of these homes were either rentals, or they were homes that had been in families for generations. The people who had rental property, which was the biggest part of that, still don't know what they're doing. Does it pay to redo it? Am I going to get money to redo, abandoned, who knows what? People can't go back. Now they can finally come back, they have water. What do they go back to? I think a lot of it is not as much racial as it's made out to be. A lot of those people in the lower Ninth Ward were hardworking people. A lot of those homes have been in families for a long time. They were, some of were self-built, they were -- they weren't all the criminals that you saw running on, looting. They weren't all looters, I think. And I think the media likes to play on that, and show the same thing. Yeah, there were looters. There were police who were looting, there were regular people who were looting, there were National Guard people who came in, there were military people coming in looting. This is in all aspects. There was a lot of bad stuff went on. But I think it's so outweighed by the good that happened, that really, I feel, it's difficult, not just because of the lower economics, but every economic strata, for people to come back and rebuild their lives. Doctors don't have the patient base either. The stores can't get workers, because people can't afford to live here. The cost of living is astronomical, for renting or for buying.

RH: So, tell me, what are your hopes for the New Orleans community? Do you, have you thought --

ML: Well reality is --

RH: -- about that?

ML: -- that it's not going to be an easy road, or a short road. I mean, it's not going to be the same. But I think there's an incredible spirit here of people who just want the will to survive, who can outdo anything, I think, really.

RH: Have you ever thought of leaving?

ML: Where? I don't know where I'd want to go to. That's a question we discussed. We've -- my husband and I have discussed where would we go, if there's another hurricane. We don't want to have to go through this agony of rebuilding again. It is really an agony, that at our age we can't, don't want to do it anymore. We were out shopping somewhere where there, must have been Lowe's, we're always -- I live, I think I live at Lowe's and Home Depot. And he said, you know, whatever you get, go ahead and get good now, he says, we're not going to buy again. You know, fortunately, most of my furniture is on legs, and stuff was able to be restored, bookcases replaced, the kitchen cabinets, the lower cabinets had to be replaced. But they were able to get the same cabinets that I had from before, to match. You know, that's just difficult stuff. But the agony of it is, I don't know, I don't know where we'd go. Where do we want to go, you know? The thing is, our family is here, our children are here.

RH: So, what do you hope for your children?

ML: A whole life, good health, to be able to live life like a normal person, live like a mensch, a healthy life, put one foot in front of the other, and keep going day by day.

RH: For you, what are, has there been any changes in your world view, now that you've been through this entire year? Is there anything that you look at a little differently now?

ML: Differently. Not such a rush, I'm older. I think I've aged a lot, aged a lot mentally. Not so much physically, but I am becoming an old person, and I never thought I would be. Just the resignation that I don't want to go through this again. I don't know if I could go through it again. That's different. The world, I think, our responsibility for each other,

the responsibility for the world, the idea of if there's a disaster, reaching out. I understand now how to help people more, what's important that people need to sit down and realize priorities, not just necessary to rush to an area, to rush and throw what you don't want in a bag and send it off to someone. The immediate need is for food, water, cash, shelter, as fast as possible. People need money in their pockets. They need that independence. It's a hard thing to say, but many communities -- and I'm not talking about necessarily for the individual -- communities need it, governments need it, the city needs it, the city can't do stuff without running. Send, I don't know what, how to explain it, the government is, I said before, government, we can't rely on government. But there are certain things that the government is responsible for. They can, the military should be more prepared for civil defense, maybe even have some kind of this enforcement. It should have to be asked for. You shouldn't have to wait and see. It should be ready. Hurricane season is here, let the National Guard, let the Army, Navy, Marine Reserve, Air Force Reserve, know this is our summer job. It's hurricane time. Winter time is something else. There're fires in somewhere, there's snow problems, there're problems with flood in a certain part of the country, different parts of town. There should be some standard, and I think it's being worked on. For immediate fast, fast, response. I'm not talking about next day, two days later. Immediate, let people know, the uncertainty for people. It's been hard. In some way, to technically be able to communicate.

RH: What have you learned about yourself?

ML: Myself.

RH: Yeah. Any lessons here?

ML: I'm not as afraid to speak out as I was. I'm not going to be shy about them, reluctant to complain. I was never, the way I see, somebody's having a bad whatever, whatever, don't worry about it. Just go to a different clerk, go to a different place. I, just fighting with the insurance companies (laughter) is enough to make sure, do it right, do

check things right. I'm not as exact as I am. A lot of things around the house were not done to a standard I would have liked to see them done. You know, things -- I mean, I expect a person does a job, everything's, the corners line up, everything lines up, it's finished, you finish, it's clean, that you don't leave a mess, half-done, things aren't broken, whatever. I've become a little more lenient on that (laughter). Had a reality check (laughter). Don't open the drawers yet. The kitchen cabinet's the same, they open the drawer, our dimensions are the same, but inside is different (laughter) don't have room for what I had in this drawer. All right. One of the stoves, we'll get a stove and the plumber tells me, Miss Lew, come see. One, any time they call you by your name and tell you to come, I want you to see something, it's a problem. New stove, the oven door wouldn't close. It took, by the time they sent -- well, of course, the new stove is under warranty, they're going to send out an appliance person. Well, that takes two weeks to get them there. Then, have to order hinges for the door. That takes a few weeks. Hinges of the door came in, didn't work. A few more weeks before they decide and Frigidaire says, well, we'll replace the stove for you. Through Lowe's. But the stove was out of production (laughter), so anyway, I got the stove -- when was Rosh Hashanah, two weeks ago? Like a week, the week of Rosh Hashanah that week.

RH: For the New Year.

ML: Yeah, I mean, nothing like we're waiting three weeks, three months for a stove.

RH: Right.

ML: You know, I mean, the --

RH: So, patience --

ML: So that I could cook --

RH: -- is a new skill.

ML: -- I mean, I was (laughter) patient for -- I have the same, that everybody's in the same, everybody's going through some.

RH: Are there things that you took for granted before, that you just don't take for granted anymore?

ML: Yeah, I think family, my sisters, my brother, I think -- not just mine, but I'm saying family in general, family and friends, keeping in touch with people. People I hadn't heard from in years, who had called, contacted. Not to rely on things like the post office (laughter) and the Internet. You have to find some way to communicate. Getting together, I think getting together with family and friends is the most important thing. Physically, getting together is very important.

RH: And are there any things you're grateful for, after this year?

ML: After this year? Grateful we were able to have a place to come back to eventually. Grateful we survived. There's no way of knowing who gets picked off and when. Grateful for that. It's --

RH: And I just -- one more question, because you talked about, you wanted to be back because it was home. So, can you kind of describe what home means to you?

ML: It's the idea that I know what, where I put my feet, where I sit down, when I walk, how's this chair, that chair, whatever it is, I can reach into the kitchen and know this is where I have this where it should be, or whatever, you know. My own, I can go to the closet and pick what I want to wear. I don't have to take clothes from the trailer, it's that, do I have what I need this week out here, do I have it inside, do I have to wash, yeah, what's back and forth. You know, I'll call my husband. He's out, and I'll say, what do you need? Bring me undershirts, we needs towels, whatever, you know, everything is in the same place. It's a physical thing, set up so nice to be able to use the dishes again. There's no place in the trailer for real pots and pans and dishes (laughter). There's

barely enough for food, and I hate using the paper. Because I bought a lot for the holidays because the kids like them different designs, whatever, and to use out in the Sukkah. But I find that I am carrying my dishes in and out, and it doesn't bother me, got the dishwasher, got the hands, you can wash (laughter).

RH: These things.

ML: You know, it's --

RH: So, I think we're about done, and I wonder if there's anything you would like to add about this past year and your experiences that I might have missed.

ML: I know it's been extremely difficult on my husband, living in that thing, very, very difficult for him. He's an active man, he's used to going around, I mean, not to have to sit, and not to have a comfortable place to sit down. I can at least come in the house. I go upstairs in the room where I have the computer. Also I have a little couch there with a pullout, it's a sleeper couch with a footstool. I can put my feet up and be a little comfortable. If I stop working a little bit while I'm waiting for the laundry to be done. But I, I've limited, we're trying to limit his being inside until all the mold is gone, because of his health problems. It's hard on him, and it's been hard watching, putting up with that. That's hard. Not -- and the hardest thing is not being able to have people over, not able to make a house a home, not able to say, come on in, you know, come for the holiday, come, whatever, come in, come have a drink of water, come visit me. It was -- it's hard, not being a hostess, (laughter) I guess you'd say.

RH: Well, I think we're going to wrap up now, and this has been beautiful, and I really appreciate you giving us so much of your time. Thank you.

ML: OK. Thank you. It made me think a lot.

[END OF PART 2]

ML: What is it? Oh, this is -- you don't want -- we don't have a picture here, do we? Call cropping. Should I use scissors? It probably would be better, huh? We should, yeah, because it goes this way. It's where the refrigerator was. And I can take you around and show you how the bathroom vanity doesn't quite fit where it should, because the new door frame is too wide.

RH: So, just kind of, just say what each picture is, if you don't mind.

ML: Do you want me to put them in any kind of sequence, or --

RH: Well, it's up to, I think you could just point to it, and --

ML: And then you'll just edit them out --

RH: -- give us your sequence. And kind of tell us why you, you know, why you have them here.

ML: Other than this picture and this one, these were taken, basically, for the insurance adjustor. My husband turned 70 in, while we were in Houston, and the grandchildren made a birthday party for him, as you can see, with Ninja turtle plates and balloons and such. These were the three grandchildren who were with us there. This is typical New Orleans. This is, in fact there's a sign there at that corner, a few blocks away from us now. It's a big piece of cardboard said yo, stop. And there's another, there's a new one up there now, because typical New Orleans, there were no signals, no one-way signs, no traffic lights, nothing. Everything was cock-eyed around here. For insurance purposes, I took pictures to show what was going on. Before we evacuated, that Shabbos that we had, my grandchildren had come over to visit in the afternoon, and had left some things out I hadn't picked up, in the hurry to get, to pack up, to evacuate. These things weren't important to me to pick up. So I didn't. So, this was a table. They had a quilt they were playing with, and a pillow on the floor and some games and toys, which you can see mildew into the cabinets. This is where the refrigerator was, and this is the pantry next to

it. This is the far corner of that pantry. After everything had been removed, we had mildew. We had about four inches, which you can see on this table.

RH: That was four inches of water.

ML: Of water that came in the house and sat. And so I took pictures in the, for the insurance. This is what the pantry looked like when I opened the door. The kids came by. They also had some friends, and they'd been playing hide and seek, and that was one of the places. That's why it's such a jumble. Somebody was hiding in there. But that's what I faced, and after I cleaned it out I had this. This was in the back there, of a cutting board, like this, and a big chopping bowl. You can see the lovely colors of mildew. Mildew's gorgeous, turquoise, this orange color, beautiful. This is as, was a chair. This is typical of furniture we found. These items were taken because they were under the cabinet in the, under the stairs. We have a closet there. And these were on the floor in boxes, this is Passover. This is the stuff that I have to take out right away to prepare for Passover. This is my milk box for milchichs, and this is for fleishigs, for meat and cheese. And the drain board, and some knives and things that I've, you know, cutting boards to begin preparation, so they're easy to take out. But I took them outside to photograph them. This was our coat closet. The clothes were mildewed, which thank God, everything was able to be cleaned and saved. We didn't have to throw away. This is typical of what a few inches of water can do. But it stayed, and this was the result.

ML: There's one thing no picture will ever show, and that's the smell.

RH: Right.

ML: Smell. It was still some places you get a whiff of, that was just, stench, stink, none of that describes it. It's not enough, it's -- I don't know how people who had to stay here, or got stuck here survived the smell. It was awful.

[END OF INTERVIEW]