Ruth Jungster Frankel Transcript

LAVITT: This is the oral history interview of Ruth Frankel. Today's date is August 7th, 2001. This is Pamela Brown Lavitt, oral historian for the Jewish Women's Archive's "Weaving Women's Words" Project in Seattle. I am at the home of the Frankels at 3239 80th Avenue, SE on Mercer Island, Washington, and I'm very pleased to be here. I just wanted to, before we begin, in Seattle, I wanted to make sure that I have your permission and that you are aware that you're being recorded.

FRANKEL: Of course.

PL: Wonderful.

RF: My pleasure.

PL: I wanted to ask—my mother's name is Ruth, as well – and I wanted to ask you about the story of your name. Is there a story to your name?

RF: I was named after my paternal grandmother but her name wasn't Ruth. It was Hermine. So my middle name is Ruth Hermine.

PL: Do you have a different Jewish name?

RF: No. Ruth is my Jewish name. I'm very proud of it.

PL: Where were you born, Ruth?

RF: I was born in Frankfurt, Germany.

PL: What were the circumstances of your birth?

RF: It was during the war, 1916, and my mother lived there during the war from 1913 until 1919, and when my father returned from the Army they moved to where he was born, a small city, Tann. T-A-N-N. My Dad took over his father's business and they lived there until 1938. I lived there until 1929. I went to a different school. My grandfather had lost his second wife and my parents didn't want him to be alone, so they encouraged me to go to school in the city of Limburg. They sent along our maid. It was a great sacrifice for my Mom, but he needed somebody to take care of us. I enjoyed these years tremendously because he was a great, philosophical person. He was a businessman and he was a great influence on me.

PL: What kind of business was he in?

RF: Dry goods. [phone rings]

PL: Your grandfather was in the dry goods business?

RF: Yes.

PL: At what age did you go live with him, Ruth?

RF: Thirteen.

PL: Can you go back a little bit and talk about your life up until that point?

RF: Of course.

PL: Tell me a little bit about your parents.

RF: My parents also were in the dry goods business and my mother helped my Dad in the business. He traveled a lot so she kept the home fires burning and she was quite an artist. She painted beautifully. She played the piano beautifully. I went to religion school in Tann, Hebrew school and then I went to [school] in Limburg. I continued.

PL: What was the neighborhood that you grew up in? What was it like?

RF: It was Jewish and Christians alike. We got along very well with the younger generation. I think my parents also. We didn't have friends but, you know, they were on friendly terms. It was carefree, very carefree until of course Hitler came around and then we were robbed of our youth, really. We were very fearful. These years, of course, I spend in Limburg and afterward, I went back to Frankfurt.

PL: Do you remember your relationship with your father as well?

RF: Yes. Very warm and caring. We were a very close family.

PL: How many were you—your brothers and sisters?

RF: Two. I have a sister.

PL: What was her name?

RF: Lisbeth.

PL: Can you talk about your relationships with her as well?

RF: Well we were three years—I was three years older, so she was rather spoiled [laughter]. But it was interesting. She would never go to sleep at night unless I would join her. So my mother made me lie next to her until she fell asleep and then I was able to get out again. [laughter] But we had a very wonderful [relationship], you know after we were out of our teens. [laughter]

PL: What did you and your family do together when you were very young? Do you remember things?

RF: We took trips together and we took outings together and there wasn't so much time to do things, [laughter] you know, except vacation time.

PL: What were—I'm sorry, continue.

RF: You know, Tann, itself, was a small city. It didn't have much cultural entertainment. So we went to the next big city with cultural events—

PL: Which was where?

RF: Fulda. We went for long hikes. We love hiking on weekends. My parents were Modern Orthodox. On Shabbat morning, my Mom would go to shul with us. Before my Dad would go to shul, one of his great pleasures would be to go to our garden and marvel at the beauty of the flowers, fruit trees and vegetables. During the week he traveled and at times came home late. We always waited for him and got to talk to him. We had a great relationship with him. He was not a man of many words but we loved each other dearly.

PL: What else do you remember about your religious upbringing in the home?

RF: In the home, of course, it was strictly kosher and we kept the tradition in the Jewish sense. Of course, we did traditional foods, of course: matzo balls and kugels and potato latkes and potato kugel. Whatever.

PL: Tell me about the ways that your family celebrated particular holidays—Passover, Sukkot—that you remember.

RF: We had family over always on Passover and we did have a sukkah, beautiful Sukkot. We would allow children to play games in that sukkah. There wasn't a meal we wouldn't take unless it was in the sukkah during Sukkot. The fun part when we grew up was having the kids over to play games and sing songs.

PL: Do you remember what kind of games that you played?

RF: [laughter] I don't.

PL: What was the language that you spoke in the home?

RF: We spoke German.

PL: Did you know any other languages or did you hear any other languages as a child?

RF: No.

PL: How far back did you trace your family in Frankfurt or in Germany or from other parts of the world?

RF: I'm just going through the genealogy that we received. My nephew was able to do this as a project, and it goes back to 16-something.

PL: Can you talk a little bit about what you've learned?

RF: I learned a lot because I learned how many members, other members, are involved in my family – different names, of course – that I didn't realize that we were in a system. I didn't realize and that was interesting.

PL: What was your family name?

RF: Jungster. My mother's name was Oppenheimer but there was a family by the name of Heilbron, and I remember we were related […].

PL: What does that mean to you? Did you know other Heilbrons?

RF: I knew the family very well. They're respected and they're wonderful people but it makes me—they're not alive anymore—but it makes you feel so much closer to them now than we ever realized. I don't think, I'm not even sure, my mother would know that this was the case.

PL: What was the relationship with the extended family? Where was your extended family in Germany?

RF: Well, my grandfather—My mother had a sister and she lived in Limburg. My Dad had one brother living in town—a sister, living in town, married. One sister in Koblenz near the Rhine River and two brothers, one in Frankfurt. He was a physician and another one in Darmstadt. He was also a physician. But it's interesting, I came across a letter that my grandmother wrote to the children, making sure that the two who studied medicine in case the others wouldn't be able to make a living or make sure that they would take care of the girls until they get married. I found that so interesting. She told them to make sure to keep all Jewish holidays and Shabbat and give lots of tzedakah [charity] and be good to each other, never fight. [laughter] I have that letter and we had it translated. In fact, I have 185 letters that my parents wrote to us before the war with America started. When Hitler came to power, my sister and I got visas to come to America in '38. They were told that if your children are in America, you don't have to worry, you don't need a quota number. They just can give you an affidavit. Of course, that was the wrong information. So, they waited and had a tremendously high quota number and they were never able to get out of Germany. They were killed in Auschwitz. But the letters were translated into English and I have them in book form. I can show them to you later.

PL: I'd like to see that. What do you remember about the landmarks of Frankfurt and your interactions with neighbors and things like that?

RF: I was young but, you know, of course, the great synagogues. There were so many synagogues.

PL: Tell me about that.

RF: There were two Orthodox synagogues, one a Reformed synagogue, and one a Conservative synagogue, and we had good relations with the rabbis except the two Orthodox synagogues did not get along too well, for some reason. I'm not sure because of envy or just plain politics.

PL: What do you remember about Shabbos mornings?

RF: Shabbos morning? I don't.

PL: Or even Friday nights going to shul?

RF: It was beautiful. I went with my Dad. We went with my Dad to shul on Friday night. Of course, Mom had to see that the meal was ready. As a forshpeis (appetizer) [laughter] You know what that is?

PL: Translate it for the record—definitely.

RF: Appetizer. We had trout. They were very small fish, and she made a beautiful hollandaise sauce always. Of course, soup and the usual: either chicken or roast. And she was a great baker. So we would have all these delicious desserts and we would sing songs, zmirot, and usually we had family over after for dessert, sometimes for dinner.

PL: What do you remember about your sense of public duty in the community? What was the relationship between Jews and non-Jews and German citizens at that time? Early on I'm talking about.

RF: Well, the earlier times, it was okay. But once Hitler—once in the '30s. He came really to power in '29. It wasn't obvious but he was there. Once the '30s started, the relationship changed. The German Jews never thought it could get worse. He was just another politician. They never thought, never dreamt that this could ever happen. So

many of them left early. I have a cousin who went to Israel and Palestine in '33. It wasn't called Youth Aliyah but it was early in the creation. And since I never went to a non-Jewish school [in my primary grades], you know, we didn't have close friends at that age.

PL: I meant to ask you about your early schooling before you went to Limburg. But let me ask you one other question. As a child, again in your early years, in what ways were you German? What are the things that you celebrated that made you feel "German" as opposed to necessarily "Jewish"? Were there holidays that you celebrated that were German holidays?

RF: No.

PL: Was that considered anathema?

RF: Well, it probably was. We just celebrated only our own, yes. I know many, many Jews celebrated Christmas there. That was an absolute no, no.

PL: In Germany, what do you remember about that?

RF: There were also a lot of intermarriages between Jews and Christians. But I don't remember, probably because I was too young to be interested, you know.

PL: So what was your first schooling experience?

RF: My first schooling experience, I have to tell you how I got into kindergarten at five-and-a-half. In Europe on your first day at school, you're handed a huge, cone-shaped paper bag filled with candies. The reason for this was that you have a happy, sweet school year. It was a very nice custom because everybody was photographed of course with their cone-shaped bag in hand. It was interesting. It was nice. Our Hebrew School bags were nice. The classes were small and very intimate and we had nice teachers.

PL: Who were those teachers?

RF: Oh, they were Hebrew school teachers.

PL: Women? Men?

RF: Women. Right.

PL: What do you remember about that style of education? Were boys and girls tracked differently? Similarly?

RF: They weren't. We were together. They weren't tracked. I don't think they—well, yes, some of the Orthodox schools they do that. But we didn't. We didn't do that.

PL: What did you wear to school?

RF: We wore uniforms. Mid-length. Calf-length.

PL: What else do you remember from that? Do you remember the school, itself? Or some of your experience at holidays and things like that at school?

RF: Well, we didn't celebrate holidays. We were prepared for, you know, taught about it. But they were happy days. We had friends in Limburg and after would go sledding. In the summertime, we'd go swimming. They were happy days.

PL: So now tell me and take me up to the point where you wound up moving in with your grandfather.

RF: It was in '29 and I went to the Hebrew school—high school there. Afterward, we had lots of studying to do so I had to go home and do my homework. We would meet friends mostly in summertime. See, we had different kinds of vacations in the whole year: fall vacation, winter vacation, spring vacation, and only four weeks or three weeks for summer vacation. So, it was a happy time, even though it was Hitler. The friendships we formed, you know at 13, 14, 15, were solid.

PL: How did you feel about leaving your family to go live with your grandfather?

RF: I didn't. I loved him so much, you know. I felt my parents instilled in us a sense of responsibility and the strength to overcome hurdles. But he was such a loving person. I think I must have almost felt as close to him as my own Dad.

PL: What were things that you and your grandfather liked to do together?

RF: Again, he was a businessman. He was busy. The only time he had was Sundays. We would go to the theater together. He would take me and we would mostly take trips. The country was very beautiful so we would go along the Rhine River, visit castles, and—

PL: Since his wife had died since your grandmother had died, were you responsible for certain things, up-keeping the home?

RF: Well, because he had our maid, remember?

PL: Yes.

RF: My parents sent our maid along and she kept the house. She knew exactly how to keep kosher.

PL: Was she a Jewish maiden?

RF: No. She knew how to say Birkat. She would never let me forget it. [laughter] I wouldn't forget it because she said to me, "Ruth, you have to bench." Do you know what "benching" is? The night prayer—hamalach hagoel, you know. She knew a lot of prayers because she learned with us when we were children.

PL: At what time, in your earliest memories, did you always have a maid?

RF: Yes.

PL: Was that a common thing? Or was that a—

RF: Yes.

PL: —certain class of person had a maid?

RF: Not every Jewish family there had but a number of them did. It was, I guess, quite common.

PL: So can you describe a little bit about that relationship with her?

RF: Our relationship was wonderful. My mother was wonderful but she was very strict. If we didn't like something to eat—my mother didn't know anything about Dr. Spock then [laughter] —and she would actually induce us. I don't want to use the term "force" but she would force us to eat it and our maid would come to our rescue.

PL: I'm not sure I'm understanding. What is it that you were—

RF: We didn't like farina, and she thought it was so good for us to eat farina. So our maid would say, "If your Mom comes and sees you, eat. Just put it in your mouth and then afterward we can get rid of it." [laughter] She did because we just hated Farina. You know, psychology wasn't that advanced, I guess. But if you think it's good for your kids, so you make them eat it. That was one of the fond memories we had of our maid. She was very, very understanding.

PL: Did she live with you?

RF: Yes. Oh, yes.

PL: Did she ever—I'm sorry?

RF: No, she didn't have a family.

PL: So she was with you during the vast majority of her lifetime? How old was she?

RF: Well, she was with us until Hitler came and then she had to leave. But after Hitler came, my parents told me, she brought butter and milk to them almost weekly. Butter was rationed. Especially Jews couldn't buy butter. So she would sneak in at night, and bring them foods that were not permitted for Jews to buy. She was a wonderful person. In fact, we corresponded, until the war, with her and we occasionally sent her packages and money because she was such a kind woman.

PL: What was her name?

RF: Lina.

PL: So 1929 you're out with your grandfather and Hitler comes to power. What did you understand of the change in Germany at that time or when did you start recognizing certain changes?

RF: Well, we actually didn't recognize it until '32, '33 when he boycotted Jewish businesses, and many of your non-Jewish friends in Tann wouldn't be your friend anymore as far as their parents were concerned. I still had a lot of non-Jewish friends in Limburg. I guess that lasted until about '35, or '36.

PL: So you graduated from your Hebrew School?

RF: Right, and I went to business school.

PL: Can you tell me about that?

RF: That also was in Limburg. In fact, it was a Catholic business school that was one of the best—

PL: I'm going to pause this for a moment. [break in tape]

RF: Okay. I went to a business school which was a wonderful experience and I made a lot of friends there too – non-Jewish friends.

PL: What was the name of the business school?

RF: It was called Marien Schule. It was Catholic.

PL: I see.

RF: I told you, and the sisters were terrific teachers, and I really learned a great deal. It helped me all through my life to go to business school.

PL: How did you decide to go to business school? And what was the Catholic school like?

RF: The Catholic school was such a highly recommended business school. It didn't bother me at all because I didn't participate in any of their religious activities. I was always excused and they didn't have that many really. They didn't have prayer services every day.

PL: How old were you when you went there?

RF: I was, let's see, 16: 16 to 19.

PL: So can you describe what it was like?

RF: It was like a junior college.

PL: What was the education like?

RF: In the business school, it was great. I learned some English, French. It was a great experience, really.

PL: Was it considered a typical thing for a young woman like yourself to go to a junior college?

RF: Well, nobody ever could have gone to the university because we weren't permitted anymore. That was closed off to us, so this was the next best thing to do. It helped me come here to the States. It did help me, really. Afterward, I went back to Frankfurt and this is where I met my husband, in Frankfurt.

PL: Ah. Before we get to that, I want to ask whether you remember the Nuremberg Laws. You said you were restricted from going to university.

RF: We were restricted to go to the theater. We could only go "standing room," which we did. At the opera, we had to stand in the last row, [also] in concerts. Jews were not permitted to sit. But we did go because we just didn't want them to rob us of our cultural pleasures. Many businesses were closed because they couldn't exist anymore because non-Jews would boycott them. I'll tell you an interesting story. My uncle had also a maid in Frankfurt and his patients again would often give him a gift of butter. As I told you before, butter was rationed. In Germany, they use a big crock pot and put salt in it, and kept the butter in there and that butter was in his kitchen. The kitchen had a balcony and the maid would, every time he got that gift of butter, put it into that crock pot. He had non-Jewish neighbors who reported him to the police and he was given a few days to get out of Germany and they seized of course the butter. So he left Germany within a few days and went to Cuba.

PL: Why Cuba?

RF: And from there he went—Why Cuba? He had an eye infection at the time and he couldn't immigrate. They wouldn't let him in the U.S. Anything that's wrong with your eyes – red eyes, whatever. So he went to Cuba and had it healed and from there he went to New York. My aunt stayed behind to sell the practice.

PL: Do you remember being part of this experience?

RF: Only—Well, I was in Frankfurt at the time only because I happened to be there. I didn't live with him but I happened to be in Frankfurt at the time. I know that was a frightening experience. Very frightening.

PL: Why did you return to Frankfurt?

RF: I helped start a Jewish school in Frankfurt to help educate young students to immigrate to Palestine.

PL: Was that part of an organized—

RF: It was like the Jewish Federation. The Jewish community in Frankfurt funded the school, and I was in charge of the girls and Joe, who I didn't know then, was in charge of some of the gentlemen, of the young boys. It was interesting. It was called Hachshara [trans.: preparation; organization teaching youth to work fields or learn a trade in pre-state Israel]. It was an interesting experience for us.

PL: How so?

RF: I didn't, you know, I really didn't want to do it because I had no experience in this but they knew I was competent and it gave me great experiences to interact with the young people, to understand them. I taught them basics, you know, housekeeping and manners. Whatever, you know?

PL: So the goal was to help people integrate into Palestine?

RF: —to Palestine. Right.

PL: So what were some of the things that you had to teach them other than housekeeping and manners? Did you have to teach them about Palestine?

RF: Yes, of course, we did. We gave lectures—not so much [the teachers and] I as the head of the institution. We organized for all kids, to prepare them. Many of them did go to Israel. Many of them didn't, didn't make it, but the experience itself was a wonderful one.

PL: You, yourself, were you convincing yourself to go to Palestine?

RF: I wanted to. That was my goal. Absolutely.

PL: What happened?

RF: Well, the immigration, you know, the British didn't want anybody in. So I changed my mind.

PL: Your goal or your decision?

RF: Right, and went to America.

PL: Can you explain how you met your husband and when you first met him?

RF: I met him at the school. He saw me doing gymnastics with the kids and he watched me each time and I didn't even realize it, you know. He liked to watch me do gymnastics with the kids. We met in the evenings after everybody was put to bed, so to speak, and we talked. We had long talks. We'd go on hikes on Sundays, which was wonderful. It was very platonic in the beginning. He had a bike, so I would walk along the bike. In '38 we became engaged before I left for America.

PL: Can you describe the reasons for your family choosing that their children go to America and the circumstances that led up to those decisions?

RF: The reason was because they wanted to immigrate also. They wanted to get out of Germany. They had to. Of course, they couldn't unfortunately because of their high

quota number. Joe was incarcerated for four months in Buchenwald and after that, he went to England. It was called Kitchener Camp which had over a thousand young people, men, and women who were all waiting to immigrate. Some of them perhaps stayed in England.

PL: When was he apprehended? Was it while you were both at Hachshara?

RF: No. No. He was apprehended on November 9th, Kristallnacht. That's when all young Jewish men, and older ones too, were asked to come to a certain point – to a certain place in Frankfurt. The police officers asked him, "You are blond and you have blue eyes. Are you sure you're Jewish?" So Joe said, "Yes, I'm Jewish and I'm going […]." They didn't know where they were going and they ended up in Buchenwald.

PL: Were you still in Frankfurt at this time?

RF: No, I left in June, and that was a traumatic experience. His mother sent a cable to me stating—it was in German. Of course, the cable company translated. It said, "Immigration Seppel." That was his nickname—"URGENT." The cable company said, "Immigration Seattle. URGENT." I had no idea what that meant. I had never heard of "Seattle." So I cabled back that I didn't understand what it meant. So then they sent another cable, "Immigration Joseph. URGENT." I had a hunch that something happened but I didn't know what. But there were rumors flying, so I knew something very bad had happened.

PL: What prepared you personally to take the step of leaving where you grew up? What did you take? What did you think about? What were those experiences like?

RF: Leaving Germany, […] it was a most traumatic experience for both my sister and myself. To leave my parents at the railroad station. Leaving and never knowing if you would ever see them again. You know, and, of course, my Mom had such great words of wisdom always to impart to us. She would say, before we left, she said, "Children, never

go to bed angry, even if you get married. Give lots of tzedakah. Be charitable. Be kind. Don't criticize anybody's children if you have your own." She was just a very ethical, extremely ethical person. […] That was a moment I will never forget. Of course, Joe brought me to the boat in Hamburg.

PL: Tell me about that.

RF: He was born in Hamburg and his mother lived in Hamburg. So he brought me to the boat and saying goodbye to him, of course, it was almost as traumatic because we never knew if we'd see each other again.

PL: Had you fallen in love at that point? You were engaged?

RF: Yes, we were engaged. Oh yes, very much.

PL: So can you talk a little bit more about what took you from a platonic relationship to becoming engaged. You seemed to have skipped over some romance there. [laughter]

RF: Well, it just grew, you know. Love grew. We had so much in common. He liked the same cultural things, liked the same books. We had a lot of things in common. The same interests, political interests. So it was just a natural thing, I imagine. It was easy to fall in love with him.

PL: How so?

RF: Well, he was so kind and down to earth, so honest and very unassuming. Very unassuming. He's always been a sociable person. He had many qualities that I admired – that leadership. He had a beautiful voice, he always did. He learned under great cantors in Hamburg. The first time he performed Shachrit service at Rosh Hashanah was when he was 13. Not in Hamburg, in Bonn. So he was just a man you couldn't resist.

PL: Had your parents met him?

RF: Oh, yes. Yes.

PL: So what did they hope for you, given that you were leaving?

RF: They were most happy that both my sister and I were engaged. That was one of the greatest satisfactions. They knew if they did not make it that we would be taken care of. That was their concern.

PL: Today's day and age, getting engaged has certain formalities to it. Did you have formalities back then?

RF: No. There was no time for this. There was no engagement party. The natural thing, you asked your in-laws and that was it. There was really no—the mood wasn't—you know, you have to be in a certain mood. We were happy but we were sad because we had to leave.

PL: When you left, were you all aware of the militarism of the country?

RF: Oh, sure. In '38? Oh, yes.

PL: What do you remember?

RF: The Hitler Youth, the SS. You could hear them going in the streets with their boots. It was frightening, very frightening. Even when I came here, I was even afraid of the policeman because the policeman was our enemy.

PL: Did you have personal contact with the SS?

RF: No.

PL: So it was most—

RF: No, I didn't. Joe did.

PL: So tell me about your passage over to America.

RF: It was interesting. We came on the SS Washington. That was quite an experience.

PL: How so?

RF: Seasick. [laughter]

PL: Where did you sit? What was the ship like?

RF: The ship was huge, very large. It was nice. Of course, we were very concerned. We had nobody except my uncle. What would it be like in America? We didn't know the language. I knew "carpenter" Hebrew, if you know what that is. [laughter]

PL: Explain. What does that mean?

RF: It's a little bit personal – basic, you know? So we were very apprehensive, very, very frightened. When we arrived here—we came a day late—we stayed with my uncle for a few days. Our resolve of course was to bring our parents out, so we had to earn money right away. We were glorified nannies. I had no idea how to diaper a baby.

PL: Where were you? What part of the United States?

RF: I was in New York.

PL: Which part?

RF: In the Bronx. That was my first job. In the East Bronx. No wait a minute, near Grand Concourse. Those were the best months. A second job was in the East Bronx and the people were very, very nice.

PL: Were they Jewish?

RF: Yes, oh yes. I wouldn't go. They had to be kosher, you know? But it was interesting. My uncle explained to me how to take the subway. That was a frightening experience. [laughter] We didn't have a subway in Frankfurt. We had one in Hamburg. He explained to us how to get to the Bronx. Of course, you had to go downtown. I went downtown and then came an express—there was an express train. I think they told us, "You have to take the Express Train." It was an A-train. I went in and she [my sister] was left on the platform. Now, you can imagine, I have no idea where that train would stop, how would I get to see my sister again? It was one of the most frightening [laughter] experiences I went through and it didn't stop; it didn't stop, you know. Well, finally it stopped and I went out and I said, "Please, God, let her come on the next express." [laughter] Well, she was smart enough to stand where she stood and get in. After only 10, 15 minutes—I don't know if it lasted that long but it came quite frequently—she was on the train. It was a reunion as if we've never seen each other. So that was one of my early experiences.

PL: What was New York like at that time for a young girl who didn't speak English?

RF: Well, see, I had cousins there who could understand us. My uncle would speak and my aunt would speak German to us. But we were very anxious to learn the language. There was one way of learning it—to get into a family that you would be forced to speak and that's how I learned.

PL: So tell me a little bit about being a nanny. Who was the child you took care of?

RF: The child's name was Mark. He was six-months-old and I had to tell the woman that in Germany we diapered differently [laughter]. I think they did have different diapers. At that time we still had pins; here, now it's, of course, a little different. So she showed me how to do it.

PL: She paid you?

RF: Thirty-five dollars a month, which was a lot of money at the time. We saved thirty and used five to go out and buy a few things in the hope of having our parents—getting them out of Germany. We did try. We had a Cuban lawyer and an American lawyer. I don't know if you've ever heard of the boat "St Louis"? We tried to get them tickets on the St. Louis and we paid at the time. We had to borrow the money from my uncle. We paid a thousand dollars each for passage and the lawyers, which, I guess, was cheap, if you look back now. But at that time it was a lot of money. The St. Louis, of course, was overcrowded and they never made it. It's just as well because I'm sure you know the story. You heard about it? The St. Louis had a wonderful captain. He was German. He was not a Nazi. But Hitler had an agreement when St Louis would enter land in Cuba. They should refuse—Cuba should refuse to let the people off the boat and the captain begged the authorities to let the people off, but they didn't. He went to the United States, to Miami, and unfortunately President Roosevelt at the time did not permit the people to get off either, except for a few children. So they went back to Europe and of course people ended up in concentration camps.

PL: Did you know of that story at the time or in hindsight did you learn of that as an adult later?

RF: I did.

PL: Which one? Earlier or later?

RF: I'm just thinking. No, there must have been some communications between my mother and Dad because letters that we received were letters of despair because they were writing about the ship and hoping to get out, and they couldn't get out. They were still hoping to get out some other way, you know, through China or through Russia. It was just a horrid, horrid experience.

PL: The letters that your parents sent to you, they described the demise of their situation vividly.

RF: Oh, yes. As well as they could. They hinted. They couldn't write that they don't have anything to eat. They would say, "Somebody sent me some food today."

PL: I see.

RF: Because everything probably was opened and censored.

PL: What other things did you learn in those letters?

RF: Well, I learned specifically they had nothing to eat, that they were fearful of their lives all along. They had heard rumors of Jews being sent to Poland but not to concentration camps, and even then they couldn't mention the word "concentration camp."

PL: What do you remember then about the American community's response?

RF: I knew a Jewish dentist in New York and he asked me where I was from. I told him. Do you believe that he gave me an affidavit for my parents along with my uncle, of course? He was a stranger, a complete stranger. He didn't even know if I would come back to him, you know. He would give me an affidavit. He would give us an affidavit for our parents and they couldn't come because of their high quota. So, we had very little hope that they would ever be able to join us.

PL: You said earlier in the interview that this robbed you of your youth.

RF: It did.

PL: What do you mean by that?

RF: Well, you know, you want to be happy. There was this constant fear within us. We couldn't do all the things that ordinary kids do. There was the constant fear. When I was at the school in Frankfurt, the SS came and confiscated all the Jewish books so I pretended. The staff told me, "Go to your room, go to bed and hide as many as you can under your mattress"—which I did. They did come to the room but they didn't make me get out of bed. So these experiences that you have to do things in secret. You couldn't go wherever you wanted to go. You were always afraid of being attacked.

PL: In the United States how did you then deal with this sudden maturity, this anger or trauma or despair that you felt?

RF: It was very difficult. See, I was taking care of the baby but in the back of my mind, there was always the thought, "How do I get my parents out?" I used to listen to Gabriel Heater. I don't know if you—

PL: Can you spell that name, the last name?

RF: I forget how you spell it. I think it's H-E-A-T-E-R.

PL: Who was that?

RF: He was a commentator. Or Edward R. Murrow. You know him? Gabriel Heater had such a dramatic voice over the radio. There was no television. When he reported what was going on in Europe, I would shudder. I would shiver. They were frightful years for us. Very painful.

PL: Was there some joy in your life as well?

RF: At that time? No. I had my sister there. We would meet on our days—afternoons off, you know. The only thing that we would do that might be interesting. We didn't want to spend a nickel because we had to save so much money. So she also worked in the

West Bronx at the time. We would go in the subway from the Bronx to Brooklyn. Would you believe it?

PL: That's a long way.

RF: Forth and back. We would spend the afternoon, so we wouldn't have to go out and spend another nickel in order to save that money to get our parents out. These were sacrifices which we happily brought, you know. We didn't think anything of it. We wouldn't do that every free day but we did it quite often.

PL: What did you get all of that experience, seeing the city?

RF: We just felt good about it. We had another nickel in our wallet, you know? That's what the feeling was. The more money you could save, the faster we hoped we would be able to get out our parents out. It never came to fruition.

PL: What were other children of your age doing in New York at that time?

RF: I really didn't have—we weren't children anymore, you know. I was 22 when I came here. We were so preoccupied with what we had to do. Also, we had to get our brother-in-law, Joe's brother, out of Europe. He was born in Denmark. So he was on a Danish quota and we were able to get him out.

PL: How were you instrumental in getting him out?

RF: I got affidavits for him, also from strangers. The dentist gave me one, and there was a friend of theirs who lived in Baltimore, I believe, and they were helping. They were not Jewish. They were helping with an affidavit for my sister-in-law and brother-in-law. He had some money invested here with the Chase National Bank. It wasn't much. He was a moshgiach [overseer of kosher kitchen] on the boat for a couple of years during the Depression between America and Germany. So my first experience with a bank that he

sent me to was Chase Manhattan or Chase Manhattan National—or Chase National, I forget now—and speak to an officer there. That was a frightening experience to me. This big bank and my English wasn't all that good, but we did manage and we finally did get them out. They came, they went to Spain first and then came to the United States because of this low quota number, being Danish, having been born in Denmark.

PL: In terms of the communities and the neighborhoods that you lived in in Frankfurt versus in the Bronx, what was your experience meeting other immigrants? Do you remember?

RF: In the Bronx, I really didn't. The Jewish life that the people led, they weren't strictly kosher. They weren't committed Jews. They were not shomer Shabbat. They went to synagogue three times a year. My first year I spent Yom Kippur in the park with my prayer book.

PL: Which park was that?

RF: Moshula Parkway.

PL: So what happened that you wound up with your own siddur, you know?

RF: I think I cried most of the time.

PL: Why? What was going on?

RF: Because I wanted to be in shul. I'd never been outside of shul on Yom Kippur. The Zimmermans—that was their name—took me in the afternoon for Minha for an hour. But that wasn't enough for me. So that was an experience that I won't forget.

PL: The family that—

RF: I was very homesick at the time, you know—became very homesick. I wasn't actually when I came here but that day I remember the first Yom Kippur away from home made me very homesick.

PL: Was there a synagogue that you had access to in the Bronx?

RF: Young Israel. But I couldn't go because they weren't synagogue-goers and didn't appreciate that I would leave the baby. So they were very nice in that way; their Judaism was borderline.

PL: Did they strike you as being very different from your upbringing?

RF: Well, I knew of German Jews also that were peripheral, you know. I mean, there were plenty of them. They weren't all Orthodox or Conservatives. So that was nothing exceptional. Now, I also was told by my cousin by my uncle and aunt —my uncle and aunt themselves were not Orthodox Jews; they were Reformed, very Reformed. So this wasn't strange to me.

PL: There's sort of a view of German Jews often as being Jews privately but publicly German.

RF: That, I don't have the experience with. I don't know anything. Maybe I was too young to delve into it.

PL: Yes. So what happened then? How long were you in New York?

RF: We were in New York for 10 years before we came here.

PL: What happened else during those 10 years that you were there?

RF: Well, Joe was inducted into the Army on Erev Pesach in 1943.

PL: Which Army?

RF: Corps of Engineers.

PL: So take me up to the point where he left Kitchener [Camp] and then came to the United States. How did that happen?

RF: My uncle gave him an affidavit and he came on April 1st, 1940. On April 1st the New York subway had a strike. I'd like to tell you that story. The woman I worked for worked for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in Brooklyn. She had forgotten her keys that morning. She called me, "Ruth, take the baby, take a cab, bring me my keys." But the cabs were busy that day but I did get one. I brought her the key and went home with the baby. When I came home, I see a slip under the door. I opened the door, and picked up the slip. It was a telegram that "Joe arrived at Pier." […] So I fed the baby quickly, and took another cab to the pier. When I came to the pier, there was nobody around. Everybody was gone except there was a man from the HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society]. I didn't know he was from the HIAS. So he saw me pacing up and down. He said, "Who are you looking for?" I said, "I'm looking for my fiancé." I said, "You wouldn't know who he is." He said, "Maybe I do. I'm from the HIAS." So, I said, "Pardon me." "What's his name?" I said, "Joseph Frankel." "Oh, he's on Ellis Island." I said, "Ellis Island? Why on Ellis Island?" He didn't know. He gave me a number to call and I thought it was the number of HIAS. In my excitement, he said, "Find out how long they're open." So he gave me the number, so I asked him, "How long is Ellis Island open?" And the gentleman on the other line said, "Three o'clock." Well, it was almost 3:00. So I had to take the ferry, put that baby in my arm, didn't have any contraption like we have today, and went to Ellis Island for a nickel. When I came there, the officer said, "I just told you not to come here!" I said, "You? I didn't talk to you." "You asked me how long Ellis Island is open and I told you three o'clock." I said, "I'm sorry. I haven't seen my fiancé in two years. I'm not leaving and you see I have a baby here." He didn't want to call up and see if he had an interview. The reason he was sent to Ellis Island, the purser asked him where he's going and he answered, "To my uncle on 90th West." Then

the immigration officer asked him, as he left the boat, “Where are you going?” and he said, “My fiancé.” The answer was, “We don’t do this in America.” For that reason, they sent him to Ellis Island. But he had the hearing and he was on his way out. Have you been to Ellis Island? You know the many corridors?

PL: Describe them, what did they feel like at that moment?

RF: There were glass doors between the corridors, one after another after another after another. I know they did some changes there. But I saw him with his suitcase in his hand. I couldn’t holler because he couldn’t hear me. I was going so fast. I was hoping I wouldn’t trip. Finally, in the last corridor, I called his name. He looked backward and that was our reunion. It was very dramatic. [laughter]

PL: What happened then?

RF: What happened then? I took him to the people that I lived with. They were very nice and they gave him supper. I had to find a room for him. Actually, they were decent humans. They helped me to get a room for him. Joe was trained in Europe as a journeyman, and that came in very handy because it was wartime and there was a great demand for these people. So he worked as a journeyman for a while and in the evening he went to Fordham University. That was his first start. On Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur he would look through the paper and found a cantorial job. The first job was with Rabbi Schatz in Kew Gardens. I will never forget this.

PL: What was the name of the temple?

RF: I don’t remember but I will remember the name “Rabbi Schatz,” and I think he got $250, which was a lot of money.

PL: Was he called a cantor or was there another name for it?

RF: No, he was called “cantor,” but he didn’t go by “cantor” because he didn’t function as a cantor, you know. So the next year he ended up in Miami because my sister and brother-in-law were there. My brother-in-law was a rabbi there. In the third year, he was New York and I don’t remember it. I think it was Ohav Shalom. It was up in Upper Manhattan near the Park. And then, of course, he was inducted into the Army Erev Pesach.

PL: What did he look like when you saw him for the first time? How did he look?

RF: Well, he came from Kitchener Camp. When he came out of concentration camp, all his hair was shaved off. I have some pictures of that. But he looked well. You know? He looked well.

PL: How did you get on immediately? Were you dating? I mean here you both had gone through such an intense experience.

RF: Well, we were engaged.

PL: Yes.

RF: Yes. But we couldn’t get married right away.

PL: Why not?

RF: Well, because we didn’t have money. But in order for him to be drafted in ‘43, we got married suddenly in August on the suggestion of the people I worked for. They said, “You know, they’re drafting all young men. Do you want to be separated again? You’ve been separated already almost two years. And if, you know, they draft you, G-d knows how long you’re going to be away.”

PL: Hold onto your thought, Ruth. I need to change the tape.

[END OF CD 1]

PL: We're continuing with the oral history interview of Ruth Frankel. Today's date is August 7th, 2001 and this is mini-disk tape #2. So you were telling me about what led up to your decision to have a civil, marital ceremony.

RF: It kept Joe out of the Army for about two-and-a-half years. So we went to the civil court and we were married. Of course, we didn't live together. That was unheard of. We had no intention to. It kept him out until 1943.

PL: Do you remember the civil ceremony?

RF: I do because the judge said, "Clasp your hands." We, of course, didn't know what he meant. [laughter] So the lady, you know—the people that brought us there—showed us what to do [laughter]. I was embarrassed but it was okay. Right afterwards he went to his job and I went to my job.

PL: So there wasn't a lot of hullabaloo.

RF: No.

PL: Did you wear a special dress?

RF: No. No. I have to tell you. I was married in 1940. Since our parents weren't here, it was a happy event and a sad event because we had no family, immediate. Uncles and aunts and cousins but no immediate [family]. So it was, as I said, happy and both happy and sad together. We were married on a Saturday evening—Shabbat was over—at the Breuer Synagogue. I don't know if you heard about that, the Breuer Synagogue.

PL: Where is that?

RF: It's a very Orthodox synagogue up in Washington Heights, and we had about 15 people at our ceremony. Everything went over the phone. No written invitations and it was very intimate. There were a couple of young cousins and close family. Joe's cousins from Denmark—they lived in New York, the ones I stayed the night with the day that Joe was drafted. These cousins gave a lovely dinner after the ceremony, and we knew he had the order, I think, six weeks before, or something like this.

PL: Did you go to the mikveh?

RF: I did in the beginning and then I stopped because each time I came, I had to go downtown to the mikveh and each time I came home I had a cold. So I really wasn't convinced either anymore because I felt since we have modern bathtubs and showers. You know, it's a wonderful custom if you believe in it. So I stopped going.

PL: Did you go the night before your wedding?

RF: Absolutely.

PL: Can you describe that experience?

RF: Well, it was strange but it was a cleansing experience, I believe. It was something to look forward to.

PL: Where was the mikveh located in New York City?

RF: In lower Manhattan.

PL: Was it a joyful experience or was it an intimidating experience?

RF: Well, at first it was intimidating, you know? I remember, I didn't cut my fingernails and the woman cut my fingernails and that was kind of intimidating.

PL: Did the mikveh lady or the woman that was there—

RF: Yes, she was with me.

PL: What did she do for you?

RF: She just washed me.

PL: Did she dunk your head for you?

RF: I don't think so. I think I just went under. It was a strange experience but then again it was a cleansing experience.

PL: When you said that baths and showers and things like that keep a woman clean, to you did the mikveh, when you stopped going—was your decision a halachic [Jewish law] decision? Was it a customary decision? How did you make the decision to stop going?

RF: It wasn't halachic. Also, I thought it was an inconvenience for me to take the subway and we didn't belong to Breuer Synagogue. We belonged to a different synagogue. Theirs was too extreme for us. So we belonged to Ohav Shalom which had a wonderful rabbi, Ralph Neuhaus was his name, and I felt very comfortable there. So it was really a thing of convenience. I felt became a hardship.

PL: You said that—

RF: —And I didn't feel "guilty" about it. I made the decision together with Joe and he understood.

PL: Were there other ways that you had to compromise certain parts of your Judaism in America?

RF: No. I never did.

PL: When was the first time that you heard your husband—he was your husband at that point—sing in a synagogue during the high holidays?

RF: It was at Ohav Shalom Synagogue and it was in New York because I didn't go along to Miami and I didn't go along to Kew Gardens with him.

PL: Can you describe the experience of hearing him during the holidays?

RF: Well, he has a very warm, soothing, convincing voice. When he davens [prays], you feel really involved. It is not just somebody performing. It comes deep from his heart, out of his—he still sings beautifully. That's why people loved him and respected him. Because when he stood on the pulpit he just drew you along, and we felt really involved in the prayer that he would chant.

PL: So you were married in what year?

RF: Forty. 1940.

PL: You were in New York through '48?

RF: Yes. I meant to tell you, after we left the ceremony we had a dinner in the cousins' home and then we had rented a furnished room with kitchen and bathroom privileges because we couldn't afford an apartment. That was also about, I guess, $35, $40. So we had to shop every night because the fridge wasn't big enough. There was no freezer except for ice cubes. So every night, before I came home, I would stop at the butcher, you know. At that time, everybody still ate a lot of meat and my fruits and vegetables I cooked.

PL: What neighborhood was this in?

RF: It was in Washington Heights, on 161st Street.

PL: That neighborhood was very—a lot of German Jews there at the time?

RF: Yes.

PL: Can you describe that experience and your neighbors?

RF: Yes. That woman was very snoopy [laughter]. We didn't like her. She had other borders. [unclear] She had other young couples living there. You know, the apartments were huge. They had many, many bedrooms. So she had two other couples, so we were three. So you can imagine, four different parties using the kitchen and the bathroom, one bathroom? But we managed, you know. We were happy to be together and our first funny experience was when—There's a little park at 181st Street. It's not before Fort Tryon Park. It's just across from 13th Avenue and we used to walk there and sit there, and one Shabbat afternoon we were sitting there, and there were a lot of other German refugees sitting there and they were talking about finding a place to live. So this one woman says to the other, "There is no "vaGENcy, a vaGENcy, a vaGENcy." She meant "vacancy." So even so our English wasn't 100 percent, we couldn't help but laugh and correct her, you know [laughter] So these are some instances you don't like to forget. [laughter]

PL: Were there refugee communities or institutions for the German-speaking people that you affiliated with?

RF: No I didn't because we really wanted to become very Americanized, you know? I mean, we had friends, young couples, who were German. But as soon as we were able to speak English we spoke no more German. In fact, today, it would be very difficult for me to keep up a German conversation.

PL: Where did you learn your English?

RF: I really learned it here. As I said, I learned "carpenter" [basic] English in school in Germany but I learned it here with the people I lived with. That was most important to me and that was a good thing that they did this. You know, jobs were scarce and what else could I have done? I couldn't go into business because I didn't know enough business

English to communicate. So this was the only way out, and I didn't mind. I really didn't mind that.

PL: So you had an apartment in Washington Heights?

RF: Well, I had a room.

PL: A room.

RF: That lasted a year-and-a-half, actually. We moved then because the woman was so snoopy. We moved to another nice couple who only had us, rented only to us, which was nice.

PL: What were your early marital years like? What were those times like? What did you do together? What kind of expectations did you have about this marriage?

RF: Well, we had great hopes to accomplish things in America, you know. Everybody has goals and Joe, of course, went to evening school, Fordham University. I worked after we got married. Of course, I didn't take care of babies anymore. I worked in different businesses and I worked at Mignon Chocolate Factory. They used to make chocolates for Barton's Chocolates. Before Barton became their own company Mignon used to make chocolate candies and pack them in Barton boxes and that kind of was interesting. I didn't make chocolate, you know. It was interesting, and fascinating to see. But I helped them around. I helped in the office. I helped pack. It was a small company. That was a nice experience. On Friday afternoons, we were able to take candies that weren't good enough to be boxed, and Joe was looking forward [laughter] to the candy parties we had. Joe worked during the war as a journeyman, as I told you. Then after a year, or another half a year, I don't remember, we went into an apartment near Inwood.

PL: Why did you move?

RF: Because we wanted to be on our own, and I became pregnant. I had a miscarriage in my fifth month. Then, too, if you had children, babies, that would deter you from being drafted this early. So, I think I had a miscarriage, miscarried.

PL: How did you deal with the miscarriage?

RF: That was difficult. We were looking forward to the baby. We had so little family. That was very difficult to deal with. Joe would come towards me and I would break out in tears, you know. That was difficult to overcome.

PL: Was there a doctor or someone that supported—

RF: I had a doctor.

PL: Did they give you a reason for the miscarriage?

RF: No. He scolded me.

PL: Why?

RF: Would you believe it? He was not the kindest man. Oh, he claimed I did something—maybe carried heavy bags. Baloney. You don't get a miscarriage from, you know, carrying heavy bags. His name was Kleman. I'll never forget it.

PL: Can you spell his name?

RF: I think it was K-L-E-M-A-N.

PL: So did you deal with the loss of this first pregnancy on your own, with your husband? Did you talk about it?

RF: I talked about it with my uncle and aunt. They were very fond of us and they helped me overcome—and he, my uncle, treated me afterwards.

PL: Treated you how so?

RF: Well, whatever I needed; whenever I needed a doctor, I always went to him.

PL: Did you make the decision to try to get pregnant again? Soon thereafter?

RF: No. We didn't. Actually, I was hospitalized, of course, afterwards.

PL: Why was that?

RF: Well, when you have a miscarriage, you have to be scraped. So they kept you four or five days, a few days. You know, in and out.

PL: Was there anything in your family and the women in your family where you were taught about such things? Or were these things discussed or not discussed?

RF: Well, we were so young, you know. So I knew they happened. I saw it around us. But personally we didn't discuss that. My parents always hoped we would have children but I never realized that it could happen to me. So after the apartment in Inwood, when Joe was drafted, for $35 a month—and I knew I couldn't afford this on my own—we rented a studio apartment.

PL: Also in Washington Heights?

RF: 4455 Broadway. It had one large living room with a kitchen and kitchenette and a bathroom. That was enough for me and we moved in there for $35; $10 was a lot of money. You wanted to know what we did on our day off: Radio City Music Hall was our favorite at the time. Sunday mornings we would stand in line. I don't remember even how much it was. It wasn't much. So we would go there very often.

PL: Do you remember who you saw at Radio City?

RF: Yes, the Rockettes of course; that's the reason we went. But the movies—which ones I don't remember.

PL: What was the culture of New York like during these war years?

RF: Well, you could have what you wanted. You could go to theater, which we didn't go too often because we couldn't afford it? We went to occasional concerts. Once in a while to an opera but not too often once again because we couldn't afford it. But it was there. We went to Yiddish Theatre.

PL: Where did you go to the Yiddish Theater?

RF: I don't remember where it was but we saw Menasha Skulnik [laughter] umpteen times. We enjoyed that.

PL: What was it like going to the Yiddish Theater?

RF: Well, even so we didn't understand everything. The devotion and the movement and the art that goes into theater is so fascinating that you just were drawn into it, and it made you feel like at home. Even so, we didn't speak Yiddish but it was so Jewish. It was a wonderful experience.

PL: What was the relationship between German-speaking and Yiddish-speaking Jews because you almost share a similar language and yet you didn't grow up with Yiddish?

RF: I didn't. I didn't. My brother-in-law speaks, of course, perfect Yiddish. His parents were Russian. His Mom only spoke Yiddish. I don't think she ever was able to communicate in English when she came here.

PL: What were your views of Yiddish growing up? Did you hear Yiddish?

RF: I didn't hear Yiddish, and not in Frankfurt either.

PL: I guess in German the word for "Yiddish" has often been jargon.

RF: Well, we didn't in my parents' house. They would never do that. They were very broad-minded and accepting. They would never put anything down. That's what I respected from them all of my life.

PL: What about the relationships between Russian Jews and German Jews?

RF: That was great. It was great.

PL: Do you remember any differences, any connections?

RF: Well, I didn't have that much contact but I knew a Russian woman who was married to a German Jew and everybody was fascinated by her. I think there was a certain fascination about a Russian Jewess. She was pretty and cultured, very cultured, and of course we had lots of Polish friends, Polish-born friends—children of Polish friends. So, as I say, it never occurred to say, "Are you of German or Polish descent?" That was unheard of in my family—

PL: And in New York, was that similar?

RF: No, I didn't. Never. I never encountered anything of that sort. Never.

PL: What about the established German-Jewish establishment, English-speaking establishment in New York? As someone who was a refugee, a post-war—a pre-war refugee, what was your relationship with the older German-Jewish establishment in New York?

RF: I really didn't have any. Of course, we were young, you know. We came in contact with distant relatives. They struggled still. Everybody was struggling, see? Everybody was struggling except during the war.

PL: Yes. So when did your husband, when was he drafted?

RF: 1943 on Erev Pesach.

PL: What happened after that?

RF: He went to Fort Belvoir,Virginia. I saw him once there over a weekend, I went there. It was an interesting experience. I took the train to Washington, DC. It wasn't easy because soldiers were always transported. I believe I needed a permit at the time. From Washington, DC, I took the bus to Alexandria—overnight in the bus. I had my little overnight case and sat in the back of the bus. The bus didn't move. There were other passengers there. It didn't move. A guy kept looking at me, and I didn't know why—with hate, you know. I couldn't know why he was looking at me, and I got kind of uncomfortable. So after about five minutes, he came to me and he said, "Don't you know you're sitting where the blacks are sitting, supposed to sit?" So, that was a shock to me. That was really a shock to me. So I said, "I would like to sit here because I have a suitcase and I have my suitcase here." "I'm sorry, you can't sit there." So he made me move. That was my first experience.

PL: What had you heard about segregation?

RF: Well, in New York City, you have so many Blacks. I really didn't follow it that much. I knew there was segregation in the South. I never thought it could be in Washington, DC, you know. So that was my first experience.

PL: What did you decide to do? The fact that you said, "I'd like to sit here still," was that an act of defiance?

RF: It might have been because it was so strange, you know. Here I go on the subway. I sit next to a Black person. There wasn't a separation in the subway.

PL: Did that resonate at all with your own experiences?

RF: Oh, sure. Absolutely. Maybe that's why I was very angry. I was very angry, but there was nothing I could personally do about it. I remembered it was just very hurtful.

PL: So you went to visit your husband at the—

RF: Yes, he got a room for me at Mrs. Anderson's, and we spent our Shabbat together. Sunday night I went home. Sunday we went to Washington, DC. He showed me around.

PL: What is the situation of a young refugee from another war gets drafted into the American army?

RF: I think he took pride in it. He really did. Once he was in it. It was hard to say goodbye, you know. But once he was in it, he took pride in it. He was drafted. After basic training, he was shipped out to Seattle of all places. And he was here, and he called me one day. He said, "Ruthie, you have to come out here. Try to get off from your boss and try to get a permit to take the train." The train would have taken, I think, three nights and four days. So I did. I got a permit and went on the train. […] The day before I was to leave, he called me: "I'm being shipped out tomorrow to the Aleutians. I'm glad you're not on the train already." So that, of course, was one of my greatest disappointments.

PL: What was it about Seattle that he was so enthusiastic about?

RF: He was stationed in Fort Lawton and he called me before he was shipped out and he said, "If I ever come back alive, this is where I would like to live." It reminded him of Hamburg—the mountains, the water, the sunsets. He said, "You've never seen a sunset like this, and this is where we will live." He was shipped to the Aleutian Islands where he fought the Japanese there. Then somebody knew of his beautiful voice. Chaplain Lewis who was in the Air Force was stationed in Anchorage and he had him transferred to the

Air Corps and became his assistant and that made Joe very happy, of course. He was able to use his skills in music, and singing, and at the same time do his duties. They flew all over the islands to give services to the soldiers wherever they were—bringing food to them, kosher food, and it was a good experience.

PL: How long was he away for?

RF: He was away from April of ‘43 until November of ‘45.

PL: What are you doing—

RF: I saw him once. In 1945, he had a six-week furlough and he came to New York. We went for a week to Lakewood, New Jersey. There was a couple that rented out rooms. So we went for a week to Lakewood, New Jersey, and the couple had a daughter who was married to a rabbi, Rabbi Oles, who became rabbi at Temple Beth Am. It was so interesting. It’s a small world. I remember they had two girls and one of the girls was very friendly with our daughter. At the end of the furlough, the European war was finished. Of course, there was a ticker-tape parade in New York City, and he had to go back to Alaska, to Anchorage. But the Pacific war was still on. So, when he came home in November.

PL: I’d like to get a sense of what it is that you are doing with your time while he’s away, and also about what is the news that’s coming in about your family and his family. So what are you doing during this period of time?

RF: During this period, I listened to every radio commentator and I was also heavy-hearted. Always worried—“Would he come home?” “Would he not come home?” “Would I get to see my parents eventually?”—because I didn’t know what was happening. We heard rumors they were being sent to Poland. Then after being sent to Poland, maybe they’d arrive. We didn’t hear about the concentration camps.

PL: Until when?

RF: Until maybe after the war. They were rumors. Again, we were admiring Roosevelt. He had such charisma, such a beautiful speaking voice. I would never miss one of his talks, would never miss it for anything because he just was so charismatic.

PL: Are you talking about his Fireside Chats?

RF: Yes. And the fact that he was paralyzed and, you know—we didn't know 'til after the war that Morgenstern at the time asked him to bomb the railroad tracks and he outright refused and said, "We need the bombs for other things." He could have done it very easily. We didn't know all these things. So they were difficult years. They were not happy years for me, the war years.

PL: As the wife of a serviceman, were you getting a check? Was he sending money home?

RF: I did. I tried to remember how much it was. I thought—if I think about it—maybe it was $50 a month for a check.

PL: Were you friends with other women who were in the same situation?

RF: Yes, and that helped, yes. As a matter of fact, one of my friends always came over to sleep. You know, it's interesting, out of frustration often when I was alone, there was a department store, Wertheim—

PL: Spell that?

RF: —Wertheim: W-E-R-T-H-E-I-M. When you're desperate, you know, you shop. I didn't have much money to shop but even an apron or a blouse would make me happy. So I got quite a collection of aprons and blouses over the period. [laughter] But that's a sideline. But I have to tell you something interesting. Joe would call me every Sunday

from Anchorage. I couldn't get a phone in New York during the war. So I wasn't on the phone. But there was a phone at the entrance of the building. He could never tell me when, what time, he would call. He would say, "Between 10:00"—it could be 8:00 at night. So what did I do? I would make lunch. I would take my knitting or sewing or writing and I'd sit in the lobby until he would call. It was only a one-way phone. So when he was finished, he would click over and I would talk, which wasn't always convenient as today. But the fact that I heard his voice, that's all that mattered. So that was my bored Sundays.

PL: I understand you also worked during this time. Did you work at the Wholesale Leather Company?

RF: Yes, I did that, too.

PL: What was that?

RF: They made—what did they make?—luggage, briefcases. And I worked in the office there. I was promoted to the office, which meant I typed. I learned how to type in school, and that was very nice

PL: Who else worked? Was there a lot of women, given that so many men were away?

RF: I think I was the only one.

PL: Where was this job? What part of New York?

RF: It was 42nd [Street]—

PL: Why did you get that job?

RF: —and Fifth Avenue. Why did I get it? I don't know. I looked through the ads in the papers.

PL: Did you need the extra money?

RF: I needed to work during the war. I could not afford to go to school. Oh sure.

PL: Why so?

RF: I couldn't live on $50 and what should I do? It [not to work] would be terribly boring, and working would make me forget. They say you forget all your tsuris [troubles].

PL: Were there other ways for women to become involved in the war effort?

RF: I'm sure they did but I didn't have time for that. Many of them became involved during the war, you know—

PL: So at what point did Joe return to your home?

RF: In November [1945], a Friday evening, from Fort Dix. He got stuck in a tunnel. I was waiting and waiting and waiting on Shabbat. He didn't come and I waited all day. Finally, I forgot what time he came. I have something else. You know, he kept kosher as much as he could. So the only thing he ate was the kosher salamis that they got and eggs and potatoes and tuna fish and fish. You know, it was hard for him. He put on a lot of weight. When he came home, he was 175 pounds which was a lot for him.

PL: How did you make do Jewishly during the war? Did you still continue to observe?

RF: Oh, yes. Oh yes.

PL: Did you go to family or—

RF: I went to synagogue. I have a lot of friends in the area too. I went to my cousin's. They were closest to me. And since my uncle didn't observe and he was too far away, I didn't take the subway on Shabbat. I went mostly to Joe's cousin's.

PL: At what point did the two of you make the decision to move to Seattle?

RF: Well, his wish was always, but we couldn't right away. So after the war, everybody was supposed to have gotten their jobs back but he didn't. So his cousin from Denmark had a jewelry wholesale business and much of the jewelry was hand-hammered, handmade. So he suggested to Joe to come into his business and learn how to hammer silver jewelry and then, you know, they would go from there. Well, Joe took the offer but he didn't make much money. And in '47, I became pregnant. No—yes, 1947. No, in '46, I became pregnant and in '47 our daughter was born in May. And Joe said, "You know, we can't go on like this. You can't live on what I'm making at my cousin's. I think we'll move." In New York, there was a tremendous apartment shortage. We lived back then in that studio which was not very pleasant, and it was hot. So we decided—and you were able to sell, which I still don't understand, sell your apartment to somebody else. It's the strangest thing. So we sold the apartment for $250 to another Jewish couple and then another $100 or $150 for our furniture and we packed everything we had and went by train. It was a beautiful ride, first-class because we had the baby. We came to Seattle. Had no job offering, but he knew since he was trained as a journeyman he could find something.

PL: I want to get back to you and we'll pick up next time, I think, in Seattle. But I want to ask a little bit about the birth of your daughter. This is following a long time apart and a miscarriage. What was that experience like being pregnant for you, having a baby?

RF: It was the most happy experience. Of course, I was very cautious and careful. But I did work. I worked 'til the day before I delivered Betsy. It was the most happy experience.

PL: Where did you deliver her?

RF: Seidenham Hospital. It doesn't exist anymore.

PL: Where was it?

RF: It was on the borderline between Harlem and Manhattan.

PL: Did you have any prenatal care or a doctor?

RF: Oh, yes.

PL: What was that like?

RF: Yes, and I did natural childbirth, which was unheard of.

PL: Really? Why? Tell me about that.

RF: The doctor was fabulous. I'm trying to think of his name and I can't.

PL: We can fill it in if you remember it later.

RF: Right. He gave me exercises to do and he said, "If you do them religiously, I can deliver natural." I was a little afraid of it, you know. I walk into Fort Tryon Park Shabbat afternoon with Joe and I had a backache. So I said, "Gee, I don't know. I hurt so much today." Because Friday before, I saw the doctor and he said I still have two weeks. I didn't think about giving birth. After Shabbat, I took a shower, washed my hair. I'm in the shower, I get pains every 10 minutes, so I said, "My God." So I quickly came out of the shower, dried my hair, called my doctor and I said, "I think I'm in labor." He said, "What?" He kept me on the phone. He said, "You are. Take a cab. Come to Seidenham." Before I came there, he was there, and that was 12:00 and she was delivered at 5:00 in the morning.

PL: You said he prescribed exercises. Can you describe what kind of exercises they were?

RF: Well, I remember, I had to sit a lot on the floor [laughter], and that's the only part I remember.

PL: Were they stretching?

RF: —and strengthening and stretching exercises.

PL: Did your husband participate in this prenatal experience?

RF: No. Well, he saw me exercise. But, you know, men did not learn to deliver. In fact, when he asked the doctor, "How long do you think it'll take?" because he was scheduled to collect for Jewish Federation from door-to-door that morning, Sunday morning. So he said to the doctor, "Do you think I could go out and collect money this morning?" He said, "You never know how long it takes. You go ahead." So he left me there and collected for Jewish Federation [laughter] and when he came back, I had delivered. [laughter]

PL: Did he feel sad that he wasn't there?

RF: Well, he couldn't have been in the delivery room, but he was sad that he wasn't there at the moment, you know.

PL: Upon reflection, if you could have had him in the delivery room, would you have wanted him there?

RF: I'm not sure at the time, you know. Things were so different.

PL: What was natural childbirth like and why is it that women were not encouraged to do it back then?

RF: It was great. Of course, having the doctor right next to me and help me push, you know, I wasn't afraid at all. I knew he was there. It wasn't just a nurse. He was there for

me and he really helped me push.

PL: Did he describe to you what the benefits of natural childbirth were?

RF: Yes, he did. He did

PL: What do you recall?

RF: Well it was better for the baby, and that's what I mostly recall. It was more helpful to the baby, natural childbirth. There was no cutting, no tearing.

PL: Explain further.

RF: Well, you know, often you tear and you can't sit afterwards. So it was beautiful.

PL: Did they talk about breastfeeding?

RF: They didn't encourage it that much. He encouraged me a little bit but I couldn't. I tried, but I really couldn't.

PL: In terms of your stay in the hospital, how long were you there?

RF: Ten days I stayed in the hospital. That's how long they kept women in bed, only dangling your feet. When I came home, I was so weak because, you know, staying in bed for 10 days, it's a long time.

PL: Do you understand why they required that?

RF: That was the rule of the game at the time, for everyone. If you had any surgery, you were kept at least 10 days.

PL: Did you have insurance or did you pay outright?

RF: No. I paid outright.

PL: Do you remember what it cost for the whole stay?

RF: In the hospital? No. I only remember it was $250 for the delivery. That was probably a lot of money.

PL: In Jewish tradition or in custom, or minhag, you didn't have a boy, so there was no Bris.

RF: Baby Naming?

PL: Yes.

RF: No.

PL: Would and how did you decide to name her "Betsy."

RF: Her real name, her official name, is Elizabeth, after my Mom. She was named after my Mom.

PL: What is your mother's name?

RF: Elizabeth. But her call name was Betsy.

PL: So at this point, you knew that your mother was no longer alive?

RF: Oh, yes. In '47, of course, we knew they had passed away; that they killed her in the concentration camp. We knew that right after the war. We found out through the Red Cross and through letters of other people.

PL: Can you describe your experiences of early motherhood? I'm talking about before you left for Seattle. What do you remember about those initial stages?

RF: It was beautiful. I guess we had diaper service for the first few weeks then we couldn't afford it any more, so, I had bought diapers. Every night, I had a large, huge pot. I would sterilize the diapers on the top of my stove. I wouldn't dare to bring them to the washing machine in the house where everybody else's wash would be done. So, I had to sterilize bottles which I did every night. It was a full-time job having a baby.

PL: How did you and your husband immediately negotiate this new life? How did you share the responsibilities?

RF: It came natural. Because he was working, so he didn't. He was going to school at nights, except for pushing the buggy on Sundays, you know? It wasn't that he had to. Making her fall asleep at nights. She was a very poor sleeper. It was so hot in New York, we had a huge fan on a huge stand that made terrible noise. There was no such thing as a noiseless fan. That didn't help so we would often take the carriage and go up on the roof and sit there for a couple of hours and wheel her to sleep because she just couldn't fall asleep and eat.

PL: I think that we'll stop here, and we'll pick up next time I come back. Thank you Ruth.

RF: Okay. [break in tape]

PL: We are continuing with the oral history interview of Ruth Frankel. Today's date is August the 15th. The year is 2001. This is Pamela Brown Lavitt, oral Historian for the Jewish Women's Archive's "Weaving Women's Words" Project in Seattle. I'm very happy to see you again, Ruth.

RF: Thank you.

PL: Why did he bring you up to Seattle? Can you tell me your decisions? And how you came to Seattle, and when?

RF: We arrived in Seattle in 1948. One of the reasons was that Joe could not find satisfactory work in New York City. And he decided the West Coast probably would be better to find what he was looking for. I think I told you that he was trained as a machine shop operator in Europe because college was not open to us any more as Jews. This actually was a great relief and help for us because he was able to really find work immediately when he arrived in New York City. But after the war it was more difficult because the boom of preparing for war, of course, was over. The war was thankfully won and there was lots of unemployment. So he decided in 1948, "Let's pack up and go to Seattle." That's where he was stationed, and he left the city before he shipped out to Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. So, that's what we did. We packed up. We bought a first-class train ticket. Our daughter was a year old. We took our belongings – packed them up or had them packed up, I don't quite recall. We left Sunday afternoon, and arrived here Wednesday morning. It was a nice trip. We saw the country. And Betsy had fun walking through the train with her Dad. However, there was apprehension, you know? He had no outlook for a job what I'm saying. He just felt this was a City where he could find work. We arrived on June 1st, and I think within a few days he found a job at the Bremerton Shipyard. But before he did all this, since he was a war veteran and wanted to continue his college degree. He enrolled at Seattle University. The reason was that it was close to where we had lived. Because we didn't have a car. So he was able to take the bus after work to Seattle U., and then come home after wards by bus again. So, there was no hardship as far as transportation was concerned. He worked at the Bremerton Shipyard for about a half a year. He got up early in the morning at 4:00 o'clock. Took the bus to the pier then he had to take the ferry. But he was young and he didn't mind. It was just a matter of fact for him.

PL: And for you?

RF: And for me.

PL: What was going on for you?

RF: Well I had Betsy. I took care of her. I prepared dinner late for him, because he went to evening school. The first Rosh Hashanah we were here somebody heard him sing somewhere, I don't exactly remember where, he got a job in Centralia. There was a lovely congregation there. So, he went there with another friend of his. Joe davened Musaf [Service on Rosh Hashanah], and he gave the sermons, and his friend davened Shachrit. And when yontif [holiday] was over, someone had a relative in Centralia that lived in Seattle, and they were members of Herzl Synagogue, and they told the board, "You have to get this fellow. He has a terrific voice"—Joe wasn't actually looking for a cantorial job yet—"But you have to get a hold of him," and they did. So, Herzl engaged him as their cantor. So, immediately after that, he gave up the Bremerton Shipyard job. He was able to go to school full-time under the G.I. Bill of Rights which made it much easier. A year later the Rabbi who was then there, asked Joe if he would help him start a three-day a week Hebrew School. Joe, of course, was very enthusiastic about that because he had a terrific Hebrew background. The two of them started a three-day-a-week Hebrew School. It wasn't an easy matter. They had coffee klatches in the afternoon to convince parents to send their eight-year-olds three-days-a-week in the afternoon after regular school to a Hebrew School. Yet, they were able to accomplish it.

PL: I'd like to return to the Hebrew School because, I know at some point that you started teaching there. But, I just want to remind you this is your oral history. And though you are extremely proud of everything that Joe's done and were a part of everything that he's done, but I want to go back a little and ask you about your experiences and impressions and feelings about moving to Seattle—and what you remember about Seattle at that time and what neighborhood you lived in? All those things.

RF: I was very apprehensive about going, because you know, you go somewhere where you don't know anybody […]. But that was not the reason we came here. So, we were apprehensive. But they did find an apartment for us. Seattle at that time wouldn't take any children into apartments. Of course, coming from New York there is no such law. This was so strange to us. We were very, very unhappy. My brother-in-law did find an apartment for us which was such a disappointment. When we came in there I told Joe, "I want to go back to New York." It was really a—it was a great disappointment. Not that we lived in luxury in New York. So he convinced me, "We can fix it up. We can wallpaper it. We can do anything to make it livable." Which we did. A week after we moved in, I went looking for another apartment. The minute people saw me coming with the stroller, they said, "If it is for you, we don't take children."

PL: What neighborhood are you—

RF: That was on Capitol Hill. But that may have been anywhere within Seattle. They just did not permit babies or children into apartments. So I jumped a little bit ahead. We lived there for five years. One of our congregants was building a court, also on Capitol Hill, and Joe asked him, "Mr. Schifrin, would you take us and Betsy?" He said, "You have first choice when you get there, when the building is finished." That was such a relief. It was such a beautiful court, and we moved in after she finished kindergarten.

PL: Where did friends that you knew—or people that you met—with children live if they weren't taken into apartments?

RF: In homes. It was called the Schifrin Apartments at the time.

PL: What streets was that on?

RF: That was on 12th [Avenue East and John Street]. They did take children [in our 19th Avenue East building] then, so a lot of young refugees that arrived were in this building. It had two stories, maybe 10 apartments. It wasn't a very large building. But,

of course, we made some friends, and then the apartments became more bearable. You know you're not alone there. But you kept on looking and looking until Mr. Schifrin finally finished his apartment project and we were able to move.

PL: What were your impressions of Seattle? Were their particular landmarks that stood out or about the city, or comparisons to New York that you were making in your mind?

RF: Well, when we first moved here everything moved so terribly slow. In New York City you rushed. You rush even if you know the train comes a minute or two later, you still, when you hear it, you go run and catch it. And, [laughter] when I came here, everything was moving so slow. People walked slow. In New York, we ran, we walked fast and the cultural aspect of that time made a big difference. Even so, we didn't have much money, but we did have occasion to go to theater and concerts. Seattle did have a symphony, and we did go. Theater was, in the beginning, you know it was '48. There were a few theaters there. But the [Seattle] Repertory Theater, the ACT [A Contemporary Theatre], didn't exist. The Intiman [Theater] wasn't there. You know, the big theaters and, I don't believe the opera. There was no opera house. No, the opera house was built after the World's Fair. So, that, yes, I miss terribly. Also, there was no Jewish delicatessen, no Jewish restaurant. How can a city of that size have no place to eat and go to grab a sandwich, a corn beef sandwich? That was unheard of and that was disappointing. There were little things, you know. If you think back, you can make your own sandwich but it's not the same. [laughter] It took a while to get used to these changes.

PL: What do you remember of your interactions with Jews and non-Jews?

RF: We really didn't. Where we lived, the building was only occupied by Jews. And when we moved to 12th Avenue on Capitol Hill. It had a number of non-Jews, and they interacted wonderfully. There was no problem. There were other children too then. The Rivkins didn't have that policy, "We don't take children." It was a garden apartment.

So, you know, it was no problem at all. So, we had no problem. And also, meanwhile Joe had started school. He made a lot of non-Jewish friends at college. So we often had them over and we've had no problem with that.

PL: Compared to New York how did Seattle respond to its Jewish population? Were the people or the friends that you made sensitive to your similarities and differences?

RF: They did. They did. Do you mean non-Jewish friends, or not? Jewish friends we had no problem with at all. The others, I don't think that ever became a problem. We met a lot through the synagogue, of course. We met a lot of young couples and that was a big help. Then we met a lot of European couples too which bonded us in a different way, you know? It's very difficult when you come to a new city to break into circles and so you create your own circle, you know? But through the synagogue we had wonderful, made wonderful, friendships.

PL: Which synagogue? And when did you start being involved in a particular synagogue?

RF: It was at Herzl at that time. At Herzl Synagogue in '48. We started there in—I think it was '49—'49.

PL: So, your first year did you attend any synagogues?

RF: Yes. Joe went to Bikur Cholim.

PL: What was that like?

RF: I didn't go because we lived over a half-an-hour away, and I had Betsy and she couldn't walk yet, you know. You couldn't push the carriage, the stroller. So Joe went Shabbat morning and Friday night to Bikur Cholim. But he was brought up Orthodox and I was brought up Orthodox, so that wasn't a strange thing. In fact, in New York City,

we went to an Orthodox synagogue. When we joined Herzl, Herzl was very right wing, and that pleased us very much, because except for men and women sitting together, the service was strictly, I would say, Orthodox or Conservative like on the East Coast. Because the East Coast Conservative movement at that time was really leaning more towards Orthodox than here later on. Here we became more modernized, more left wing.

PL: Can you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by "right wing"?

RF: When I say, "right-wing," I mean, really Conservative.

PL: Specifically, what does that include?

RF: Well, they didn't leave any of the important prayers out. We still read the whole Torah, which later on we didn't. We had a three-year-cycle.

PL: Why did that change Ruth? From one to three years?

RF: Well, it takes a long time to read Torah, you know? Then, you become—you get a different rabbi. Different rabbi's have different ideas and the seminary, I think, at the time—Jewish Theological Seminary—at the time suggested to try a three-year cycle. So you read one-third of each portion one year. The second year, you read the second-third and the third year, the third-third part. So that's what they instituted. That's what I mean. They did actually everything that the Orthodox would do except have men and women sit together.

PL: You said that there were certain things that Herzl eased up on over the course of time that you've been there. Can you give us a sense of how you think it's changed with regard to these more traditional, original, more Orthodox ideals?

RF: It was important for them to ease up, to attract younger people. There was no happy medium, except Orthodoxy and Conservative or Reform. So, in order to attract a lot of young people, which they needed to do at that time, they had to ease up. As I said, with each rabbi—we did change a lot of rabbis at that time.

PL: What time was that? What year?

RF: In the '50's and '60's. Herzl, for some reason, couldn't retain their rabbi's. It wasn't a good marriage each time. [laughter] You know? So, in fact, there was one year when there was no rabbi. Again, Joe was on the pulpit giving sermons and conducting services. He introduced the bat mitzvah at Herzl.

PL: What year was that?

RF: I don't recall the year.

PL: Do you remember the conversations about it? Was it his idea? Or was it a communal idea?

RF: No, it was really his idea and then he brought it up to the Board. Because, again, he needed to, he wanted to attract people and it really went over wonderfully. We had bat mitzvah services Friday nights instead of Shabbat morning. The young women conducted the Friday evening service and then the Haftorah portion Friday night. And afterward they had a very simple cookie and cake reception. If I think about it, it was really beautiful. It didn't become a wedding reception, like in many cases later on. It still does happen. It was a simple, down-to-earth ceremony for the child and for the family and friends. Very successful.

PL: Do you feel that the bar mitzvah and the bat mitzvah were parallel ceremonies? Or, were they viewed differently by you and your husband or the congregation?

RF: No, they weren't viewed differently by me and my husband but I think the congregation today view it differently because the girls, as I said, had it Friday night for some reason. Today, that has changed, of course. Girls have their ceremony Saturday morning, just like the boys. They read out of the Torah.

PL: Why do you think the decision was made? And how did it reflect the values of the congregation that the girls went to on Friday night?

RF: You know, there was no—we didn't speak about equality. We didn't think about equality at the time. It was something that you introduced. Probably, maybe you didn't want to interfere with Saturday morning. I really don't know. There was no question about it. "It should be Friday night" because the equality part didn't play a role; nobody talked about this. It wasn't even a conversation piece. So that was the reason that we started that, I believe, Friday night. Also, to attract more people to shul, you know?

PL: When did Herzl read the parsha? Friday, or Saturday?

RF: No. As a synagogue? No. Always Saturday morning. But the girls did it Friday night, and of course the next morning it was read again – not by the girls but regularly by whoever was given the honor of the Haftorah reading.

PL: How else have you seen Herzl change over time?

RF: Well there have been many changes to the better. Some—this is my personal opinion—better for Herzl, in my personal opinion. I don't have to agree with everything that they have so-called "improved." Women's equality plays big role, which is wonderful. Women play a big part. Today they wear tallit [prayer shawl] and kippah [skull cap] in synagogue. That's one thing I don't agree with because, I feel, even though we are equal, we do not have to do everything that men do. It's just there is a difference between men and women. [laughter] Why not keep it that way, as far as the ceremonial part is concerned. So, that's my opinion. To have women wear a tallit and a kippah? To

wear a hat is fine. But I can't see the kippot son the women. But that's my personal opinion.

[END OF CD 2]

PL: We are continuing with the oral history interview of Ruth Frankel. Today's date is August the 15th, 2001, and this is mini-disk tape #3. So we were talking about changes, and you talked about women wearing tallit, but it was okay to wear kippot. I was wondering, what that difference is in your mind?

RF: No, I said—

PL: Oh.

RF: —I don't like them to wear kippot. I like them to wear hats.

PL: Hats. My apologies.

RF: That's all right. Or a little veil, whatever, to cover their heads, but not the kippah.

PL: But women are wearing—?

RF: —Kippot, right.

PL: Having talked to many of the women in your congregation, what is the impetus behind that?

RF: I really don't know. They just want to do what the men do, I guess.

PL: Have you, yourself, participated in any women's centered organizations or rituals, or ceremonies pertaining to synagogue?

RF: Well, I would not go. I would not want to be called to the Torah [laughter], because I feel it's a man's thing to do. It's an honor to be called to the Torah. I think it's – perhaps I'm from the "old school," but I know a lot of women at the synagogue who feel the same way. You know sometimes I think because, in my younger days, I had the European upbringing and it has really nothing to do with that. It's an attitude and it's a feeling, an inner feeling that I feel. There is something that I want men to do that's different than what we do. I admire anybody that wants to do it but I personally couldn't.

PL: Your Hebrew training though, would have—you read Hebrew?

RF: Yes.

PL: —Gives you the ability to go and get up on the bimah [stage].

RF: Oh sure, absolutely.

PL: So what's that fundamental difference?

RF: Well, that isn't the point, you know? That has nothing to do with your background. I just feel that this is not my position to be there.

PL: You've been involved in other ways in the synagogue. Maybe you can start from your initial involvement with the synagogue. Was that when your husband became the official cantor. Did you take a role as well?

RF: I was always a member of sisterhood. I didn't become involved before Betsy went to school – that was when she was six years old. I taught Sunday school at the time. And I was active in Sisterhood – always was an active member. And when she became eight and entered a three-day-a-week Hebrew School, I started teaching Hebrew school, and enjoyed it immensely. I was a very active member within the sisterhood movement.

PL: Let's talk about that sisterhood movement.

RF: I was Torah Fund Chairman for many, many years. We did Purim seudas [banquets].

PL: Can you describe what that means?

RF: A Purim seuda is a beautiful thing that you do on Purim Day. [The Megillah tells us to celebrate the Maccabees' victory over Haman.] We had, at one time, 450 people attend. We had to turn away people from the seuda. Sisterhood women and men prepared and cooked the dinner. Our USY boys and girls would serve the dinner and, it was a very jolly and happy evening. This was one of the projects that I was very active in. We had Hanukah latke [potato pancake] parties, of course, where the older women grated latkes on the four-way grater. We didn't have a Cuisinart then. This is a labor of love. They loved to do it and it was just beautiful. We had Purim carnivals. We would decorate the social hall. Have booths, individual booths, which we organized. The men would set up and help us and children would come the next morning and have fun. I was very involved within the synagogue always. Of course I was very involved in the Hebrew School because they didn't have a secretary. My husband was principal of the Hebrew school. So, all the secretarial work fell on me at home, which I love to do. I loved to help him. We set up curricula together and I did not get paid for that. It was volunteer.

PL: Did it ever enter your mind that that could have been a paid position?

RF: Yes, but I had such enthusiasm, a love for Jewish education, that it never occurred to me to ask for money. I was strictly a volunteer because I just loved it. That took a lot of my time.

PL: How did you juggle being a mother and doing this?

RF: I did it at home. You know? Betsy, of course, was in first grade, second grade, you know? She went to school. So I did have time. I did the typing for him. And, we

just—we worked all summer. As I said, we had no secretary. We worked all summer to prepare for the opening in fall. Today, the school has a school secretary, a typist, and you name it and they have it, you know? They have Xerox machines. We did it on—what do you call it when you type?

PL: Carbon copies?

RF: Carbon copies, you know? And it had to be done a few times. [laughter] Because how many carbons can you put in there?

PL: Were you always patient? Or, did you ever get frustrated?

RF: No. I loved to do it. I was pretty patient.

PL: What kind of values or your own aspirations influenced your participation with the synagogue and the sisterhood?

RF: It was a total devotion to Judaism—total immersion into Judaism, that was my part. I felt, you know, I have to do this to educate the young people. It was total commitment.

PL: The relationship of men, vis-à-vis women in your synagogue and in your mind, what was that? What was the role that sisterhood played in the Synagogue?

RF: But again, they raised funds for the synagogue. That was one of the—We raised funds for scholarships, for camp scholarships. We sent children to Camp Ramah for instance. We gave scholarships. The Synagogue paid the rest but the Sisterhood would raise half of it. We raised funds for our library, which we started at the synagogue and it was a natural thing. There was no questions asked. It came so natural. We had some wonderfully committed men and women there. They were really very helpful in every direction. The school board chairman, one school board chairman in particular was Frances Klatzker.

PL: Please spell the last name.

RF: K-L-A-T-Z-K-E-R. She was loyal, very loyal, and committed—really, really committed. Not many people are able to carry out what you ask them to. But you could ask her anything and she would follow through, and so was her husband Bert. We had other chairmen but she was exceptional, I must say.

PL: Comparing your American Judaism to European Judaism, how did you adjust? Or what are the things that you had to adjust to? Purim carnivals and all these kinds of things, was this an American phenomenon? Because I know that in German, there are many carnivals.

RF: As I said I was really too young here. I mean I was [young], and through the Hitler years, I told you once, we were robbed of our youth. We had to grow up fast, real fast. I didn't have the occasion to attend a Purim carnival. I don't think it was the custom of the synagogue to do that. The synagogue was not directly connected with the school. See, the reason we had this was because of the school. Hebrew schools were separate from synagogue. They were state schools. They were supported by the state just like any other school.

PL: So, when you started working for the Hebrew School, were you then paid?

RF: Yes.

PL: What led you to start teaching? What did you have to teach in order to do what you did?

RF: I taught Hebrew. I taught the sidra of the week, every week. I had second-grade Hebrew – that was the "Bet class." It was the fourth grade in public school and children love to learn. Third- and fourth-graders are a wonderful age to have. They just love, and are eager to learn new things. So, it was a real pleasure, a satisfaction to instill in

these children—first of all, your own personal commitments, and they were very receptive to this. I think when you teach, you really have to have a personal commitment in order to have any kind of influence on children. I must say, I certainly had the commitment. We did beautiful things with them. Later on, when we moved here to Mercer Island, I had twice-a-month Hebrew-school children in my class come for dinner Friday nights, and we invited the parents for dessert. we didn't have more than three or four at the time because that's all we wanted and because we wanted to enjoy them. I didn't invite them before they knew how to say Birkat. I taught them Birkat Hamazon [grace after meals]. Before this, we could sing a few zmirot [songs]. And then they were able to come here. They could hardly wait. They would say, "Mrs. Frankel, when can we come for dinner? When can we come for dinner?" We also made it a fun evening. Joe would sit on the floor with them and play some games after we sang zmirot. It was a wonderful experience for them to see a kiddush [prayer over the wine] because many of them have never seen a kiddush at home or light candles. Many mothers just don't do it. So after they went to our home quite a few convinced their moms to light candles and encouraged their dads to make kiddush. In fact, they talked to the parents often, and said, "If you don't want to make the kiddush, let your child make the kiddush. But let him do it." We convinced many of the parents to really have a Friday evening at home. That was a great satisfaction to us.

PL: Well, that was my next question which is—this is a very strong role you're playing, as a woman—and, I'm wondering, in public worship, or private worship. I'm wondering if you can elaborate on the importance of having your students in class and then inviting them into your home and what your role was, and the rewards and satisfactions that you got from doing this?

RF: Well, the reward and satisfaction were that they carried on later on at home, most of them and, they still talk about it. I see parents coming up to me, today, and saying, "I'll never forget your Friday evening dessert in your house." We still do kiddush. That

means a lot. That was so rewarding, that you did have that influence. The experience that the children went through was an experience I never had before. You cannot teach Hebrew School and talk about a kiddush. I taught them how to make it. I brought challah to school, and I brought a challah cover to school. It's not the same. It's not Friday night, you know? So they had to experience this in order to appreciate it—and appreciate it they did.

PL: Was this an extension, in any way, of your role, as the cantor's significant other? Or, was this an independent role?

RF: No, that had nothing to do with that at all. It was our idea to really—if you want to have an impact, and you want to really impress children of what this is all about, you have to show them what it is like. The only way to show them—when I ask the kids maybe out of—you have a big class, it's 20—maybe one or two would have kiddush at home. But I'd ask them, "Why?" "Oh, my Mom is too busy" and "My brother does this"—baseball or basketball, who knows what. There were too many activities, of course, you know? Just overlooked doing this. Well, I feel that we have such beautiful ceremonies and it is so important to Judaism to keep this up. I brought my Hanukah oil menorah to school to show them. I said, "You know you don't have to use an oil menorah." We made menorahs in school for them to use. To light the candles. You know? So, I think the practical way is always the way. It sits with you. You don't forget.

PL: You taught from 1950 to almost 1981?

RF: Right.

PL: Almost a thirty-one-year period of time.

RF: Right, right.

PL: Can you talk about how you witnessed changes in the curriculum for Hebrew school? And the need for it within the congregation?

RF: See, I don't know what the group may know. I don't think—I shouldn't say because I really don't know. You see when you have a three-day-a-week Hebrew School, you are limited in what you can teach. In second-grade Hebrew, it's still a beginner's class; they knew perfectly how to read. There isn't really much change except to the Hebrew language and you're not able to really teach the Hebrew language in a three-day school. You can learn a few sentences. But you cannot incorporate teaching Hebrew and language and Bible and history. It just doesn't work in six hours.

PL: Did you comprise the curriculum? Or was that state-wide?

RF: No, we followed the Conservative movement curriculum.

PL: Did you have any training, Ruth? Or did you have any mentors?

RF: Teaching? I have no teaching training, but I have the background. I didn't really want to teach because I always felt I'm not a teacher. But everybody said, "You can give. You have devotion and commitment" And I enjoyed it, so they—

PL: Did you watch yourself grow into this role?

RF: Oh yes. You see, I taught first only Sundays – that was the beginning and I started to love it then. Again, I loved fourth-graders because they already went through Aleph which is the basics of Hebrew. So you continue on that. It was so rewarding to see them grow and improve. I'd get something that no one else did at the time. You have bright children. You have slow children. You have children with other problems. So within my own room, I divided my class into two. The very bright ones I was able to work with on a much faster track, and, the slow ones I catered to because they needed extra help. So, I asked for an assistant to help me. He was a student, and it was a great help to help

them along. This way I didn't cheat the bright ones and the slower ones got their fair due. I don't think many other teachers did that. Not everybody believes in a track system, but I thought it was only fair to the kids. I didn't want them to get bored at all. So that was my idea.

PL: That extension, how did your home—or in terms of more "domestic religion"— reflect the values and the things that were important to you about Judaism? Did you keep a kosher home?

RF: Always. I didn't know anything else. I never could not have a kosher home. I was brought up that way. Of course all the Yom Tovim we strictly observed. That was so ingrained in us, and me, that I couldn't have done it any other way.

PL: In what other ways was your home a Jewish home?

RF: Well, of course, you know you give a lot of charity, a lot of tzedakah. You do volunteer work. You do good for others. I used to go to Veterans Hospital every Monday and spend a day reading to them. To put them in their wheelchairs. To write letters for them. This was a great satisfaction for me. I loved to do it. I worked for the Council of Jewish Women in the '50s, '60s—it was in the beginning.

PL: In what capacity?

RF: At that time the Council was an entirely different organization. It was probably the intra-state stage. We sold stationery. So that's what I did, sold stationery for Council.

PL: What was the stationery like? Or what was the purpose was raising money?

RF: Oh, I guess the purpose of money was—of course, Council had done such wonderful things to help the organization function.

PL: Would you go door-to-door?

RF: Well, we did it by phone, over the phone and it was successful. But later on, when I taught Hebrew School, I became too involved at the synagogue.

PL: I'd like to know a little bit about how you and your husband made decisions about holidays in your home, and how you celebrated. Given that holidays were always such a public forum since he was involved with the synagogue, how did you make decisions?

RF: I'll tell you something; the only thing I ever greatly disliked was Friday night services at 8:00 p.m. He had to be on the pulpit. He had to eat at 6:00 o'clock, or 5:30, in order for him to be able to sing and we had to walk a half-hour to shul. So, it was difficult for me, always, to rush. Friday evening was always a rush for us. I never really, really enjoyed a Friday night dinner at home because it was rushed. It was almost like Yom Kippur, you know when you rush to eat and then go to shul. But Shabbat was a different story. Shabbat Joe left early. In the beginning, I didn't go until Betsy was able to walk. She was able to walk that distance when she was a little bit over two. So, we walked. I had another friend who had a child that age and we walked together to shul. We didn't go at 8:30. We went maybe at 10:30. We got to shul sometimes [at] 11:00 because shul would take quite a long time. I mean, we didn't get home before 1:30 or so because in the beginning they still read the whole Torah. Then, when we came home, we had dinner and, the rest of the day was ours. Afternoon we would go to the park. We didn't live very far from Volunteer Park, which was lovely. It was so natural that Joe was on the pulpit, except, as I told you, on Friday night it was not easy.

PL: What about holidays?

RF: Holidays? They were—I don't want to use the word "tension"—but there was a lot of pressure. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is a lot of pressure. Succot is a wonderful different kind of holiday, or Passover, Pesach. But Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is a very strenuous, demanding holiday.

PL: Tell me a little more.

RF: I felt the pressure on my husband, you know? You sing with the choir. You have to be—the choir at that time wasn't visible. Joe was on the pulpit and the choir was upstairs in the choir loft. That was difficult. But he always managed. [laughter]

PL: Was the choir physically behind your backs?

RF: Upstairs.

PL: Upstairs?

RF: In the loft, and he was downstairs. You know, he didn't see the choir director point at him. He had to do it all really intensely by listening.

PL: Aas his wife, sitting in the audience while this is going on, did you—

RF: I felt tense. I really did. I really did. When I tell you he was singing solo, you know, but when he sang with the choir, I was thinking, that's such a strain. It's such a strain. It's such a strain to be up there and come in at the right time because you didn't see them.

PL: I imagine that you had a lot of very strong, physical, or experiential connections with Joe. Can you describe—this is one—what it was like to see him and also be participating in your own way?

RF: It was a beautiful experience. I was always very, very proud of him. Because people loved him. He has the voice of a, shall we say, saint? He's so convincing when he sings, that you automatically—you are carried along with him. You can't help but have kavana, conviction, of what you are doing is the right thing. I felt always – and the congregation felt that always, and they still talk about this today – of his warm, convincing, strong impact. His words had that power.

PL: Were there any expectations upon you as the cantor's wife to participate in synagogue services or within the synagogue in other ways? Did they reserve a seat for you?

RF: Yes.

PL: Tell me a little bit about that relationship.

RF: They always had the front row [reserved].

PL: Front row?

RF: Yes.

PL: Tell me more about that.

RF: Well, I didn't feel privileged. I think the rabbi's wife sat on the other side, you know? Also in the front row. I didn't see a privilege. I just felt so proud to be close to him and our daughter would sit next to me. We had a children's service. But for a while, she would sit and then go to the children's service. She was very good at sitting and listening to her dad. She was also very proud.

PL: Did you ever feel pressured, or guilty because you couldn't be there and you were expected to be?

RF: I never had that feeling. No. People were not demanding as far as I was concerned. They didn't say, "She wasn't in shul or she was in shul." Because they knew if the weather was bad, or it was raining, I wouldn't go to shul, you know? It was just too far to walk to get wet.

PL: Were you involved in more political decisions?

RF: Absolutely not. My mother taught us. She said, “I always told your Dad, ‘Never get involved in synagogue political business.’” This stays with me until today. [laughter] No, we never got politically involved. You couldn’t, anyhow as a cantor’s wife or rabbi’s wife. You can’t really get involved.

PL: Why not?

RF: It wouldn’t be prudent to do that. It really wouldn’t. They wouldn’t really want you to either.

PL: Yet, you must have had opinions?

RF: I did. As I said, we were very good friends with the school board chairman. She was our confidante. We would often discuss privately with her, but never openly.

PL: Were there particular confrontations or decisions that caused certain tumult within the synagogue that you witnessed during this long period of time that you’ve been there? Any major conflicts or tensions and changes?

RF: Oh yes. There were conflicts and changes each time they changed the rabbi. We had one rabbi that didn’t like Joe’s voice, his wife. So they asked him at the time, “Would he sing Shachrit [morning service]?” And they brought in another cantor. He was going to quit the shul at the time because he was very angry. But the school was so important to them, and also to him. He discussed it with me every time. He said, “You know, I really cannot leave that school.” Because that was his heart and soul. “I will just stay on as the school administrator, the principal.” Well, they didn’t want that. They wanted him. They still wanted to hear his voice. Well, he really didn’t want to do it. He said, “If I’m not good enough for Musaf [obligatory additional prayer after morning service and Torah portion] why should I be good enough for Shacharit, you know?” But that took quite a number of years for that. They had the second cantor, the Musaf cantor, and he was able to do that. It was Rabbi Wagner’s wife who wanted change.

PL: Can you spell her name?

RF: Wagner. Betty Wagner. W-A-G-N-E-R. She's still alive and he passed away in California. They moved to California, eventually.

PL: So, that was the rabbi's wife?

RF: Yes.

PL: When did Herzl first get a cantor? Did they always have a cantor or a hazzan? What was the term of art?

RF: They had a cantor or hazzan before Joe was there. They had one by the name of Lefkowitz and one by the name of Shiffman. In fact, the building that we lived in, Mr. Shiffman was the cantor before Joe came. He had retired; they retired him.

PL: In your home—since, again, to get back to the idea that Joe's commitment on the holidays is to the synagogue—how did you then celebrate and observe Passover in the home?

RF: Well, after synagogue, after we came home from services—of course, Passover is the seder at night. We had a few community seders at the synagogue, which I greatly disliked.

PL: Why?

RF: I don't like community seders. I like the total participation of your individual guests and members sitting around the seder table and you can't please everybody. It's a communal thing. You read your Hebrew prayers or your English prayers together. I just never felt—I feel that the seder is just such a beautiful ceremony – such a really beautiful evening – that it's a total—it should be a total family commitment. I know there's a great need for communal seders.

PL: What was the need for the communal seder?

RF: Well, a lot of single people, and a lot of people that maybe didn't have a seder. Or didn't know how to conduct a seder. Even so, we had a model seder for the children. But that's not the same. But my personal feeling is that I don't have to participate in a communal seder. I know what it does; it serves a great purpose. I know it is important. I just personally don't like to be involved with it. [laughter] But they were only three or four times when that took place. In our own home, of course, we had always guests. And, 15 or 16 was the limit I could seat here. But they were beautiful sederim.

PL: Did you do all of the cooking yourself?

RF: I did, and I did the serving myself. In fact, the Peizers—if you ask Ruth about it—came here a number of times with their family.

PL: Tell me a little bit about that. When would you start preparing? What kind of foods were your favorite recipes?

RF: I prepared my Pesach kitchen a week before. Since I have a small kitchen—but I have a lot of counter space here—half of my kitchen before Pesach was Pesach. So I cook, I kosher my oven and I bake, and I put it in the freezer. I make my matzo balls and put them in the freezer and I didn't buy mixes because they're high in sodium. We can't—we are on a salt-restricted diet. So I had to make everything from scratch. I loved to make matzo kugel of course. I loved every bit of it. But it was tiring. It was such a wonderful evening to look forward to. It was natural, you know? It was the natural thing to do.

PL: Do you have any special family Passover recipes?

RF: From my mother, yes. I have a lemon cream which she made. A sponge cake. We'd serve it over sponge cake with strawberries. She would make trout. The trout in

Europe are very tiny, very small, and very delicate. And she would make trout in a Hollandaise sauce. Lots of eggs [laughter]. I have a lot of her cake recipes. I still have a couple that she wrote the recipes in. It's all in German, and I can't use it because they're in German pounds and everything. But still, I keep it because she used it.

PL: Were there adaptations that you made to your Jewish cooking because you now lived in Seattle?

RF: I didn't understand the question.

PL: Were there adaptations that you made?

RF: Oh, of course. As far as my cooking is concerned? Yes.

PL: Such as?

RF: You know, you use different recipes. You have a Hadassah cookbook. You have a Council cookbook. You have the Horowitz Margareten cookbook and you use them all. You do change of course. I don't make any more Hollandaise [laughter] sauces and yes you do.

PL: For example, your gefilte fish?

RF: I never made it. We didn't have it at home. We didn't make it at home. And I've never made gefilte fish [here]. The only time I made gefilte fish was in New York City because of the combination of fish. You have carp, you have white fish and you have—I forgot the other one. Here you have salmon—oh, pike in New York, or carp? There's one more. To me, it had a different taste and a different color. I know people say, "The homemade gefilte fish here is good." But they're not. To me, they don't taste the same as on the East Coast. So I use the jar. I use the jar that uses the white fish. And it is just delicious. I never make gefilte fish.

PL: Are there any other recipes that you would make during the holidays, or any other time for Shabbat, for example, that are special to you?

RF: Well, it's the usual thing. I don't make anything more special. It's chicken or roast. I make lokshen kugel [non-dairy noodle pudding] of course. I don't do it anymore for myself because I do spend Shabbat with my daughter and son-in-law. They do live near Kline Galland which is great, so I can be with Joe. So I don't do much cooking anymore for Shabbat.

PL: Are there any secrets to Jewish cooking? Good Jewish cooking?

RF: [laughter] You know what my mother used to say when I asked her? "What do you take? How much do you take?" She never followed a recipe. She said, "You take. You just put it in, you know?" [laughter] I think that's the secret, you know? You mix, and that's it. I don't know any other secret. I always remember my mother always saying, "Remember, you take," she said. [laughter]

PL: And yet, she wrote a cookbook.

RF: Mostly in writing, she wrote the recipes down. Yes.

PL: And she handed those recipes down to you?

RF: Right. Right.

PL: Did she write them down for you?

RF: I don't think so; that I don't think. It was her cookbook, one of her cookbooks.

PL: I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about the role of women. You mentioned it a little bit. That is the role of women in the synagogue—through sisterhood, on the bimah, generationally? What have you witnessed, and how have you felt about it?

Because Herzl, I know, has a woman rabbi.

RF: Yes. Well, the role of women at Herzl is a very strong commitment on their part. Sisterhood is very strong though they don't have meetings every month anymore. They used to have sisterhood meetings every month, sisterhood luncheons. They do have yearly fundraising luncheons like Torah Fund Luncheon and mitzvah Luncheon which raises money for the sisterhood to give out scholarships, etc., etc. They really are very committed and they will play a great role there on the board of the synagogue, synagogue board. Of course, their role in the service; they read the Torah. They read—the Cantor teaches them, Cantor Kurland, teaches them to read out of the Megillah. So that changed of course. When Joe was cantor, even much later the cantor still read the whole Megillah. For about three or four years, the cantor teaches women and other men to do parts of the Megillah. The Megillah's very difficult to read which is probably a good thing. They play an active part in what's going on in the pulpit. As I said, I wouldn't be able to do it because I'm just—it's maybe my upbringing, I don't know. But I admire the ones that go through the training because it is hard training. It's difficult. I did teach myself. I taught bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah students. Joe taught me the trope, so I did help him when he was teaching. Even in later years, when I was still teaching Hebrew school, I taught the bar mitzvah students and the bat mitzvah students. I took great pride in that because [laughter] they all did very well. Always. It wasn't easy, you know, to make no mistakes.

PL: Well, there are so many that are going back and doing b'nai mitzvah. I imagine at Herzl there are b'nai mitzvah classes.

RF: Oh yes. Yes.

PL: Did you either teach older women or men?

RF: No. I was gone then already when they started that. I was out of the picture.

PL: I want to ask you a little bit, more personally, about how it is that you inculcated—you and Joe—inculcated your own daughter with a sense of her Judaism.

RF: I think it was a natural thing. She grew up totally immersed in Judaism and all its customs. And she was at Camp Ramah a few times. When she came from Ramah – when Joe was not on the pulpit anymore, we wouldn't go Friday nights to services when it would pour rain. We didn't feel that he has to go. But Betsy, when she came back from Ramah, she would tell us, "Mom and Dad, if you don't want to go, I will go myself."

PL: How old was she?

RF: She was—the first time she went, I think she was 12 and we wouldn't let her go in the dark. So we were forced to go with her to shul in the rain, in the pouring rain. But so, you know, Ramah has a tremendous impact. Are you familiar with Camp Ramah?

PL: I'd like you to familiarize me with it a little bit.

RF: It's a very strong camp movement. They have wonderful, wonderful counselors. The camp counselors are usually seminary students. The women, they are well-trained. At one time we were told that it was only Hebrew-speaking. So I wanted to see what was going on—because we did give scholarships for Ramah, but I wanted to see. The kids were so afraid to go. If they only speak Hebrew, how can we manage to communicate? So I said, "I'll tell you what I'd do. When Betsy goes next year. I will go with you." I think it was her first year. Yes, it was the first year she went. "I will go bring Betsy to Camp Ramah, and I will ask Dr. Ackerman"—who was the head of the camp at the time—"if I can spend a week in Ramah." He said, "Of course." Well, I quickly found out—I loved every minute of it—I quickly found out that it wasn't Hebrew-speaking. They taught Hebrew. They did Hebrew conversation. You know, "Reach me the milk" and "Give me the butter" and "Close the door." I call it "carpenter" Hebrew. So that was the extent. Of course, the Israeli teachers were able to speak amongst themselves, you

know? But there wasn't enough time to impact the kids with so many things that they had to—lectures. They sat outside the camp in the open air and listened to lectures and, were taught beautifully. But the impact was so strong, even so, they didn't speak Hebrew. But I did say to him, "You shouldn't be calling it a 'Hebrew-speaking camp' because you turn off a lot of children that are afraid to come here." So, when I came back, I made it very clear. Meanwhile, we had our own Camp Solomon Schechter here, which we started in the '50s. It was Rabbi Wagner, Rabbi Stanford from Portland, Rabbi Solomon, and Joe. We were there. It started out as a three-day camp. An overnight camp in Echo Lake, which was a motel. That was my first experience. It was beautiful. The next year they decided since the kids loved overnight camp, why don't we go and rent facilities from Pacific University on Whidbey Island? Pacific University has huge property on Whidbey Island. It used to be an Army camp. It still had Army barracks standing on it. So we rented the facilities on Whidbey Island and opened the first Camp Solomon Schechter. Joe, of course, was a counselor and I was a counselor. The experience there was magnificent. In the camp there, you have the kids day and night. They really lived entire Jewish lives, you know? And it was beautiful.

PL: What do you mean by "entire Jewish lives"?

RF: Well, they have the meals. Everything was strictly kosher. Shacharit service in the morning. It was usually during the time of Tish b'Av. The Tish b'Av service in camp is unbelievable. Birchat after every meal, after breakfast, after lunch, after evening meal. Shabbat service out in the open near the water. It was just—it's like I was comparing it to seeing Mount Rainier. It gives you something new every time you see it, you know? It was so inspiring. The kids were inspired, you know? We taught them. Of course, we had to teach them, whatever. History. Hebrew. Hebrew classes [Pirke Avot, ethics]. You name it and they could choose.

PL: What was Ramah like compared to Solomon Schechter? Can you compare the two camps?

RF: Well, see, our kids were able to stay two weeks at the session. We had different ages. At Ramah, you stayed either four weeks or two months. They had all ages at the same time. We couldn't do that because the camp facility wasn't big enough. So, we separated them by age, and they're still doing this. The Aleph session—they have Aleph, Bet, and Gimmel sessions at camp. Or, Aleph and Bet session. Not sure if they have three. I know they have two for sure.

PL: Where was Ramah located?

RF: Near Santa Barbara. I can't think of it.

PL: Well, when you think of it—

RF: Yes.

PL: —You can say so.

RF: We'll come back.

PL: How did your daughter, Betsy, respond to her mother coming to camp? She must have felt that you were checking up on her.

RF: No. She didn't mind because she was afraid of being homesick. She was homesick after I left. But I told her, "We paid a lot of money for that, you can't come home with me." [laughter] She had somebody else from Seattle. The rabbi's from Temple Beth Am, Rabbi Oles' daughter.

PL: Can you spell the rabbi's name?

RF: O-L-E-S. She was at the same time at camp, so that helped. Although they didn't room together. They did that on purpose, which was probably good.

PL: To get back to something you said earlier about Betsy coming back home from Camp Ramah and feeling a sense—more of a steadfast sense of her Jewish responsibility—did that continue in her commitment?

RF: Yes. Oh yes. She married a very Orthodox man. Today she wears a wig. I never thought—it was not a Sephardic custom actually to wear a wig. But many of the young women do now.

PL: So, she married a Sephardic man?

RF: Yes, but it's not a Sephardic custom. Rabbi Maimon's wife never wore a wig. You know, many Sephardic women do not wear wigs. But Jack, I guess, insisted. He went to Yeshiva University in New York and had very influential Orthodox rabbis teaching here. So I guess that had an impact on him, and he wanted her to, and she didn't mind. Well, she has such beautiful hair. It took me a long time to get used to that. My mother never used to wear a wig.

PL: So, when you look at your daughter and you see that she's become more Orthodox, how did that—how did she respond to you and your husband through the years? I mean—did she—her knowledge must have increased incredibly? Her education? Were there ever times when she trumped you?

RF: No, not really. I don't think her knowledge has increased really because she grew up in an Orthodox home, even though we belonged to a Conservative synagogue. Our home was very Orthodox, and she knows that. My grandchildren often ask me, "Why are you belonging to a Conservative synagogue?" Do you know? I really can't explain

to them why because, as I said, the shul was so Orthodox to me that when we became members I didn't object to sitting next to a man. I felt that there was not enough reason for me not to belong. Everything else is strictly traditional, very traditional and Betsy never objected to it.

PL: Does she object to it now?

RF: No, no. Of course not.

PL: Was there ever a time when you felt concerned because of her decisions to become more Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox?

RF: She's not ultra. She's Orthodox. But, as I said, she is not any more than she was in my house.

PL: When she met her future husband, who's Sephardic, at what point in Seattle did you recognize that there were Sephardic Jews here?

RF: Well I knew that there was a Sephardic community, but I didn't, you know, I didn't have any friends. But I knew there was a strong Sephardic community and I knew the Franco family and all and, you know, I knew of them. Their customs are very different. On Passover, for instance, at the seder, I never knew that you could use romaine lettuce instead of horseradish. There are other things, of course. Of course, the food is so entirely different. She learned—Betsy didn't know how to cook, and she wasn't interested at all in cooking. I always said, "How can you get married, and not know how to cook?" She said, "You know, there are cookbooks. And, if you can read you learn how to cook." Well, she was right, of course. Today, she really cooks Sephardic. She's a terrific co and I love the food. [laughter] It's very, very different customs too. But, I'll tell you something—I hope her husband will never hear this—she really doesn't like the service. She doesn't like the service, because most of the women there, except the young generation, do not read Hebrew and cannot participate in the service. Instead

of reading Hebrew, they talk. Now, in a Conservative shul or in a Reform synagogue, you don't hear anybody talking and that was one of my love for the shul. That you could sit and devote yourself to your prayer and not listen to your neighbor's gab. She objects to that very, very—and of course, some of the melodies she used to sing in the choir, and she used to hear her dad chant. She doesn't hear anymore and she still misses that. But, you know, she has to get used to it.

PL: Have you gone with her to—is it Sephardic Bikur Cholim?

RF: Oh, yes, I always go with her.

PL: Tell me what your experiences are.

RF: I go with her. I don't mind it. You know, it took me a long time too. There are some beautiful melodies. But often, it's in a monotone. The Haftorah is read in English. Somebody's chosen to read the Haftorah who has either a Yahrtzeit or an anniversary in English. They auction it off every Shabbat and the highest bidder gets the Haftorah reading. This is one way of bringing in money. In Europe you used to auction off Haftorahs too because I remember auctioning; so it must have been the Haftorah. So they do that still. So, there are some differences.

PL: What about the way that women dress or modesty?

RF: Well, I guess it's a common thing now to wear long skirts. [laughter] You know, everybody wears long skirts and long sleeve shirts. Betsy wears long sleeves. She doesn't, you know if it's hot; she doesn't wear long sleeves. I know my granddaughters—no, my granddaughter does. My granddaughter by marriage will wear short sleeves. No, she got used to it. But as far as Orthodoxy is concerned, she was brought up Orthodox. So there was no way of her changing, or improving.

PL: Was there ever a time when you had conversations around the interpretation of the Torah in the household?

RF: When she was young, my husband would. I usually wouldn't. I'd do something else. He would study with her, the pirke avot or the siddur, or whatever.

PL: Is she a soft person or a strong-minded person?

RF: She's strong-minded but she's so soft. She's the librarian at the Hebrew Academy. She loves what she's doing.

PL: How would you feel about her choice of a life partner, in her husband?

RF: In the beginning, I was not too happy. You know? I said, "You have so many other friends. Can't you wait a little bit?" "No," she said. "He's the one I want to marry." And, it's funny how they met, if you're interested. You know, Betsy couldn't take the University entrance test. For UW, on Shabbat. They are always given on Shabbat. Always. So, she asked me to come on Sunday. There were other Orthodox kids, and that's where she met him for the first time. She'd never seen him before. Next, they met at day camp. They were both counselors at day camp and that's how they became friendly.

PL: So they were very young?

RF: Well, let's see; it was in '66, I think. Yes, it was in '66 because that year Joe and I went to Israel and we wanted her to come along, mind you, and she wouldn't come along because of Jack. She would not come along to Israel with us.

PL: Were you disappointed?

RF: I was very disappointed. Yes.

PL: So what did you do about it? I mean, were you a disciplinarian? Were you very flexible?

RF: No, I couldn't force her, you know? Joe and I went to Israel in '66, and she had a girlfriend come over to stay with her. That was it.

PL: How would you say that your style of childrearing, and the decisions that you made about conflicts that you had with your daughter got settled? What kind of parent were you?

RF: I think a very tolerant parent. Very accepting. That was her choice. I didn't dislike Jack. I just thought that she should have given herself some more chances of meeting other young men, you know? So, no, once she got married, it was fine. [laughter]

PL: What are the things that you particularly enjoyed doing—you and your family? You said, going to parks. Were there things—

RF: Going on picnics.

PL: In Seattle where did you go to picnics?

RF: We would go to Salt Water State Park. Have you been there?

PL: No.

RF: It's beautiful. Well, I don't know how beautiful it is now. But then, it was beautiful. We'd go to Madison Park Beach. We would go visit a beach—I forgot the name—near Sand Point: Matthew Beach. I don't know if you know that beach. We would go down near Lake Washington. We loved to picnic. That was so relaxing for us to be away from everything. She loved it too. In the summertime, we would mostly go to Canada. Canada had these wonderful sandy beaches on Vancouver Island. So we would spend a couple of weeks in Canada when she was little.

PL: Well, now that she's married, and you have how many grandchildren?

RF: I have three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

PL: Okay. Well, beginning with your grandchildren, and by extension your great-grandchildren, what kind of expectations did you have about becoming a grandmother?

RF: There was a natural expectation [laughter]. You know, all grandmothers think, "Spoil them a little bit." [laughter] You know, it was so beautiful for her to give birth to three kids. I lost two. Both pregnancies—seven-and-a-half month pregnancies, which was devastating to me at the time. It took a long time to get over. So, for her to have three children was just the most wonderful thing that could just happen to us.

PL: Well, you yourself had a miscarriage that you talked about in the last session. So, did you—

RF: I had one in the fifth month, I think I told you before?

PL: Yes. So, did you, as mother and daughter have—give her solace about this?

RF: I didn't have fears actually that she would miscarry. I was so convinced that she would carry through that it never occurred to me that it could happen to her, you know? Thank God it didn't.

PL: So, tell me a little bit about your experiences of being a grandmother.

RF: That's the most wonderful experience I can imagine. Betsy, when Sarica was born, we had a little baby crib here. She would come and I would come. We would almost see each other every day in Summertime. Not in winter because I was teaching. I would babysit for her. She would bring her here but they would go for a weekend away and she would sleep over. Later on, of course, when they [the children] were older, they would stay Shabbat over the weekends. We would take only one at a time because we

felt each one needs our special time with them, and we didn't want any conflict. And that was the most wonderful experience. The grandchildren still talk about it. At one time, we took our grandson—he was eight—to Meany Hall for a concert. It was a Shabbat evening. He said, "Do you think I could take a book along to read in case I get bored?" I said, "Of course, you can take a book." [laughter] Well, he didn't get bored. He listened to the concert but he had that, whatever it was, a little book with him. That was so rewarding and we took them out on Sundays. We would go to the park with them, and play with them.

PL: What, generally speaking, have been your roles and responsibilities as a grandmother?

RF: Actually no, we don't have direct responsibilities. But we did help them with their tuition, for which they were very grateful.

PL: Tuition for college?

RF: For college. Right. They took out a loan. Betsy and Jack helped them too, but you know Yeshiva University like any other university isn't cheap. So we did help a lot, which was gratifying.

RF: So, all three went to Israel to Hebrew University?

RF: No.

PL: I'm sorry.

RF: Yeshiva University.

PL: I'm sorry, Yeshiva [University].

RF: All three went to Israel, yes. Also, one went for a year and a half. Sarica went first to Machane Camp Gold—to yeshiva over there. The boys when to a different yeshiva, I forgot the name. Yossi stayed a year and a half, and Momo stayed a year. That was a wonderful experience for them. At that time we really didn't have to worry about what you go through now, you know? There were always clashes between Arabs and Jews but it wasn't like, G-d forbid, it is today.

PL: What were your own feelings about Zionism?

RF: A lot of Zionist women at an early age were involved then in what they called WZO, Women's Zionist Organization. There was such enthusiasm because we all wanted to go to Israel, to immigrate to Israel. So, it was a young movement. It would meet, we would study about Israel, we would sing these beautiful songs about Israel.

PL: Do you remember any of those songs?

RF: It's hard to remember. But we were ingrained to be Zionists.

PL: Where was this, WZO, in Germany?

RF: In Frankfurt, yes.

PL: Who belonged to it?

RF: Young women, young women that wanted to emigrate to Israel

PL: Given that your parents were still alive, what was the purpose of wanting to immigrate to Israel?

RF: Well, we hoped that they would also follow us. You know, that was the purpose. We didn't think about going to America at all. The enthusiasm was for Israel, and help with the land, you know? It was a strong movement. It was so ingrained. It was the

early chalutzim [movement]. I mean, I wasn't an early immigrant in 1908 or 1910. But the movement was so ingrained in you that you were full of enthusiasm.

PL: How, in Seattle did Zionism affect the Seattle community? I know that Herzl, named after Theodore Herzl—

RF: Right.

PL: —itself, had its own leanings.

RF: Yes, well I know one thing: Temple de Hirsch has made a complete turnabout. That was many years ago. They were strictly anti-Zionist, strictly. Imagine. I forget when that was. They turned around, thank goodness, and that has changed. I think the movement is very strong here amongst Jews.

PL: How did it manifest itself, and those differences, within the Seattle community and within Herzl?

RF: Support for JNF, for instance. I know when we came from Israel it was '66. It was early. You could see the difference where the Arabs lived and the Jews lived. Joe gave a sermon on the pulpit and talked about the difficulties that Jews have there building and creating and living there, and making everything look green and beautiful. Jews had to carry the rocks. But they did, you know, make the land fertile. That day, he wasn't a fundraiser. He didn't go up to the pulpit to raise funds. But that Shabbat, he had such an impact on the people, that on Sunday there was a meeting and they collected, I don't know, how many thousands of dollars for JNF at the time.

[END OF CD 3]

PL: We're continuing the oral history of Ruth Frankel. This is mini-disk tape #4. Last week, when we left the last tape, we were talking about Cantor Frankel's talk at the pulpit

in which he was in fund-raising but wound up making a lot of money for Israel. This was 1966? Before? '67? I guess I just wanted to hear—as a Zionist and as someone who visited Israel at that time and is a strong supporter and from a congregation that strongly supported Zionism within Seattle—how did the formation of the State of Israel, and through '67, how has it impacted you and Seattle life in particular, Seattle Jews?

RF: Of course, we were most happy when Truman declared the State of Israel at the time. He didn't declare it, but he was part of recognizing Israel. That was the first wonderful thing that could have happened, that Israel was recognized. The State of Israel grew. It grew quickly because of the war, and because immigration was so very important to young Jews, Russian Jews, Polish Jews, and German Jews that had lived there. So it became very, very important. There was great enthusiasm within the Seattle community, even within the Federation, the JNF [Jewish National Fund] movement. So when Joe spoke on the pulpit that day, his voice had such power and such conviction that people were just convinced that what he said was really the truth, and they couldn't help but do something positive. So the next day they had a meeting and they collected a tremendous amount of money to go to Israel, which was important of course.

PL: Did you go as delegates of Herzl?

RF: No. We weren't sent at all.

PL: What was the trip like in '66 when you went?

RF: It was most interesting. We had friends. The woman who taught for us in Hebrew School, Weissmann—her husband used to work for Boeing. Lovely couple. Beautiful couple. We kept in touch with them when we got there. We lived with my cousin in Tel Aviv. We figured instead of paying for a hotel, we would pay him. He had a small laundromat. I know that he didn't make much money. So we gave him at the time $200.

In '66 that was money for Israel. He was most happy and we traveled from there. The Weissmans took us around Israel and we saw, of course, things that no tour operator takes you to. They knew the land so well. Tour operators take you to places where there were shops and you can go shopping. Most of the time is spent in a shop. They took us to areas near the borders where we could overlook the Jordanian border. Where we could overlook the Arab side. The first thing they took us to overlook was the [Western] Wall. We could not go to the Wall, the Western Wall, because the Arabs occupied East Jerusalem. The Western Wall at that time had Arab soldiers with their guns pointed at you. They wanted us to see what it was really like. That was our first impression there—"That's the enemy, you know?" They took us—you couldn't go to Hebron of course. We went to areas where they had—oh, I forget—where there was a Yeminite watch person watching the area with his binoculars and we met him. The Yeminites, we were told, spoke the most beautiful, true Ivrit [Hebrew]. These were the things that we highly appreciated at the time because, as I said before, we didn't want to go to a shop and spend money on tchotchkes [bric-a-brac]. We'd rather just see what was really going on. Then we visited of course synagogues, old synagogues. It was a great experience. It drew you to the land. It drew you so much to the land that it was hard to leave. When we decided to go back, we felt very strong.

PL: Did you have any desire to move to Israel?

RF: Once I was here, not really.

PL: Why not?

RF: Well, I guess it was starting out new again, over again and we had a tough start here. Once you're settled, it's very difficult to uproot yourself. I know I have a cousin there, which I haven't seen for thirty years almost. So, it was a beautiful reunion, but it just never occurred to us once we had settled here to uproot again. We went through too many tough periods, you know? Separated because Joe was in England. Separated

for almost three years because Joe was in the Army and they were all tough times to restart again. So, I guess we just felt once we did all these, made all these sacrifices, we wanted to live life another way.

PL: Did you visit Israel again?

RF: We visited there in '72. There was a tremendous change—the '67 War, of course, gained East Jerusalem, the Wall. And so we saw the other side—Bethlehem, went to Hebron which was dangerous at the time. We were told to take an Arab sharouk, [a sherut (taxi) driver]. You were told to take an Arab sharouk—

PL: A taxi?

RF: Yes, it's a big taxi. We went with my sister and brother-in-law at that time. He would take you to Hebron and nobody would bother you. This we did and nobody did bother. But it was dangerous at that time too.

PL: What was your desire to go—

RF: Again?

PL: No, to Hebron? Why Hebron?

RF: Because there's so much history, you know: Hebron, Rachel's Tomb there, you know? So, it's too much history there.

PL: So you were there before the Yom Kippur War?

RF: Right.

PL: Did you return again?

RF: [No]. The Yom Kippur War was in '67.

PL: ’73?

RF: Oh, ‘73, right. Right, I’m sorry.

PL: But that’s interesting.

RF: No, we didn’t. We just didn’t have a chance again.

PL: How did you then describe your relationship with Israel?

RF: Today? It’s very strong. A great supporter. I’ve been a supporter of Hadassah, Amit, JNF. Yes.

PL: What percentage of your income or of your time or energy went to supporting Israel?

RF: What percentage of our income? Well, that’s hard to say. We do give very generously, let me put it that way.

PL: Is that your first charitable priority?

RF: Not really. It’s one of the important ones. The Federation, of course, and, ORT.

PL: Women’s American ORT?

RF: Yes, Women’s American ORT and Hadassah, and AMIT of course, the Council of Jewish Women, and some other organizations.

PL: Can you roster any of those of your activities with any of those organizations we have not yet discussed? Were you involved with any of those organizations?

RF: I’m not involved except by donation because my time is limited. My main devotion was teaching in the synagogue.

PL: Yes.

RF: Once I retired, we became involved in—I don't know—personal matters, and we started to enjoy life. I wanted to be free and not committed time-wise. So I guess that was my reason not to be involved.

PL: Did you and Joe retire at the same time?

RF: Yes, kind of—right, right. We did.

PL: Can you say more about that?

RF: We did quite a bit of traveling, which we enjoyed. Joe lectured, which he loved. Joe lectured and gave classes on Judaism at the University of Washington at night. We took extension classes at UW. They had wonderful extension classes going on during the day and at night.

PL: What kind of classes were you interested in?

RF: We would take Russian history, general history, and of course, Judaic classes. Kieval. Is he still there? No?

PL: I'm not sure.

RF: Maybe, I think he's still there. The other one is a member at Temple Beth Shalom [laughter] – and I can't think of his name right now. No, we took a lot of classes, which we surely enjoyed. We felt we were entitled to do something for ourselves.

PL: Well, I'd like to know what other things you did for yourself. What other leisure activities, or how you spent your leisure time? What was most important to you?

RF: Well, we loved theater. Every theater, you know? We loved the concerts. We had season tickets for the opera, for the symphony.

PL: Did you have a favorite opera?

RF: I like Verdi. Verdi is one of my favorite composers. So—

PL: Were you introduced to Verdi as a young child?

RF: Yes. We left already. Yet Opera in Europe, I think I told you that we couldn't go anymore. There was "Standing Room Only" for Jews. But, we still went, even though we had to stand for two or three hours. The opera was the thing.

PL: What's your experience when you go to the opera?

RF: You take it all in. It's so inspiring. I like the traditional performances. I do not like modernizations of the stage performance. The music is always the same. But it just—to me—it is just, it is not the same. If you put Carmen on as a modern production, there is something missing. The same with Aida. So, I'm a traditionalist. Of course, we went to ACT [A Contemporary Theatre] and The Rep [Seattle Repertory Theatre].

PL: You must have been witness to the growth of Seattle's theater community.

RF: Absolutely, and it was a terrific thing. Terrific. It was so gratifying to see the city grow, culturally, that it made you proud of the city.

PL: During what years would you say that were the boom years in culture?

RF: It really started after the Fair, the World's Fair.

PL: Do you remember that World's Fair?

RF: Oh yes. It was in '62 or '63, I think.

PL: Well, finish your thought about the boom, and then I got to hear about the Fair.

RF: Well, it started after the Fair. We had no—I think I told you—no opera house. There was this huge hall. Had a name to it, I forgot too. It was like a convention hall but

it was terribly ugly. But after the Fair, they rebuilt this and put an opera house there. That's when operas really started to become a thing to go to for the American public, the Seattle public.

PL: How much of a fan are you with?

RF: Opera fan? I like it. I like it.

PL: Do you know who the directors are?

RF: Right now I don't. I think it's Speight Jenkins or something. I haven't gone since Joe's been ill the last three years. But, I still contribute to them. I support them.

PL: What other kind of theater do you enjoy?

RF: I enjoyed always The Rep and I enjoyed the Intiman [Theatre]. They have terrific plays—you know, political and otherwise, their plays.

PL: Are there particular playwrights or plays that you enjoyed?

RF: I don't remember them all. Wasser—

PL: Wasserstein?

RF: —Wasserstein is one of them. There were a number of Black playwrights. They did beautiful—I don't remember their names—had produced beautiful plays, inspiring plays. Really gave you an insight into the movement. I love theater. Betsy told me the other day when I come back we'll go again. I'm dependent on someone to take me.

PL: Yes. Is that something that you miss terribly?

RF: I do. I do terribly. Yes, I miss that terribly. But we do have to make sacrifices, you know? Then it became a matter of—I got used to it, you know? For a while, I didn't even

look at the programs anymore. You know, I get them sent every year to know what they're playing. Either because I was upset because I couldn't go. It wasn't because I wasn't interested, you know? I guess it's just a thing that you have to get used to.

PL: So, what have you done instead—

RF: Instead of theater?

PL: —to occupy your leisure time and the things that you enjoy doing?

RF: Instead it became when Joe became ill. I tell you, I didn't do much of anything when he became ill because he really took my hundred-percent care. I had to devote all my time to him. We walked. I had him read The Times for me, which he loved to do. Even so, he couldn't comprehend. When I was ironing or cooking, I would say, "Joe would you sit with me and read to me." He said, "I'd love to." It gave him great satisfaction and made him very happy that he could do things for me. So he did that every day, twice a day – in the morning, in the afternoon, whenever one would tend to do it and he didn't mind doing it. He really liked it. He still would look at the newspapers. They would stack up here, and I didn't have the time to read them every day. So I would have stacks and stacks of papers, you know? I'm trying to catch up now. In fact, I stopped the mid-week Times and read only the Sunday Times now so I can go through The New York Times, which I feel gives me so much more.

PL: I'd like to return to this for a moment to talk about when is it that you discovered Joe's diminished capacity, and ultimately the diagnosis of Alzheimer's. Let me go back a little bit. You talked about your interest in theater and culture. I was just looking at my notes, and I saw that—I guess it was in '49—that there was a non-profit organization for the advancement of Jewish Culture. Called the Herzl Jewish Culture Foundation.

RF: Uh-huh.

PL: And you and Joe were very involved with producing concerts and music and culture.

RF: Oh, I forgot about that, yes.

PL: At Herzl.

RF: Yes.

PL: Including, I guess, it was the Friedmans—the Cavalcade of Jewish Music Concerts.

RF: Right.

PL: Was that something that you were involved in, Ruth?

RF: Yes, I was involved in putting that together. The Friedman—Maurice Friedman was a great singer—and his wife—I forgot her first name.

PL: Susie Michael Friedman.

RF: Susie Michael accompanied him. And there were a number of musicians, Jewish musicians, like the violinist Ada Ash. You know of her? She played with the Symphony, and just recently moved to The Summit. She still plays her violin quietly, for herself. There were cellists and violinists. So Susie Michael got together a small orchestra and started these cultural events to perform. Then she decided—she invited Joe to sing. This became the first Cantor's Concert at the museum at Volunteer Park. I still have a recording that was recorded at the time, where she introduced Joe and she introduced then our choir director. It's a beautiful recording. This was the first concert. I wish I would remember the year, which I don't. That started, actually, the concert movement. The second concert was at the Sephardic Bikur Cholim many, many years later. But the first concert was organized by Susie Michael, and the only cantor that sang at the time was Joe and then, later on, of course, the concerts were given. There was an Ashkenazi Cantor Gottlieb and the Sephardic cantor, two Sephardic cantors

[participating]. That was very successful. Ruth Peizer had a great part in that too. Then, the third one was at Herzl. Yes, Herzl used to produce plays. But that was mostly for the shul. They were plays of Jewish content of course. It starred women and men that were very talented. Actually, we had very good directors who were very talented. One of them was, actually, a professional in theater, who was a member of our shul. So, we all participated in that. We were active in that.

PL: So, these are plays that you wrote?

RF: No, no. I didn't write. No, no. There were plays that—I think were either written or composed by the group. Yes.

PL: Did you, yourself, perform in these?

RF: No. I was helping, with staging—

PL: Who came to these performances?

RF: Pardon me.

PL: Who came to these performances?

RF: Just members of the shul. Yes. It was a fund-raiser too. But they were very nice and successful. I don't know if I told you—in fact they did a play for Joe and myself. We were honored by the University of Judaism in '79, and we drew the biggest crowd—it was a fund-raiser—that they ever had at any dinner. It was a dinner given in honor of Joe and myself. The shul players organized a cute play. I don't remember anymore. Somewhere I probably have it stuck away. But there were over 400 people attending and it was the most money they had ever made at a University of Judaism dinner. So that was kind of gratifying for us to be part of.

PL: You've been honored many times. What are some of the other honors?

RF: Yes. We've been honored. Well, we've been honored for 25 years at Herzl. We were honored for being 50 years at Herzl. That was a great occasion—almost three years ago. But then, again, it was beautifully attended. Joe wasn't able to respond anymore. I'm not very good at speaking in public. It was hard for me to do that and it was also very emotional having him sit in the first row and not participate, you know? He was always a very eloquent speaker. So, it was tough—tough on me.

PL: So, in this example, you were up on the bimah—

RF: Right.

PL: —accepting and talking, and he was sitting in the front row?

RF: Yes, yes, right. He was accepting the honor on the bimah, but he then went down and I responded. It wasn't easy for me to do that.

PL: Why not? I mean, what's going on?

RF: It was emotional—very emotional for me. Here I'm taking space, so—

PL: Do you remember some of the other concerts and events? What was the Herzl Jewish Culture Foundation?

RF: I don't know if it was called "foundation."

PL: It sounds like it was founded in August 1949. You had lecturers such as Ludwig Lewison?

RF: Oh yes, of course. I forgot that.

PL: And, I understand, Dr. Mordechai Kaplan came?

RF: Right, right, right.

PL: Do you remember these speakers?

RF: I remember Kaplan.

PL: What do you remember about him?

RF: Well, he was a powerful, very powerful, and influential speaker. You know, he could just draw you—you know, you were drawn to him. You had to listen. He was the Reconstructionist movement [rabbi], which never really succeeded. We had always hoped that it would. Well, I guess it was too extreme at one point. The older generation didn't take to it and the younger generation wasn't too interested. So, it never proved to be—

PL: Here in Seattle?

RF: Well, generally, generally. Even in the bigger cities, it never became a great success.

PL: What was the response to the things that he had to say? He was a very controversial figure.

RF: He was. He was. I don't remember anymore really. It's too long ago. But, we quoted him often, I know that when we were teaching. We had hoped that the movement would grow.

PL: Why? What was the hope that you held?

RF: Well, again, we felt that there were really so many unaffiliated Jews. We felt that this is a movement that people could identify with and affiliate with. So it would be an easy way—an easier way than Orthodox or Conservative Judaism. It is Conservative but it is more modernistic in their ideas, of course. The Kaplans' ideas were different.

PL: Such as?

RF: I don't remember anymore really, truly. Don't let me quote. I don't want to quote anything, but they were different.

PL: To bring us up to date, Herzl at some point there was a merger between Herzl and Ner Tamid.

RF: Yes. Yes, in '71. The synagogue had to move away from the Central Area—the race riots at the time. It was '69 when you couldn't go—We went to shul Friday nights. We had to have a police car walking or driving next to us while we walked because we were afraid to be attacked. So actually, in '68 already, we had Rosh Hashanah-Yom Kippur services, and in '69 at the Seattle Center. We didn't have a rabbi so we had to import a rabbi the first year.

PL: What's the backdrop of what's going on in Seattle, that these race riots were happening in the late '60s?

RF: Well, it was all over the country, remember?

PL: But I'd like to know specifically what was happening in Seattle.

RF: Well, they would attack you. They would break into homes in the area. A lot of Jews lived still in the area, the Central Area.

PL: In the Central Area?

RF: Right.

PL: And by "they," you mean African-Americans?

RF: No, Jews lived there.

PL: But who broke into people's homes?

RF: The Afro-Americans.

PL: Why?

RF: Well, because of the race riots all over the country. You weren't there. You weren't born yet. But, it was frightening. Our daughter was going to get married. She could not get married in our shul. Her husband probably wouldn't have liked it anyhow. Their synagogue had already to moved to Seward Park. So, we were in the process of moving the synagogue—I mean, moving the congregation. So, we had services twice at the Seattle Center. We stayed in a motel. We ate gefilte fish because the only thing we had was a fridge there. No stove or anything that we could warm up anything. So we lived on gefilte fish. I don't know what else—potato salad? I remember you couldn't take it along. Cold meat? So then the synagogue bought property here in Mercer Island. They had property also in Bellevue. And they decided Mercer Island was the proper way to go, because the JCC, Jewish Community Center, was kitty-corner from our synagogue, and it would be a very convenient thing for people to combine both—you know, go to shul and before that go to the Center or whatever. So, before the synagogue moved to Mercer Island, the branch that we had in Bellevue eventually became independent, Ner Tamid. It started out as a branch of Herzl. We had our branch Hebrew school in Bellevue because the Bellevue people did not want to go across the floating bridge to Seattle anymore. So they insisted, since there were so many children living on the East Side, that we open a branch school, which Joe did. He opened a branch school. There were more members through Boeing Company, moving to Bellevue from out of town. So Bellevue had quite a Jewish community. They decided that they wanted to have their own shul. They wanted a branch shul, actually. But, Herzl wouldn't go for that. So, they separated from our synagogue and created their own synagogue, Ner Tamid. But then, when we moved to Mercer Island. Both synagogues

felt we were not—neither one was large enough. We lost a lot of members. We lost members to Beth Am. They formed their own synagogue. And Beth Shalom. Most of the members of Beth Shalom were members of Herzl. So we lost a lot of members. So they felt it would be more proper and more profitable to combine synagogues, which they did. They merged in '72 [becoming Herzl-Ner Tamid], which was a good thing.

PL: Is there anything else about—well, actually, I do want to ask you how it was that the Jewish community responded to Civil Rights here in Seattle. And how, given that the Herzl congregation was physically forced out of its neighborhood as a result of uprisings and tensions within Seattle, how then did the Jewish community respond to Black/White relations?

RF: I think they were supportive. At first, there was great anger, of course, because they always felt that they were very kind and good to their neighbors, towards their neighbors. But then there was anger that the response was so strong. Then later on they were very supportive of the Civil Rights Movement. That was only right. Because we were slaves ourselves once. We shouldn't forget this. You know? We should treat people equally. I am a strong believer in that.

PL: Do you remember any rabbis, cantors, or officiants from any of the synagogues that were working with members of the Black churches or of that community?

RF: They did, with the Black minister at the time. McKinney was his name and they did work with him. I remembered that very strongly. In fact, McKinney came and spoke. I'm pretty sure of that fact.

PL: He came and spoke at Herzl?

RF: Yes.

PL: Do you remember anything about the content of his speech?

RF: Well, he appreciated the support, you know, that they were recognized. That we recognized the fact that they exist, you know?

PL: Yes.

RF: I don't think that we ever did not recognize that they were there, but not to the extent that they could feel the support.

PL: Have you, or your family ever been involved in any political causes?

RF: Not really, directly. I'm a supporter, we are members, of ADL, American Jewish Congress, Young Jewish [inaudible]. We support, you know, with contributions. But—

PL: Did you and your husband vote similarly along Democratic-Republican lines?

RF: Yes. Yes, we did.

PL: Were you a registered Democrat or Republican?

RF: No, Democrat.

PL: Did you support the Party as well?

RF: Well, I remember we used to. I think we could vote for Republicans and Democrats at the same time—wasn't it? I think so. I'm not sure if you can still do it. But I think you can do it here too. I do if I feel there's a Republican on the ticket that is more qualified than a Democrat, I do. But I suppose as far as the presidential voting is concerned, Democrats – registered Democrats, yes. I support the movement of course.

PL: I'm wanting to continue with your own process of growing older—and how it is that you and Joe coped since your retirement. I'd like you to talk about his Alzheimer's, and the encroaching of that. But also, about your own abilities as you've watched his diminish at times. So, at what point, did you recognize that your husband was forgetful

at times? Things like that?

RF: This becoming older, you know, it's funny. I'm going to be 85. I don't feel 85, except physically, because we have so many young friends. Very young. They're in their 50's and 60's. Ao I feel really privileged that they still recognize me as their close friend, you know? But of course, we have friends our own age too. But, I recognized when Joe gave a lecture—he lectured every year at the Life Learning Center for retirees who want to continue [learning]. It's a tremendously successful movement. He lectured there when he retired every year. He would never give a lecture twice. He would always, always choose a different subject. He would prepare for hours, which he loved to do, and research. Then, when it came to lecturing, I took other lectures but often I would sit in on his lectures. He would barely look at the notes. He would just occasionally look down. When he started reading the lecture, this is when I first really recognized it. He might have been doing things that I thought were normal. You know, forgetfulness. You misplace something and you can't find it. We all do that. But this is where I first noticed it and that was difficult for me to watch. Then when people started asking questions, he often either did not hear the question properly although his hearing is good. He would not stay on the road to answering the question correctly. He had a good friend who is a psychiatrist – who is still our good friend – and we met him twice a month for lunch. We'd go to his office, pick him up and go for lunch. So I called Larry and I said, "This is what is happening." I didn't think of Alzheimer's. I didn't think that could ever happen to Joe. I said, "I'm fearful that something's not right." So he said, "Why don't you come in? Oh, it's probably just, you know, nothing. Just regular forgetfulness as we all do." And I said, "Okay. We'll have lunch again." He couldn't detect anything because in normal conversation you would never know—never—except when the next few times, he would keep on asking the same question. He would repeat—right in front of me—"How many grandchildren do you have?" "How many children?" A couple of minutes later, he would ask the same question. A couple of minutes again, he would ask the same question and that's when we really noticed that

something was not right. So I called Larry afterward, and I said, “Larry, I would like him to stop lecturing.” He said, “Why do you want to do that?” I said, “I want him to be remembered as a good lecturer. I don’t want him to be remembered as the fellow that should have stopped, you know when he wasn’t good at it anymore.” “Well,” he said. “I guess you have a point.” So I did try very hard. It was very, very difficult for him to become convinced not to lecture anymore. It was like thunder coming across this way. He wanted to know, “Why.” I said, “Look, you lectured so many years and we didn’t really have so much time for ourselves. It takes a long time for you to prepare the lectures each time, you know? And, don’t you think it is time to do things for ourselves again? “ Well, he wasn’t convinced. So, another couple of lectures, and I just couldn’t be witness to the fact that he was deteriorating as far as delivering the lectures was concerned. So finally, I convinced him. It wasn’t easy to do. It was heartbreaking for me to have to do it. But I just couldn’t see him not answering the question that he was asked, properly and looking and reading, and perhaps not knowing what he was reading. I guess he was still knowing though. But I didn’t know what he knew or not knew. It came on slowly, and I was in complete denial. Complete denial. Betsy always said, “Mom, you can’t be in denial. You have to face the fact.” I said, “I just can’t believe it – because he’s such an intellectual – that it could happen to Daddy.” So, I was in denial for quite a while.

PL: How long?

RF: Well, I would say almost a year. We still did things. We still went to concerts and went to the theater. He still drove. He was a perfect driver until even two-and-a-half years ago. Would you believe it? Even before he went to the [Kline Galland] Home, you know, he would be in the back seat when we went driving and he would tell my friend, “Here you turn right, that’s where we live. There’s a stop sign coming. Make sure you stop.” I mean, then he even still did it, you know? But Betsy said, “He has to stop driving. It’s too dangerous.” I said, “Don’t worry, I know when he has to stop driving.”

But—

PL: What were the distinct beliefs about this illness that you had?

RF: Again, when he became very forgetful. When he tried to put everything away. It wasn't hiding. It was just his neatness that forced him to do this. Then, he kept on asking the same question, over and over. That's when I recognized that he was not the same person and I had to realize that this is a disease. So, when I discussed it with this doctor, they didn't know it was Alzheimer's, you know? Because it comes on so slowly. Dementia is the same thing. They still don't know much about Alzheimer's. Unless they perform autopsies, they can't really find out what's wrong with the brain. I don't know how many if at all, did that.

PL: What prepared you to take the step to kick out of your own denial about his illness? Is there something that you felt you were personally compromising your own safety? Or, something about your quality of life?

RF: My quality of life, yes. But my own safety, I was never concerned about. Never. Because he was never violent. He was the kindest person you ever met. He would pull my chair out—even today, he does that. When I come, he gets up and gives me a chair. He wouldn't go into the room unless I step in before anybody else. He still has the ability to know what's right and not. But, my own safety I was never concerned until the very—not my safety. It was his safety I was concerned about when I made the decision to have him go to Kline Galland Home. I lived with this for a long, long time. I mean, five years. But as I said, in the beginning, we lived a so-called normal life. We still did things we wanted to do. But once I couldn't go to anymore to my friends' parties because my time was so all-consuming. There were hardships and great demands on the caregiver. The caregiver really has to be strong and I was praying for good health—that I'd be strong enough to endure my responsibility and carry out my responsibilities.

PL: You told me that you had lost almost 30 pounds during this time?

RF: I did.

PL: And part of it was because? Why?

RF: I mean when he would go into a room, I would go up to see what he does so I know I could find my stuff? His desk actually had locks. I had to lock the desk drawers because there were bills in there that I didn't want him to take out and put them somewhere in a magazine or a book and I couldn't find them. You know what I mean? So each time he would get up, I would have to go and watch and it was quiet, like a child—like if you watch a child? It was so quiet. I know he was somewhere near the books or near the magazines. He would shuffle around things constantly. There are books that I can't even find, probably because they're probably in the back row, and that made me get up every two minutes, every five minutes. That was demanding. Or walking with him every day. I didn't have a helper in the beginning, of course. I loved to walk. I didn't have a balance problem at the time. So, we'd take great walks. Or, we went to the park and walked to Luther Burbank. But, it's an all-consuming job. It's devastating.

PL: When did you feel that this job was all for you?

RF: Immediately.

PL: Why?

RF: Immediately?

PL: When did you get help? And what kind of help did you need?

RF: See, Joe never wanted to be without me. That was another thing. He wouldn't stay here with somebody. I always had help when I couldn't handle him anymore by

myself. Three years ago, he was hospitalized and he needed, I needed, a nurse 24 hours when he came home. He had an infection. A cellular infection and he needed intravenous antibiotics. He wouldn't keep the needle in his arm. So it had to be taped to his arm. I needed 24-hour care so that he wouldn't pull it out. That was the first time that I needed help. I had a wonderful young man, a young student, a Yeshiva student who wanted to help me and wanted to be with Joe. He was unbelievable. At that time, he still learned with Joe. You know what learning is? Studied with him, Torah. He visited him at the rehab center and they would study Chumash [one of the five books of Torah] together. He enjoyed him, and he was still verbal. He could still talk. This young boy walked with Joe after school. He took him for a walk and that was a relief for me. I paid him, of course. Yes. It was extra money for him. He would come on Shabbat and Sundays for an hour or two hours. He would take him to the park, and Joe loved it. Even today—he is in college now back East—when he comes home, he has a job, a flexible job. Even today, he visits Joe. He visited the Home the other day and walks with him and you know, sits with him. This is a young man who is a jewel. You won't find many young boys 21 years old or 20's that devoted.

PL: Well, just to shift this back to you—As Joe was getting the help, finally—I'm wondering how you are helping yourself? Because the caregiver, as you said, is often the person who doesn't realize how depleted they are. Did you rely on friends? Did you talk about it? Did you talk to professionals about it? What did you do?

RF: I relied on my friends and on my children. I have a very dear friend who lives here on the Island. She's greatly supportive, tremendously supportive. She's like my second daughter, actually—Babette Schiller. You know, it took a long time for me to realize that he isn't here.

PL: Would you like me to pause for a second? [break in recording] There are now—I guess you would call them bereavement groups—but, groups for women and their

partners who are both suffering from this dreadful disease. Did you consider going to a group?

RF: I was encouraged by my doctor and by other people. I could never go because Joe would never be alone here with anybody. He would not let me out of his sight. The only one he would go with would be my son-in-law. Of course, he wasn't available during the week. So Betsy would take me to a play or to a movie on a Sunday afternoon. Jack is wonderful with him. That's the only person he would be alone with. Even with the caregivers that I had, he would not leave unless I was with him and that made it very difficult.

PL: What then prepared you to take the step to make the decision that you could no longer be in your home care for your husband? And that you needed him to be fully cared for at the Kline Galland Home.

RF: It was a very difficult decision for me to make. I never thought I could make it. He would ask me, every night, "Don't ever leave me." The reason I had—When the caregiver would take him for a walk. He would tell her or him—I had men too—"I want to go on walking, and you go home." A few times, he became very angry when he was made to turn around, when he was told, "You have to go home with me." He became very anxious and very angry that they made him go home. I didn't want him, G-d forbid, to become violent ever. Because they do become violent if they can't control themselves, I was told. He never became violent, thank G-d and I was very fearful of that. One evening, he didn't want to go to bed. It was 10 o'clock. He said, "I'm not getting undressed. I'm going out." I said, "Honey, I'm undressed already. Don't you want to join me and go to bed now?" "No, I'm going out for a walk. I'll be back." Well, I always had the security lock locked. Luckily it locks from the inside and he didn't like that the door was locked. I finally convinced him—you know, it must have been five minutes, but the five minutes seemed like an hour—"that we can go the next morning for a walk." That

finally convinced me that I really can't handle this by myself.

PL: What prepared you to take that step? What is your—

RF: I wasn't prepared. I really wasn't. Because I always hoped that I could handle it till the end of his life. I really wasn't prepared.

PL: Do you feel somehow that you, personally, are responsible?

RF: No. No, I don't feel any guilt. I know I did what I could.

PL: What about resentment?

RF: I never had resentment. No, I talk to Ruth about it. I never felt resentful.

PL: So, now that Joe is at Kline Galland, do you feel a sense of relief? Do you feel that you can return to focusing on your needs?

RF: I don't want to call it "a relief." Yet, it is a relief. It is a relief for me because I do now things—not under pressure. When I was paying bills here, I'd always have to watch: what was he doing? I do it now because nobody interferes with my action. I can do the things that I want to do and I am slowly going out, you know? It is difficult for me. I am going to a party on Sunday. I was at a party at the Bermans a few weeks ago. It is difficult to do it by yourself. It's very hard. But I feel that I can't be a recluse. I have to mingle again. I have to go out. My friends insist anyhow. So I slowly get used to the idea of going alone, which is not easy.

PL: Is there a community of men and women that you talk to about being—I hate to say it, but, you know—you know, "partnerless"—even though your partners are still alive?

RF: My friends, yes. I have dear friends.

PL: Are we coping with it all differently?

RF: It's very different when you go by yourself. I always feel almost guilty that I do it, you know because he was so much part of my life.

PL: Are there things, Ruth, that you are re-introducing yourself to now? Things that you have been eager to re-invest yourself in?

RF: I will go again to the theater and concerts. Not every week like we used to, but occasionally.

PL: If you were to sort of step outside of this situation, which is very hard to do, but, to look at your generation, and the ways that you've been taught to deal with these significant health crises. Is there something that you've perceived about how you were taught or the significance of this experience and how you've dealt with it?

RF: Well, the first thing that you do when you get married, you say, "In sickness and in health." But, this is so natural. If you love somebody, it's such a natural thing to do that you don't even think about it. We had such a perfect marriage, so it's a natural thing.

PL: Have you thought about, or what do you feel about, the role of therapy because that's something very much a part of this younger generation?

RF: For myself, you mean?

PL: Yes.

RF: I feel I don't need it because I'm my own therapist. I really feel very strongly about that. I mean, I'm not afraid of anything; it's wonderful. But what can a therapist tell me that I haven't done or should do? He's not able to change the situation, and I've read so much about it, you know, that I strongly feel that I really don't need it. I am a very strong person.

PL: Have you, during this time, yourself, experienced any significant you know, health decisions that you've had to make about your own body?

RF: I know that I have to be very careful walking because I have a balance problem. So I'm very, very cautious of what I do. I do have a walker here in case I need it. I know that my balance is way off. Some days it is better than others. But I walk on a cane. I have to hold onto a person outside. I do have physical therapy for that. I go to my doctor if I need to talk to him. He's very supportive. He's not a therapist but he is a therapist in a way as far as I'm concerned. He's been very supportive. In fact, I discussed with him—and he knows Joe well—he said, "I know you're not ready to have Joe go to Kline Galland. And if you feel the way you do, don't push it." But then, when it came to the fact that he insisted on going out at 10:00 o'clock at night, that's when I felt I just can't handle it. Too much pressure. You know, the pressure was so tremendous that I felt I couldn't handle it anymore.

PL: All these choices that you had to make, have you ever relied on female friendships?

RF: Oh yes. Yes. And as I say, my children are very supportive of this. But my friend, Babette who calls me every day, sees how I am. Joe was hospitalized three times. Each time was a Friday afternoon if you believe it. Erev Shabbat. So twice I slept in the hospital. Of course, the children came until Shabbat started, you know? And then, they went home. But Babette stayed with me. She's the truest friend I ever could have. She knows what's going on And she encouraged me to have Joe go to the Kline Galland. She was helpful in the decision that I made.

PL: I realize—

RF: It was hard.

PL: —at the time of this interview, it's only been a short while—a month or two—since you made this decision.

RF: June 19th.

PL: So, I wondered before we moved to the more conclusion of this—I'd rather conclude on a different note—whether or not there is any other significant experience your and Joe's experiences around his Alzheimer's, around these decisions that we haven't talked about That has been significant to you? Maybe to tell me the story of how he wound up walking from Kline Galland for four hours—

RF: Yes.

PL: —And that nearly drove you crazy. [laughter]

RF: Yes. I did tell you that.

PL: Yes. That was off-tape. But I wanted to know then—

RF: You don't have that on tape?

PL: No.

RF: Well, I'd like to tell you that experience.

PL: Please.

RF: There's a gentleman whose wife is a stroke patient. I do not know why she's on the Alzheimer's floor. Maybe she also has Alzheimer's, I'm not sure. I have known this gentleman for years and we talked to him the first few days we were there and he sees everybody has their name on their rooms, you know? Joe has a beautiful room, by the way, with a beautiful view of Lake Washington, which he loves. So the gentleman talked to us a few times during the week. So that Sunday, was actually the first or second Sunday he was there, Mr. Kaplan talked to Joe. I was at the Home. Joe had lunch in the lunchroom. I saw him come out of the lunchroom walking and I called him. I said,

"Yossi, you want to join me?" He said, "No, I'll walk a little bit." So, he walked up and down the corridor, the hall. So I kept reading my Times. In comes the nurse a few minutes later and said, "Have you seen Joe?" I said, "Yes, he was walking outside." "Well, he's nowhere to be found." I said, "What do you mean? I just saw him a few minutes ago walking." "Well, he isn't here. We looked in every room. Every toilet." I found that strange. So, they looked upstairs and came down—came down from upstairs and said, "Mr. Kaplan took him in the elevator upstairs, talked for a minute, and out walked Joe." He went for a walk. He didn't know where he was going. He crossed two very, very busy streets. One terrible neighborhood and walked for over four hours. Up a hill to a skyway which is near Renton. The synagogue was called, the rabbi was called, and we called 911. But they didn't call 911 when I asked them to. I thought that they should immediately call 911. "No, there are certain procedures we follow." I said, "There's no procedure to follow. When somebody's not here—please call 911." They waited at least 15 minutes. It's been a long time. So, finally, they called 911. The police were on the alert. I went with one of the nurses to look for him. I thought maybe he walked to a synagogue because that was his life, and he didn't walk in that direction at all. He walked South instead of North. Somebody said they saw him go North. I said, "If they saw him go North, why didn't they stop him?" Well, they didn't. It was raining that day. He had nothing on but his short-sleeve shirt and a kippah. It was cold. So, the rabbi from Shul, Rabbi Gelber, was called. She set up a command center. They organized 100 people. By the time they had it all organized, luckily he was found. A nurse's aide that happened to work on the same floor — Joe is on the second floor — had just moved to Skyway, where Joe was walking, three days before. She came home, did her grocery shopping, and saw a man walking that looked like Joe. She recognized his shirt. Then she said, "Somebody else can wear the same shirt," you know? So she drove on and she went home, unpacked her groceries, she said. Then she went to her window to make sure it isn't Joe. But when she looked again, he was nearer—a half a block away from the house—and she recognized him then. So she quickly walked out,

crossed the street, and talked to him, and he recognized her, her face. Took him in, dried him up, called the home that he was found, and brought him—gave him a jacket to wear and brought him back. When he came into the home, Betsy and I hugged him and cried. We couldn't help crying. He said, "Why are you crying? Did somebody pass away?" That was his reaction. He had no idea what he did.

PL: What was going on for you?

RF: I was sitting there. Some of my friends happened to come to visit. Of course, they stayed with me after I came back and we couldn't find him. It was one of the most taxing experiences. It reminded me of when Joe was in a concentration camp. The agony I had to go through, "Would he ever come out alive, you know?" That was the first thing: would I ever see him alive? Because the area that he had to cross is full of young gangs. He had no money with him. No ID. They could have done anything to him and that's what my thought was. Would I ever see him again?

PL: So, from these experiences, Ruth, what advice do you have for other women—or other men, for that matter—who are going through the same thing? What kind of advice do you have for them?

RF: Some people say, you should have put him into Kline Galland Home earlier. I said, "Absolutely not." I would have felt very guilty for doing that. I know some couples do that. They do not wait. Some women do not have the strength, perhaps, to go through this. I felt that I have the strength. I do whatever I can to enjoy his presence, you know?

PL: What do you look forward to? We have only a minute or so, and I was wondering, as somebody who has so much more to give, what are your hopes for your grandchildren—as a woman who has witnessed so much of a big part of the twentieth century. What are your final words for this interview?

RF: My grandchildren, of course, learned from this experience, tremendously. They have been tremendously supportive. The only thing I can tell them: advise them to have a beautiful marriage. Bring their kids up ethically—that's the most important thing in life—and lead a happy, healthy, ethical, charitable life. That's my advice to them. Mainly, to keep their marriage together. Marriage is, to me, a 50/50 proposition. Be respectful and have Drech Eretz [respect] for everyone.

PL: Thank you so much for this interview, Ruth.

RF: You're welcome.

[END OF INTERIVEW]