# Muriel Pokross Transcript

ELLEN ROVNER: I'm Ellen Rovner and I'm interviewing Muriel Pokross in her home under the auspices of the Jewish Women's Archive Temple Israel Oral History Project in Boston, Massachusetts. This is December 20, 1996. Okay, I'm curious. Why did you decide to do this?

MURIEL POKROSS: Well, I thought about it for a while and decided that it was a good idea. I think it helps you to think about yourself and what went on and this [unclear]—

ER: All right, I'll put it on pause for a minute. [tape turned off/on] Now we can continue.

MP: Yes, I think at this stage of my life it's time to turn back and to review the kind of life I've had, and—though I thought it was a good idea. It came at a good time when I'm sort of slowing down on many of my activities, although I seem to have long lists of things to do everyday. [chuckles] But since my husband reached the landmark of 90 years, I thought it was time for me to look back over my life as well, and so it just seemed to come at a good time.

ER: Right, wonderful. Is there anyplace you'd like to begin? I mean, before I turned the tape recorder on we talked a little bit about how you were born in Roxbury and then you moved to—your family moved to Brookline. Can you talk—do you remember the years in Roxbury or how old were you when you moved to Brookline?

MP: Hmm.

ER: Or can you tell me a little bit about your parents?

MP: Yes.

ER:  About what your early life was like?

MP:  Is the tape recorder on?

ER:  Yes, it's on.

MP:  Oh, it's on.

ER:  It's on.  [laughs]

MP:  Oh.  Well, I was the middle of three children growing up in my early days—earliest I remember were in Roxbury.  My father was a—he was in a family business which was dress manufacturing and his father had started that business downtown on Bedford Street, and he was a hard-working young man who left the house early and spent long hours at work, and my mother was a real homemaker.  She was a wonderful cook.  She was a good mother and the three of us were well taken care of.  I remember having a nursemaid so my mother could have a little time off, because the three of us were very close in age and—

ER:  What were their names and how close were you?

MP:  Yes.  My older brother was Warren and he was two years older than I, and I always looked up to him.  I just thought he was the smartest person.  We called him the "walking encyclopedia."

ER:  [laughs]

MP:  And whenever I had trouble with my homework, Warren was always there to help me.  And then I had a younger brother who was only 18 months younger—

ER:  Oh, boy.

MP:  —than I and—Lester.  And my mother said when he came into the family, I seemed to be quite bewildered because I was so young myself, and there had been attention focused on me and then suddenly it was turned toward Lester, this lovely, smiling baby who always seemed to be good.  I—as I look back, I was kind of the tomboy, the rebel in the family.  And I think I gave my parents a hard time because I always wanted to—I was fearless and I would climb trees and try to play baseball with the boys, and my mother didn't think that was very ladylike.

ER:  Did your mother have sort of activities or ideas of things that you ought to be doing, or directions that she tried to put you in?

MP:  Yes, I think she always was very ambitious for her children.  I remember having piano lessons early on.  I had recitals, elocution lessons.

ER:  Right.

MP:  I remember going to Doris Bramson Whitehouse.  I'd go there once a week, and apparently I was quite good because whenever we had family events I was always asked to recite.  [both laugh]  So, elocution lessons is what I had at an early age and then dancing—a whole group of us, friends of my mother and her children and I all went to Amelia Burnham's Dancing School, which—

ER:  Is this in Roxbury also?

MP:  I think this was in Roxbury, yes.  And I remember having some recitals.  I'm not sure how graceful I was but it was fun.  It was a social event and I enjoyed it.  And what else?  Well, my parents were members of Temple Mishkan Tefilla in those days—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —which was very close to where we lived.

ER:  What street did you live on?

MP:  We lived on Elmhill Avenue.  And three times a week there were Hebrew lessons at the school and—

ER:  Did you—as a girl, were you—

MP:  There were two—I think there were two girls and about ten boys, so I thought that was great because that was kind of my social life.  I don't remember too much about what we learned.  [chuckles]

ER:  Was it unusual then for girls to go to Hebrew School to study?  What do you think?

MP:  I don't think so.  Of course Mishkan Tefilla was Conservative, probably in the Orthodox—in the Orthodox synagogues they didn't have women, young women at that time.

ER:  Did you have a bat mitzvah?

MP:  No, they didn't have bat mitzvahs in those days, but I do remember, as I got a little older, Rabbi Rabinowitz—he was the rabbi of the temple and in fact, he's the one who married David and me some years later.  But I was a little mischievous, maybe I don't know what, but anyway, one day I put a tack on his seat.

ER:  Oh!  [laughs]

MP:  He came in.  He fortunately saw it before—he didn't sit down.  He saw it and he said, "Who did this?" looking out at the kids.  And I said, "I did it," and after a long silence—and he said, "Muriel."  He always called me 'Muh-riel.'

ER:  [laughs]

MP: “Would you leave the class and don’t come back.” So out I went and I went home and I didn’t tell my parents. I was so mortified that I had been fired out of the class.

ER: Wow!

MP: And at the end of the week the rabbi called up my mother and said, “I would like to come and see you.” And so he came and he told her the story. And I thought she would be very angry but she said, “I had to pinch myself to stop from laughing.”

ER: [laughs]

MP: So she didn’t think it was such a terrible thing.

ER: Yeah.

MP: And he said, “Well, it seems to me that Muriel is bored and maybe she should be in a higher class.”

ER: Oh.

MP: So as a result of putting a tack on the rabbi’s seat, I got a promotion.

ER: That’s great.

MP: [laughs]

ER: Well, it’s great that he was insightful in that way.

MP: Yes.

ER: You know, that he could see that you needed more challenges—

MP: Yes, I—

ER:  —rather than being punitive.  I mean, he really looked at what the cause was.

MP:  Yes, I thought that was quite—

ER:  Yeah, it's very sensitive, I think.

MP:  Very, very good.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  And then I think I really settled down after that and I did graduate Hebrew School, and I remember having to recite a poem by Bialik.  I don't remember the poem, but I remember the name of the author.  And I remember my grandfather on the maternal side sitting in the front row of the temple.

ER:  Wow!

MP:  And he thought it was wonderful!

ER:  Great.  Now, were your parents born in this country?

MP:  My parents were both born in this country.  Their parents had come over from Russia and—

ER:  So they were pretty early arrivals—

MP:  They were early arrivals.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  Yes.  And they grew up in the West End, and my mother was in a play.  They had settlement houses.

ER:  Right.

MP: And the West End House, and that's where young Jewish people went and she had the role of Jessica in The Merchant of Venice. And my father was in the audience and he asked to walk her home afterwards. And that's where the romance started.

ER: You know, it's interesting that they chose the Merchant of Venice, because Shylock is really such an antisemitic character. [chuckles]

MP: Yes.

ER: You know, of all plays, but—

MP: Yes, well, in those days—

ER: Right. Well, there was always this, you know, of course this fascination and enthrallment with anything English. And Shakespeare's the epitome of British literature.

MP: [chuckles] Yeah, we forgot the tea.

ER: So that's how they met and they lived in the West End and then moved to Roxbury, is that what happened?

MP: And then they were married, but they did not tell their families—

ER: You're kidding.

MP: —that they were married.

ER: How come?

MP: Now, let's see. My mother was 20, my father 22.

ER: Oh, so they weren't really that young for in those days.

MP: No, but—

ER:  Thank you.

MP:  Now, this is lighter; this is darker, so I don't know which. [referring to their coffee]

ER:  Well, I don't know, I'll trust your judgment.  Thank you.

MP:  Oh, it may be—I used to hear that my father's family looked down a little bit on my mother's family and I'm not sure why.  [chuckles]  With my father's family, you see, they were—maybe they came over earlier and they were in business, a manufacturer.

ER:  This still—the dress—

MP:  The dress manufacturing and—where my father worked—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —most of his life, although his younger brother went to Harvard.  But it seemed to me, growing up, we were not as close to my father's family.  But—so what it was, there was my father on the—grandfather on the maternal side had a pants factory but after a while he didn't do so well in that, although he said some people who became very wealthy later on were employees of his.

ER:  Oh, really?

MP:  And on Sunday they would cover over all the sewing machines and they would have weddings there.

ER:  In the factory?

MP:  In the factory, which was down near the Charles River, near where the Mass General [Hospital] is, in that area.

ER:  Wow.

MP:  Well, there was a time when my grandmother thought that the family—they had eight children—that they should augment the family resources.  And she started a creamery business.

ER:  Wow.

MP:  Where people would come—

ER:  On their own?

MP:  —and cream, yes.

ER:  Wow.

MP:  But my mother was the one to help her.  And my mother as a very young girl would—she was maybe in grammar school at that time, would help her.  And they would get up very early in the morning and people would come to get their milk and their cream.

ER:  So did farmers bring—did she have relationships with farmers—

MP:  Yes.

ER:  —and they would bring—

MP:  They would bring in—and bring in.  And then my grandmother was very enterprising because she went to Houghton Dutton.  Houghton Dutton was where you bought dishes in those days.  It's on Beacon Street now, downtown near the Parker House.  And she would buy dishes and if people bought a certain amount of her produce, they would get a plate.

ER:  Wow!  So entrepreneurial.

MP:  Very entrepreneurial for those days, but as a result, my mother went only through grammar school and never went to high school.

ER:  Oh, really?  Because she worked in the business with—

MP:  She was the one who worked, whereas her sisters—her younger sister went to law school and was one of the early women lawyers of Boston.

ER:  Wow!

MP:  And—but my mother who was I thought, you know, in retrospect, very smart and capable and certainly today she would have been—she would have had quite a career. But she was a housewife.  She was the one who took care of her parents when they got older, and eventually my grandfather went into the real estate business.  He bought real estate down on Columbus Avenue—Tremont Street.

ER:  Right.

MP:  That's where the blacks were at that time.

ER:  In the South End.

MP:  In the South End.  And my mother would collect rent.  As he got older, my mother would collect rent.  In those days you collected rent every week.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And then I remember going with her at times.

ER:  What was your mother's name?

MP:  Her name was Wasserman—Anna Wasserman.  And she was a small, little person. My father was quite tall and my mother always said she was so glad that she had a tall

daughter, although I must say now, in my present family, I seem to be the short one. But I was, you know, 5, 5 ½ and that was tall, and she said she always wanted to be tall, but she was on the short side. But she was a wonderful cook and she loved—she did beautiful crocheting. In those days, she used to crochet tams—lovely berets—

ER: Wow.

MP: —for everyone in the family. And then when—her cooking was wonderful, too.

ER: Yeah, you've mentioned that a few times. Do you remember some of—

MP: Yes.

ER: —your favorites that she made?

MP: Well, she had a 12-egg sponge cake that was –

ER: Wow.

MP: —as high as could be and light as a feather.

ER: Wow.

MP: And she was known as the maker of the wonderful sponge cake. Now that sponge cake could be turned into strawberry shortcake.

ER: Right.

MP: And—or peach shortcake, and she was renowned for that. In fact, when Abe Sachar came to be the president of Brandeis and moved here, and the Hadassah women—my mother was a great Hadassah person—they asked her to make one of her famous sponge cakes for the tea—

ER:  Oh!

MP:  —that they were having for Abe Sachar and his wife, Thelma.

ER:  Yeah.  Very nice.  So she was a good baker in particular.

MP:  Mmm.  Very good.  We were not a kosher family—

ER:  Oh, now that—

MP:  —ever.

ER:  Was that unusual then?

MP:  Well, in my mother's group it was not unusual.  Her friends were similar.  We went to—you know, we would go to temple on High Holidays.

ER:  At Mishkan Tefilla.

MP:  Mishkan Tefilla.

ER:  Even after you moved to Brookline, would—

MP:  After we moved to Brookline, yes.  Well, what happened is that Mishkan Tefilla moved too.

ER:  They moved to Newton.

MP:  They moved to Newton—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —and eventually, so that's where they went.

ER:  How active were your parents in the temple or were—or you—

MP:  Yes.

ER:  —other than going to Hebrew, you know, Hebrew school.

MP:  Right.  I was not active at all.

ER:  And your mother?

MP:  And my mother belonged to the Sisterhood.

ER:  Right.

MP:  But her main interest was Hadassah.  She was a great Hadassah person and I remember when they had the Hadassah donor luncheon.  She would stay up the night before with her cronies, planning the tables.

ER:  Yes.

MP:  Very important, who sat where.

ER:  [laughs]  Right.

MP:  My grandmother, by the way, who was quite a person in her right too, belonged to what they call the Ladies Helping Hand, and that was her group and they were the original Sisterhood of Temple Israel—

ER:  Oh.

MP:  —of—not—Beth Israel Hospital, not Temple Israel.

ER:  And the friends at Beth Israel?

MP:  Beth Israel.

ER:  Right.

MP:  Yes, they had a place on Townsend Street and so forth.

ER:  And what was her name?

MP:  Her name was Rebecca Wasserman and she and my grandfather, David, lived in Roxbury—

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  —on Walnut Avenue and we used to go over every Saturday for lunch, it seemed to me, and Sundays we were there.  Our social life, it was a very family oriented—

ER:  Right.

MP:  And so did everybody else—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —go to their parents'...  [laughs]

ER:  House.

MP:  I remember it was quite a walk from where we lived.  At that point we were in Brookline and—no, we were in Roxbury.

ER:  Now, did your family observe the Sabbath?  Did they—

MP:  My mother always had a wonderful Friday night dinner and she always had candles, which she prayed over—

ER: Right.

MP: —before the Friday night Sabbath meal. That we did have and we often had friends who came for dinner—Friday night dinner. And it was always a very nice evening—family evening.

ER: That's great. Now, do you remember at that time in your life running into antisemitism at all, I mean—

MP: You know, I really don't, at that stage, because we were more or less in a Jewish neighborhood.

ER: Right.

MP: And our activities—our social activities were going to Hebrew School and the temple and I do not, in the early days—I went to the William Lloyd Garrison School—I do not remember. I remember in the kindergarten sitting in a circle and one of the little girls, when the teacher was asking about your grandparents and parents, this little girl said, "I have a Jewish grandmother and a Yiddish grandmother." [laughs]

ER: [laughs] That's funny. Wow.

MP: Well, my parents, of course, were born and English was their language but at home their parents spoke both Yiddish and English. So when my parents didn't want us to understand what they were talking about—

ER: Right.

MP: —of course, they lapsed into Yiddish.

ER: [laughs]

MP: So we picked up some choice phrases.

ER: Right, right. Now how old were you when you moved to Brookline?

MP: Let's see. I started Girls' Latin School. I went to junior high school in Roxbury, and then started the ninth grade at Girls' Latin School and we moved that year. So I would have been, what? Eleven or twelve.

ER: Maybe, Yeah, twelve, thirteen.

MP: Thirteen. I did start school early because I graduated at 16.

ER: Oh.

MP: And that was because my mother knew the kindergarten teacher and so they accepted me early in kindergarten. [chuckles] But—

ER: Do you think in those years your mother would—and your father would have treated you differently had you been a son? You know, you had talked earlier about being a tomboy.

MP: Yes, I think my brothers were given more freedom.

ER: Yeah.

MP: I mean, I was supposed to come home before dark and my mother did have a lot of fears, and—which she sort of imposed on me.

ER: Right.

MP: And I was at the other end of the continuum. I mean, nothing bothered me. I didn't mind, you know, walking, being out in the dark or anything of that sort. So that—you know, she was concerned and I think had a difficult time with me when I was a teenager, trying to rein me in. [chuckles]

ER:  Right, right.  [chuckles]

MP:  But we became very good friends after I was married, certainly.

ER:  So you moved to Brookline; you went to Girls' Latin.

MP:  School.

ER:  School.

MP:  And then we—

ER:  And even though you were living in Brookline, you went to high school in Boston. Was that —

MP:  Now, then I had started Girls' Latin School in Roxbury and continued when we moved to Brookline and I remember my parents had to pay 300 or $350 to send me to a public school.

ER:  Right.  Right.

MP:  And there it was a—they didn't have car pools in those day and we walked, carrying lots of heavy books.  And one of my very good friends, Mary Lahey would meet me. Mary Leahy's parents and the Kennedy's lived back to each other and they were good friends—that I remembered.  Mary was a good Catholic, a darling, and we remained best friends for many years.  Many years later, she was one of maybe nine children, and we would meet and walk together because she came from a little different part of Brookline.

ER:  You walked all the way from Brookline to Roxbury to—

MP:  Yes.  Oh, I—Well, we lived—yes.  Yes, we lived on Thatcher Street so it meant walking to Longwood Avenue—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —and then walking down Longwood Avenue.  So maybe it was two miles at the most.

ER:  Yeah, it wasn't really—right, right.

MP:  And in those days, everybody walked except that we had heavy, heavy books to carry, because we had so much homework.

ER:  Right.  Were you a good student?

MP:  I would say I was a fair student.  I was in the middle—I would say in the middle.  Math was my worst subject, but I was good in languages and Latin.  I was very good in Latin.  We had to have Latin every year and that paid off when my children had to have Latin—

ER:  [laughs]

MP:  —and I could be their tutor.

ER:  Right.

MP:  They were very impressed.

ER:  Right.

MP:  At the time I wasn't sure whether Latin—Latin was a dead language.  [chuckles]

ER:  Right.

MP:  But even today, I can tackle words that I may not know the meaning of and figure out if the background was Latin.

ER: Right.

MP: And it's amazing. It really helped me in writing and English and—

ER: Definitely. I think it's sort of a misnomer to say that it's a dead language in that way.

MP: Right, it isn't.

ER: Right.

MP: It isn't.

ER: Right.

MP: And of course in those days, learning was memorizing.

ER: Right.

MP: And it's quite different today. When our children went to school you had to do a little bit of memorizing but that was—that was Latin School. If you could memorize and give back what you had memorized—

ER: Right.

MP: —without maybe really completely understanding it, you got by.

ER: You got by. Now tell me, what was your social life like when you were in high school. Did you—people date or—

MP: Well, it was a girls' school and the only guys that I met were my brother's friends.

ER: Were you in—do you remember at that stage going to temple for social functions or—

MP:  There weren't so many in those days.

ER:  Right.

MP:  Temples were not what they are today.

ER:  Right.

MP:  But I do remember going to a dance there and someone whom I had met at Hebrew School, one of those ten or twelve young men, invited me, but I did very little—I had many friends, many girlfriends but not many boyfriends in those days.

ER:  Well, would your parents have allowed you to go out with a boy anyway?  I mean, my sense is—is that was non—

MP:  No, that was a taboo.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  A no.  No, I do not remember going out on dates.  Maybe it was once in a while, not very serious but in those days girls were girls and they kept to their own.

ER:  So what did you do for entertainment then?  I mean, did you—was your mother—did she want around the house?  I'm, did she, you know—

MP:  Well, first of all, you know, I had many lessons.

ER:  Right.

MP:  I was always taking lessons.

ER:  [unclear]

MP:  Piano lessons came along.

ER:  Oh, so you—how long did you study piano?

MP:  For many years.

ER:  Really?

MP:  And the teachers always said that I had great talent and of course that kept my mother going.  [chuckles]

ER:  Right.  [chuckles]

MP:  And I remember one teacher, you would get gold stars and if you had a certain number of gold stars you would get a pen—a pocket pen.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  And I did get one, and we used to practice.  And later on it got to be a little troublesome and—but my mother insisted.  And we had the piano—the piano that I could show you in the living room is the one that we used, and all three of us took lessons.  And then we had a teacher, Mr. Becker, who would come to the house.  This started in Roxbury and he was really—we didn't really like him.  He was much too serious and we didn't think he was a very good teacher so the three of us would have lessons, one after another.  And practicing, by the way, my mother sat at the piano with us—

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  —to make sure that we were practicing.  [chuckles]  She was very ambitious for her children.  And I remember once when my brother—I had had my lesson and my brother, my younger brother Lester was having his lesson, and I crawled in from another room under the piano and untied the lacings of Mr. [unclear]—

ER:  Oh, boy.

MP:  He wasn't very happy about that.

ER:  You were quite precocious.  [laughs]

MP:  I was mischievous.

ER:  Now, it sounds to me as if—you know, you had—you were very fortunate.  You had a very comfortable life as a—you know, growing up.

MP:  Yes.

ER:  And—

MP:  Yes, we were not deprived in any way.  We were always taught that my father worked very hard for what they had, but that they wanted their children to have the best.

ER:  Did you have much contact with more recently arrived Jewish immigrants?  You know, people who came more—

MP:  Yes.

ER:  —around the '20s and people who really came as peasants from small villages.

MP:  They were called greenhorns.

ER:  Greenhorns.  [chuckles]

MP:  My family called them greenhorns.  [chuckles]

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  Yes, it seemed to me that, in my grandmother's house, for example, nieces and nephews would come later and they often would stay with her—

ER:  Yes.

MP:  —until they could find themselves—that was—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —a usual kind of thing.  And so there were some members of the family, not close but remote—

ER:  Yes.

MP:  —who would come and we would meet them and—and at school, I mean, you never knew—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —which parents came when.

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  And we didn’t really care.

ER:  Right.

MP:  I mean, we were all—of course we all wanted to be Americanized.

ER:  Right.

MP:  There was no such thing as diversity, ethnicity.

ER:  No.

MP:  We wanted to be as American as we possibly could, but I did not remember any antisemitism because we were in almost—it was almost like a ghetto in a way.

ER:  But even in high school?  Even when you were in—

MP:  In high school there were—my best friend was Catholic.

ER:  Right.

MP:  Irish Catholic, and we—you know, we loved each other's family rituals and respected them.  And so I don't remember any antisemitic incidents.  I'm sure there were some, but I probably repressed them.

ER:  Right, right.  And then right from high school you went to Smith.  You went out to Northampton?

MP:  Yes.

ER:  Can you talk a little bit about that, how that came about?

MP:  Yes.

ER:  How your decision—who made the decision and—

MP:  Yes.  Well, I had applied to three or four schools.  I remember Goucher was a fallback school.  Pembroke—these are all—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —girls' part of Brown.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And—

ER:  Hopkins.

MP:  —Hopkins.

ER:  Right.  Now, so it was accepted—expected that you would go to college.

MP:  Oh, absolutely.  My brother already was in—at Harvard—Warren.

ER:  But that was really unusual.

MP:  No, it was not so unusual for that time.  I mean, many—all our contemporaries were going to—they went to Boston Latin School or Girls' Latin School—

ER:  Oh, your female contemporaries went off to college.

MP:  Females did as well as males.  Now, there were some members in my class at Latin School who didn't go.  Some went to kindergarten school.  Some went to secretarial schools.

ER:  Right.

MP:  You know, I don't remember the percentage, but at Latin School a high percentage went to—many went to Radcliffe at that time.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And I was happy to get away from home.

ER:  [laughs]

MP:  And Smith seemed to be a goodly distance—not too far.

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  But, you know, my parents weren't coming up every week.  And at that time we were more affluent.  I had gone to camp in the summers, of course.

ER:  Right, where did you go to camp?

MP:  I went to Camp Somerset in Oakland, Maine at that time.

ER:  Were there many Jewish girls there, or—

MP:  It was a Jewish camp.

ER:  It was a Jewish camp.

MP:  That was a Jewish camp and many of my friends in the neighborhood went to that camp.  I went there for maybe five or six years and then became a counselor.

ER:  Great, great!

MP:  And even when I—I think when I was a freshman at Smith they needed—one of the counselors had left, and they needed to have someone for the month of August and I remember going.

ER:  Yeah.  So, now what year did you graduate from high school and go on to college?

MP:  I graduated high school in 1930—

ER:  Okay.

MP:  —and college in 1934.

ER:  All right.  Okay, now I'm—so yes, historically I'm trying to get a picture.  Okay, so now talk to me a little bit about what your college years were like in terms of your own independence or your own sort of evolvement as a young woman, and how much freedom your parents gave you or how much freedom the school gave you.

MP:  Oh, not much.

ER: Right. [chuckles]

MP: In those days—

ER: Such a different story today.

MP: —at Smith. Oh! At Smith you had to be in your dorm at 10:00 and 11:00 on Saturdays. And you could only take a few weekends and they didn't even want you to go home for Thanksgiving, because you had classes the next day. And I remember one time I really wanted to be home for Thanksgiving and somebody who had a rumble seat had room for me. And so what I did was, I had a friend--. I had a psychology class the Friday after Thanksgiving and it was a big lecture, and there were maybe over a hundred people. And really, the professor didn't know who was who, as long as the seat was filled—

ER: Right. Right. [laughs]

MP: And so a friend of mine sat in my seat. Now, that was not a very nice thing to do but, you know, I—when I made up my mind—

ER: Right.

MP: —to do something, I did it. [laughs] And—within the framework of the law.

ER: Right. So what were those years like for you—those college years.

MP: Well, now freshman year, I think I felt there were few—there were fewer Jewish girls. I don't remember what the percentage was, but that was the first time that I felt that my Jewishness—I was not, you know—there were a group of us who were friends, some Jewish girls, some non-Jews in the dormitory. But there were many girls who came from private schools.

ER: Right.

MP: And they formed their own cliques. There are a lot of cliques at Smith and I think that my freshman year I felt—I felt it. And I think I was a little—not homesick but, you know, it was away from home—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —really for the first time.

ER: Right, right.

MP: Although I couldn't wait to get away from home, but made—you know, made friends, and got through that freshman year, but I think the freshman was not the happiest.

ER: Yeah, it's a hard time. I think it's a major transition.

MP: It was a big transition, which—I mean, I always put on a good front—

ER: Right.

MP: —but I think inwardly, as I look back, it was not the easiest. Sophomore year was better. I stayed in the same dorm and then decided that I wanted to take my junior year abroad, and in those days, if you majored in French and took a test that they gave you and passed, you could go your junior year. So I took all the necessary prerequisites—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —in French and passed the test, and was able to go to France for my junior year.

ER: Oh, how wonderful! So where did you go?

MP:  I went to the Sorbonne—went to—in Paris.

ER:  And you lived in Paris?

MP:  First we lived in—we lived in Grenoble.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  We went there for two months.  In those days you went over by boat—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —and it took six days.  And I went over in the Champlain and there were—in August and there were four of us—two uppers and two lowers.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  And we landed in—where did we land?  Was it Cherbourg?  Maybe Cherbourg. And after spending a few days in Paris, we—staying at a convent [laughs]—

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  —we then went to Grenoble and there we lived with French families en pensions and I had a roommate and we lived with a wonderful French lady, Madame Bousier, and we were right on the—oh, it was a wonderful experience.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  And that year was really an outstanding year.

ER:  Right.

MP:  I could spend all the time talking about it.

ER: You were there for a whole year—for two semesters.

MP: Went in August and came back end of July.

ER: Oh! How wonderful! Did your parents come to visit at all while you were there, or—

MP: At the very end my mother came by boat—

ER: Wow!

MP: —with my aunt—two aunts, and one aunt had a beautiful dress shop at the Hotel Biltmore in Providence, and so she came to do some buying. And my mother and another aunt, Aunt Gladys, came by boat and we traveled around for two or three weeks, went to Switzerland and so forth. In those days, you went by train—

ER: Right, right.

MP: —and came back—came back on a—I've forgotten what line.

ER: So you spent a few months in Grenoble and then you went into—

MP: Two months in Grenoble—

ER: Right.

MP: —and that was really getting used to the language.

ER: An orientation of sorts.

MP: Orientation of Grenoble. It was a beautiful place. It was at the foot of the Alps.

ER: Oh!

MP: You could see the snow-capped Alps.

ER:  Wow!

MP:  It's changed a great deal over the years but it was a really lovely little town and Madame Bousier spoke only French, and so I used to sit at the table with a dictionary and—in the beginning.  Afterwards, I became very fluent.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And after a while you begin to dream in French, think in French.

ER:  [laughs]

MP:  So we were well prepared for Paris.  We came to Paris.  I lived—

ER:  Do you remember the—I was just in Paris so that's why I'm asking.  Do you remember the street you lived on?

MP:  [unclear] Montparnasse at the corner of Rue de Beaugerard on the Left Bank and everyday we would walk to the Sorbonne and I would go through the Jardin de Luxembourg—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —and come back for lunch and then go back again in the afternoon.  I think we had to be there at 8:00 in the morning.  And so we had courses.  They were called cours de civilisation.  And there were other students who were taking these courses and—but we also had supplementary courses.  Smith had an apartment on Rue Bonaparte where we had a few classrooms and there were three French professors who went with us from Smith, and they stayed with us for the whole year.

ER:  Oh, so you weren't really on your own without adult—

MP:  No.

ER:  —supervision, so to speak.

MP:  Well, the families with whom we lived—

ER:  Right.

MP:  We all were in different families—were told—but we, our Madame [unclear], who was a war widow and had two teenage sons was very liberal.  And she would let us do things that maybe we weren't supposed to do.  [chuckles]

ER:  [laughs]  Now, at that time, was your being Jewish in any way—did that set you apart in any way from—

MP:  The others?

ER:  —the others or in your French family or—

MP:  Yeah, there were about maybe five—or there were I think almost forty of us who went that year.

ER:  Wow!

MP:  And maybe there were about eight, maybe ten who were Jewish.  And there we were all good friends because we were a small group.

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  And that didn't bother me.

ER:  And in France it was no—you never—I mean, your French family, were they aware that you were Jewish or was there any—

MP:  I'm not sure that Madame knew.

ER:  Right.

MP:  I mean, we didn't make any declarations.

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  And she didn't ask us.

ER:  Right.  So there was no expectation that you would go to church on Sunday or anything like that?

MP:  No, no.  I think she went to church.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  She was a good Catholic.  You know, most French people were Catholic.

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  And some of the students were put with Jewish families, by the way.

ER:  Oh, in Paris?

MP:  One or two of the families—I remember there was a Levy [?] family.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  And two roommates lived there.  So probably it wasn't by chance that they were put with that Jewish family, but my roommate, Bernice Gordon and I—Bernice Frieze now (you might know Michael Frieze, her son)—we were together, both in Grenoble and in Paris.  And vacations, we were on our own—

ER:  Oh, how wonderful!

MP:  —to go, and I took a bicycle trip.

ER:  So what was that like for you?  It must—

MP:  Oh, it was wonderful!

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  Wonderful.  And I had some French friends too—boyfriends, who were going to school in Paris.  One young man went to the Ecole Coloniale, which prepared you to be a magistrate in one of the colonies of France, and he went to Saigon eventually.

ER:  Wow.

MP:  Now, I do, yes, and I remember, I went on a bicycle trip my spring vacation.  That was the time of the bank holidays.  Depression had set in but our tuition was already paid for and I didn't want to spend a great deal because I had been getting letters from home.  In those days you didn't call.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  You sent letters and it took ten days for the letters to come—

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  —that things were tightening up, that there was a bank holiday, and so I decided to go on a bicycle trip and ending up at Raymond's family home, which was in a little town not too far from the Chateau country. So—

[END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE]

ER:  —said you were on a bicycle tour.  I'm curious, I mean, what was your—what were your parent's expectations of you at that time, just—it seems like—it's amazing to me that

they just kind of let you go, you know?

MP: Well, it wasn't easy. It wasn't easy but I had a friend who was a friend of my mother's too, Edith Berman. She had been to Smith and she's the one.

ER: Oh.

MP: And my mother, you know, would respect her.

ER: Trusted her?

MP: Yes, she trusted her and Edith said, "Ann, you've got to let Muriel go. It would be a wonderful experience." It was not easy to convince my parents.

ER: Yeah.

MP: And—but they finally acquiesced and let me go. And Edith was really very helpful.

ER: That's great.

MP: Poor Edith is gone now but she was very helpful.

ER: Now, was she your age or your—

MP: No, she was older. She had already graduated Smith and was married.

ER: Oh, right, right.

MP: So—

ER: So she was between you and your mother, generationally.

MP: Yes, yes, and good friends of both of us.

ER:  Great, great.

MP:  And I think my mother, you know, respected her and finally agreed that it would be all right and that she was assured that we were going to be well chaperoned.  Well, what happened is in this pension where I lived during vacation time, some—she would have other people coming to stay in the apartment from—she must have been on some lists.

ER:  Yes.

MP:  These were Rhodes Scholars—American guys who came from England and they were coming to—

ER:  [laughs]

MP:  —Paris for their vacation.

ER:  Vacation.

MP:  And they were free as could be, and—

ER:  And there you were.

MP:  And there—we were there.  And one of them was Charlie somebody or other.  They were Midwesterners.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  And so my roommate decided to go to Spain and Charlie, he wanted to go to Spain too, so he went.  I mean, you know, I think they were just friends.  At any rate, Kritchell Parsons was this tall, slow-speaking—you know, you would look at him and say, “He’s not a Rhodes Scholar, but a very nice guy,” and I wanted to go bicycling and he wanted to go bicycling.  And I didn’t want to go alone.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And so we decided to go together.  And it was the most platonic, believe me, but foolishly, you know, we had taken pictures and I sent a few pictures home.

ER:  Oh.

MP:  And my parents were indignant and they wrote a letter to Madame [unclear] and said, “You are supposed to be chaperoning our daughter and what’s going on here?  We are very, very concerned.”

ER:  Right.

MP:  And they didn’t have to be.  They did not—excuse me a minute.  [tape turned off/on].

ER:  We can we talk about your daughter.  That’s fine.

MP:  Well.

ER:  We don’t have to stay chronologically.  It’s sometimes a little easier, I think—

MP:  Yeah.

ER:  —for both of us but—

MP:  Sure, sure.

ER:  —you can talk about your daughter also.

MP:  Yes.

ER:  She works at Kennedy School.

MP:  Yes, Joan works at the Kennedy School.

ER:  What does she do there?

MP:  She's an administrator but she's considered a member of the faculty, and she has been there for a number of years now and worked with Mary Jo Bane in Health and Human Services.  Mary Jo Bane was called to Washington.  Bill Clinton was on their Board and so Joan—

ER:  Great!

MP:  —had a connection with him, and Mary Jo has now resigned because of the new welfare—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —laws and she's come back.  But Joan also is working for Professor John Newhouse.  He is a health economist, world famous, and is at the School of Public Health as well as the Kennedy School.  And Joan also has another job.  She's head of the Ph.D. program at the School of Public Health.  She started that program, and she also is the director of what they call the Inter-Faculty Initiative at Harvard where all the graduate schools are working together now, rather than each one separately.

ER:  That's great.  Wow, she's a busy person.

MP:  Well, she's a great daughter.  [chuckles]

ER:  Wonderful, wonderful.  So, I want to get back to your time in Paris and college.

MP:  Yes.

ER:  I know as I talk to you and look at you now—

MP: Oof.

ER: —I mean, you're a very attractive woman and I would think back then—

MP: Yes.

ER: —you were quite a beauty.

MP: Well, I don't think I was a beauty.

ER: Well, what did you think—I mean, how did you see yourself back then? I mean—

MP: Well, I was—you know—

ER: Well, you're tall and you're slender and, you know, I would think you, you know, were very attractive and—

MP: Well, I did have, you know, friends and I, you know—I thought I was okay.

ER: [laughs] Did you have light hair, dark hair?

MP: Brown hair.

ER: Brown hair.

MP: Brown hair, and, yeah—I—you know, I didn't really think I was that attractive; I just didn't. But I guess I accepted whatever I was.

ER: Right.

MP: And I did have friends. I had this Raymond Bonet, who was a—he was at the Ecole Coloniale. He was a good friend and then I had another one, Paul Drulineau who was in agrinomical studies and he had come from the south—[Lascautat?], which is—where is that? It's near the Cote d'Azure. And he was a very good friend, so, you know, I had a

lot of dates in Paris and that was great fun. And Madame Lamond [?] was willing to let me go out on dates.

ER: Great. Well, you must have felt like quite the sophisticate then.

MP: So I was—you know, I felt quite liberated. [chuckles]

ER: And there was—now, this was in the early ‘30s.

MP: ’33.

ER: So the war was not—

MP: No.

ER: Can you tell me how the Depression, the impending war—

MP: Yes, I do remember this, that Madame Lamond of course, who had lost her husband in the First World War, hated the Germans.

ER: Yeah.

MP: And I had a friend. He was really a distant relative of the family who lived in Cologne, Germany and I had met him in America. And he came to Paris a couple of times—Emil, his name was. And she didn’t want to let him in the house to pick me up. And I could understand but I thought it was a little foolish, because Emil had nothing to do with the First World War. At any rate, Emil’s family invited me to come and stay with them for Christmas vacation. So this was the end of ’32 and the beginning of ’33. I stayed with them, had a week, took the train and it was an all-night trip and ended up in Cologne, and stayed with Emil and his family. And at that time, on the next street was the headquarters—the Nazi headquarters.

ER: Oh, really, wow!

MP: And they said, you know, not to walk on that street. You have to be very careful—the “brown shirts,” they were called.

ER: Right, wow.

MP: I think they were the “brown”—yes.

ER: Was that true for everybody or just if you were Jewish?

MP: If you were Jewish.

ER: Yeah.

MP: I mean, his family were very much aware—

ER: Right.

MP: —of this Nazi group that was growing—

ER: Thugs.

MP: And so we always avoided walking on that street. And on my way back to Paris at the end of visiting with Emil and his family, and his family liked me and they would have liked me for their son, but we were good friends but that was it—on the train going back, and I remember staying up all night talking with German students who were leaving Germany to go to college in Paris. Paris had sort of an open enrollment.

ER: Right.

MP: You could just transfer and they were getting out of Germany and going to France, because they saw the handwriting on the wall.

ER: Wow.

MP: That was early on—the beginning of, you know, 1933.

ER: Was there any sense of what would happen with the Jews? I mean, was—were there already—

MP: Yes, the Jews were—yes, there were already incidents.

ER: Right.

MP: And antisemitism from the start with the Nazi Party.

ER: Right.

MP: And so they were getting out. They were the lucky ones.

ER: Yeah, what happened with your cousin—with your—

MP: They got out.

ER: They did?

MP: Yeah, Emil's sister and her husband came over and they came to Boston to live. I think they came, maybe '36—something like that. And the parents came.

ER: Oh, they did; good.

MP: The parents came and Emil came. And Emil eventually married and lived in New York. So it was very much in the—in the air at the time.

ER: Right.

MP: Although in Paris we didn't feel it.

ER: Yeah.

MP: But in Germany it was very—we were very aware of it.

ER: Right, because in the States—had you been in the States all that time, it was—you know, I think there was some talk but—

MP: Not much.

ER: —you didn't know.

MP: No, no.

ER: So then, okay, you came back to the States, you finished at Smith, and then what happened? When did you meet your husband? Was that around the college years or—

MP: Well—

ER: Fill me in.

MP: Let me see. How did that come about? I had—a friend of my mother's—I think through my mother—she had learned of a young man whom she thought—a friend of my mother's thought that I should meet a young man.

ER: Now, you were—how old were you?

MP: Now, I was—I graduated at 20 and—let's see, I was 21, I guess; I was 21.

ER: What were you doing at that time?

MP: What I did was, my aunt—my youngest aunt, Gertrude, was a lawyer—a woman lawyer and she was doing title examining. In those days, women lawyers were given a very limited—

ER: Yeah.

MP:  —kind of work.  But she was quite an expert in her field.  So she said, “Come on in,”—and to the Registry of Deeds, “and I will teach you the title examining and you will be able to earn some money, and you might find it interesting.”  So—

ER:  Excuse me.  Did you have any career expectations for yourself?  I mean, were you—

MP:  Yes, I wanted to go to School of Social Work.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And—but my parents said no, and I was a little—what’s the word—submissive—

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  —maybe, in that respect.  And—but then they—later on they said, “Well, if you wanted to, you could go to the Simmons School of Social Work,” and by the time I had applied, it was too late.

ER:  Oh.

MP:  So instead I went to the Prince School.  The Prince School was a graduate school of Simmons and that was a one-year course—

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  —in which you would get a Master’s in—MS—I already an MA—I already had a B—I had a BA—

ER:  Yeah, and what was the—

MP:  From Smith.

ER: —Master's—

MP: No, it was a BS, I think—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —for one year. And you could—you could go into the field of retailing—

ER: I see.

MP: —not as a buyer, but more in the personnel area.

ER: Yeah.

MP: You could do the buying too, and that, you know, appealed to them and I just thought, 'Well, you know, I'll take that course for a year'—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —and see what happens. So I did that.

ER: At Simmons?

MP: At Simmons, and living at home.

ER: But there were a lot of Jewish women at Simmons then. I mean—

MP: A lot.

ER: A lot, yeah.

MP: Oh, yeah.

ER: Both of my aunts went to Simmons.

MP: Really?

ER: Right, it was sort of the place for intelligent—

MP: Young women who wanted to have a vocational—

ER: Right.

MP: —outlook. I mean, it wasn't considered as liberal arts as some of the other colleges.

ER: I see.

MP: But you get a Liberal Arts as well as a vocational interest in library or whatever. And well, so I had met a young man through a friend of my mothers, and his name was Dick Friedman. And he was a very pleasant, nice guy and lived in Brookline too. And we began to go out on dates. And he often talked about his friend, David Pokross, who I never could meet because he was always either working or busy or something. But I did meet David's roommate, who was George Gross. George Gross and David both were from out of town. David came from Fall River; George came from Pennsylvania. And they had an apartment together in Brookline on Beacon Street. And we were invited to—we were invited to a supper party at David's house—David's apartment, for Lewis Untermeyer—

ER: Oh.

MP: —who had come to town and was reading poetry at Harvard, and David's friend, Merrill Moore, was going to have a party for him. Merrill was a psychiatrist but he was a poet too, and then it was quite an elaborate evening, which I almost turned down because I didn't want to lead Dick on any further, because he became very serious and I wasn't. So anyhow, we met David that night at his apartment where there were maybe

30 people.

ER: Right, right.

MP: It was in the evening after the Russian ballet or whatever, and then we said goodbye and we went to get Dick's car. Dick's car—he had parked it on the top of a cliff—some parking lot, and it was sort of parked over. Anyhow, you could not drive it; it needed to be towed back.

ER: [chuckles]

MP: So we went back to David's apartment and said, "Could you give us a lift?" And David said, "Yes." By that time everybody had gone. And so he gave us a lift, and he took Dick home first. [both laugh] Then he took me. Dick was not far from me. And so then he said, you know, "Maybe we could see each other again," and I was sort of noncommittal, and that was it. But that was the beginning. So it was really to his friend, Dick. And by the way, Dick's son, Richard Friedman, is the one whom you may know.

ER: Oh, from General Cinema? Is that—

MP: Not General Cinema, but he's the one who—he owns the Charles Hotel—

ER: Oh, right, right.

MP: —in [hotel group?] and has a beautiful home in Martha's Vineyard where Clinton stayed.

ER: Where Clinton stayed. Oh, that's [chuckles]—

MP: So that was how I met David. And David in the beginning, you know, was not interested in being very serious. He was a hard-working lawyer at that time.

ER: He was out of—he was finished with school.

MP: He was finished with school. He was seven years older than I.

ER: Yeah.

MP: Six or seven and—seven. And was working for Peabody-Brown and would work nights and so forth. He would call me at the last minute and say, “Are you free?” And of course I would try to save the time, because I knew that his pattern of not knowing until the last minute.

ER: Right. [chuckles]

MP: I would turn down other dates and that upset my parents.

ER: So you liked him though.

MP: So I liked him from the start.

ER: Start, yeah.

MP: From the start, I knew that the chemistry was right.

ER: Right. And how did your—and your parents were upset that you were kind of waiting around for him. But did they like him? I mean, did they—

MP: Once they—

ER: Yeah. [chuckles]

MP: Yes, once they got over his pattern of—

ER: Right.

MP: —waiting for the last minute.

ER:  And you were living at home then?

MP:  I was living at home on Thatcher Street in Brookline.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And so, but once they got to know him, I mean, they loved him and my father changed lawyers—

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  —as soon as David came into the family and all of that.  I mean, David has been really the pillar, the mainstay of our whole family, you know, even before Lester's family and Warren's family—

ER:  That's wonderful.

MP:  —and my parents.  And so, he is that kind of a person.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  If you met him you'd know what I meant, right from the start.

ER:  I'm sure; I'm sure. Now, what can you tell me about your wedding?

MP:  Oh, my gosh!  The wedding—that was—

ER:  Or, excuse me—or do you want to tell me more about your courtship?

MP:  No.

ER:  Or anything else, I don't want to—

MP:  No, David was a sailor.  He had a boat.

ER: Wow!

MP: He had a third interest in a boat with Dick Friedman—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —and Clary Levin, who lost his life in the Second World War.

ER: Yeah.

MP: Very sad. So we went sailing.

ER: And where was the boat moored?

MP: The boat was moored in Boston at the Columbia Yacht Club and David would spend, you know, weekends working on that boat and I was invited to go, and one time it was going to be an overnight trip to Marblehead. And my parents really didn't want me to go. You don't go overnight.

ER: Right.

MP: And I said, "Well, there are going to be other people there—lots of other people." Finally they did. It wasn't easy. [laughs]

ER: Right.

MP: But anyhow, the wedding was a noon wedding at the Copley Plaza.

ER: Right. And what year were you married?

MP: 1936.

ER: Right.

MP:  June 17, 1936, and we just had our 60th wedding anniversary.

ER:  That's wonderful!  That's great!

MP:  Hard to believe.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And that was quite a party.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  David wanted all his partners—all the—he was an associate at that time.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  He wasn't a partner yet.  So Mr. Peabody—W. Robin Peabody and his wife came.  I'm sure it was the first Jewish wedding—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —they had ever been to, and Charley Storey and his wife, Susan, and Charley Riley and his wife—and David had many clients—non-Jewish clients who were invited to that wedding.

ER:  How large was your wedding?

MP:  Well, it's, you know, it's hard to say but I'm sure it was—I don't know—150 people maybe.

ER:  Wow, and do you remember who married you?

MP:  I certainly do—Rabbi Rabinowitz—the rabbi whom I had "attacked." [Both laugh]  He was our family rabbi.  And—

ER:  Yes, right.  He was from Mishkan Tefilla.

MP:  He was Mishkan Tefilla, and David didn't have a—David came from Fall River—

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  —so he had no affiliation.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  And that worked out just fine.  And it was a lovely wedding and unfortunately, we didn't take pictures.  We have no pictures of it—

ER:  Oh, you're kidding!

MP:  —in those days.  But there was a picture of me as a bride and I looked like a scared rabbit, I think.  [Both laugh]

ER:  And so it was a luncheon.  You had a—

MP:  So it was a—yes, a lunch at 12:30--

ER:  Right.

MP:  --or one, and very nicely done.  You can be sure that my mother saw that every detail in the flowers and the menu and everything was really great.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  And so, then we went to Europe on our honeymoon.

ER:  Oh, wonderful!

MP:  And that was great, and one of the highlights was when I met Mr. Peabody and told him that—he said, “Where are you going?” and I said, “We’re going to England and France.”  And he said, “How long are you going to be gone?”  And I said, “Three weeks—three weeks.”  And he said, “Well, I think David could take another week or so.”

ER:  Oh, very nice.

MP:  So that gave us more time.

ER:  [laughs] Great.

MP:  And—so, we went to New London.  That night we went to New London, Connecticut, went down on the train and stayed at the Hotel Griswold (which doesn’t exist anymore) and watched the Harvard/Yale races the next day.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  And then we went to New York and stayed overnight, and friends of ours were there in New York and we all went to see Victoria Regina. That was a wonderful play in New York and then a nice big party after it and then we went off to Europe the next day.

ER:  You took a boat.

MP:  Yeah, we took a boat. And, I think, my mother came down and some of David’s relatives who lived in New York were there and that was it.

ER:  Now, were you close as a young bride in the early days of your marriage…were you also close with his family, or did Fall River seem far away?

MP:  Fall River seemed far away.

ER:  Yeah.

MP: His parents were like another generation from my parents. They were—his father came over when he was about, I think, 15—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —and made his way and went into real estate, and David had grown up in a family where he just pitched in with all the workmen—

ER: Right.

MP: —at summers when he was at Harvard he worked, so he knew how to fix anything in the house. He had had a very broad, but not the happiest of backgrounds. His mother died when he was two years old—

ER: Oh, my.

MP: —and his father had remarried—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —and had a family, and David was the only boy. He had a sister who was a little older than he, and he and his sister—in those days, when you had a stepmother you didn't let the grandparents come into the house.

ER: Oh.

MP: It was a whole different world.

ER: Wow.

MP: So, anyhow.

ER: Yes, so that wasn't too happy.

MP: Too happy, so he was really—he loved my mother and father, and he's been a wonderful family man. I don't think he'd ever had a birthday party until we gave him a birthday party. Well, I started to tell about the Prince School.

ER: Yeah.

MP: And at Christmas I had already met David and had been out with him a few times, and we liked each other very much. And at Christmas time—six weeks before Christmas we were sent to different department stores all over the country. I was sent to Strawbridge and Clothier in Philadelphia with five of my classmates. And so we had taken a suite at a small hotel near Strawbridge and Clothier where we worked. And David was in Boston and decided he had to go to Washington, that he would stop in Philadelphia after the Harvard/Yale game. And so he did and I met him at the airport, and it was that weekend that we decided. [telephone rings] I hate to do it, but that's one call that might be important—

ER: That's okay.

MP: What were we talking about?

ER: Oh, about when David came down to see you in Philadelphia.

MP: Oh, yes, yes. And it was that weekend that we knew that we were right for each other.

ER: So how long had you been seeing each other at that point?

MP: I think we had known each other almost a year.

ER: Yeah.

MP: But it was, you know, sort of a casual relationship at first, and then it intensified.

ER: Yeah.

MP: And that was the culmination when he came to Philadelphia, and then we set the date—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —that we would like to be married the following June. Today you wait a year or so but—

ER: Right.

MP: —in those days you didn't.

ER: You did it quickly.

MP: So we had—Yeah, so we were engaged from April to June.

ER: So now, your wedding, you say was a Jewish wedding. You were married by a rabbi.

MP: Yes, and there were—

ER: A chuppah.

MP: There were—there was a chuppah and there were Hebrew prayers—

ER: Right.

MP: —there. And I think that his law firm people were very much interested.

ER: Right.

MP: I mean, you know, externally they thought it was really very, very nice.

ER: So career-wise—

MP: So he—David, you know, never hid the fact that he was Jewish. There was a time when he could have been taken for maybe looking a little Irish or whatever.

ER: Right.

MP: But there were incidences in which Mr. Peabody stood up for David, you know, when a client would say, talk about the other side as being “those kikes.”

ER: Yeah.

MP: And Mr. Peabody never let them get away with it and always apologized. He was a real gentleman.

ER: So—so, because he was in a law firm that—

MP: A Brahmin law firm.

ER: The firm, but where they were tolerant or accepting—

MP: Yes.

ER: —and so his career was never really hindered by the fact that he was Jewish.

MP: Well, that’s a whole other story—

ER: Sure.

MP: —that would take another few hours.

ER: Yes.

MP: But he has put all of that on tape.

ER:  Great.

MP:  So you can—at any time.

ER:  Great.

MP:  So you could—

ER:  So after you were married, where did you live?

MP:  Well, we rented a little house for $75 a month [chuckles] in Newton Center on Garland Rd.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  And that's where we lived.  We had two children there and—

ER:  When was your first child born?

MP:  Joan was born the following August.  We were married in June and decided—David was 29.  That was—

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  —considered old.

ER:  [laughs]

MP:  And we—and he seemed to be doing okay and had a good future, and so we decided to have our first child.  And Joan was born August, 1937.

ER:  So you—so after you were married, did you—had you finished with the Prince School?  Did you—

MP: Yes.

ER: And what did you think about a career?

MP: Yes.

ER: Did you, well, now that—

MP: Well, I—

ER: Was that not an issue anymore, because you were married?

MP: Well, you know, I had done some work in the—in department stores, but not very much.

ER: Right.

MP: And I really was not crazy about—

ER: Right.

MP: —working in that field. So—so I didn't really pursue it. And really, I had never worked, you know, until we were married and—

ER: Did you work after you were married? Did—was that when you were doing the department store? The retail?

MP: No, that was before.

ER: Before. So after you were married.

MP: After we were married, I was at home.

ER: At home.

MP: And I did lots of volunteer work.

ER: I see.

MP: League of Women Voters. Matter of fact, I was the president of the American ORT.

ER: Oh, great.

MP: They had—their president had died. They were looking for a new, young person and I said, “Okay,” not knowing what I was getting into. [chuckles] And so I was the president of ORT.

ER: And that was in Newton.

MP: And that was in Newton

ER: Great.

MP: It was for all of Boston, and that was really for a couple of years.

ER: So that must have taken a lot of time.

MP: That took a little time—not a great deal. And there must have been some other—I was always involved in one thing or another and—

ER: What kinds of projects were you involved with, with ORT?

MP: Well, having—raising money was one of the things. [chuckles]

ER: Yeah.

MP: It seemed to me that many of these groups, what they really needed was to raise money so that they could go ahead. ORT, of course, was developing schools.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And that appealed to me—schools where people or émigrés or whatever could learn a new trade.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And I thought that was a wonderful project.  I didn't want to get involved in Hadassah.  My mother had been involved in Hadassah and it seemed to me [chuckles] that that was not—that was not for me.

ER:  How come?

MP:  Yeah, well, I don't know; I just thought they spent a lot of time fussing about things that weren't important.  And I thought I was too intellectual for that.  [chuckles]  So I didn't get involved with Hadassah.  I always supported them and of course my mother saw to it that I was a life member—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —of Beth Israel and Brandeis—

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  —and so forth.

ER:  And did you—were you active in those groups as well—Beth Israel—friends of Beth Israel and [unclear]—

MP:  Yes.

ER:  And these were in your—this is—where I'm talking about the early—

MP:  The early years.  Of course, you know, taking care of children—

ER:  Right.

MP:  And we had—Bill was born two years later.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  And David was very ambitious and he wanted to—and he loved his home—and he wanted to have people over, and potential clients, maybe—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —or friends.  And so we did quite a bit of entertaining and at that time refugees were coming over from Vienna and from Germany.  And David spent a great deal of time helping them get their—they weren't visas—there was another name, but they had to get visas.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  And they had to have a person, a regular person who would be responsible.

ER:  Right.

MP:  So they would not go on welfare.

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  Affidavit is the word I'm looking for.  So David gave many affidavits, and of course they were always free.  And when those people came over, we got to meet them and have them visit with us, and dinners and so forth.  And so I was kind of busy.

ER: Right, but you were very aware. You and your husband were very aware at that time of the Holocaust, of what was happening to the Jews—

MP: Yes.

ER: —in Europe.

MP: Yes, yes.

ER: And that was one of the things that you could do—

MP: Right.

ER: —to help.

MP: Yes. And David, you know, was very concerned about it. He was always more involved. He was President of the New Century Club before I even met him and CJP [Combined Jewish Philanthropies]. He eventually became the President of CJP, amongst his many other things. And so we were very aware. Now, this group—amongst the people who came over were a whole group of psychoanalysts.

ER: Oh.

MP: And they came to Boston, many of them. The first one who came was Hanns Sachs. And he came through Merrill Moore. Merrill Moore, early on, was a great friend of David's. And he was head of the ushers at our wedding, and all that sort of thing. So Merrill was really the link and—to Hanns Sachs, who came over. David became his lawyer and friend and he became our friend; he was part of our family. And then came a group of psychoanalysts and David was the lawyer for them and started the Psychoanalytic Institute—

ER: Oh.

MP: —Incorporated. That's a whole other story too. So, early on, our friends were these older people, many of them. But we would—they would lecture and write papers. So we were really in this very new world—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —of Freudian psychoanalysis, which was not quite accepted—

ER: Right, right.

MP: —at that point. And that was interesting.

ER: Yeah.

MP: We really had a lot of interesting friends—

ER: Oh, it was very exciting.

MP: —and people. For example, the godparents of Joan were Helena and Felix Deutsch, the Deutsches. And they were, you know, right—she was a direct disciple of Freud.

ER: Didn't Freud's daughter come? She was at Simmons School of Social Work.

MP: No.

ER: Or his granddaughter?

MP: Maybe a granddaughter. But Anna Freud came to get an honorary degree at Harvard. She did a little work at Yale but she already had established—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —a center in London. And we subscribed to that, and that was helping children.

ER:  Children, right.

MP:  These were children who had come away from their parents, and some of them needed help.  And so we sort of adopted foster children—

ER:  I see.

MP:  —and helped in that way.  So—

ER:  I want to jump back a little bit.

MP:  And then—

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  One more thing, at that is that as these people came over, one of them was—his name was—we called him Fritz Lehner.  He was a brother to Dr. Greta Beavering, who became a Professor of Psychoanalysis at Harvard, the first lady to do that.  Now, her brother had been a professor, but he was not in Vienna.  But he had not—of German literature, and he had not been able to get a job in this country.  And so we formed a group and people would come.  They'd pay so much, which we gave him, and they'd meet in our house and he would give lectures.

ER:  Great.

MP:  And I remember we did that for a year or so, and eventually he did get a job, I think down South teaching.  That was very good.  Then I remember another thing was that we took—we had another group of art lectures and this was given by some friends who knew a great deal about art, meeting in different homes.  And maybe that's where our interest in art started.

ER:  Well, it sounds—it sounds like you had such a rich cultural life.  I mean—

MP: We did. We did. Yes, we did have a lot of interesting things.

ER: Now, how—when I said I wanted to jump back a little bit—

MP: Yes.

ER: —to when you had your daughter, and then you had your other children pretty soon afterwards.

MP: Well, no.

ER: What was—your son was two years later.

MP: Bill. Yes, Bill was two years later, and then David was six years younger.

ER: Oh, so there—

MP: We had already gone into service at that point.

ER: Oh, okay.

MP: Yes, David went into the Navy.

ER: Okay.

MP: And first he was getting training and then eventually he sent for us and that was—well, first he went to—well, he was at Virginia Beach near Norfolk for a while. We thought he was going to go overseas and so we spent some time there with him. And then we came back, stayed at my mother's house because we had rented this house, and then David—it looked as though he was going to be counsel to an admiral who was going to be stationed in Ohio. So it looked as though he was going to be there for a year or so and rented a house. He rented a house there, and we came down and we were there for almost two years.

ER:  Now—

MP:  And our third child was born then.

ER:  I see.  Okay.

MP:  He was born in Ohio.

ER:  So what was that like for you with these young children?

MP:  Yes.

ER:  I actually want—am very curious about what it was like for you when you first had your daughter, like how that was for you and your relationship with your parents, what kind of [unclear]—

MP:  Yes.

ER:  —and how your life changed—

MP:  Yes, well.

ER:  —as all of our lives change when we have children.

MP:  Yes, well, Joan—she was a ray of sunshine—

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  —right from the start.  She was one of these wonderful babies and sweet and darling.  And my mother—she was the first grandchild—adored her, and so did my father.  And my mother was so helpful and supportive and would come over and help, and of course, being a wonderful cook—in those days when you were so busy with young children—

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  —she would bring a little of this or that.  She never came empty-handed and was always as helpful as she could be.  And Joan loved my mother and even when Joan was about, I think six months old, and we were thinking about taking a trip, my mother came and stayed with Jennifer.

ER:  Oh.

MP:  And so we did have a helper.

ER:  Who was Jennifer?  Oh, Jennifer was your helper?

MP:  Wait a minute now—stayed with Joan.

ER:  Joan.

MP:  Excuse me.

ER:  Joan.

MP:  Joan.

ER:  Right.

MP:  Stayed with Joan.  So we went off on an 18-day cruise.

ER:  Oh, how exciting!

MP:  That was really marvelous.

ER:  Yeah.

MP: And my father was always very cooperative, and whatever my mother wanted to do, he backed her.

ER: That's great! You were very lucky.

MP: In that respect.

ER: Yes.

MP: But, you know, if my mother was angry with me, my father would back my mother. [laughs]

ER: [laughs]

MP: So it had its drawbacks.

ER: Yeah. But what would your mother get angry with you about?

MP: As I was growing up, she was angry about a lot of things with we—that I wanted to do, that I—going—I think it was, you know, making plans to go with friends, do things with friends.

ER: Yeah. What was her expectation then?

MP: But—

ER: I mean, it sounds—

MP: Well, she wanted—she was overprotective.

ER: Overprotective, right.

MP: Overprotective.

ER:  It sounds like she had difficulty with your burgeoning independence.

MP:  Yeah, as, you know—as many mothers do.

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  And it was difficult.  I think in today's environment it would have been a little bit easier but who knows?

ER:  So, okay, now—

MP:  She always had my best interests at heart.

ER:  Right.  [chuckles]  Even though you didn't feel it at times.

MP:  I didn't feel it.

ER:  So, okay, now I want to jump.  Here you are a young mother with three small children.  The war is going on and you're living in Ohio.  What was that like for you?

MP:  Well, it was a very—it worked out extremely well because David came home; his hours were much more regular—

ER:  [laughs]

MP:  —than they were when he was here.

ER:  So he was always with you.

MP:  So he was with us.

ER:  He was—

MP: And more so during the war than before or after. So that part was very good. He was always very supportive and you were like a family group. All the people were from different areas and they were all pretty much, you know, young people. And we've kept up with many of them, even to today—friends from all over the country. And we had a lovely little house, and we did a lot of entertaining. People would come over, but you did it all very casually in those days. And—but, you know, it took time. And we didn't have too much help. And there were—there was the Officer's Club. We did—we were able to use WAVES, I guess, for babysitters.

ER: Yeah. [chuckles]

MP: They weren't always the greatest. One of them, I remember, was fast asleep when we came home. [chuckles]

ER: Yeah.

MP: But they were good years and even though we had hardships, everybody else was enduring them.

ER: Right, right.

MP: And—but we could shop at the Officer's Commissary, and you couldn't do a lot of driving around because you were rationed on food and gasoline—

ER: Right.

MP: —and all of that sort of thing. But—and the kids went to—Joan went to a—what they called a "consolidated school." And—

ER: Off base?

MP: Yes. She would—yes. And these were kids who came from all the townships around.

ER: Right, right.

MP: And some of them early on—Joan was always a good student. She was not a brilliant student but she was a dependable, responsible—and I remember when she was in the—I think it was the third grade, the teacher had her as an assistant to help with some of the kids who would come from the hills of Kentucky and hadn't had much schooling and been at home and knew nothing. They were much older kids.

ER: Right.

MP: So it was good in that respect. And our parents came to visit you occasionally.

ER: Yeah.

MP: And—

ER: Did you run into antisemitism—

MP: Antisemitism—

ER: —when you were in the service?

MP: We probably did, but maybe I am not recalling it that well. David remembers, for example, when they showed the film of the camps.

ER: Yeah.

MP: This was toward the end of the war, and the tears were rolling down his cheeks and nobody else was that concerned. I'm sure there was. But I think antisemitism, as far as we were concerned—he was an officer. He was a Lieutenant Commander and you were

all together.  I mean, it wasn't a question of being shut out of a club or anything like that because if you're an officer, it was an Officer's Club.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And so our friends were mostly non-Jewish.

ER:  Right.  Did you have any observances?  Jewish observances at that time in your life in your family that you can recall?

MP:  Well, I know when David Jr.—

[END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE]

ER:  When you're the type of person who sees the bright side—

MP:  Yes, yes.  It—you don't always face reality, maybe.

ER:  Is there—like, do you have an example of that in your life, of a time where maybe your Pollyannaish spirit—

MP:  Didn't work—

ER:  —helped you not to see things—some things that might have been happening that were painful or difficult.

MP:  Yeah, I think that—Yeah, I think that that's my nature to, you know, not—"everything's going to be okay" kind of attitude, which is good and not so good. But—but, you know, raising children, it was hard for me, I think, to be tied down with children.  There's nothing that prepares you for motherhood.

ER:  Right.

MP: Don't you find that?

ER: [laughs] That's exactly—

MP: After you've had freedom and all that. Do you have two children?

ER: I have—I actually have four children. I have three stepchildren. I married a man with three children and—who lived with us from the time we were married and I have a son with him who is seven.

MP: Oh.

ER: So all my children are 7, 15, 18 and 22.

MP: Wow!

ER: Yes, so all different stages.

MP: Oh!

ER: So, you're absolutely correct. There's nothing that prepares you for it, for either step-motherhood or mother—and then motherhood. I mean, you know, it's all very similar but it's so—it's much more consuming than any kind of job I ever had. It's just—and you can't—it's so wonderful, yet, and so tedious and so consuming.

MP: Right.

ER: I mean, it's—

MP: Yes, I know. It's wonderful but it is overwhelming—

ER: Right.

MP: —sometimes.

ER: Right.

MP: It really is. We were fortunate enough to be able to have some help at—all along.

ER: That's great.

MP: And in the beginning, they called them "mother's helpers," I think.

ER: Right, right.

MP: And you paid them six or seven dollars an hour—a week.

ER: A week, and now it's more like an hour. [laughs]

MP: An hour.

ER: Right.

MP: And it was just—and I think I felt tied down. You could see I was a person who always wanted—

ER: Right.

MP: —to be free. And here you had to just be right on—well, Joan was a very good child all along and always well-organized, even as a kid. And then came Bill. Bill is brighter but he—you know, there were times when he wouldn't sleep through the night.

ER: [laughs]

MP: I never felt rested.

ER: Right. [chuckles]

MP: It was really—he was a difficult child—very bright. And, you know—and we always thought, well, we were doing what was right for him and we got all this advice from our friends, our psychoanalytic friends.

ER: Right.

MP: Many of the theories are now trashed.

ER: Right. [laughs]

MP: And I think back over what I could have done differently. But it was—and, you know, David always was supportive of me, whatever he saw that I was, you know, not managing too well, he would always try to help me—

ER: Right.

MP: —you know, in any way and was—I mean, I couldn't have wished for a more wonderful, exceptionally bright but sweet—

ER: That's great.

MP: You know, I think it's because he was brought up with—in this harsh, difficult household where he had another kind of a stepmother.

ER: Well, it can go either way, you know.

MP: Yes.

ER: People are faced with—

MP: Yes.

ER: —a kind of coldness, they can sometimes become that way.

MP: Yeah, but she was not—she was almost abusive. He didn't even know it.

ER: Yeah.

MP: I mean, she would use David and his sister, Eve, to do the work. I mean, he remembered cleaning out the refrigerator—it was an icebox in those days.

ER: Yeah.

MP: And the door closed, you know, and all these terrible things.

ER: Yeah.

MP: And—but they both turned out to be wonderful people, because they were on their own—

ER: Right.

MP: —early on. So sometimes, you know—sometimes out of bad situations—

ER: Right, right.

MP: —good things come.

ER: Now you said your son, Bill, was a little more difficult.

MP: Yeah.

ER: So what was your relationship like with him as he was growing up?

MP: Growing up. Well, yes, I—I think that I spent a lot of time with Bill. I felt that he needed more time than Joan and—

ER:  The fact that he required so much time—do you think that—what—is that why you think you waited a number of years before you had another child.  I mean—

MP:  Well—

ER:  It's interesting to me—

MP:  Yes.

ER:  —that you had this very sweet baby.

MP:  Yes.

ER:  And within really short—almost, you know, a few years you had another baby because it was such a, you know, wonderful kind of experience.  And then you had this child who didn't like to sleep and—

MP:  Right.

ER:  —more challenging to deal with.

MP:  Very challenging, and—you know, and very bright and he always wanted to—you know, Joan was always the older one and he didn't accept that.

ER:  Yeah.  [chuckles]

MP:  You know, I guess sibling rivalry, although they're very good friends now.  But Bill didn't marry, and maybe something with his relationship with me is the fear of women.  And, you know, there are times when we just had difficulty coping, and—

ER:  Even as he went through his life?  I mean, as a young boy and then as an adolescent?

MP:  Yes, I mean—yes, and he went to camp early on and really he never should have gone to camp.  He maybe was not—he had a certain insecurity—

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  —almost from the start, and so that was not a good experience.

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  And I think—and he was so bright that he could relate to older people.  I mean, the Admiral, for example, in the Navy.  He'd sit on the Admiral's lap and he could converse with all the adults and they thought he was super—

ER:  [laughs]

MP:  —because he could discuss anything and he was so bright.  But relationships with his own peers was not easy.

ER:  He had a hard—harder time.

MP:  He had a hard time with it, and the kids went to private schools.  And I always thought, thanks to my psychoanalytic friends and all, that those early years were the most important.  It was more important to go to a private school and get your study habits early on.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  And then later on it didn't matter, because you already had a firm foundation.  Maybe that was right; maybe it wasn't.

ER:  Was he a good student?

MP: Excellent. Yeah, he was a very good student. He always got things in late, but he was a good student.

ER: Yeah.

MP: He went to Harvard and he went to MIT and he got a Ph.D.—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —at Pittsburgh.

ER: And what does he do now?

MP: And he taught for—he taught for eight years, maybe, at Howard University.

ER: Right.

MP: He always was comfortable with ethnic groups, and he was maybe one of the few white professors there. And—but then he got a little tired of it, and he didn't get tenure because he didn't produce. I mean, you had to write—

ER: Right.

MP: —and publish.

ER: Right.

MP: And he could have—he writes beautifully, but he's undisciplined.

ER: What field is he in?

MP: Economics.

ER: Is he still an economist? Is he still teaching?

MP: Well, then he went out to California and taught there for awhile and now, he's really—I don't think he's doing any teaching now. And, you know, it just seems that there was too much emphasis on the intellectual side of him and catering to that side rather than to the social side, you know, to just getting along in everyday things with kids his own age and all of that.

ER: Yes. How would you describe your relationship with him now?

MP: Well, I think I'm a little critical. I mean, it's a warm relationship and for example, we were invited to Tuscany. Friends of David have a 300-year-old farm with modern plumbing outside of Florence, and they gave us their home for two weeks.

ER: Oh, isn't that wonderful!

MP: And we invited Bill. Our friends said, "The roads are like this all around."

ER: Yeah.

MP: And it's gorgeous! Oh!

ER: Yeah.

MP: But he said to David, "I don't think you ought to do the driving."

ER: Yeah.

MP: So we invited Bill to come. We had a wonderful time.

ER: Yeah.

MP: And he was the driver and he spoke Italian and got along, and he's into culinary things.

ER: Right, right.

MP: You know, he's a great kid.

ER: Yeah.

MP: You would—everybody likes him.

ER: Yeah.

MP: But I don't think he's doing much with his life right now, and, you know—

ER: Are you concerned for him or—

MP: Well, I am concerned, Yeah, because, you know, I want to help him—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —in some way. And if he comes on—he was here for Thanksgiving and stayed on for David's birthday, and we hoped he'd then come to visit us in Florida. And so, you know, he comes back and forth and we're in good contact—

ER: Right.

MP: —and good relationship. But when he's around for a certain length of time I guess I become a little critical and he doesn't want to take that criticism—

ER: Right, right.

MP: —anymore. I mean, here I see this wonderful guy and really not doing—not really doing—I mean, he does a lot of good things, but not really working. And, you know—

ER: Does he seem happy with his life? I mean, do you think he's happy?

MP: Yes, but I think he's rather isolated. He has a, you know—a small group of friends and maybe, you know—he's much more outgoing than David, our younger one—younger—youngest one. David is, you know—Bill—immediately you would warm up to him.

ER: Yeah.

MP: He's that kind of a person. So now, when you talk about antisemitism, when we bought this house, this was an all-Gentile neighborhood. And my mother—my mother's comment was when she saw the house, "Oh, I love the house," she said, "but did you have to move so far away?"

ER: [laughs]

MP: I mean, like this was the other end of the world.

ER: Right.

MP: Well, what we didn't know was that this was a highly restricted area.

ER: Really?

MP: And a judge and his wife lived in this house. They had no children, and it's a ten-room house; and he died very suddenly, young, and she sold it. And it was getting on toward October, end of September, and she didn't want to be in this house alone. She sold us the house but told her neighbors that a Jewish family was moving in, with no Jewish family in this area at all—highly restricted. And we weren't aware that the neighbors sort of all got together and they didn't like the idea—

ER: Oh, really?

MP: —of a Jewish family.

ER: Yeah.

MP: Now, they were older people. We were the young family with young children and of course as we got to know them, we all became best friends. I mean, next-door neighbor here, he was—David was his lawyer and friend and so forth. But in the beginning it was not easy. And then the kids went to private school and they were the only Jews in that school—Belmont Day School.

ER: Right.

MP: Belmont Hill—

ER: Right.

MP: —at that time. Now they've got a Jewish head of Belmont Hill. In those days—

ER: Right.

MP: —Ted Densmore, head of the lower school, called up and he said, "You know, we're all singing Christmas carols and I noticed that Bill isn't singing." And we said, "Well, you know that we are Jewish and we don't sing Christmas carols." I mean, they were absolutely insensitive—

ER: Right, right.

MP: —to that. I mean, it's all changed.

ER: Right.

MP: David in the law firm—that's a whole story that, you know, we didn't go into. That era—these kids today don't realize what the problems of antisemitism was. This was a highly restricted area. Now we had friends who lived on Marr Street not so far away. And they were the ones who urged us to come here and then we found a house and

moved in but didn't realize.  Now, that's all changed.

ER:  Yeah, now there a—

MP:  Are we taping or not taping?

ER:  No, we are taping.

MP:  Oh, we are taping.

ER:  We are taping, right.  I'm just always checking to make sure it's—

MP:  Yeah, Yeah.

ER:  So, initially were neighbors kind of cold toward you?

MP:  I would think so and there—

ER:  But nobody tried to stop the transaction?  You weren't aware of that?

MP:  No, no.  I think the transaction was already completed, so they couldn't stop it.  But they, I'm sure, were not happy.

ER:  Right, right.  And did you have any difficulty getting your children into the Day School?

MP:  No.

ER:  No, they—

MP:  In those days, at the Hill School and the Day School, they were happy to have anyone who would come.

ER:  Who would come.

MP: Yes, and besides our friends who—the Kaufmans—they were Jewish and their children had been in the schools and, you know, they had no trouble. But they were—they were not—well, I guess they were secular Jews. They were Jewish but, you know, psychoanalysts at that time were not interested in religion.

ER: Right, right.

MP: So, non-observant.

ER: And how observant were you now that once you were here and your family was growing?

MP: Yes. Yes, well, our children went to Sunday school and it started when we were in Ohio in the Wright-Patterson Field.

ER: Yeah.

MP: Other children were going to Sunday school and so our children said—Joan and Bill said, “Well, we’d like to go too.” But the others went to a non-Jewish—

ER: Right.

MP: —you know, but it was Sunday school. So that’s how our children started and then—

ER: Oh, did they go to that—

MP: They went—

ER: And they went to a Christian Sunday school when you were in the service or—

MP: No, it was a Jewish—

ER:  They had a Jewish group.

MP:  Yes, and when David Jr. was circumcised it was done at the hospital, but we had a little service at that time.  And we did have the local rabbi—there was a local rabbi in Dayton and he presided.  And all our friends in the Navy came to that, and that was very nice, you know.  I mean, David was always more observant than I.

ER:  He was—

MP:  Yes, he was brought up much more into—although his parents, I guess—the synagogue was probably an Orthodox.

ER:  Right.

MP:  His grandparents were certainly Orthodox and—as mine were Orthodox, too—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —at that time.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And—so, then the children, when they came back here, we joined Temple Israel.

ER:  In Boston.

MP:  In Boston when we came back, and Joshua Roth Liebman was the rabbi and we thought he was wonderful.  And we all felt—liked the idea of a Reformed temple; that seemed to appeal to us, and him in particular.  And of course, he died shortly thereafter.  But our kids kept going to Sunday school and it was hard to—then they started having them come during the week a little bit.

ER:  Right.

MP: And that was difficult because they were at schools that went until four or five.

ER: Right.

MP: And—but we did keep it up, and we had a little problem with Temple Israel because when they changed rabbis, and Rabbi Gittelsohn came along—

ER: Right.

MP: —Bill and he didn't see eye-to-eye. [chuckles] Oh, and they were writing letters to each other. You know—

ER: Bill was a child then.

MP: He was—yes, he was—

ER: About how old? This was after the war so—

MP: Well he was born…

ER: And was he bar mitzvahed there?

MP: He was bar mitzvahed—oh, no, he was too young. They came back as children.

ER: Right.

MP: Bill was bar mitzvahed.

ER: At Temple Israel.

MP: At Temple Israel with—

ER: With Rabbi Gittelsohn?

MP: —two others, and it was Rabbi Gittelsohn.

ER: Yeah.

MP: Or was it [Klausner? Posner?] maybe—I think Rabbi Gittelsohn at that time. And Joan—and they both went to confirmation class and Bill was bar mitzvahed; so was David bar mitzvahed. And they—and after they bar mitzvahed, they said they really didn't want to go to a temple after that. I mean, they are Jews and they feel—they feel very Jewish but they are non-observant.

ER: It's interesting how that turns off so many kids. My experience is a little different now with our kids. They were always resistant to going but they kind of liked it and eventually got less resistant and now I—you know, they're not that turned off. But I know, certainly when I was growing up, Hebrew School seemed like a real chore and it had really no meaning to me—

MP: Yeah.

ER: —other than it was something I—it was like just—like you had to go, because it was school.

MP: Right, right. That was it. I mean—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —you didn't—you didn't dare oppose your parents.

ER: Right, right.

MP: If they wanted you to go, you went.

ER: Right. Now, what—were you involved at the temple at all—I mean, with any of the groups at the temple? The Sisterhood or the—

MP: Yeah, I think I was—

ER: a lot of activities going on.

MP: Yes, well, I think when the children were there, I was involved but not deeply.

ER: And you were involved in the community.

MP: Yes, I was more involved in the community.

ER: Here.

MP: I loved the League of Women Voters and also parent teachers groups.

ER: Right.

MP: You know, and of course at the time of bar mitzvah you have many sessions at the temple.

ER: Right.

MP: More so now than in those days. But kids always went. And David always worked with them on their homework. David Jr.—they were not—Joan was the only one who was enthusiastic about going and she said, to her it was like social activity.

ER: Right, right.

MP: She really enjoyed that and had many friends, and Bill had some friends too and also, David Jr., but he had some run-ins with Rabbi Gittelsohn. Rabbi Gittelsohn was not a favorite in our family—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —for the boys.

ER:  Now, what—

MP:  Now, we loved Rabbi Mehlman.

ER:  Yeah, he's wonderful.  Now, what kind of run-ins did you have with Rabbi Gittelsohn?  Were they—did he think the boys were behavior problems in class or were just wise guys or—

MP:  Well, I think they probably gave him a hard time.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  I think that, you know, they probably created problems in the classroom and they were always running out and doing different tricks and whatnot—

ER:  [laughs]

MP:  —creating a lot of difficulties for a rabbi.  They were not ideal students but David Jr. had Miss Fine and she used to put on plays and he was in plays, and she was—she liked him and they got along just fine.  So they did all right with the teachers.

ER:  What about you?  Did you find that your involvement with the temple changed as your kids got older? Did it lessen or increase or—

MP:  Lessen.

ER:  As they were older.

MP:  As they got older.  We seemed to just go to temple for the High Holidays and not to get involved.  And we had such a rich life, a rich cultural life away from—

ER:  Right.

MP: —religion. I mean, I don't know, I just didn't get involved.

ER: What about your home? How observant have you been, or how important was—

MP: We always, always had the family over for holidays. My mother, as long as she was alive had the family and then when she was older, we here—

ER: Right.

MP: —would have everyone over. And we observed Chanukah and Passover and the holidays, and the family would all get together. Now that we're older, Joan and her husband seem to take over having the family over for big dinners and so forth.

ER: Does she make a Passover Seder or—

MP: Yes.

ER: Is her husband Jewish?

MP: Yes, he is, and he's more Jewish than she is.

ER: Yeah.

MP: And he also—yes, he is, I'd say, more observant. And they joined the local temple here when their kids were growing up.

ER: Both?

MP: And they both graduated. They went to confirmation and Jennifer is now married to a man who is more observant than she is.

ER: Really?

MP:  He came from Rochester and he—I mean, for example, we—you know, when we were in the service and away from home, when Christmas time came we really observed it.

ER:  Really?

MP:  We never had a tree but we would have—we would exchange gifts.

ER:  With your kids?

MP:  With the kids.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  And that continued, and now we observe Chanukah, we observe and light the candles, and David Jr.—his wife is not Jewish but she has said the boys—the twins can be brought up as Jews.  So we went to Rabbi Mehlman and I don't know whether you call it a conversion or what, but he did say prayers over the two little boys.

ER:  Really?

MP:  I'm sure they didn't know what was going on.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  But they—

ER:  Were they babies at that point?

MP:  They were—no, they were at least two or three.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  They're now almost six.  And so, they are Jews and they know they are Jews.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  And that's fine with Laurie.  I mean, she's not religious; she doesn't go to—

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  She doesn't observe religion.  David, you know—David lights candles.  Now—but they do have a Christmas tree.  That's Laurie's.  They do have a tree and—but they light candles also.  [chuckles]

ER:  Right, right.  [chuckles]

MP:  So they've got both.

ER:  Well, Christmas has almost become a secular holiday in a lot of ways.  I mean, you know—

MP:  Yeah.  Now, for example, Christmas morning—and we've done this for years, everybody comes over here and we do exchange gifts and we have a wonderful brunch here.  And we're going to do it next week—next Wednesday.

ER:  And will you make brunch for everybody?

MP:  Yeah.

ER:  So you're still cooking—

MP:  Oh, Yeah.

ER:  —for your family?

MP:  Oh, yes.  Oh, sure.

ER:  Now, did you inherit your mother's cooking skills?

MP: Unfortunately, not. She was always—she would always say, “Look, I haven’t got time to teach you now. I’ve got to get it done.” So I would observe a little bit.

ER: Right.

MP: But I was never really that much interested—

ER: Right.

MP: —in it.

ER: Did she cook—do you remember, did she cook mostly Jewish—what we would now think of as Jewish food?

MP: Jewish cooking. She did both.

ER: Yeah.

MP: She—from her parents, from her mother she knew—she knew all the Jewish dishes and could make them all wonderfully. But she also made many other things too. She was an American cook as well.

ER: Right.

MP: And I mean, we always had lobster in our house.

ER: Oh, she—

MP: She could make lobster—what did they call it—Thermadore.

ER: Right.

MP: I mean, boil lobster, yes; but lobster Thermadore?

ER:  Stuffed with crab.

MP:  And, you know, I remember she'd bring the lobsters home and she would crack them open, you know, and—

ER:  But, now, her mother must have kept kosher.

MP:  Her mother did keep kosher.

ER:  So did it—do you have any recollection of if that was ever an issue with your grandparents, the fact that their daughter was—

MP:  I don't remember it being an issue, but my mother always had two sets of dishes.

ER:  Oh, she did?

MP:  No, wait a minute.  At Passover time—

ER:  She brought out—

MP:  —she brought out the Passover dishes, but other than that—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —no, we didn't.  But we had special Passover dishes.  That I remember and we stuck to it with—you know, with matzohs—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —latkes, and all—

ER:  Right.  Now, do you have any recipes that you like to do that were your mother's? Any foods that you enjoy making, that you can think of?

MP: That were hers? I mean, you know.

ER: I'm sure there are. Sometimes you just don't—

MP: Yeah.

ER: You're not even conscious of it.

MP: Right, you just grew up with it.

ER: Right.

MP: And so you just—but I don't bake, and she really was a baker.

ER: Yeah.

MP: She'd bake the most wonderful coffee rolls—

ER: Wow.

MP: —that, you know, that you—hey, we were supposed to have lunch!

ER: Oh, okay, I'll play this—I'll stop it for a minute. [tape turned off/on]

MP: —learning anything about your family.

ER: Well, we will in time. But, so you were just saying that your mother always set a really beautiful table.

MP: I have the most beautiful tablecloths.

ER: Mmm, this is delicious. That's great! Hits the spot.

MP: I think we'll put another one in. [chuckles] What would you like to drink? I did have cider, but I think it's turned.

ER: Something cold. Water is fine.

MP: My mother loved beautiful dishes. In my basement I have the most beautiful dishes you ever saw and crystal glasses. And my mother had three sisters, and one of them married and divorced. None of them had children; they were career people. And my mother's brothers were lawyers and judges and so forth, and I was the only girl. So I really had like four mothers growing up.

ER: So you got all the—

MP: And one of them, the oldest one—Frances, had a dress shop at the Hotel Biltmore in Providence. So that's where I used to get beautiful clothes.

ER: Wow!

MP: Always, you know. And she gave me my wedding gown.

ER: Oh, boy.

MP: And so, you know, that was great. And so I got all the dishes and whatnot from all of them.

ER: Wow! And what did your mother's other sister do?

MP: One of them, Beatrice—she was an intellectual. She was—I think they must have had a matchmaker. She married a guy whom she really didn't like and lived in Providence also—married to him for 15 years. He was in the jewelry business and so she was in the jewelry business with him. And then she had a lingerie shop near her sister at the Hotel Biltmore for awhile. But she was interested in semantics; she was

interested in organic farming.

ER:  Wow!

MP:  She knew about food—

ER:  Wow.

MP:  —long before anybody else did, and she was really not always understood by others, but to me, she was the most wonderful person.  And she ended up in California and she never remarried, and she was a wonderful person.  So, and then the youngest one, Gertrude—she was the one who became a lawyer, was so colorful.  She was an actress.  You would adore her; from the first moment—

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  —she was an entertainer.  And bright, and she would have no part of the kitchen. She would have no part of—you know, she was a career person and that's what she did. Let me see what I can find.

ER:  That's an exciting family.

MP:  Well, you know, not always.  Sometimes they clashed; sometimes they—[tape turned off/on]  [unclear] seven.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  So, you know, we could have been great grandparents and—

ER:  Right, right, and you might still be soon.

MP:  We hope so.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  Now, this is yours and you can—

ER:  Okay, thank you.

MP:  Now, do you want a knife to cut it with?

ER:  Yeah, let me cut it.

MP:  Did you get a napkin?

ER:  Yes, I do.

MP:  You did?  Good.  This is very informal.  [chuckles]

ER:  This is fine.  Delicious.  Did you buy these—do you get these in Watertown?

MP:  Uh-huh.

ER:  They're great.

MP:  That's the place.  You know Watertown?

ER:  I know, Yeah.  I'm familiar with the stores.  I've never bought these.  I buy—sometimes I buy the vegetarian lamejun.

MP:  Do you go to Eastern Lamejun?

ER:  I go there.  I go to Kay's.

MP:  I go to Kay's.

ER:  Yeah.  [chuckles]

MP: In fact, I'm going to go to Kay's this afternoon maybe.

ER: Great.

MP: And I just go, you know, like once a week—

ER: Right.

MP: —stock up. It's so hard to find a place to park, for one thing.

ER: I know. So what—tell me a little bit—

MP: This doesn't come from—you know, next door they have a bakery.

ER: Right.

MP: But these come from—it's called, I think Eastern Lamejun.

ER: On—

MP: On Trapello Road or Belmont.

ER: Yeah, that's a great store too.

MP: That's where these come from.

ER: Right, I buy lamejun there; they have vegetarian lamejun and they have—and I buy baba ganoush and I buy stuffed grape leaves.

MP: Hummus.

ER: Oh, I love all that.

MP: And we do too. We're crazy about it.

ER: And so, tell me a little bit about your life now. I mean, you still seem like you're extremely busy. You've got so much going on.

MP: Everyday. It's typical to get so loaded and I have to just clear things up. I need an organizer. Well, I don't know; we're just so very busy. What do I do? What am I doing? What I did was, I went back to school.

ER: Great!

MP: When the kids were growing up and at a certain age, I went to BU and got a Master's Degree in education.

ER: Great! Oh, wonderful—

MP: —and could have been a guidance counselor, but I didn't want a full-time job. And so I took a job as rehabilitation counselor for an agency in Boston that dealt with hearing impairments and worked for 25 years.

ER: Wow.

MP: And I'm still interested in it. And, you know, I could have made you a salad too.

ER: No, this is fine, really. It's a real treat for me. [Chuckles]

MP: At least you won't be starving.

ER: No, this is really much more of a lunch than I—I usually just grab anything.

MP: Mmm, I do too.

ER: So you worked with hearing-impaired people?

MP: Yes, and children.

ER: Children?

MP: Yes. In fact, just the other day I'm trying to help a youngster here in Belmont. She's a teenager and she has a hearing impairment. She's not deaf; she's hard-of-hearing and she doesn't want her peers—you know, she's at the age where she wants to be like every—she doesn't want anybody to know that she has a hearing loss. And she—when she wears hearing aids, she covers it over with her hair, and, you know, she's not accepting it. So that's the kind of thing that I used to deal with—families and children and how to make the most—you know, instead of treating it as a handicap—

ER: Right.

MP: —where do you go from there? What are the things you can do? Not the things you cannot do.

ER: Right.

MP: So, you know, that's a lifelong interest. But—and the interesting thing is that Colin Powell's wife, Alma, worked for this same agency—

ER: Oh, really?

MP: —before she was married.

ER: In Boston?

MP: In Boston.

ER: Really?

MP: She was here for a couple of years. She is beautiful and charming and great. She's always in the background; you don't see much of her. But they had a party for her and I was at that and she told about the early days. And one of my friends here, Betsy

Ingersoll, who also worked for the same agency I did, was there before I was and remembers her as a young, beautiful, young woman—very light. And she had a blind date with some guy from the military, and she put on a funny face and wore terrible clothes because she was sure she wouldn't like him, and that was Colin Powell.

ER: [laughs]

MP: He was, you know—he was—she wasn't sure right away. He was darker, and that's important to them.

ER: I know there's a pecking order.

MP: But he's a handsome fella.

ER: He's a very good-looking—

MP: Very good-looking. Anyhow, that's part of what I did.

ER: So you've been—so how long has it been since you worked? Or worked full-time, I should say—full time.

MP: I guess I worked until I was about 75.

ER: Great.

MP: So I haven't worked for almost 10 years.

ER: So it hasn't been that long. That's great.

MP: And I loved it.

ER: And are you involved in—with groups and organizations now or—and—I know you told me you go swimming. And now I can see the—

MP: Results.

ER: —results, yes. [laughs]

MP: Well, you know, it's not so easy in the cold mornings to go swimming. We belong to a—well, we belong to two clubs. David was a golfer. He became a golfer early on. He was a tennis player when I met him but—and I played tennis too up until recently. And he was a golfer but he'd always go out early in the morning so he could be back, he thinks, twelve or one o'clock to be with us all. But—so we joined after the war when we came back here. They had saved a few places at the Belmont Country Club. And before that, he had played at a little nine hole course here. Anyhow, so we became members; we've been members ever since.

ER: Yeah.

MP: But there is a Belmont Hill Club, which is a tennis club and swimming.

ER: Oh, great! That's terrific!

MP: And it's right near—it's five minutes from here. So we're very lucky in that respect.

ER: That's great.

MP: And so, I go twice a week and he plays round robin on Sunday and once during the week, if he can.

ER: Wow. It's amazing. I mean, both of you really are blessed; you really are.

MP: We know it. As he says, "Our days are numbered; we know it can't continue, but so far"—

ER: It seemed for a while, you know, I have—my father died awhile ago. My mother's happily remarried and my stepfather's father just died—102 years old.

MP: Oh!

ER: And, really, up until about the last few months when he got pretty ill, he was very active, very—you know, physically active, mentally active. His wife—his second wife is 90, still lives in Florida, drives, and she's also very active. So, I mean, I think a lot of it is a state of mind and if you happened to be blessed—if you're lucky enough to have some good health, you know, many more years.

MP: You know, you said, "still." I mean, it's great to know, but, you know, for everyone that does, there are—

ER: Right, many—

MP: —dozens and dozens that don't make it.

ER: Right.

MP: We were recently at a party and Kenneth Galbraith and Kitty—Kitty and I are classmates, and by the way, Julia Child's my classmate—

ER: Oh, really! Isn't that interesting? [chuckles]

MP: She wasn't a cook in those days.

ER: No?

MP: It all started later. So, Kenneth said, "Are you—do you know about the 'still syndrome?' Do you meet up with that?" He said, "People come up to me and they say, 'Are you still swimming?' 'Are you still working?' 'Are you still'"—and he said to me, "I have to write every single day and if I don't"—he said, "For my psychiatric health"—

ER: Right.

MP: —"I have to write everyday." I said to him, "Are you working on a new book now?" And he said, "Well, you know, I'm always writing," and he's written many, many books, oh!

ER: Right. It's true though; it's true. You get to a certain point in life. People, oh, they—I don't know. The expectation is that you're going to stop in some way but if you're healthy, why?

MP: That, or trying to find out more about the will a healthy older person—

ER: Right. And I've read studies or things in the newspaper about studies that have been done that show where people stayed physically active, mentally active, it really helps to keep them healthier longer. And that even people who have had some—probably may have had a stroke or whatever, if they can get back to being physically active, they say that the physical activity will help to create new brain cells, that, you know, it's so important.

MP: That would be wonderful. They've had so many breakthroughs—

ER: Right.

MP: —that are, you know, learning more and more everyday. Well, I mean, the days I just don't have enough time. I don't have enough time to read and that bothers me—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —because, you know, there are so many good books. We have them piled up and people say, "Well, when you go to Florida, you certainly have time to read."

ER: Right.

MP:  We should have time but, you know, there—we've got so many friends there and so many things going on.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And now, every organization is moving down there.

ER:  That's right.  Right.

MP:  Boston Symphony even; they're going to have some things going on.  There's a Harvard Club down there.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  And we know so many people that it's hard to—I think we're more socially involved down there than we are here.

ER:  Really?

MP:  Here we try to contain it a little bit.

ER:  Yeah.  Yeah, and how long do stay down there for?

MP:  Until the end of March.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  So that's a long time.

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  But, anyhow, we have a lot of nice things going on.  David was once president of the American Jewish Historical Society and he's very active in that too.

ER:  Is the center at Brandeis?

MP:  It's on the grounds of Brandeis, but it's separate.

ER:  Great, great.

MP:  And they are going to have a meeting, I think near Monticello in Virginia in March. So we'll probably go there.

ER:  Wonderful.

MP:  And usually when we're in Florida we visit Bill in California, but since we were with him for two weeks in Tuscany and maybe he will come, we won't go out there.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  I mean, it just goes so fast.

ER:  Very fast; very fast.  Well, when your days are full.

MP:  Now, you are so busy and still, you're taking time for this.  How do you do that?

ER:  Well, this was—when I first heard about this it really sparked my interest.  You know, I—just very, very—I'm always very interested in about what women of various generations—what their life experiences were like and also—and in particular, Jewish women.  You know, I mean, I had—like now, you've asked me now, I have been blessed with some wonderful women in my life, many of whom aren't here anymore.  So I mean, you know, it's just—it's very comforting and stimulating for me at the same time to talk to people and learn about their experiences and somehow, on some level, see where it relates to me.  So this way—and I really enjoy Temple Israel.

MP:  Yeah.

ER:  And—

MP:  It's really—I mean, you could spend all your time—

ER:  Just being involved there.  So—but I, you know, kind of pick and choose the activities that are meaningful to me, and this was one of them, so—

MP:  Now your seven-year-old—

ER:  Is in the second grade at the Lawrence School in Brookline.

MP:  Oh, it's a good school.

ER:  Yeah, and he's great.  You know, he's a cute, rambunctious little boy.

MP:  Oh.

ER:  And—

MP:  That's wonderful.

ER:  —the 15-year-old is a sophomore at Brookline High School, and then, Rachel, my younger stepdaughter is a freshman.  She's coming home today, as a matter of fact.  She's a freshman at Trinity College in Hartford.  And Sarah, the older stepdaughter, has an apartment in Brighton.  She's getting a Master's in Education at Wheelock.  So they're all kind of, you know, moving on.

MP:  Sounds great—

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  But, my God, you are busy!

ER:  I'm busy, yeah, but it's good stuff.  I, you know, like you, really have found many things to do other than have a full-time job.  I do some writing.  I write a column about food for the Boston Herald and I study writing a little bit.  I'm taking some writing classes at Radcliffe, and so I feel I'm pretty busy right now.  Right now, I feel very good.  I like having the flexibility to be with my kids and—

MP:  Yeah.

ER:  —take care of things at home.  For many years I felt like I was very frantic and never had time to really put into anything.  You know, when I did it always felt like it was half—like I never could really be on top of anything, you know, from messy cabinets to kids who—you know, phone calls I had to make for my kids or whatever.  So I don't have that same—I'm very busy, but I don't have that same kind of stress that I had before and I—

MP:  That's good.

ER:  And I really appreciate that.

[END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO]

ER:  Today is June 30, 1997.  I am Ellen Rovner and I am interviewing Muriel Pokross in her home in Belmont, Massachusetts under the auspices of the Jewish Women's Archive Temple Israel Oral History Project in Boston, Massachusetts.

MP:  From beginnings of just a few paintings, time went on.  We would buy a painting, usually of an artist that wasn't too well known but whom we thought had a future, and we would try to look into the background of the painter and, if it appealed to us, we would buy the painting.  Some of these artists have become well known.  Others are still not known, but they're paintings that we enjoy looking at.  And we became friends with many artists.  Early in our marriage we met Joseph Flock.  He was a well-known Viennese

artist who had a studio in Paris. At the time of the Nazis he had moved to Paris, and he was quite well know there. And some of our friends here in Boston knew him from Paris and Vienna, especially the psychoanalytic friends that we had. So when he came here, before he became well known and could get established, David said, “Joseph would like to come to Boston and do a few courses and earn a little money, so let’s have him do your portrait, Muriel.” I wasn’t for it, really.

ER: [laughs]

MP: The children were small—the two little ones and—the two first-borns—first-born and second-born. And I was not into sitting to have a portrait done. But I went along with it, and our friend Dr. Helena Deutsch had her daughter-in-law painted. And we would go to Helena’s home in Cambridge and she always had a cold bedroom, and it was in the mid-winter.

ER: [laughs]

MP: But I sat a few times.

ER: Excuse me. About what year was this? Do you—

MP: I would say it was like—‘40—We had come back from the war. David had been in the Navy, and at that time we had come back with a third child. So maybe it was in the ‘40s, like ’43.

ER: I see. Okay.

MP: ’43. So that helped and there were others.

ER: So you would have to sit in this cold bedroom in—

MP: In Helena Deutsch—this eminent psychoanalyst and—maybe three or four times in the morning, for about an hour at a time. And, you know, it meant arranging for the children and so forth to have coverage, you know. But, anyhow, I did it. And as I look at that portrait today, I look sort of stark and maybe—not relaxed.

ER: It—where is it?

MP: I'll show it to you.

ER: Okay.

MP: And—but anyhow, the family is glad that we had it done then.

ER: Right.

MP: So that's one of many stories relating to our collection. Most recently, the Rose Art Gallery—Rose Art Museum at Brandeis had a retrospective of Barnet Rubenstein.

ER: Right, right.

MP: Maybe you saw that.

ER: No, I'm familiar with his work.

MP: Okay. And we have four or five of Barnet Rubenstein's, and he's a friend of ours and we liked his work; we've been to his studio several times, and so they asked to borrow our paintings. And it was a beautiful exhibit. I can show you the catalog. And so that was fun and we've given our children some of our paintings, because now they're too numerous; we don't have any wall space in this colonial house. And so some of our paintings are up on the third floor but we've given our children paintings from, if you want to call it, our collection.

ER: Are you still collecting?

MP: Very eclectic. Well, not long ago we bought a painting just this month of Aaron Fink's. He's a young painter. His parents—his father is head of Alpha Gallery, which is on Newbury Street, and his mother Barbara Swan is a painter, and she did a painting of David. She liked his bow tie and she said, "I want to paint the bow tie." So we have one of David. And—but a lot of this interest really started with our friend, Beata Rank; we called her Tola. She was the wife of Otto Rank, who was one of Freud's disciples. She had a salon in Paris. When she came here and lived in Cambridge she met many painters, and she also introduced us to Shana Orloff. Shana Orloff was one of her friends in Paris. And many times we went to Paris and visited Shana Orloff. In fact, she came here once because she had an exhibit at the Worcester Museum. She was a little too contemporary, I guess, for Boston. But the Worcester Art Museum had some of her works and she was a very colorful figure. In Israel she has done some large sculpture in front of many of the government's buildings. And she is perhaps better known there, even, than here. But we have some of her sculpture too. In fact, when Jennifer was six or—when Jennifer—let me see, Jennifer was born in 19—Joan—excuse me. Joan, our first-born, born in 1937—David, as a gift to me, bought a sculpture from Shana Orloff, who was in Paris at that time. And we have it here, and I will be glad to show it to you.

ER: Great.

MP: And "Femme en [unclear]", very contemporary woman in a chair, and years later on one of our trips to Paris, Shana did a head of David, which I will show you too. And—so, you can see, there was a very personal relationship with many of the artists. And there's a story behind almost every painting that I'm going to show you, Ellen.

ER: Okay. Great, great.

MP: And so it's—

ER: So do you want to start—

MP: Yes, in here. For example, William Wylie is a California artist whom we've met. He is a very colorful man. He has a studio somewheres in the Wine Country or near the Wine Country, and we went on a trip with our son, Bill, and met him. And we already had two or three of his works. When we—we started going to California when Bill moved out to California. And when we would visit him we would go into San Francisco and we got to know the California School. So some of our art is from California and William Wylie is one of our favorite California artists. And he always has words that go with his paintings and for this particular one, which is the newest one that we have of his—maybe we bought this five years ago.

ER: Can you describe it?

MP: Yes. It's a—it's an oil on canvas and it's called "Shutters" and you can see there are two shutters, and you can see the hinges.

ER: Right, right.

MP: And some of the figures have to do with a musical instrument.

ER: Right, right.

MP: He's interested and he has a—sort of a guitar that he likes to play, and he was also interested in a book of medieval art with dragons and whatnot.

ER: Right.

MP: And so that is in the—included in the painting. And if you go real close you can read the words that are on the painting. And he's a very imaginative, very creative artist, and we even have a self-portrait of his, which I'll show you.

ER: Oh, great.

MP:  And when he does his self-portrait, he doesn't portray himself as he is, and by the way he's a tall, handsome guy, but he puts on a false nose; he puts on glasses.

ER:  [laughs]

MP:  And that's the portrait that you'll see that's been loaned to—some our art have been loaned to galleries all over the country and sometimes abroad.  When an artist is being displayed they sometimes will call us and ask can they borrow a painting.  So I'll show you some of those.  One of our paintings was recently sent to Berkeley to an art exhibit that had work of gay artists and straight artists.  We had a painting by a straight artist and so they asked to borrow that, called "Lady Blackline"—"Lady Blacklines," which I will show you.  And somewheres we have a little booklet as to the results that they found as a result of comparing the two.  And over here is (we're still in the dining room)—that's of course a Barney—Barnet Rubinstein—the lower one.  And Alex Katz, whom we met also in New York; he's an interesting man.  That's one of his.  And then, this one on the left is Robert Hudson.  I went out—one of our trips to California we visited him and he is in the Wine Country somewhere.  He and Wylie are friends and contemporaries.  And he has a barn that is not to be believed.  He collects interesting old stuff that you and I would throw away.

ER:  Yes.

MP:  And when he is creating something, he looks in his barn and he takes a little bit of this and a little bit of that and has done some interesting sculpture as a result.  We have a watercolor and there's another one in the reception hall—of his.  So he's another very creative artist who sees relationships and they all, you know, have their own philosophies of life—interesting too.

ER:  And what about this one?

MP: That one is an Adolph Gottlieb and we never did meet him, and I believe he died. And he was into calligraphy and Chinese figures and all, and so some of the designs that you see have to do with Chinese figures or calligraphy. And that's how he put his together. And Avery is a well-known, very prolific artist who painted in Gloucester a good deal. Unfortunately, we didn't know him—we used to go to Gloucester summers, we didn't meet him at that time. And that's one of his traditional paintings that we like—his color, his composition. That's quite traditional. And then later on, he did more abstract.

ER: Right.

MP: And that's called "Moon Path," done by the same artist at a later date in his career, and we love the colors and the vibrancy of that period of his life. And this is a California artist next to it. He made his own paper to begin with and that's a very nice watercolor with sort of a target, a central point. We didn't know him. And in the corner over there is a little Flock. Flock is of course our very dear friend, whom we followed all his life. He died about maybe eight years ago—

ER: That's a wonderful—

MP: —lived in New York. He had—and that was typical of what he did, always women in either a doorway or near a window, and he was considered an "artist's artist." He was studied and some of the California artists studied Flock and then took off on their own. But they liked his compositions, his colors, and so he is a well known figure and, as so many of these people who came to this country, added so much to the culture and civilization of our country.

ER: Now do you have favorites among—or let me backtrack. Do you and your husband make joint decisions when you decide on a piece or—

MP: Usually. Yes, usually you talk it over. Sometimes David, who has a very good eye, will look at an artist's work and he'll say, "This is what I would like to have." First of all,

we try to have paintings that are on the small side.

ER: Yeah.

MP: And also, they're less expensive. And of course we try to buy art at the beginning of an artist's career, if we can. And we buy paintings that we like, that we both agree on. If I dislike a painting, David will honor that and usually our taste is compatible, so we don't have any trouble in that respect. And I must say, our interest in art has enriched our lives. Wherever we go we always find the art world of the area, and we were at Alaska two summers ago and got to know some of the Alaskan painters, and we brought back a painting that we liked. David has it in his law office now. So—

ER: Do you just go to a museum or a gallery and then make inquiries?

MP: Yeah, we don't always buy things. If they're too expensive we, you know, don't buy them, and we are not buying very much right now. And Aaron Fink, we knew him as a very young painter. He's still a young man and we have one or two of his earlier paintings. He's only about 40 maybe, and his mother, of course, was a painter and is a painter, Barbara Swan, and his father has a gallery.

ER: Right.

MP: So it's a very nice—

ER: Right.

MP: And so, we believe in him. We like to help young people, too, on their—help them, encourage them, and, thanks. And so, art is really a very important part of our lives today [unclear].

ER: Have you ever collected any Judaica? Any Jewish art?

MP: Yes, when we were in Israel, we—there again, we went into a museum and tried to find out the local artists. And we have some; we have a pastel, which I can show you upstairs and we have two or three Israeli painters. I would have to look somewhere to—I don't quite remember their names. The one—the first Israeli painter was Reuven Rubin; he's very well known—Reuven Rubin, and he happened to have been a friend, a personal friend of our friend, Beata Rank, who really encouraged us in art and introduced us to Joseph Flock. Reuven Rubin was a Romanian painter and he was in Paris and hungry for good deals, and our friend Tola Rank would invite him over for dinner and so forth. They became good friends and he exhibited his art, and he was a friend of Shana Orloff's; and then he moved to Israel and became one of their outstanding painters. So we have an early painting that was given to us by Tola.

ER: Really?

MP: And then we have—when we went to visit, and our daughter was with us at that time—she was going to be married, so he gave her a painting and we have a watercolor of a shepherd with a sheep around his neck—

ER: Great.

MP: —which we liked very much. And I think some of it's here. I think some of our Israeli paintings are children, but we may have a few here.

ER: Have you ever painted or drawn or—

MP: Well, when I was first married I did take a course at the Museum School with Harold [Rosenberg? Rotenberg?]. He subsequently moved to Israel many years later and lived in Safed. And so, I learned a little bit about drawing and painting and—but I can't say that I was really a painter. I dabbled a little bit, but not very much. Our granddaughter went a little further and we have some of her art, but she's now a lawyer. [chuckles] So painting is her hobby.

ER:  Yeah, great, great.

MP:  And she—whenever we traveled with Jennifer, she would go to museums with us, and she became interested in art.  And that encouraged her with her own artwork and now she's in Washington, married, and—Yeah, a year today—

ER:  Oh, really!  Great!

MP:  —married and whenever we go to Washington we go to art museums.  And she goes there and she said she was going to, in her spare time, take a course and continue to work in art.  So we hope that that gives her pleasure.

ER:  Great, it's very nice to see that you have carried through generation to generation with the interest there.

MP:  Yes, and our children—our daughter is very much interested.  We started everybody on art and they're all interested in it now.  So that's wonderful.

ER:  Should we take a walk around?  Can we do that and you can tell me a little bit and maybe I can figure out a place to plug this in in the living room, and somehow, hopefully we can record?

MP:  Yes.

ER:  Okay, so I'll temporarily just—

MP:  All right.

ER:  We're now in the living room and we're surrounded by wonderful paintings, and, as Muriel had said when we walked in, this is like stepping back into history.  So I'm very eager to hear some more.

MP:  Well, first of all, a lot of the furniture in this room comes from either my mother or an uncle or an aunt.

ER:  Great.

MP:  Since I was the only girl in the family for many years, I seem to have inherited a great many interesting things.  First of all, my uncle, Leo Wasserman, collected some art and had beautiful furniture.  He was a bachelor and when he died, I inherited wonderful tables—

ER:  Beautiful.

MP:  —old tables and also, some art.  For example, there's a Rodin head that he bought in Paris and that has [unclear] of an English poet and—

ER:  Oh, it's beautiful.  Wow!

MP:  And so we have that and we have these wonderful tables here, and the piano was the piano that we had when I was growing up and struggling with piano lessons.  And now we really enjoy the piano and—

ER:  Do you play?

MP:  Well, a little bit but not much today, although when I was taking lessons I was told I had a lot of talent.  That kept my mother—

ER:  [laughs]

MP:  —continuing with lessons until I said, "Enough."  And so the piano brings back a lot of memories.  And the—the Sheridan—

ER:  Oh.

MP:  —copy of an old Sheridan mixing table, they called it, where you could—sort of like a bar.

ER:  Oh, like a bar.  Oh, it's just beautiful.

MP:  And has nice inlaid wood.  That's—

ER:  Looks like a secretary.

MP:  Yeah.

ER:  But it's just gorgeous.

MP:  Yeah, well it has a roll top on it, and we have these drawers where you can keep bottles and so forth.  So—and a lot of this furniture comes from Uncle Leo.  Also, the—some of the furniture here is from Old Colony Furniture Company.  They're no longer in existence but they had the finest cabinetmakers, and this coffee table is a teak.

ER:  Beautiful.

MP:  It came from one tree.

ER:  It's beautiful; it looks Japanese.

MP:  Yes, teakwood, and—

ER:  It's beautiful.

MP:  Yes, and so—and the divans and the tables and so forth.  And the Old Colony Furniture Company, the Rudman family—Warren Rudman is—

ER:  Oh.

MP: —from that family. Sidney Rudman was a classmate and very dear friend of ours. And so we certainly enjoyed the furniture that we bought there. And now, getting back to the art, also from Uncle Leo is this seated Buddha.

ER: Right.

MP: I think that's maybe 11th Century, "Seated Buddha," that—

ER: Careful—

MP: —he had collected. And we enjoyed that very much.

ER: Oh, boy!

MP: And we have the whole history of it—really old.

ER: Oh, boy!

MP: And so that's another piece. Now, I talked about Shana Orloff—

ER: Right.

MP: —who was a dear friend and a sculptor in Paris, a wonderful lady, and when Joan, our firstborn, was—I guess—when she had been born, David wanted to do something special for me—

ER: Oh, it's just beautiful!

MP: And so he bought a Shana Orloff, "Femme en Fauteuil"—"Woman in a Chair," and it sort of aged and oxidized a little bit.

ER: Oh, it's beautiful!

MP: But we like it very much and—

ER:  She looks very strong and very sensuous; it's beautiful.

MP:  Now, we have another piece that Helena Deutsch, our very dear friend, left for me, and this is called, "Ruth and Naomi."

ER:  Oh, how wonderful!

MP:  And the two—the two women—

ER:  Right.

MP:  And that's a favorite.

ER:  Right.  Oh, it's beautiful.

MP:  We love that.  And also, let's see, David's—yes, and then remember, I told you that Shana did a head of David—

ER:  Yes.

MP:  —when we were in Paris.

ER:  That's great.

MP:  And so, that's the head that she did of him at that particular time.

ER:  That's beautiful.

MP:  Strong.

ER:  Very strong and handsome.

MP:  Strong face.

ER:  It's great.

MP:  And—

ER:  This "Ruth and Naomi" is really quite beautiful.  I love how they're embraced.

MP:  Yes, and they're together.

ER:  Right.

MP:  They're almost one, in a way.

ER:  Right, Ruth would not leave Naomi.

MP:  Yes.

ER:  Yes, it's beautiful.

MP:  That's—

ER:  Very heartwarming story about—that I'm really just learning—just sort of—just starting to learn a little bit more of the Torah, and, you know, Ruth was Naomi's daughter-in-law.

MP:  Yes.

ER:  And her husband—Naomi's sons died and she had to leave, and Ruth just refused to leave her mother-in-law.  She would not abandon her, just was so devoted to her.  It's really—it's quite a wonderful story.

MP:  It's a moving story.

ER:  Right.

MP: I should really read up on it again. I knew the story at one time. Also, talked about Reuven Rubin—

ER: Right.

MP: —an Israeli—

ER: Yes.

MP: —artist whom we met when we were in Israel and was a great friend of our friend Tola Rank. Here is the—that's an oil.

ER: Oh.

MP: A shepherd with a sheep—

ER: Right.

MP: —which we love, and we bought it directly from him.

ER: Right, right.

MP: We went to visit him in—the studio was in Jerusalem, I think.

ER: Great. And this painting here?

MP: And there's another Reuven Rubin over here, and that's "Flight from Egypt." That's a really old one that he did, and that was given to us by Tola. She—

ER: Beautiful.

MP: —gave us that painting. And you can see Joseph and so forth.

ER: Right.

MP: So that's a very interesting one of an earlier period, and then this one was many years later when he was painting in Israel. And—now, these here—we bought that one in California.

ER: It's very nice.

MP: The name of the artist escapes me, but a contemporary artist whom we like very much. And one of David's law partners, Thad Beal, did this one here. He decided one day he didn't want to be a lawyer anymore, and he really wanted to be an artist. He had uncles who were quite well known Beals of past generations, and so he went to the Museum School and now he's an artist and—

ER: Great!

MP: —this is one of his over here. And these paintings here from California—Fairfield Porter—

ER: Right.

MP: —is one of our favorite artists. He was in the class before David at Harvard, although David did not know him at that time, but we liked his work, particularly of Maine.

ER: Right.

MP: And that's a typical of Maine with an island—

ER: Right.

MP: —a [unclear] covered island. We did many sailing—you know, we were sailors in our early years and we used to sail down the coast of Maine and knew these places. So we enjoyed Fairfield Porter's and we have a few of his here. And—

ER: And what about the portrait that you sat for?

MP: Of course. All right, let's come in here. [several words unclear] Now in here—here are the portraits. There's a portrait—

ER: Oh, it's beautiful.

MP: There's a portrait of me shivering. [laughs]

ER: Oh, Muriel—oh, it's beautiful.

MP: Sitting in the chair in Helena's bedroom for—and you can see—I think the expression in my face is a little bit scared—

ER: [laughs]

MP: —a little bit uncomfortable, you know, thinking 'I should be home doing this or that.'

ER: Right.

MP: And, 'What am I doing, just sitting here luxuriating?'

ER: Right, right.

MP: And so, that's—

ER: Oh, it's beautiful.

MP: —that's that. And that was of that particular era, and this was done of David—

ER: Right.

MP: —by Barbara Swan who wanted to do his bow tie, and that was done about, maybe, eight years ago.

ER: Great.

MP:  And we didn't think it was an exceptionally good one, but she caught the bow tie.

ER:  Right.  [chuckles]  Right.  And what about this one?  This [unclear]

MP:  Now, this one here is done by Sauer, Raphael Sauer, who had a studio next to Joseph Flock in New York.  And that is a portrait that he did, not of anybody whom I knew.

ER:  I see.

MP:  But that sort of chalk—

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  —chalk texture and skin color was sort of typical of him.

ER:  I see.

MP:  He did the 30's and we think he's a very important artist.  He hasn't had the full recognition yet but we believe in him.  He's gone, of course.  Now, over here, Judy Chicago.

ER:  Oh.

MP:  She did a—you know about the—

ER:  I know.  Oh, I remember—

MP:  This is Judy Chicago over here.

ER:  Great!

MP:  And that was a study that she was doing for the Holocaust [Project].  Did you happen to see the Holocaust [Project]?  It was at Rose Art.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  She had an exhibit there.  At any rate, you could see the horror—

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  —of the faces and the agony, and we were in Santa Fe actually when we saw this and liked it, and thought it would be an interesting study.  And these are contemporary artists.  Stewart Davis—

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  —who's quite well known.

ER:  Right.

MP:  We have a couple of his, and this is Tom Wesselmann.  He—well, how can I describe him?  Very contemporary artist.  He does sometimes close-ups of lips, parts of the body, whatnot.  Here is the hand and all.  But we find him interesting.  And this is a—these are our art books.  We have really a huge collection—

ER:  [chuckles]  You certainly do.

MP:  —of art catalogues and books.  I don't know what we're going to do with them, but we've given some of our paintings to the museums, some sculpture that we had that we really inherited from my uncle Leo.  But also, we gave the Rose Art some of an artist, and this was an artist—we did not know her but she had a tragic ending.  She was in the Middle East doing a—some kind of a showing—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —of work.  She was up on a ladder and fell off the ladder.

ER: Oh.

MP: But we thought she was very promising. Her name is Joan Brown, and this is called "Woman in an Art Chair,"1974.

ER: Great.

MP: And then, this is not—we have others, but this is not a very good one of John McNamara, whom David is sort of a father figure for him. We first got to know him through an exhibit at Rose Art and then he had—he won a prize at De Cordova, a very young, up and coming artist. That is not a typical one of his and it's not a good place for it.

ER: [laughs]

MP: We hope that he's going to develop one day.

ER: Yeah.

MP: Careful of [unclear] here. All right?

ER: Okay.

MP: And we have a Christo over there? Maybe you know that name?

ER: Is Christo—is he the one who does all those massive—

MP: Wraps.

ER: Yes.

MP: Wraps, and this is called "A Wrapped Tree."

ER: Oh.

MP: And we bought that—we met him, actually. He was here in Boston and we were invited to someone's home on Beacon Hill, and he's an interesting man.

ER: Yeah, he's quite the character.

MP: That's actual string and plaster—

ER: Right.

MP: —that he wraps with. And—

ER: And I see—your teapots. Were these your mother's?

MP: No. That was a teapot—a tea set that was given to us when we were married, a [unclear] set, which we still have and we love. And—

ER: This is quite a—

MP: That's really an old teapot. Mmm, I'd forgotten about that.

ER: Very art deco.

MP: Yes, yes. That, I think, came from my mother's collection. She had beautiful dishes and glasses and so forth. And we were—for example, we were in Mexico.

ER: Right.

MP: And we went to—just to a gallery to see some—an exhibit of a man called Zuniga—Z-u-n-i-g-a. And he was relatively unknown at the time. And they had—you could buy a piece of sculpture with a book of his works. And he appealed to us. We thought that his women were like the—you know, they were like Mother Earth.

ER: Right, right.

MP: Heavy women, and so we bought a watercolor and this little sculpture—family sculpture, and he's now a national hero in Mexico. He's one of the outstanding artists, and he's done huge sculpture. So that was kind of fun—

ER: Great.

MP: —and brings back pleasant memories. And this figure here—we got to know Bill Beckman—William Beckman, and we have a few of his paintings and he's represented in New York galleries now. And this was his wife—his ex-wife who did this. And we visited them in New York. They're right near Hyde Park where the Roosevelts' home is, and they have a lovely—they had a lovely studio. Unfortunately, they separated and she's gone off on her own. She was a model for her husband for 20 years—

ER: Wow.

MP: —and one day decided, "This is enough for me," so she went off on her own.

ER: Yes.

MP: So we don't need to go into all of these others.

ER: Okay.

MP: But there's a contemporary sculptor who does this interesting ribbon-like figure, Lila Katzen. We met Lila because she was commissioned to do a piece for Brandeis, and if you are on the Brandeis campus you will see a huge—this is really called a [unclear]; it's sort of like a model of a bigger piece that she did.

ER: I see.

MP: And it's right there near the Rosenstiel Building of Science, and also she did a little—little one for us here. She stayed with us when she came for the dedication, and

she has a place in Provincetown and—well, we haven't seen her lately, but we're still friends.

ER: Great.

MP: She has a place in New York.

ER: Great.

MP: Works on big pieces now.

ER: Great. Wow, it's just wonderful.

MP: You know, this is just a small part, but it's part of our lives, I have to say.

ER: Right, right.

MP: It really has enriched us very much. I'm looking to see. You're interested in Judaica and I have some samples. The—in this room we have Hebrew books here and we have a wonderful Hagadah by Leonard Baskin that—

ER: Oh!

MP: —is a work of art and I have the—I have the menorah of my grandparents.

ER: Oh, it's beautiful.

MP: And I remember it being on my grandfather's desk and lighting the Chanukah candles.

ER: Yeah.

MP: And so that brings back a lot of memories.

ER:  I'm going to take some—a picture of you with some of these things.

MP:  Okay.  And lets see what else here.

ER:  Just beautiful.

MP:  Wonderful drawings in it, and we have some Leonard Baskin woodcuts.  He was a professor at Smith and when Joan was there; she was a friend of his, and we became interested in his art.  So that was many years ago.

ER:  Great, just great.  You're very fortunate and very, very—

MP:  We've had a lot of interesting, wonderful experiences.

ER:  Right, it's great that, you know, there's of course a story with each piece so—

MP:  Yeah, Yeah.

ER:  —and that, it's great.

MP:  Oh, and this one I wanted to show you the head of William Wylie.

ER:  Oh, right.

MP:  That's the man---this is what he does to himself.

ER:  Right.  [laughs]  Funny.

MP:  He wants to sort of denigrate himself or make fun of himself and this portrait has—portraits of artist are always of interest.  So every now and then there's an exhibit and they, you know, ask for a self-portrait of the artist.  And that one has gone to California and a few other places.  Well, we could spend a lot of time on—we've only covered one small part—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —of the art.

ER:  But I think I have a sense of how you got started and what you like and—

MP:  Yes, and, you know, it's a continuing interest and we enjoy visiting art galleries.

ER:  And today, what are you—like where do you go and look, and do you have favorites in the area or—

MP:  Well, if there is a particular exhibit going on—for example, at the Museum of Fine Arts, there's an exhibit of Roy Lichtenstein.  We don't have any of his paintings but he is now painting in a completely different style, almost like little dots, and it is worth seeing—really.  We didn't buy his art because it seemed a little cartoonish.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And we were not that interested in it.  But what he has done lately, I think is very fine art and I recommend that you see it.

ER:  Great.

MP:  Try to go there.  And this desk, well, that's a whole story too.  That desk was left to David by Dr. Hanns Sachs, who was really his introduction to the psychoanalytic world, and that was a desk that he used and he willed it to David, who was his friend and lawyer and so forth.

ER:  And what about these candlesticks?

MP:  The candlesticks—Helena Deutsch gave them to us.  They—actually she said they were done by an Italian; they're Italian candlesticks, which she gave to us because she loved us dearly.  And this piece—Uncle Leo had this piece here.  The figure—it looks like

a copy of a Rodin, but I think it's an original piece from an Italian artist. It really was given to my brother but he said, "You keep it."

ER: [laughs] He wasn't interested?

MP: He didn't have room for it. So you can see that our walls are filled with art and with memories and even the clock, the antique cherry clock—that was a gift. We were able to—a very close friend of ours—they were looking to adopt a baby, and we had heard of a baby for adoption.

ER: Oh.

MP: This was the time when you really couldn't adopt easily and so it worked out extremely well, and they gave us a gift.

ER: Oh, it's beautiful. Very lovely.

MP: So everything in this room has a history. After all, we've been here 55 years. It's a long time.

ER: It is.

MP: When we first came, the walls were not filled with art. [chuckles] But we sort of added as we went along.

ER: Right.

MP: And David met this artist from St. Louis. Well, I can't think of his name right now, but it'll come to me. And also, David got the first De Tocqueville Award from United Way and those books and all—

ER: Oh, how wonderful!

MP: A piece of statuary—

ER: Right.

MP: —came with it, which he has in his office. He has some art in his office that he likes very much. Well—

ER: Great. Well, I'm going to pause this here—

MP: Yeah.

ER: —before we move into—

MP: This little den, although we have a ten-room house, is used more than any other room.

ER: [chuckles]

MP: David and I are in this room, and you can see, he's got papers and so forth. He uses his den; he used to use it a great deal.

ER: Yeah.

MP: Anyhow, so there's a lot packed into this little room. A lot of art.

ER: I see some—and wonderful photographs.

MP: Now, there are photographs. There's our friend, Dr. Helena Deutsch, who is our very dear friend and her husband, Felix Deutsch, who was physician to Freud—

ER: I see.

MP: —and then became interested in psychoanalysis. And he is the one who coined the term "psychosomatic medicine."

ER:  Oh.

MP:  And he was really the father of that whole field.  This is Dr. Hanns Sachs, who really introduced David to the psychoanalytic world and as people came over, they turned to David—if they needed a lawyer, they needed guidance; and we became friends of the whole group.  And above is Freud, the last summer of his life, when he was in London at Marrisfield in the garden and you can see him with Princess Bonaparte, who was a great friend, who was the one who paid ransom for him to come to London—

ER:  [unclear]

MP:  —from Vienna.  And our friend, Hanns Sachs, and then—well, these are pictures to David.

ER:  Right.

MP:  David's boat, "The Onward," and by the way, he did—

[END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE THREE]

MP:  —and had students come, many of them had never had a paintbrush in their hands, to see what they could do—their conception of God.

ER:  Oh.

MP:  And they had an exhibit which is there now.  At any rate, that was one of the drawings from his notebook.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And you can see that it was just pulled out of the notebook.  And he sees himself as close to nature; animals and people are interchangeable—interesting artist.  And this is of course that winter, you know, I went to Smith.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And this is—Scott Pryor is a very good artist who did the “Hills of Northampton.”

ER:  Oh, it’s beautiful.

MP:  So David bought that for me.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And these are various paintings that we collected, and California School—now that artist does huge, monumental sculptures.  But at that time he was doing just little ones—painted aluminum.  And another favorite of ours is Gillespie—Gregory Gillespie, and he is a very good contemporary artist.  We have some of his; he’s a good friend of ours.  He lives in Belchertown, not too far.

ER:  Right.

MP:  [unclear] now, and has his studio there.  Very creative; that has to do with fertility, the seeds and you know what.

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  And so that’s of interest —

ER:  Great, and this one over here?

MP:  And that’s a Beckman—Bill Beckman, another friend of ours.  I told you he has a studio near Hyde Park in New York.

ER:  Right, right, right.  He did the sculpture—

MP:  No sculpture; he only did paintings—

ER:  Oh.

MP:  —landscape, and—

ER:  Oh, wasn't there was a—one whose wife left him after—

MP:  Yes, she—

ER:  And they're also near Hyde Park in New York.

MP:  She—and her name is Ward.  She goes under her maiden name.

ER:  Yeah.

MP:  He's still Beckman and she's—I think she's moved away now.

ER:  Yeah, and this one over here?  It looks like a market or—

MP:  Oh, what's interesting to you—here is an Anna Tiko, "Jerusalem Scene."

ER:  Oh.

MP:  Here, and we also have another one of her "Olive Trees."  You see, there is a museum; her home was turned into a museum in Jerusalem—a very fine, wonderful—this is mixed media:  charcoal, pastel, watercolor and it's called "A Jerusalem Scene."

ER:  Wow.  And this one over here?  This one.

MP:  Now that little one there—this is by David Moore.  I don't know too much about him. That's oil on masonite and it's called "Orange Line Platform."

ER:  Yeah.

MP: An interesting one. And above it is a Max Beckmann dry point.

ER: Oh.

MP: That was done in 1915; you know, the faces, the—

ER: Now, do you remember where you got that or how you came to—

MP: I don't really remember on that one. David would have to fill me in, but I would say that maybe we were at a gallery and we saw that and liked it.

ER: Go ahead.

MP: And so, I think that—

ER: Oh, this is wonderful. Great.

MP: And there's—not a very good picture is Uncle Leo Wasserman, who had a lot to do with our lives. David was his lawyer and friend. And this is my uncle, the youngest of the family—

ER: Right.

MP: —who didn't marry and—

ER: Your mother's brother.

MP: Mother's youngest brother, and he was interested in art and traveled quite a bit in his later years. He was an accountant. Leo Wasserman, accountant and—well, you asked about our interest in psychoanalysis.

ER: Right.

MP: And in the early—well, the late ‘30s, when the—when people were coming over here to escape Nazism, many were eminent doctors and psychoanalysts, and Boston became the center for Freudian psychoanalysis. And that’s—

ER: Shall we sit down? What would you like to do? Go to the next room? Okay. I’ll pause. We’re back now, recording, okay. So, you started to talk a bit about the psychoanalytic movement here, how a lot of physicians came here during the war or right before the war, and your husband became friendly with—you and your husband—who served—

MP: Yeah.

ER: —as a lawyer and as a friend and a guide to a new country and a new culture. And in the classes you had mentioned some women with whom you became good friends, women who introduced you to artists, who were artists in their own right and introduced you to artists. So I was hoping you could talk a little bit more about—not too much about the psychoanalytic movement, but more about how it was for you as a young woman meeting people who were really, you know, from a very different culture.

MP: Yes, they were very—

ER: And were pioneers in their fields—

MP: Yes.

ER: —and were really creating a stronghold in this country, for study, and also—and the women involved with it, because, you know, we hear names like Freud and Otto Rank, but women’s names aren’t quite as well known.

MP: Well known. Well, in this group, it’s interesting that the wives were psychoanalysts and doctors. They had met their husbands at medical school in Vienna

or Germany, and so there were quite a few husband and wife teams of doctors—psychoanalysts. And the Bibrings—Greta Bibring and her husband, Ed—Edward Bibring—they were both doctors. There was Jenny Welder and her husband. They were both analysts. Helena and Felix, of course; they had a double interest because Felix had been the personal physician of Sigmund Freud, and through his wife, who had been analyzed by Freud. You know, as one of the early, early psychoanalysts, he became interested in psychoanalysis and so forth. I knew the wives because here they were settling into a new culture, a new country; they needed a lot of practical kinds of help. I mean, where do you buy gadgets for the kitchen? Where do you buy furniture—

ER: Right.

MP: —or rugs? And so I seemed to be the resource for them, although, you know, I was a young bride at the time. But even with Dr. Hanns Sachs, David—he'd asked David to find a house for him. David bought a house for him on Marlborough Street. And he needed a couple—he needed a husband and wife team. I had not had too much experience with hiring help but I quickly found out that there was a Liddell Agency on Newbury Street that specialized in couples for homes, and so we found a very good couple for Hanns Sachs who stayed with him for many years. And since he had his office at home, he needed a particular type of man to usher in the patients and this man was so handsome—they were an English couple, and the wife did the cooking. So that was an early experience and so, it was really helping them get settled in, finding their way around, buying the things they needed and introducing them to many things in the Boston community. So we became very good friends, David being the lawyer for the families and helping them in that respect, and David had given many affidavits during the war so that they could come over. But there was already a small psychoanalytic group here. But they were mostly Brahmins, Boston Brahmins, in that group and so forth. So, for example, the Deutsches became godparents of our firstborn, Joan. Tola Rank

became the godmother of Bill, our second-born, and David Jr. was born in Ohio so he had members of the family.

ER: Right.

MP: But we had a close relationship, and early on they were giving us advice about raising children and how their development was coming along.

ER: Right.

MP: And we thought they were really the last word. And at that time psychoanalysis was not completely accepted, but they had deep psychological insights and we were allowed to go to some of their meetings when papers were being read, and so we developed an interest in it. And as their friends came over one by one, they immediately turned to David for legal help and me for practical help. So we had them, you know, for dinner many, many times. Some of them had to take—in order to practice medicine in this country, they had to take their medical exams over again, and you can imagine, for people who were already in their 50s and 60s, to have to study again in order to practice was a real ordeal. And we had a little house—rented house in Newton with a new garden, and I remember their coming out because many of them lived in apartments. Some of them lived in nice homes but in the beginning many were in apartments and they loved coming out to the countryside, Newton, at that time, to study. And we had many good times together. We often had dinner together. Our social life was very much with these older people.

ER: Right.

MP: But very interesting and of course they were so—Hanns Sachs—he was—he knew literature. He could quote from Vanity Fair as though he had read it yesterday. So they were very stimulating, interesting people to be with. And we were very close friends, so that was a very good connection.

ER: What did your mother think of your psychoanalytic friends advising you on child rearing?

MP: Yeah, well, they couldn't quite figure them out. First of all, you know, their English was not the best—

ER: Right.

MP: —to begin with. And Hanns Sachs was much older than David and we would often have him to our house, and sometimes when we'd go to my parents for Thanksgiving dinner in those early days, we would bring Hanns Sachs along. And they weren't quite sure about him. And there were—before—even before David and I were married and we were—David would come over. And sometimes he would call and ask could I find a friend for his friend, Hanns Sachs. And when this man came, my parents said, "What's the matter with that young man? He's bringing his grandfather with him?" And so they were not too accepting. But they were good sports and they went along with this group of people, and that was, you know, sort of our lives but our parents were—my parents—David's parents were not in the picture, because they lived in Fall River and they were not involved at all.

ER: But your mother didn't—

MP: She didn't completely approve—

ER: Right.

MP: —but she wasn't going to interfere, and she thought, well, you know—

ER: Did she get to know any of these women? Tola Rank or—

MP: Not really, no, she was older at that time and had her own group of friends and my mother had her own social life, and she had a Jewish studies group. They met at each

other's homes and Mildred Goldberg, I remember was the leader and her husband was Judge Goldberg, the father of Barbara Goldberg—

ER: And Carol.

MP: —you may know, and Carol, and they were good friends. My parents had very interesting, good, solid, conservative Jewish friends, and they enjoyed visiting each other, doing things together, and my mother had what was originally a sewing club that turned into, I think, a bridge club. And they would meet at each other's homes maybe once a week, and that's when I first learned to dislike bridge.

ER: Oh, really?

MP: [unclear], I was never going to be a card-playing person. Here were these women playing cards on a beautiful day and I'd come home from school and think, 'Oh, so many wonderful things to do and this is the best that these people can do.' But they had their intellectual side too.

ER: Right.

MP: And so, my mother was really the—she was the doer, the shaker, the mover of our family. My father was the hard working, adoring—he adored my mother. He always backed her up. She was the disciplinarian. [chuckles] And he was very sweet and gentle and always behind my mother in whatever she thought was the best thing to do. And of course we had every opportunity, every possible class and course growing up. I had elocution lessons, dancing lessons, piano lessons and Hebrew lessons—went to Hebrew School. My parents belonged to Mishkan Tefilla, which was a Conservative (and still is) temple. And growing up in Roxbury in those early days, the Hebrew School was just very close to where we lived up on Seaver Street, and so I went there three afternoons a week. And I think that my attitude was I was interested in the social life. There were only three girls and the rest were boys.

ER:  [laughs]

MP:  And I think I talked about that earlier.  And [unclear].

ER:  I went to get—again get back to these women.  When you were friendly with them, you know, when they were coming over and you were helping them out and all, did you ever think about maybe pursuing—

MP:  A career?

ER:  —a career in that field in psychology or—

MP:  Well, I was interested, very much interested in psychology and took some courses. Of course that was before I met them, when I was in Smith.  I was already interested in the field and I was already interested in being a social worker, but that didn't come about until later on when I went back to school to get a Master's Degree.  But I was always interested in Psychology and to me this was such a fascinating field, that it just opened new doors completely, and reading and listening to papers that were being written about such subjects as asthma and the psychological causes of certain forms of asthma.  That was a whole new field.

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  And also we became very interested in the early years—growing idea that the early years were the most formative; that we're holding even today that those first years form the background, the foundation and are so important.  And with all the feminist liberation and so forth, some women do have feelings of guilt about leaving their children during that period and some of them have given up their careers temporarily.  But I—in the era when my children were young I was at home with them and always wanted to have some outside interests, because I felt that being home all the time with them was not the best for me or for them.  [chuckles]  So we did have helpers; I had mother's helpers in those

early years, and this was, you know, before the war, in which we took our two little ones and—

ER: Right.

MP: —we had a whole career of traveling around in the Navy.

ER: Now, when we were not on tape, we talked about how it was your mother and you and your daughter, Joan, and your granddaughter, Jennifer, and how values have been passed down from one generation to the next.

MP: Yeah.

ER: Can you talk a little bit more about that? About—

MP: Yes, I'd love to.

ER: Great, starting with your mother or your grandmother or—

MP: Yes, yes. Well, my memories of my grandmother are very vivid because she lived not too far from us and it seemed like every Saturday and Sunday we would visit, and other members of the family would come with their children. And so I knew my grandparents very well. They had come over from Russia, the Ukraine area, and they had maybe four children when they came over. My grandfather made a couple of trips first before bringing my grandmother over, and they came in the—I think I said the 18—

ER: '60s?

MP: —'70s.

ER: '70s?

MP: ‘70s. And my mother was born in 1878 in Boston, so they’re already here. And my grandmother was a very special person. She raised eight children, and in those days you did everything. You made all your food from scratch. I remember for the Sabbath her preparing noodles, pasta, and I remember them on the dining room chairs, over a towel drying out, made her own noodles, made all her food because they didn’t cook on Saturdays.

ER: Right.

MP: That was truly a day of not cooking and of leisure for my grandfather—I’m not so sure about my grandmother. But she was a very wise person and everybody turned to her. She was a very generous, good-hearted person and a wonderful mother to her children. They all had the best things to say about her. My grandfather was a bit of a tyrant and a difficult man, but growing up, he loved me because I was the only girl in the family, and was interested in my learning how to do some of the cooking. And he said whatever I made for him tasted better than anybody else’s.

ER: Right. [laughs]

MP: And older—when I was a little bit older and he had property, he would ask me to write checks for him. His hand—he was developing palsy at that time. And so I was really a favorite and thought he was great until I learned more about the other side of him. But my grandmother was really a role model, and in her later years she would give advice to all the neighbors and everybody knew her, Rebecca Wasserman, in the neighborhood. And she—all—she was the real matriarch of the family. And all members would come to her, and in the early days, I was told that whenever anybody came over from the old county they would very often stay with my grandparents, who lived in the West End, and until they got established, they lived with them. There was always room for cousins or relatives to come and they put them up, even though they had eight children of their own, four girls and four boys. And in the early days, before my

grandfather—well, he did have a pants factory in the West End, overlooking the Charles River, but I think things became bad. And my grandmother decided that she was going to have to help out and so she started a little creamery, sort of like a little grocery store.

ER: Right.

MP: And my mother was the one designated to help her. And so my mother went through grammar school but never went to high school because she was the one who was helping out in the family, whereas her older sisters had—one had left home and became interested in a career as a—had a dress shop in Providence, left home early, and her older sister followed and had married someone in Providence so she was away a little later on. But my mother was the one who really was the family—took care of her family and she helped out with my grandmother and worked around the home. I always thought my mother was very smart, although she had not had a great deal of education. She went through grammar school and I think maybe that was through the ninth grade in those days, but that was it for her. And the rest was picking up. She became a wonderful cook; she used to help her mother with the cooking so she learned how to cook at an early age and—

ER: Do you have dishes that you'd like to make that were your mother's, anything specifically that you remember?

MP: Well, then my mother developed, yes, her own style of cooking and she became a wonderful baker as well—in addition to all the Jewish dishes. She became interested in American cooking and she was not kosher—we never had a kosher home although my grandparents did, but remember, my parents were emancipated. They belonged to the Conservative—

ER: Right.

MP:  And then we followed with the Reform, so that was the evolution, but my mother always collected new recipes.  She was always reading in the “Boston Post” or the “Herald” at that time, the “Globe,” I guess it was just starting.  And she would cut out recipes and I have her cookbooks—Settlement cookbooks, falling apart, but there are recipes that she cut out for making new things.  Well, she made—the holiday dishes, of course, she was just superb in that, and I remember the coffee rolls that she made for breaking the Fast.  They were famous.  She was famous for her sponge cake and—which all her contemporaries knew about and whenever there was an occasion, Ann Carne’s sponge cake, which was about 12 inches high.  It had about 12 eggs in it too, by the way.  It was light and fluffy and often she turned it into a strawberry shortcake or a peach shortcake so she was really known as the superb cook.  And when she had luncheons or dinner parties, they were always perfection.  Her tables were beautiful—her tablecloths, her decorations, her food, but, you know, she did have items like shrimp and lobsters—

ER:  She did?

MP:  And they were wonderful.  And she also made Longchams blueberry pies, which were big blueberries with a little whipped cream on the top and just a crust on the bottom.  And—well, I never really went in for baking because, it seemed to me that my mother spent so much time shopping and baking, that sometimes when she had her dinner parties she was so tired—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —that she really didn’t enjoy her guests.  So I was one for finding shortcuts and not spending any more time in the kitchen than I had to.  But I do have some of her recipes and—of food that I have made.  And by the way, Joan became more interested in cooking, although she always had a career, but Jennifer particularly is interested in her great-grandmother’s recipes.  And so, she is making some of the traditional food.

ER:  Great, great.

MP:  And Jennifer's husband is more religious-minded, and his family than Jennifer.  So she is learning that holidays are not one day, but there are two days.

ER:  [laughs]

MP:  And our family—you know, early on, I called them a secular family.  Although we observed all the holidays and all the moral values of Judaism, we were not a great temple-going family.  Our—we joined Temple Israel, as I told you early on, because Rabbi—who died so young—

ER:  Liebman?

MP:  —Liebman, Rabbi Liebman, who we thought was wonderful, and we joined the temple.  He died very, very young and—but we of course stayed on at Temple Israel and, as you know, we're still members.  But our boys—Joan went to Sunday school and our two sons went.  Joan enjoyed Sunday school, I think partially because of the social life and she is more traditional and accepting.  But Bill had a difficult time with, I think—he got along with Rabbi Klausner but then when Rabbi Gittelsohn came along and was bearing down more on attending during the week for services of young people or Sunday school, Bill had difficulties with him, and so did David Jr.  He did really—he was a mischievous imp at Sunday school.  And they were both bar mitzvahed because their father wanted them to be but after they were bar mitzvahed they said they were not going to be temple-goers and they haven't been.  Bill hasn't been and David we'll see, with the twins growing up how things develop.

ER:  Right.

MP:  But they have always observed the holidays and felt keenly about Israel and Judaism.  So they have a foundation but the ritual part of it they were not so interested

in. But at any rate, my mother always Friday night had Sabbath dinner and she always lit the candles and said a silent prayer before each Friday night dinner and we always had a traditional Friday night meal and I'm sure that came from my grandmother. And my mother—she—whatever she did, she did extremely well, whether it was knitting, crocheting, sewing, she—whatever she did she did very well. And she was ambitious; she had high standards, whether it was for education for her children, which of course she hadn't had herself. And by the way, my father graduated English High School and that went into the family business, which was dress manufacturing, which his father had started. And—but his younger brother went to Harvard but—so my parents were very good—good parents, my mother being the disciplinarian and a little strict, and I think as I said before, I always wanted more freedom than my mother was willing to give me in those days. I think things would have been different today but she was nervous about—

ER: Right, right.

MP: —certain things.

ER: What values do you think that she handed down to you that you really cherish the most, or what did—

MP: Well, I think that doing for others is something that maybe came from my grandmother, who was one of the early pioneers in the background for Temple—for Beth Israel Hospital—Helping Hands, I think it was called—the Auxiliary. My grandmother always had time, no matter how busy, to do something in the community. And my mother was a very ardent Hadassah person and attended meetings. While I was not interested in Hadassah, I became more interested in ORT and became the President of ORT in my younger days. And—but I think the tradition of helping other people, no matter what your circumstances are, became very important—reaching out to do good. And that, I think was something that came from my mother. She always—although her community was the Jewish community, whether it was doing things for the temple,

Temple Sisterhood, Mishkan Tefilla in those days, or Hadassah in their many endeavors. I feel the same way except mine is more ecumenical, and I think that, you know, [unclear] of Parent Teachers Associations and the League of Women Voters was important. There were many things in the community that I felt I wanted to devote time to.

ER: And how do you—do you see that value passed on to your daughter?

MP: And Joan has—Joan is—absolutely. Joan went through stages of wanting to be a social worker but she got over that, and as her career developed, she is an administrator and she has a lot to do with students at the Kennedy School. She was always a compassionate person, helping others. Maybe it started with doing things for her brother. She was the oldest and she was always very considerate and thoughtful of her brothers, particularly the younger one, who was maybe eight years younger than Joan. And she was always reaching out to help people in one way or another. She became a Girl Scout early on—

ER: Right.

MP: —a Brownie first and a Girl Scout, and that led to many things. And today, Joan has gone out of her way to do so much on an individual basis, as well as traditional kinds of things. For example, she is now an overseer, as her father was (and is) of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. They have a division—a group—a committee devoted to bringing music to the public schools. Joan is very active in that and has a lot to do, working with people in the black community, in all areas. No matter how busy, Joan is always the one to come through in a very giving way and with a lot of intelligence as well to help with her expertise and see something good happen. And many of her students—many of them were on the Work Study Program connected with her Kennedy School. And these were from areas of Cambridge—some Asians, some blacks, and she's helped them get into college, found scholarships for them, and that's absolutely a continuation of helping, and it's—with each generation it's been more and more and greater and greater.

ER:  And your granddaughter?

MP:  Now Jennifer, I think because of the influence of her mother, when she was in school she always was interested in the community, and I remember she taught.  One summer she was in the Chinese community helping out with students, teaching them reading or math or something of that sort.  Right now I don't know what she's doing in Washington because she is kind of settling in and has a demanding job and a busy husband, but I am sure that she too will carry on the tradition of helping people.  But Joan is really the epitome of what she's learned from my grandmother, her great-grandmother, her grandmother, from me, and she has carried it to I think the nth degree.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And anyone who knows Joan, and from all walks of life, and no matter where we go, Joan has a friend in the group who has done something, many of the things we don't even know about.  But I feel very good about Joan.  She is a wonderful person who is going to help as many people as possible and do as much good as she can.

ER:  Great.  How would you describe your relationship with your daughter these days?

MP:  With Joan?

ER:  Yes.

MP:  Very good.  We have a very good, close relationship.  She has a lot of concern for us, particularly as we're getting older.  But Joan and I have good times together, although she is extremely busy.  If there is anything that she thinks I might enjoy going to or doing with her, and I do the same for her.  And very often she comes to our dinner parties here because we seem to have many of the same friends, intergenerational at this point.  And, let me see, we had a—yes, a—we had a dinner party for example two weeks ago here, and Joan and Ron came and they contribute.  And their friends are our friends and our

friends are their friends. And when Joan—does a lot of work for John Newhouse. He's head of a department that has to do with public health and health economy. And they were having a brunch at their house for some of their friends and people who worked for them, and they called us and invited us to come. And so we were there; we went with Joan and Ron. Very often we go places with them. I talked about last night going to a party for the son, James Winer. Joan and Ron picked us up. We do many things together and I would say we have a very good relationship. Joan is particularly friendly, fond, loves her father. They see eye to eye on many things. David—many of the things that David has done, Joan is carrying on and he is very close, very proud of Joan. So that's good and we hope that Jennifer will continue. I can say that Jared is a lot like his mother in many ways and he has been teaching negotiating skills, although he's getting a Ph.D. at Stanford; he's home for the summer. He started a little group doing—teaching negotiation to young people and—in the high-risk neighborhoods. And even as part of the work he's doing out at Stanford, he had a class. He went into the Stanford Junior High School—Middle School, and taught them skills, and showed me a wonderful book that they gave him. Each one did a separate page on Jared and what he had done to help each person develop skill in dealing with other people and what it's meant to them. So he's carrying on the torch.

ER: That's terrific.

MP: And we'll have to see about the twins. [both laugh] We'll see what happens with them.

ER: Right. That's wonderful. You mentioned about, you know, entertaining. When you have dinner parties, do you cook?

MP: Yes, I do some cooking and I do some takeout. And for example, Saturday night was our latest party, and that was one at which we had Mary Dunn—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —the former President of Smith who's now Director of the Schlesinger Library for Women.

ER:  Right.

MP:  So she's interested in this kind of thing too.  And so she was here and some of our friends, a classmate of mine, Madeline Gleason, who brought a book as a gift that she had just completed on "sailing families" in her husband's family, and she has published some books.  And then, Darcy Wordward, who had done a wonderful study and history of her mother, who was a sculptor and painter and brought some of that along. And then we had very good friends, Barbara Friedlich and Allan.  Barbara was a dancer with Martha Gray.  So that was a great party and they stayed until midnight.

ER:  Great.

MP:  And all kinds of interesting talk and discussions.  And I do dinner parties a little differently from my mother because I don't want to be a slave in the kitchen and spend all day cooking.  And so I get my menu together and I do a few things in advance, and I might buy an entree.

ER:  I see.

MP:  I have a particular store—place where they will do a chicken dish or a pasta dish. So many people are on—are vegetarians—

ER:  Right.

MP:  —and whatnot.  But, you know, I do the desserts and the hors d' oeuvres and the vegetable and the—whatever to fill in.

ER: But it's still a lot of work.

MP: It's still work.

ER: Right.

MP: But I think I have it down to a science and—

ER: Does your husband help you?

MP: Well, he—he wants to help.

ER: Yeah. [laughs]

MP: And he will take care of the bar—

ER: Right.

MP: —and is very supportive in many ways. But—and I think the one thing, we've always had many people here for a dinner, starting way back when we were first married with people whom he knew; many of them were older people. And he not only enjoyed them, but as a young lawyer, he was interested in developing, if you will—you can use the word in those days—more clients and people who would know him, come to know him and the type of legal work that he did. So early on we started having people for dinner and that's kept up. And that's taken—took more time in those days—

ER: Than right—

MP: —than right now. But right now, we feel that our home is a great place for people to come—young people, older people and rather than going out to dinner when you can't talk and have conversations and sometimes noisy and so forth, we are much happier even to have the simplest food. It's always buffet style; everybody helps themselves. And I don't mind if people help clear the table. We have a lot of conversation, but I do

miss a little of the conversation because there are things that have to be done.

ER:  Right, do you ever hire anybody to help you or—

MP:  I used to do that but now we have it down to a science.  Oh, if we were having a big party, but, I mean, I could—

[END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE THREE]

ER:  Okay, so—

MP:  After my father died, which was in the ‘70s, I spent—I really spent a great deal of time with my mother and with her youngest sister, my Aunt Gertrude, who was the very colorful member of the family.  And while my mother, as a young person was helping with her mother and father, Aunt Gertrude, her youngest sister, was off on a career.  And she was one of the earliest women lawyers of Boston, which she would tell you in the first five minutes when you talked to her.

ER:  [laughs]

MP:  And she was very dramatic, very colorful and very different from my mother.  My mother was the dignified, ladylike, beautiful hostess.  My aunt, her youngest sister, was flamboyant, married three times—

ER:  Wow.

MP:  —maybe four—three, I guess.  And traveled all over the world, became the head of many organizations, loved to make speeches, and was a delightful person.  And so, after my father died and I spent more time with my mother, although she insisted on being very independent, self-sufficient, had her own apartment, and my Aunt Gertrude had her own apartment; they were near each other, but they didn’t live together.  I spent, even while I was working, I would take time to do their shopping, help them with whatever they

had to do, and usually once a week we would go to Legal Seafood for a lunch—a wonderful lunch. And they always were very apologetic, both my mother and Aunt Gertrude, in not wanting to interfere with my life or take too much of my time, and they were self-sufficient as long as they could be. In 1978, David and I decided that for them, we would like to buy an apartment in Florida. My parents had gone in the winter to Florida for three or four months, and after my father died, my mother decided that maybe she shouldn't go there; she didn't want to go alone. And that this would be nice; we had not really been to Florida. We had always taken our vacations in the Caribbean, where you could count on the weather and so forth. However, we did buy an apartment in Palm Beach on the ocean, thinking that my mother and aunt would spend their winters there.

ER: Right.

MP: And for some winters—several winters—they would come. They didn't want to go alone but they would come with us. We would bring them when we went down and sometimes we left them in the apartment with somebody overseeing because David had to get back to his practice. And so we became very good friends in those days, and, you know, we're talking about they were getting into their 90s.

ER: Oh, boy.

MP: Late '80s and early '90s, and so we—I began to spend more time as I realized that my mother needed more help, although she always said, "I don't want to be a burden; I don't want to take your time, but if you are free"—"I would be glad to do this"—"so could you do this for me?" Always very apologetic. And of course that made me want to do more things.

ER: Right.

MP: And for my aunt also.

ER:  It's interesting that they presented two different role models for you.

MP:  Two different—

ER:  Completely different role models.

MP:  Right, and they—they admired each other to a certain extent.  Sometimes they did have their clashes; but as they got older, they became more compatible.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And my mother sort of—she was the one who would cook.  Auntie Gertie never liked to cook, and Aunt Gertrude would come over and have a lunch with her or dinner or something of that sort.

ER:  Right.

MP:  And they became better friends—

ER:  As they got older.

MP:  —as they became older.  I mean, underneath it all, they had a strong—

ER:  Oh.

MP:  —feeling for each other, although their styles were completely different, and their worlds were really different.

ER:  Now, did your Aunt Gertrude ever have children?

MP:  No, she didn't.  She didn't have children of her own, so it was like she was another mother to me.

ER:  Yes.

MP: They all liked me very much and her two—my mother's older sisters, Frances and Bea—as I said before, it was like I had four mothers but my mother was the disciplinarian. She's the one who had to deal with me.

ER: Right.

MP: And the others could indulge and do fun things. And if I felt my mother was treating me harshly I could always go to my Auntie Gertrude, who lived nearby when I was growing up, and complain to her. She was always very understanding. So I had special—a special relationship with each one of them.

ER: Now—when you look back now, when you think about your life now and how your mother's life was in her, you know, day after—70s, 80s, 90s, how—in what ways do you think you're similar to her now? I mean, are these years in your life somewhat similar to the ways her years were or—

MP: Yeah, well, I think in terms of keeping going and keeping active, I think they are similar. I mean, I don't want to succumb to old age. My mother never wanted to succumb—she never considered herself to be an old lady, and she never wanted to publicly celebrate her birthday. She never wanted anyone to—

ER: [laughs]

MP: —know how old she was. So we had family parties, but we didn't have big parties for her friends. We did have a few anniversary parties here, had a wonderful 45th surprise party for my parents, and I'm so glad we did that. And then they had a 50th brunch at the Belmont Country Club, where we were members for their 50th. But my mother never wanted—she said, "People don't have any use for older people." And she looked much younger than her years, and she wanted people to believe that she was younger. So—so she was very independent up, practically, almost to the end, and didn't want people to do things for her. She kept active, did her own shopping, cooking, drove

a car until she was 83. They would drive to Florida. She did most of the driving. And so, I think in that respect and in—and in, you know, doing things and keeping up as long as she could—the holidays she enjoyed right up until the end and I can see her making the potato latkes, which she loved to do, and everything that she did was light and fluffy and she always had ways of not having things heavy or that sort of thing. She cooked almost until the end. The last years, she cut down and didn't do very much in that respect. But she kept going like a trooper and my aunt kept going too, and whereas my aunt was very proud to tell people how old she was and how well she was doing, my mother always thought of herself, I guess, as a younger person.

ER: And did you—

MP: And I think I think of myself as, you know, on the one hand I know that I'm slowing down, that I'm not moving the way I used to, not having the energy or not doing as many sports or activities, and that my eyesight is not as great as it used to be. I am—as my mother used to say, "I'm grateful for every day that I have," and she did enjoy every day, and so do I. And I find that every day is just filled. I never have enough time to do all the things that I want to do. And David is still very active, and we're so lucky to have each other at this stage when so many of my friends have lost their spouses, and to keep going and to plan trips and to enjoy our family and to do so many things for others involved still, deeply in the community in many, many ways. So I guess I see myself as—not as an old lady; I'll get to that, but, you know, as aging and having to cut down and having to gracefully turn over things that I used to do. I had everyone for the holidays after my mother was too old to have people over, and now Joan has taken that role. And we have the feeling—we know that Joan is going to continue the family and the family traditions and the holidays after we're gone, and that's a good feeling. Continuity.

ER: Right. Do you think your children's expectations of you now are in sync with your own expectations or, you know, do they see you as being very—think that you can still

just go run off and do anything? Or do they think that you should be a little more sedate now? Or, I mean, are you in sync with—

MP: Well, they are more cautious about us than we are!

ER: Yeah. [chuckles]

MP: They are more concerned about our falling than we are. And Joan and Ron are very considerate and they have done different things over our objectives, like putting up railings going up from the driveway and down to the basement where I still—the laundry is still down there and many other things. They have taken more precautions than we would take. And I think they are concerned and occasionally, you know, we have to say, "Well, we're going to do these things and we think we can, and we want to." They're trying to be protective of us and not having any casualties or any unnecessary things happen.

ER: Right, right.

MP: So they're very concerned, I would say, Joan and Ron, more than David and Laurie.

ER: Do you think it's because she's a daughter? I don't know. You know—

MP: Yes, I think so.

ER: I often think daughters just—

MP: Are that way.

ER: Right, right.

MP: And Joan always was a very loyal, concerned, very good daughter. And so, I think that, you know, many of the things—now she's interested in her garden and she has a beautiful garden. And she says it all started when I gave her her own garden; she

remembers that early on. And she is passing that on to Jennifer. When Jennifer—when they rented a little house in Bethesda, Joan went and helped Jennifer plant a garden, and now Jennifer has learned about it.

ER: Great.

MP: And so it's nice to see some of these little things continue on.

ER: Oh, it's great; it's great. And you say, you know, you're still very involved in a lot of different kinds of activities. What are—what activities are really important to you now?

MP: Yes, well, I'm involved in the Fernald School; I mentioned that before. My friend, Harriet Griswold, got me into it originally when she was doing things, being a disabled person herself, she was interested in disabilities of all kinds. And early on, she was interested in the Fernald School, which is right here in Waltham—

ER: Right.

MP: —and in helping the corporation, in which they wanted to do things for the mentally retarded. They call them developmentally disabled community. Well now, Harriet has retired; she's at a retirement home now. Her husband, you know, was Dean of Harvard Law School and she's had quite a career herself. I'm going to see her this Thursday and we're going to talk about things going on at the Fernald Corporation. They now want to develop a village for developmentally disabled, integrating them into the community, regular community out near Harvard, Massachusetts, where the Fernald Corporation owns land. And so they're getting me deeper and deeper into this. And this is a philosophy of not isolating the disabled community—the mentally retarded community—

ER: Right.

MP: —but integrating them. So I'm getting deeply involved in that. Also, I am chairman of the nominating committee so I have to get a slate ready for the New Year, and some of the people are going off the Board and I have to get some more people on, and they're having some meetings that I have to go to. And I've got to do many things in that area, and I said I would help them in this—they want to start a new group involved in this disabled community. So that takes a lot of my time.

ER: Right.

MP: And I do things. I'm a volunteer for the Boston Symphony Orchestra volunteer group now. I did more in past years than I do now. But I still do some work for them, whether it's serving on a committee or sometimes they have things going on right there in which they ask for volunteers to come and to get lists together to do telephoning, campaigns, or something of that sort. I do that. But—and those are the two that come to my mind—

ER: Great.

MP: —at this point. Now, I've never been active in the Temple Israel Sisterhood. And probably if I lived closer, maybe I would now. As you can see, our lives have unfolded more in the general community—

ER: Right.

MP: —than are confined to Jewish activities, although you know that David was President of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies—

ER: Right

MP: —and has been active in many areas of both the Boston community as well. And I think maybe I was the one who said to David, "With all your talents, I think you should

broaden your base and be more helpful to not only the Jewish community, but to the community at large." And he became very active in the United Way and that led to a lot of other things, besides which, he was always on the boards of various schools—

ER: Right.

MP: —that our children or grandchildren—

ER: Right.

MP: —went to. He's still very active now in Buckingham, Brown and Nichols as an active trustee.

ER: Right.

MP: So I think that maybe my interests have been more in the general community, and of course David was with a Brahmin law firm long before Jews were accepted.

ER: Right.

MP: That was really quite unusual. So that's brought him into the community-at-large. And so, as I say, I think if I lived closer and somebody called me and said would I do a specific job, you know, I might become more interested—

ER: Right.

MP: —in the Sisterhood.

ER: Yeah, the Sisterhood now is one—I'm not involved in the Sisterhood but I'm involved in a women's study—

MP: —Group.

ER:  —group.  I'm involved in—what is that?  Also, Rabbi Mehlman teaches a Bible class, "Women in the Bible."  Here's—I'm involved in this.  I do—I help out at the, you know, Hebrew School when they have events.  So there's other way—there's all kinds of ways to participate.

MP:  Yes, and I think if your children are involved—

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  —you have a direct line and you want to be—

ER:  That's right.

MP:  —involved in whatever their interests are.

ER:  Right, right.

MP:  Become a part of it.

ER:  Right.  Are there any rituals from, you know, your Jewish life that you value particularly today? Anything that you can think of from, you know, your parents or your earlier marriage, and you think that are particularly Jewish that are part of your life now, whether it's something like lighting Sabbath candles or having a Sabbath dinner or a certain holiday celebration—Passover or—

MP:  Yes.

ER:  —anything that—

MP:  Well, I think all the holidays.  We observe all the holidays and, as I say, we used to have the family here for many, many years.

ER:  Right.

MP: And now it's Joan, David to some extent, but the Jewish holidays—and Joan's husband is very cooperative. And he had a traditional background. He grew up on the North Shore in Gloucester. And he also is interested in cooking and doing some of the traditional dishes. So we observe Passover, Chanukah, the New Year. But the minor holidays, not so much now.

ER: Right, right.

MP: And the family all get together and usually we have some people who—some students who are away from home. They—we've always had students participate with us and I guess I didn't mention but early on, we had many students from foreign countries who would come here and we were sort of a host family to them, and have kept up with many of them. But the holidays are observed and we prepare; we plan for them. It's usually a joint effort and everybody does something for it and Laurie, David's wife, who is a lawyer, a litigator—very busy. But she's also a good baker and she has Jewish cookbooks and she has some of my mother's recipes and she will make a traditional—she will make a—she has my mother's recipe for her wonderful sponge cake.

ER: Yes.

MP: And my mother had a version for Passover and she will make the traditional dessert or some of the dishes even, the charoses—

ER: Right, right.

MP: —if I'm not making it.

ER: Right.

MP: So we certainly continue and we see that Jennifer is going to continue and, with her husband being interested in these holidays and his parents being even more traditional

than we are, that's the—all the traditions will continue and they're in good hands.

ER: [unclear] Is there anything else you'd like to talk about? Anything you feel we've missed?

MP: I don't think so. I think we've done pretty well.

ER: Right. [laughs]

MP: I mean, we could elaborate on many things we've already talked about.

ER: Right, right.

MP: But probably that's enough, and it's been really a great experience. You are a wonderful tape recorder—

ER: Why, thank you.

MP: —and interviewer.

ER: Thank you. Well, you're a marvelous narrator. You're a wealth of information and your recall is great. And you lead—you have led and you continue to lead a very fascinating life, so it's a pleasure. Believe me, it really is.

MP: Well, we hope it will continue for a few more years. We know it's not going to go on forever. And as you know, David had his 90th birthday—wonderful party, and he's continuing. He goes into his office daily and, though he's willing to take vacations and—but he's still keeping very busy.

ER: That's great.

MP: And we do more things together now. In the early days, of course, we were so busy, and he often would bring homework at night. I think maybe the one area that I

didn't elaborate too much was that I was always a good listener for David. He was the one early on who was involved in many different organizations, taking leading roles. And I was—in the early days when he was a trial lawyer, he would try his cases with me the night before. And if he had anything to write, I would look it over and comment. And he's always shared with me and I think maybe I have been some help to him in some ways all through his career, and, you know, never felt that, well, I want to go off and do my own thing. I always wanted to help him and do what I could, because I thought he had so much to offer in the way of expertise and judgment and psychology.

ER: Right, right.

MP: But we really worked together on many things.

ER: So in a lot of ways, you know, it's interesting how relationships go when you have the—when you're fortunate to have many years together that when you first start out, before you have a family, it's the two of you. And then you have a family and then there's this big, huge chunk of years where it's a group.

MP: Yeah.

ER: There's still, hopefully, the two of you some of the time, but it's—

MP: Now we're back to two—

ER: Now you're back to two.

MP: —again, and we're really enjoying it.

ER: Great.

MP: And we're fortunate enough to have our families nearby—

ER: Right.

MP: —so that we can do things together. And of course with those twins it's deja-vu. It's already—

ER: Right.

MP: —going on and seeing them develop, and so I think that keeps you young, when you're doing things with your grandchildren. And we, you know, try to see them as often as we can and watch their growth, and our son has sent us their reports from kindergarten.

ER: Yeah.

MP: And they're moving on to first grade, and so we've really been very fortunate in many, many ways. So it works well, but we're together again and we're still very much in love. We see things eye-to-eye and, you know, we have our differences, but we respect each other's differences and talk about it. And I think that early on our philosophy was, "Never go to bed angry with each other." We always got things straightened out, but I had a wonderful husband to work with.

ER: Right, right.

MP: So that was very fortunate.

ER: So do you think the—

MP: Are we off the tape or we on?

ER: We're still on. [laughs]

MP: Oh, we're on. Okay, sorry, I didn't know.

ER: But do you think the fact that you talked—that you always insisted on talking things out, that the two of you decided that that's something that was important to do if you had

differences—

MP: Yes.

ER: —is talking through, that's been one of the—

MP: I think communication—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —has been so important, not to harbor—

ER: Right.

MP: —angry thoughts, but to put them out on the table and, you know, and to criticize. We never criticized each other in public but, you know, if David said something or did something that I didn't think was just right, you know, afterwards we would talk about it, and maybe he would do the same thing with me. He was always very even-tempered—never got angry, and so we really—I guess we grew together and that was good, because you know, when you're first married—

ER: Right.

MP: —you really don't know each other that well.

ER: Right. [chuckles]

MP: —and you have to develop; it's a growing relationship—can't remain static, and—

ER: How many years have you been married?

MP: Just had our 61st wedding anniversary.

ER: Oh, wow! Wow!

MP: 61 years.

ER: What a blessing!

MP: And our daughter, Joan, is going to have her 60th birthday, which we can't believe, but there it is.

ER: It's wonderful.

MP: Yeah, she was—we were married one year when she was born and so—

ER: Great.

MP: —time marches on.

ER: Well, it's marching on—

MP: Our children are not children anymore.

ER: [laughs] No.

MP: But we really could be having great-grandchildren and maybe we'll live to see that day, but it's up to Jennifer—

ER: Yeah.

MP: —and Aaron.

ER: Great, great. Well, I hope you do and I bet you will. [laughs]

MP: Well, Ellen, it's really been such a pleasure—

ER: Thank you.

MP:  —to talk with you and to have you over and I hope this is a career that you're going to pursue—

ER:  Oh, thank you.

MP:  —because I think you're so talented—

ER:  Thank you.

MP:  —in this area of trying to keep on track and still listening as the person speaks.  I think you really have a lot of sensitivity.

ER:  Thank you.  So, thanks.

MP:  All the best to you.  It's been a great experience.

ER:  Thank you, and same to you.

[END OF INTERVEW]