Arva Davis Gray Transcript

Pamela Brown Lavitt: This is the oral history interview of Arva Davis Gray. Today's date is Monday, June 25th. It is around 1:30 p.m. We are in the home of Arva Davis Gray at 644, 131st Avenue, N.E., Bellevue, Washington. And I am Pamela Brown Lavitt, the oral historian for the Jewish Women's Archives "Weaving Women's Words" Project in Seattle. And before I begin, I just want to make sure that I have your permission to tape record our history today.

Area Gray: Certainly.

PL: Great. So, I want to begin at the beginning. [laughter] And I'd actually like to know a little bit about your name "Arva" – and how you were given that name?

AG: According to some of the records, I was named after a Great Aunt. And—but her name was spelled E-R-V-A. I don't—I guess my mother thought "A" was prettier. We have a lot of peculiar names in our family where people have been named, and in every other generation they come up with wild ones. I went with plain ones for my children – and then, I have a granddaughter named Berkeley who is supposedly named for—rather than name her Hamburger, the kids decided to name her Berkeley, to make her American. And I kept saying, it's "Barclay" and it's English. But at any rate, we tend to—every other generation stayed with pretty simple names and the odds ones are stinky names. So I've met very few Arva's – but it was an old, I think, Mormon name in the family.

PL: So, you were born, where and when?

AG: In Midway, Utah – in July 20th, 1926. I was born—they had a little tiny hospital—well, actually I was born in Heber, which is an even bigger city. There must be

3,000 residents there. Heber was probably less than 1,000. And most of the people were related. It was unusual at that time for people to be born in a hospital. My mother did have a midwife. I was born in a hospital, as were my older brothers. I have two older brothers – one who is still living, and he's 77, and another brother who died at 56. We have a history in our family of not living long – so I am probably the oldest. Other than my brother I am probably the oldest Davis around because my father died at 44 of heart problems. And my mother died when she was 51. So, I don't have a lot of the background that you would have talking to the family and remembering things – I never had because my brothers and I tried to remember what went on when we were small. And so, that's about it on that.

PL: Can you tell me a little bit about the family you were born into? What did your father and mother do?

AG: Well, basically, my mother was a housewife until I was seven, I think it was. And my father had different jobs. When before the Depression, my grandfather was a very prosperous man in this little town of Midway. He had the hardware stores – the this, the that, the so on – and he was a Commissioner, and so on. And as each child was born, he gave them a plot of land, built them a house, and started them on. So, we had a little farm, and so on. Eventually, with the Depression, my father went to work in the mines in Park City. We moved to Salt Lake. And most of our family did move there because there was really no way to make a living in these small communities. My father continued to work in the mines. And during one period, he went to work for the CCC, which was the Civilian Conservation Corps. There was actually no work available. And we really were fairly poor. In fact, we were poor. Eventually, my mother and father both became—she became a beautician and he became a barber. And they set up a shop, not far from the University. And they both worked terrible hours. I mean they would work Saturdays, Sundays, at any time. And so, my brothers and I became very responsible. I guess you'd call us latchkey kids, except the doors were never locked. When my mother went

to work, and I was seven, seven-and-a-half, I had responsibilities. My brothers had responsibilities. And by the time I was nine, my job was to buy the groceries. I got $7.50 a week to buy the groceries for the family. I would start dinner before my parents came home. We were to keep up the house, keep up the yard, and do things. But we still played a lot. And we had many friends. And most of them were in the same position. Which didn't make it that bad. We had a lot of laughs. And even though our house was – you know, insignificant – my father and mother were always welcomed to have friends over – especially my brothers. My father on a Saturday night would play cards with the kids using matchsticks, or whatever, for money. And we had a lot of fun at home. On the weekends my parents worked very hard. If they had time around the house we painted our own house, we did the electricity, we did anything that needed to be done. We had to learn to do it because we couldn't afford to hire anybody. And that was pretty much it. We—my brothers were—I was the spoiled one because I was the youngest, so I got away with a lot of things that they didn't. And to this day, my one brother still reminds me of what a terror I was. I remember, one time, I went back to – actually Heber – which is a big city next to Midway – to visit my grandmother. And I thought she adored me. And there must have been 20 or more grandchildren. I was on the back of her rocker. And actually she was rocking the chair and I was rocking it faster. And I recall – I couldn't have been more than four at the time – she reached around and didn't say anything. She just—oh, I think she had said "Stop it." I kept going. So she reached around and pinched me, and I always remember that woman pinching me. [laughter] But as a rule we were generally—we had a lot of fun. My mother, my father and my brothers had a pretty good sense of humor. So, we were always playing gags on one another and doing terrible things to one another – which always ended up pretty funny. And that was about it. I graduated from high school. I went – when I was 16, I followed my brothers by about two years. One, four years before me, and the next one, two years after that. And so, as I went to school, my oldest brother was a hellion. My middle brother was the kind, sweet young man who studied very hard. And I was probably in-between the two of them. And

as I showed up for school – I guess there was a tremendous family resemblance – and the teachers would always say, “Oh, are you another one of those Davis’s? Which one – what are you like? Like Kent? Or like Van?” I had to say I was more like Van. But at any rate, it was a terrible thing to have to follow two brothers. And as I say, the one that was especially nice, in the middle, put a lot of pressure on me to behave, but I didn’t. After I graduated from school, I wanted to go to college. And of course, by that time, my father had died, and my mother was working in the beauty shop. And there was really no way that I could go to college. My brothers had both gone to—in the service. One of them in the Navy and one in the Army. They met, of course, in the Philippines during the war. Saw one another. At any rate, it was up to me to figure out how I could go to college. So, I worked for the telephone company for, oh, six to eight months. I practically got fired there because I didn’t like the way the business was run – which is natural for me to criticize the way anything’s run. I then—the Cadet Nurse Corps came up. I could join that and go to school, and become a nurse. They would pay for my education. They would pay for my housing, and they would assure me that I could be an R.N. when I finished. So, I went to the University of Utah. I did live at home, even though I could live there. I went to the U. for the three years. Actually, I went to the University for six months and then moved out to the hospital, which was St. Mark’s – it’s an Episcopal Hospital in Salt Lake. I went to the Episcopal Hospital because by that time, I considered myself no longer a Mormon. When I was very young, I had gone to church with a couple of my friends – and one of them was Catholic – and the Bishop mentioned that if you were not a Mormon, you were certain to go to Hell. I couldn’t see how this nice friend of mine was destined to go to Hell. So, I really became disinterested. And I went to the Episcopal Nursing School. By the time I had been in the Hospital for six months – I was 17 at the time – they put me in charge of a night ward because all of the nurses had gone into service. There was really a nursing shortage. So, a 17-year-old girl was in charge of a medical floor. Of course, there were only 25 patients. But this was before penicillin. And in fact, penicillin was just coming in. But you gave 5,000 units of penicillin every

hour to someone. And these people with pneumonia were—I mean, it was unbelievable how sick they got and how awful it was. And I would be alone with them on this floor, taking care of these people. And then, go home—go back to the nurse's home at about 7:30. Sleep an hour. Go to classes at least four hours a day, and then, rest some more. So, it was really a pretty hard ordeal. I was always given a lot of responsibilities and I guess I accepted it. But anyway, I graduated in December of 1946. I was 20 and a half. So, I couldn't get my nursing license. You couldn't do that until you were 21. So, I went to Sun Valley and worked there for a year as a nurse in the hospital. And then I returned and took my license. And actually, I returned in probably September when they gave the licenses. And then I moved to—uh, two friends—oh, I'm backing up. When I went back to Salt Lake, before I took my exam, I worked in the Hospital again as Head Nurse. And it bothered me because I made less than the nurses under me. But I injured my back then, and ended up flat on my back for a while. This was the cure – either that, or have surgery which I didn't want to have. That's bothered me the rest of my life. But I had to lift – another girl and I, and this was before the slide boards or anything – had to lift a 400-pound man off the operating table. And so, as I say, I have a recurrent back injury. I guess that's unimportant.

PL: To use the metaphor of a "back" – I actually want to backtrack a little bit [laughter].

AG: Okay.

PL: Because you've told us such a rich story already. And you're 20, and there are so many things that I want to ask you about – having grown up in the community you grew up in – and you mentioned making a very strong decision in your life was to no longer be Mormon. And I'm wondering if I can just ask a little bit more, going back to the household that you grew up in. Can you describe a little bit about the values – whether they are religious or otherwise – in the community that you grew up in? Who were your neighbors? What was the neighborhood like? Can you set the picture?

AG: Oh, we had, as I say, this—almost everybody was in the same position that we were. We lived in a neighborhood where all the kids after they had done their – whatever they had to do – would go out and play “kick the can” or whatever – until all hours of the night until our parents could finally find us and bring us in. Because my parents worked, my brother’s job when I was little was to take care of me. So we would walk to the park and have ballgames. I went—we would go skating in the winter. Just early in the morning. We did quit a few things. It was the kind of neighborhood where you never really worried, I don’t think. I was warned about certain people – and of course, there were the strange people in the neighborhood. But pretty much, it was a place where you could go and be safe. I didn’t—of course, none of us were afraid of being kidnapped. They’d lose money on that deal. But I don’t know. We just—my mother had her brothers – a sister and a brother that lived in Salt Lake – so the family would get together for holidays, Thanksgiving and so on. I remember going over to my Aunt Anne’s who, I believe, was Jewish – that had converted to Mormonism. And she used to make these wonderful Thanksgiving dinners and so on. And I was the one that helped, my cousin and I. Although I had a cousin that was born the same day I was one hour older than she was and about two heads taller. So, I was responsible and she was a little girl. But as I say, we had a large family with a pretty good amount of laughs. As I say, we were poor, and we—I don’t think we ever realized how poor we were until I grew up.

PL: Your Aunt Anne—what is it about her that made you think she converted?

AG: My mother said sometime she was Jewish. But in the Mormon Church, of course, they accept Judaism because they feel they’re the Lost Tribe.

PL: I want to ask a little bit more about that because—

AG: Don’t ask me too much because my memory’s not that good.

PL: Well, can you elaborate at all about what you mean by Mormonism being accepting of Jewish, and converts from Judaism?

AG: They felt that basically they were close to the Jewish religion. They tithed. They did a number of things that supposedly you do in Judaism. They felt that the Lost Tribe settled in South America and they found a gold plate—I mean I'm not going to go into it because I don't believe it.

PL: The folklore of it is just as fascinating.

AG: Yes.

PL: So, please share it.

AG: But they felt that Joseph Smith had found these lost tablets that told they were the – that the Mormons were one of the Lost Tribe. And they basically followed many things of Judaism. Of course, they were outcast just as Jews were. It's interesting in my—way back, you know, and Mormons go back to history. My family supposedly can trace its roots back to Charlemagne. But anyway, I'm not sure that I believe it. But one part of the family, I know, in France were Huguenots. And so, they were pushed out of France into Holland. And I guess it's my habit to always find a religion where they're sort of persecuted. I seem to search for that – but, not really. But at any rate, I really—I was a very headstrong girl. And when I decided that Mormonism was not for me, my family couldn't do anything about it. They weren't terribly religious, although my brother is extremely religious now and is a Bishop, and all kinds of things, and been on missions. He's a—let's me get away with anything I want to. But it's—I think Mormonism is a very difficult religion if you want to live it. Because it requires an awful lot of things of people, and most of the people I know that were Mormons were not observant, really. As I say, my brother's probably the exception.

PL: In the home, how do you remember being Mormon? Or, was it mostly in school?

AG: Oh, it was really nothing. You fasted once a month on Sunday. You actually—it was much worse than Judaism. You woke up one morning and didn't eat until the next morning. And if you were following certain things. But we didn't do it really. My parents were too busy getting things done that they—a lot of things went by the wayside. There were a lot of activities at the Mormon Church as you probably noticed – where the Mormons are, there are churches around the neighborhoods. And so, in my neighborhood, the Church was within walking distance. And for anybody, it was within walking distance. With every few churches, they had a social hall. So, they had dances. I sang in a choir. They had all kinds of activities for the children after school, if you could do it. And most of us did. We went just because everybody else went. But they—I know later they sponsored basketball and all kinds of things for the kids. And of course, women, naturally in the Mormon religion, were second-rate citizens. And—

PL: How do you mean? How so?

AG: Well, they could never be an officer of the Church. They were supposed to stay home and take care of the children. They were not allowed—they weren't considered – although most of the women I knew were pretty strong – they basically—the husband was the Master. And what he said was the thing. It wasn't in my family. And it wasn't, of course, in the families I knew. But according to Mormon Religion, women were really a second-class citizen. The whole teachings, just as they taught that the Blacks had the mark of Cain—which was one of the reasons why, until it became financially feasible – I guess I shouldn't say those things – for them. They had to accept Black people or they would lose funding in their schools and so on. But it was a very enclosed society, basically. And I guess I really didn't like it.

PL: At what point did you make that realization? And was it slowly? And what were the things that you particularly felt, you know, bristled your – bristled you?

AG: Well, as I say, the one that was striking was with these friends when I was very young. And after that, things sort of added on and kept compounding itself. My brothers were better than I was. And that women could not have a leadership role in anything. It really rankled me because I couldn't see any difference between me and my brothers. And my parents didn't either.

PL: And you said that you participated quite a bit—

AG: Oh sure, because—

PL: —with your brothers? Sports and things?

AG: Oh yes. They had—I mean, after school we would have a neighborhood baseball game or whatever. And I just had to play sports with them because if I stood on the side, I'd whine, and they said, "Well, you're going to have to play then." So, I was a first baseman on a boy's baseball team. But that was just accepted. And I was a terrible tomboy.

PL: Oh, is that right?

AG: Uh-huh.

PL: So how do you live your life as a tomboy?

AG: Oh, I know my mother had some relatives visiting, and we were in this poor circumstances, and my mother was talking about how terrible it was living in this neighborhood because the kids were so tough. "Look at that." And outside these two kids were beating each other up, and, of course, it was me beating up the neighborhood boy. And so, I was really quite a disgrace. [laughter] But I couldn't stand that kind of thing. And if somebody said something, I was just as easy to hit them back as the boys were.

PL: What were the values – either Mormon or not – that your parents endowed you with? Were they disciplinarians? How did you feel that they conducted themselves according to the Mormon Church or not?

AG: I don't know if it was the Mormon Church or not, but, my mother was very clever in a way. I respected my father very much. He was a very sweet, quiet man. And when I would do something that she thought was terrible, she'd say, "I just hate to do this, but I'm going to have to tell your father." And when he came home, I was so humiliated, because I didn't want to let him down. And I think that was the thing that my parents taught us: not to let them down and not to let ourselves down. And that we had responsibilities. We had to be honest. We couldn't cheat, lie or anything like that. Because even though she didn't know, or my father didn't know, they acted like they did. So, it could be, really a restraining kind of thing. Not beating. Not anything. It was just, "I'll have to tell your father about that. I'm very sorry, and I'm very upset about it."

PL: What was your relationship with your mother like?

AG: My mother and I had a lot of problems, but I'd rather not discuss that because it is something that's very painful still, now.

PL: Okay. Can you describe a little bit what Salt Lake City was like when you were growing up there? Distinctive landmarks? Who you associated with? Restaurants? Things of that nature?

AG: [laughter] Restaurants? I didn't eat really in a restaurant until I worked in Sun Valley. Occasionally a hamburger place, or gosh, they used to have a place called, believe it or not – I think it started here – Coon Chicken Inn. But the places we ate when we went out were not something I'd consider a restaurant. They were less classy that McDonald's. And, oh I remember one of the things we used to do when we were children. If we had everything done on Saturday, the whole neighborhood would get

together and we would make some kind of sandwiches. And we'd go on hikes up above the Temple, which is in the—on the hill, just above Salt Lake. We'd go beyond that. Not the Temple. The state capitol. And we would go way beyond that. And there were lots of caves up in the hills. And we'd go, I guess, spelunking when we were little kids. And we'd spend the whole day hiking and we'd come home just exhausted that night. But we'd all hung together, and I think the oldest one might have been 14, if that old. But there were eight or ten of us that would just take off on Saturday if we had everything done. And it was, you know, we didn't have toys. We didn't have—we'd have a ball and bat maybe, but we did have a tennis racket. I think there were two in the family. So, two of us could play tennis at one time. But there just wasn't the material things. So, we had to make up our own games and our own amusement, and we did. There were amusement parks outside of Salt Lake. One was at Great Salt Lake, where they had a pavilion and they used to bring in dance bands when I was young. They'd tour the country – go from New York to Los Angeles and this was a stopping point, so most of the big bands came there. And of course, when I was getting older, that was the time that you would go dancing also. There were about three pavilions in Salt Lake where you could go and hear *the* top orchestra of the time and dance. But I can't recall too many other things. As I say, my friends – depending upon when I went to school – my best friend married my brother, my middle brother. And she lived a couple of blocks away from me. She was a very pretty, very lady-like person. Her mother used to tell me I'd have to learn to behave. And I always had boyfriends. But they were boyfriends that we'd laugh and have a lot of fun together. And I used to think those girls with their prissy dresses, and so on. And I just couldn't stand the whole thing. And I really never had any problems when I was older, getting a date or something because I had pretty good looking brothers, so these girls would have to be nice to me and make their brothers take me out in order to make my brothers.

PL: Would you say, Arva, that because you were a tomboy, it made you a little bit of a social oddity?

AG: Well, at times, with the girls. But it didn't bother me. I mean, I've never been upset about what somebody said about me as long as I haven't done any damage to anyone. And this was more or less my feeling. I couldn't see why girls would like to sit around and talk when you could run or jump or play things. It just seemed ridiculous. I was a good student and I'd study. But I just felt that the bit of girls being nice little ladies was an awful burden to put on girls, more than anything else. I know it didn't bother me.

PL: Did you express yourself as a tomboy in how you dressed? Did you dress differently?

AG: No, I dressed the same as the other girls. My mother made most of my clothes. That was the terrible thing. She always used to put ruffles on my dress. And of course, because she was a beauty operator, she would put curls in my hair so I would leave for school and find a first hose I could find and turn it on my hair and straighten it. And then I would tear the ruffles off my dress because I hated it. And I know when I graduated from high school, my brother had come home. He bought me the most gorgeous graduation gown. And I immediately spurned it, and went out and got some piqué and made me a white dress with yarn ropes around the neck, and embroidered a little Mexican boy on the pocket. I could not stand the idea of the sweetheart neckline and the many layers of tulle. And so, I just expressed myself that way. I didn't feel any different. It was just not something I wanted to do.

PL: But you learned how to sew. And your mother taught you how to sew?

AG: Right.

PL: So you could command your own vision of how you wanted to dress?

AG: Right, right.

PL: Well, did you find that empowering?

AG: No. Not especially – well, empowering – I guess it was because I had to do it. Until I graduated from – or I was graduating from training – I did not buy many clothes. And of course, when I did, I would go into a store, and I couldn't stand the way that something was made. So I ended up buying very expensive clothes. But I had to buy them – even if it was just one dress. Because I couldn't stand the way the other things were made. But I guess it did. Because I knew that if I wanted something to wear, or something, I could knit it or I could sew it or something. But it was never a big, important thing.

PL: What do you remember about what you knew about Jewish life back then? Or knew of Jews? You mentioned that the Mormon Church had some connections. Or at least had some certain camaraderie with Jewish life. But I'm wondering what you knew? What was the first thing you knew about Jews back then?

AG: Nothing. Absolutely nothing. I guess I—well, when I first moved to Seattle. I'm jumping ahead. But I moved here with two of the girls that graduated with me. And I had, as I say, the back injury. And we all applied for jobs. I applied through the nurse's registry. One girl used the newspaper. And the other girl called the clinics. And one friend got a job with Irwin Wirth, a Jewish doctor – a Jewish psychiatrist actually. The other friend got a job with Sidney Weinstein, a Jewish internist. And I got a job with Bernard Gray – probably Scandinavian. And one day we were talking, and they all belonged to "Benny Birth" [phonetic] – B'nai Brith. And we didn't—we thought that Dr. Weinstein was Jewish. We thought that Dr. Wirth was German, and we thought Bernard was a Scandinavian of some sort. I really didn't know anything about Judaism. I don't recall it ever being a startling thing to me. There are people with different religions. And it didn't seem to, as I say, there weren't—well, I did know a few families in Salt Lake. My brother worked for one family that owned a filter company. And I can't think of the name of them other than, of course, there was a jewelry store, owned by a Jewish family, and a department store. They were nice people. There was nothing wrong. Of course, the Mormon Church at the beginning used to do terrible things and put signs on the buildings

of the Mormons so you would patronize them rather than the Jewish business. But that was all over with by that time. Although it may be back.

PL: What do you by “put signs?”

AG: Well, they would like make you know that the ZCMI – which is the Zion’s Mercantile—Zion-something. Anyway, it was a Mormon store. There were—like you see people with the fish on their car. You know they’re Christians unless it says “Darwin” or something. But there were signs. But we never paid any attention to it. But I know, even today there are lots of stores that Mormons patronize because they are Mormon stores. I don’t think there’s anything wrong with that. I certainly patronize Jewish businesses in preference to other businesses. I feel, you know, I’ll get a better deal with people that I understand.

PL: Were you part of—since you said that your family traced itself back to Charlemagne, and you know was fifth- or sixth-generation Mormon Community in Salt Lake City.

AG: No, they came from—actually some of them came from Nauvoo, Illinois with Joseph Smith.

AG: Others came from Ohio. They came from all over. They really were the ones that came on covered wagons into Utah. They settled—my great grandparents settled a number of towns. One was named Wallsburg after one great-grandparent. The parts of Idaho and Utah were settled by my relatives.

PL: Was there a certain amount of pride that your parents felt about being a part of this incredible heritage that they instilled in you?

AG: Well, I guess it was just a sense of belonging if you wanted to be. My husband also says that he was never bar mitzvahed because in his community—he lived where there were all Jewish families and he didn’t have to identify himself. I had the same kind of

thing. I didn't have to identify myself. I was accepted, and there was no problem.

PL: And just to mine this a little bit further—you said that there were local kind of satellite churches. But what do you remember about going to the big institutions of the Mormon Church? Was the Tabernacle built?

AG: Oh yes, the Tabernacle was built long—it was one of the first buildings that was built, the Temple and the Tabernacle. Yes, I could go into the Tabernacle. I couldn't go into the Temple. No one could, unless you were married there or had gone through service before you went on a mission. That's a closed place. I've never been in it. In fact, I've always laughed when I was invited to my nephew's weddings, and so on, I was invited to the wedding. It was a formal invitation. But you met at the restaurant after the wedding, or wherever the reception was being held. And only those who had been blessed by the Mormon Church could go into the Temple for the ceremony. So, it always struck me funny that I'd travel all the way to Salt Lake to go have dinner with somebody. But I guess you do for Passover and everything else.

PL: At what point are children asked to go on missions? And you said in your pre-interview with Michelle Rosen than you felt you left the church at age 10. And then you said you formally felt disconnected from it at age 16, 17. What point did you see your friends and things having to go and serve in some other way?

AG: Oh, I was, you know, when I was 16 and the War was on. Nobody really was going on missions then; they were going in the service. And so, by the time I went into training, all the fellows I knew were gone. They were not in Salt Lake any more. We would go to USO dances, or this or that, to meet people. And we met people from all over the world. I mean, all over the country. But we—no, most of the fellows were gone. And they were the ones who went on the missions.

PL: The men did?

AG: Yes. Later, the women did too. But no, they were the ones who were expected to go on missions. And I don't remember seeing—it's funny. Well, of course, it's not funny, because I went to Sun Valley [after graduating and returned in September 1947 to take my exams for registration] then I moved to Seattle. But I don't remember seeing any of my old boyfriends from high school. And I think it is just because we all moved on with our lives. But it always seemed strange because I remember people saying, "Well, we lived in this neighborhood all the time," and I thought, "Gee, that's strange." And I guess it is basically because I left home by the time I was 16.

PL: Did you talk to other friends who felt similarly to you – that they felt that they wanted to leave the Mormon Church?

AG: No, no.

PL: Was that something you kept under wraps?

AG: Oh no, but I had the two friends that I came to Seattle with. One of them became an Episcopalian; the other one is a very staunch Mormon. But we came up here, we'd all gone to the St. Mark's School because we were sort of fed up with the Mormon Church. But the one of them went back and is very—she married a fellow here. He converted. The whole family converted. And it wasn't—I think it was just maturing, and I wasn't too interested in what religion anybody was, or what they thought. I'm very stubborn. What I believe in, I believe in. And I'm very difficult to persuade as a number of people will tell you.

PL: Where did you go to school?

AG: I went to school in Salt Lake—you mean as a child?

PL: Uh-huh.

AG: I went to Sumner Grade School. Then, I went to Roosevelt Junior High School, and then I went to South High School. And that was the out school because East High School was the one that was in. And of course the Junior High that I went to was the one that the kids always went to East High School. And—

PL: What do you mean by "it was the out school"?

AG: Well, there was an "in" school, and an "out" school. East was the good one and South was not supposed to be as good. But my brothers had gone to South and they said, "You are going to South." So I went to high school – it was quite a ways. Well, they all were. We had to learn to walk – not 10 miles through the snow – but, we did some pretty good walking. Busses weren't that convenient. By the time that you could catch a bus to go to school, you're halfway there. So, not really. But it was—I mean we all walked a lot. Just as we took these hikes and everything. It was no hardship to walk. I think the only time it was was when I broke my leg. I was limping afterwards and my brothers were walking—in fact, I think it was when my father died. No, it wasn't. Yes, it was. And I was still limping. And my brothers said, "We're not going to walk with you if you continue limping." So, I had to make a conscious effort to stop limping. But—

PL: What do you think about that?

AG: I agreed with them. I was sort of getting away with something for a long time. Getting a lot of sympathy, and it was time for it to be over. So—

PL: What would you say your experiences at the school were most formative? Were there any particular experiences, curricular activities or teachers that really influenced you?

AG: Well, I had a teacher in grade school but I cannot remember his name – I keep thinking it's Mr. Arborgast, but I don't think it was – who kept spurring me on. And one time, before I went to University, they all thought I could write so I was on the Year Book,

the school Year Book. I was active in a few of the activities. But—and because of that, I never learned to us a period, properly. Because I'd used dashes, and exclamation points and everything else just to express my awe at something. And then, I guess this is going to reveal my true self. In high school, I had a teacher Miss Kaplan, who was the biology teacher, and she was a wonderful teacher. My oldest brother had gone in there. He didn't take the class. He had been a hall monitor. But he used to like her so much that he'd go and audit her class. And she said he was the worst trouble she'd ever seen. But he was always sneaking in the class. And my second brother went through it, and I guess was just in the room. And so she used to tease me and really pushed me quite a bit. But I don't recall anything I did. I took math when the girls took sewing. I took—I'm trying to remember. We had to take algebra and geometry. I took trig – I never really understood it – and plane geo… I can't even remember what it was. But I specialized in math and science classes thinking I would be an engineer or something. And of course my little brother is. He became a civil engineer. He is retired now, but had a filter plant, similar to the one that he worked for in Utah. And I guess the feeling was that you could do anything you wanted to but you had to work for it.

PL: Do you feel that boys and girls were tracked any differently?

AG: Yes. I—they definitely were. I just didn't fit the mold. And most of the girls that I knew played with dolls and had tea parties and so on, and I just didn't have time for it.

PL: So, what were the things that you did instead?

AG: I went out and played with the guys. I'd go—I'd read. I'd do anything else. I'd go and work in the yard. I just got so bored with that. They had, the girls had these little clubs where they'd meet and gossip. And I'd think, "Oh, I can't stand that." And I'd get away from it. And when I was finally 16, or so—I mean I couldn't be less interested in a lot of the things they did.

PL: Were there particular books? I mean, you said you read. Were there particular books or authors that you were drawn to? Any series of comic books, or anything like that?

AG: No, not comic books. Anything I could find, I'd read. I have a wonderful memory. I do not remember the book I read yesterday so I just read and probably don't learn anything from it.

PL: So, you said you were thinking about being an engineer—

AG: Uh-huh.

PL: —when you grew up? So what was the course of study that you took? And I know that you're not an engineer now. So, what happened?

AG: Well, when I graduated from high school, as I say, my father was dead, my brothers were in the service and my mother was alone working. And there just wasn't the finances to go to school. That's why I worked for the telephone company thinking I could save some money and go to college. And I just found it was pretty impossible to—things were—I had some problems at home. And it was—I had to be on my own. So, it never happened.

PL: Let me pause the tape for just a second. [break in recording]

PL: So, you were explaining to me a little bit about a class that you flunked in school? [laughter]

AG: Well, I didn't really flunk it, but I didn't do very well. My parents decided that they'd surprise me and got me really one of the biggest presents I'd ever had – and it was a typewriter. I was so upset with my family. And I had to take typing to learn how to handle it. But the feeling in the family was that women become teachers, stenographers, maybe nurses – but not probably, because that's very hard. And in fact, when I went into

nursing, my mother said, “So you’d rather carry a bedpan than type, do nice clean typing?” And it really set me off very well.

PL: So, tell me a little bit about—I want to go back to where you had started with your story about entering college. And the decision to enter college and study nursing.

AG: Uh-huh.

PL: So, you obviously made some kind of decision, moving from engineering, math—

AG: Well, there was just no real way that I could become involved with that. I think that I might have had it in my mind as a sort of a—I’ll show—”I’m not interested in those girl things.” But when the opportunity came up to go into cadet nursing, I really was very pleased with it. And I actually enjoyed the course. I enjoyed being a nurse. I worked very hard. And all of us did at that time. Because of course none of the—there were I’d say four. This was a fairly large hospital. One of the three in Salt Lake at the time. Probably 300 beds. I may be wrong, but I don’t think I am far off. And there were only five registered nurses there at the time: the supervisor and then a night supervisor, a day supervisor, and a 3-to-11 supervisor, plus one that would fill in. And the rest of us were students who were taking care of, you know, the sick people in that community. We had horrible things happen. And I can understand why when people watch “M*A*S*H” they can laugh because I can remember one night there was an accident between a bus and a truck, just off the highway from where we were. I think all of the doctors nearby and all the nurses came back to work, and they were just hauling people in, badly injured. And it was a nightmare. But you had to keep your sense of humor because otherwise you’d be crying. And so I got to the point that I could work with very ill patients and be cheerful. And they knew they were dying. I knew they were dying. We weren’t fooling one another. But we could laugh and find things to enjoy. And I always did enjoy the patients. I’d usually get into trouble with the administration because they thought I was foolish sometimes. But I know, one doctor came in, and he was quite ill, and he was

complaining because his hair was dirty. So, I washed his hair in the bed. And of course, he was soaking wet and all this and that, but he was happy and so on. And I did it on my own time. But as I say, I enjoyed it. It was very hard. And only until I broke—injured my back and found that I could no longer do lifting and the different things that were required. When I went to Sun Valley, there were only six nurses there. There were two doctor's offices. And the little hospital at that time – I think it was 12 beds – one of the nurses had to give the anesthetics during the operations. Anyway, there were six of us. And during ski season, which is when I was there primarily, you'd do the morning shift and the then the accidents would come in, and you'd either have to scrub in the surgery or assist or give the anesthetic. Of course, I wasn't qualified to give the anesthetic. So, you'd end up working 14, 16 hours a day, during the rush time. And when I went home to visit one time, I walked into the hospital and they said, "Oh, just back from pink pill nursing, huh?" And I kind of enjoyed that because we really did work hard.

PL: What did they mean by "pink pill nursing?"

AG: They mean just sitting there and giving orders. Not doing any work, and sort of, you know, like I used to say, "When I get old, I'm going to sit and eat chocolates." That kind of thing – that you are just not doing any work. And we worked very hard there.

PL: How did they train people to be nurses? And is it different from the way nurses are trained today?

AG: I don't really know. It must be different. Because they certainly have different routines. You have more aides. You have more people. When I was a nurse, you had to do the entire care of a patient – from bathing them to giving them their medicine, to knowing exactly what kind of medicine they were taking. And what the counter-actions of that medicine could be. The thing I resented then was that we were not allowed to tell a patient what we were giving them. We'd give them a pill and if we told them, "Let me know if you get any heartburn," or this or that. That was not allowed. And I objected to

that. Because I always felts that people should be able to know what was going on, and what was going into their bodies. And that they accept now.

PL: What were the reasons behind that back then?

AG: Oh you might make people think up these things. In other words, you should observe, rather than let them know what to watch out for. And it was really an arcane kind of thing. You know, the bit of laying somebody in bed in a gown and then standing over them. To me, the whole thing was awful. You'd put somebody in a demeaning position to start with, and then you don't tell them what they're getting, you don't tell them why you are doing something, and it's silly. It's totally uncalled for. So, I got called before the thing quite a few times, but I got out of it some way.

PL: Because you would make exception, and you would be more forthcoming with your patients?

AG: Yes. I mean, why should they just take something because I tell them to? They should know what they're taking it for. And of course, they do that now. There is nobody saying—I mean, if you take something in the hospital now, they tell you what it's for. It's only when they've made a mistake. [laughter] That they don't tell you.

PL: Was there a particular culture of working as a nurse? Things that you did socially? Or the way that the hospitals ran themselves? Was there a women's culture? Was there a difference between nurses and doctors?

AG: Oh there sure was. There sure was. I could be working all night – and have to stay to finish my charts. You had to do all your own charting. They don't do that any more. You just drop off a slip and a secretary writes down what you observe. But I would have little things in my pockets on different people's temperatures at certain times, and so on, and not have time to do that during the shift. And I would be doing that at 8:00 o'clock in the morning, when actually I should have been off at 7:15. And the doctors would come

up and you'd have to get up and give them your chair. You had to help them out of their jackets. Give them their gowns. You had to do everything for them. You opened the door for them, just as men are supposed to do for ladies. They were "God." And I always said I would never marry a doctor, which I think is very funny.

PL: And why do you think it's so funny?

AG: Well, of course, my husband found out after we were married—I just—I didn't want to have anybody think that they were that much better than me. And I know that after we were married, I had to go in the office a couple of times to help out. And Bernard would start to take his coat off and it would fall on the floor, because I didn't help him off with his jacket. [laughter] But it's—I just felt that they had been raised to be superior beings. And I wanted somebody a little more likeable.

PL: What did nurses do then to make sure that they were recognized? You were working for – what it a government hospital?

AG: No, no. It was an Episcopal hospital?

PL: Was it unionized?

AG: Oh no. Oh heavens no.

PL: Was there any talk of unions in those days?

AG: No, are you kidding? Never. I mean you just—it was awful. I remember one time, I was at a student's meeting and they were talking about getting more nurses because they needed them badly. And they wanted to know what to do. And I, of course, made the terrible remark that one of the things that they should do is to get pasteurized milk in the hospital for the nurses – they had pasteurized milk for the patients but not for the nurses – and a couple of other cute remarks. And I was the next morning called in front

of the bishop of the diocese of Utah and the director of nurses and the director of the hospital, a doctor, had asked me to explain myself. So, I guess I could have been a union organizer about that time. And my husband always says I used to be very sweet, and I never was.

PL: [laughter] Were there other times that you felt that you spoke up because you felt justified about changing a certain policy? Or, the way that people treated people?

AG: Yes, [laughter] all the time.

PL: [laughter]

AG: I mean, that's sort of the normal status quo for me. I always open my big mouth, unfortunately. So, a lot of times, it wasn't a good idea. But I couldn't not.

PL: Well, I'd be happy to know, as we go along, if there are other points at which that's been the case.

AG: Yes.

PL: [laughter] I want to know a little bit about your transitions then. You were a nurse, it says from 1946 to '51 at St. Mark's. And then at Sun Valley in 1946. And at some point, I'm wondering a little bit about the wartime?

AG: Okay, I was a nurse. I was in training from '43 to '46. It was a three-year program. December '46 I graduated. Then I went to Sun Valley. Then I came back for a short time, and got my license in '47. I came up to Seattle in '48, '47/ '48. And the war was over in – all of a sudden, I can't remember when the war was over. But I do remember that everybody was so happy. And the whole – this whole little city of Salt Lake, you know there were air bases there. There were all kinds of military installations around Utah. And it was really such a relief. But I don't, you know—we'd gone through

rationing. In fact, in training one of the girls that I moved to Seattle with and I had the same size shoes. We'd buy a pair of shoes together because we needed two pair of black shoes to go with our uniforms. And I think you got three pair a year or something. We needed nursing shoes and we wanted to have a dress shoe. I know one time we bought some – oh the brown and white shoes that all the kids wore?

PL: Saddle shoes?

AG: Saddle shoes. And I liked them sloppy. And it was her turn to wear them. And she cleaned them and I was so annoyed with her. But we lived in a dormitory, in training. My roommate was a Japanese girl. She was from California. Her sister had a Ph.D. and was working as a maid in somebody's house because she was Japanese. And this Mary Sazaki was one of the nicest girls. And the only trouble was she was terribly clean. So her side of the room, I finally drew a line down and said, "You just keep that clean, and leave mine as messy as I want it." But I just felt that everything was so—I hated the way the Japanese were treated. Because we had had a Japanese family in our neighborhood who were cleaners. And they had their windows bashed in, and all kinds of stuff. Just a lovely, lovely family.

PL: You're talking about in Salt Lake?

AG: Uh-huh, in Salt Lake. It was a horrible thing, because they were the "dirty Japs." And they were nice people. They were not – anyway.

PL: Do you remember any community outrage about it? Or, was it—

AG: No. No, it was accepted. Hate the Germans and hate the Japs. And I think probably—of course with the First World War because that's why a lot of the families who spoke German or who spoke foreign languages gave them up because they wanted to be Americans [when I was growing up]. And there really wasn't too much pride in a heritage to be able to speak many languages. You wanted to be like the rest of them. Of

course my family didn't have any – you know, they didn't, you know – my parents were I don't know how many generations away from another country but my grandparents all spoke English and read English. But I don't recall any uprising about anybody harming somebody, or abusing anybody's rights, or anything like that. It was just the way it was. And it wasn't very fair.

PL: What would you say was your dating life like, as you were a young nurse? Who did you date?

AG: Well, as I say, most of them were fellows in the service. I don't remember one fellow that I dated in high school that was 4-F, they were all gone. So, we would go to USO dances or something and meet these fellows. And we would date them. But it was nothing to be interested in. I mean, these people were going through town, type of thing. And you'd go dancing with them or something. But you—it was nothing serious.

PL: Did you have any serious relationships before you left for Seattle?

AG: Oh yes. I had a few fellows that I was really – I was quite taken with them. But it didn't work out. I mean, it was—in fact, I was very serious about a boy here who had a step-mother, and she was a lovely woman. And he thought she was terrible and used to be a real tyrant at home. And I thought I don't want that kind of person around, that can be so mean to somebody that is trying to please him. So—

PL: Did your family have any expectations around your dating life? And—that's my question.

AG: Well, see my father died when I really just started to know boys. And as I say, I'd always been a, I'd always been a—I'm trying to say—I can't even think of the word. Anyway, when I first was in high school or before then – no, high school really – when they started having more proms. In Junior High School, I'd go usually. We went with a gang. I had two friends who actually later ended up in nursing but at a different hospital.

And we would—there were five or six boys in the neighborhood. When there was a school dance we'd say, "Okay, we'll go." I know one time, there was a Max – the cutest thing alive. He was about 5'1". And he was my date that night. And you'd have to have dates because you couldn't walk in as a gang. So that somebody would say, "Okay, you're my date, you're my date." And it was never very serious. It was just a lot of fun. And we did things together and laughed. And I've always had fellows as friends. I guess, until recently, I had some very good friends. And they were the type that even today—well, my husband has girlfriends too. But until a few years ago, there were fellows that I'd go to lunch with. And we'd visit and have the best time, because I do enjoy men. But—

PL: Would you say that the gang that you're talking about was a homogeneous group of people? Or, were they diverse? Were they part of the same Mormon community?

AG: Oh, I think they all were. I'm not too sure they all were. I think they were. Madeline and Lorraine were, the two girls. They probably were.

PL: So, what happened, Arva, internally – and maybe externally – distancing yourself from the Mormon church. Did that take hold socially in terms of your social interactions, your relationships with elders and things of that nature?

AG: Not really. No. Because I'd been obnoxious all my life. I don't think anybody expected anything from me as far as religion went. And because of certain family situations, we were apart from different people. When I moved to Seattle, I went with this friend who converted to Episcopalianism. I went to St. James' Cathedral with her, and found out that I don't have any use for that. I can't see any reason of converting. But she did. And as I say, the other girl is a staunch Mormon still.

PL: This standard back then—how did the Mormon church deal with those who decided to leave them?

AG: They don't accept it. I finally got excommunicated from the Mormon church. I used to have the missionaries come by all the time. And I once received a letter from the Mormon Church saying how they were antiabortion and so on. And God would not believe in it and so on. And would I send a donation? So, I happened to write them back, and said, "God, in Heaven, whoever She might be…" And of course, I got excommunicated. So—

PL: How did you feel about that?

AG: Well, I didn't get calls any more. I didn't have them knocking on the door. Of course, my brother is still being baptized in Utah for me, and for my sins, and for my family. Every time something comes up, he goes to church and sees that I'm taken care of. But it struck me so funny that I had to do that. I'd write them and say, "I'm not Mormon. I'm Jewish. I'm not a Mormon." And they'd keep—so, "Her" did it.

PL: Well, I hope that we'll talk more about the relationship after your conversion with your Mormon siblings. That's very interesting to see how you've negotiated it. I don't know if you want to add anything right now about the ways that you negotiated your leaving the church at that time with your siblings?

AG: Well, my oldest brother wasn't too staunch either. My younger brother – older/younger. He always looked so young that everybody thinks I'm the oldest. He is a year and a half older than I am. He's accepted me all his life because he can't do anything about it. And as I say, he married by best friend. So, when I would go to visit them in Utah, he had a one-cup coffee pot for me. When I smoked, he had an ashtray for me. He did all the things that he didn't believe in, for me.

PL: And you were saying that the Mormon Church didn't believe in smoking or in caffeine?

AG: No. No coffee. No tea. There's a song, "In Our Lovely Deseret…," something, something, "…tea and coffee and tobacco. We…," something or other. "We hate a bore." But it's a funny, funny song. And as I say, they basically lived a much healthier life by not—I know that I have problems with caffeine in my—with heart condition. I mean, I don't have a heart condition, but I find that I can get my pulse going pretty good with coffee, and it is not good for me. My husband can't have it at all either. So they do have something to that, but I think it's because they didn't have an interest in the tea.

PL: Now, not being accepting of coffee, and tea, and caffeine, and cigarette smoking, and, I guess, alcohol.

AG: Alcohol.

PL: Because we all know that—

AG: No wine, no nothing.

PL: No wine, no nothing. How did that affect a child? Did those restrictions seem—those are mostly what would seem like adult restrictions. Did those affect you at all growing up as a child? The sense of restrictions on your—

AG: No. Well, my mother drunk and drank coffee. [laughter] So, I guess there was no problem. As I say, it would be very difficult to be a very good Mormon, and abide by all these rules. And my family did not abide by all of them. They picked and chose something like I did, when I chose Judaism. I chose Reform, rather than Orthodox. Because I like something I can live with. Sometimes, some things are too strong and I don't have the strength.

PL: I want to lead up to that. When did you—this has to do with your move. You made a move to Seattle in which you met your husband?

AG: Uh-huh

PL: And made the decision to convert. But can we start with—you made a decision to leave Salt Lake, Utah. And how did that happen?

AG: Well, my two friends – one had been a stewardess after graduating, the other one had stayed in Salt Lake – and we decided that we wanted to leave Salt Lake. It wasn't for us. So, I had been here when I worked in Sun Valley. I had come up and actually stayed with dear friends of mine that became dear – it was the mother of one of the nurses that I worked with in Sun Valley – and had crewed in a Nanaimo Race. And just thought Seattle was the most beautiful place because in the summer your heels didn't melt in the sidewalk like they did in Salt Lake. you could take a white blouse off at night and there wasn't a black ring around the collar. You know, Salt Lake is in a Valley. So, all of the stuff seems to go in there. And you clean your face at night and this filth would come off. There was mining and so on around there. But anyway, I loved it here. The other girl loved San Francisco and the other girl didn't care. So we flipped a coin and I won Seattle. So we came up here and decided we—it was a wonderful time. We had a lot of fun. The three of us, we were all tall. And we rented an apartment. Because we were new in town and because we were living away from the family and nurses, we were supposed to be pretty loose girls. So if we had a date and we went out and they got a little bit obnoxious, we would say, "Oh, why don't you come up to the apartment and have a cup of coffee or a drink." And eagerly they'd come up, and with that, the other two girls would get up out of bed and come and visit. And it worked beautifully. [laughter]

PL: [laughter]

AG: But as I say, it was terrible not to be living at home – a woman unmarried. That was just unheard of.

PL: Well, was that simply from the culture from which you sprung? Or, was that the sign of the times?

AG: That was a general sign. You lived at home, until you got married.

PL: So how did people respond to you? Besides the boys?

AG: Oh no, most of the—I had many good friends, many couples. The people who lived above us in this apartment house became dear friends.

PL: What neighborhood were you in?

AG: Well, we started, believe it or not, in Ballard. We were there about six months. And then we moved to West Seattle, which I loved. And I used to love getting on that bus on First Avenue. We always met on Fourth Avenue and then walked down there. Because it was pretty wild in those days. And we would get on the bus, and there'd be people on the bus that would have their beer in sacks drinking it on the way. There was a little house in West Seattle where they built a whole fence out of beer cans or pop cans. Pretty strange people out there but I loved it.

PL: Well, is that what you meant by wild?

AG: Uh-huh.

PL: How did West Seattle—you're saying somehow it distinguished itself from Seattle?

AG: Well, we didn't know it because we had this apartment that was just off the beach. In fact we rented it from a—it had been the Friedlander Apartments that Anne Friedlander had developed. And we moved into a condo – I mean a duplex that she had which had been the old family home. And other people would come out to West Seattle and have parties on the beach. And in the summer when the weather was nice, it was hard to sleep. We lived there after Bernard and I were married. It was wonderful because he

had the two children and I could take them down. And we could build fires and have hot dogs, or they could go play on the beach and so on. It was a wonderful place to live at that time. It was a lot of fun. But after dark, it was wild.

PL: So, while you were living there with your two friends, were you all working?

AG: Yes.

PL: Where were you working at the time?

AG: At Doctor Weinstein, Dr. Wirth and Dr. Gray's. [laughter]

PL: How did you get that job?

AG: I went through the nurse's registry. I'm sure it's still around. Where R.N.'s could go and get jobs. They have a listing of all of the things. As I say, my girlfriends – one went and looked in the newspaper and got a job with Irwin Wirth, and the other one called a clinic and got one with Dr. Weinstein. [unclear]

PL: So, what were your responsibilities at your new job?

AG: Well, I'd never done it before. I was a desk person. I had to learn X-ray. I had to learn—I didn't have to but Bernard used to have a secretary come in and do the typing. After hours, he would do the dictating. And in fact, it was a friend of mine that I got to do the typing eventually because the other girls would work and then quit. And I decided that I'd better learn how to type. So I went to Broadway High School, which was almost Seattle Community College but not quite, and learned to type at night. So that when he had to get something out immediately, I could do it. But I hated every minute of it. Always hated typing. [laughter]

PL: Was it just the two of you in the office?

AG: Yes.

PL: So—

AG: No, there was—well, later on there was another girl. But at the beginning, yes. He had a – it's funny – he had a girl working for him, I don't know, that got sick or something. And I'd gone to the registry and they said, "We've got a bunch of places for you to go." And because I had done a lot of orthopedic nursing in Sun Valley, it does seem logical. But I got there and he wasn't there. And I waited about a half-an-hour or an hour and I said to the girl, "I'm sorry, I'm leaving." And she said, "Oh no. You're here." The one that's substituting, she said, "You have to stay." And I said, "No, I can't. I've got to do some other interviews." And she said, "No, just stay." Well, finally, Bernard came in, and interviewed me and told me I had the job. And of course, I was wearing my roommate's dress – because we shared clothing and everything, shoes and everything else. And I went downstairs where there was a little coffee shop to have a cup of coffee. And Bernard slid in beside me and said – I had my ten-cent cup of coffee and went to pay it – and he said, "Oh, I'll buy this. But don't think it's going to be a habit." So, he's paying big for it now.

PL: [laughter] Well, now I am going to ask you to maybe start telling another story. Now we understand how you came to work with Bernard. But how did you meet your husband?

AG: I met him in the office. And he was married at the time – had two children and a wife. And I guess they weren't happy. But I was dating another boy at the time they divorced. In fact, I was very involved with this one that had the stepmother. And after his divorce, he kept after me, and I kept saying, "No, I'm not interested. I want a white picket fence. I don't want to get involved with you." And he persisted. I finally ended up with the two children. [laughter] And quit working.

PL: At what point did you start working together? What year was it?

AG: Well, it was when I moved to Seattle, 19—

PL: Was that ‘48?

AG: ‘48. It was ‘47 and a half. Towards the end.

PL: And when did you marry?

AG: ‘51.

PL: So, during that three-year period that you were working together—

AG: We were married in December of ‘51. It was almost four years that I’d been working for him.

PL: When would you say that your actual courtship began? And what was it like? Can you describe it?

AG: He was just very persistent. He just was so persistent. He—I mean I’d have a fellow coming to pick me up after work and he’d want me to work later. I don’t know, he just chased me.

PL: Did you find that romantic, or were you—

AG: No. I wanted out. [laughter] Very funny. I really was not that interested. And finally, I decided, oh, okay, he’s not a bad guy. I—you know, when he was out of town, I used to go to the hospitals and see his patients. And then he was out of town on vacation sometime, and his son was at Lakeside, and he said to me, “Would you please go out and take something to David while I’m gone because he gets lonesome” or something. And I went out and visited with David, who’s a nice boy. And I thought, “Well, what the heck. So, he’s got kids. Big deal. I won’t be bothered with those anyway, because the

mother will take care of them." And she was an alcoholic and did not. [laughter] So, we ended up with custody of the children within 6 months. We had the boy to begin with, and then the wife just wanted the alimony for the children. So we paid her and kept the kids.

PL: Did you know her in—

AG: Yes. I knew her as his wife. Yes. But she seemed okay.

PL: Was she a Jewish woman?

AG: No. Catholic.

PL: And I'm just curious about your decisions to make this—because, clearly, he's married, or at least extracting himself from a relationship. How did you grapple with some of those decisions? To get married, to date? Because you are also working together, so there's a lot of different relationships at bay here. Was this a joyous time? Was this a difficult time?

AG: Very difficult. Very difficult. I didn't want to get involved. After he was divorced, and he said, "Well, now I want to take you out." And I said "no" for six months. "I want you to see other people and just leave me alone." And so he saw people and I saw people. And then he finally said, "Well, you've got to marry me, and you've got to do it before the end of the year, because we'll be [better-off] tax-wise. In fact, that year, I had worked so hard in the office. I used to go early, because I didn't understand the desk work. I didn't understand the X-ray. I didn't understand a lot of things. So, I would go early before the office opened to get caught up. And the stinker had found out from the elevator operators that I had been coming in early to do the work. But anyway, he took the time, and we decided, well, we'll get married. And everybody gave it six months. I gave it about three.

PL: [laughter] Why did you have so much hope?

AG: [laughter] Well, I just thought we were very incompatible. But before that, by the way, a month or two before we got married, I went to see—we went to see a rabbi. And the rabbi said do you want a *chuppah*. And Bernard and he discussed how important a chuppah was and all this and that. And I said, "No, that's not important to me. I don't want to convert just to have a ceremony. I want to convert if I understand Judaism. If I don't—if I can't accept it, I won't convert." So, that ended that with the rabbi. Until later when Jacob Singer started working at Temple de Hirsch.

PL: Which Rabbi did you go to see initially? And I think the tape's going to end, so can I switch the tape first to talk about this?

AG: Sure.

END OF CD 1

PL: We are continuing with the oral history interview of Arva Davis Gray. This is minidisk tape #2. So, I'd asked whom you went to talk to about conversion?

AG: Oh, originally, we went to—I can't remember the name of the rabbi. He was at Herzl. And as I say, he thought it was all for ceremony. And I wasn't the least bit interested in the ceremony. I didn't care whether I converted or not. This was, I would say about November of '51.

PL: Why did you go to Herzl?

AG: A friend of mine knew the rabbi there. I had two friends who were Jewish – actually. Polly Zuck had a good friend, Sylvia Copeland, who had recommended the Herzl rabbi. And I wasn't happy talking to him or anything. So, I never thought of it again. We were married by a judge. Married, in fact, in a friend's home in West Seattle. And lived in this little duplex, which was the third place that I lived in West Seattle – where I lived with other women who had moved out – when we got married. But—

PL: What do you remember about that conversation that you had with the rabbi at Herzl?

AG: Oh. As I say, he was—"Well, if you convert." And I said, "I'm not talking about converting. I'm talking about understanding Judaism. I don't know anything about it and I want to know about it. I'm not going to say that I'm going to convert and then find I'm not going to do it. I'm being honest, and I want to know. And I don't need to know it to get married. I'm not doing it to please anybody. I'm doing it because I want to understand Judaism." And as I say, my husband and the rabbi got talking about how important it is to have a chuppah, and all this and that. And I didn't really care about it. And so I sort of stormed out of there and said, "Forget it!" And then, of course, Bernard had the two children. And the kids had not been going to temple or anything else. I said, "I think it is important as long as they're Jewish that they understand Judaism." So, they went to Temple de Hirsch. David started it. And he was never bar mitzvahed because he was 12 when we were married. And Miriam and they went through confirmation and graduation there. But I just feel it's important. If there's a mixture of religions or a mixture of understanding – or, if there's antisemitism, or anti-anything – you might just as well know where you come from because it's your only defense.

PL: Do you remember the first conversations that you and your husband had about the issues of your differing religions and backgrounds?

AG: He didn't feel it was all important?

PL: Had he belonged to a temple at the time?

AG: No. He didn't. He – it was funny. I think when he first came to Seattle, he met Jessie Danz who asked him if he was affiliated? Years ago, "affiliated" meant did you belong to Temple or did you belong to the golf course – the Jewish golf course? And that was it. And, as I say, Bernard came from a city where his father was very well-known. He was—lived in the same city and knew everybody and was Jewish.

PL: What city was that?

AG: Winnipeg. His father was “Man of the Year” and a member of the legislature, and so on, for many years. He was a very well-known person there. So it was—that was it.

PL: And you mentioned that he, himself, hadn’t gone through the bar mitzvah process?

AG: Uh-huh.

PL: Why not?

AG: It wasn’t a custom in that town. These were all people that came from Russia and they just didn’t think it was—it was a ritual that wasn’t necessary. And they had—he went to Peretz School, which is a Jewish School. And he went to all of the different things, and certainly understood. But bar mitzvah was just a ritual. It wasn’t done.

PL: So, what were your first—what’s going through your mind? These first thoughts about going to see a rabbi to talk about getting married? What are you thinking about?

AG: My thinking was that if I’m going to marry him, and if we were going to have children or something, I want to know what it’s about. I think it was just as simple as that. I didn’t have any deep thoughts or anything about it. I just wanted to know. I’ve always not liked walking into something without knowing what it is. I wasn’t concerned about the Jewish religion. As I say, I had no prejudice against it – or no understanding of it, even. So I just didn’t pay too much attention.

PL: In terms of socially, and community, and meeting your husband – did you make more Jewish friends at this time? Did you start learning more, perhaps about the Jewish community as well in Seattle?

AG: Not until we were married.

PL: Okay.

AG: No. I was—I went to some parties with him. They used to have a dental—oh, I should remember it. It think it was called “PhiDE” [Phi Delta Epselon] or something. Where the doctors and dentists in town got together and had parties. And I think they had a lot of meetings, and so on. I was known as a *shiksa*.

PL: How did you feel about that?

AG: I didn’t like it.

PL: Did anyone ever call that to your face? Or you had heard it?

AG: Sure.

PL: Do you want to describe the circumstances under which?

AG: Well, they were pretty well-known people in Seattle. And these were men that weren’t exactly faithful to their wives. I think they thought that I was available even though I was with Bernard. And they made some pretty terrible remarks. One of them, I had to tell him to get his hands off me unless he wanted to be slapped in public. It was very interesting. [laughter]

PL: What do you think it was about “being a shiksa” that made him behave in such a way?

AG: I wasn’t a Jewish girl. And they didn’t have to worry about any repercussions, I guess, or something. I don’t know. I really don’t know. But it was pretty funny.

PL: Was there something exotic about your being—I mean, you’re blonde now, but I—

AG: I was very blonde.

PL: And you were blonde then too.

AG: I was naturally blonde, and skinny.

PL: Uh-huh.

AG: I wasn't bad looking. I thought I was ugly, but I wasn't bad looking.

PL: And so, was there something about your looks, or being exotic?

AG: I don't know. I don't really know. I think they were just idiots. I mean, that's the only thing that could explain these people. They would misbehave no matter where they were.

PL: Well, I imagine that entering into this process of learning about a different religion, and wanting to know enough to – you know, he already had children – to be knowledgeable. That you had to do a lot of things that you might have been uncomfortable with at first.

AG: Sure.

PL: What were some of those things that you remember – first stepping your foot into the water on?

AG: Well, the first year was unbelievable. The children's mother was alive but incapable really of taking care of the children. And the daughter, who was eight, was very loyal to her mother and I didn't blame her. I mean, you've got to be. And I—the kids took so much responsibility for the mother. It was just unbelievable how much they did. And—but I was resented. David accepted me more at first, and Miriam didn't accept me for a long time. They had been allowed to do as they wanted to do. They could go to bed when they wanted to. They could eat what they wanted to. Really. They were pretty free spirits. I remember one night, Miriam. We were having people for dinner in West Seattle – and she came out in the living room, brushing her teeth, and I took her hand and took

her back to the bathroom and said, “This is where you brush your teeth.” But they really—and David, as I say, really wasn’t too bad. Miriam just couldn’t stand me. And it took an awfully long time because I was responsible for her. We had to—Jewish Family Services stepped in during the custody hearing and I had to go to see a case worker with the court like every two weeks. And the case worker would drop into the house all the time. And I used to think, “How do I prove I’m a decent person?” It was an awful, awful year. And finally, that was over.

PL: Why was JFS involved in this?

AG: Because the aunt wanted custody of Miriam. And there was a whole big hullabaloo. And, it was a very trying time. And Bernard had to go to court and say—and thank heavens, as they say, he got JFS through Sidney Weinstein who was active then. And he had to say, “I’m the father. I’ve been—I can take care of these children. And I’m willing to.” And the aunt said, “You know, he’s got this young wife who’s not capable of doing anything.” So, it was Judge Long. He used to have the court where he was [incomplete authority over child custody cases]. He had complete say. He said, “You get the custody” or “you don’t.” There was no recourse or anything. And that was that.

PL: Was there something about the courts at that time that had to do with a bias against a man getting custody in particular?

AG: Yeah. Women got custody of the children.

PL: And where did the Jewish Family Service kind of enter into this?

AG: They went in as friends of the court. And the director – I think his name was White at the time. I didn’t really know him – went in and spoke for Bernard. Saying, “You know, this is a decent man,” and so on. “The wife can’t take care of the children, why shouldn’t the father?”

PL: What kind of pressures did you feel to have to prove yourself – either privately, or publicly?

AG: It was horrible. I mean, you know, they'd come to visit – and I'm not particularly neat – so, did you scrub the floor or what? It was trying to prove yourself and I've never had to. So, it was—this caseworker was so obnoxious. But I had to be nice to her no matter how obnoxious she was. And it just killed me. [laughter]

PL: So, at what point did you make the decision to convert?

AG: Not too long after—well, in fact, Janet was born, I guess. And I went to Rabbi Singer. And a friend of mine went too, and we talked to him.

PL: And Janet is your first child?

AG: Yes. And he said, "He'd do it. It would take a year." "But I don't care how long it takes. If I don't agree, I'm not going to convert." And he said, "Well, I think you'll agree. So, we went every week for a couple of hours. And, actually, I'd gone originally to Rabbi Levine and he was too busy.

PL: What year was this?

AG: Oh, I'm going to say it was 1956.

PL: Okay. So you had gone to Rabbi Levine at first who was the—

AG: The senior rabbi.

PL: —senior rabbi. And then—

AG: He referred me to Jacob. And so I got to know him very well. And every week Lillian and I went, and we had books to read. And I've forgotten all of them.

PL: Who's Lillian?

AG: Lillian Pinch. And she is not—she just sort of moved away.

PL: Was she a friend of yours who was also going through the same conversion process?

AG: Mmm-hmm. Mmm-hmm.

PL: I have many questions about that. But my first question is: what do you remember about that first meeting? Because I imagine you came in with a lot of questions. And he had a lot of things that he needed to tell you?

AG: No. I came in with a lot of questions, and he said, "Well, are you going to stay a Jew if you go through this?" And I said, "If I go through, and accept it, yes. But if I don't accept it, I'm not going to become a Jew." And so he said, "Okay, you're going to really study."

PL: Did he talk about your relationship with the Jewish community?

AG: No.

PL: Or your family?

AG: Because by that time, I was involved with the Jewish community. [laughter] I'd been on the Board of the Council of Jewish Women. I'd been secretary there. I've been involved with a Jewish day school that was established at Temple for children that had come from—they had originally come from Holland, and so on, through China and then settled in Seattle. And the JFC and the Council of Jewish Women did the thing together at Temple de Hirsch at one of the classrooms. And so I was involved. I'd moved into a neighborhood of mostly Jewish people.

PL: What neighborhood was that?

AG: This was—I used to call it “Sephardic Heights overlooking Fisherman’s Wharf.” We were on Lake Washington Boulevard, above Lakeside. Just North of the floating bridge, and the Volchoks and the Calderons and the Alhadeffs. I mean the Calderons lived above us, and the Calvo and Calderons lived below us – the senior ones. And the Alhadeffs were down the street. And so, actually as soon as I moved in David and Miriam, of course, knew some of the children, and I got to know the mothers. And naturally, we became very good friends. In fact, I belonged to a club where the ten of us, when the husbands would go play Poker – they used to play Poker once a week at Glendale or some place – we would play cards. And that meant that we would take the children. I didn’t have any and Janet Levine didn’t have any at that time. But we would play at each other’s house. And if there were babies, they slept on the bed. Then, when I had babies, they had dogs. And when I got dogs, they had grandchildren. And when I had grandchildren, they were out of the house. Well, this friend and I were always one step behind.

PL: Did your club have a name? Did you call yourselves something?

AG: No, we were just “The Girls.” My kids wondered when I would stop calling them “girls.”

PL: What kind of games were you playing?

AG: Oh, we played Canasta. We played Mah-jongg. We played Pan. We played Bridge. Anything. And mostly, it was a conversation club. Because we never gossiped. And the—you know, if somebody got married, we all chipped in for a gift. Or, somebody who was bar mitzvahed. It was this or that. So, you’d come. And this was when money went a long way. If you’d come to Club with $20 in your pocket, you could end up – you owe this one that. And the money would just go around the table. Now, I’m paying for

that, and so on. I remember one time, Miss Marcy, who has since died, said, "Oh, did you know, Mrs. Fleischacker died in San Francisco." And one of the friends looked up and said. "Oh, who do I owe for flowers?" Oh, we were just always doing things together and having parties together and picnics and things involving the children. And because Miriam and David were their kids' ages, and so on, they were all friendly. And we lived on this one little street – and the street below us. And which is nice. Sylvia Volchok is still my good friend. Rita Calderon's still my good friend. All of them are still good friends that are alive.

PL: It's unique and interesting that you wound up moving into the Sephardic community initially, or at least were initiated through the Sephardic community.

AG: Well, not really because Sylvia was—Sylvia Volchok was not. But you know, there was—I mean, I learned Sephardic cooking.

PL: I wanted to ask: what were you learning about Jewish and Sephardic Jewish life as you are being inducted into this – a different world of culture?

AG: Yes, completely different. I think I was a "kitchen Jew" before I converted. And I certainly knew how to make a *quajado* before I did anything else.

PL: Which is?

AG: It's a spinach soufflé with feta cheese and so on. It's wonderful with fish and so on. But it's a pretty common Sephardic dish.

PL: Who taught you how to make that?

AG: Rosie Alhadeff – from her mother, her mother-in-law. And then she taught me the *biscochos*. Rita taught me something else. And I'd always liked to cook, so it was fun. And so it was an interesting group because we were kind of mixed. And even in those

first days Sephardics weren't quite accepted by the Jewish community. And that was when they were first being accepted, I guess. It was a hard time for them. And of course, you know, when Bernard came to Seattle, it was German Jews who were really accepted. And he was Russian. Of course he didn't wear the *peyes* or have the accent or anything else. So he was accepted. But I recall in a reading – and in some of the history of different places – how they resented all these foreigners coming in and ruining the position they reached in society because they were accepted in general society.

PL: So, I'm curious then—how it is that—it was a number of years then that you became involved with the Jewish community before your conversion. Can you explain how you started getting involved with other Jewish organizations? And what urged you – or what desire did you have – to do the things that you started getting involved with?

AG: Well, I'd worked all my life. I always had something to do. And, I guess I get passionate about causes at times. But I know when I went on the Council of Jewish Women, there was a very positive woman there, Leona Kaufman – and I don't think that there's much in the records about her because the men hated her. She was a very positive woman. Very active in the Home too. But she was the one who had started different things. And I went—her husband was a psychiatrist. And I met all these women through their husbands who were doctors. And I think she was the one that—well, I know she was the one who put me on the Council. And then, I think, another doctor's wife suggested I go on Jewish Family Board. And they never said, "Are you Jewish?" I just assumed I'm in the Jewish community. I don't know much about it. I agreed. But anyway. So I was converted before I was president of the Jewish Family. But I was accepted by most of the community as being Jewish.

PL: So, what was it like then to be involved with the Jewish community and their assumptions that you were Jewish before you actually, you know, "legally" became Jewish? But you were very much active and involved with the Jewish community. What

was that like for you? Because I've read certain essays. I'm thinking of some essays that have been written by – call it "Jew by choice" or whatever – where there are certain questions that often rankle people, or annoy them. When you start playing Jewish geography and things of that nature. Were there ever moments where that assumption was uncomfortable for you? Or that you had to, you know, clearly "come out" in some fashion?

AG: No, I don't think so. Because I had this group by that time that were—one of the women never converted. She considered herself Jewish because the Orthodox Sephardic wouldn't accept her. The children weren't allowed in the Orthodox synagogue. But I—it was just accepted that—it wasn't a terrible thing about religion. When we first married, Bernard loved the fact that we had a Christmas tree. Then, when I told him we weren't having a Christmas tree any more, he was pretty unhappy. But—

PL: Why did you make the decision to no longer have a Christmas tree?

AG: Because I was Jewish, and I had converted and understood what it was a symbol of. And I really was not interested in having any Christian symbols around.

PL: You mentioned that when you spoke to Michele Rosen – I just want to quote. I don't know if it's your motto, or if it is a Mormon motto, but—"You can't just breathe the air, you've got to put something back."

AG: Uh-huh.

PL: So, I am wondering how it is that at this time in your life and you are making these decisions to get involved with another community, cultural – whatever – religious. How are you bringing in your Mormon experiences, or your upbringing? How are you having these conversations in your mind if they were?

AG: I wasn't really. I guess I didn't consider myself an outsider. I came into the community and was accepted by a certain group, and then eventually became accepted by the community. You know, you have to put in your time, so to speak. But I guess I was interested in children when I did the first bit with the nursery school. I had time. I was involved in the community. I didn't know that much about the Holocaust which was an unbelievable thing. I remember going to a brunch – or a luncheon one time. And I don't know if you've ever heard of Paulette Fink? She's an outstanding woman. She's a French woman that used to speak for the Joint Distribution Committee. And she came to one of the Federation luncheons. And I think everybody in the room was crying. I've since met her; she lives in Palm Springs. But you know, it is the things that people went through. And, I was involved of course before then. But it sort of—I felt fine – I'm home. This is where I belong. And somebody'd say, "We need somebody to do this." And I'd say, "Okay." You know? I just did.

PL: Can you talk a little bit about the process of learning and conversion? And what you have to do? Reform has made certain decisions versus Conservative versus, well, Orthodox doesn't convert. But what were the things that you remember learning about? And then, what ritually, was required of you?

AG: Nothing. I don't think—well, yes. I mean, the rituals were the no Christmas. The no this, the no that. No Christian holidays, certainly. But very little was required of me. Jacob was, you know, "humble and [unclear] …" I can't even remember the phrase now. My mind is gone blank. I guess it's—

PL: Did you have to study and take a test?

AG: Yes, I did. And I can't remember a thing about it.

PL: [laughter]

AG: They gave me these heavy books and I read them, and I studied them about the history of the Jews – about everything under the sun. And I can't remember one thing right now.

PL: Did you enjoy it?

AG: Yes.

PL: Why?

AG: I was learning. And even though I've forgotten it now, I was learning. But there wasn't anything that I couldn't do. I could not see keeping a kosher house. I could not see some of the rituals. I couldn't see sitting in another place at synagogue from my husband. That was the same thing of moving the women upstairs that the Mormon Church did.

PL: Mormon sat women separately?

AG: No, no. But their bit about not being able to serve in the church and so on – second class citizens kind of thing. But generally I could accept it. I used to make pork roasts when we were first married. And then, all of a sudden, I couldn't stand the sight of it. I think more "kitchen Jew" than anything. [laughter]

PL: What other ways, besides cooking, is somebody a "kitchen Jew"?

AG: Well we started having, you know, observing the different things. And of course, going to synagogue on the holidays and for different things. And getting involved in some of the ritualistic programs – which are not hard to live with. And I could see the coming of the bar mitzvah. The bat mitzvah. Although bat mitzvahs weren't done then as much. And I'm amazed that Herzl is a—you know, had—well I guess Temple did. I'm trying to think of who had the first woman rabbi associate. But I guess it was Temple that did.

PL: Do you remember being asked to get involved in the Jewish community? Or going to Jewish rituals, such as weddings or bar mitzvahs?

AG: Oh, all the time, yes.

PL: Was that part of the process of the conversion that you were encouraged to do those things and witness—

AG: I was already doing that?

PL: Or were you already doing that?

AG: I was always involved in it. I was always making cookies for a bar mitzvah or a wedding. And I went to Sephardic weddings. I went to Orthodox weddings. I went to all kinds of weddings. So—

PL: What about—

AG: You know, Bernard was established in the community. It wasn't that I came into a new community alone. Like you came into this community not knowing anybody. Your husband had been here a little before. So, I didn't have that. He was a member. Even thought he wasn't affiliated with any synagogue. He was a Jewish doctor who was affiliated with the Jewish doctors. And the house we moved into was a house he had lived in before. And we moved back into when—a year after we were married. So, you know, he knew the neighborhood.

PL: So, who did you ask questions of?

AG: Oh, I had a couple of friends. I knew Sylvia Volchok. And Flora Meyerson. Those were the two. I had a good friend, Polly Zuck, who converted. And I always loved it, because my mother-in-law used to say, "I can tell you who's Jewish and who isn't." And so, we went to Polly and Gene Zuck's for dinner one night. And I said to her, "Now one

of them was Catholic and converted. And you tell me which one." And she said, "That sweet Jewish girl marrying that Catholic boy." It was totally wrong. Polly had been Catholic – more Jewish than anybody. [laughter]

PL: Well, it's very interesting because there's all this, you know—well, I think it's in the Talmud or whatever where they say, where often converts become—what is it? They're closer to God than Israel because they've never witnessed these miracles, and the Jews have. And so, nothing necessarily convinced them. And then, there are other things about many converts become—they know more than a lot of other Jews. [laughter]

AG: Not any more. I used to. But not any more. I just—I think the cutest thing is, before I got ill the kids used to come over every Friday night – in fact before last year. And my little granddaughter, Miriam, who is now six – she was about three at the time. And before dinner, she started to cry and cry and cry. We couldn't figure out what it was. And that's because she didn't get to say the *hamotzi* first. And I said, "Did you ever think in our household?" Because he didn't follow the rituals either. His father had *tefillin* and all kinds of things. And his father used to be a sort of a circuit Rabbi. He sang and so on. But when small towns around Winnipeg needed somebody for the holidays, he could conduct the service. But Bernard wasn't. He was—none of the children were. They were sort of—yes, they were Jewish, and that's it.

PL: What about Hebrew? And how did that factor into your decision to learn it? Not learn it?

AG: I have a very difficult time learning any language. And so, I finally decided to give up. We go to Mexico every year. We used to spend a couple of weeks. I've been there many times. I have a woman in California that works for me that's Mexican. I cannot speak one word of Spanish. And no matter how hard I try, I'm tone deaf. With Hebrew, it's the same. It's just a total blank. My daughter learned it. My son learned it. Everybody in the family can speak Hebrew but me.

PL: Was that something that was encouraged or not encouraged?

AG: Not encouraged, not important.

PL: Do you think that that was specifically because it was a Reform Synagogue?

AG: Yes.

PL: And so, if you had chosen to follow the conversion process at Herzl, what might have been different?

AG: I probably would have learned Hebrew, although I don't think so. I just don't—I might be able to read it. I can read Spanish, but I can't speak it. So, I just don't know.

PL: I'm also wondering about the *mikvah*. Because oftentimes, women – and this may not be true of your experience – but, are encouraged to go, or converts. And for lots of reasons people are encouraged to go to the mikvah during a process of conversion. Was that anything you ever considered?

AG: No. It was not even brought up, and I didn't know anything about it.

PL: Do you know—

AG: I know about it now, because my three grandchildren were converted and had to *beit din*. All three of them had to go to the mikvah.

PL: Can you talk about that a little bit?

AG: Well, my daughter adopted three Korean children, who are just wonderful kids. And they were—Charles was just eight, and David will be nine, and Miriam is six. She could not have children and so she adopted these three – one a year after each other. And they are just marvelous. And the decision was that as long as they were being raised in a Jewish household, they would convert them Orthodox so they'd be accepted anyplace.

They had the papers to prove, so to speak. So they had the *beit din* and they had the—went to the mikvah. They did the whole deal. And I think that's fine.

PL: Were you—

AG: They're going to Herzl now. And they're much more Orthodox than we are. And when the children come over, as I say, on Friday, I do the whole thing. And when Bernard and I are alone, I don't. But it's—they're very proud of it, and I think that's wonderful.

PL: How do you feel about it?

AG: About what?

PL: About their conversion?

AG: Oh, I think it's wonderful. I just am astonished with them. They're so much fun. And of course, the middle one – I love it – somebody said to him, "Get out of my way, Chinese boy." And he said, "I'm not Chinese, I'm a Korean Jew." Which I loved.

PL: I think we're going to stop here.

AG: Okay.

PL: And we'll pick up again next time.

AG: Okay.

PL: So, thank you very much for all your stories.

AG: You're welcome. I'm sorry. [laughter] What should I say – I got all my information when everybody died and everything else. [laughter]

PL: Well, we're talking about life.

AG: Yes. [laughter]

[Break in recording]

PL: We are continuing with the oral history Interview of Arva Davis Gray. Today's date is August the 9th, 2001. This is Pamela Brown Lavitt, oral historian for the Jewish Women's Archive's "Weaving Women's Words" Project in Seattle. And we are continuing with the minidisk tape #2. It's nice to see you again.

AG: It's nice to see you.

PL: I wanted to pick up on something that you mentioned a couple of times in the last interview. You talked about your Judaism in terms of "kitchen Judaism." What's your definition of that? And why do you say that?

AG: Well, I think the funniest thing—my family – both my family and my husband's family – have always had our most pleasant times at meals. And in fact, the hardest thing for Bernard was when he didn't have the four kids at the table so he could talk to them, "What have you done today?" and so on and so on. And I guess, eating becomes an important part when you make it pleasant. And so I— and I lived in a neighborhood, where there were Sephardic Jews and Ashkenazi. And I learned to cook both kinds of food and enjoyed it. My family, luckily, would try anything. So, I always said I was a "kitchen Jew." Because I can make quajado and biscochos and I can make gefilte fish from scratch – type of thing. Basically, I was a "kitchen Jew" long before I converted. In fact, the first Passover my family had had—and in fact my husband said his mother didn't have it either; we had it at my house. And, they were kind of shocked at using the prayer books. The books for the Passover—I can't even think of the word now. But—

PL: The *haggadahs*?

AG: The haggadahs. And we went through the whole routine. And now I'm the one who knows how it goes along as it should, and I'm saying, "Please get it over with." [laughter] So, I guess that way, I'm a "kitchen Jew." I observe the rituals, and I enjoy the latkes for Hanukkah and the different things. I think it's sort of fun to have a good time celebrating your Judaism. I think that's the main thing.

PL: Are there particular holidays that you celebrated other than Passover in your home?

AG: Not really. We have a big Thanksgiving. Hanukkah is so, so—well, it's eight nights. So, some nights it's a big deal. Not now. Not with the children not at home. But when they were at home, you know, some nights would be special nights, and other nights was just the Hanukkah *gelt*. No, I think Passover was probably the biggest one. My oldest daughter when she went away to college always said, "At least she'll get away from Passover." And came time for her to come home from college at certain times; she always made it home for Passover. So, I had a feeling she enjoyed it, even though she protested.

PL: What was your recipe for gefilte fish?

AG: Oh, I take a number of types of fish. I get laughed at by Easterners when I put salmon in it, but I was able to make that bona fide when a friend had an article on gefilte fish in *The Sunset Magazine*. I use salmon. I used Buffalo [carp] if I can find it. I use sole. I use anything I can think of. One day, I put some—by mistake. Not really by mistake but I like it. I put the white Chilean sea bass in it. And I mix it up. I usually grind it in my grinder and then put it in my Cuisinart with egg and matzo and salt and pepper. And my—and the time I made it with Chilean sea bass, it was out of this world. But it is a very expensive fish to use. I usually end up making about 80 pieces. But I'm getting pretty good at it. Thank heavens we have the equipment that we have today, because when we originally did it, we would do it only in a food grinder. And the old food grinders used to stick with the skin in the thing. And you'd have to clean it out every few times. But

now with the other processors—some fish stores will grind them for you but I do my own grinding. And I've found if I bake it in the oven, it doesn't smell as much. And I also—well, I'm not going to add that. I save—nobody's going to like this. I save the broth and make bouillabaisse with it. Which is sacrilegious. So don't mention that.

PL: [laughter] Well, I'm just curious., What is sacrilegious about it to you?

AG: Well, it's not really because we do eat shellfish. We're Reformed. We're not Orthodox. But many of my friends, I know, would be very upset if they were to hear that – not the ones that come for the bouillabaisse by the way. The ones that come for the gefilte fish. But I hate to throw anything away, especially any good stock. And I couldn't think of what else to use it – the stock for – from the gefilte fish for. So, I turned it into fish stock for anything else.

PL: Well, it must be interesting to convert to Judaism, and realize that there are all these rules, and then realize how often they're broken.

AG: I didn't feel that I was breaking the rules, as I say, Being converted Reform. Except for pork, basically, which we do at times – in a Chinese restaurant or something. But my neighbors were Sephardic and had been in the fish business and so on, and they used shellfish. And supposedly—they belonged to the Orthodox congregations. But I didn't feel that any of the food things were wrong. And there had certainly been a religious background for not using them. And there was none as far as I was concerned, or as far as my husband was concerned. So, we do—we eat just about anything. If it is clean, and et cetera. I still can't eat lamb's brains. But other than that, I am pretty unrestricted.

PL: Are there other ways that you define "kitchen Judaism"? Is that a larger term for "domestic Judaism"? Or it all about food?

AG: No, it's "domestic Judaism." It's the bits that you do as a wife or as a homemaker. I guess, I was raised at a time, when women were considered wives, and more or less –

not property quite, because I never was. But the whole bit of what the women do – as part of the religion and as part of the way of life. And I think that "kitchen Jew" covers your entire household attitudes you have. Before I converted—well, in fact, when I converted, my husband loved Christmas trees. And he felt he could get away with it, married to me. And I refused to have them. And so it was—you know, I just—I don't know. I guess that's part and parcel of the thing. I can't do that. I can't have a Christmas tree. I can't observe Christmas. I just don't. And it doesn't seem necessary. My kids used to say something at times. But then, you know, Hanukkah comes around—I guess we did that, basically, to make up for Christmas with children. I don't think there's any question about it. Because kids don't really like to be different. I don't know—I guess in certain areas they're the majority. But certainly in Seattle, we're a small minority. And when friends would come over and find that we didn't have a Christmas tree, they would say something, and then Larry or Janet would say, "We're Jewish." Period. And one little friend of mine came into somebody's house and saw all the Hanukkah candles out, and took a look at it and said, "Oh, you're American." So, anyway, that's my feeling about "kitchen Judaism."

PL: Are there other decisions that you made in the home around whether or not to celebrate other Holidays? Did you ever have Shabbat? Or Shabbat dinners? Or, lighting the candles?

AG: We didn't. The only time we lit the candles was for Passover, or certain holidays. My daughter then married and the children were converted to Orthodoxy. They're Korean children. And I think the funniest, they used to come here every Friday night for dinner. And I had the candles and the wine and so on. And my youngest granddaughter, who was I'd say three years old at that time, in the middle of everything, started crying. And she was crying because she didn't get to say the hamotzi. And my husband said, "Did you ever think in our house, anybody would cry because they couldn't say the hamotzi?" So, we do now, with our grandchildren. And certainly all of them have a much

better religious background than my children did. They're all—every Friday night, those candles come out. And the grape juice or wine or whatever is there. They seem to enjoy the ceremony and the bit about it. They're wonderful kids, and it's kind of fun to listen to them. Because I can't say one word of Hebrew. I sort of mouth it. And my little grandchildren can go through the entire prayers for the Friday night – the long one, not the short one. And love to do it. And it's fun. Because in a couple—next year, my – one of my granddaughters is going to be bat mitzvahed and I'm looking forward to it. But of course, my children – my son was bar mitzvahed. My daughter, at the age of 43, decided she hadn't had the ceremony, so she was bat mitzvahed three years ago. And it's kind of fun. She got the presents too. [laughter]

PL: Well, let's go back then to your own children. And raising two children that you—did you adopt them legally?

AG: No. No, when we were first married, the children had a mother. But she was unable to take care of them. And I just took care of them. They didn't call me "Mom". They still don't. They call me "Arv" or whatever they want to call me. And they were nice children. At the beginning they didn't like me, of course. And I don't know whether they trusted me or what. But after the first year, we were pretty good friends. And the father – their father – I guess, my husband, Bernard, is a very easy-going person, and does not believe in any discipline of children. So, I was the disciplinarian. My son would ask if he could take a little kicker boat from the sound up the Dewamish [River] Slough without night lights or anything else. And my husband would say, "Sure." And I would say "Absolutely not." But it ended up working out. They respected me and they minded me. I didn't have to resort to any—well, I did threaten and I did bribe. I think all of us do that. But the threats were carried out if they misbehaved. And I said, "If you do this, this will happen." And they knew it would. So, I didn't have to threaten too often.

PL: Why did you feel the need to be the disciplinarian? What was at stake?

AG: Because my husband wasn't. And these children literally had very few manners. They were very self-involved, and unable to function in groups without—they really didn't have the background, as far as I was concerned. It didn't take long. They had been wonderful children, and they're very nice people. But when they were little, they were – you know, they were the type that even at eight would throw a tantrum if—and that was a little bit out of line. So, I've always spent a little bit of time with all my children apart from everybody when they start something because we just leave the area before they make fools of themselves. But anyway, that's why I was a disciplinarian.

PL: How long before you decided to have a child of your own with Bernard?

AG: We waited. I wanted two children. I don't know that Bernard did.

[Break in recording]

PL: Continue.

AG: I've forgotten where I was.

PL: I was asking at what point you decided to have a child of your own?

AG: Oh, I felt Miriam and David needed to be friends of mine. I felt that they had to feel like they were part of the family. And for the first couple of years it was not a good idea to have a child. It really wasn't. Because, they would have—I think it would have made them feel left out. But when I had my daughter, they were both so pleased, and Miriam insisted she share her bedroom. Of course, then I had a nurse like we all used to have. And the nurse threw Miriam out of her own bedroom. So, that had to end. But they were very happy with both Janet and Larry. In fact, Janet and David are probably the most alike. They're the best friends. And Miriam and Larry are the best friends. It's kind of funny how they split up in the family a little bit. But they had just—it's worked out very well. And I've been very pleased with all of them because they are *mensches* basically.

And they're honest. They give somebody a day's work for a day's time. They don't cheat. They don't try to cut corners or anything else. And I'm very proud of them.

PL: How did you and Bernard inculcate them with those wonderful values?

AG: Well, I guess you set an example. And I can't take advantage of anybody. And my husband can't either. So, I think that goes through the children. If somebody comes home and says, "Boy, did I get away with something. They charged me three dollars too little at the grocery store." I don't like that. And I think that goes to the children too. They can't take advantage of anybody, and they won't. It hurts more if you do.

PL: Is there anything you would say about those values that are Jewish?

AG: Well, I don't know that they're Jewish. I just think that it is ethical conduct. I wouldn't put it to any religion, or anything else. I think it's the way you're raised. This is the way that my parents felt. This is the way that Bernard's parents felt. One was Orthodox Jews and the other were like farmers. But it can come from any side of the family or anyhow. I think that in families that tend to take advantage of other people. Maybe that's passed on. It's nice to make the extra percentage point from somebody, but with us it is not.

PL: Janet was born in March of 1955? And Larry in, I guess, it was July of '56?

AG: Uh-huh.

PL: That's pretty close.

AG: Right.

PL: Can you talk a little bit about your experiences being pregnant, and giving birth? And what those experiences were like? All of a sudden having two children in a short period of time?

AG: Well, I can say it was planned but it wasn't. It was tiring. I didn't think that I'd ever get my hands out of the toilet. But the kids were fun. They were active. Janet was a very good baby. Larry was hell on wheels. And I think if I had known that he would have been as active, I would have waited a couple of years. But Bernard wasn't terribly young, and I was 29 when I had—I was almost 30 when I had Larry. And in those days, 30 is pretty old to have your first child. But the kids were—it was funny. One night I was up most of the night with Janet, I guess. She had some kind of an infection, and I was up pacing around. And David, the next day, came home from school and said, "Please go to bed. You need some rest. I heard you last night. I'll take care of the kids." So, this was the sort of household it was. The kids helped me. I guess it was easier with them and yet in a way it wasn't, because they realized at a very early age that they could outvote us. And we had to have our day off on – usually Thursday we'd play golf. And went out to dinner. And that was our day to discuss how to take care of the kids and make sure that they don't take advantage of us.

PL: Where did you play golf?

AG: We played at Glendale. We played at the old Glendale, and then, the one in Bellevue. And that was our day. And Bernard would have his men's games on the weekends. But usually Thursday was the day that we played.

PL: Just to digress for a moment. Can you talk about the culture of Glendale, and why that was a respite? It's been an important part of a lot of people's lives in this area.

AG: Well, it was the only private Jewish club in the area. It isn't any more. Sixty-percent of the members are non-Jewish now. It used to be closed on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Any of the serious Jewish holidays it was closed. The food was basically into the pot roast and substantial kinds of foods. And now we have a chef who insists upon putting raspberry sauce on salmon. But it's a total change. At one time, someone said to Bernard, when he first met – came into the United States – "Do you affiliate, or are you a

member of Temple de Hirsch or Glendale?" And my husband didn't actually affiliate at that time. He was active in other parts of the community. But I guess I'd belonged to Glendale since I was married. Bernard belonged before then. So, it was a sort of—we had many friends there. Many of my friends belonged. And we all lived in the same neighborhood. It was part of our culture. We knew everybody that belonged and everybody knew us. But of course, that's changed. Part of it's aging. We don't play golf any more. I used to know everybody. But because, as I say, the thing has changed. It is no longer one of the centers of Jewish activities. It's just a club.

PL: What caused that shift?

AG: I hate to say it. My husband was partially responsible. We were going through the thing about – a club is not an extension of your living room. And everybody should be able to join. There were certain clubs that were—in fact, all of the clubs, except Glendale—there was one Jew, I think, at Sand Point at one time. But basically, they weren't accepted for membership. So, when the thing came up about opening the other clubs to members – no Blacks, no Asians, no this, no that – my husband felt very strongly that it should be, people shouldn't be excluded from belonging to whatever they wanted to be. And I think it was the best bargain in town, so we ended up with a lot of non-Jewish members. Now the Boards and that are non-Jewish. And as I say, the course is open on our holidays. And we also closed it on Christmas and New Year's. Christmas, because the employees are all gentile basically. But anyway, it's made a radical change in the feeling because most of the older members are Jewish. And there's a little bit of resentment in some of the parts. And I am friendly with a lot of the members. But at times you can feel a bit, when the older members are out to play – and they were given privileges many years ago that gave them certain things when they reached—when they were older. So that they could play for less money or so on, when they were ready to retire. Because many people would drop the club rather than keep up the expense. And many of the older players go out to play and they are slower. There's no question about

it. And it's resented. And of course when I first knew it – when these were fathers of friends of mine, or so on, you treated them with respect. And I find now, a lot of comments about "those old guys," and, as I say, most of "the old guys" are Jewish. So, it's an unfortunate thing that shouldn't happen. But it does.

PL: Continue.

AG: That's all.

PL: What did it cost to belong to Glendale back then? What does it cost now?

AG: Well, I don't really know. I think the membership at one time was $1,000 dollars. But I'm not sure. I—and so much per month. And it's ranged from under, around $50 dollars or something to—I don't know what they charge here now. But most of the golf courses now charge around $385 a month. This membership, I think, is way under $30,000. And Broadmoor, for example, is $100,000. Even, Overlake, which is not nearly as nice a course, is more expensive.

PL: Speaking of those other courses, do they now accept Jews? Because at one point I understand Broadmoor and others didn't.

AG: Yes, they do. Not a lot. I think there are two or three Jewish members at Broadmoor. I think the funniest thing though—I played golf at Overlake one time. And I wanted a cart. I was playing in a tournament. And the pro said to me, "Well, we don't have any carts. But maybe our Jewish member will lend you his." His name was Lang. He'd converted many, many years before. But they still considered him a Jew, which I—guess you just can't get away from it.

PL: Well, to get back to your family. So, this was your day off, and your "date" with your husband. [laughter] How did you take responsibility when you were home? How did you share responsibilities? Or have different roles in rearing your children? Both your older

children, and now, your new young children?

AG: I don't know that we shared responsibilities. Bernard and I've sort of always had a fine line division between what's his responsibility and what's mine. You may not know, or you may not remember, but, 50 years ago, men did not change diapers. Men did not feed babies. Men did not baby-sit. So if I went to a meeting, I had to get a babysitter even though Bernard was home. And the excuse was, he might get called out. Men really, I don't know – the house, the yard, the cellar was my responsibility. And the office and working was his. He really didn't like children until they could talk back to him. They had to be able to express themselves before he was even interested. He'd go, "Gootchie-gootchie-goo. He's yours," you know, type of thing. And I found that with his son and daughter too, he loved to talk to them – if they could talk. But if they—I don't know, he was a very smart man, but on a lot of things, he didn't share it with the kids. And I felt—anyway, I guess he was afraid of me because I ran the household. And, he didn't—he wasn't the least bit interested. And the disciplining was mine because he wanted to be the good guy. And he was the good guy, and I was the bad guy. And that was the roles that we took: good cop, bad cop. [laughter]

PL: What were you like as a mother, other than the "bad cop"? [laughter]

AG: I was probably – I don't know – a neighbor and I were considered the loudest yellers in the neighborhood calling the kids in. I don't know. In a lot of ways, I goofed up – as I think we all did. But I was very active with my children doing things they wanted to do. I don't know. I always felt I was there for them. And I've always found that they talked to me about their problems. I was—I guess I was just there, when they went to school or if I went out to play golf or something, I was there before they got home. I may make dinner in the middle of the night, but if I left the house I was back before they came home. I always felt that this was – especially the older ones, when we were first married – they needed somebody there that was always there that would be there when they needed a

person. And that's just been my job. I've been there.

PL: So, what were some of the things that you really enjoyed doing with your children? What kind of games did you play? Or, activities? Either on your own with them or at the home, or out and about?

AG: We used to do crazy things. We'd pack up a dinner and go up to Asahel Curtis Park up above Issaquah. We went of course to the zoo, and all of that kind of stuff. When they were particularly bad, my way to handle that was to put them in the car, and go to the Public Market. And they could run, and they could yell and they could do anything they wanted. It was just perfect. And they just seemed to get the whole wildness out of them. This was the smaller ones. Because they could go in there and everybody smiled at them and gave them a piece of food, or this or that. And that seemed to be a good place to take them. We used to, I don't know—we just did all kinds of things. I can't think of what we didn't do. I took them alone a number of times on vacations to my family because Bernard was busy, and he'd come in for the last day or so. On Bernard's birthday, it was a tradition of our family to go to Mt. Rainier and climb – not any distance. And all the kids loved it. We'd pack up a huge lunch and leave. And by the time that we'd gotten outside the Seattle limits, we had eaten all the food. Then we'd have to hunt around Mt. Rainier to find dinner. But that was what the kids enjoyed most – was going on these trips. Sometimes on a specific morning, we'd get up and it was raining and we'd get in the car and take off for wherever in the State of Washington it wasn't raining to have a picnic. If we could go to the beach, or if we could go there. We had some pretty wet picnics but it was fun.

PL: And you said you had to hunt. What did you mean by that?

AG: I'm sorry?

PL: You said you "had to hunt" for your dinner.

AG: Oh yes. Because many of the places we'd go, there weren't restaurants around. These were like deserted beaches. I'm sorry, I said Rainier. In fact, around Rainier, there aren't a lot of restaurants. So, we had to really hunt around to find some place to eat. And many times, we didn't eat until we were on the way home. And they're all screaming because they're starving. And I've never figured out yet how to pack enough food for children when you're traveling. There's just no way.

PL: At first, [laughter] I misunderstood – I thought you did that with a shotgun.

AG: [laughter]

PL: [laughter] I was wondering what might have been some of the major conflicts that you had, during the rearing years with your children or with Bernard over the rearing of your children?

AG: I remember one time, when David was 15. We'd gone to a party on a Saturday night, and David was ahead of school of where he should be – all of his friends were driving and so on. Bernard was called in an emergency. And nobody lived as far as we did. So, he brought me home, and went to the hospital. And when we got home, the other car was gone. And I had a pretty good idea where David was because he had a girlfriend the North of town – North end of town. We were in the South end. So, I called him and I said, "You've got to get home. And whoever you give a ride to, do not allow them to come with you." And he came home with his head bowed, and so on. And he said, "I guess I did it." And I said, "Yeah. Because if you had caused any damage, or injured anybody, or so on, we would have been responsible." And he said, "Well, what's going to happen?" And I said, "Well, for the next month, you will come home from school and not leave the yard. You'll do your homework. I'm sorry you can't go any place with your friends, and so on." It was the hardest thing I ever did because I had to be home from school too. I had to be home all the time. It wasn't like I was watching, but I didn't want him to get the feeling that he could cheat. So, I didn't go out either. And Bernard

said to me, “What happens if he doesn’t behave?” I said, “Well, then, I’ll think of something worse.” But he did behave, and he did do it. And I think, at times, when little children do something that’s really very dangerous, sometimes the discipline has to be very strict. And so I did it. Bernard didn’t think it was—he did that when he was younger too. And I just didn’t want all the rest of them to get the idea that they could do it too. I spent a lot of time at home with the children.

PL: What about forms of physical discipline? Was that an allowed or discussed thing in your home? Was punishment—did it simply mean docking or—

AG: —going to your room. Yes. Once – I spanked all the children once. And I’ve regretted it. I keep thinking, I don’t know—and I can see how mothers do it when they get so frustrated – that there’s nothing else they can do. But it’s such a horrible thing. I mean, kids don’t need to be beaten. They want to be—they want to find out—they want to be approved of. And they certainly learn more by being by themselves or isolated than they do by anything else. If you hit them, they learn to hit. And so, as I say, I always felt bad that I did. I don’t remember my father spanking me. Although they probably did. But not that I can remember. I don’t remember them—the only hitting that went on when I was a child was my brothers and I having fights or something. But it was not allowed. And it was just not a thing to do it.

PL: I know that this question, it can be loaded. So answer it anyway that you like. But how would you differ, or say your way of rearing your children was similar or different than the way that your parents did – to continue with what you were saying?

AG: It was pretty much the same, probably. The only thing that I did wrong with my kids was criticize. They’re pretty terrific people. And I don’t think they know how good they are. And I should have let them—I see so many children who’ve been raised, where their parents have convinced them that the sun rises and sets on them. And I don’t think there’s anything wrong with that. I think the confidence should be there. And I don’t think

I gave my kids enough confidence. And I regret that.

PL: Did that manifest itself in any way? Did you see them not having enough confidence in themselves?

AG: No, I think they have confidence. But I don't think they, as I say—I don't think they realize how good they are – and, I wish they did. I think it's kind of nice to see people who are not afraid. Well, my kids aren't either. I don't know. I guess that's irrelevant. But it's just something that I wished that I had done more.

PL: Are there particular moment that stand out in your mind – that give you lots of *naches* .

AG: Oh sure. So many of them. Bernard and I have been married 50 years. Kids have accomplished a lot. Bernard accomplished a lot. I've been pleased with a number of things that I'd done. A lot of things I'm sorry that I haven't done. But I don't know. I can think back on the different things that my children have done. Graduating from college, kind of thing. They're—I enjoy my daughter who's been very active in Seattle, and is taking a hiatus because of the children now. I was amazed to go to Los Angeles and find out that my youngest son is on the Trail's Committee [in Malibu] – is on this committee. Is involved with so and so in his community and in his temple. And I was really very pleased. And I think, "Well, they might have gotten it from their grandfather on my husband's side." But it is kind of nice to see that your children are taking part in their community and making a difference?

PL: Well, perhaps we can shift gears a little bit, and talking about your community service, and the things that you've done in the community. And perhaps you can return to the things that you'd wish you'd done later. But to ask you a little bit about the work that you'd done in the community – where did you begin? Or, where did it begin? How did you get involved? What was your first foray?

AG: Well, the first thing I did was work—there was a Bonham Galland School that opened up. The refugees were coming in from China, and so on. These children, who spoke no English, and who had to be brought into the community. And so a nursery school was opened. It was at Temple de Hirsch. It was sponsored by the Jewish Family and Child Service, and by, I think, Council of Jewish Women. At any rate, I worked as a volunteer there. We brought American children and the immigrant children together. The parents didn't speak English. And, by bringing the children together with American children, they were speaking English in no time. They were really accomplishing a lot of things. And orienting the parents to the community by having group meetings, and so on. It was a very good project. And it ended when the last of those refugees came in.

PL: What year are we talking about?

AG: I'm going to say 1953. It was before I had children. 1953, 1954. And then I went on the Board of the Council of Jewish Women. That must have been 1955. No, '54, I guess. No, '55—because I had Janet. Just after I had Janet. And then of course I got pregnant with Larry. And I think that everybody in town thought I was going to have fifty million children. And from there, I went on the Board of the Jewish Family Service. And I can't remember the years I was president. But I went as a member of the Jewish Family Service Board. You went on the—as a president or a secretary of the Jewish Family Service, you went on the Board of the [Kline] Galland Home. And so, I probably went on the Galland Home Board in 19—I think it was '56 or '57. It's kind of mixed up because I went first on a consulting committee which is not recorded. And then, went on the Board itself. And I've been on that Board since then.

PL: Let's just stop there so that I can ask you some questions about those experiences. I'm wondering what it is that motivates someone to join a Board? Versus being a member or a checkbook member?

AG: Well, I think if you're introduced to it properly. If it is something that you were interested in. I was very interested in Jewish Family Service. Of course, then it was called "Jewish Family and Child Service." And, I don't know, I guess I've always felt that you have to give something back. You can't just take what's there. So, I got interested in that. And then, when I got a little bit involved with The Home, it became fascinating. There was always something that could be done to improve the care of the elderly. Now that I'm one of the elderly, there's a lot of things we should have done.

PL: Such as?

AG: Well, we should be much farther ahead in retirement living. The Summit is the first thing the Jewish community has done here. They need to develop home health care in the community. We need to develop all different kinds of projects and types of living—whether it be group homes or different things. We have to have low cost things. There are so many multiple things that can be worked out. The Golden Age Clubs and the things like that do some work. But there's really got to be—we've got to have more responsibility for people who can't take all the responsibility for themselves. Whether we do Meals On Wheels from the home. But that's basically done through the city. And there should be many, many, many more projects for the elderly in different communities. I know that in community centers, the senior centers do some work. But there is some that we could reach. And, you know, basically, what we have done in the City of Seattle – and I think it is basically because of Josh Gortler who is the director now – we have set standards for nursing homes in the state. We have the requirement that the directors of nursing homes have to be licensed. He has set so many things. We have worked with the University [of Washington] on many things, and started programs throughout the whole community. And usually the Jewish agencies are in advance of all the others as far as providing these services. We're behind on help for the – a lot of cost – housing for the elderly because the other communities have found most—nursing homes are the most expensive. And so, they've steered away from that and gone into

more types of care, where they don't need a nursing home. And of course now they are going into more nursing homes. But we should go from nursing home to the other programs that should be available. I'd like to see a good home nursing care. You can get home nursing care – you or I, or anybody can get it – for $20 an hour. And if you need somebody four hours a day, four days a week, that is an awful lot of money for somebody to put out on a limited income. So, we have to figure out how to supplement that. How do we get into those things? Is it better to come to the house than be in a building? I think is cheaper to go to a house in the long run, rather than build a building and run all of the facilities that are necessary that go along with it. But it too has to be supervised and so on. Anyways, there's just an awful lot of things. I wake up at night thinking of things that could be done. But we're getting there.

PL: Now, when you say you wake up at night—

AG: Not really, but I do. I'm concerned about that. I'm concerned about other things too that's not necessarily with the aged. But I do think that there's a lot of things where we are behind.

PL: Back then, you made an effort to try to do something?

AG: Uh-huh.

PL: Can you describe your involvement with – either being on the Board at the Kline Galland Home, with Jewish Family Service?

AG: Well, by the time I was in Jewish Family Service – after all the president and secretary of the agency were members of a four-person Board of the Galland Home – there's got to be some interloping. Temple de Hirsch president and secretary were the other four—two members of the Board. When we were – and this is where Leona Kaufman came in. She had been active with Jewish Family and had also been active with The Home. And she was responsible for us to get caseworkers at The Home. They

were paid for by the Jewish Family Service – not by the home. And to get a caseworker – a social worker – as the director of The Home. Before then it had been a minister for people that sort of used their own fiefdom. They'd have people over for dinner and so on. Employees lived in The Home which was not a good idea. It was a totally different thing. We had 44 beds of a firetrap building. It was very scary when I first went on the Board. The nurses had to go around their—

END OF CD 2

PL: Continuing the oral history interview of Arva Gray. And this is minidisk tape #3.

AG: But at any rate, the nurses had to cover each floor – each room, every hour of the night or day because they were so afraid of a fire. And this was a scary building. It really was. We built wooden escape ramps and so on. But I just hated the whole thing. And it was not until 1967 that we completed the first new building for The Home. I was on the committees for that. I helped raise money for it. And I've just been involved with The Home all the time. And at that time, we had—I worked with all the directors of The Home from—well, I'm just trying to think of the names. The first—hold on just a minute. The first Director of The Home was Art Farber. And then we had Sol Frankel. And then we had Bernie Rackow.

PL: Can you spell Rackow?

AG: R-A-C-K-O-W. Who had been the Executive of The Home when I first went on the Board. And then we had gotten Josh Gortler. It was 10 years after I had been on the Board. And we fell into something with that because he's been probably the outstanding nursing home director and gerontologist in the country. He sees things that need to be done and moves towards it. After Josh we, then in 1976, built the next building. This one held 70. The next one held another 70. Then, in 1991 we built the last expansion of The Home which is the Litvin Center. And during that time, when we went on the campaign

for that, we set our goal for $15 million dollars to start to build The Summit. Of course we had set it at 10—but Sam Stroum said, "Why set it at 10? Set it at 15." So, we raised 18 [million dollars]. And Josh was still raising money for it but we've got to get a foundation now to cover in case the state drops back on its payments. In case different things happen. But anyway, the Summit was just finished this year and is 90 percent filled. And will be filled soon. We'll have to build another one.

PL: Can you give some background as to the relationship, the history behind Kline Galland, and The Summit? And their differences and their similarities? Because—was Kline Galland at the time the only Jewish senior—

AG: —nursing home.

PL: And can you give a little bit of background history to put this in context?

AG: Well, with The Home many of the people in a nursing home can be helped in assisted care. They don't need quite as much care as somebody in a nursing home. So, it's more logical for someone who needs maybe help with their medication. Maybe needs help with their bathing. Someone who really can't live at home but they still don't need the full care that you get in a nursing home. So, we knew we had to build the assisted living, which was basically the basis for The Summit. We have – I'm trying to remember – 30. I can't remember how many assisted living units we have. But these are people that stay on their own floor. They have three meals a day. But they can go out and so on. I mean, they're on a separate floor because they need much more service. They still have nurses around the clock but not the RN's as much, and not as much nursing care. And then with the retirement home, these are people that are really kind of tired of making their own meals and traveling all over and so on. And they can get one meal a day – which is very important for the elderly. The main problem is malnutrition with many of the elderly. So, this is why they have to pay for one meal a day. And they can't miss them too often. The staff watches them to see that they do because it is important. "They?" I'm

talking about “me,” really. And I guess I’ve always felt that way about The Home, and about The Summit and so on. Any of the construction. I’ve always seen myself living there. Would I like to live that way? I’ve never felt that anything should be for “the others.” And I think you have to look at things that way. Because if it’s not decent, not nice, and something you wouldn’t live in, then why should anybody else live there? It doesn’t have to be lavish, but certainly it should have some beauty to it.

PL: Do you have any plan to move to The Summit?

AG: I did last year because I was ill. But I’ve gotten over it. No – as long as Bernard and I can live here, we won’t. But if things happen, yes, I’ll be there. One thing I don’t like – and I shouldn’t even say that – because I’ve gone to The Summit, I know almost everybody in there. They’re all my age, and so on. So walking down the hall, it is very hard to get from—if I had to get to a bathroom, I’d have wet pants I guess would be the answer. [laughter] But it’s awfully hard living in a place where there’s 100 people and you know them all. Because you can’t cut anybody off short. But that would be the only thing that would prevent me from there. I have a dear friend who is living there and she just loves it. And mostly people complain about the food. But I’ve never known anybody who stayed in even a fantastic resort hotel that hasn’t complained about the food after the second day. So, it can be improved I’m sure. But it’s not that important.

PL: Well, establishing these major edifices for the Jewish community in Seattle, how is it that you had to wrangle with different visions of the construction of these buildings, of the fund-raising? I imagine being part of the Board, there were often different views of how these things should be built and created?

AG: We’ve had a lot of problems. The major problem are the neighbors. They don’t want it in their backyard – even where The Home is. And—

PL: And you are talking about the Kline Galland Home in Seward Park?

AG: The Kline Galland Home.

AG: Every time we've added on, we've had to wait a while. We've needed the beds before we built them. And we had problems. And we'd have to make concessions with the neighbors. And that's been a restriction. We have bought a lot of property on the water and stuff there. So, our next expansion we can expand for 15 years. But I think the next expansion will still be there. We had trouble with the first construction of the first building because the Trust, which was actually the thing that ran the banks – CL Trust and Savings , ran the policies of The Home. The four members of the Board, we had an awful time. They said we only had enough money to build 44 beds and that's all we they were going to build. And that's when we went to the community and got the money. They wanted to sell that property at Seward Park and move downtown. I know it's pastoral out there. And it is true that most people like to be where there's activities. But we found this was a good location to get good help there. It's not too ridiculous to get a bus there. And so we were – the Board, the four members – were really adamant with the bank. I guess it was three of us, basically, on the Board. Leona was the meanest about it. We just wouldn't put up with moving it and having them sell that property, I think, for $80,000 dollars. And we're talking 5 acres on the water. But even in those days it was a cheap price. And we had an awful lot of fuss with that bank. It was a nightmare. And Leona and I used to meet with the men. Sometimes the men were on the Board of the bank, which wasn't quite fair – or the attorney for them or something. And we'd go to these meetings with our high heels and our hats, and our gloves, and look like ladies and act like devils, because it wasn't right. They were trying to shove things down the community that they felt—the bank felt that they owned the Trust and that it was for their benefit – so they were able to give low-cost loans to their employees. This was almost enough for a suit. They really didn't handle the funds very well. And it wasn't until, oh, before we built the last building. We got it all turned over to us. And now we manage the Trust, not the bank. And we've been able to invest much better and so on. They were investing and making 1 percent or 2 percent. And it was a nightmare. So—

PL: Were there particular members of the community that came to the aid of this? You mentioned Sam Stroum.

AG: Yes. All of the members of the community came to the aid of The Home. We've always had a good reputation. And we've always had—we have a lot of friends. And a lot of these peoples' parents and family were in The Home. So, you know, it was sort of a slam-dunk to get help from anybody.

PL: How did you go about doing the fundraising? Did you personally have to make those phone calls and say, "Hey – by first name – we need a million dollars?"

AG: No. We made a phone call and said, "I'd like to meet you for lunch." And then you met them for lunch. [laughter] And then you told them. I was co-chairman of the last campaign. I worked on all the others. And I was Women's Division chairman of the Federation too. So, I've had my times where people cross the street to avoid me. But it isn't as hard as you think it is.

PL: For fear that you'd ask them for money?

AG: Mmm-hmm. Yes.

PL: Can you talk about being the Chair of the Women's Division?

AG: Yes. I took that – that was a crazy thing. That was 1965. Ben Bridge, and Charlie Fine showed up in my kitchen one Sunday morning when I had the children to ask me to take over the campaign. And I respected both of them very much, so I couldn't say no. So in three months we had to do a campaign. And I was able to get a lot of active people in the community to help. We did a show that didn't turn out very well at all. But we raised more money than we raised before and netted more. And it was sort of a slam-bang kind of thing. But in those days, the big gifts from the women was one $2,000 gift. And I think we raised over $50,000 – which was unheard of in those days. But of course now it's

ridiculous. But it was a—of course, I paid my cleaning woman a dollar an hour that time too. [laughter] So in comparison it was considerable.

PL: What is the Women's Division of the Federation? When did it come to be? And why was there a need for it?

AG: I don't know when it came to be. It was long before me. But I think most of the feeling was that women should take responsibility too. Even though they're married, or this or that. And it wasn't just business women that it started out for. Many times a wealthy man would die and his widow would feel that she was bereft, had no money and could not support the community, and sort of drop out of the thing. But this was to involve the women in the community and their responsibility. But it isn't—they have a part in saying where money should go. And that's why, you know, the different programs under the Women's Division developed. And it should be. The men, you know, go to the men alone. They don't go to the husband and wife. And so, we felt, go to the wives. And go to the single women. Go to all women. It's your community too. And even though they were giving – well, in those days they were giving about as much as they give now in comparison to what the campaign itself was. But it is a way of teaching people.

PL: What was the culture? And what were the programs for the Women's Division while you were Board president?

AG: I really don't know what you mean?

PL: What kind of programs? You said that there were—

AG: Oh, we didn't have any programs. We just raised money. We did a telethon. And as I say, we did "That Was the Week That Was" which came to Seattle. It was an old TV show that was a hit. And this friend of mine could get it for us very cheaply. And it was totally the wrong thing to show to the Jewish community. So it was a flop. We didn't lose money on it.

PL: And what was the name of the show?

AG: It was called “That Was the Week That Was.” It was a television show from England. And they would review the things that happened. And it was sort of a Mark Russell kind of thing. And I don’t know if you’ve ever heard Mark Russell speaking to Republicans? That’s about how it went over. [laughter] So, it wasn’t successful but it did teach me one thing. You don’t put out a lot of money unless you’re guaranteed something in return. So I was kind of a sore in some of there [unclear]—some of these people—because I hated the idea of hiring. They all thought that all you do to get somebody to perform for the Federation is call them. Not realizing that you call their agent, and dicker around how much you want to pay for them. And anyway, I had all—and now of course they have the very successful connections and all different kinds of things. And I think it’s wonderful. But in those days, we had these luncheons and they could be deadly. But the one woman who convinced me – this was Paulette Fink. I think I told you about her before, who was a French resistance worker and then spoke around the country. And she now lives in Palm Springs and I see her quite often. And it reminds me of what a fantastic woman she was. And I think she brought more people into Women’s Division than anybody because of her talk.

PL: What other kind of speakers did you have at these luncheons?

AG: Oh, they had different movie stars. They had—I can’t think of some of their names. I can remember who they had for Israel Bonds one time. Now I can’t think of his name – Marx.

PL: Harpo?

AG: Harpo. We had Harpo who was fabulous. One of the funniest men I’d ever met. He had wonderful stories to tell and was a very literate man. I think Groucho came on another circuit . Was not—was political, more than religious.

PL: But within this—you said, “the circuit.” It’s very interesting that you used that word. Were there speakers that NCJW, Israel Bonds, you know, Federations, knew were available for these kinds of events?

AG: Yes.

PL: How did you become aware of them and their availability?

AG: Oh usually, half the time they were hired ahead of time. With Israel Bonds, of course, you can get any Israeli general. You can get diplomats and so on. And the main speakers, at times, you’d get Abba Eban in New York. But they were the ones that were, you know—they were rated really on what kind of community, and can they afford it, and will they bring enough money? We weren’t the top circuit, of course, because we weren’t New York, Los Angeles or Chicago, or Miami. But we had a pretty good choice of people, I think. I can’t remember all of the ones that came through. But an awful lot of people did. Usually second leads in a movie kind of thing. Not the stars.

PL: Did it have to pertain to anything necessarily Jewish?

AG: They spoke on Jewish themes. I think most of the speeches were probably written for them. But they were asserting their Jewishness and so on. Getting out. You know. They had time. They’ll do it. [laughter]

PL: You also were involved in Israel Bonds. What was your affiliation with them?

AG: I was Women’s Division chairman. Irv Sternoff was Men’s Division chairman. And this was quite a while. Once Mike Litvak – who was the CEO, or whatever they called them then of the area here – got onto you, you couldn’t get away. He was one of the best fundraisers I’ve ever met. In fact, [Mike] was very active in raising money for the JCC. I’d swear, he knew what anybody’s bank was. He knew the total they had in there – in their whole investment portfolio.

PL: Sounds like he also knew something about their cultural background?

AG: Oh, everything. He knew everything about everybody. He was the nosiest—well, not quite, Josh was the nosiest. But anyway, he knew everybody. In fact, when Josh came to Seattle for an interview, I took him to meet Leon Okin who was a JCC executive. I took him to meet Mike Litvak, and I figured that if neither one of them picked his pockets, he'd be a good executive – and he was. But anyway, Mike got Irv and I for – well I think he still had Irv – but, he had me for about five years in a row where I had to say, "Yes, I'll be Chairman." "Yes, I'll get the girls." They'd do modeling. They'd model the Israeli fashions at a party at somebody's home. And you'd get young girls to try to wear them. And they sent these clothes all over the country to show what the Israeli fashion business was all about. And there were really some stunning gowns and stuff. They usually for a men's thing sent a general or something to talk. But you always had to get up and say something. It was interesting.

PL: What are Israeli fashions?

AG: Oh, the clothes that are made in Israel. And they were gorgeous. After all, the bathing suit—I can't think of it—

PL: Gottex?

AG: —Gottex is made there. There were so many in those days, of course, fur pieces, and gorgeous formals and so on, that were made in Israel. And I don't know. Every so often you'd pick up something that says "made in Israel" and I think it is still going – a good fashion industry there. And so, this was just anything to promote Israel as a nation that is making a living and doing things – rather than to somebody—the bond buying was actually not a gift because you bought these bonds. You might not get the same interest you would from something else. But it was backed and it was a good example. We used it with all our children – had them to go to Israel. So, it—which was what we thought

would be the best thing for them.

PL: What made you into—or can you tell me about Zionism, actually, a little bit in your life?

AG: I don't know why. I guess I just was. That's about all I can think about because I—when I was a child during the Second World War, I really never knew anything about it. And when I became aware of what was going on, I probably—I think before I married Bernard, I felt there should be a country. I was supportive of it because – I don't know – I just did. And it was something that should be done. And people needed a country. And this bit about being not allowed in the United States, not allowed any place else. It's impossible. And I watched many of my friends who are anti-Zionist switch over the years.

PL: Here in Seattle?

AG: Yes. It was fun to watch them.

PL: What does anti-Zionism mean?

AG: They don't believe in Israel. They didn't believe in having a separate state. You get along perfectly well in your own community. Even after Hitler, they felt that. And I—and most of this, of course, came up because of Hitler. But I just couldn't believe it because I felt that was kind of stupid.

PL: Where was hotbed of anti-Zionism in Seattle? Was there a certain locale or a group of people that would call themselves anti-Zionist? Did they come from particular institutions, or educational backgrounds or class?

AG: [laughter] You know, I don't even want to talk about it. I don't want to mention names or anything like that.

PL: You don't need to mention names.

AG: Because there were—a lot of them were German Jews who settled Seattle. And they felt that people can get along in their own community. They had not been in Germany during any of Hitler's times. These were third- and fourth-generation Jews who had assimilated pretty well in Seattle, by the way. And they were basically the ones that weren't too happy with the Russian Jews – the Orthodox Russian Jews coming in. They weren't too happy with the Sephardics. But that's, you know, old news. That's not around any more.

PL: You mentioned that you saw friends who were "anti-Zionist" who had changed their views over the years. What can you say to that? Why did they change their ideas?

AG: I think they became more realistic and accepted the entire community as a whole. And I think with that, they accepted Zionism. Because for a long time, the "society" in Seattle was Jewish, German Jewish. And we were coming from Germany or if you were a refugee from Germany, you'd be greeted with wide-open arms. But if you were from Russia, no. If you were Sephardic no way. So, I think that was it.

PL: So, I was going to ask whether or not this was indigenous to Seattle. I do know what you said, it's old news. There's a history. Temple de Hirsch. Rabbi Koch.

AG: Uh-huh.

PL: You know, Herzl, was much more Zionist—obviously named after Theodore Herzl. And so I do understand that there's a history of that. It is interesting though, to note, how it is that there's a particular Seattle phenomenon. And I was wondering if you might elaborate on that. Whether it is because Seattle is far away from the East Coast or it's regional? Regionally does it make a difference?

AG: I think so. You know, this was a community that pretty-well assimilated. And then the other Jews came into town and they're not like them. And a lot of families that strived very hard to be accepted, and weren't accepted. There were many families, as I said,

that converted and became very successful. I'm trying to think of the name of John that was—worked for Nixon. Not John Dean. But anyway, it was an old Jewish family. And had converted and so on. And they were accepted. Now, I can't think of his name. Why can't I think of it? The Lang family was another one that completely switched. I know when I was on the Jewish Family Board, there were many people who were active in the United Way or in different—and, of course, we dealt with the United Way because a Jewish Family gets funds through that. But many people who were very prominent in the city who had been Jewish. And, as I say, I can't think of John… It starts with a "B." It probably starts with an "L." [laughter]

PL: At Israel Bonds, was there like Hadassah, for instance – people who were active in Hadassah were Zionists, generally speaking.

AG: Mmm hmm.

PL: Were you ever interested in Hadassah?

AG: No.

[Telephone rings in background; break in recording]

AG: John Erlichman. That was the name.

PL: Spell his name for us.

AG: E-R-I-C-K–

PL: That's okay.

AG: Let's see – Erlichman.

PL: We'll go back to that.

AG: He was in the – and he was part of the people that were – he went to jail for Nixon. He was with John Glenn – not John Glenn. [laughter] God!

PL: [laughter]

AG: I tell you, my memory is so bad. But it was Erlichman.

PL: So, you were not active or involved in Hadassah?

AG: No, not really. I belonged to it. And I knew people who were in it, and so on. I had my plate full.

PL: Well, what was the culture of these organizations – or your interest in these particular organizations versus others that – why were you interested in Israeli Bonds? How did you get involved with Israeli Bonds?

AG: Mike Litvak.

PL: That's right.

AG: [laughter] You get somebody convincing that gets after you and you're stuck.

PL: So, what did you do for them?

AG: Nothing much. I just arranged –I got people to come to meetings. Got them involved in the fashion shows. Got them to buy bonds. Mike did the selling, and I just introduced him to people. That was basically the thing.

PL: I'd like to ask a little bit about the role of women vis-à-vis men, in these organizations?

AG: Well, I think the reason I like the Galland Home was because that even though now it is getting a little more male-balanced, it usually was the women were considered as

capable as the men. I don't like separation of women's and men's organizations. And I resent it. And it happens so often where the women do the work and the men do all the speeches. But it's very true. Jewish organizations are pro-men. They've been stuck in Seattle because they haven't been able to get enough capable men to be chairman of the Federation. I think that's why Eileen Gilman and Frankie Loeb and all these different women have done these fantastic jobs because they are capable and they can do it – and run a family and do these things as men run businesses. Now, of course, there are many professional women that are coming on the Boards and so on – and are brilliant people. And it's about time. I don't know if it will ever happen in Judaism, though. I just don't know. It's so funny. I go to Herzl with my daughter, and the women are up on the pulpit. And the women are doing this and that. Then at Temple it's still—it's sort of a – it's nutty.

PL: Well, I'd like you to elaborate. Because those contrasts have been drawn out in other interviews that I've been in. Some women have kept their dual membership at Orthodox or Conservative and Temple. And I'm just wondering, could you draw out those differences that you see? Especially in the role of women?

AG: Well, I can't draw them out too much. I guess it was just brought home to me. And I shouldn't even mention this. I went to a family reunion: Bernard's family. He had 23 first cousins. And they stayed friends and kept in touch over the years. They're all over the world. Not all over the world. All over the United States and Canada. Well, they are all over the world. They're in China, and so on. But their progeny are. But at this meeting, two of the third cousins or fourth cousins. Women had planned the whole thing. Sent out brochures. Had the pictures of everything. Tied everybody in. And when it came time for the dinner, three men spoke. And I sat there thinking – and I was talking to a cousin of my husband's who is just a wonderful woman and I said, "What goes on?" And she said, "Why do the men take over?" And it was a scary thing too because this is a family full of Alzheimer's. And they talked about "the disease." And I was getting angry. And I

told my husband the next morning, when we had the breakfast, I was going to get up and say, “Look you all have Alzheimer genes in your family. Let’s do something about it. You have five generations. It would be wonderful. The Alzheimer’s Association would love to work on you. I want my children to get involved.” And so, before I’d gotten down there, he had somebody get up and say, “We’re going to make donations to the Alzheimer’s Association and so on.” And I thought, “I’ll kill him.” But men do that. They—if you give them an idea, they run with it. And they don’t say it’s yours. Anyway, I don’t know. I guess it’s—and men are still being brought up to believe that, in some families, they’re the be-all, end-all of the thing. But I guess basically it’s so wrong, and I get wild about it. My daughters feel the same. And I don’t know if it’ll ever end. I guess when women make the same as men, and are—have completely broken through the glass ceiling, it might happen. But as long as we have the children, and are – and certain years of our lives – are the child caregiver . Although it’s happening so much any more, my grandchildren when they fall will just as soon call “Daddy” as “Mom” now. So, maybe it’s changing. I haven’t seen it yet though.

PL: With your own children, you had two boys and two girls?

AG: Yes.

PL: How did you instill that sense of equality – no “end-all, be-all”-ness in your home?

AG: You know, it was very interesting. It worked out with my youngest son and with my daughters. My oldest son, I can’t get to him. He’s a, well, he’s just a prince. His wife works and does a good—he works. And she still makes the meals, takes his breakfast to him and all this and that. And he is so spoiled. But when he was a child, it was his turn to clean up the kitchen. I felt that all my children should learn something about doing their own laundry and fixing their own meals if they had to. But he’s waited on hand and foot. I blame his wife. I don’t blame—I can’t blame me because he knew better. But we’ve been—you know, I was raised in respecting the man. Not too much. My mother worked,

and it was during the Second World War. And she was liberated. So, I don't know. My brothers weren't able to push me around. But I guess that's only in certain families because there are too many of these girls that are raised to be pretty little things and not have a brain in their head. And they get by with it. And unfortunately, I think it pulls us down a little. But I can't blame other women. I do blame men.

PL: At Temple de Hirsch and Herzl – to go back to your comparison. Temples are Reform, and Herzl is Conservative. Temple still has male rabbis and Herzl has Lisa Gelber, who is the rabbi there. So, what is it that you see when you made that comparison? I'm not sure that I understand.

AG: Well, they've had women rabbis at Temple de Hirsch too. They had Rabbi Singer and before that they had another one. But I don't know. I guess because—and they've had women presidents at Temple de Hirsch and they've had women presidents at Herzl. I guess that's not quite a fair bit, except that I do find that the bat mitzvah's at Herzl, they take as much preparation as they do for the bar mitzvah's. And I haven't been to a great bat mitzvah at Temple.

PL: What is the difference? And what makes it not great?

AG: Well, the ones that—well, of course, it may be the difference in their training too. But of course, I went to one where the girl was brilliant and she speaks Hebrew better than the—well, she's been to Israel and all kinds of things. And I was just very impressed with how she conducted herself and had the confidence, and many of the girls don't. That could have been I went to exceptional ones, and so on, which was probably the thing.

PL: Do women at Temple wear tallit and things like that?

AG: No. No.

PL: Do they at Herzl?

AG: Yes.

PL: What do you make of that? What does that say about, well Judaism?

AG: Yeah. That's what it says. Because the men don't wear tallit or anything at Temple. They are a little bit more—I haven't been there for a while. Last—in fact, I haven't been there for the Holy Days the last couple of years because I've been ill. And somebody said, "They're starting to wear the tallit more." But I've just noticed that the Herzl women have the stuff on. And I don't know, they just seem to be a little bit better trained. [laughter]

PL: I understand that you were one of the founding members of the B'nai Torah.

AG: Yes, we were. When they fired Jacob Singer from Temple de Hirsch, I was—we were good friends of Jacob. And I still think he is probably one of the best speakers I've ever heard. He had a beginning, a middle and an end to any sermon. He was a literate man. And probably his own worst enemy. But he—they really did not treat him well. And so, we – with a group of other people – started Beth Am.

PL: Beth Am or B'nai Torah?

AG: B'nai Torah. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm glad you correct me because I'm a little nutsy, I think.

PL: Well, perhaps some historian will find that Freudian slip more interesting. [laughter]

AG: Well, I always liked Rabbi Hirsch at Beth Am. But anyway, so it started—formed that congregation. And things happened with Jacob when he was dying. They hadn't set aside – we were not involved with the Board and had sort of pulled ourselves away a little bit but we were still members – but they had not taken anything under consideration for his retirement and so on. And you know, the normal thing is you have a retirement

program for anybody in that situation. You have it for social workers. You have it for anybody that's working anyplace. And they did not. And the people in power were a little bit—I thought they were very nasty about the whole thing. And so we, after Jacob died, moved back to Temple. And—

PL: What was the difference that created the B'nai Torah? What were you looking for in creating a new synagogue? Where did you create it? Who was going to lead? Was it going to be communal? What were the decisions that were made surrounding this break-off from Temple?

AG: Well, we all liked Jacob and felt that he was doing a good job. And many of the other people didn't. He basically was a lazy man, but he was a good man. My husband was more involved with it than I was. And he was a very close friend of Jacob and felt that we can use another synagogue. There's no reason why it has to be at Temple de Hirsch. There's room for another reform temple. And we'll set one up and have it be a little bit more representative of how the people feel. Jacob used a lot of music in his services. We wore tallises – men wore tallises if they wanted to. And it was more like B'nai Torah is like now. And it was—I mean I just felt like I could work with him. But Bernard did too. And he felt it would be better. He was kind of disgusted with Temple at the time.

PL: Were there incendiary or vituperative moments at Temple around this breaking off?

AG: Oh boy, yes.

PL: Would you talk about that a little bit?

AG: I don't. I can't talk about too much because I don't know too much. But people were really angry with one another. And somebody would say – like what they do now with different Rabbis when they leave. "Well, he didn't come. I was sick in the hospital, and he didn't come to see me." Not "I was dying in the hospital and he didn't come to see

me," but "I had the tonsils out and he didn't come to see me." And it was, you know—you take sides. And there can't be—there can't help but be disagreements and so on after that. Some see somebody as good and another will see him as lazy and worthless and so on. And everybody, I find – well, of course in the Mormon Church too – everybody in Judaism is an expert. And they all know how services should be conducted and so on. And what does the rabbi know? So, it's—there are too many experts.

PL: Is that a contemporary phenomenon? Or, can you put your finger on something about Seattle's Jewish community that causes that kind of reaction?

AG: Well, I don't know any other Jewish community. So, I couldn't compare them with any other. But I do know with the last rabbi that was leaving town—this was, you know—"he's a great man" until he wanted a better salary and then immediately "he's not doing his job." I mean, I don't know. I get pretty annoyed with some of the "experts."

PL: Well, I imagine it's petty.

AG: It is. It is very petty. And you know, it can destroy a man. And they do when they do this. Every time they fire a rabbi or so on, it takes a bit of him away. And you don't end up with the same person that you had before. You just can't. And I think probably the rabbis have the toughest time because when they're fired it's got to be the most humiliating thing in the world. Not to be a junior rabbi and have worked hard and so on, and to have been in a congregation for a long time, and said, "No, you're not good enough to take over." And I think those decisions should be made in the first year or so that somebody has worked in there. It shouldn't be a come on. Keep looking for the one who is going to take over, if you have to.

PL: Let's imagine for a moment that the purpose of the next part of this interview is to establish the history of the Temple B'nai Torah. And this is for the historical record of B'nai torah. When you broke off, where did you meet? When did you decide to—what

were the early decisions around how you would pray? Where you would pray? What—how did you make these decisions communally?

AG: Well, a group of people got together and said to Jacob, "We're with you." And originally, he had a few meetings in his house, and so on. There was a – I think it was a Congregational Church. I can't remember the one on Island Crest Way. There was a church there on a corner. And we made a deal with the people to use it Friday nights and for our holidays. So, we used that, covered the cross. My son made—he carried the Torah. And each time, my son made the—designed the ark. In fact, it's at the B'nai Torah now. And we met there, used the social hall and so on. And then, when it came time, we raised money for the new B'nai Torah. So when that burned down, the insurance paid for most of it. Money had to be raised again.

PL: How long did it take for you to build the first building?

AG: Oh, I can't remember. My son designed it. I can't remember – absolutely. My memory for dates is so bad, and I should write things down. And I do have them written down some place but I can never find it. I don't even remember. I can go back. Larry was the first bar mitzvah at B'nai Torah. So that would be 32 years ago. And then we were meeting in that church, and it was about nine months before that we established it. So, if you take 33 years away from that, what have you got? [laughter]

PL: Good enough.

AG: Yes. But—

PL: So, what were the satisfactions and rewards, the feelings that you had about being part of this new temple?

AG: Well, we were a small group. We were basically friendly. And we had –the services were lovely. I mean, Jacob and his wife had a wonderful voice and we had a beautiful

choir. And it just seemed it was a little more relaxed and not as big. I shouldn't say this, but when they built the new Temple de Hirsch— We belonged to it when it was the old building. And when I saw the first Temple de Hirsch, when they used to have the staffs – well, you wouldn't know – but they had staffs at the end of each row. And I walked in and I thought, "I can see [Cecile B.] DeMille saying, 'The lion's now!'" And it was a little too ornate for me. And it still is. Even with age it hasn't become pleasanter. It's—I didn't like the architecture, I guess.

PL: So, B'nai Torah, by contrast was more?

AG: Very simple. Very simple. And of course, the new one is even simpler. But it wasn't a complicated thing. And it wasn't "awe-inspiring," I guess, is the word. But I probably belong in smaller communities. That was my only feeling with it. My husband can give you the whole history of that. But, as I say, he was more involved than I was. And when he gets more involved than I am, I let him take over.

PL: When Rabbi Singer passed away, did they bring in a new rabbi?

AG: No. They hired – well they brought in – they had somebody. I don't know whether they had somebody for a short time. But, anyway, then they brought [Rabbi Jim] Mirel in from Temple de Hirsch. And we'd have stayed there, if we knew that Mirel would be there.

PL: Why did you decide to return to Temple de Hirsch?

AG: We didn't want to pay another building fund and build another synagogue. [laughter] We'd paid enough. And a lot of our friends were there. We just went back. And it's really never been the same though. We used to be fairly active. And we rarely go now. And it's just we belong, but big deal.

PL: Can you describe—I'm going to erase that question. I want to go back to some of your civic and volunteer activities. I think there is one thing that we missed, which is that you have been active in the Democratic Party.

AG: Well, I have and haven't. When we moved over here 30-some-odd years ago, I became active. I ran for, you know—I was just a precinct committee woman. But I got to know everybody. And went to some of the state conventions. But never beyond that. I was just involved. I'm very liberal. And this was—that precinct was the only one in Bellevue that voted Democratic.

PL: What precinct was that?

AG: I can't remember – 40. I can't even remember the number. I'm sorry.

PL: What is a precinct chair?

AG: Oh nothing. It's really nothing. You have 250 to 500 people in a precinct. And what you do basically, you go to the district meetings which are held once a month or something. And you get to know the candidates and who's running for what. But basically your job is to inform if there's, say, a school bond issue or something that's important. Usually the Republican counterpart will cover half the district and you'll cover the other, if you are in agreement. But it's basically to canvass the neighborhood and try to get the people to vote. You can pick up towards the end of the Election Day. Anyway, it is not much of a job. But you get to work with people in the Democratic Party. You get to help on—a lot of the elections you work hard on.

PL: Were there opportunities for growth and advancement within—was the hope that you would become a precinct chair and then you move onto becoming a delegate?

AG: Oh you – yes, I was a delegate to a couple of the state things. I was elected. You have the Party—I'm sorry. I can't even think of the name of it.

PL: [laughter]

AG: Before the election. In fact, I think that they're going to change this, and I hope they don't. It's been done here for—the delegates at your house who come—the people who come to your house for the state convention elect a delegate or elect a president in that Precinct meeting. And it can be rigged very easily, and it is not one-man, one-vote. It's ten people voting for 500, or 1,000. And it really is out of line. Because I think people are so disinterested, it can be swayed an awful lot.

PL: What kind of values, or ideas do you have, that made you decide to take this step – to run for Precinct Chair?

AG: Well, as I say, that's no big deal to do because all you have to do is to put your name up. They need somebody. And you have to get 60 percent of the vote for the last presidential election. You know? And you have to get 60 percent of your precinct vote of what your candidate made in the last election – what the Democratic candidate, or what the Republican candidate made. It's not any big deal.

PL: Did you volunteer? Or did someone suggest your name?

AG: I think someone called me. I knew most of the people that were involved. And I've always felt very strongly. I'm pro-abortion, and I'm pro- an awful lot of things that many people aren't. And I got involved because I think it's silly. We are no better off than we were 20 years ago, or 30 years ago. In fact, we are worse off.

PL: How did you balance all of this community work with your family life, and your other responsibilities? Did you have help?

AG: I had help at times. I've always had cleaning help. When the kids were small I had more help because I wouldn't be—pardon me, do you want to turn that off?

PL: Yes.

[Break in recording]

AG: I've had some live-in help. Or, I used to have my cleaning woman a few days a week. So I was able to do that.

PL: Who have your cleaning women been?

AG: Hmm?

PL: Who have they been? What communities have they come from?

AG: Usually Black. Mui's the first Asian I've had.

PL: How does she spell her name?

AG: M-U-I. And she's a lovely woman. She got out of Vietnam. Her husband went to work one day and never came home. And she and her three children with her brother were one of the boat people. One of the first ones that the church sponsored here. And a friend of mine who belonged to that church called me and said she had somebody. And she's been working for me ever since. She's put three children through college – two of whom graduated like Phi Beta Kappa or close and have very good jobs now. They don't think she's very smart – which is an unfortunate thing. She's one of the smartest women I know. But she can't master English. And it's just too bad. If she could, she could be any place. But she works part-time here once a week for me and then she works at an electronics factory. And she's been promoted three times because she catches on. But it's too bad – the ethnic problems. Her daughters of course, I've said, spend time with her, and teach her, "Oh she'll never learn." She will and has.

PL: So, how is it, to continue, you have continued to manage to juggle all these roles, and leadership roles and family roles?

AG: Sometimes you run fast. If you enjoy it, it is not too bad. I think the worst was when I was chairman of the Women's Division. A woman who was the chairman the next year used to call me every night at dinner. And it got to the point that my son answered the phone one night and I heard him saying, "Oh, I'm sorry, Mom isn't home." And when I realized what he was doing, I let him say that because it was interrupting our dinner. And I think that's a terrible thing. It's like the salesmen that call – especially, the phone company that dials, every time, at dinner time at night. And I think they should be fined. [laughs] But it seems to balance.

PL: How did other women in your generation manage similarly? Did they also have help in the home?

AG: Yes.

PL: Did they rely on other family members?

AG: Almost all of my friends have had help of some sort. Some more, some less. But none of them have been very active in the community. A lot of them are—well, I have one friend who's never done a damn thing in the community. But she's the best social worker I know. She has, at any given time, three-to-ten friends who have a lot of problems that she's sort of nurturing. And I told her she should get her diploma and let them know they're really getting good help. Well, people work in their own way. They do what they want to do.

PL: What are the special qualities or talents that you have that's made you capable of these leadership roles and of all of the things that you've done? I'm asking you to kind of go inward and ferret out those things that have made you a success in these areas?

AG: Well, I don't know that I've been a terrible success. I've had a lot of people angry with me. I guess the main thing is that I keep after something until it gets done. And I hang onto a lot of things. I think you have to do it. You have to be there to help when it is

being done. Whatever “it” is. But I don’t know. You are totally involved. You have to feel—you have to believe in what you’re doing. And if you do, you can do it, and you can convince other people to help you and it works out.

PL: Are you particularly convincing?

AG: I think sometimes I am – when I talk about The Home or when I got involved with that. When I was on the Board of the Jewish Family Service, I was very convincing on that. I think my belief in Zionism helped with the Israel Bonds and The Federation. I never do anything I don’t believe in. I can’t. I can’t be half-hearted about something. And as a result, I can be pretty boring. [laughter] But I can’t remember all the, you know—you have a heartache doing things too because you may be out totally on the wrong side of the fence. But I found generally, I’ve worked on—The Home Board has been very satisfactory to me. Because I’ve been able to be on opposing sides with somebody and I still respect them.

PL: What is The Home Board?

AG: The Galland Home Board is 27 members. It used to be four, then it was 15, and now it’s 27. And it is women and men. And although I was the first [woman] president – we’re going to have another woman President soon. I think I did such a bad job, they wouldn’t have anybody until Jeanie Alhadeff is going to be the woman president next. The Home Board is—they have a cross-section of the community, from the Orthodox to the Reform, from the Ashkenazi to the Sephardic. And everybody’s represented. If—and most of the things, of course, are done in committees. And everybody’s on a committee or two. But when a committee report comes in and you disagree with it, it can be sent back very easily. I’ve earned the respect of men and women, and I think that I’ve respected everybody there. So, it worked out fine. Actually, it was almost the same on the Jewish Family Board except that I couldn’t stand the director.

PL: Have you ever been paid for any of these jobs?

AG: No. It's cost money. When I was raising money for the last campaign at The Home – and every time – you usually meet people for lunch. It's much easier. You don't call anybody on the phone and ask them for a considerable amount of money. And as a woman you drop your credit card in the place when you go and say, "Put the tax and tip on it, and leave it." Because you're picking up a man's lunch. And it is very hard for them to see a woman move a credit card around. But it costs money. I've never been paid for anything.

PL: Do you have other things that you've done with – the little time that you probably have – with your leisure time –that you love to do?

AG: I used to play golf and I was pretty good, and I enjoyed it. But the last four years, my arthritis has been pretty bad and I haven't been able to. It is a wonderful relief you know? You are four hours away from everything. And it really is a good game. I sew and I do needlepoint. And I did an awful lot of things. I always managed to have a full plate on different things that I've done – until the last few years, when I do less.

PL: Leisure time.

AG: I can't remember all the different things.

PL: You mentioned gardening?

AG: Oh, I've always gardened. I used to have a much bigger yard. I love to garden. It's wonderful to stick these stinky little plants in the ground and watch them grow. I miss all these things, because I can only do a little bit now. The only pots I do are the ones that are waist high. I don't bend over to pick weeds any more. I don't do all the things I used to do.

PL: What's inhibited you?

AG: My arthritis, basically. I injured my back when I was 20. And then of course, if I had a straight back, by now it would be good. Because I was a slumper, it becomes more painful as time goes on. Yes, sit up straight. [laughter] But and I used to play tennis years ago. I was pretty active. My kids and I used to play games together.

PL: Are you a reader?

AG: Yes.

PL: What do you read?

AG: Anything and everything. I love murder mysteries. And yet, you know, I won't go to a shoot-'em-up movie. I love Tony Hillerman. I love Susan George – not so much. I used to like Josephine Tey. She died long before you were born. And P. D. James. Oh, I read the other writers too. I started out loving what's her name – who wrote *Pigs in Heaven* and so on – and made that disaster of that [*Poisenwood*] *Bible* book. Kingsolver, Barbara Kingsolver. But, I read a lot of ethnic books too. I enjoy books—and the lives Indian people live, or Asians or anything. I seem to enjoy those too. I can't stand something like Sydney Sheldon by my husband likes. And we have a terrible time over that. [laughter]

PL: Where do you get your books from?

AG: I buy them.

PL: Particular stores?

AG: If I'm desperate – any place. You know, I usually go to Barnes & Noble. I used to buy all my books from a small bookstore that was in the Nordstrom Building, downtown. They had a—didn't have a lot of books, and they had a couple that I think that owned it.

And they used to have a little sandwich shop above it. They had the best books. And you know, they had read them all and had a little comment on them. I hate buying them in the bigger stores because if you say, “Is that good?” They’ve never read it. They have no clue, and so on. But the little bookstores are being pushed out. They aren’t much any more. And they are really the best ones.

PL: Do you remember the name of this little shop in the Nordstrom Building?

AG: No, I don’t.

PL: Was it a gathering place of any kind?

AG: No. People just went in there, and picked out books, and then upstairs they could get a sandwich or so on. But it was—yes, it was called City Books. But it isn’t around. I guess I should go down more to Pioneer Square where they have some more. But I don’t get down there very often. I don’t go any place where I have to walk too much. So. That terrible? I sound like a real, old lady. [laughter]

PL: [laughter]

PL: Is there something you could put your finger on as to why it is that murder mysteries and ethnic books – the books that you described – are your favorites?

AG: Well, actually, the ethnic books are more fun because they bring you into the lives of other people. And how totally different other civilizations are. And how totally different [unclear] civilizations – there are civilizations. But how different the Indian woman, for example, lives. I read the book *The Red Tent* which was a good book until the end. And I think what I am going to do in my next life is to write the ends of stories that are terrible.

PL: What is it about *The Red Tent* that you liked, and then didn’t like?

AG: Well, I thought the end was probably cliché. I liked the bit – this was again, the life of a woman who—I've almost forgotten—who had terrible things happen to her. And who survived. But the end was not a survival thing.

PL: Did you read that book on your own? Or did someone recommend it to you?

AG: I picked it up.

PL: Had you heard the hubbub around it in the Jewish community? In the women's Jewish community?

AG: No.

PL: Pretty popular book right now.

AG: Is it?

PL: Yes. Are there any magazines or books—sorry, magazines that you subscribe to?

AG: *New Yorker. Newsweek. Gourmet*. That's about it. We take some other stuff, but I can't remember.

PL: Are you fans of any particular television shows or movies?

AG: Uh-huh.

PL: What shows do you watch regularly?

AG: Well, I love Martin Sheen's… Why can't I think of it? The Martin Sheen—

PL: "The West Wing"?

AG: "West Wing." My head. You'll have to help me with everything.

PL: I'm trying not to. [laughter]

AG: And then, my shoot-'em-up is "Law and Order." And I like "The Practice." And I like an awful lot of shows. I like "Jeopardy." And I like it when it's the kid's "Jeopardy" because I know every answer. Now, when it's a celebrity, that's when it's fun.

PL: Are any of these social events for you? Do you sit down and have a regular week sometimes?

AG: No. If I'm home and I'm not doing something else, I'll—I do remember Wednesday nights. And that's like—it's like the old Lucille Ball stuff or some that went on. But, no. Most of them don't make that much of an impression. Oh, I'm stuck now. I watch baseball games. I love them. My daughter has ticket and takes the children. One of them is five, and she's small. So she has four tickets. She and her husband and the two boys will go. And Miriam is now objecting because she's old enough. She's old enough to have her own seat. So they have to buy a cheap seat for her and then switch her over to where they seat. Because with five people, four seats are never filled. They're always getting something to eat. But she's a fan. And of course, I am too. I've enjoyed it.

PL: What is it about the Mariners that invokes that?

AG: Well, I guess what I should tell you is I'm also a—my husband is a sports widow. I love to watch golf. I love to watch tennis. I love to watch football. I'll watch basketball. I love them all. I was a tomboy as a girl. And I used to play all the sports. I never played football or basketball. But these were—I grew up playing games. My brothers were older and had to baby-sit me. So I had to play all the baseball games and on their teams. I wasn't to sit on the side. So I've always enjoyed sports. Probably football is my least favorite. But we had tickets to the Seahawks. We still have them, but I don't think we're going to go for the new deal. So. I can't walk up the ramp anyway.

PL: Have you participated in any women's-only social groups? Such as book clubs or—

AG: Yeah. I have a club of women. There were ten of us and we used to play cards every Wednesday. It used to be every Wednesday night. Except I never went on the nights that I had either Jewish Family Service or The Home meetings. And we would meet when them children were very small. I was always out of step with them. But we just called it "Club." And we would meet and have dinner. And when the met went out to play cards or to do something else. When it first started the women would take their babies, and I was always a little behind everybody else. So, when this other friend and I – when we were trying to have our children – they had dogs. And when we had dogs, they had grandchildren. And now, they've got great-grandchildren. [laughter] And we're still behind. But anyway, we were a very close group of women. There were ten of us. Five – four have died, and one has a very bad Alzheimer's. And we were very good friends. In fact, they are my best friends, really. We've laughed together and cried together. We're the first ones at anybody's house when something happens. And my kids are always wondering when I'm going to stop calling "the girls."

PL: Well, how has this group of women—how have you supported each other? Or talked about the processes of aging? Or going through different lifecycle events together?

AG: My oldest daughter always calls it my "support group." And she says, I have the biggest support group she's ever heard of. We help each other. We always have. We don't gossip, unless it's really funny, or very good. But we—we're interested in one another. We're concerned. And we, of course, have our days where all we do is – it is called "dissing the husbands," or beating up on them. The similarity between these men that are not mechanical. Have never been trained to do anything around the house – can get pretty funny. And we have an awful lot in common. We live in the same neighborhood when I was first married. And we're still very good friends. And I don't know. I would have missed a lot if I didn't have any friends. One of them taught my boys how to dance. And the different ones – each one of them taught me how to cook. They've all been nice, interesting people.

PL: Were you aware, or did you discuss over the years, different images of Jewish women and, you know, the way that society looks at Jewish women? Now, I don't know what that means to you as someone who has converted – that doesn't necessarily – may not suffer from that same prejudice at times. Curious if that has ever entered your conversations?

AG: Not really. No, we don't have any problems with that. I think the funniest—the worst problem is when my daughter was away at school. She was elected chairman of the Jewish girls group. And the person who was in charge of these different things, called her in and said she couldn't be that. She said "Why not?" And he said, "Because you don't look Jewish." Janet succeeded. She was president of the organization. [laughter] But it was a funny thing. I mean, it was really a reverse kind of deal. I get pointed out because I'm not Jewish – because I wasn't born Jewish. And I remember one woman who was pretty obnoxious. I was at a party one day and she said – "Look at her. She's President of such-and-such, and she's not Jewish." So you get it from both sides. You can't be right, no matter what.

PL: Over the years what have your attitudes been around feminism and the changes in Women's Lib, or call it what you will?

AG: Great. The more the merrier.

PL: Can you contrast your views regarding versus your mother or your children – around women's roles?

AG: No. My daughters feel the same as I do. Well, my mother – I don't know. I really don't know what her feelings were about on that. You know, she was a working woman. Of course during the Second World War, a lot of women were. It was acceptable. So, I don't really know what her feelings were. I know I had some aunts who were pretty independent. So I imagine she was just as independent. I don't think my daughters are

as fervent as I am.

PL: Would you call yourself a feminist?

AG: Oh, definitely. Definitely. I've been one for an awful lot of time.

PL: What is the definition of a Feminist to you?

AG: Well, to me, a feminist is a person who believes in equal rights for men and women. And I think that's, more than anything. It covers culture. It covers everything. Women are on a par with me. They are not above them, and they are not below them. And just as I feel that everybody should be – feel equal. I think the position that women have been put in – in a lot of positions—I guess, one of the things – because I was a nurse, and I resented the way that doctors were treated in my time in the hospital. They came in and you took their jacket off and hung them up and gave up your chair for them, and so on. And I don't—I mean, had they been old or they had some kind of a handicap, I could see that. But I don't, you know. I think women are women. And they're actually better than men. But in feminism I don't want to say that. But women are very—they're different and they are better. They're more caring, and they're more observant. And they're more sensitive to things than men are. But that isn't feminism, that's women.

PL: Are there particular women mentors, or cultural heroines – either in the local landscape or in the national front, even international for that matter – that you've admired?

AG: Other than Eleanor Roosevelt?

PL: Not other than, go ahead and tell me about your admiration of Eleanor Roosevelt.

AG: Oh, I think she was outstanding. I think she did more for Women's Lib – for the understanding of how smart women can be – than any woman I can think of. She

certainly was a capable woman. She certainly was—except for some of the Jewish issues which she wasn't—she really didn't understand because of her background. But she came to understand many of them. And I think, had she been at a different time, I would have loved to have seen her president – somebody like her. I think Hilary [Clinton] has a chance. I like her. She's brassy and she's outspoken and I love it. Women aren't supposed to be quiet like some people we know. But there have been many women I've admired. I can't think of all of them. There have been many women in my community I've admired. As I told you, one friend was Flora Meyerson who had a handicapped child and had so many things go on in her life. She was the happiest, most cheerful person that I ever met. And you know, I'd have some little problems, and I'd say something to her, and she'd be all sympathetic and so on. And afterwards I'd say, "How can you tell her what's wrong, when she has these problems that are not going to change." But in the community – most of the ones that I admire are my contemporaries. They have been women who have taken hold of things, and done them. I admire Bernice Stern. I admire Eileen Gilman. I admire Frankie Loeb. Well, there's so many of them. They've accomplished a lot of things. Not accomplished. They've done things. Usually they don't expect any thanks. They just go ahead and do it. I can't think of any others. There are, I'm sure, a lot of them that I either don't know but I am forgetting. Forgetting is very common with me.

AG: [door creaks open] There it goes again.

PL: [laughter] I know that recently you suffered from – is it Epstein-Barr? Chronic Fatigue Syndrome?

AG: I still have it.

PL: And I am trying [laughter] to make a very awkward connection here. But it's been something that has been often associated with women.

AG: Uh-huh.

PL: And I'm just wondering what your experiences of that have been – in terms of having it and being diagnosed with it, or struggling with it. It's a recent diagnosis, isn't that correct?

AG: It's five years that I've had it. Last year was the worst because I spent four months in bed. And I could not get up and I could not do anything. I still pace myself. I can only do so much a day. I usually take a nap every day. I don't stay out late or anything. I'm just too fatigued. It's been a horrible thing because when it first started, none of my doctors believed me. And they gave me an awful bad time. One of them said, "Oh, just get back on some more Boards. You'll feel—

END OF CD 3

PL: We're continuing with the oral history of Arva Gray. Today's date is August the 9th, 2001. And this is minidisk tape #4.

AG: Okay, I've had Chronic Fatigue for five years. When, it first started it was just a gradual fatigue. And I was unable to do many things. I went—in fact, it was on my seventieth birthday that I was having my family up for a bunch of things. My son was – it was his fortieth birthday and my granddaughter's fifth within a few weeks. So, we were all gathering together. And I was going to have family dinners for three days and so on. And I found I couldn't do anything. And I ended up hiring people to do all the cooking for everything. And I kept thinking, "What's the matter? Why can't I do this?" I'd get up in the morning and start my little routine of what I had to do before I went someplace else and I found I couldn't do them. If I washed my hair, I was tired. If I did the dishes, I was tired. And I'm talking about putting them in the dishwasher, not washing them. It was so dreadful. And finally, about three years ago, a woman doctor in Palm Springs diagnosed it. The other doctors were calling it something else. And she said, "Arva, that's what you

have." So—

PL: What did they call it?

AG: Chronic Fatigue.

PL: With the misdiagnosis?

AG: Oh. They just said I was tired, and so on. And I was probably bored and to get back to doing things. There was no excuse for me not being out there. I'm perfectly healthy. And of course all my blood tests were normal. I had no tests for Epstein-Barr. I mean, the Epstein-Barr was negative. Everything they tested me for was totally negative. So, I kept going on. And then finally, last year, I remember distinctly. I had gone to Edmonton for a ninetieth birthday party of a man who I arranged the wedding for. And I guess that's complicated. But at any rate, I had gone up for his ninetieth birthday. And I came home. And I didn't feel too good. But I thought I was okay. And the next day, I couldn't get out of bed. And for four months I was in bed. I had to have household help all the time. I had to have—in fact, Bernard turned into a pretty-good nurse. And it was dreadful. Nothing helped. I went to the doctors. They checked me. They did this. They did that. Finally, put me in the hospital. And of course, I have the pain from my arthritis. But this was not pain. This was just this horrible, horrible fatigue. I was anxious. It was funny – I had fatigue, I wasn't sleeping. So, they gave me sleeping pills. They gave me this. They gave me that. I was perspiring all the time. And finally, I went to—I started getting better towards the end of the year. And I went to a doctor this year in California. He's an M.D. but he is also more of a naturopath. And he started me on all kinds of—well, I had gone to Bastyr too before he started me on all kinds of vitamins, minerals, enzymes. Nothing harmful, but so on. Then he gave me a hydrogen peroxide IV [intravenous], and it helped me. I don't know why it did. He said they had used it during the First World War for pneumonia. That these people were dying of pneumonia and they had given them in India these IV's – and they lived. And he felt that it helped tear down any shell, or

anything that might be around the bacteria or the viruses, so your natural immune system could get to it. And it seemed to work because I felt much better. So I still have it. I still am tired and function, and I couldn't then.

PL: What prepared you to take the step to visit a naturopath?

AG: If you've been in bed for 4 months and you've gone to doctors for years – and, I believe in doctors. In fact, I still keep my doctor. I would try anything. I would have tried—because I had reached the point where I just couldn't cope. And when you reach that point, you either stay that way or you start doing something about it. So I went first to Bastyr, and I told my doctor I was going. And then I went to this doctor in California, who I think is wonderful. And I am still going to a naturopath here. And I'm trying to get out of this. I went yesterday to see my regular doctor. Gave him a list of all of the stuff I take. And he checks to see that there's nothing out of balance, and that's fine. And I told him, "That's the way I have to work." I can't just take tranquilizers and sleeping pills to feel better. They didn't make you feel better, they made you think you're not too bad. But it's a dreadful, dreadful thing. And I'm too old, supposedly, for Chronic Fatigue. It usually happens to people in their forties and fifties. But just when they told me I was too old, another patient's doctor that I go to came in to see him – and she was older than I was with the same symptoms. I think they'll eventually find a cure. But it is not one disease. It is a bunch of viruses. We all build up things in our system that stay. And just as AIDS or arthritis – all these are autoimmune – this is what this is. And if I can find anything to help in any way, I'll try it.

PL: What do you make of the gendered diagnosis of Chronic Fatigue that's been in the news?

AG: Oh, they're progressing. I got an interesting article. Because we're on the web with everything for that. And I laugh. Because they had a meeting. You know, one of the major medical areas for treating Chronic Fatigue was here at Harborview Hospital. Dr.

Buchwald does Chronic Fatigue. But she basically is doing it – I don't know – more or less running cases through. I should have gone to her but I didn't. I could have gotten an appointment probably in six weeks or six months – I can't remember which. But they had a big argument on their last meeting on what to call it. Whether to name it. And they had these other names. And I thought, "If they don't have anything better [to do] than to figure out a name, I'd rather that they worked on treating the disease." I guess it's pretty esoteric. The doctors, fifty percent of them believe that there is such a thing. And fifty percent think you're crazy. So, I don't know. It's just dreadful.

PL: How many other women do you know, or you have been in contact with, or you have had group meetings with, that have Chronic Fatigue?

AG: I don't have group meetings with anybody. I know two or three other people in our community that have it. And I've talked to one of them a little bit. The other one ignores the whole thing and doesn't want to—

[Telephone rings in background; break in recording]

AG: Anyway, one of them's husband sort of runs the whole show and I talk to her because she goes to Palm Springs like I do. And I talked to the sister-in-law, I should have said, and gave her the information and came back with, "They aren't interested." Which is fine. If you're not, there's nothing I can do. I don't know that it is a panacea what I've picked up, but it certainly has helped me. And the other woman was a young woman – much younger than I am – who has it. And she and I talk occasionally. She has some things that have helped her. And I've had some things that have helped me. But I'm open. I have a good friend, one of my members of "The Club," who has Fibromyalgia, which is a cousin of that. And it is diagnosable because of the sore spots, and so on. But they haven't done too much in that. It's really an orphan disease. They say it's new. I say that it has been around a long time. But it hasn't been recognized. I remember certain women being so tired all the time. So, I know it's happened. But it's a

terrible, depressing thing.

PL: Have you made any stories in your mind as to why it is that women, in particular, suffer from this?

AG: Men have it too. There was a book written by a doctor in – I think South Carolina. He was an intern who got it. And so he took the year off and got better. And now he's in sort of a naturopathic thing like Andrew Weil [M.D.] and so forth. He felt that as long as he'd had it that he could help more than anything. And he's on a nutritional thing too. But he'd had it. But I don't know why more women have it than men? I blame mine on an infection I got many years ago. And in fact, it was like almost 30 years ago.

PL: What kind of an infection was that?

AG: Well, we went to Africa. And we were all over. And I came home. Bernie got sick in Africa. In fact, everybody got sick there except me. And we flew from—we flew actually from Africa to Israel. And we flew from Israel to France to New York to Seattle. And I came home and went to the store and got some groceries, and went to bed. And I woke up the next day with this awful temp. And a lot of pain in my sternum and so on – in my chest. And they never diagnosed it. And I was in the hospital for three weeks. And then, after that, about every couple of years – every 3 years – I'd have something happen. You know, I'd get some kind of a strange infection or something. And they wouldn't diagnose it. So, I've always felt that this was what it is. It's causing the whole shebang. But maybe it isn't. But I think that was it. And this fellow in Los Angeles said, "Look, stuff stays in your system forever – malaria, they say AIDS, arthritis, allergies. He went through a whole bunch of autoimmune things that a lot of them don't show up on this. So, could be.

PL: Has this been the most significant health issue that you've dealt with?

AG: Well, I've had a lot of health issues. I've had both shoulders replaced. Both knees replaced. I've had a lot of bone and joint problems. I've got a horrible back. But this has been the most significant, because it has tied me down the most. I can still do things with the others. This one, I couldn't. My mind is not as good as it was. My memory's lousy. And it's just nuts, because I forget such stupid things.

PL: So, what do you do to keep your mind sharp? Do you eat certain foods?

AG: That's what I'm on – is on a health food thing. Yes, Q-10 is supposed to help your—it's supposed to be for the blood vessels but it also said it is for mental stimulation. I'll try anything.

PL: Are there foods that you avoid?

AG: Well, you're supposed to avoid sugar and white flour, and, you know, all that stuff which is really bad for you. I have gone into more—I have like a smoothie in the morning with yogurt – which I detest – and a lot of things in it. But I try to watch what I eat a little more. I have a candy binge about once a month rather than every day. But, you know, it's nuts, because it's so vague. But it's there. And I wish it would go away.

PL: How would you contrast views of women's sexuality from your generation to this next generation?

AG: Well, they're more open now. I think that's the only thing. Although with our friends we were as open. It's just not out there. If you were—certainly the provocative clothes we didn't wear. It wasn't as open. But, as I say, with your good friends you discussed it. And I think that my friends discussed it with their good friends. But I don't know. I get very unhappy when I see these beautiful people dressed like hookers. It's so blatant. And I don't know. My husband used to say, "The most beautiful women are dressed. It leaves a lot to your imagination." And I think a lot of the girls miss out on that by the type of clothing, and the type of the way they act. It's not your business. That's probably one

of the things I feel is detrimental to the feminist bit. Because you can be feminine but you don't have to look that way.

PL: When you were a young woman, did you and your friends discuss things candidly? Or, was it ensconced in language?

AG: No. When I was younger, the things that happened. I got out of high school. All the boys left for the war, or most of them did, or went someplace. And I went into nurse's training with none of my friends. Nobody I knew. I ended up having three very good friends from there who are still friends of mine. But generally, you didn't discuss anything. I wouldn't want to discuss my personal life with these women. They were not—I don't know. Most of them were, as I say – it is a terrible thing to say – but most of them were little farm girl or something. And I lived in a big city at Salt Lake. And they were pretty unsophisticated. Yet, I think very well-educated in the things that I wasn't.

PL: So, where did you get your education around your own body? Around sexuality? Was it through nursing school?

AG: No, you don't learn anything there.

PL: [laughter]

AG: I don't know that I did. I don't think I ever came to any conclusion about my own sexuality – probably haven't. I know when I had a mastectomy, it was a terrible blow to your femininity. But I think that was the hardest because then really you are not feeling well. And you look like the devil and you don't have the right padding, and this and that. It's a nightmare.

PL: When did you have your mastectomy?

AG: In 1979. On my son's birthday. Isn't that sweet? [laughter] [unclear]

PL: How did they address—the doctors address the decisions that you had to make. I mean, there are very different discourses around mastectomy today, I imagine?

AG: Well, of course, all the doctors were friends of mine. And the ones I talked to that I respected said, “We don’t know enough about the lumpectomy. The safest is a mastectomy. We do have a long history of that, and that’s what we recommend.” And I have to go with them. I’m going to go with the statistics. And it was amazing at the time because four other of my friends had mastectomies within five years. In fact, there were more than four. And two of them who had lumpectomies are dead. So, I still think I went the right course because I had glands involved and so forth. And I think that I would recommend that to anybody today, except I’d say, “Take both breasts off.” Because you don’t want the aggravation or the worry that you get if you get a little cyst in the other breast – and you’re panicky until you see the doctor and have it injected to find out it’s nothing. Because, it’s a horrible thing. After you’ve had cancer too – I had something wrong with my eye, and I went to see this doctor who finally said the nasty word “oncological eye doctor,” or something. And the minute that word came out, I started—I mean you’re terrorized for the rest of your life. So, as I say, I would take both breasts off and I would—I had the replacements which was an awful thing. I would just wear enough padding and that’s comfortable.

PL: How did you discover that you had it? Or, did a doctor detect it?

AG: I detected it. I have always had cystic breasts. And I felt this one lump and I called the surgeon then. And he had me come in. I didn’t go to my gynecologist. I called him. And he said, “Well, come in and we’ll take a look at it. And he called me and he said, “Arva, I’m going to be very busy today.” And I said, “But I’ve got it. So some and see it.” And he said, “Okay, I’ll meet you at 5:30” or something. And I went in and he took the sample right there, and had it checked right then, and called me – and told me then that it was cancerous. And so I had the surgery the next day. I didn’t want to fool around.

Apparently, it was pretty fast-growing. I know other women who have tests done and then don't find out about it for a week. I couldn't stand that. I want it done yesterday.

PL: Did your doctor encourage you at that time to have, you know—what was the talk about plastic surgery and reconstructive surgery and things like that.

AG: Well, the doctor, my oncologist, didn't approve of reconstructive surgery. And I told him, "That's all right, I'm going to have it done." But he said, "Wait a year." So, I did. And I had it done. And then it was the one that they sued over. Anyway, I had that done and it was wrong, and I had it done again.

PL: Are you talking about silicon implant?

AG: Silicon implants. I had silicon implants – which may have been responsible for my arthritis because nobody in my family had it. But I had the implant in for about six months the first time, and it just wouldn't settle right. So, I had it done again. And then I had it taken out. Not that I knew anything about silicon at the time. It was just plain uncomfortable. And I think it leaked a little too. They wanted me to go in on that case, you know, for the people. In fact, Bernard had an attorney contact me. If they could guarantee that by winning that case I would feel better, I would have gone for it. But as always there were no guarantees. I couldn't see having the aggravation of going through any kind of a thing. But anyway.

PL: You mentioned about body image after having a mastectomy. How did you grapple with that?

AG: It was horrible. You don't grapple. When you take a shower and you come out, you look funny. And it's a—I don't know that you ever get over it. And even the ones that have had implants, they're not the same. You don't have the feeling of the breast. Maybe some people do, but mine were always very numb implants. So, I don't—that was probably one of the worst things to happen. Because I was—first you feel like you're

maimed, more than anything. And you look it. And my sister-in-law's very unhappy because she had the thing happen, and she had the mastectomy and she's very angry because she found out about a lumpectomy later. And I said, "You're alive, leave it alone." But it happens.

PL: Are there ways that you work to regain your sense of beauty and physical—[laughter] I'm not exactly sure the word I'm looking for.

AG: No, I don't think so. I just kept plodding away. You know, I was so distressing that I didn't realize it until my birthday. Everybody was supposed to bring a story about me. And I didn't know anything about it.

PL: This past birthday?

AG: Yes.

PL: The seventy-fifth birthday?

AG: My daughter got up and she said, "You'll never know what mother's like until she had this thing. She was so ill and she never let us kids know." And I felt, with that, you can't. I mean, you can't tell the kids that it's bad, or this or that. You go on about your business. Because if it's too hard on them. Anyway, it was a—and I didn't realize how much it had affected her. She had me crying. And it was supposed to be funny things. And I said, "The next time you tell me something funny, it's about my funeral."

PL: Oh, no. [laughter]

AG: But anyway.

PL: I'm wondering if we can conclude the interview.

AG: The fun's over?

PL: Oh, no, no. Definitely not on that note. Actually, looking back at your entire life, and looking—you just celebrated your seventy-fifth birthday. That's incredible. And I'm wondering as somebody who has witnessed the growth of Seattle and the growth of yourself as a person, and the nation, whether or not there are certain things that really stand out for you – that have shaped your life experiences – that we have not talked about to date.

AG: Oh, I definitely think that the Depression shaped my life. My family had been fairly successful in a little town. And I think they owned most of the town. After the Crash, we were very poor people. And college – there was no question about going to college. It was a question even about finishing high school. I had to work in order to go. I didn't work in training because I was a part of the Cadet Corps. But a lot of the things that I wanted to do, education-wise, I could not do because there was not money there. And I think – I don't know – my marriage of course affected my life. Because I converted. I didn't convert when we were married but I converted afterwards. And have a different lifestyle. I don't know really. You mean, things I'd like to do differently? I don't think that I would do anything differently. I keep telling my kids I would: I wouldn't have kids. [laughter] No, I—

PL: [laughter]

AG: As I say, you know, I get very upset politically on a lot of things. I get upset about the civil rights thing. And it still hasn't worked. And you know, there's so many problems in this country and it shouldn't be. It's the richest country in the world – and the poorest people. And it upsets me. I find a lot of people living in their little glass house and they're very happy. And they aren't really, you know. They've got theirs, so the heck with it.

PL: Is there any advice that you have? You're an example of somebody who has gotten out – broken out – and worked in the community. What advice do you have for young

women? Young Jewish women?

AG: I think it's do what you want to do. Don't be pressured into doing anything you don't want to do. Be yourself. And I think that's all you have to do. If you want to do something in a certain situation, don't let' anybody talk you out of it. You have to do what you want to do. It's the only way you'll be successful, and it's the only way you'll be happy.

PL: Thank you very much, Arva, for the interview.

AG: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]