

Ventura Franco Israel Transcript

ROZ BORNSTEIN: Hi. This is Roz Bornstein. And I'm here today with Ventura Franco Israel, at Ventura's home in Bellevue, Washington. And the date today is May 31st, 2001. And I'm here meeting with Ventura to gather her oral history for the Weaving Women's Words Project of the Jewish Women's Archive. And Ventura, do I have your permission to interview and tape you?

VENTURA ISRAEL: Yes.

RB: Thank you very much. Let's see, why don't we start with when and where you were born.

VI: I was born here in Seattle, Washington, on June the 6th 1915, at 12th and Main Street (Laughs).

RB: That's great. Let's see, when you say 12th and Main Street -- can you describe that neighborhood, for people outside of Seattle who don't know the neighborhoods?

VI: Yes, yes. Well, 12th and Main Street now is an Asian neighborhood, with a lot of markets and a lot of people. But at that time it was mostly all Jewish people.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Yes. Because I had cousins that were born around that area. And some friends that I have now. But it was a lively little neighborhood, I guess, because there were so many people born there.

RB: That's wonderful.

VI: Yes.

RB: And was it a predominantly -- let's see, as a Jewish neighborhood, was there a mixture of Jews from all over the world, or were there Jews from mostly one part of the world?

VI: I think it was just from one part of the world. I think they were mostly from Turkey, and Rhodes, Greece.

RB: Okay.

VI: I think so, yes.

RB: So there were Jews, Sephardic Jews that settled in that area.

VI: Right.

RB: Can you give us a sense of the boundaries of that neighborhood?

VI: Well, I don't know how old I was when I moved away from there. And the first home that I remember living in was at -- oh, not too far away it was at 1209 Remington Court. And that was near the Pacific School, just a block from 12th and Jefferson.

RB: That's amazing you remember the address.

VI: Yes. I lived only a block away from Pacific School. So I imagine we must have moved from 12th and Main Street to 1209 Remington Court, which is just a quarter of a block from 12th Avenue, and a block away from school.

RB: I see. Wow.

VI: Yes. And I had a nice childhood. And there was a lot of Jewish people living around there.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Yes. We had Jewish people living next door to us, and two doors away. And of course on the other side was a very nice Italian family.

RB: That's wonderful.

VI: And across the -- we lived sort of -- oh, we were on the street, but the back of the house faced like -- faced an alley. And across from the alley we had Jewish people, Sephardics, and Ashkenazim, and Italian and Blacks.

RB: Yes. Now, Remington Court--

VI: Was only two blocks long.

RB: Okay. I'm trying to picture it in my mind.

VI: Yes.

RB: What other -- what streets were around Remington Court? What were some of the names of the streets?

VI: Jefferson. And if you went a little further north there was Cherry and James and Columbia.

RB: I see.

VI: And going south there would have been -- oh, there was Spruce and Alder, Fir, and Yesler.

RB: Got it. That's great.

VI: Yes.

RB: Now, where were your parents from?

VI: They were born in Constantinople, Turkey, which is now known as Istanbul, Turkey.

RB: And so both were born over there. Did they meet and marry over there?

VI: They were born and they met in Turkey.

RB: Wow. And what year did they come over?

VI: Well, my brother -- my oldest brother must have been -- well, he was born in 1911. So they must have come over and -- no -- yes, he was born in 1911. And she was pregnant with my second brother, second oldest brother. And he was born in 1914. So she must have come over early 1914, or the latter part of 1913.

RB: Oh, wow. Right before the immigration was cut off.

VI: Right.

RB: And World War I. Yes, (Inaudible).

VI: Yes.

RB: Do you know why they came over?

VI: No, I don't. I don't know why they came over. My dad was married before he married my mother, and he had two sons.

RB: Oh, from his first marriage.

VI: His first marriage, yes.

RB: I see.

VI: Yes.

RB: And then his wife died?

VI: His wife died, I think at birth.

RB: Oh, okay.

VI: I'm not too sure. But she was very young when she died.

RB: I see. What was your father's name?

VI: Simantove.

RB: That's good. That's wonderful.

VI: Yes. And my mother's name is Donna.

RB: Donna. And how do you spell their last name, and what was their last name?

VI: Yes. N-a-h-m -- like in Mary -- i-a-s.

RB: How do you pronounce that?

VI: Na-MY-yes.

RB: Nahmias. Okay. That's a beautiful name.

VI: Yes, yes (Laughs).

RB: So two of your brothers were born in Constantinople?

VI: No, one. My oldest one, in 1911.

RB: Oh, I'm sorry. That's right.

VI: And then the second one, Mike, was born in Seattle. She was pregnant of Mike--

RB: When she came over.

VI: -- when she came over, yes. And then I came along in 1915. And my sister came along, my sister, Sally, about seventeen months later. And then my brother, Isaac who's still living. And Sally is living. And then we had another younger brother, Sabetai. But he died when he was fifty-nine years old. And Mike died when he was fourteen and a few months.

RB: Oh, how tragic! What were the circumstances?

VI: Well, my brother had his tonsils removed. And we got home -- and it was winter. And when he got home, he caught pneumonia and died from that.

RB: Oh, my gosh! Oh, how tragic.

VI: Yes. And he died in nineteen -- in 1917--

RB: Mmm, oh, that must have been terrible.

VI: -- no, he couldn't have. No, I'm sorry. My brother -- see, I told you I was going to get nervous.

RB: That's okay. You're doing fine.

VI: No, my brother died in February of 1928.

RB: Yes. Okay.

VI: And my dad died in July of 1928, six months later.

RB: Oh, my gosh, okay.

VI: My dad had a gallstone operation and died from that.

RB: Oh!

VI: It's not like it is now. You know, they have--

RB: Yes.

VI: -- such new methods, you know.

RB: Right, right.

VI: Yes.

RB: Oh, how tragic for your family.

VI: Yes, Yes.

RB: What was the impact of that on your mom and you and your siblings?

VI: Well, it was hard. It was hard, because when my -- my dad had a shoeshine stand.

RB: Yes.

VI: And he did quite well, you know. He brought home--

RB: Of course.

VI: -- took care of us. And he used to bring a chocolate candy every night for my sister and I, called Uno . And then when I was about seven years old, he bought a piano, and so my sister and I could take lessons.

RB: Is that right?

VI: And then when he died in 1928, we just became very poor. Very poor.

RB: Yes.

VI: I was thirteen years old. And we sold the piano. And my mother had a lot of beautiful -- well, I'll show you a picture eventually -- beautiful jewelry, gold jewelry. All that was sold. And then I was going to school, and I kind of -- I was going to school, and I wasn't going to school. I had to quit--

RB: Yes.

VI: -- part of the time, so I could go to work, so my brothers can go to school, because you know, a man has to make a living for his family. And I used to beg for work.

RB: (Inaudible)--

VI: I used to -- you can't imagine how I used to beg, whether it was for one day, for two days or for a week. I worked in a bakery at night. I worked during the day at a delicatessen in the market. I babysat. I was a nanny.

RB: Oh, my gosh.

VI: And I just looked for anything I could get.

RB: And this was when you were about thirteen or fourteen?

VI: Thirteen, fourteen, yes.

RB: And older.

VI: Yes, Yes.

RB: Oh, my goodness.

VI: And then I worked for a linen shop called Daylan's on Second Avenue on Saturdays.

RB: How do you spell that? Do you remember the spelling of that?

VI: I think it was D-a-y-l-a-n.

RB: Okay.

VI: Yes. Daylan's Linen Shop. And I worked also on a Saturday for a shoe repair shop. I was a cashier. And when I used -- I actually begged. I used to ask them for work. And they would give me one hour, two hours or a day, or two days.

RB: Yes.

VI: I would bring some money home. And my brothers went to school. Of course, when my father died, then my brother, my older brother ran the shoeshine stand. He would go there after work, and he'd work there on the weekends.

RB: Wow.

VI: Yes.

RB: So at the time that your father died, how many of you were there? Let's see--

VI: Well, my -- well, my one brother had already died.

RB: Right.

VI: My second brother. So then there was Albert, myself, Sally, Isaac, and Sabetai. I knew before my father died she had quite a few miscarriages too.

RB: Wow. She went through a lot.

VI: Yes. She had -- she went (Inaudible) -- yes, she did. She did. And then she went to work. She went to work for the Seattle Curtain Factory.

RB: Is that right?

VI: That's run by Morrie Capeloto.

RB: And what year was this, do you remember (Inaudible)--

VI: Well, it had to be around the early '30s, Yes, early '30s.

RB: And so were her children, then -- all of you, old enough to take care of yourselves at that point?

VI: Right.

RB: Did she have younger -- I'm trying to remember the (Inaudible)--

VI: Well, Sabey was younger. He was born in 1921. My brother Isaac was born in 1920. And so my little brother was seven years old. When he was born, he couldn't talk. My mother used to tell us a story that when she was pregnant of him, a cat jumped on her stomach. And at that time, you know, they said that that's what scared her and stopped the baby from crying and talking. Since we were very poor, there was some -- well, there was two men here -- and I don't want to mention names -- in Seattle, that -- no -- that thought that maybe Sabey should go to a home. But we went on Jewish Welfare. In 1928, we went on Jewish Welfare. And they also thought -- they were already feeding so many people, so many kids. They thought, one more, if they could just send him away to a home (Inaudible) one less. And that's what we did. We sent him to a home at Medical Lake Washington. He was there until he died.

RB: I see.

VI: And he was a beautiful child!

RB: Is that right?

VI: Beautiful child! He sure was, beautiful, Yes.

RB: So his main disability was lack of speech, is that right?

VI: That's right, that's right.

RB: Wow.

VI: Yes. But my mother used to go every year to see him. And there was a woman here by the name of Anna Adatto, and she had a sister Lavina (phonetic), I think in Spokane. So whenever she would go, she would take my mother so she could see her son.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Yes.

RB: So the place where he lived was in Spokane?

VI: It was Medical Lake in Washington. It was right near Spokane.

RB: I see. Okay.

VI: Yes, it was right near Spokane.

RB: And so at that time it was the -- was it called the Jewish Welfare League or--

VI: The Jewish Welfare, yes. And whenever we needed any clothes, especially shoes, we would have to get a requisition. I would go down, and I would walk from 12th and, say, Jefferson, to 4th and Yesler. And then I would get a requisition. So -- yes. And it was during Depression, too.

RB: Yes.

VI: And during Depression, they opened up a place on 12th and Yesler. I don't know what it was called. But that's where we used to get our clothes, take our requisition there. We used to get our clothes, yes.

RB: Wow. What was that like for you as -- you know, tell us about that experience.

VI: Well, it was -- but we didn't mind. We never complained. We had food on the table--

RB: Right.

VI: -- you know. And we tried to dress as well as we could, you know. Thanks to Jewish Family Service--

RB: Yes.

VI: -- Jewish Welfare Family Service, thanks to them. Then what little my brothers and I used to bring home. My brother Mike used to sell papers.

RB: It sounds like you were incredibly resourceful as a child.

VI: Yes, right.

RB: To go out and find work.

VI: Should I let it go on the answering machine?

[INTERRUPTION IN RECORDING]

RB: What were your parents' expectations around work and education? Was this something that you were taught as a young child, that work was important, or education important (Inaudible)?

VI: No. My dad was so busy working, and he worked days and nights. And my mother was busy raising her family.

RB: Of course.

VI: She was a very clean woman. And her house had to be just spic 'n span, just so.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Yes.

RB: So she worked awfully hard in the home with her children and her home.

VI: Yes.

RB: So it was a traditional household in that your mom was the primary house manager and--

VI: Right, right.

RB: -- and child rearing person?

VI: Right.

RB: Were boys and girls treated differently in your family, or were they treated--

VI: Just the same.

RB: Just the same.

VI: Just the same. My dad would leave in the morning, and he wouldn't get home until late at night.

RB: Right.

VI: You know, so...

RB: So hard work--

VI: Because his shoeshine stand was on 1st Avenue, and there was a lot of, you know, activity there, I guess. And he was always busy.

RB: Well, when you were younger, prior to your father's death, can you describe a little bit about your childhood, you know, what kinds of activities were you involved in, or what was the community like, and...

VI: Well, we had a playground called Collins Playfield. And we had the Settlement House. And we used to go there and whatever we did, play on the swing (Laughs), or play baseball, or--

RB: That's wonderful.

VI: Yes.

RB: Did you have much interaction with non-Jewish people or with Ashkenazic Jews?

VI: With everybody.

RB: With everybody?

VI: Everybody! Yes.

RB: Okay.

VI: Yes, yes. They weren't any different than us. We never considered them any different.

RB: Okay.

VI: You know, because we had the Blacks, we had the Japanese, all around us where we lived. And at school, I mean, we never knew the difference.

RB: Yes.

VI: Never.

RB: So it wasn't this -- you didn't feel insulated within the Sephardic community--

VI: No, no.

RB: -- during your young childhood?

VI: No, no.

RB: Okay. So where did you go to school?

VI: I went to Pacific School, grammar school. And then I went to Broadway High School. But I think I was only there a couple of years -- I'm not sure -- I think just a couple years -- but part time. I didn't go full time. I couldn't.

RB: Yes. Do you remember any school experiences at Pacific School that really stand out in your memory or--

VI: Yes.

RB: Well, what do you remember?

VI: Our principal, Mr. Stafford, had a belt that the barbers use, you know, to sharpen their razor blade or whatever.

RB: Yes.

VI: He always had that. And he used to hit the boys with that. If they got out of hand, boy, they got this belt across their bottom!

RB: But not the girls, just the boys.

VI: Oh, no, not the girls, just the boys.

RB: Wow.

VI: Yes.

RB: Oh, my gosh. Do you remember any teachers that had an impact on you that--

VI: The only teacher I can remember is Mrs. Hislup (phonetic). Her name was Mrs. Hislup. And of course, Mr. Stafford, our principal. Those are the only two I remember.

RB: What do you remember about your teacher?

VI: Well, (Laughs), she was tall and thin, and she wore her hair in the bun, and very, very nice. Yes, that's all I remember about her.

RB: So that's amazing you can go back and remember the names of people from grade school.

VI: Yes. And Pacific School was a school for the immigrants that came into town.

RB: Is that right?

VI: And they went there to learn English.

RB: I see.

VI: Yes.

RB: But it just also happened to be close to where you lived.

VI: It was a grammar -- yes, but it was just a block away.

RB: Which was fortunate.

VI: Just a block away, Yes.

RB: So did you learn English there, or did you learn it at home and then--

VI: No. We didn't speak English at home, because my dad and my mother, you know, just spoke very broken English.

RB: I see.

VI: No, I learned English in school.

RB: And what did you speak at home?

VI: Spanish.

RB: Did you speak Ladino?

VI: Yes, oh, yes.

RB: Great. It may sound odd for me to ask you these questions, but they're for people outside of--

VI: Right.

RB: -- of Seattle. They may not know what language.

VI: Right.

RB: So let's see. What was it like going from -- or living in a bilingual (Inaudible)?

VI: It was wonderful. I mean--

RB: How so?

VI: Like I said, we never knew the difference. I mean, we played games with them. They'd come over. We'd go over to their house and... I mean, the only thing that my mother ever told us, the whole family, was that we had to marry a Jewish boy or a Jewish girl.

RB: (Inaudible).

VI: That's the only thing.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Yes. But everybody used to come into the house. We'd go to their house.

RB: That's wonderful.

VI: Yes. Never knew the difference, Yes. It's not like it is now.

RB: Do you know when that changed, when the--

VI: Just let it go on the recorder.

RB: Okay.

VI: Oh, it could be my daughter. I haven't heard from her this morning.

RB: Okay. I'll pause the tape.

(INTERRUPTION IN RECORDING)

RB: So growing up, did you consider your house to be a Jewish home?

VI: Yes, yes.

RB: How so? What made it a Jewish home?

VI: Well, I think it's because whatever food was brought into the house had to be kosher. We had to buy from a kosher market, which was -- I don't know if -- mine is on 24th and Yesler -- was there at the time. I couldn't tell you.

RB: (Inaudible)?

VI: But I know Ziegman's Meat Market was on Yesler Way between 17th and 18th. And (Laughs) I know that we used to go there to get some meat.

RB: Do you remember how to spell Ziegman's?

VI: Ziegman?

RB: Yes.

VI: Yes, Z-i-e-g-m-a-n. Ziegman.

RB: Thank you.

VI: Mr. Ziegman.

RB: Mr. Ziegman (Laughs).

VI: And he was an older fellow then (Laughs).

RB: Is that right?

VI: Right.

RB: So he had been here from--

VI: I suppose.

RB: -- before (Inaudible)--

VI: I suppose.

RB: That's great.

VI: Yes.

RB: So you kept kosher. Was your house -- was your family Orthodox?

VI: Not real Orthodox -- not real, real Orthodox. But I imagine -- I mean, I would just call it a Jewish home.

RB: How were holidays celebrated when you were young?

VI: Fine.

RB: Like Shabbat, did you celebrate Shabbat? Did you have Friday -- was there a Friday dinner, or Saturday meal or--

VI: Friday night there was always -- of course, my dad was never home.

RB: Right.

VI: You know, he was--

RB: Yes.

VI: But we always had a Friday night dinner, and Saturday.

RB: And did your family attend a synagogue?

VI: Yes.

RB: Which one was that?

VI: The Ahavath Ahim. A-v-a-t-h A-h-i-m Congregation.

RB: For those outside of Seattle, can you tell us a little bit about that congregation?

VI: Well, it was a little house on -- I think it was on 16th and Fir -- either 16th or 17th and Fir. I can remember it was kitty-corner from Romey's Meat Market. And it was just a little house. It wasn't a regular synagogue. They held their services there.

RB: And who were the congregants? Where were they from, primarily?

VI: From Turkey.

RB: From Turkey.

VI: Yes, Yes, yes. Because they were like -- they say, Istanbullees.

RB: I see. Okay.

VI: You know. You're Rhodeslee?

RB: No, actually--

VI: Are you Istanbullee?

RB: Yes, my family -- that's right, from Turkey.

VI: Right, yes. Istanbullee, yes.

RB: Yes.

VI: And all the Istanbulees went to this little synagogue, which was a little house on the corner. And I think it's still there. I think it must be a church or something now.

RB: And then eventually where did those -- how did that congregation evolve? Did it become the Sephardic Bikur Holim?

VI: No. Then they went from there -- then some went to Bikur Holim, and some went to the Ezra Bessaroth.

RB: I see. So they branched off--

VI: Right, right.

RB: -- when they began to disband.

VI: Yes.

RB: Do you know why it started to wind down, why--

VI: No, I don't. I don't. Because at the time that it disbanded -- although we still have an Ahavath Ahim Club.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Right, right.

RB: Okay. Can you tell me--

VI: The siblings of the ones that used to go to this little -- little synagogue.

RB: Aha. And is it a social group?

VI: It's a social group called the Ahavath Ahims, Mens and Ladies Club.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Yes.

RB: And what kinds of social activities meet to this day?

VI: Well, we have meetings. And we have a lot of social affairs.

RB: I see.

VI: And they also help the needy.

RB: So there's a Tzedakah component to it?

VI: Yes, yes.

RB: That's wonderful.

VI: Yes. And so by that time -- when they moved, either to Ezra Bessaroth Congregation or the Bikur Holim Congregation, I was already married and living in Los Angeles.

RB: I see. Okay. Yes, so you weren't in Seattle that brief period in time, but--

VI: No. I lived in Los Angeles for five years.

RB: With your first husband?

VI: Yes.

RB: I see.

VI: And my son was born there.

RB: Oh, that's wonderful.

VI: And my husband lived just a block away from me. By that time we had moved from 1209 Remington Court to 2710 Yesler Way, right off of Empire Way. It used to be called Empire Way, now it's Martin Luther Way -- King. We call it Milky Way.

RB: Yes, yes.

VI: He lived down on the next corner. And his sister saw me sweeping the porch, the front porch. And she made him come over to talk to me.

RB: (Laughs).

VI: So he came over and talked to me, and then we started dating. And we didn't date too long, because he decided to move to California where his brother was, Los Angeles. And so he left in October 1934 with one of my cousins, who still lives in California. So I was alone for seven months. I mean, we were engaged.

RB: Oh, you were engaged before he left.

VI: He left, we were engaged, and I didn't see him until seven months later, which was in May of 1935. I was going down to LA to get married. Because my mother couldn't afford to give a wedding.

RB: Yes.

VI: And his mother and his two sisters were already there. So I went on a train. He sent me the money. I went on a train, and went to my mother-in-law's. And I lived there for a month -- no, I wouldn't say a month, maybe a couple of weeks. Then from there I went to stay with my cousin. I did not have anything. I had a trousseau, but I didn't have a wedding gown or veil or shoes or nothing! So my mother-in-law bought me everything.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Yes. She knew I couldn't buy it, so...

RB: Of course, of course.

VI: Yes.

RB: I see. That was (Inaudible)--

VI: I had a small trousseau. It wasn't too (Laughs) big like everybody else. At that time, you know, they used to have -- show the trousseau on the wall.

RB: Can you describe that, how it's done? And would you remember what it's called?

VI: Ashuar.

RB: Ashuar, yes.

VI: Yes, ashuar. They used to hang it (Laughs) on the wall. And I remember going to my girlfriend's home when they were showing their trousseau. And oh, gosh, they had the fur coat, and they had beautiful shoes, and you know, (Laughs) I had one little teenie wall (Laughs). And I don't know, I think I must have had one dress (Laughs). But it was okay. I didn't complain. I didn't say that, oh, "Seema (phonetic) had more than I do", or, "Jeannie (phonetic) had more than I do" -- or I did, you know.

RB: Well, it was right during the Depression, too.

VI: Oh, yes. It was 1934.

RB: Yes.

VI: And so -- yes '35 -- '34 and '35. And so when I went to LA, my mother-in-law bought me everything. And then I had to move out of their house because I was going to get married. I went to stay with my cousin, one of my cousins there.

RB: Now, why is that? Just out of curiosity, why couldn't you stay in their house before you were married?

VI: I think it was -- I don't know--

RB: (Inaudible)--

VI: I think it was because it was a custom. I mean, you--

RB: Was is a sort of superstition?

VI: Because you couldn't -- so you couldn't see -- be with your--

RB: Groom?

VI: -- with your groom the day before or the night before, or whatever.

RB: I see.

VI: Yes.

RB: Now, bear with me here, because I'm going to ask you a few questions just about Sephardic culture and see if I can -- if you know about any of this. I know that for some of the women who are older than you are, they talked a little bit about how marriages were arranged. And was that happening when you met your husband or--

VI: Yes, Yes.

RB: So that was still happening?

VI: Oh, yes.

RB: And were they arranged marriages for women in Seattle or from over in Turkey?

VI: Oh, from over in the old country, yes. From the old country.

RB: I see. So the women would come over to marry men here in Seattle, is that right?

VI: Yes, Yes.

RB: Okay.

VI: Yes.

RB: And so the women here, though, in Seattle, they were able to meet and decide who they wanted to marry more on their own, is that--

VI: Well, I think most of them were already married when they came from the old country. I think they were mostly all married.

RB: I see.

VI: Like my mother, like my aunt.

RB: Yes.

VI: Both of my aunts, Yes.

RB: So which women were involved in arranged marriages? Were they women that were born here or women coming over? I'm not sure--

VI: I think they were arranged in the old country. I don't think they were arranged here.

RB: I see. Okay.

VI: Yes. Maybe a few that came over by themselves and then followed, you know.

RB: So by the time you were of age to date, that practice was no longer happening, that you know of?

VI: When I became of age, no. You know, when I got married, huh-uh, no.

RB: Okay.

VI: Like my dad, you know, was married before he brought--

RB: Yes.

VI: -- the two boys.

RB: Oh, they did, okay.

VI: And my mother was taking care of them too. But my oldest half brother died when he was twenty years old.

RB: Oh, gosh. What were the circumstances of--

VI: He also was in the hospital for gallstone surgery. And he wasn't supposed to get out of bed. There was a water fountain in the hallway at the Providence Hospital. And he got up, and he drank to his heart's content, and then (Inaudible) died from that.

RB: And it (Inaudible).

VI: And then my second half brother, who died just about three years ago, he was almost ninety-five when he died. And he left home, you know, because it was just too much for my mother. So he went to Montana and was adopted.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Yes.

RB: Did he go with an agency or did he go on his own to Montana and--

VI: I think he went on his own.

RB: Isn't that something?

VI: Yes.

RB: Was it a Jewish family that adopted him?

VI: No, no.

RB: I see.

VI: No, no. And then when he was older, he moved to Los Angeles and married a Jewish girl.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Yes, and had four children.

RB: Are you or were you in touch with him--

VI: Always, always!

RB: Is that right? So the family stayed close even--

VI: Always! And in fact, the only one that came to the wedding was my mother and my sister.

RB: To your wedding?

VI: To my wedding.

RB: I see.

VI: Because my brothers were working and going to school. And my half brother gave me away.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Yes.

RB: Can you describe the wedding? Was it at a Sephardic synagogue in Los Angeles or--

VI: Yes.

RB: Tell us about it.

VI: It was a Sephardic synagogue on 55th and Hoover, and a very nice synagogue. In fact, I was the second bride to get married in that synagogue. It was a brand new one.

RB: Do you remember the name of it or--

VI: No, I don't. I probably have it written down, but I don't remember the name of it. Temple something.

RB: (Inaudible). And what was your husband's name?

VI: Morris Franco. We got married in the synagogue, and then we had the reception there, a little reception which consisted of just dancing, you know. And I can't remember whether they served sweets or what. But then we had a dinner at my mother-in-law's house for the family.

RB: That's lovely.

VI: Yes.

RB: Just to take a step back for a minute, when you became engaged, did you have the custom -- I think it's call a mandatha, where it's a silver tray and this--

VI: Yes, yes.

RB: Do you remember that at all -- or did that not happen?

VI: Yes.

RB: Can you describe it for us?

VI: Well, it's a tray. And they had candy, Jordan almonds. And then they used make a hand out of a marzipan dough, in the shape of a hand, and then gifts. And I got a nightgown with a -- a negligee, really -- and a beautiful compact that had the rouge and the powder and the lipstick in there, very good. And it was Hazel Bishop's. (Laughs)
Yes, I still remember that.

RB: Is this the -- you'll have to help me out here. Is that the name of the--

VI: Yes. That's the name of the cosmetics, Hazel Bishop, Yes.

RB: And so the custom was that the groom -- or in Ladino it would be Novio -- would give -- would send presents to you?

VI: Yes.

RB: And did you send any back, or was it just a one-way, you know--

VI: I can't remember whether we sent anything back, but I do remember getting that. And then I got a compact with just the powder. And it was Helena Rubinstein's.

RB: Is that right.

VI: (Laughs).

RB: Isn't that something?

VI: Yes, Yes. So it was really something, Yes.

RB: So let's see.

VI: So I lived in Los Angeles for five years. My son David was born there, who is going to be sixty-five years old next month.

RB: Oh, wow. That's wonderful.

VI: Not married. Still a bachelor.

RB: How, how old were you when you were married?

VI: Twenty.

RB: And was that typical of the time? Were women about twenty?

VI: Right, right. Eighteen, nineteen, twenty, yes.

RB: Let's see. So tell me, how many children did you have?

VI: I had two.

RB: And what are their names? I know you mentioned David.

VI: Yes. David M. Franco and -- because there's another David Franco here in Bellevue -- and Rita -- you want her maiden name or her married name?

RB: Both would be great.

VI: Well, her maiden name is Franco, yes, and Rita Peha. And she's married to Joe M. Peha. And the reason I'm saying Joe M. Peha, because there's about five other Joe Pehas.

RB: And the name is spelled a little bit differently too, right?

VI: No.

RB: There's a "P-e" and a "P-i," right?

VI: Yes. P-e-h-a, Yes. Yes.

RB: Thank you. What do you remember about your childbearing experiences? Do you have any great memories or stories about--

VI: Do you mean when I was having David, in labor (Laughs)?

RB: Pregnancy or labor and delivery.

VI: No, I had a good pregnancy. I never had a sick feeling -- you know, that morning sickness? I never had that. Even with Rita I had -- did not have morning sickness, but I just kind of felt, you know, kind of funny. I used to eat crackers in bed. But with David I never had any morning sickness.

RB: And where were your children born?

VI: David was born in Los Angeles at the French Hospital. And Rita was born here in Seattle. She was born in Columbus Hospital, which is now St. Cabrini. She was born in

1943. David was born in 1936. So they were seven years and five months apart. And I wanted four children so badly (Laughs).

RB: Is that right? You had it in your mind you wanted four?

VI: Right. I wanted twins.

RB: Is that right? How come?

VI: Well, my brother-in-law -- my husband's brother was a twin. My mother-in-law's sister had twins. And then I had a cousin on my side who was a twin.

RB: Really? So you had them all around.

VI: So I wanted twins. But thank God I had Rita and David.

RB: Two beautiful--

VI: They're wonderful, wonderful children.

RB: What were you like as a mother? What was your parenting style? How would you describe your style?

VI: My side?

RB: Your style as a mother.

VI: I think I was a (Laughs) good mother.

RB: Of course!

VI: Even though David was (Laughs) a crying baby. He had colic for (Laughs) for about three months.

RB: Oh! How was that for you?

VI: It was bad (Laughs).

RB: Oh, how did you manage?

VI: I managed okay.

RB: What did you do? You know, do you remember any ways that you would support yourself emotionally with the crying and colic?

VI: Nothing.

RB: Nothing? Just--

VI: Nothing.

RB: Oh!

VI: My husband was in the flower business. And at that time, in the 1930s, there was no flower shops. They sold flowers on the corners, street corners. And he would get home late at night. But he was a good father.

RB: Is that right? You remember?

VI: Yes, he was a good father.

RB: So you were home with the children raising the kids, and he was working--

VI: Well, I had Rita here, but I lived in Los Angeles for five years. And then he knew how unhappy I was because I just missed my family so much. And he wasn't doing well there, so we came here. And we lived with my mother. And I went to work for Kress'. In fact, before I was married, too, I went to work for Kress'. I worked everywhere.

RB: That's (Inaudible).

VI: And I used to take David -- David was two years old. And we lived, like I said, on 2710 Yesler Way. And I used to take him on the streetcar and get off at Broadway and Yesler, and walk three long blocks to the Seattle Day Nursery, drop him off, and then go another block to take the streetcar to go to work.

RB: Is that right? So you arranged child care at the Seattle Day Nursery.

VI: For David, yes.

RB: What was that like? Can you describe it?

VI: Well, I don't know. He was -- never complained, you know.

RB: He enjoyed it.

VI: Yes, he enjoyed it. He looked forward to going. And I worked for Kress', oh, I would say, for about two years. In 1942, my husband opened up a flower shop. We opened up a flower shop. At that time it was owned by a Japanese family, and they were sent to the camp. So in the meantime, we didn't have the money to buy the flower shop, which was a good buy. And so my cousin, Vickie Mayo's husband, Victor Mayo, gave us the money to open up the shop. By the end of 1943, we paid him back, every penny.

RB: Is that right? So the business really took off?

VI: Yes. We had a flower shop on Broadway right off of Olive Street. And we had it from '42 to 1959. In the meantime, I would work there, and then I'd work at Kress'. And then I got a job at the Bon Marche as a gift wrapper. I worked there, I think, for about -- I don't know -- a couple years or so. And so in the meantime, we bought a house too, in Montlake. And one day I went to the bank where I was making my payments, my mortgage payments. And the vice president there, Mr. Bauers said, "Where are you

working now, Mrs. Franco?" And I said, "at the Bon Marche." And he said, "would you like to work here?" And I said, "yes, I guess so." So he offered me a job.

RB: (Laughs) Is that right?

VI: So I quit the Bon Marche and went to work for Union Federal, it was called, Union Federal Savings and Loan. And I worked there for twenty-five years. I retired in '75.

RB: Wow. Isn't that something?

VI: Yes. And I became a teller supervisor after a few years. And then after about ten years I became an assistant secretary.

RB: Oh, my gosh.

VI: And I was a teller supervisor of all their banks, even the one in Spokane and one that we opened up here in Crossroads, and one in Ballard, and one in -- we opened two in Ballard.

RB: Isn't that something?

VI: Yes.

RB: So you really learned a lot about the banking business?

VI: Right, Yes. In the meantime I had Rita too.

RB: Oh, my goodness.

VI: Of course, I had Rita before I went to work for the Bon and for the bank.

RB: I see. And did Rita also go to Seattle Day--

VI: She went for a while to Seattle Day Nursery.

RB: And then?

VI: And then at night I would help my husband at the flower shop, whenever. I used to put Rita in the buggy. And Morris had a little truck, and we'd pick up the buggy with Rita in it, put it in the back of the truck. Anyway... yes...

RB: (Laughs) Wow. And what about your son? Did he come and help out at the store as well, or was he in school or--

VI: He was in school.

RB: I see.

VI: And Rita, after, was in school. Yes. And they were in Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and Brownies, and you know, BBGs.

RB: So you were a busy -- you were (Inaudible) B'nai B'rith Youth?

VI: Yes.

RB: Oh, you were a busy mom.

VI: Right.

RB: How did you juggle all of that? How did you manage that?

VI: I mean, we managed. You know, I was young. You know, we were young! (Laughs) I was young.

RB: (Laughs) At what age did you have David?

VI: David, I was twenty-one. And then Rita, I had her when I was twenty-eight. Yes, they're seven years and five months apart. Like I said, I wanted more children, but it --

thank God for the two of them.

RB: Now. How did you celebrate your children's life cycle events? Like when your son was born, did you have--

VI: We had a Bris. Then thirty days later, because he was my firstborn -- if I had had a miscarriage before that, this wouldn't have happened -- then they had a -- what do you call it, pidy?

B: (Inaudible)?

VI: Pidyon Ha-Ben. But you call -- the Ashkenazim call it something else. Pig in the pen, or something like that.

RB: (Laughs).

VI: And we had that thirty days later.

RB: I'm spacing it out.

VI: Yes.

RB: I have the Sephardic--

VI: Yes.

RB: -- the Spanish version .

VI: Yes, where a Cohen buys the baby.

RB: Right.

VI: And then he sells it back to the parents.

RB: Yes, the firstborn son.

VI: And we have to pay them. And I think it was five shillings at that time, or whatever (Laughs). Don't forget, it's been sixty-five years.

RB: (Laughs) After you married, did you consider your home to be a Jewish home? Did you celebrate the holidays and--

VI: Oh, definitely, definitely.

RB: Can you tell us about that, just for--

VI: We celebrated the holidays with my mother-in-law, and my sister-in-laws and brothers-in-laws--

RB: In Los Angeles?

VI: -- in Los Angeles.

RB: And then in Seattle as well?

VI: In Seattle, oh, yes.

RB: What synagogue did you belong to in Seattle (Inaudible)--

VI: When we came back we belonged to the Ezra Bessaroth.

RB: Okay.

VI: Yes. Because my mother-in-law had belonged to that too before she went to Los Angeles to live.

RB: I see, okay.

VI: Yes, right.

RB: And do you remember much about the customs at that synagogue? Are there any specific Sephardic customs that would be interesting to people outside of Seattle, or even in Seattle, that are different from Ashkenazic traditions?

VI: I don't know what could be different than a--

RB: (Inaudible)--

VI: -- just a Sephardic synagogue, you know.

RB: And so the prayers and melodies are chanted in Hebrew and Ladino, is that--

VI: Right. And the women and the men sat separately.

RB: So it's an Orthodox congregation.

VI: Yes, Yes.

RB: And are the women called to the--

VI: To the Torah?

RB: Yes.

VI: No.

RB: Okay.

VI: No, they're not allowed.

RB: So growing up, and even today, the men and women are separate.

VI: It's separate. And the girls cannot have a bat mitzvah like they do at the Ashkenazim synagogues, but they can have it on a Sunday, but they cannot go up to the Torah.

RB: And let's see. I'm trying to go back here -- I'm sorry -- I'm just taking a step back to holidays, like Rosh Hashanah and--

VI: Yes.

RB: Do you remember any specific traditions for Rosh Hashanah that you remember as a child and over time?

VI: We had a lot of food (Laughs).

RB: (Laughs) How was it celebrated in your family, like the first night?

VI: Well, for Rosh Hashanah, you know, you read the prayers at the dinner table. And you know, you have your Yehi Ratzones that they have, you know.

RB: Can you describe that, because I think that really is a special Sephardic custom that many people may not know about.

VI: Well, they have the -- I don't know if that's -- I'm getting mixed up with Passover now. Rosh Hashanah is--

RB: Well, there are two separate Seders.

VI: Yes.

RB: One is for Rosh Hashanah and one is for Passover.

VI: Right, Yes. And we celebrate two nights for Rosh Hashanah and Passover.

RB: And what foods do you have available to say blessings over for the Rosh Hashanah Seder?

VI: Well, I know there's apples, and there's -- oh, gosh, I'm getting mixed up with the Passover.

RB: Okay. That's all right.

VI: I have to look it up.

RB: That's okay. If it comes to mind, you--

VI: Right.

RB: -- there's no problem (Inaudible).

VI: Right, right. A lot of goodies. And during the holidays when we owned the home, we used to have servicemen, I used to invite the Jewish servicemen over.

RB: Is that right? Tell us about that.

VI: -- for the holidays. In fact, I got three beautiful letters. I still have them. I'll show them to you.

RB: Really? I would love to see them.

VI: Yes, beautiful letters from them. And we always had servicemen over the holidays, always. And I was working at the time, and getting everything ready at night when I -- for the holidays.

RB: Wow. So you'd work all day and then come home.

VI: Yes. And I said, we celebrated the holidays with my sister and her families.

RB: So it was a big crowd.

VI: Right. So I would have it the first night because I was the oldest, and then she would have it the second night. My sister Sally Alhadeff.

RB: And you would also invite servicemen during -- is this during World War II that--

VI: Yes. It was in the 1950s -- '40s, no I'm sorry, 1940s.

RB: That's really wonderful that you would do that.

VI: Yes, yes.

RB: For what organization did you do this? How did you know these servicemen?

VI: You called the Jewish Family -- I think it was the Jewish Family Service. There was a place that you could call, and then they would send you -- I had two different ones.

RB: That's lovely.

VI: I had two different fellows -- two fellows which I heard from, you know.

RB: You kept in touch with.

VI: Right. And the others I did not hear from. I've got the letters. They're just beautiful.

RB: Oh, I'd love to see them.

VI: You'd like to see them?

RB: Sure, you bet. I'd love it.

VI: But you know, on Passover you have the lamb -- the lamb shank that you have to put on the table, the bone. And you have the celery which you dip in vinegar, and the

haroset that you make out of -- everybody makes it differently, you know. We make it out of apples and raisins and nuts and wine.

RB: Sounds delicious.

VI: Yes, very delicious.

RB: Were there other recipes that you remember, special family recipes?

VI: Cheese pinwheels, which everybody makes, and spinach quashados, souffle.

RB: What's a spinach quashado?

VI: What does it have in it?

RB: Can you describe it?

VI: Sure. I use fresh spinach. You cut it up fine, and you mix it with wet matzohs, a lot of eggs, a lot of grated cheese, cottage cheese and feta cheese.

RB: Mmm. What kind of cheese besides the feta and the cottage? What's the third cheese in it?

VI: The grated cheese, Romano, grated Romano.

RB: It's delicious.

VI: Right, very delicious, yes.

RB: And the cheese pinwheels, what do you call those? Are those boyos?

VI: Boyicos.

RB: Boyicos, okay. And how do you make those?

VI: It's very easy (Laughs), all in one bowl, and with flour, water and cheese and oil. That's it.

RB: And then you just coil them? Are they coiled?

VI: No. And then you just make a dough, just like a little pie dough. And then you make little round balls on the palms of your hands, and then you put them on a cookie sheet. And then I flatten them up with a meat cleaver, to make a design. In fact, I started it.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Now every Sephardic (Laughs)--

RB: I see that, that's right! That's wonderful! (Laughs).

VI: Every Sephardic gal is doing it, Yes.

RB: So what recipes were passed on in your family over time? Those two--

VI: Well, the spinach quashado and the hamburgers that were made with leek.

RB: So it was ground beef and leek.

VI: And leek. And you can make them without the hamburger. And my mother used to make cauliflower patties with hamburger.

RB: Mmm. Were those called -- what did you call those in Ladino?

VI: Keftes. We just called them Keftes de carne, you know. And I learned a lot. I got a lot of recipes from my mother--

RB: Is that right?

VI: -- which I still make. Even though I'm alone, I still cook enough for an army.

RB: Is that right? Lucky family.

VI: And you know, and the red rice that you make with tomato sauce (Laughs), add a little oil and water and salt, yes.

RB: Did you make desayuno?

VI: Yes. Well, my mother never -- my mother made rolls, yeast rolls and -- but we made borekas.

RB: Can you describe what a boreka is for those who don't know?

VI: A boreka is a turnover that is made with a dough with just water and oil and flour. And it's filled with mashed potatoes. I use fresh potatoes -- and a lot of ladies use instant potatoes -- which you mix with grated cheese, eggs, and feta cheese. And you make the mashed potatoes, and then you fill them and you bake them. Yes, borekas.

RB: It sounds wonderful.

VI: Yes.

RB: Mmm. When would you eat these foods? You know, I know that you would make them for a holiday, but would you--

VI: You make them for holidays, you make them for all year around, you know.

RB: So it could be for any time of day or--

VI: For any time, any time, any time.

RB: Okay. Sounds delicious.

VI: Yes.

RB: Any other favorites that you'd want to mention today?

VI: You mean in cooking?

RB: Yes.

VI: My favorite -- you mean in -- you don't mean desayuno?

RB: It can be anything, anything that comes to mind (Laughs).

VI: (Laughs) Everything's good. I like the spinach boyos.

RB: Tell us what a spinach boyo is.

VI: All right. A spinach boyo is made, again, with flour and water and a drop of oil, just a little bit oil. And then it's spread out real thin. And then you make your -- you put grated cheese in your spinach. And if you want -- a lot of people don't -- they put feta. I don't put an egg in it. A lot of people put an egg in it. And then they make it into a swirl, you know, it looks like a snake, and you go round and round, and it looks like a swirl.

RB: It's coiled.

VI: Yes.

RB: So you roll it up with the filling inside, you coil it?

VI: Yes, Yes.

RB: And you're still making those?

VI: I used to make quite a bit of them, but not as -- I've slowed down quite a bit.

RB: Yes. Those are more labor.

VI: I'm going to be eight-six next week, so (Laughs)...

RB: That's incredible. Let's see, I'm trying to think, now, over the -- let's see -- and your son -- we were talking about different life cycle events. Did your son have a bar mitzvah?

VI: No.

RB: Okay.

VI: My mother -- I gave my son a thirteenth birthday right on his birthday on a Monday, which was on July the 18th, which was 1949. And I had all of his cousins and his neighborhood friends. And my mother was with me. She stayed with me occasionally, off and on. And of course, she lived in different homes too. She never had a home of her own after... And anyway, that night my mother took sick. And -- oh, let me start -- let me go back. You know, for weeks I wasn't able to find a place to have David's bar mitzvah party that was within our means. And so anyway, so I had this luncheon. So on that night, she took sick. She kept complaining down below, around her stomach and just above -- around her chest. So by the next morning -- I kept giving her enemas, but it wasn't doing any good. So the next morning I sent her and my son, David, to the doctors. I put them in a cab and sent them to the doctors. And then the doctor called me and said that my mother had had a heart attack, and he was going to put her in the hospital. So she was in the hospital for a whole week and under oxygen. And she passed away the day -- which was a week later -- she passed away the morning that my son wore his tefillin. And she was still alive when he wore his tefillin. And then I had family come from Los Angeles. They just came to visit, my aunt, and then my brother's wife. They just came to visit. They were coming to visit, and they just happened to be in town. So we went out for breakfast right after David wore his tefillin. We went to Hesse's on Broadway. And when I got home the phone was ringing. And they said I should come to the hospital right away because my mother was dying. So she waited for my son to wear his tefillin before she died. So he never had a bar mitzvah. I wasn't told that

he could have had a bar mitzvah anytime! Years later -- the same year -- I wasn't told that, see. But the Friday night after my mother passed away, then we went to the synagogue. And David said his little speech, you know. It was on a Friday night. And all I had was just the family, aunts and uncles and cousins and a couple of friends. Then they came to the house and we had coffee and pastry. Yes. So that's all the Bar -- you know, that's why he had it... So it was quite... Yes.

RB: Wow. That was -- oh, what a time for you. How was that for you, to--

VI: It was. It was.

RB: Oh, a combination of--

VI: Right. And she -- you know, my dad died when he was fifty-nine. And my mother died when she was sixty-four, so -- .

RB: And how was that for you and your family when she passed away? What--

VI: It was hard. It was hard.

RB: How so?

VI: But thank God I was working, you know. And that kept me busy. But it was hard, you know. It was hard on my little brother that was in Medical Lake, Washington the one that was in the home, because she used to go every year. And so -- and of course, I went with her a couple of times after I got back from Los Angeles. So then I kept -- I went every year to see my little brother. The first time I went there by myself, he was walking towards me in the walkway. And he

saw me, and he said, "Ma Ma, Ma!"

RB: Is that right?

VI: Yes. He thought I was my mother.

RB: Oh! (Sighs)

VI: Yes, it was--

RB: Really something.

VI: Yes.

RB: How did you feel about that?

VI: Very sad, very sad, yes.

RB: Yes.

VI: And he loved ice cream, so I took him to the commissary and gave him an ice cream sundae. And poor guy, he just ate it so fast.

RB: Oh! (Sighs) Isn't that something?

VI: Yes. But he had wonderful care there. And he died when he was fifty-four.

RB: Do you know the circumstances of his death? Was it--

VI: Yes.

RB: Was his -- had he been sick or--

VI: He took sick. I think he caught pneumonia.

RB: That's so sad.

VI: But it's funny, we were in San Francisco, my husband and I and my brother, Isaac, and my sister -- I think we went for some affair or something. My older brother, Albert, was here in Seattle, and he called us there, and said that my brother was very sick, and that we should go to -- that my brother Ike and I should go to Spokane, on Medical Lake. But we came here. We flew to Seattle and got my brother and we drove to Medical Lake. And my brother, Sabetai, he was in the hospital, under oxygen. And we stayed there a couple of days. And then he came out of it. He came out of it. Like the doctor was telling us later, that us being there, that he must have sensed it, you know, and he got better. So he lived for a few more years.

RB: It sounds like you were a very close family with your--

VI: Yes, we were. My older brother died in 1982. And his wife just died last year. So anyway...

RB: Wow.

VI: Yes, we were a very close-knit family, even with the Francos.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Oh, yes. Morris' aunts and uncles. He had a lot of -- my mother-in-law had a lot of sisters and two brothers. So we were a very close family.

RB: Oh, that's (Inaudible).

VI: Yes.

RB: Now, your husband, Morris, died suddenly. Is that--

VI: Yes, he died suddenly. We had gone to Hawaii in December of '69 -- and the early part of January of 1970 -- no, it was early part of -- no, we went in '69, yes, I think.

Anyway, we went with Albert and Rachel Caraco, you know. I'm going to tell you about this. I have a diamond.

RB: You're showing me a necklace.

VI: A necklace, a little diamond pendant. And before we left Hawaii, we stopped at this jewelry store, and Al was buying his wife a bracelet or something. And I fell in love with this. But we ran out of money. And Albert said, "don't worry." He says, "Morris, I'll give you some money. You can pay me later." So he bought me this. So I have never taken it off.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Ten days later my husband dropped dead. He went to the front door to pick up the Sunday newspaper, and it was on George Washington's birthday. At that time, they celebrated George Washington's birthday on February 22nd, that was their day. He went to get the paper, brought the paper in and he dropped dead.

RB: Oh! (Sighs).

VI: Yes.

RB: Oh, that must have been (Inaudible).

VI: Yes, it was horrible! Horrible!

RB: (Inaudible).

VI: And I called the fire -- called -- no -- there was no 911 then. I called the fire department, but they came -- they said if he had lived he would have been a vegetable. And ironic, next month, thirty days later, Medic One was initiated.

RB: Oh! (Sighs).

VI: Thirty days later.

RB: Oh, gee! (Sighs) Oh. (Sighs).

VI: Yes, Yes.

RB: Oh, (Sighs) that must have been a very, very horrible time.

VI: Yes, right.

RB: How did you manage that? How did you--

VI: Well, I was working, and so that helped me get along, you know. It was hard on my children, you know, to lose their father so young.

RB: How old were your children at the time?

VI: In 1970? Well, David -- thirty-six -- he was twenty -- he was what? Thirty-six from seventy?

RB: He was around thirty-four.

VI: Thirty-four. And Rita was about twenty-eight, twenty-six. And then Rita had her two children, my two grandchildren. And he adored them, oh, God, how he adored them.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Yes.

RB: It was a very sad time.

VI: Yes, yes. Very. So...

RB: Did you continue working right away as a way of coping?

VI: I continued working, oh, yes. And we lived in an apartment at the time, which made it good, because you know, I didn't have to worry about a house and--

RB: Right, right.

VI: We lived in Rainier Beach.

RB: So did the Jewish community move -- can you describe how, you know, geographically, how it evolved?

VI: Well, eventually, you know, they moved away from around 12th and Jackson and 14th and Jackson and all around there. Then they moved closer to -- starting, I would say, from 16th and Yesler all the way up to 31st and Yesler. And then they started moving to Seward Park, to Mercer Island, you know.

RB: So they moved east.

VI: They moved east.

RB: Some continued east to Mercer Island and Bellevue--

VI: Bellevue.

RB: -- and others continued south, or went south--

VI: Right, right.

RB: -- towards Seward Park.

VI: Most everyone went to Seward Park.

RB: For -- because the two -- or there were three main synagogues, and still are, in Seward Park. Is that right? Is that (Inaudible)--

VI: Yes, yes. The Ashkenazim Bikur Cholim, the Sephardic Bikur Holim, and then Congregation Ezra Bessaroth. Yes, they're still there.

RB: Okay. Right.

VI: Yes. And I still belong to the Congregation Ezra Bessaroth.

RB: That's wonderful.

VI: Yes. And my son-in-law, my daughter's husband, is very, very active in Congregation Ezra Bessaroth, but not as active as he used to be. He had back surgery in 1998, in November, because he was suffering with his back just something terrible. He was in surgery for nine hours. And when he came out of surgery, he was blind.

RB: Oh! (Sighs) Oh, how tragic!

VI: He's been blind ever since.

RB: Oh! (Sighs) Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that.

VI: Yes, yes.

RB: Oh, that must have been terrible for your daughter and your family.

VI: Yes, it's very hard. Very hard.

RB: In what way has it been hard?

VI: Well, because she's actually leading two lives.

RB: How so?

VI: Well, she's leading his life, doing for him, and then for herself, you know. And you know, everything, just everything. But he's remarkable, though. He is remarkable. The

bedrooms are upstairs in their condominium. He comes down to the kitchen. He makes his own coffee. He likes instant coffee. So she has the instant coffee there and the sugar and the whole bit. And whatever he's going to have for breakfast, she has it ready for him. And he takes it to the table, kitchen table. When he's through he brings it all to the kitchen sink, and washes his hands; turns right around and goes into the den. He is remarkable, remarkable what he does.

RB: It sounds like your daughter has also been a tremendous support for him.

VI: Very, very.

RB: So she's home full-time with him?

VI: He's always said that, "I need Rita more than she needs me."

RB: So did she stop working at that time?

VI: She wasn't working.

RB: Okay.

VI: No. She--

RB: So she chose to stay home raising children (Inaudible)--

VI: Yes. She worked for quite a few years, and she also was in the banking. And then after she married Joe -- they've been married, I think -- let me see, '87, '88 -- thirteen years. It will be thirteen years. And she worked for a few years, and then she had to stop.

RB: I see.

VI: Yes.

RB: What a time.

VI: And he has four children.

RB: Oh!

VI: And then, of course, Rita has the two, with the two grandchildren.

RB: So they have a very busy--

VI: So it's been very hard. But she's been very supportive. And she takes him to the synagogue every single Saturday--

RB: Is that right?

VI: -- and with him, yes.

RB: So he's observant. He's a fairly--

VI: Oh, yes, yes. Very.

RB: I see. And your daughter as well, does she--

VI: Sure, sure. She got to be--

RB: Is that right?

VI: -- going to the synagogue every Saturday morning.

RB: Isn't that something?

VI: Yes.

RB: Did you pass on religious practices to your kids that they've continued--

VI: I did, yes. I did.

RB: (Inaudible) ones did you pass on? Which--

VI: Well, usually it comes from being in a Jewish home, you know.

RB: Describe that a little bit for us.

VI: In what way?

RB: Whatever comes to mind.

VI: You mean, what they did at home?

RB: How did you -- what did you teach your children about being Jewish?

VI: Well, I -- they knew that they were Jewish. And even though I instilled in them that they'd have to marry a Jewish girl, boy, man or whatever. It didn't work out that way with Rita's first husband. She married a non-Jew. And she had the two children. Then they were divorced. And thank God, she married a Jewish man.

RB: Isn't that (Inaudible)?

VI: Oh, he's simply a wonderful, wonderful man, Yes, yes. And then David, of course, never got married. And I think -- I don't know, this is just me -- I think it's because when he was in his early twenties, I used to tell him, "now, don't forget, you can't marry a non-Jew. You've got to marry a Jewish girl. You can't marry a non-Jew." I don't know if that had anything to do with it or not. So I blame myself (Laughs).

RB: Is that right?

VI: Yes.

RB: Although, for each person--

VI: And David went to Hebrew school. And he reads Hebrew, and so...

RB: So you provided Jewish education--

VI: Right.

RB: -- and that was important to you--

VI: Right.

RB: -- with your kids?

VI: Yes, both of them. Both children. Rita went to Talmud Torah for a while.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Yes.

RB: That's wonderful.

VI: Yes.

RB: What about your grandchildren? What has it been like being a grandma?

VI: And a great-grandma.

RB: Oh! Sorry, I didn't--

VI: (Laughs).

RB: (Laughs) Tell us, how many do you have?

VI: Oh, wonderful. Oh, wonderful! Absolutely!

RB: Tell us about it.

VI: I got four.

RB: Tell us the names of your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren.

VI: Okay. My daughter's grandchildren are: Justin, who is going to be eleven years old on June the 12th; and Morgan, she is named after my two husbands.

RB: Is that right?

VI: They were both called Morris. Anyway, Morgan is going to be nine--

RB: That's wonderful.

VI: -- in June -- not in June, July. She's going to be nine in July. And my grandson's two girls, Chloe Rain was just five -- what, five? What am I talking about? She was seven in May. And Jasmine is going to be three.

[CD NUMBER ONE ENDS]

RB: Hi. I'm back with Ventura Franco Israel. And the date is still May 31st, 2001. And Ventura, do I have your permission to continue taping you?

VI: Yes.

RB: Great. And it's also Minidisc Two. And what we're doing right now is, we're actually going through some memorabilia. And Ventura, you were showing me a beautiful picture of your wedding to Morris Franco in 1935. And you were describing that your cousin had made the flowers in the picture.

VI: Yes.

RB: They're beautiful.

VI: Yes. My cousin Mordo Altabet made all the flowers. And I remember my flowers were white anthurium. And the bridesmaids wore -- let's see, six bridesmaids and two flower girls and one ring bearer. And the bridesmaids wore different dresses. And the grooms -- the -- what do you call them?

RB: The corsages or the--

VI: They had--

RB: -- boutonnières?

VI: Yes, they had (Laughs) boutonnières, Yes.

RB: And you had mentioned something interesting just about relationships between women, that your mother-in-law -- there were a couple women in the wedding party who--

VI: No. These two were related -- these two bridesmaids were related to my mother-in-law. And this was Matilda Soriano, and Tillie Hazan. They were related to my mother-in-law.

RB: I see.

VI: And then my sister-in-law, Emily Benatar, and then my sister, Sally. And then the other three bridesmaids, one of them, Sarah Israel, she wasn't married yet, she married -- later on she married -- her name was Sarah Feinberg -- she happened to be in Los Angeles, so I asked her to be in the wedding.

RB: That's wonderful.

VI: And the other two ladies -- she was also a Soriano. And she's a Skapog (phonetic). I can't remember their first names. And they were just friends of my mother-in-law's

family, and they were asked to be in the wedding. And then Isaac Matrani was a friend of my husband's. And Bob Romano, who later changed his name to Bob Rose, was a friend of my family. He happened to be in Los Angeles (Laughs), and I asked him to be in the wedding. And Dave Alhadeff -- Dave Nessim Alhadeff, he happened to be in Los Angeles, and I asked him to be in the wedding. And then my half-brother, Joe. And then Albert Franco was a cousin of my husband, Morris. And his brother, Benny. And then another friend of my husband's, Jack Alhadeff, formerly of Seattle. And then Linette Altabet, Raymond Benezra and Bernice Hanon were the flower girls and ring bearer.

RB: Beautiful wedding party.

VI: Yes.

RB: Great picture.

VI: Yes.

RB: So there were some other things that you wanted to show me that I thought we could talk about on tape quickly.

VI: Yes. This is Morris Franco.

RB: I see. So that was your first husband.

VI: And this was my second husband, Morris Israel.

RB: And what year did you marry your second husband?

VI: I got married April 7, 1976.

RB: I see. How did you meet?

VI: Well, I had known him all my life. And he'd known me (Laughs) all my life (Laughs). His son was married to my cousin's daughter. And he just asked me to go out one night.

RB: Yes. Isn't that something?

VI: And that same night (Laughs) he asked me to marry him (Laughs)!

RB: You're kidding! He was in love. He was smitten. Wow!

VI: Oh! (Laughs) Yes.

RB: So he knew you were the one for him.

VI: Yes. And he was a great guy, just a great, great guy.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Yes.

RB: How so?

VI: Yes, a great guy. And he had two daughters and three sons.

RB: I see, from a previous marriage.

VI: Yes.

RB: Okay. I see. And so his first wife died, is that--

VI: Right, the year before we were married.

RB: Okay.

(INTERRUPTION IN RECORDING)

VI: Anyway, like I said, he was a great guy. He had the same habits as Morris Franco.

RB: Oh!

VI: (Laughs).

RB: So they were similar in name and--

VI: Similar in name, and not only that, they drove the same way. They drove their cars the same way.

RB: (Laughs).

VI: If they're going to make a right-hand turn from the curb lane, they won't be in the curb lane, they'll be in the middle lane, and then they make a right turn.

RB: (Laughs).

VI: That was Morris Franco and Morris Israel. And yes, same habits. They snored the same way.

RB: (Laughs).

VI: And they were both short and you know, a little stocky. Morris Israel always called me Queenie.

RB: Is that right? How come? What was that from?

VI: I don't know. He just -- all of a sudden he used to call me Queenie.

RB: That was his nickname, affectionate.

VI: Yes, always Queenie.

RB: Oh, that wonderful.

VI: But he was a great guy, too, just a great guy!

RB: And how did he -- how long were you married to--

VI: Thirteen and a half years. After eleven years of marriage, he took sick. He took sick in February of 1987. He had to have nursing care at home, twenty-four hours.

RB: What was his illness?

VI: Just --

RB: Okay.

(INTERRUPTION IN RECORDING)

VI: But it's just something that he needed care.

RB: Of course.

VI: So for two years I had twenty-four hour care. And that's what his family wanted, which was fine. So I could go and come as I please, you know.

RB: And you knew that he was safe and cared for.

VI: Oh, yes. And I was home to take care of him too, you know.

RB: Yes.

VI: And then he went to the Kline Galland Nursing Home. He was there for eight months. And then he passed away in October, October 10th, 1989. Good thing I remember those dates.

RB: Isn't that something? That's amazing to me. I have such trouble with dates, so I'm impressed.

VI: Yes. Well, I try to keep it in mind, you know.

RB: Of course.

VI: Yes. And this is taken in Hawaii just before he died.

RB: Is that right? So you had--

VI: He wasn't -- Morris -- this is Morris Franco.

RB: Okay. Oh, I see. Okay. This is your first husband.

VI: Yes. He was a joker.

RB: Is that right? Were they both jokers, or he was more--

VI: He used to tell jokes. Morris Israel used to tell jokes.

RB: (Laughs) Were your roles in the marriage similar with each husband, or did you find that your role was different?

VI: Well, it always is. Everybody who's married a second time say it's not the same--

RB: Of course.

VI: -- as your first marriage.

RB: Yes.

VI: But they were both so alike in everything they did.

RB: (Inaudible).

VI: (Laughs). Anyway...

RB: Can you describe your experience of -- this is kind of a sensitive area, and so if you'd rather not describe it, that's fine -- but it might be -- and I think it would be valuable to hear your experience of widowhood. What is that like to lose a spouse and--

VI: It's hard, because whenever you go out, you go to an affair, you're just out of place. You're out of place, because everybody is with their spouse. And it hurts when someone doesn't come up to ask you to dance. So you feel -- you're out of place. It was like that with Morris Franco, you know, when I was a widow for six years; and then after Morris Israel passed away. Yes, it's just very hard.

RB: Did you find, have you remained mostly -- your social relationships have been mostly within the Sephardic community, or have you branched out to the Ashkenazic community, or--

VI: I have a couple of Ashkenazim friends, yes. Oh, yes, quite a few of them, yes. I play cards with them. We play Pan. And I have a lot of family on both sides, the Franco side, Israel side.

RB: So a lot of your friends who are also Sephardic have continued to be Sephardic?

VI: Yes, yes.

RB: And do you find that -- so you mentioned that it's hard to go out as a single woman, you know, as a widow.

VI: It is. It's very hard.

RB: And so would you say that within the Sephardic community that it's more difficult for women to go out by themselves, or do you think it's the same--

VI: Well, some gals can have a good time. You know what I mean?

RB: Yes, of course. Yes, it depends on the person, sure.

VI: Yes. But I try to have a good time, but it's hard. It's just--

RB: Yes, it's a different--

VI: Especially when you go to an affair, and the tables are assigned, and they put you with other widows, you know. It's hard, you know. So... or with older people (Laughs).

RB: Is that right? (Laughs) So you find they'll seat you with either widows or the -- is that right? Right.

VI: Right.

RB: Were you active in any organizations that were really for women, strictly women, or were you, for example, a member of the Sisterhood?

VI: Well, the Congregation Ezra Bessaroth, we have a Ladies Auxiliary, you know. And the Ahavath Ahim has a Ladies Auxiliary.

RB: How important were those organizations in your life?

VI: Well, I think they're very important, because I don't belong to a non -- what would you say -- non-Jewish organization. So they're very important to me.

RB: What do they provide to you? What do they offer?

VI: Well, we have our (Laughs) -- we have our meetings, we have our luncheons, we have our get-togethers. We have our brunches for Mother's Day and Father's Day and--

RB: That's wonderful.

VI: Yes.

RB: So it sounds like a lot of it is social, but also there's -- is there fundraising? Is that -- when you say meetings, what do the meetings involve?

VI: Well, they do. You know, there's fundraising affairs, there is, in both organizations, yes. Like the Ahavath Ahim, they help the needy. We pay dues. I see a lot of Ashkenazim women when I go to the Kline Galland. I volunteer on Monday mornings--

RB: Is that right?

VI: -- at the Kline Galland for a couple of hours.

RB: That's wonderful.

VI: They have a little gathering of the Sephardics. And it's like a news conference. But there's quite a few Ashkenazim that enjoy it, and they come too. But I haven't been there since December 2000. I had a little problem. I had a little irregular heartbeat, so I stopped going for a while. But, God willing, this Monday I'm going to start going.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Yes.

RB: You're feeling better.

VI: And then I visit. There's a lot of Ashkenazim people there that I know.

RB: So you're -- it sounds like you have been a regular volunteer pretty much.

VI: I just -- just for a couple of hours. But I saw one of the volunteers not too long ago, "we sure miss you, Ventura."

RB: Oh! (Sighs).

VI: She says, "there's one gal there," she says, "where's that young lady "-- I said, "young lady"? -- that used to come on Monday mornings.

RB: How do you spend your leisure time?

VI: Well, I love to drive, that's why I use a lot of gas in my car. Anyway, with my family and my friends. In this building here we have one, two -- four Jewish -- there's five Jewish families here.

RB: In your apartment--

VI: My apartment complex. My cousin lives here. And my girlfriend, who's also my godmother, she lives here.

RB: Really?

VI: And two friends live here.

RB: So a lot of your socializing is--

VI: Right.

RB: -- right where you are.

VI: Here and the synagogue. Whenever we're going to bake for the bazaar, we're there two days a week baking. So I'm there helping, Mondays and Thursdays. And then

Mondays, after I volunteer at the Kline Galland, I go help at the synagogue.

RB: Wow. So that's quite a bit of volunteering each week.

VI: Right, right.

RB: So the baking, is it a regular--

VI: For the bazaar. We start baking in September.

RB: And when is the bazaar, usually?

VI: In March.

RB: Wow. So--

VI: And we bake two days a week.

RB: Oh, my gosh. So really, you make quite a lot.

VI: Right, oh, yes. Quite a lot.

RB: A major fundraiser.

VI: Major! Yes.

RB: That's remarkable.

VI: Yes, Yes. So I keep busy. And go have your hair done, your nails done (Laughs); go to Bellevue Square. It's not too far from here, shopping. And I love to spend time with my grandchildren -- great-grandchildren and children.

RB: Is that right? That's wonderful.

VI: Yes. Justin is going to middle school, so we have a graduation on June the 15th.

RB: That's very exciting.

VI: So it's very exciting. And I go to the dance recitals of my great-grandchildren, three granddaughters -- two granddaughters -- the other one is too little -- they're in. So (Laughs)--

RB: I bet they're adorable.

VI: They are, just adorable. Just adorable! I just love them! (Laughs).

RB: (Laughs). Well, you know, our time is just about up for today. But I wondered if you could just give us -- oh, I don't know, if you could reflect a little bit about some of the key events, you know, if there's anything that really stands out in your life that you think was really significant and really shaped who you are and what's important to you.

VI: I think the most important thing was when Rita married Joe.

RB: How so?

VI: Yes.

RB: Why was that?

VI: I don't know -- because she was married to a non-Jew the first time, and had two children. And I always used to tell her that I wanted her to marry a Jewish fellow -- always. But see, that's my problem. That's what I did with my son. That's why he's still a bachelor. So when she married Joe, it was really, I think, the highlight of my life.

RB: So it was very important to you that--

VI: At least one of my children would marry a Jewish (Laughs)--

RB: And to retain the Jewish faith and customs.

VI: Right, yes.

RB: It was very important.

VI: And Joe, my son-in-law, is very Jewish-minded, you know. And before he became blind and we used to have the holidays there all the time. He read beautifully, just beautifully. He used to do the whole Passover service and Rosh Hashanah service. And now, you know, he tries -- he can remember a little bit. But since he can't read, he just--

RB: Oh! (Sighs).

VI: So, it's just--

RB: That's very tragic--

VI: Yes.

RB: -- for him. You know, it sounds like something he loved.

VI: But thank God she's happy, and so...

RB: Yes.

VI: Yes.

RB: So it sounds like just being part of the Jewish community and continuing it through marriage is something very important to you.

VI: Right, right, Yes.

RB: Well, thank you so much for your time.

VI: You're welcome (Laughs).

RB: You're just terrific.

VI: I told you I was going to stumble.

RB: You didn't at all. It was great. Thanks a million.

(INTERRUPTION IN RECORDING)

RB: This is Roz Bornstein, and I'm back with Ventura Franco Israel. And the date is still May 31st, 2001. And we're here for the Weaving Women's Words Project of the Jewish Women's Archive. Ventura, do I have your permission to continue taping you?

VI: Yes.

RB: Okay. We thought that what we would do is put on tape Ventura's descriptions of some of the artifacts that she has that are especially meaningful to her, and that would be historically significant. And one of them is a beautifully framed piece of tatting -- how would you describe it -- embroidery?

VI: It's tatting. It's like a camisole. It's a camisole that was sewed on. Yes, it was a camisole that was made by my mother. And it was called tatting, I think. And it was sewn onto a nightgown.

RB: Mmm, it's gorgeous.

VI: It is gorgeous, Yes.

RB: And you were describing that women frequently embroidered or made clothing with this tatting.

VI: They did that. And all of the Jewish women crocheted and knitted and embroidered. I embroidered quite a few (Laughs) tablecloths for card tables.

RB: Is that right?

VI: Anyway – yes, -- especially the older women, they did a lot of crocheting.

RB: So the items were for clothing, or were they for household use?

VI: Household use. There were doilies, there were tablecloths. There were throws that they would put over their furniture, their couches.

RB: That's great. Approximately how old is this piece that you have?

VI: I would say at least eighty-five years old.

RB: Wow, that's great.

VI: Maybe more, because my mother came into this country around 1912 or 1911 -- no, it had to be later than that because she was pregnant of my second brother, so probably about 1913. And twenty, eighty -- about eighty-five years.

RB: It's really (Inaudible)--

VI: It's about eighty-five years old.

RB: And it's in beautiful condition.

VI: Yes, it is. And I had it framed. And when I took it to have it framed, the salesperson at the frame shop asked me what color my mother's eyes were, and I said, blue. So the background in this frame is blue.

RB: It's just beautiful.

VI: Yes.

RB: Do you know if it was from a nightgown that was for a special occasion or just regular--

VI: No, I don't think so. It's just for a nightgown.

RB: Wow. And you also have another framed picture of some beautiful pieces of embroidery, one that your mom made.

VI: You mean crochet.

RB: Crochet. I'm sorry.

VI: Yes.

RB: And what type of thread is used in this work here?

VI: DMC thread, Yes.

RB: So it's a very--

VI: It's just like little place mats. There's a round place mat, and there's an oblong, and another one that's in circles.

RB: And so those are another example of the crochet work, very fine, delicate work that the women would engage in.

VI: My mother did two of those pieces, and I did the third one.

RB: They're just gorgeous.

VI: Yes.

RB: And then, completely separate is another thing you would like us to have, another piece for the exhibit is an article. It's a cutout from the newspaper that shows -- it's a picture of you, and there's a couple paragraphs describing your promotion at Union Federal Savings Bank. Is that right?

VI: Yes.

RB: Okay. I just want to--

VI: It was in the Times paper. And this piece that I'm holding, it was in this Jewish Transcript, March 23rd, 1972: "Union Federal promotes Ventura Franco. Ventura Franco has been named Assistant Secretary of Union Federal Savings and Loan Association, according to President Gerald J. Pittinger (phonetic)." Should I go on?

RB: Sure, if you'd like to, that's fine.

VI: "Her responsibilities include the hiring, training and supervision of tellers at all of the association's five offices. Mrs. Franco has been associated with Union Federal since 1951, serving most recently as Teller Supervisor. A native of Seattle, she's a member of the Ahavath Ahim Congregation, Lady's Auxiliary, and Congregation Ezra Bessaroth."

RB: That's marvelous.

VI: Yes.

RB: And you had really--

VI: I (Laughs) -- I came up, didn't I, in--

RB: (Inaudible) yes. Isn't that something?

VI: I became Assistant Secretary after twenty-one years at the bank.

RB: And in describing this before, you were talking a little about the work culture and women's roles in the bank. And could you describe it on tape? I think it's important, historically that -- were women treated any differently, or what (Inaudible)--

VI: No. They were treated equally. They were treated equally, yes. We even had a vice president that was a woman. We had a treasurer that was a woman. So they were all treated equally, yes.

RB: Did you ever feel any differences, being a Jewish woman, working in the bank?

VI: No, no. They treated me like as if one of their own--

RB: Okay. Isn't that something?

VI: -- you know, Yes.

RB: Okay. That's a great work history that you have, starting from very young (Inaudible)--

VI: Very young, yes.

RB: -- (Inaudible).

VI: Yes.

RB: Okay. And I'll just go over these really quickly, because I know our time is really limited. There's also a letter. The letterhead of the stationary is the Servicemen's Club of Seattle. The date on the letter is April 22nd, 1943. It's a letter written -- why don't you describe it?

VI: I had invited this serviceman on April 22nd, 1943, which was Passover. And he sent me a thank-you letter.

"My dear Mr. and Mrs. Franco: I'm writing this letter to thank you again for the wonderful time I had at your home. I shall never forget the kindness and wonderful hospitality you extended to me. I guess the greatest thing in the world to a soldier far from home is to have the feeling that he is with people in a home so much like his own. Words will never express by gratitude to you. And all I can say is, thanks. A million thanks, and God bless you all. Sincerely, Bernard Garfinkel." And the stationary is "Courtesy of Sears Roebuck and Company, Retailers for Defense."

RB: That's something.

VI: That something?

RB: Yes. That's great.

VI: And then I got a second letter from him, from Barry Garfinkel on August 20th, 1943. My husband and I had sent his parents a dozen roses for Passover. So here's his thank-you letter: "My Dear Mrs. Franco: I'm taking this opportunity first to say hello, and second to ask a favor of you. My mother and dad's twenty-fifth anniversary is sometime next week, and I would like to send them some flowers. Since the last time I saw you I have been home on furlough, June 22nd to July 7th. My mother told me that she has never seen such beautiful roses as the ones you so graciously sent her. When the flowers began to wither, my dad took the pedals and mixed them in with a pint of whisky. I took a drink of some of it, and the smell and taste of the rose pedals are there. He's saving it for after the war, when we can use it to celebrate. I have been trying to find out how much it would cost to wire a dozen roses to New York, but unfortunately I haven't been able to do so. I don't know how much to send you for it. I would be indebted to you if you would wire the flowers and send me the bill so that I can remit the necessary amount to you. I haven't had the opportunity to come into Seattle the past few months, but if the occasion does come, I'll surely step in to say hello. I still thoroughly remember the wonderful time I had as your guest during the Passover holidays. Thank you, and again, I remain,

thankfully yours, Barry Garfinkel." And he gave me the home address of his parents. And Morris and I sent them a dozen Better Time roses. And we did not charge Barney for it.

RB: Oh, that's lovely.

VI: Yes, yes.

RB: That's just great.

VI: And then--

RB: Let's see--

VI: And then, October, 1948, we had another serviceman. "Dear Mr. and Mrs. Franco: I thought I'd take this opportunity to thank you for the wonderful hospitality you showed me in my visit to Seattle last week. I especially enjoyed the new to me and delicious dishes that I ate at your table. The homey atmosphere that I felt at your house made me feel very much at home. Your entire family was extremely cordial. My visit to your home made my entire stay in Seattle most pleasant. Thank you again. Sincerely, Marshall Nieman." I wish I could find these folks. I wish I could find them through the internet.

RB: You'd like to see them again. How is it reading these letters now? What is it like for you?

VI: Oh, (Laughs), very -- it makes me cry.

RB: Yes.

VI: Yes.

RB: Why is that? Can you describe the feeling behind that?

VI: Yes. I think what we did was wonderful, and I think there was a lot of -- lot of families -- all the families, I should say, in Seattle, took in servicemen. And a lot of Jewish families took in servicemen.

RB: Supported them.

VI: Yes. And these were Jewish soldiers, yes.

RB: And then the other -- the last two pieces here -- one, it's a wedding invitation--

VI: (Laughs).

RB: -- from your first marriage.

VI: Right (Laughs).

RB: And the other, it's beautiful, an invitation for--

VI: For my son's thirteenth birthday--

RB: Yes.

VI: -- luncheon that I gave him.

RB: Yes. For him for his bar mitzvah.

VI: Yes, yes.

RB: (Inaudible) great. All right. Listen, thanks again for your time, Ventura. It was wonderful.

VI: Oh, you're welcome, Yes (Laughs).

[END OF INTERVIEW]