Joanne Alter Transcript

JOANNE ALTER: Hello.

DEBORAH MICHAUDM: Oh, hi, Joanne, it's Deborah again.

JA: Okay.

DM: Okay, so are we ready to go?

JA: All right.

DM: Great. Let me just shut the door here. So, let me just review a couple things about the interview. It should go about an hour and a half to two hours. Well, between one hour and two hours. So, I would say an average of about an hour and a half would be more typical. You will have the opportunity to excise anything that you say that we want to put in the website. So, what we'll do is I will be writing a biography based on what we talk about. Then, from tha,t you'll have a look at that before it's put on the website.

JA: Oh, that's very nice of you.

DM: Yeah so you'll be able to – if you need to change anything or you want to delete anything, you'll have that opportunity. And then [RECORDING PAUSED] of you talking, maybe five or six or seven sentences or something like that so people have the opportunity to hear a little bit of what you say directly. So with that too –

JA: Very honored.

DM: That's great. So, with that, too, you'll be able to listen to it and decide if those are not the quotes you want people to hear. [laughter] So, don't worry about anything you say in this, nothing will be fixed in. Then, let me just double-check to see if I have anything

else to let you know. Oh, the other thing is I'm sorry I didn't email that artifact category list. I meant to send that to you actually. There's this list. But I'll be sending that to you this week.

JA: You better send it to Chicago because we're driving back on Friday.

DM: Okay, great. What is your Chicago address?

JA: 179 East Lake Shore Drive, three words.

DM: East Lake Shore Drive.

JA: Chicago 60611.

DM: Chicago 60611. Okay, great. So, let me just for the purpose of the recording, let me just say we're talking with Joanne Alter. And today is – what is today's date? February?

JA: 22nd maybe.

DM: 22nd. I'll just double-check on that as we close out. It is Saturday morning – or afternoon, actually. Do you have any questions or concerns about where the interview goes or anything like that before we start?

JA: No, except to comment that there are a few other locations where more information can be, I suppose, dug out.

DM: Right. I remember you mentioned one of them, and I couldn't find it on the Internet.

JA: It was American Jewish Committee interviews with two hundred Americans.

DM: Okay, so we'll be sure to check that.

JA: There's an archive on me at the University of Illinois in the women's archive.

DM: Oh, wow. Okay, that's great.

JA: But they say [inaudible] – I just led them up to my attic and they scooped up everything, and nothing was in any kind of order, including old gardenias and things. Then I gave a talk on growing up on the North Shore to, I think, the ADL [Anti-Defamation League]. It was a forty-minute talk about doing things first. We were settlers on the North Shore – Jewish settlers on the North Shore of Chicago in the early '30s. There were not very many Jewish families there. So, almost everything I did, it was, "Oh, Joanne, she's the Jewish girl going to the dances or being invited to various things. Anyway, I gave that talk.

DM: Oh, that's great. ADL, what does that stand for?

JA: Anti-Defamation League.

DM: Oh, right. Okay.

JA: I'm pretty sure that's who it was for. I can't remember. And that's another thing. My memory is just not what it was three or five years ago. I'll try.

DM: Right. No, don't worry. So how old were you in the 1930s?

JA: I was born in 1927, and we moved to Winnetka when I was about five.

DM: Winnetka is Chicago. I mean it's outside of –

JA: Suburb of Chicago, right, and there were only two or three Jewish families there. There were twenty or thirty members of the temple, Reform temple, and nobody to go to Sunday school with. There was a lot of prejudice in those days, mostly against Catholics.

DM: Oh, wow. You witnessed that growing up?

JA: Yes. And felt some anti-Semitism, but nothing that really mattered. We were not invited to go to Skokie Country Club or go ice skating. That's all changed.

DM: But that's interesting, though that the primary focus was on Catholics.

JA: Yeah there were Catholic – Catholic kids went to Faith, Hope and Charity and two or three private Catholic schools in Winnetka and Wilmette. Then, my mother was very influential in shaping my ideals. I'm sure you'll get to this but [inaudible] –

DM: Well, this is a good start, because we were going to –

JA: She was one of the founders of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, which was an organization in the – I suppose it was the '40s and '50s. It was after the war. The first thing they did was they had an ecumenical Thanksgiving service at the Union Church in Glencoe. That was the first time that Protestants and Jews had worshipped together. There was no such thing as that. It's hard to imagine.

DM: That is really hard to imagine.

JA: Made a lot of progress. And a rabbi spoke, a minister spoke, and a priest spoke. It was a very big thing. Then I was involved in that group in high school at New Trier.

DM: So, that's really where you started your activism.

JA: My activism probably started when I was a Girl Scout.

DM: Oh, yeah? How did that influence you? Being a Girl Scout?

JA: Well, we had to sell cookies, we had to go door to door to sell cookies as a Girl Scout. It was the war, and they sold war bonds. Are you familiar?

DM: Yeah.

JA: So, I got on my bike and Glencoe only had like 3,800 residents. It was a very small town.

DM: 3,800. Wow.

JA: So, I knew everybody.

DM: Everybody knew everybody else's business, right? [laughter]

JA: [inaudible] But then I just went door to door and I sold war bonds, and I got the prize for selling the most war bonds. They were three and a half cents each or whatever. So, I remember that. I remember growing up during the war and having rationing. We had cards for – you had to have a certain number of points to get shoes and you had to get points to get milk and gas. My father rode his bicycle to the train station to take the train downtown. We didn't drive a car to the station. So, that was growing up during the war. Then, we brought family over from Europe; we had a cousins club.

DM: Which part of Europe?

JA: Well, the family we knew the best was from France, from Strasbourg in eastern France near Germany. They came and lived with us. Janet Katz ended up living in Northfield. She lives in California now. But she came to our house and didn't speak any English at all and lived with us. Her father, who was a PhD in chemistry and a pharmacist of some success in France, was driven to shoveling leaves, raking leaves for people around Glencoe in order to make any money. He had no money. Then, he ended up going back to Europe. He became the head of [inaudible], the labor organization.

DM: How were you related to him exactly?

JA: His wife and my mother were first cousins. Janet. Her name was Anna Kane. My cousin was Janet – his name was Katz. But that was my first introduction to anybody who spoke differently, who had an accent, had any kind of difference. I think that's one of the key things in my life. It's embarrassing talking about what kinds of things influenced you. But in a way, I think I always wanted to protect the underdog, the one that was different, the one that needed to be paid attention to. Nobody was paying any attention to Janet and David and her parents and so we paid attention to them.

DM: Right. How old were you when your family brought them over?

JA: Well, I must have been about twelve. Bus it was our whole cousins club. It was called the B'nai Mayers Cousins Club. And actually, there's something on the Internet about it because they all came from this town. Oh boy, what's the name of it? In Russia-Poland-Lithuania. Grodno. Grodno is the name of the town.

DM: And how do you spell the name of the cousins club?

JA: B'nai, B-apostrophe, N-A-I, Mayer M-A-Y-E-R.

DM: Cousins club. So, that involved not just your family but a number of families who were trying to bring.

JA: Well, my mother's whole family that was from there. And my father's family. Oh dear, do you know, in those days, they had this great prejudice within the Jewish community between Litvaks and Galitzianers?

DM: No.

JA: Have you ever heard of that?

DM: No, no.

JA: I'm getting way off the track. Anyway, the Litvaks are supposed to be Levis and descendants of rabbis. That's a very important part of my mother's history that she passed on. That we were descended from the elite, no doubt about it. I don't know if I've done that to my children or not. But there are supposed to be two divisions, Kohen and Levys, and they were the two Rabbinical divisions. Anyway. So that was my bringing up. I was a little Jewish girl in Winnetka.

DM: Wow. So, how did you identify as Jewish? Was that a big part of your daily life?

JA: No, no part at all.

DM: No part at all. Did your family try to disavow it to assimilate?

JA: No, my family belonged to the temple but we didn't have any Jewish friends because there were no Jews. So in high school, we began to more or less congregate around each other because there was a confirmation class at the temple. There were like twenty-eight confirmands. There's three now at that big temple in Glencoe on the lake. Are you familiar with that at all?

DM: No, no.

JA: Designed by Yamasaki, it's gorgeous.

DM: No, I'm pretty new to Chicago, so I don't know it too well.

JA: Well, you should take a trip, rent a car, and drive up the lake. And when you get to Glencoe, there's a huge, gorgeous temple – synagogue they call them now I think. It's gorgeous. The majority of the residents of Glencoe and Highland Park are Jewish. Completely changed.

DM: Interesting. That is very interesting.

JA: All right. So, then I went to New Trier. I graduated from Central School in Glencoe. And there was a – you want to know all this?

DM: Yeah. Well let me –

JA: It was a terrible time. Some people got tapped, like not for sororities, but, "Oh, we're going to have a party, and we're going to invite eight kids from New Trier and eight kids from Winnetka and eight kids from so-and-so, and they're going to all go dancing so that when they get to New Trier, they'll know each other." Haha, right? Can run things. So. I got tapped as one of those. They were called "On To New Triers." And then we got to New Trier, it was the '40s and there was an experiment going on educationally so that a certain group of kids who scored a certain way in tests didn't have to take the college boards and the college aptitude tests. They took five courses a year at New Trier, and then they got into any school they wanted. So, they did that as an eight-year experience, and I think –

DM: It was an experiment?

JA: It was an experiment. But you could go to Harvard or wherever.

DM: So you were chosen.

JA: At New Trier, I was in what they called the V-group. And then they had a – do you want to know all this?

DM: Yeah, yeah.

JA: I was tapped for something they called TNT, which was also very inbred. And they tapped fourteen kids in junior year and fourteen kids in senior year and they were supposed to go on and change the world.

DM: And was this a public school that you went to?

JA: Yeah, New Trier High School. There were four schools in the country that were involved in the V group program: Scarsdale High, Denver High, New Trier – I forget the fourth. If you went in the V group program and you wanted to go to an eastern college, which in those days were the hardest colleges to get into, then you got admitted.

DM: And that was a federally funded program?

JA: No, it was an agreement between the colleges and the secondary schools.

DM: Interesting. Now, if we could backtrack for a second, when you were really young, it was the Depression. Do you remember much about that?

JA: I was really young. I remember my father was a salesman. My grandfather – want to know about my grandfather? A wonderful story.

DM: Yeah.

JA: I don't think two hours is going to be enough. [laughter]

DM: [laughter] We can always do a part two if we have to.

JA: Okay. My grandfather wrote a little autobiography. He said when he was a boy in Silesia, I guess, or – this is my German grandfather Hammerman was my maiden name. He said he came from Vienna. But we don't know where he came from. He spelled his name H-A-M-M-E-R-M-A-N-N, two Ns. He writes in his autobiography that he wasn't very smart in school. His father said, “I'm not going to keep you at home. You can go and be with your relatives in America, where nobody's smart.” He gave him fourteen dollars and a ticket to Hamburg, and he took the train to Hamburg, and he got on a boat, and for three months or whatever he crossed the Atlantic Ocean, and he arrived fourteen and a half years old in New York City. He had the names of some relatives. He spoke no English, of course. He spoke German Yiddish, I guess. So, he found his way

somehow into the Lower East Side of New York and into a family that fed him and where he stayed I guess, for a couple months. Then they lent him some money, and he bought some envelopes and some pencils, and he started selling envelopes to immigrants. Then he'd walk along the streets of New York and sell these envelopes. Finally, he decided he wanted to go and see the rest of the country, got three dollars together, bought envelopes, and he started walking along the railroad tracks. This is a true story. He walked along the railroad tracks and stopped at places where people in the town before him had told him to stop, and he slept with them. He was a very good salesman, and he kept selling the envelopes and walked all the way to Chicago. Then he settled in Chicago and then he started buying baby clothes and selling baby clothes. Then he turned out to be a baby clothes wholesaler. And then my father was one of five boys and two girls in that family. They worked in the store where they were selling baby clothes. During the Depression, my father bought some bankrupt factories in Michigan and started making baby clothes. Then he ended up being the biggest manufacturer in the country.

DM: Wow. Really?

JA: It's a wonderful success story. The Depression? My memory of the Depression is my father in his black Ford coming home at 7:30 at night after having been around to all the stores in Chicago trying to sell baby clothes to everybody and being very tired. They always worked on Saturday. They didn't take Saturday off. He insisted we go to temple on holidays. That's a secular Jew, right? That's why I was wondering when they asked me to do this for the Jewish Women's Federation because I had not had an – I was active in the young people's division of the Jewish Federation before I was married, and then my husband was the president of the Jewish Vocational Service, but I was never on the Federation board or anything like that.

DM: Right, right. Well, the archive is interested in thinking broadly about the experience of Jewish women.

JA: Well, I'll tell you something really interesting, and we'll get to it. I was in politics. I was the first woman ever elected countywide, the first Jewish woman ever elected, and the first woman ever to run statewide when I ran for Lieutenant Governor. I was given a lot of honors, but the Jewish community never gave me diddly. Any attention at all. It's interesting.

DM: That is interesting.

JA: It's very closed. They hurt my feelings. I've never really told this to anybody but my husband. When I ran for office the first time I ran with a Polish man, and the Jewish community gave him a big dinner with 1,500 people, and I wasn't even invited. [laughter]

DM: What year was that?

JA: So, people can say, “Oh, well, Alter, she just wasn't interested in the Jewish community,” but I think it ran both ways. The community wasn't interested in me either particularly. I was very early – when we were married, I was very early on invited to be on the boards of scholarship and guidance and then on the women's board of the Art Institute because of the junior museum project I had. I was on quite a few boards, but not ever on Jewish Family and Community Services or some of the things that would have really interested me, and where I could have been helpful. But I don't know. I suppose it went two ways.

DM: Right. Well, we'll come back to that. Let me just ask you a couple quick questions about the Depression. Do you remember –? You mentioned your father coming home late at night tired. But you guys did okay during the Depression?

JA: We lived in the suburbs then, and that was a very special thing. My mother said that the reason we moved is she couldn't afford to send us to Francis Parker or Lab School. And the schools in Chicago were not good enough for her kids.

DM: Still the same today.

JA: But that was in the '30s, and I think they bought their house in about -- right before the war, maybe '39. They moved from Winnetka to Glencoe. We didn't feel deprived. They were very much self-starters, the Hammerman boys. The older boy sold stockings, nylons – silk stockings, and then when nylons came in, he was one of the first, he bought a factory along with my father, and he was making nylons, and he was one of the first people that made pantyhose, so he made a fortune, and he moved to California.

DM: Who was this again?

JA: His name was Joseph Hammerman.

DM: Okay. He was your cousin, you said?

JA: He was my uncle.

DM: Oh, your uncle, okay, wow.

JA: So, the Depression just gave him an opportunity to expand. They were rabid Roosevelt supporters. They thought that Franklin Roosevelt was God and the NRA [National Recovery Administration] and all the support of private enterprise. So, that was another thing in Winnetka and Glencoe that was fascinating. There was an election in 1936 between Roosevelt and Landon, Alf Landon. Nancy Gunn, who was a friend of mine from school, and I were the only Democrats in our whole fourth grade. [laughter] The Republicans had sunflower buttons because Alf Landon was from Kansas, and that was the Sunflower State. They had a great big headquarters right in the middle of

downtown Winnetka and the Democrats were over the North Shore Station. North Shore is a little electric train that ran up and down from Evanston to Highland Park. Anyway, nothing to do if you were a Democrat. But I was a Democrat very early.

DM: Yeah. Fourth grade, you said.

JA: My sister, who was a little bit younger than I was, couldn't stand it, and she finally went over and got a sunflower button. [laughter]

DM: That's funny. You said you were in fourth grade at that time.

JA: I think so.

DM: Wow, that's funny.

JA: But I was very active politically very early on. Very early on. I remember hiding under the covers. Did you ever put the sheets over your head and listen to the radio? Well, we didn't have television, but you could read your book with a flashlight and also you could listen to the radio very quietly, your mother couldn't hear it. I remember listening to the returns.

DM: Wow, at a young age. That's interesting.

JA: Yeah, very early, under the sheets.

DM: Oh, that's funny. That's funny because most kids don't have a sense of their being affected by that stuff.

JA: My son Jonathan does very much. We'll get to him later.

DM: Yeah, definitely. Let me go through these questions.

JA: The Depression, I can't – I don't know. What else could I remember from the Depression? What other kinds of things? We didn't feel deprived because we had enough shoes.

DM: Right. It sounds like your family did okay. They had to work a lot, but they did okay.

JA: My mother didn't go to work. My mother ended up – she could never really accept the fact that women were in the workforce. Even though she was a radical. She was a real Bolshevik. She believed in a lot of the things that we considered later on to be radical.

DM: But as far as gender went, she had a hard time thinking about women changing their roles.

JA: Yeah, my father used to say if only you were a boy. That was really sad. One of the things I think that inspired my feminism. I was elected. I got a million votes – 1,130,058 votes. That's a lot of votes. So I invited my father for lunch. He could never make it to come up to my office for lunch. So after about two years, I finally got him to come, and I had a big office and two staff or two secretaries. So, we're sitting there, and he said, “Okay, now I want to go meet your boss,” and I said, “I don't have a boss.” And so I said, but I'll introduce you to the man that's the president of the Water Reclamation District, who's an ex-mortician and ward heeler of the first order, but a very nice man. So, we went down to his office, and we walked into his office, and my father strides in, and he says, “How do you do? I'm Sol Hammerman. How's my little girl doing?” [laughter] It was just too difficult for him to absorb. In the beginning, when I was elected, he said, “Well, can you fix a ticket?” Oh dear. He grew up in that era of politics when it was being run by precinct captains.

DM: Right. Right. Well, women didn't even have the vote when he was growing up.

JA: Well, when they were young. They were married in '26. I was born in '27. I think the franchise was '23. Whatever.

DM: Were your parents active in politics at all? Were they interested in politics?

JA: They thought it was, “Can you fix a ticket?” That was their complete understanding of politics.

DM: Yeah, interesting. But you were into it from a young age.

JA: So, we were ahead of the curve.

DM: Yeah, yeah. But your mother was active in –

JA: My mother was – no, she never spoke up about her radicalism, she just passed it on to me and Enid. Enid really didn't absorb a lot of it, my sister. But her brothers were all radical.

DM: But you said your mom was a founder of the National Committee of –

JA: She was one of the founders of the North Shore Committee of the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

DM: Conference of Christians and Jews, okay. So that shows a little –

JA: And that was pretty active. And in the war, she was a Gray Lady. She had a little gray uniform she put on. She went and did typing. And she had a job before they were married. She was a secretary. But mostly, she was a flapper. She was great. She told us what I've been telling my children and grandchildren, and that is: anything you want to be, you can be. That's some legacy.

DM: Yeah, yeah. Did she talk about being a flapper and what that meant?

JA: Well, somebody-Levin, what was his name, wrote a book called The Old Bunch. Meyer Levin wrote a book called The Old Bunch. She's one of the characters in it. What they talk about is that she was sixteen, and she could sit on her hair. You wore your hair in braids. That's when they wore long black skirts and stuff. Anyway, she went over to a friend's house and went and had her hair bobbed.

DM: That was a big deal, right?

JA: Oh my goodness.

DM: Did she get in trouble for it?

JA: Oh my gosh. Oh, I guess. Wasn't allowed to play with those girls. So then I had some idea. They told me that when they were first married, they went to a lot of bathtub gin parties and freewheeling. But they didn't have a lot of money in those days. They ended up [inaudible] –

DM: They ended up being very what?

JA: Comfortable. They traveled all over the world and had as many adventures as they wanted. My parents, Celia and Sol Hammerman, and there's a gallery at the Art Institute named after them and an emergency room at the hospital named after them – a lot of civic things they did. But they ended up, for me, being quintessential last half of the 20th century American success stories.

DM: And let me make sure I have their spelling correct.

JA: Sol, S-O-L.

DM: S-O-L, okay.

JA: Celia, C-E-L-I-A.

DM: And then Hammerman with two Ms and two –

JA: No, one N.

DM: Oh, one N.

JA: H-A-M-M-E-R-M-A-N.

DM: M-A-N. Oh. So it changed to one N.

JA: Yeah, after my grandfather got here. Right. Isn't that a great story? Walked across the country?

DM: That's amazing. That's amazing. Selling things. That's amazing. So, let's see.

JA: Depression – I'm not old enough. I was too young. But I can remember the '30s and the election. There was a great influence in my life of the Winnetka community spirit. I don't know if you ever heard of that town. But it's on the North Shore of Chicago, and it was founded by people who were very idealistic and felt that community involvement was very important so they had things like the Winnetka Community House, and when kids went to camp, they went to the Winnetka Community Camp. They hired a Dewey acolyte – you know John Dewey? –

DM: Yeah.

JA: – named Carleton Washburne to be the superintendent of their schools. They had a very radical school education program, very radical. So, I was exposed to that at an early age. They didn't give you exams. You gave yourself exams. They were in the back of all the books. They had conversations about sex when you were in third grade. This Carleton Washburne wrote books called The [Story of] Earth and Sky and Sea Under Us and wonderful exploratory books. They had the Winnetka progressive school system, which was very criticized by the old-timers and much admired by the progressive

element.

DM: So do you think that –?

JA: Oh, that influenced –

DM: – politicized you?

JA: Tremendously. Tremendously. The whole Winnetka system. They used to have parties on the village greenThey were very inclusive experiences.

DM: Did they talk about current politics and current issues and things like that?

JA: In Winnetka?

DM: In the school.

JA: Everybody was Republican.

DM: Oh, wow. That's interesting that you had such a progressive school in a Republican area.

JA: Yeah. Well, these were very – they were all educated. It was an interesting time in America. There wasn't all the repression that we've got now. Ashcroft and Cheney and [inaudible]

DM: Let me just review the schools that you attended. So you started in Winnetka.

JA: I started out in Chicago until the beginning of second grade. In Chicago, I went to Hull House for tap dancing, gymnastics, and art. And my father and his brothers and sisters had all gone to Hull House. You know Jane Addams?

DM: Yeah.

JA: Okay. When my grandfather brought everybody to – came to Chicago, married a woman, Annie April, who had actually been born here before the Civil War, I think. No, wait a minute. No, they were married in – can't remember. Well, anyway, my grandfather settled on Halsted Street with his children's clothes store, and all the boys worked there. And then, after school, they all went over to Jane Addams's place, where they learned how to sing and draw and dance. When the boys got together, it was phenomenal. What should I call you? What name should I call you?

DM: Oh, Deborah.

JA: Deborah, okay. Because when they got together, and they were older – there's a Jewish humor where everybody is – they make each other laugh. I used to laugh until my stomach hurt when the family got together. But they knew all the Shakespearean plays. They would sing the little songs from A Midsummer Night's Dream and some of the other Shakespearean plays. And they would dance the dances. They were wonderful. When we grew up, and we lived in Winnetka – Ms. Nancrede was the woman that helped Jane Addams do dramatics. Jane Addams did a lot of the social work. [Edith de] Nancrede was the woman that did the dramatics. We lived in Winnetka, which was very – I must admit – elitist. My mother had Ms. Nancrede come out every Wednesday afternoon on the train, on the North Shore train. We would meet her at the train, and she would come to our house for dinner, and she would teach us poetry and singing.

DM: This was in the ‘30s, in the mid '30s.

JA: Yeah, it was the '30s. The ‘30s. I was going to say something. Oh yeah. What they did was my dad gave the art room at the Hull House on Broadway, and my Uncle Mayer gave the theater at the Parkway Community Center Hull House, and I was on the Hull House board for a while.

DM: Oh yeah? How old were you then?

JA: Twenty-six.

DM: Oh, wow, when you were on the board.

JA: But not of the big association. I was on the Jane Addams Center Hull House board. That was what prepared me for being a good – I shouldn't say I was good, but for having a sharp eye for the finances of the government agency I served on. Because I was on this Hull House board with very prestigious older people like Marshall Holleb. They were all lawyers. We'd go to these board meetings, and they would vote to do programs, and programs and more programs, and the Hull House Jane Addams board went broke. Spent their endowment. So any organization I've ever been in since, I've been very careful of the finances.

DM: Right. Was a hard lesson.

JA: I was on the board early on.

DM: Yeah, you were young.

JA: Anyway, so I went to this school and went to Hull House. And how old are you in first or second grade?

DM: Yeah, probably six, seven. Right.

JA: Then we moved to Winnetka. I was involved in Winnetka. Oh, I was so mad my mother moved us to Glencoe. [laughter] I took the train back every day to Winnetka to visit friends. Read a lot of books.

DM: So, when you said you went to school in Chicago –

JA: In Chicago, we lived on Roscoe Street and I went to Nettelhorst School for two years.

DM: For two years. And then you moved to Winnetka. You were about seven or eight. And then, how old were you when you moved to Glencoe?

JA: Let's see. I was in fourth grade in Winnetka, and I was in about sixth grade. What's that? About eleven?

DM: Sixth grade. Right. That sounds right.

JA: Glencoe. And then in Glencoe, I was there during the war. Then graduated from Central School in Glencoe. And I read – oh boy, some of these things I did I haven't thought about in fifty-five years. For our grammar school graduation, they chose me to read a poem I'd written about my grandmother, and I have it still.

DM: Oh, wow. That would be great if you want to include that in the –

JA: I'll try and find it.

DM: Yeah, that would be great.

JA: It's about the stories she told. My grandmother lived with us. My mother's mother lived with us. Every night when we went to bed, she'd come in and say the Shema Yisroel Adonai Eloheinu, so we would know that prayer. We didn't go to temple every week, but we would know that prayer. We knew our grandmother would tell stories. She got very forgetful. She wandered around town with just her bathrobe on.

DM: Oh my gosh. Must have been Alzheimer's, probably.

JA: Yes, yes. [inaudible]

DM: That they didn't diagnose back then.

JA: Yeah, it was so hard for my mother.

DM: I bet.

JA: During the war, I said my mother worked as a Gray Lady. Sje was very proud of that.

DM: Was that volunteer work?

JA: Yeah, volunteer. I was a very big – it's really interesting. There's a cyclical side to this whole thing, which you probably want to put in at the end, but for the first twenty or twenty-five years of my life, I really, really worked [in] the volunteer sector. The great strength of America was the workforce that men and women supplied to enrich their community. And then, with the war and the rise of feminism, everybody had to have a job. So, volunteerism more or less was eroded. We began to pay people to do the jobs that volunteers were doing. And then, after, I guess, retired, when I didn't run for office anymore, and I started WITS [Working in the Schools], I realized that there's this huge volunteer source available to us in the elderly community. Huge, huge. So, it's a cycle. It's coming back now because people are living longer and because they don't have the paid jobs available to them anymore, and they realize that volunteerism can make their community strong, and themselves. There's a tremendous payback in this program I do. Tremendous. People feel so enriched, and they don't feel like they're giving to the kids in the school – “Here's a gift of my time to help you read.” When they come home, they feel – enriched, I think, is the word I can best describe it. I'm a big advocate of volunteerism.

DM: So, I have your schooling up through high school. And then, did you go on to college after that?

JA: I went to Mount Holyoke College.

DM: Oh, you know what? That's funny. I'm doing research on women students at Mount Holyoke in the 1920s.

JA: Women at Mount Holyoke in the 1920s. I'll tell you the worst thing that's happened to me is that horrible movie that came out about Wellesley [Mona Lisa Smile].

DM: Oh, I don't know it.

JA: Oh, it's about an art teacher that goes to Wellesley and then finds these women are so uptight. You got to see it. I went to Mount Holyoke. I went to visit colleges. It rained when I went to Wellesley. Smith had a very antisemitic interviewer. I went to Holyoke, and they were studying for finals in canoes. I thought that's for me. Of course, it turned out to be the hardest school in the country. It's very difficult academically. For me, it was a tremendously exciting experience, discovering the life of the mind. Did you go to a challenging academic experience?

DM: Yeah, I went to Hampshire College, actually.

JA: Oh, yes. So, they make you think.

DM: Yeah, absolutely.

JA: So, I just had wonderful teachers, and I was exposed to all kinds of disciplines that I had avoided. Science, for example. I just had a wonderful time, although it was hard because I was a little bit more active than the rest of them. [laughter] I ran the Truman campaign on campus. And that was very exciting. He got two percent of the vote. It was a riot. And I worked on the [inaudible] programs, and I went to all the activist meetings. I had a wonderful experience with Eleanor Roosevelt.

DM: Oh, really? Tell me.

JA: I was the program director of the international relations club and she was our guest for the weekend, the UN weekend, and she was in my dorm, so I was responsible for her. She arrived, and I took her suitcase to her room, and then she said, “Now, sit down right

over there," and just like in the play – did you ever see that monologue about her?

DM: No.

JA: She took off her big hat, put it on the dresser, and took off her coat. She said, "Now, you sit down over there. All right, Joanne, now you tell me all about yourself." It was the most wonderful experience. She was fantastic. I went to Hyde Park in those – no, I don't think I did that when I was in college. The big thing that happened to me in college was that I got a scholarship to go to Europe, the international meeting of a student organization, the World Student Service Fund. This was after the war now. I graduated from high school in 1945. One of the things about high school that I think is important is that we were contained in a group, a gang. We had a gang. It was very cohesive, and we still see each other, those of us that are alive. It was because mostly in those days when you went to high school, when you got there as a freshman the junior boys started to take you out. Taking out means going to the movies and getting a soda. Because it was the war, the boys were gone. The older boys were not around. And we were stuck more or less with the freshman boys. But we had a very cohesive group, and it was fun. They were almost all Jewish kids.

DM: So you went to a school – by high school, it was much more mixed?

JA: Yeah.

DM: You had said Winnetka was very Christian.

JA: Yeah, high school was more mixed. I'd say there was about eight percent Jews, not very many. Now it's about seventy-five percent. The North Shore suburbs are very ecumenical, I guess. Anyway, that was – what did I do? During the war, I went to a Food for Freedom summer in Vermont at Goddard College. It was very important to get food harvested during the war because all the farmer – there were many, many small farms in America in those days. And all those boys were drafted in the Army. So they

would get ordinary people to harvest the crops. So, we went to Goddard College. We had to pay to go there. I think it was seventy-five for the summer – bring your bike. We lived at Goddard College, and every day, we rode our bicycles out to these farms in Vermont, where we did the haying. My friend snapped beans. But I developed muscles. When I got home, my father said, “Please don't flex your muscles when you drink your soup.” Because he was just – it was really hard work. I rode my bike seven miles uphill. Vermont's all uphill, no matter which way you’re going. I'd get to this farm, and they'd send me out to the field where I had a pitchfork, and the farmer had horses, and he mowed the hay, and I made it into piles. Then the wagon came by with horses, and I tossed it on the wagon. We had lunch, which every day for seven weeks was eggs. Except the last day when they killed a chicken in my honor, and we had chicken. But that was fun because there were kids from all over the country, and it was called Food for Freedom. And we were very idealistic. Help our country.

DM: So, this was the summer before college?

JA: Two summers before college because that summer, I went around and visited Holyoke and Wellesley.

DM: So, you really felt like you were a part of the project of –?

JA: Oh, yeah, we were helping the war.

DM: For you, was the war very much about the Holocaust? Did you --

JA: I never heard of it.

DM: Never heard of it.

JA: It was just incredible when you look back at it. We just didn't know. We knew that our cousins were leaving Germany and leaving France. But we didn't hear that they were

being killed. It's amazing.

DM: That is amazing. Wow, wow. So, what was the war about for you at the time? It was just about –?

JA: Oh, I hated Hitler. I was going to sacrifice myself like Joan of Arc and kill Hitler, and then they were going to kill me. [laughter]

DM: [laughter] You had that running fantasy.

JA: Oh, I hated Hitler.

DM: But you didn't know.

JA: But I didn't know [inaudible] –

DM: It could be at that age –

JA: Have you ever heard this from anybody else?

DM: Well, no, but it could be that – it makes sense because you were young. Maybe the adults were shielding you from the knowledge.

JA: Yeah, but you would have thought they would have talked about – they raised money through the cousins club to bring cousins. I think they must have brought twenty cousins. Oh, I started to tell you there's a website.

DM: Yeah, do you know the website name?

JA: Well, it's B'nai Mayer Cousins Club. Oh, it's a big website. Somebody went back there to Grodno. I started to tell you. They took videos of the town and of the Bible inscriptions of what families were born. Anyway, I used to go around and give a lot of speeches when I was in office. One time, I was giving a speech, and a man in the back

of the room who looked exactly like my mother's family stood up and said, “I think I know your mother's family.” He described the town that they lived in. My mother had always said that she lived in a – she said things I thought were crazy. She said my mother used to go to Paris to get her clothes. And I said, “Oh come on, from the shtetl to [inaudible] long stretch.” And this man got up and said, “Your grandfather had the liquor license for this section, and he was a friend of the Count (Petroski?), and he was able to control the courts and everything else because he had the liquor license, and he used to go to Paris and get liquor and buy his wife clothes. So, then I started believing her a little bit. She'd say, “Your grandfather spoke thirteen languages.” I said, “Oh yeah.” So, she comes up with this citation, and Jonathan, my son, I gave it to him when he was at Harvard, and he had it translated, and it's a citation from the czar to Alexander Ziskin Kagen for his translating ability, and it lists about six languages. Jon's got it hanging up in his office at Newsweek. So, you really should begin to believe your grandparents when they tell you stories that are wild. Oh, dear. How did I get on that?

DM: Well, let's see. Let's go back. So you graduated from Mount Holyoke in what year?

JA: In 1949. But the thing is I was given a scholarship to go to this international meeting of students, and I went to Europe and – well, I got the scholarship. It was three hundred dollars. I needed another three hundred. My parents were on a cruise of South America. And so I cabled them. You couldn't really talk [inaudible] that I'd gotten the scholarship and I needed three hundred dollars. And they cabled me back to say that nice girls don't travel in Europe by themselves, and they turned me down. So, this is the revolt. I cashed in savings bonds that I had gotten when I was ten years old when I was selling war bonds. And I went. That was a big revolt against my parents. When they got back and I told them I was going to go anyway, they said, “Well, okay, but we're not going to pay for it.” So went to Europe the whole summer, for the 15th of June until what ended up to be the third week in October. I got stuck in Hungary and Austria. For six hundred dollars. [laughter] Can you believe it?

DM: No, that's amazing.

JA: We slept in student hostels, and we traveled all over with a group of sixteen that were students from about ten different countries. We had an economic and social tour of France and Switzerland. The basis of the economy, they told us, was the grape. So, every afternoon, we ended up at a vineyard. Then, I met some guys, and they invited us to go to Czechoslovakia, and then when we were in Czechoslovakia, they invited us to go to Hungary. Then, this Canadian girl and I got stuck in Austria, unable to get back. Europe was divided into zones. This requires some European history. But they divided it, the British zone, the French zone, the American zone, the Russian – anyway, in order to get home, we had to go through the Russian zone, and we couldn't get what they called gray passes. So every morning for like six weeks, we went to the Russian consulate to try and get our gray cards. We couldn't get through. In the meantime, my mother is wondering where I am and my school – I didn't go back to school. School started September 15th, and it was October. I'm still in Europe. A very exciting time to be in Europe. I was visiting bombed-out universities.

DM: Oh my gosh. So, what impression did that have on you at that young age?

JA: Oh a tremendous experience, a tremendous experience, because we met kids from all over the world. There was Communist representation at the international students meeting in Combloux, France, where the conference I went to was. Having a dialogue with people that were committed Communists was very exciting. Then, the visits to the bombed-out universities, laboratories, and libraries was devastating. These people, we knew about the war from a distance, but we didn't know what it looked like. We got to London, and it was – God, you can't imagine what London looked like. Just a shell. It was bombed within an inch of its life. And then to travel all over Europe and eastern Europe and see the repression. We met with the Communist students in Czechoslovakia, and they had what the Chinese did. They got rid of all the professors

who didn't agree with Communism. Anyway, it kept me from being a radical, I'll tell you that.

DM: So, you came back, and it was the start of McCarthyism.

JA: Oh, that was after I graduated. No, I came back and I got very active in international affairs. Actually, I dreamt two nights ago that I started a council on foreign relations in Tucson. [laughter] It's very hard to get Americans to stop being isolationists. When I watch the TV or read the newspaper, they're so parochial.

DM: It's amazing. It's really amazing. I lived in Europe for two years, and the news is just so different. Just what they're aware of, what your average citizen who's not even highly educated is aware of in the world, is just so different from here.

JA: Right, right. We just can't seem to shake our provincialism. I didn't mean parochialism. So, then I graduated. I wanted to join the CIA. My advisor at Mount Holyoke said they don't take Jewish girls. That was in 1949. So, I found out that there was a scholarship through the UN for an internship. I came back to Chicago, and I discovered the way to get the scholarship was through your Senator. So, I made an appointment to see Paul Douglas, and that was my introduction to politics in Chicago. I got a job at a law firm checking when the men went to the bathroom. It was the stupidest job you can imagine. But I guess I had a nice haircut, and they put me up at the front desk, and I smiled at everybody, and I made appointments to go see all the US congressmen and representatives and talk about me getting a job at the UN. I wanted to work in the United Nations. In the meantime, Douglas was running for office, so I got involved in his campaign. He was a wonderful Senator. Paul Douglas. Are you familiar with –?

DM: No, no.

JA: Oh, he was just a marvelous United States Senator. Anyway, that whole summer went by, and I got a job as – oh, I don't know how to explain it. I saw an ad in the newspaper. "Wanted: a person interested in foreign affairs to work with foreign students." I went for the interview, and this man said to me, "I want you to go to see Senator Fulbright and get some money." It's true. I was twenty-one years old. Get some money so we can have a foreign student exchange program in Illinois. So, I got on the plane, and I went to Washington. I met with Fulbright, and we got money and started something we called Operation Friendship. I went around to fifteen college towns, small college towns in the Midwest like Holland, Michigan, and Bloomington, Illinois. I would go in. This is really an exciting thing to do, and I loved it because of the volunteer aspect. I would walk in completely unknown to anybody and go to the local educational institution and say, "We've got fifteen foreign students coming here from Oxford and Cambridge. Can you give them some courses this summer without charge?" Then, go over to the bank and ask the bank president if he could give some scholarship money. Then, go to the YWCA and see if they could find houses for these kids to live in. Then go to the various community organizations and say let's get together and have an Operation Friendship committee, and they're going to be here on the 10th of June, and they're going to stay until the 1st of September. Can you take care of them? We had fifteen. I was so proud of that program. We had fifteen Midwestern cities. We had a lot of crises. There were times when the students would arrive, and there were no beds for them in Chicago, there was no bus to take them to Indiana. We had a lot of crises. But this man paid me very well, and he sent me off with all kinds of contacts. "Sure, call up. Senator Fulbright will see you." He was the one who set up the Fulbright exchange program. Anyway, this guy who had hired me, Larry Krebs, turned out to be a real crook because, in the end, the very end – and it happened on my wedding day – I had to go to court. He left one group stranded. They were in New York, and they couldn't get back to London because what he did was he had these airplanes. He'd fill them up with Americans going to Europe, and they would pay. Then he'd fill them up with foreign students coming to

the United States, and they wouldn't pay. Then he'd fill them up with Americans again. They had this one airplane that was going back and forth and back and forth. We had about 150-175 students come on to the program.

DM: How was he a crook? He was pocketing this money?

JA: Well, because in the end, he had the money from the Americans, but he had no way to get them back to the US. So, Larry Krebs went on trial, and the trial date was May 17th, 1952, which happened to be the day I was getting married. But it was a very exciting time and a wonderful experience. Wonderful experience, I guess, of daring to do anything.

DM: Yeah. Did you ever get that scholarship with the UN?

JA: Oh, what happened with the scholarship, I found out that you had to be twenty-five years old; that's what happened. You had to be twenty-five. But nobody told me. Nobody told me that you had to be twenty-five.

DM: Oh, wow. But through the search, you came up with other opportunities, so it was worth it.

JA: Yes. And then when I came back to – let's see, I think I might have the time mixed up between Operation Friendship and when I had my job. My job I got, I guess, right out of college. The job was to go around to universities and give speeches about the war-torn colleges that I had visited. So, I would arrive at a campus, say Wesleyan or something, and that was mostly in the east. Oh my God, I had to travel on Greyhound buses everywhere, everywhere. So, I would arrive in Watertown, Connecticut, check into the Y, go over to the university, and make the arrangement to speak at their chapel or assembly hall. I'd talk about the war-torn universities, and then we would have lunch with the heads of the Fellowship of Faith and the Red Cross unit at the college. The kids would raise money for the war-torn universities. It was an exciting time. I went to about

thirty or forty colleges, and I had to go into the deepest recesses of western Pennsylvania and places you would never go except on a Greyhound bus. But it was a very good experience, and I worked for the World Student Service Fund. I learned how to give speeches. It was fun because I was featured, and I was young. They were all neat young people interested in helping foreign students. I got very interested in the foreign student exchange program at that time.

DM: And this was your job after Mount Holyoke.

JA: My job was after Mount Holyoke, yeah.

DM: And after the foreign student –

JA: No, before Operation Friendship.

DM: Before Operation Friendship. Remind me, what did you study at Mount Holyoke?

JA: Political science. And my thesis was on Yugoslavia. So when all this recent –

DM: Yeah, you must have an interesting take with the historic background.

JA: Yeah, and I had a wonderful -- I graduated cum laude. I had a wonderful advisor who didn't think I was very smart. Very good to me. I ended up being on the board of trustees.

DM: Of Mount Holyoke?

JA: Yeah.

DM: Oh wow. Are you still?

JA: No. Did you get my bio?

DM: No, I haven't gotten your bio yet actually.

JA: They've had it for –

DM: They have? Oh, okay, I'll have to email them and make sure they get it to me.

JA: It's in the bio. It was a very interesting experience being on the board. Well, from the Jewish point of view, there were about four percent Jews when I was there and about five and a half percent Catholic. And it was mostly –

DM: Very Protestant.

JA: – the oldest women's college in the country, and we were required to – oh my God. I didn't tell you in college what I did. I get to college, and I'm dying to go, of course, and chose all my courses. And then I discovered several things. One is you had to go to chapel three times a week. And the other was you could only go away seven weekends. Of course, that was my main occupation, was going to Yale and Dartmouth and doing a lot of socializing. Anyway, I said, “This isn't right. I don't think we should have to go to chapel.” “But we've gone to chapel since 1837.” Anyway, so I led a rebellion, and the kids marched up – and the students marched up and back. They arrived at a compromise with the administration, which was that instead of having to go to church, you could go to assembly. But Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, you had to go to something. You had to check-in. And it was an honor system. What happened was, and I kept explaining this to the faculty, everybody lied. They marked an X in their place that they'd been to chapel, but of course, they hadn't been, and it just made thieves and liars out of all these wonderful Mount Holyoke girls. So Jim and I got married, and we went to Canada on our honeymoon. We drove down through Canada, down into northwestern Massachusetts into South Hadley. I said you have to walk me around Upper Lake because then you have to propose, and then – so, we were walking back from Upper Lake, holding hands across the village green, and along comes this woman

that was the dean of students. And I said, “Oh, Ms. Harvey, I want you to meet my husband, we've just been married. I don't know if you remember me. I'm Joanne Hammerman.” She draws herself up to her four feet ten or whatever she was, and she says, “Remember you? How could I forget you? You gave us so much trouble.” [laughter] And that was Jim's introduction to Mount Holyoke. For a wedding present, if you want to hear something nice – I'm sure we're over an hour now.

DM: We can go on as long as it's okay with you.

JA: He gave me a scholarship for a Mount Holyoke girl to go to Europe to the International Student Service -- World Student Service Fund conference.

DM: Your husband gave you that?

JA: Yes, as a wedding present. Isn't that the most wonderful gift?

DM: That is wonderful.

JA: So, that was just a very good indication of a successful marriage. And it was a successful marriage. All right, so there I am. Where am I? I haven't gotten married yet.

DM: Right. So, how did you meet your husband, and when did you get married?

JA: Well, we were more or less in the same group, but we met skiing.

DM: While you were in college?

JA: No, when I was in college, I was very busy going out with people from Dartmouth and Harvard and Yale and Princeton and all that. Jim actually picked me up on the ski slope one day, and he said, “You don't want to ski with that guy you're with. You want to ski with me.” Wilmot, which was a pimple – Wilmot is a little tiny hill. He asked me to the ballet while we were skiing. He said, “Do you like the ballet? Would you like to go with

me next week?" I said, "Okay, I would." And on the next run down, he said, "Would you go with me in the middle of next week too?" Anyway, he asked me to the ballet three times. And then, about three weeks later, he proposed [laughter] about after a Great Books meeting we'd had. And then, about a year and a half later – he carried a ring around in his pocket for a year. He was very poetic. He sent me flowers every day. Wrote me poetry. Very romantic. That's nice. Very questioning guy.

DM: And that's your husband still.

JA: Yeah, still my husband, fifty-two years.

DM: Wow. And how many children do you have?

JA: We have four children and eleven grandchildren. All of them – what is it they say in Prairie Home Companion? The women are beautiful, and the men are whatever.

DM: I don't remember. I love that show, though.

JA: Then those early days were McCarthy days. We were very interested in politics. My in-laws thought we were Communists. They were very pro-McCarthy.

DM: Was it something about your beliefs that made them believe that? Or just that you were active politically?

JA: Oh, we defended the people that were accused of treason. McCarthy was shaking all these papers and saying these people are traitors. We would say, "No proof, no proof." Oh, it was terrible. Terrible time.

DM: Yeah, that was a horrible time. My friend's grandfather was Irving Peress, who was the one who was targeted with the Army McCarthy hearings.

JA: Oh my gosh.

DM: So, I know them very well and know what they went through.

JA: Well, they ruined lives. The Rosenbergs.

DM: So, how did that play out in the Jewish community from your perspective with the Rosenbergs and with a number of Jewish families who were targeted by McCarthy? There were a number of Jewish –

JA: Didn't register.

DM: Oh, you didn't hear my question?

JA: No, no, I'm saying it didn't register for me how it happened in the Jewish community.

DM: Yeah, it was a horrible time.

JA: I knew about the people in Hollywood, but it didn't register that they were Jews.

DM: Right. I think a large percentage was. Yeah, immigrants, oftentimes recent Jewish immigrants that –

JA: Were targeted by McCarthyites.

DM: Yeah, it was very much, I think, an anti-Jewish moment in American history, posed as antiradical. It's one take on it.

JA: [inaudible] revisit it.

DM: Yeah, it's just one way of looking at it. It's more complex, but I think there was that component. It was very much anti-immigrant/anti-Jewish.

JA: Well, these people. But what was wonderful for me was they stuck by their guns. They were principled, and they weren't going to take the Fifth Amendment, and they weren't going to lie. And so these guys –

DM: Did you attend any rallies or demonstrations?

JA: Oh, no. Yeah, probably rallies. The other thing that we did was we did a lot of sit-ins and march-ins. One of the things was we tried to save the Second District Court of Appeals. I was sitting there in the hearings, and they're having congressional hearings about tearing this beautiful court building down that was on North Michigan Avenue not too from where – oh, I don't know, not Neiman Marcus but some – what's on the corner of Michigan? Barney's is on Michigan Avenue. Anyway, I'm sitting there carrying my sign and wearing my buttons, "Don't let them take us away." The guy next to me says, "Don't I know you from somewhere?" I said, "I don't think so." He said, "Oh, yeah, I've seen you at all the rallies." He flashes this button, and he's an undercover cop. He's been following me around. So, we had people that were on our tail. Then, we were involved with the Chicago Seven. You know that group?

DM: It sounds familiar, but I'm forgetting.

JA: Julius Hoffman, Abbie Hoffman, and that whole group. Does any of that ring a bell?

DM: Yes, yeah.

JA: Okay. So, we were very involved with them. We gave an art auction to raise money for their defense. We had an art auction, and Studs Terkel – you know him?

DM: Yes.

JA: He says, "I wanted to introduce you all to somebody. You see that guy back there taking pictures? He's Chicago police. And then the guy over on the other corner taking

pictures? He's also Chicago police. Why don't you come up in front and tell us about yourself and why you're taking our pictures here at a free and open meeting?" The guy says, "Oh, I'm not police. I work for the Encyclopedia Britannica." But we were not afraid to congregate with the people that were objecting to persecution of ideas. Not afraid at all. I don't know why not. I think today people are. They get sent to Guantanamo.

DM: That's right. You must have been going by your principles and not by the –

JA: Well, it's interesting because once you get in politics, the only thing that matters is that you can look at yourself in the mirror and say, "Hey that's okay.

DM: Well, if we can – oh, so now did you go to grad school eventually?

JA: No, I didn't. I took courses. I started having babies we went a lot to the University of Chicago and took courses in Camus and the literature of the Bible. That was a wonderful course. I took courses for about ten years but I never got another degree.

DM: Your degree was your politics.

JA: I was interested in politics, and I was at the Democratic National Convention in 1968, waiting to take a bus from the Conrad Hilton over to the amphitheater. I got on with a woman who turned out to be our ambassador to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. We got to talking, and then we had lunch a little while later. And then, she invited me to accompany her to Ghana in 1968. I got a presidential appointment from President Johnson to go and be a United States representative at the 20th anniversary celebration of the Human Rights Declaration. So, I went to Africa. I left my kids and my wonderful husband, four children under six, or whatever they were. There were a whole bunch of children. There were three observers to the – there were thirty African nations represented in Ghana and there were three observers.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

DM: We're being recorded again. Sorry about that. Go ahead.

JA: Well, I was in Ghana, and I gave a presentation before the commission. It was on the League of Women Voters and the role that the league played in developing constitutional guidelines for self-government. While I was in Ghana, I met some wonderful women from all over Africa who were taking leadership roles in their developing countries, including Annie Jiagge, who was the head of the supreme court of Ghana, the woman that was the head of the timber industry, and the woman that was the head of health in Kenya – all these marvelous women. So then, I came back to the US, and I looked at my Supreme Court, and I realized we didn't have any women, let alone a Chief Justice being a woman. I started giving speeches all over wherever I could about the role of women in Africa. Then, at that point in time, feminism began to develop here in the United States. It was my good fortune to be a part of that really cataclysmic movement, changing the status of women. It was because of my activities in Democratic politics – I had experience with women who talked about running for office but never had. So, the movement began. Oh, golly, how do I explain this? I first talked to people that were active in Democratic politics. The woman that took me to – was the head of the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN – that's a wonderful organization of achieving women from all over the world, and she was India Edwards's predecessor now. India Edwards was the first vice chair of the Democratic National Committee. So, they got together, and they started an effort to get more women involved in politics. I was involved in that. So, we scouted around and tried to get women to run for the Democratic National Convention delegates. Then, we tried to get women to run for all kinds of offices. I organized something called the Illinois Democratic Women's Caucus. This was pretty important in my life because we said, “Enough of you fat old Irishmen. We are going to run for office, and we're serious about it, and we can stand the heat.” There was a saying, “If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.” “We can stand the heat,

and we won't get out of the kitchen, and we're going to run for office." We had a bunch of women that we designated just out of the clear blue sky to run for county offices that year. I was the spokesperson, and I got up and said, "Now, these women, there are thirty-two people on the ticket, and there's not one woman, and you better put a woman on." These are the women we suggest for these offices. This the first time that television had ever covered the nomination process. So, it was on television, and I was on TV. I get a call from Mayor Daley saying, "Will you run for office?" And I said, "No, no, I'm a queenmaker, not the candidate." And he said, "I thought you said women were ready to run for office, Mrs. Alter." He threw the gauntlet down. I said, "I'll call my husband." [laughter] He liked that. Anyway, I ran, and I ran first out of all thirty-two. So that was the beginning of my political career, which was very serendipitous because I was really trying to get other women nominated.

DM: Right. And what year was that?

JA: 1972.

DM: 1972. So this was after – so, how is it that President Johnson had elected you to go to Ghana? To backtrack a little bit.

JA: Because Gladys Tillett, who was India Edwards's successor, and who was our Ambassador to the UN, had invited me and recommended me. And then I guess Sidney Yates and Abner Mikva and other people wrote letters to Johnson. But it was a presidential appointment.

DM: But that was your first real political appointment, actually, going to Ghana.

JA: I guess. I don't think I would consider it political, but maybe it was. Yeah, maybe it was. Then, I ran for office, I think, nine times. That includes running in all the primaries. The first time I had to run in a primary before the county election was in March of '72 I guess. I ran in '72 in the general. Then I ran in '76 – no, '78 must have been. Anyway, I

ran for what was the sanitary district and then became the water reclamation district. I ran three times. Then, I ran for Lieutenant Governor. And then I ran as a Kennedy delegate to the Democratic National Convention. I was a delegate, I think, to three or four national conventions, either as an elected delegate or as an appointed at-large delegate in the nomination process. I really and truly believe that the addition of women to the national reservoir of talent for governing our – democracy is trying to make a choice amongst our peers – choosing amongst our peers on how to govern ourselves. Fifty-two percent of the electorate has just not been represented and still is not, but at least it's a little bit more than it was.

DM: So do you feel like the Women's Movement was one of the primary, say, ideological supports that you had for going into politics, the feminist movement?

JA: No. Because we were involved in politics in high school. The Women's Movement was an additional vehicle for gaining power and bringing about change. Politics is always about bringing about change. Why do you go into politics, assuming you don't go in for the money? You go in because you don't like the way the land is being treated, because people are not allowed to vote, because some people are starving, or because babies are going without milk. Why do you go in? You want to make it better. I think that's the reason that most human beings belong to a church, say. I guess, I mean, I don't belong to a church, especially since I read that 6,500 priests have been found to be guilty of molesting. So, the Women's Movement was the prime motivating force in my activities for twenty years, and it still is. The force of women's influence on foreign policy has not been felt. We'll wait until Hillary gets elected.

DM: Yeah, let's hope.

JA: Just probably the change in the status of women is the biggest thing that happened in the 20th century.

DM: Yeah. You must have witnessed major –

JA: To be a part of that, has been a real fantastic experience, fantastic.

DM: Now can you outline briefly just what your political appointments were in the given years?

JA: They're all in the bio.

DM: Oh, they are? Okay, so let's not worry about that.

JA: I was on a statewide committee on local government. I was elected Commissioner of the Water Reclamation District. I was three times from '72 to '90, I guess. I was appointed Commissioner of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission for eight years. I was a member of the Democratic National Committee. Wait. I think I have a bio somewhere. Wait a minute. I can read this to you. I was appointed to the Democratic National Committee by Mayor Daley, and I served for eight years. I was on the Platform Accountability Committee of the Democratic National Committee. Here. I've got honors and awards, appointments, international activities. Should I read this to you?

DM: Well, if that's all been sent to the archive, then that'll be forwarded to me. So, we don't have to worry.

JA: It wasn't sent to the archives. It was sent to the foundation. Let's see. Honors and awards. Oh, I got the – here, appointments.

DM: Was it sent to Rachel Sagan? Do you remember who? I should receive it.

JA: I think somebody-Austin.

DM: Austin? Well, as long as it was sent to the Jewish Women's – you're saying the Jewish Women's Foundation is who it was sent to?

JA: Yeah, right. I sent it to them.

DM: But it was the same group that is giving you this. So then I should be able to receive it. So we don't have to – I don't want to take too much more of your time.

JA: All right. I was the chairman of the United Nations Day for Illinois. I was the chair of the Illinois delegation to the UN International Women's Year meetings in Mexico City. I was appointed by Harold Washington to go to Japan with him. I was a speaker at the International Exhibition on Water in Osaka. Is that the kind of stuff you want?

DM: Yeah, that's great.

JA: It says educational activities. Trustee Mount Holyoke College. Member of the women's board of the University of Chicago. Member of Mount Holyoke College Art Advisory Council. And a founder of the Junior Museum. Well, we haven't gotten to that yet.

DM: Founder of the Junior Museum?

JA: At the Art Institute.

DM: And what is the Junior Museum?

JA: Well, I'm very proud of that. Let me see if I can see. Oh, here, wait a minute. I was a candidate for county clerk. I was a candidate for Lieutenant Governor. I was a delegate to the national convention. I was the head of the Women's Democratic Club. I was an advisory board member of the Center on National Policy. I was a member of the International Joint Commission on Great Lakes Levels. Then, there's something here about honors and awards which you may – there's another way of looking at the last fifty years. That is that I really like to start things. When I said that being active in politics is about bringing about change, that's also in our society about organizing groups to bring

about change. One of those activities for me – oh, dear. I was also on the board of Lutheran General Hospital, Children's Memorial Hospital, YWCA –

DM: You've been busy.

JA: Back then, in the '50s, when we got married, we were entertaining a lot of foreign visitors. I started something called the International Visitors Center. Have you ever heard of that?

DM: No.

JA: Well, they programmed Fulbright and Smith-Mundt scholars who came to this country to learn about us and help us, and they go back to their own countries and build a better society. We, at the International Visitors Center, would arrange for them to have tours of Chicago and to go out to Chicagoans' houses for dinner. I spent about fifteen years doing that. It was very good. And then, the next stage of my life, I guess you would say, I did a lot with politics. I was telling you about that. But then I'd start taking my children to the art museum, and I realized there was no real way to show them and teach them about art. So, we started something called the Junior Museum at the Art Institute of Chicago. When we started, we used to take 4,200 kids around the museum. Last year, we had 168,000 kids come through. We have a special location where there's an interpretive gallery where children learn about art. My family gave this museum to the Art Institute. It's called the Sol and Celia Hammerman Children's Gallery at the Art Institute. I've been on the board of the Art Institute for about forty years – the women's board of the Art Institute.

DM: The women's board. So, does that support women's art?

JA: No, it's the women who support the museum. We've raised a couple million dollars. A beautiful exhibition there now. We've had some wonderful shows. We have been progenitors, really, paved the way, for other museums in the country who are trying to

interpret art for children. I had my kids down there over Thanksgiving, and they loved it. They had a wonderful time. I'm very, very proud of the museum. Another thing that I did that you might be interested in is I was the chairman of the committee on the Centennial Fountain for the – it goes across the river. Have you ever seen it? The big arc?

DM: Oh, yeah.

JA: That's my idea.

DM: Oh, wow. And where did that come from? How did that idea come up?

JA: Well, we wanted to celebrate the 100th year of the reversal of the Chicago River. I wanted to put a fountain actually at the juncture of the Chicago River and Wabash. There's a fountain there now. I wanted the Art Institute to pay for it. I couldn't get them to do that, so we appointed a committee at the Water Reclamation District, and they designed – and Dirk Lohan designed this fountain that goes all the way across the river from one side to the other. You can walk underneath it. If you've ever been there. You go around the other side, the north side of the fountain. You can see through this veil of water. You can see the outline of the city of Chicago. It very exciting. And water, of course, is what made Chicago what it is. By reversing the river, we kept the sewage out of the lakes and sent it down to Saint Louis. We've celebrated the thing that makes Chicago a success. Anyway, that was something interesting. So, I spent about fifteen years doing that project on the children's art. And then, when I retired –

DM: Was that a full-time activity working on the children's art museum?

JA: No. It's a board activity. But then I went to – and in the meantime, I was doing politics. Then, when I decided not to run again, I took a deep breath and said, “Well, this is the end,” and then I thought, “Oh no, come on. I’ve got twenty years to do something good.” Of course, that's the point at which Americans woke up and said, “My God, what's happening in our schools? What are we doing about that?” [We] looked around, and we

saw that nobody was really doing very much at all except wringing their hands. I just met this woman who was a third-grade teacher in Cabrini, and I said, “I've got a few hours. Do you want some help?” She said, “Sure, come over.” So, I went over there, and I helped her in the school. And then, one day, in the elevator in our building, I met Marion Stone, and she said, “Where are you going now?” I said, “I'm going over to Cabrini,” and she said, “Can I come, too?” You know where Cabrini is, don't you?

DM: No. No, I don't.

JA: This is one of the most disgusting slums in the city of Chicago. Terrible situation. The kids are not learning at all. They're in third grade, and they can't read. Then they're in ninth grade, and they can't read. So, we started going over to the schools. Then we got other people to go, and then we got my husband to go. Men were going. We were trying to teach the children how to read and how to listen to stories and realized, of course, that they weren't at all prepared and that we needed to take a strong stand. So, we became active in the reform movement for Chicago public schools, which has been going for about ten years. I can't say we've made that much progress. It's really an uphill battle trying to teach these kids how to read. But now we have 1,500 tutors, not just two of us.

DM: And what is the name of the group?

JA: It's called Working in the Schools, WITS. I think that's why they called me in the beginning.

DM: And is Marion Stone still involved?

JA: Well, yeah. She doesn't go into the schools anymore because she spends a lot of time in California. But she's still involved, and we're both still on the board. The program has developed and expanded exponentially but in the most interesting way. And that is, we used to just gather our volunteers one by one, which is very difficult to do if you've

ever worked with volunteers. But now, we get our volunteers from law firms and accounting firms, and we have nine city agencies. We bus everybody into their schools so people won't be afraid of being hurt. The bus will pick them up, say, at the Department of Revenue, City of Chicago – pick up fifteen volunteers. They'll get bused into the Jenner School. They'll read to the kids for an hour at lunchtime. Then the bus will take them back to their offices. That program has been very successful. We just got a quarter of a million dollars from the federal government to increase the participation. It's very successful because they've done an analysis of the kids that have tutors and if you go back to the same kid every other week. For example, some of the law firms don't want to let everybody off every week. So Tom takes one week and Mary takes another week, and Tom takes one week and then – but they both go to help Tamika read, and she knows that somebody will come from WITS for her every Tuesday.

DM: Right, that's great. Do you have the University of Chicago involved at all?

JA: Not very much. They've got a program of their own, but it's not very extensive, I think.

DM: Yeah, because I'm a student there, actually, and I'm doing a PhD in history, and I know that there is a volunteer program. But I didn't know if this was it.

JA: We are trying to. We've been trying to work with the – we work with Loyola and with Roosevelt. But the universities have their own program with their newspaper, with the Maroon, I think. I could find out more about where we stand, and I'll get back to you on that.

DM: Yeah, and if you ever need a link to the university to try to spread it to the university, feel free to be in touch because I would love to see that expanded. It's definitely an area which needs it.

JA: WITS went to the meeting that they had in Philadelphia with the five presidents, all the ex-presidents. Everybody promised that they were going to do work in the schools. We had a very strong presence there. But those big companies, General Electric, General Motors, and DuPont and stuff, they just were a bunch of hot air. They really haven't put their shoulders to the wheel in order to improve education at all. The No Child Left Behind bill is just a farce. But we're still working hard. We've gone from a budget of three hundred, which was my contribution and Marion's contribution in the beginning, to a budget of almost a million, and from two volunteers to 1,580-some-odd volunteers. We're going to have two thousand by the end of this, a year from June. We've got people wanting to copy our program from all over the country. In the beginning, I went to Mayor Daley, and I said look, just give me ten minutes. I knew his secretary, and I said, "Just schedule me in for ten minutes; I promise I'll leave." So, I went in, and I said, "I've got this idea, a way to get volunteers into the schools." And he just took it from there and he kept talking for almost an hour. I was in there until 3:00. It was just a wonderful experience. He agreed to be the honorary chair of the WITS committee, which he has been. He's been great. He gave a speech about WITS to the American Mayors Conference. When he goes abroad, he talks about it, and we hope he'll talk about it at the Democratic National Convention next summer. So, I'm very pleased with this last twenty years of my life.

DM: Yeah, yeah, that's wonderful work and very important issues.

JA: But it does divide up into foreign students and foreign visitors and the visitors' center, children and art, and children in the schools.

DM: Yeah, those have been the main themes. Do you see a progression happening in your thinking or your involvement, or are these just moments of your life that took on different themes based on where you were in your life?

JA: I think that Abner Mikva was right when he said to me – after I retired from office, he said, “People like you and me have to change focus or jobs because the talents that we bring to creating a new idea are not the same talents that you need to administer a program that's existing. Actually, he and I both find it boring to administer something that's a fait accompli. They ask me to go in and head the Red Cross, I'd say, “No, that's not my style. If you want me to start a new airborne helicopter-designed Red Cross, I will.” So, I think that's the answer.

DM: Yeah. But you've been involved with WITS for ten years.

JA: Yeah. We had our tenth anniversary. It’s been so wonderful because these kids run up and hug you. When we first started out, Art Strauss, who's about six-four, called me up the night before he was supposed to go. He said, “Look, Joanne, I know you're wonderful, and you love WITS, and you love these kids, but I just don't want to go.” I said, “Well, Art, what's the matter?” He said, “Well, what if the kids don't like me?” I said, “Oh Art. So just go once.” So, of course, he went, and the kids ran up and hugged him around the knees – kissed him. And to me, they say, “What are all those brown spots on your arms?” I say, “Every time a little kid says they love me, I get a brown spot.” So, then they run up, and they whisper in my ear, “I love you,” and they look at my arms, which are full of brown spots. There's so much we have to learn. We have training for our volunteers. We have to teach them. “What do you do New Year's Eve?” “Well, what do you do New Year's Eve?”

DM: What did I –?

JA: The child says, “Well, we hid under the bed. We always hide under the bed on New Year's Eve because there's so much shooting.” Then, they say, “Well, Frank (Fermenke?) can't come today.” Everybody's got a strange name. “He got shot.” “Oh,” I say, “Come on, he didn't get shot.” So, then the kid pulls up his pants leg and rolls it back, and there's a big bandage that he had put on by the hospital where he got shot in

the leg. So, we've got to begin to understand that these are the backgrounds that these kids come from, and trying to force them to read when they really want to talk about getting shot is another problem. So, we have a sociological problem. Then we have the whole political problem. A lot of people say, “Look, I've spent three generations trying to salvage these kids. I've got to take them out of their homes and put them in boardinghouses in order to salvage them.” No, I don't believe in that either. But it's really hard to get the parents to comply with some of the needs of their growing children, very hard. And they're third-generation illiterates. So that's our society's problem, right? And, of course, that's one of the reasons I really love the idea of national conscription. Are you familiar with the whole move toward everybody eighteen and over has to help their country somehow?

DM: I've heard of the idea. I don't know much about the movement.

JA: If you don't comply or if you can't read, then they send you to boot camp to learn how to read.

DM: Yeah, it's a complex problem. How do you keep your positive attitude when you see this problem existing for ten years and much longer?

JA: Well, it just takes one to make a success, doesn't it?

DM: Yeah, that’s a good way of looking –

JA: One child that says, “Oh, I'm so glad to see you again, and I wanted to show you how I can read.”

DM: Yes. You see those little successes.

JA: And the twenty-five that can't read. Also, my glass has always been half-full. I love life, and I love seeing the changes in my society around me. My husband and I are both

– we're in a very good stage of our lives. We wake up in the morning, and we think anything is possible. I guess I told you I couldn't meet until today because my kids were all here. They had a wonderful time.

DM: Oh, that's nice. So, do you spend half of the year –? Do you spend your winters in Arizona?

JA: No, we've never been on a vacation before. We always go traveling or skiing. This was our first time on a vacation [inaudible]. [laughter] But it's kind of fun. We go hiking every day. I went hiking this morning. We'd go to the Desert Museum, and we're having a good time. Our kids came from all over. I'll tell you about our children. That's the best thing about – are you married?

DM: No, no, I'm not.

JA: Well, when you do, and you have kids, it is fabulous. Fabulous.

DM: I'm looking forward to it.

JA: My kids all turned out to be very observant Jews. Well, you always do what your parents don't. Except for Jennifer, who's married to a non-Jew. But the oldest works at Baird & Warner. She's the executive vice president, second in command. She lives in Chicago. They were just out here. They ski, and they swim, and they play tennis, and they play golf. She's on the board of Francis Parker. I don't know what else. Then the second one lives in Montclair, New Jersey, and he's on the staff of Newsweek, and he has a job as a television reporter, Jonathan Alter.

DM: I actually lived in Montclair for a year.

JA: Oh, did you?

DM: Yeah, I was a nanny for a year in Montclair.

JA: They like it a lot.

DM: Yeah, it's a nice community. Close to New York.

JA: He comes to Chicago and gives speeches. He's on television a lot. Then the third one lives in New York City, but she's moving in two months to California because she has three girls, and her husband is the new president of Sony Pictures. So, they're going to be living in California. And the fourth one is a doctor, an ER [emergency room] doctor on an Indian reservation in Tuba City, Arizona. His wife is an OB/GYN [on] an Indian reservation. Save the world through medicine. We have eleve grandchildren, and they were all here. Great.

DM: That's wonderful.

JA: I have a list of honors and awards. You want that?

DM: I'll just get that through what the archive has.

JA: Okay, there's something that isn't on there that I just got last year, which was the Amistad award.

DM: How do you spell that?

JA: A-M-I-S-T-A-D. That's the slave ship. I got that award from them. There's also another board that isn't on the biography, which is the Black Creativity.

DM: Black Creativity.

JA: That's a board that's run through the university. It's the Museum of Science and Industry, MSI. It's an art exhibition.

DM: And did you say you were on the board of that?

JA: Yeah, I was one of the founders of that. So, I've founded a lot of things.

DM: Yeah, amazing, amazing. Now let's see.

JA: Talking for a long time.

DM: I know, I hate to take up your whole afternoon here. The Amistad Award was what year exactly?

JA: Last year, and it's not on the bio.

DM: So, that would be 2003?

JA: Yeah. I don't have any dates on any of my bio things, although I got the NBC Thomas Jefferson Award for outstanding public service in '98, it's marked down.

DM: Okay. Now, if we could go for maybe ten minutes longer if I could quickly –

JA: I don't care.

DM: You don't care. Okay.

JA: I love to talk about myself.

DM: Oh, good. If I could just quickly – there are a list of questions that they suggest, and I think they don't require that I go through these exactly. But I think some of the information will be good to get on tape. Let's see. So you've answered some of this. You said, as a child, you did go to synagogue, right? Was that right? You did go to synagogue as a child? You went to temple.

JA: I went to Sunday School, and I was confirmed.

DM: You were confirmed as a Christian?

JA: No, confirmation in the Jewish Reform Movement. Rabbi Siskin confirmed me at North Shore Congregation Israel in about – I'd have been a sophomore in high school. That would be '42, '43.

DM: So that's in place of being bat mitzvahed?

JA: Yes.

DM: Oh, okay, I didn't know that. And did you as a kid – it didn't seem like you celebrated Jewish holidays.

JA: Oh, yeah. We always celebrated Passover, and we always lit candles at Hanukkah. And we went to temple on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We were secular Jews, but we celebrated the holiday. The kids were all confirmed except Jamie. She now is going to be bat mitzvah because she says she missed it. Our kids are all observant. They have Shabbat. And two of them, Johnny's kids, one was bat mitzvah, and one's going to be bar mitzvah. And they all take Hebrew lessons on Saturday. Harry's kids take Hebrew. They speak Navajo and Hebrew.

DM: Wow. Oh, that's great. That's great.

JA: And Jamie married a man that doesn't have anything to do with religion, and they belong to a Conservative synagogue.

DM: Oh, wow. And as a kid, did you participate in other Jewish activities like any summer camps or organizations that were Jewish-identified?

JA: No.

DM: No. And was your family Zionist that you know of?

JA: Medium.

DM: Medium. And have you ever visited Israel?

JA: Oh, yes. I went with a group of Illinois politicians, elected officials, on an official trip. It was wonderful, wonderful. And then, I went with my husband on another marvelous journey through Israel. Yes, it was a great experience. Great experience. I don't know what to think then. I was on the committee for the Jewish Federation, where we sent – oh, what's his name, the head of the Federation, over to Israel to say what my mother had said, and that was that she's not going to give them any more money until they shape up. Well, that's what's been happening. The Jewish community is not funding the Federation the way they should be because they're so upset with what's going on in Israel. I didn't like the wall at all. How about you?

DM: No, no, I have a hard time with that. I think it's very unfortunate. I think it's going to create more division.

JA: Have you been to Israel?

DM: No, no, I've never been there, no. I would love to go.

JA: My daughter Jamie went there and worked on a kibbutz. And Jamie, she's a real fearless one. She'll get this award someday. She wrote me letters and said, "I'm working on a grapefruit farm. Also, on a chicken farm pretty near the border." She would write me tape recordings. She'd send me tape recordings. So, the last tape recording I get is Jamie, and there's a whole bunch of noise in the background. She said, "Those are the guns. I haven't been able to tell you until now. I'm leaving tomorrow. But the guns are like fifteen yards away, and we're right at the border. I'm going to go now and catch a bus and travel across Egypt." [inaudible]

DM: Wow. So she wanted to reserve that until she was leaving.

JA: Until there was no way that I could stop it. And Johnny went to Israel, and he was at the Wall, and they made friends. One of the very Conservative groups adopted him and took him home, and they had these highly intellectual, challenging philosophical, literary dialogues that, for a little Harvard sophomore, were mind-boggling. A lot of young men opted to live in Israel after they went and lived in Mea She'arim with some of these families. But luckily, he escaped. The reason he left and did not join the family, which he said he loved, was the way they treated the women. He said they just really had no respect at all for the women. They were merely vessels to carry future men, next generation.

DM: So, you really raised your kids with feminist values, too.

JA: Oh yeah.

DM: Of course, they had you as a role model, so how could that not happen?

JA: Well, I don't know. They always do the opposite. Somebody said to me, “I went to Jamie's house for dinner, and she made the bread. Did you teach her how to make bread?” And I said, “No, that's the reason she's making bread. I don't know how.” So, where are you from? You're from Montclair?

DM: No, I'm from Connecticut, actually. I'm from northwest Connecticut. I lived in New York for a number of years and went to school at Hampshire College. So, I lived in Massachusetts.

JA: What was your thesis on?

DM: My thesis was on women's changing gender roles in the late 19th century. I was looking at the ways in which middle-class white women were attending college for the first time and really creating a ruckus and claiming their right to the vote, and that created a big backlash movement. So, I looked at that movement through newspapers. It's very

interesting.

JA: Did you have that Five College Library available to you?

DM: Yeah, everything. In fact, I took courses at Mount Holyoke and Smith, and the whole Five Colleges were completely open. There are these buses that link them, and it's really wonderful.

JA: I was on the board when we had to decide what to do about the library situation. I didn't believe that we should build a library because I thought the new research pursuits would be through video and audio. But they built it anyway.

DM: So, when was that?

JA: I was on the board for ten years. How do I remember? I don't know. It was probably fifteen years ago.

DM: They built a new library since then? I didn't know that.

JA: We built a new library then, without destroying any of the trees. That whole campus was laid out by Olmsted.

DM: Oh, I didn't know that. It's beautiful. It's my favorite.

JA: Some of those big old trees are 250 years old. So, they wanted to build a library, and they had to design one that wouldn't [inaudible] the foliage.

DM: Oh, that's great. Well, it's my favorite library of the Five Colleges, and I spent –

JA: Williston. Isn't that a great place?

DM: Oh, I love it. I'd go there when I was a Hampshire student. I used to spend most of my time there. I love it.

JA: A lot of papers. A lot of good papers available.

DM: Yeah. I've been working in their archive, and it's a very underrated archive. Not many people really know about it, and it's wonderful. They have really great resources for researchers. One more question about your Jewish identity. Do you see your activism and your political work as being related to Jewish values? Or even intellectually? Maybe not through your upbringing? But do you link them internally?

JA: Yes, internally is a wonderful word. I have a friend who was just here. She's Greek. She said, “But I'm Jewish. All my good friends are Jews. My values are Jewish values. My interests are with other Jews. But I'm Greek.” [laughter] It has to be an internal motivation that will go along with change. The keywords are change, I think, and optimism and internal motivation for a value system. I'm getting some quotes in there for you.

DM: Yeah. [laughter]

JA: It's funny. You don't think about it very often. But what motivates you is probably a lot to do with role models of people from the 19th century who dared to do things that were really challenging. My kids are all – I think iconoclastic is a good word, too, to use. Because that means breaking down the icons that exist and trying to challenge the modus operandi of your society. I just am so discouraged. Some days, I do think – I think I'm an optimist, but I think maybe it's okay to be seventy-seven years old, and so I won't see what's going to happen with Ashcroft.

DM: Yeah, I think it'll get better. I'm optimistic, well, about the current election. I'm pretty optimistic.

JA: Oh really? You think people aren't going to vote for Bush?

DM: I'm optimistic. But sometimes, you just have to feign. It's hard to know how much it is reality-based. But I feel like people will – a large sector of the country is dissatisfied with the current political situation. So that's how I feel.

JA: Are you for Howard Dean?

DM: I was, yeah. And I'm hearing about Kucinich. I don't know. Do you have an opinion there?

JA: I don't think voting for Ralph Nader or Kucinich or Sharpton is doing anything good for us because we should have learned what happened in Florida. You know how few votes were effective in that election, how few? If you vote for Kucinich and another two percent do that, it could blow the election.

DM: Yeah, you're right.

JA: Always since the time of the labor organizers, the outsiders have influenced what goes on inside. Anyway, I don't know. I wasn't really for Dean, but I thought that he brought out a very good sense of responsibility in the body politic. I've been reading John Kerry's book, and he's to the manor born, my God: Saint Paul's, Yale, hobnobbing on Long Island. But he's got leadership experience. I don't know. Edwards has been to our house a couple times. Actually twice. I had lunch with his wife. He came. I had meet and greets and had the presidential candidates come up to our house with about fifty people there, opinion-makers. We had Kerry, and we had Gephardt and Edwards.

DM: Wow. So, you're still really active in the –?

JA: Edwards is charming. He's charming. He's in the John Kennedy mold. Mode is a better word. So, what other questions do you have?

DM: Well, how about how you identify and your work? How you identify personally, and is that through your work, or how does your work influence your personal identity?

JA: Well, people turn the other way because they think I'm going to ask for money you mean? [laughter] How do I identify?

DM: The way they put it here is, what role does your work play in how you define yourself or does it?

JA: Oh, very important. That's why I've always had these projects that consume me. Passions they are. I think that's another word. Passionate about Adlai Stevenson. I didn't even tell you about our relationship with Adlai Stevenson. Jimmy was the chairman of the Stevenson for President Committee in '60, and in '56 and in '52, we were both very active in the campaigns. We knew him and were good friends of his kids. We were very close to a lot of history for a long time. But we were passionate about the democratic ideals that Stevenson enunciated. I think I was passionate about teaching children about art. How wonderful to open their eyes and get them to realize this world of color, motion, and design.

DM: And how did you take an interest in art?

JA: Through Mount Holyoke. Wonderful teacher, wonderful courses on art. And a chance to go to the Metropolitan. When I first went on the Art Advisory Council at Mount Holyoke, I was sitting with this Greek woman I'm talking about, Odyssia Quadrani Skouras. We're sitting there, and they say, and here's a Magritte. She says it's a fake. And here's a Rouault. She says it's a fake. We go through the whole collection. We found out all these paintings that people had given to Mount Holyoke in their wills were never authenticated. So, we started all over. It was interesting.

DM: Did you experience any conflict between your work and your family responsibilities?

JA: No, because the family came first. That's why I didn't run. That's probably why I'm not governor. I had a chance. When I was in public office, they wanted me to run for state legislature and state Senate, and that's the route to state government. That's what Don did, and I would have had to have an apartment in Springfield, and I didn't want to do that. So, I think my romance with my husband and my involvement with the kids always came first. Is that a Jewish syndrome?

DM: Well, I think the role of the family is very strong.

JA: Yeah, we have a very strong family. My sister died two years ago, and I've more or less taken on the responsibility of her kids and grandchildren. Much stronger than in my Christian friends. I have a lot of friends who are not Jewish. They admire it, and they say, “How come your kids ended up the way they did?” But I think it was because we always were paying attention.

DM: Right, exactly. And the last question. What was most rewarding looking back and as you recount all these wonderful stories going all the way back to the beginning? What's been most rewarding, do you think?

JA: To understand at my age that there's a continuum and that I was a part of it, do you know what I'm trying to say?

DM: Yeah, that there's a connection between the very different things that you've done.

JA: Of course, very, very important has been the support of my husband. As indicated by that wedding present he gave me. Also that he tells me every day he loves me. And that's important. And that we agree on everything. Almost everything. Although somebody said, “You've never had a fight with your husband? How boring.” You have to care enough, right? We both care, so we've had big arguments and pillow talk arguments about esoteric subjects. “What do you and your wife fight about?” “Oh, about space research funding.? Anyway, we have a good relationship, and I just – some things

about modern society really get to me, like Sex and the City.

DM: I've never even watched it. I watched it for about ten minutes and couldn't stand it.

JA: It's awful. And it's enough to make you a conservative Christian, conscience-stricken, or whatever they are.

DM: Well, this has been great. I really appreciate and really enjoyed speaking with you and hearing all about your stories.

JA: It's been fun. I'm sorry that I had to postpone it until so late.

DM: No, that's fine, that's fine.

JA: That's a good example. They were all here, and they were all demanding to lie in bed with me in the morning, go hiking, and all the kids wanted some attention, and I didn't think it was fair to interrupt it in the middle.

DM: No, you made a good decision. That way, we were able to keep this open-ended, too. That was helpful. Is there anything else that we didn't cover that you can think of that you want to put on record?

JA: Wait. Let me just look at this.

DM: Yeah, think for a second.

JA: Honors and awards. It was nice getting the NBC award. That was a big -- and the Chicago Women's Hall of Fame. Those things were nice. I was the first woman to get the Chicago YMCA award – YWCA for community leadership. Delegate to the UN. I forget. A lot of things I forget that I've done.

DM: There's so much. There's so much to keep track of. We'd have to have ongoing conversations.

JA: Well, I think that running for statewide office – when I ran for Lieutenant Governor – was a very enriching experience for me because I went to almost a hundred counties, and I talked to people who never thought about running for office but who might be running because they saw somebody else running. I learned all about Illinois agriculture and industry. I learned about the state budget. It was a wonderful experience. Illinois Department of Local Government Affairs. Let me see what this says. Board memberships. Chair of WITS. University of Chicago Women's Board. Art Institute of Chicago Women's Board. Mount Holyoke Art Advisory Council. Contemporary Art Workshop. Friends of the Chicago River. Oh, I was on a big – talk about starting things. Those are all things that I was involved in starting. One of them was a man wrote an article in Chicago magazine about how dirty the river was. So, a bunch of us got together and we founded the Friends of the Chicago River, and we had trips down the Chicago River in canoes. That's when I first decided that it would be a good idea to run for sanitary district. I could clean up the rivers. So I've been on that for a long time.

DM: Is that on your bio, too?

JA: Yes.

DM: Okay, great.

JA: And then Augustana too. Lutheran. A lot of hospitals. All right.

DM: That's great. Well, great work. It's very impressive and very inspiring to hear about your life.

JA: Well, we could meet soon. We'll meet at the luncheon.

DM: Yes, yes, I look forward to it. That'll be great.

JA: My daughter's coming. She called and said she's coming. So you'll get a chance to meet Jennifer.

DM: Great, great.

JA: All right. Thank you, dear.

DM: Thank you. And we'll see each other soon.

JA: Bye.

DM: Okay, bye-bye.

[END OF INTERVIEW]