Bernice Mossafer Rind Transcript

PBL: This is the oral history interview of Bernice Mossafer Rind. Today's date is June the 5th. Today is Tuesday. The year is 2001. My name is Pamela Brown Lavitt. I am an oral historian for the Jewish Women's Archive's "Weaving Women's Words" Project. We are in the home of the Rinds at 7935 Overlake Drive West in Medina, Washington. Just to ask you, before we begin, in Seattle, for whatever reason, they just need on tape to get your consent that you understand that you are being recorded. So, do you agree and consent to being recorded today?

BMR: Yes, I do.

PBL: Wonderful. I wanted to start out – I noticed in a piece of writing in some of the things that you had at the University of Washington Jewish Archives that you mentioned – you said, "One of my ancestors [from Spain] was also a prominent Dane, who was a physician to King Christian IV in the seventeenth century." And you continued – you were introducing someone. I'm just wondering, have you traced your family history back that far or even further?

BMR: To some extent. There's a lot of vacant spaces. I've got someone from the fifteenth century – and then just a name – and sixteenth and then seventeenth. And I have more obviously from the eighteenth century to today. My grandfather, who was born on the Island of Rhodes, had everything written down, and when he died, and my grandmother was going to come to the United States, she sent his library to Palestine – to Jerusalem. When I was there – the second time when I was there, I had gone to a conference for the Board of Governors for Hebrew University – and I took the time to try and find where his library was. The man's name that I had was Perez. But I couldn't seem to get any direction from anybody. Nobody would tell me anything about it. I was

never able to trace the library. It may have been sent to Hebron and may have just stayed in Jerusalem someplace. But I have no way of knowing where it's at but that would have given me a good background. But we do have specifics from the 1750s on.

PBL: So, what do you know? Can you tell me a little bit about your family history and even the more recent family history, your grandmothers and grandfathers?

BMR: Yes, well, they left Spain. Family history says that they also came from Portugal. But of course, from Spain, some of the families went to Portugal for escaping the Inquisition. But then it followed them there. I come from three different families. All our family always married first cousins or second cousins. They were an aristocratic family, and they never married, as was the custom, below your class. So, my family is made up of the Francos, the Moussaffir, which is actually, the original name in Spain was Mussafia [and Peha].

PBL: Can you spell that?

BMR: M-U-S-S-A-F-I-A or sometimes M-U-S-S-A-P-H-I-A. So then it changed to Moussafir and I'll just take a minute to tell you about that, how that changed from Mussafia to Moussafir. When my forefather was going to the Ottoman Empire, the Sultan had invited a rabbi to come to Turkey, to – well, it was Greece, really – Salonica. He was going to send him to the Island of Rhodes. This was in the 1750s. And he said, “Since your name is Mussafia, and that's so much like our word ‘moussafir,’ from now on, you're going to be called Rabbi Moussafir, which means you're a ‘guest’ in my country.” And that's where that part of the family name retained Moussafir.

PBL: How has your family – just briefly to digress for a moment, how has your family interpreted that change that's clearly a statement of some kind – or perhaps you've interpreted it as such?

BMR: Well, if the Sultan, who was all-powerful and very good to the Jews at the time, made a direct order of that type, you have to accept it. You don't insult him and say, “No, I want to retain my name as it is.” I don't think it ever bothered them because in the culture of the country, “moussafir” was “guest.” So it was a complimentary name. And then, when my father came to the United States, the postal clerk was delivering the mail, and he'd say, “You know David.” He saw this teenage boy who was getting mail, and it was always “David Moussafir,” great, big, long name, and he said, “Why don't you make it like an American name?” So he said, “We'll call you ‘David Mossafer.’” So he's the one who directed the change, pronunciation, and the spelling to anglicize it to some degree. So it's gone over many changes. Now from Spain, our family, as the Inquisition progressed, went up to Navarre. As I mentioned in our talk before, the Spaniards – the Spanish Jews – had been in various provinces in Spain, and as the Inquisition progressed, they would gather and escape to Aragon. They had different dialects and different languages, just like we have dialects in the United States. So, their language became one language of Spanish – fifteenth-century Spanish. Our family, the Francos, were from Navarre. That much we know. That's how the language became the Spanish-speaking Jews. Part of our family went up to Denmark. Some progressed down from Denmark down through Germany, was it? They call it something – [Schleswig] Holstein. I can't remember the whole name. And down to Austria. Some of them went to – the Mussafias went to Leghorn or Livorno, and they were neighbors of [Sir Moses] Montefiore at that time. The synagogue, which was blown up during World War II unfortunately had the family crest of the Mussafias or the Moussafirs up in front of the synagogue. I have never been able to obtain a picture of that synagogue so that I could see what it was like. The family history tells us – as Funk and Wagnall’s [Encyclopedia] also quoted there – that two of the brothers, I think it was. I can't quite recall the names. Abraham and Jacob or Moshe and Jacob – something like that. Yaakov? – went to Austria, and they lived there. The Mossafers were there. Because they had a very prominent Sephardic synagogue and group of people there. From there – then that was

just – the Ottoman Empire got up just to the border of there and called upon Sephardic Jews to come to the Ottoman Empire. And one, in particular, was my forefather, Rabbi Yaakov Moussafir – Mussafia at the time. And [the Sultan] said to my forefather, "Since your name is Mussafia, and you are a guest in my country, I'm going to call you Rabbi Moussafir, which means a guest." And he sent him to – or suggested that he go to the Island of Rhodes and to nurture the people there and become a rabbi there, which he did. Then the family remained there. Some of the Sephardic Jews have been there for many hundreds of years, whereas our family was just a couple of hundred years. Also, when one part of our family left Spain, they went directly to Palestine and established schools in Safed and in Jerusalem under the name Mussafia. Then during World War II, I came across some Mussafias who were in Yugoslavia, who escaped to Israel. So, they have scatted themselves all over. A number of years ago, my brother was in England, and he was looking up in the phone book, as we always do, to see if we can trace any family members. And he came across some Mussafias, which he called on the telephone and explained who he was and that he was exploring the family name. Well, it seems these people had converted to Christianity and were no longer Jewish people. So that traceability ended right there.

PBL: It's a fascinating family history. Quite a diaspora of the Mussafia family name. Which of those many places do you feel most connected to or your immediate family heritage?

BMR: Island of Rhodes.

PBL: Can you tell me what it is that you were told or what you know about your family's history on the Island of Rhodes?

BMR: Well, all the Mussafias, the Moussafirs, all the Mossafers were all rabbis. They did not earn their living as rabbis because they did not touch money. They earned their living as accountants, teachers, and in business of some sort. My grandfather was a

scribe, and he was an accountant. He worked for a time for a Greek businessman, and he worked for his great uncle.

PBL: What was your grandfather's name?

BMR: Nessim Moussafir. Nessim Mossafer. His real name was Avrahm, but he was sort of a miracle child, so they called him Nessim. His mother had six pregnancies, all stillborn, and he was the only one who survived, so they called him Nessim.

PBL: What is it about the name Nessim that indicates the miracle of his survival?

BMR: Well, it means “miracle” in Hebrew, and so that name has been passed on. Nessim Avrahm or Avrahm Nessim.

PBL: And where is it that your parents are from?

BMR: My father was born on the Island of Rhodes, and my mother was born in Feneke, which is Asia Minor. My grandfather, whose name was Joseph Peha, Yoseph Peha, was a businessman, and he was an importer and exporter of wools, silks, cattle, sheep. So, six months of the year, he lived in Rhodes, and six months of the year, he lived in Feneke. My mother and two of her brothers were born in Feneke. The rest of the children were born in Rhodes. The older ones were left with my other grandmother [Leah] when she [Rahel, Leah’s twin sister] would go to Feneke with her husband to live there. They lived on a promontory that overlooked the sea, the Mediterranean. They had, I guess, sort of a feudal system. They had tenant farmers on their property whom my mother told me would bring them big vats of butter and cream every morning. She had her own pony. And the other children also had a pony of their own. At the time, that was their only means of transportation. You either rode a pony, a goat, a donkey, or whatever, a horse. And her father had a horse – a white horse he rode. I think it was one reason that she liked my husband. My husband, Marty Rind, is an international champion equestrian. So, when we were starting to go together, he would be in his

riding clothes because he was going to go out to ride his horse. She always felt that that reminded her of her father, who died. Both my grandfathers died young. One, Grandfather Nessim, died when he was forty-three of peritonitis. And my grandfather Yusef died of meningitis when he was fifty-three. And at that time – well, we still don't have a cure for meningitis and peritonitis. If they get it quick enough, they can save a person. That's where they were born. My grandmothers, incidentally, were twin sisters. They couldn't be told apart when they were young except for their voices.

PBL: What were your grandmother's names?

BMR: Rahel and Leah.

PBL: And so they married – one married Yaakov Peha [sic].

BMR: Yusef.

PBL: Yusef. And the other married –

BMR: Nessim Moussafir.

PBL: Interesting. And did they have a relationship, continue a relationship between these two families?

BMR: Oh yes, very close. Our whole family is very close. When my grandmothers were born, their uncle was a consulate to Austria, and so the Emperor Franz Joseph – it was Franz Joseph. My grandmother would say “Franz Joseph” [French pronunciation], and that's what I grew up saying, “Franz Joseph” – sent an emissary and a lot of gifts to the two little girls that were born. So they were very honored because I guess there weren't many twins born in those days. And my great-grandmother was then – and then she had a little boy, and she was widowed when she was twenty-three, my great-grandmother. They died pretty young in those days.

PBL: What have you heard about –? What has been the family lore or stories that you've heard about Rhodes?

BMR: Well, let me see. Evidently, it was a very peaceful place to live. Very beautiful. It was an enclosed area in a very old city. I remember, as a child, I asked my mother, "How old was the house you lived in?" And she said, "Oh, about 500 years old." And 500 years old. I couldn't believe it. And then she would describe it to me. And it was right on the street, and there were big doors that you entered. You entered into a courtyard. Then the bedrooms and the salon, as they called it, and the other rooms – the kitchen and so on – were around this courtyard. I remember I asked – I know it sounds silly now, but at the time, I asked, "Well didn't you have a yard? Where did you play as a child?" Because you would ask that when you're raised in Seattle particularly. But I wished I'd had a picture of it, but I didn't. When I did go to Rhodes, I looked for it, and of course, everything was bombed so it was all destroyed. I found where the house used to be, and they had it roped off because the Greeks were going to excavate. They found another city below that. Which, of course, they used to find all the time. So there wasn't much I could do about that. But it was the – they called it the "Casa de los Francos."

PBL: Still? When you went there?

BMR: No, it doesn't have any name now at all.

PBL: Your family called it that.

BMR: Yeah. It was the only house. It's not like a real house. They were all attached. All the buildings in most of Europe are this way. Old cities are like that. They had their own synagogue in their house where they worshipped. The only synagogue remaining in Rhodes is what they call the "Big Synagogue," but it wasn't one of the biggest. It's the only synagogue that remains that was not destroyed during World War II. I was hoping that I could find something. Then I tried to go to the city courts. The soldiers wouldn't let

me in. Of course, I don't speak Greek, and I don't speak Turkish.

PBL: What year was this?

BMR: 1977. I had no way of communicating, and I couldn't even get past the door. We just weren't able to understand one another. But I thought maybe I could find some records or talk to somebody. But it was my error. I had no way of knowing that I had to speak Greek or Turkish [laughter].

PBL: What was it like, or have you heard it's like for your parents and their grandparents as Jews living in Rhodes? What have you heard about the Jewish community, especially given that your grandfather and great-grandfather were rabbis?

BMR: Well, they kept pretty much to themselves. The Jewish community was an enclosed area, more or less. I remember my mother always telling me that they always watched the children very carefully. They were always afraid that the children would be kidnapped. Whether that was something that happened often, I don't know, but it was a fear that I guess the Jewish people have had – that they would lose their children. They were beautiful children, evidently, so they were afraid that the girls, in particular, would be stolen. They watched them carefully. I remember her telling me they always went swimming in the Mediterranean but always had a chaperon. They never went alone. In those days, that's the way it was. She loved going swimming, and she was a very good swimmer too. It was beautiful. She said they used to throw rocks down, and then they would dive down to find that particular rock because the sea is so clear and beautiful. And it is. When we were there, we went in, and it was just warm and just like looking through turquoise glass. Very beautiful.

PBL: When were your parents born? Around what time?

BMR: My dad was born in 1890, and my mother 1895/6 – something like that.

PBL: And how did they meet? Did they meet on the Island of Rhodes? Did they meet through family?

BMR: Oh, yes. Being first cousins, of course, they knew each other. But then, my mother was more or less in Asia Minor. I remember her telling me that one day her mother got a letter and there was a picture. And, of course, the pictures in those days weren't so clear, and so they said, “Oh, here is Serena's betrothed.” My mother was four-years-old and says, “Oh, let me see, let me see, let me see.” So they showed her the picture, and she says, “Oh, he's a little Moorico,” which means he's a Moor. He wasn't Black. It was just that the picture was so poor. [laughter] Well, he was a towhead with blue eyes, but in the picture was Black, so she thought – she didn't want him because he was Black, so that was it. I wish I'd had that picture.

PBL: So when did they finally meet in person? And you said he was a towhead. So, was that unusual to have blonde hair and blue eyes?

BMR: Oh, no. No. My mother had dark auburn hair and blue-green eyes. My father had blue eyes and blonde hair, and so did his brother. But not his sisters. One sister had brown hair and hazel eyes. The other one had very dark brown – or not black but dark brown – and brown eyes. Just happened that the boys were blonde and blue-eyed. That was the Mossafers. The Pehas, most of them, are green-eyed and kind of red-haired. Something that my mother and my dad used to tell me about my uncle, Dr. Mossafer, was that when he was little, he was a little blonde, very bright child, very bright boy. They could all read by the time they were three. They read Hebrew. They could read the Torah. Well, they start teaching them when they're two. He asked his uncle, who was my grandfather Joseph, who had red hair, and he'd say, “Tio Yusef,” – which means Uncle Joseph – “why do you have red hair?” And he says, “I eat a lot of carrots.” So, he went home, and he told his mother, “I've got to eat a lot of carrots so that I can have red hair like Tio Yusef.” So I remember that which I thought was kind of cute and

funny.

PBL: So when did your parents meet, and did they marry before they came to the United States?

BMR: No. My father came here first in 1909.

PBL: How old was he at that time?

BMR: Nineteen. My mother came in 1914. I think it was probably the last – one of the last ships, I guess, before World War II that we entered. I'm not sure. I'm just assuming that. They were married in 1916.

PBL: What was the situation that you heard brought them to the United States? Did they leave their families behind, or did they come with families?

BMR: My father came first. He had a cousin here. First, he went to New York, and at first, they said, “Well, no, you're not Jewish” because he didn't speak Yiddish. “So you go stand over with those people there.” They were going to send them back. And he was, of course, very upset. As he walked back to this group, they saw the little tzitzit. He never wore that in Rhodes. But my grandmother said to him, “You have to wear it.” He said, “No, Mamma, I am not going to wear that. I never wear that.” She said, “No, I insist.” So, he wore it because he didn't want to hurt his mother. So, he came, and so then they realized that he was Jewish because he had the little tassels. So, they had him read. Well, they were amazed at his knowledge and his reading, but he had already studied as a rabbi. But he was never going to practice as a rabbi. They wanted him to stay there.

PBL: Who is “they”?

BMR: The rabbis in New York. I don't know. He told me which organization it was. I'll have to ask my brother which one. But it was one of the Jewish organizations.

PBL: Was it the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society? HIAS?

BMR: It could have been.

PBL: I think he might have mentioned that. His interview is at the University of Washington. I think it was done in the ‘70s. He does mention a little bit about that. But please continue.

BMR: Well, then he went down to Atlanta because there were some cousins there, but he didn't like the weather there. Then he went to Montgomery because he had relatives there. He didn't like the weather there either. Because he noticed that the Black people would walk around with sponges because they were perspiring. The heat, the humidity was terrible. He didn't like that. Then he went West. He came to Seattle because he had a cousin here. His future wife's oldest sister. And he stayed here. He liked it. It kind of reminded him of Rhodes, even though the weather was cold. It was by the sea. His closest relatives were here. Although the ones in Montgomery and Atlanta were as close also. They were his first cousins. He liked the weather here, and so he remained here, and he always loved it. He said, “It's God's country.” Even I would complain about the sun, the lack of it, as a child and a young girl and say, “Well, we don't get enough sun, Dad, it's just not warm enough.” He'd say, “This, mi alma” – he always called me “mi alma” which means “my soul.”

PBL: Mi alma?

BMR: He'd say, “This is God's country. You have everything in the world here. This is beautiful country.” So he was a great fan of it here. Then my mother came in 1914 with her mother and her little brother, and the rest of her family was here – her brothers.

PBL: Was there something that particularly urged her family to leave? I understand that your father, it was his own mother that suggested that he come to America. Correct?

BMR: Well, I don't know who suggested it, but the boys [in Rhodes] were going to be conscripted into the Turkish army, and they felt that they would lose their children and never see them again because, in those days, I guess when you went into the Turkish army or the Russian army, you were lost to your families. You were just part of the structure of government. So, there was an exodus of all these [eight or nine] teenage young boys. They came in a group. They left Rhodes as quickly as they could so that they wouldn't be called up.

PBL: What then urged your mother and her family members to leave in 1914?

BMR: Well, my grandmother's oldest daughter was here. She'd married here. And little by little, the whole family came. So, of course, no one was going to remain behind. That's when they left.

PBL: So, where did your mother and her family initially go to? Did they also go to New York, or did they come right to Seattle?

BMR: No, came directly to Seattle.

PBL: So what was it like, or what did you hear that her life was like initially?

BMR: When they got here?

PBL: Yes.

BMR: Well, she couldn't get over the snow. She thought it was beautiful but terrible and cold. She remembers that her sisters would wear long johns, and they always wore little silk dainty underwear in Rhodes, and here they were all bundled up, and she thought it was disgusting. But they were cold. They didn't have central heating in those days. It took her a while to get accustomed to the weather because when you come from a beautiful tropical area, it is an entirely different thing to Seattle weather. Evidently, in

those days ,they had a lot of snow where we don't get that snow today. So the weather must have been quite severe.

PBL: You mentioned that your family came from a fairly well-off or aristocratic family. Were they able to come to the United States with some means?

BMR: No. My grandfather, Joseph Peha, had – I don't remember how he lost all his wealth, but he did lose it. He had retained all his papers, and he told his wife on his deathbed, he said, “Now when the boys grow up, you give them these papers, and they can collect all the money. These are all my records.” Then he died. Well, he died within a month. Meningitis works very quickly. My grandmother was so upset and emotionally in such turmoil, and she was angry. She was angry that he died. She tore everything up. It wasn't until later that she realized what she had done, but it was too late. There was nothing that could be done about it. So that was lost. Unfortunately. Now whether or not it was insured with Lloyds of London, I don't know.

PBL: So, what did your parents do in Seattle?

BMR: My father started working. Well I guess he got his – you know more about it than I do. You've got the records there. [laughter]

PBL: I'm curious as his child what it is that you knew about his life.

BMR: Well, I know that he went to work for various Jewish people and it was a very, very warm community. The Ashkenazim were – most of them – very, very accepting of Sephardic Jews, and they helped the boys and the young kids, to help them get started. Gave them jobs or got to see that they did get some kind of employment. And my father was a cobbler, and he was a – well, he was also in the fruit business. I think those were the only two things that he really was doing. He never wanted to be a rabbi. And Rabbi Koch wanted him to be at Temple de Hirsch because the first Rosh Hashanah, my father was here. He wanted to go to services, so he asked somebody on the street, “Where is

the synagogue?" Well, they directed him to Temple de Hirsch on 15th and Union, and he went there. He went at 4:00 because, as an Orthodox boy, you have to start early or whatever. So, he's sitting there, and Rabbi Koch comes by, and he says, "What are you doing here, son?" He said, "I'm waiting for the services to start." "Oh, we don't start until later." So, he got to know him. Rabbi Koch was very impressed with Spanish-Jewish history. He wanted very much for Sephardic Jews to be a part of the Temple. He always wanted my father to be a part of the Temple. He said, "Now why don't you stay with us, and we'll send you to Hebrew Union College so you can learn the methods that we have and Reform Jewry. And I want you to come back and be a rabbi here with me." Many years later, I asked my father, "Why didn't you stay at Temple, Dad?" He said, "There's only one thing that we differ. I believe in the Messiah, and the Reforms believe in the Messianic Age." He said, "And basically, that is the difference. Everything else is a ritual and personal beliefs." But Rabbi Koch, to his dying day, came to see my grandmother [Leah Mossafer] every Rosh Hashanah – my father's mother. When my father wouldn't be the rabbi with him, he was so thrilled that my mother and dad had a baby boy, and then he worked on my brother for years, and my brother said, "No, I don't want to be a rabbi. I don't want to have a beard. I don't want to do this." He says, "You don't have to have a beard. You just go to school like anybody else." But at any rate, he didn't want to be a rabbi either.

PBL: Well, I understand that your father was one of the founders of Ezra Bessaroth. And that Rabbi Samuel Koch was actually instrumental –

BMR: In helping get it started.

PBL: Yes. And did you grow up as a member?

BMR: Of both.

PBL: Of both. Oh interesting. Can you tell me –? Well, I'd like to get up to the point at least. What was your mother doing at the time? And when did they marry?

BMR: They married in 1916, June 11 – next week, anniversary. I was raised both in the Ezra Bessaroth congregation and Temple de Hirsch. All my cousins – well, the Francos and the Mossafers – went to Temple and graduated from Temple, went through the whole system. Because my mother used to say, “Well, this is America. This is the United States, so you'll get an American-Jewish education.” Then she taught me how to write in Ladino at home because I wanted to learn. I said, “I want to go to the Talmud Torah too,” and I went to the Sephardic Talmud Torah. I didn't have to go, but I wanted to go. My older brother was supposed to take me. Well, he said he wasn't going to have his little sister walking there with him when he was walking with his cousins, with boys. I had to walk behind him so nobody knew that I was attached to him. I had to keep him in sight so that I wouldn't lose him, and that's how it was. I loved going to Hebrew school. Mr. Behar was my teacher, and Mr. Levy, Albert Levy. Two very nice, knowledgeable men. I'm sure there were others which I do not recall at the time. I learned Sephardic Hebrew, and then when I went to Sunday school, I had to read Ashkenazic Hebrew.

PBL: So you were at Sunday school at Temple, but you were studying at the Sephardic Talmud Torah.

BMR: After school.

PBL: I want to return to this because this is actually part of the section of the interview I want to discuss, but when were you born? At what point after your parents were married did you come into the world?

BMR: Oh, it was many years later. My mother didn't have any children for the first four or five years. And then another four years, five years, I was born. She had miscarriages before and after, and then some years later, my younger brother was born. So, we

always felt very close, but it gave her kind of a breathing point between children. Not that she wanted it that way. It's just that's the way it happened.

PBL: Where did you get your name from?

BMR: I was named after a great-great – I guess my great-great aunt. Great-great-great aunt, I think. I'm either one "great" over or whatever. She was a spinster, and she had fallen in love with this boy [but] he family would not allow her to marry him because he was from a lower-class family, uneducated, and poor. The poor didn't bother them. It was the lack of education and breeding. So she never married. She was very much in love with him.

PBL: What was her name?

BMR: Bea [pronounced Bay-äh]. So then I have a cousin named Beatrice. She was named for her [grandmother, another Bea]. They didn't want to name another Beatrice, so they gave me the name Bernice.

PBL: Do you also have a Hebrew name?

BMR: That's it.

PBL: Interesting. I don't think you mentioned what year it was that you were born and when you were born, and where you lived when you were born.

BMR: I was born right here in Seattle. We were all born here.

PBL: Where was your first home? Do you remember the neighborhood?

BMR: Yes, it was on Leschi. It was a nice house. We had a view of the lake and the water. I could see Mount Rainer. I remember when I went to school – it was Leschi school – we didn't have any Blacks. We had one Japanese boy who was older. He was

a very nice boy [and] all the boys were very fond of him. That was the only non-white student we had. Then I remember one year this girl came to our class, about the fifth grade, and I thought, “Oh, she's a beautiful Black girl.” Never had a Negro girl in our class before. Well, it so happened that she wasn't Negro; she was a Jewish girl, just very dark. But how was I supposed to know? [laughter] She was a very attractive girl. But she was white. It's just I had never seen anybody that dark before. She was Ashkenazic. We became good friends. We were there, and then we moved to California.

PBL: Let me ask you a little bit before we get to California – what was the neighborhood like? Were there other –?

BMR: Jewish people?

PBL: Were there other Jewish people, or when did you come into contact with other Jewish people and, even beyond that, other Sephardim?

BMR: We had the only Jewish people. We had one Jewish neighbor, the Thomases. Peter Thomas. You've heard of Peterbilt Trucks. Mr. Thomas was a wonderful little old man, and he was sort of an engineering genius. They asked him once when they interviewed him, “Mr. Thomas, where did you get your education?” And he said, “Talmud Torah in Russia.” He just happened to be a very brilliant man. He was a little fellow. And his wife, Mrs. Thomas, was very sweet. We loved her dearly. She was excellent. We lived on the corner, and then next door to us were the Nichols, and then there was the Thomases. That was the only Jewish – the two Jewish families. Then some years later, an Alhadeff family moved next to Mrs. Thomas. And I remember the Thomases and our family were close even though their children were much older – they were ten, fifteen years older than we were. My mother and dad were young when they moved into that house. They had a baby, and my older brother was just a few months old, and their children were already in high school. So, it was a different generation sort of thing. But they were still close. Mrs. Thomas was very fond of my mother because my mother

never went – she never believed in these coffee klatches, or whatever you call those things. She never just popped into somebody's house. She went by invitation, and Mrs. Thomas appreciated that. Then across the street, there was a family, but they were – he was Jewish, but she was not. She was Russian – Catholic, I guess, or whatever Russians were in those days. But there were just the two Jewish families there. Down a block, there were a couple of Jewish – yes, there were two Alhadeff families and a Friedman family. Then you went down a few more blocks down the other way, there was my aunt and then a few more – there was no real cluster of Jewish people.

PBL: Can you describe a little bit about your home? And your relationship with your parents? And also whether or not – when are the first recognitions that you had in terms of the customs of your home or things that were on the walls or, for instance, the lessons in Ladino that your mother gave you that let you know that you had a unique heritage? A Sephardic heritage?

BMR: Well, on Saturday mornings, I used to like to sit down with my mother and talk because it was only really the only morning we had that we could sit down and talk. My brothers would go out and play, and I would sit there and talk to her and ask her all these questions about where she came from, what it was like in Rhodes, what she did as a little girl, and family background and history. I was just always interested, and I wanted to know. So that's where I got most of everything. Because I asked questions. Nobody else in the family, my older cousins, who should have known everything, didn't care. My grandmothers lived with me, especially my grandmother Rahel. I adored her. I just loved her dearly. She was blind from diabetes and mishaps of the ophthalmologist who was incompetent. I would talk to her, and she would tell me things about the family.

PBL: Now, the fact that you lived with your grandmothers, that's very unique, and I imagine you had three generations of women living in one home. At some point, I think it was in one of the annual reports that you had written when you were president of the

Women's Division of the Jewish Federation, and you wrote about how your grandmothers and great-grandmothers made certain that every bride was properly gowned with a trousseau before her wedding. Now a trousseau is very much a Sephardic engagement custom, so when did these Sephardic women's customs enter your life, or did they? When were you introduced to them? Did you go to other women's engagements, or how did they teach you about these customs?

BMR: I think when my older cousins were engaged, there was – you hear a lot of talk and a lot of hullabaloo. My mother and her sisters and sisters-in-law would be talking on the telephone, and I'd overhear conversations, and then I knew that there was a wedding coming on, and they were all busy, and they all helped each other. My mother, being the youngest in the family of the girls and an excellent seamstress and designer, would help out. They would all go to whoever's house they were going to do the sewing or help or whatever. That was it. I never went to a trousseau or a shower or anything like that, so I didn't – because they just had the older girls. Never asked me. Well, they don't ask little kids. So, I never saw anything like that. But that was just from overhearing things.

PBL: Can you describe what you knew about what the trousseau was, or even though you weren't necessarily present, in your mind, what was it?

BMR: Oh, well, they would be sewing bedspreads. There's usually some magnificent piece of artwork that they bring from Turkey. So, they would make that into bedspreads or whatever. I guess all the linens that they needed. Linens they would crochet and embroider or things of that type. Then they would help with the baking, things like that. That's about all I can recall as a child.

PBL: How about things like tea parties, and did your mother participate in those?

BMR: Oh yes, yeah, they had a lot of teas. That's right. Yes.

PBL: What do you recall about those tea parties?

BMR: Well, when I got older, and in my teens, I was invited to those. Seventeen, eighteen. I went to my cousin's teas. They had very lovely teas. Today you will call them – they call them “high teas,” but they were teas. They had them in various homes. Various people would honor the bride and her parents and then with the in-laws, female members of the in-laws. They'd set a beautiful table. All the guests would come, and they'd have tea. They'd serve tea.

PBL: Was it all women, or was it mixed, men and women?

BMR: I only went with women. I don't remember any men at a tea party.

PBL: Was there anything about it that you remember that was a custom or a ritual? I've heard other stories about there being a silver tray sometimes with a glass of ice water and dulces or sweets on it. Does that ring any bells?

BMR: Oh, well, that's whenever they – they didn't serve. You never went out and bought chocolates in those days. These were all kosher people, you remember. I mean, you wouldn't remember, but I mean you know. They made everything at home. All the sweets were done at home. They had various quince – sweet melon rind, things like that. Sometimes some of them would make fudge or chocolates. Then there were different things. There was the masapan or what's called marzipan today. They have various sweets that the Sephardics make, which you can find in some of the finest bakeries in Europe. They would serve that. Then when we did serve, I remember, as a child, I would help. They always served on a tray, the various sweets with a silver container – I have one upstairs – with the little spoons and forks around it. A person would use a fork and take a sweet and then dispose of the spoon in a particular area on the tray. I remember we were taught as children that if someone was visiting and they wanted a glass of water, we wouldn't just bring them a glass of water. We brought it on a plate, sometimes with a doily and a napkin. So I mean, we were taught properly how to serve, even as children. Let's see, what else can I recall about that? Then that was at

any Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur – when people are coming to visit and so on. And they had lokum. It's now called Turkish Delight. It's like applets and cotlets that they used to buy. I think sometimes there was always somebody in the community that would make it.

PBL: When was that served?

BMR: Like a sweet. I mean, it is a sweet like a candy. And then, as time progressed, they would buy chocolates, and they would buy – and then nobody ever makes anything anymore. So you buy everything now.

PBL: What was your recollection as a child then of both the relationship between Ashkenazim and Sephardim as well as within Sephardic culture and the differences between those from Rhodes and those from Turkey?

BMR: Well, let's see. As I say, I was raised both in the Ezra Bessaroth and Temple. I never knew there was any friction. I didn't discover that until I met some Russian Jews, and – outside of the Thomases were fantastic. Then there was friction that I recognized. But while I was at Temple, I knew no difference.

PBL: You said you then recognized that there was friction. How did you recognize it?

BMR: Well, for instance, I went out on a date with an Ashkenazic boy, and he'd say, “Do you keep kosher?” I said, “Well, I don't, but my mother does.” He says, “Well, you probably don't.” He was rather sarcastic about it. “And do you eat out?” I said, “Yes, I eat out.” I was being specific. And little remarks like that. I had never encountered anything like that before. I didn't know. For instance, we never made a big deal out of being kosher. I mean, this was a Jewish home. That's the way it was. Whereas, as Sephardics, it was accepted. You're Jewish. You have a kosher home. Whereas I guess the Ashkenazics made a big deal out of it – to find out what kind of a kosher home did you have or something. Maybe it was just questioning a Sephardic that they talked like that. I don't know. That's the way it came to me. And now, for instance, my mother's

younger brother lived with us, and he was at the university. My mother used to keep her kosher dishes, the milk things here, and the meat things there. As children, we didn't know one thing from the other. Just whatever my mother fixed, that was marvelous. My uncle would bring home his friends from school, the university. He brought home Warren Magnuson. They went to law school together. Allen Pomeroy. They went to law school together. All very prominent when they got older. At the time, they were just students. I remember Warren – they used to keep me on their lap. I was just a baby. Then, my uncle was going to cook. Well, he would get my mother's dishes all mixed up, and she just got so upset. She couldn't just keep buying dishes and pots and pans all the time. So after a few years of that, she says, “Well, the heck with it.”

PBL: Now, you said that your mother kept kosher, but you didn't. And I'm just wondering –

BMR: Well, I mean because I wasn't the woman of the house.

PBL: Right. But what was she transmitting to you or not transmitting to you? Or what did your ¬– you also said that you were both going to Temple and Ezra Bessaroth. So, it sounds like there were some mixed messages around, even though it was probably completely fluid to you. I'm wondering how you reflect upon that now.

BMR: Very comfortable and happy. It didn't confuse me at all because at Temple there are some people who keep kosher and at the Ezra Bessaroth or any other synagogue ¬– Orthodox – there are some people that don't keep kosher.

PBL: When did you go to each? When did you go to Ezra Bessaroth? When did you go to Temple de Hirsch?

BMR: Well, I was there all my life. Both places. But at Temple, I went to kindergarten, from kindergarten on. Sunday school. And at the Ezra Bessaroth, I didn't go to the Talmud Torah until eight, nine years old – something like that. Yeah, my brother would

let me tag – maybe about that, something like that. And that was just for two, three years.

PBL: So, how did your own sense of Jewish identity form through these institutions? Especially being in Seattle. Can you describe your earliest memories of feeling Jewish?

BMR: Well, I'm a great believer that everything starts at home, and it was a very strong sense of being Jewish at home. Plus, the fact that in our neighborhood, we didn't have many Jewish people. There was one family, the Downeys, who lived across the street from us going down a hill, and they had lived there evidently about twenty years. It never occurred to them that we were Jewish, and one day, someone mentioned to them that the Mossafer family were Jewish. They moved out that next day. The idea of living across the street from a Jewish family was more than they could bear, having lived there for twenty years. Which I thought was kind of ridiculous, but that's the way it was. There were very strong feelings in those days. I felt very Sephardic. I was very, very proud of being Sephardic. I wanted to know everything I could about it. Which is why I spent so much time asking my mother about it and my grandmother. My mother was a very bright, educated woman, so, of course, she knew what she was talking about. She used to take me down to the Seattle Public Library. We would read the encyclopedias together because there we could get the history. Then, she could trace her family and show me how we were written down there in history. When they came – when Funk and Wagnall's [Encyclopedia] was written in 1903 – or it was published in 1903-1904 – there were historians doing research in the Island of Rhodes, and they came to interview my grandparents and my great-grandparents. My grandmother would tell me that she remembers them coming and questioning her and learning the history of the Sephardic Jews in Rhodes. It was basically through my mother.

PBL: What do you remember about going to Ezra Bessaroth? What do you remember about your time there?

BMR: I remember my mother taking me there during the holidays [when I was very young]. I would sit with her upstairs, look down, and I could see my dad. I loved to go to synagogue. I loved it. I loved the music and the services, and if they got real long, my mother would take me home. My little brother wasn't allowed to come until he was a little older. My mother didn't believe that children should be there, upsetting other people who wanted to worship. My older brother hated it like most of the boys. But he saw all his cousins and all his friends there so that was okay. During the year [when I was older], I would go Friday night to Ezra Bessaroth, and Saturday morning, I'd go to Temple de Hirsch. That way, I thought I was committing myself to both synagogues. Nobody else went, I mean, of my family. None of my cousins. I never saw them at the synagogue except during the major holidays.

PBL: Did you recognize the differences between the two synagogues?

BMR: Oh, yes.

PBL: Can you describe because I haven't been inside of the –?

BMR: Ezra Bessaroth?

PBL: Right. But I do know the basic – even the synagogue architecture is very different between Sephardic and Ashkenazic and the way that women and men sit together and participate in the congregation. So what did you remember as a child and you can even reflect up until now because things have changed, clearly.

BMR: Well, the Sephardic synagogue, of course, has the Torah, the aron kodesh, above, just like any other synagogue. But where the hazzan is, it's always a central placement. In any Sephardic synagogue in the world, you will find that. There they read and make their aliyah and so on and so forth. I didn't understand what it was all about when I was little, but I saw all these people coming and going. To me, it was rather confusing, but that's the way it was, so I accepted it as it was. I liked when the choir

would sing. The songs were beautiful. Mr. Goldfarb was there.

PBL: This is at Temple de Hirsch?

BMR: Ezra Bessaroth.

PBL: Ezra Bessaroth.

BMR: I think my mother was president of the Ladies Auxiliary at the time. And she thought the choir was great, but they should always have a choir. It was all young boys.

PBL: Do you remember what kind of songs they sang in the choir?

BMR: Same songs they sing today.

PBL: Was it all in Hebrew, or did they do any Ladino or Romanzas or anything that would be non-liturgical?

BMR: No, it was all Hebrew, it was part of the prayers. The only thing that would have been with some Spanish would have been the ein kelohenu, which is half and half. Other than that, they were all part of the prayers. Part of the services.

PBL: So how would you then contrast that to the¬ –

BMR: The Temple?

PBL: – the Saturday morning?

BMR: It was quiet and orderly, and I was familiar with the prayers, familiar with the music. Grew up with it. I liked them both. The only time – now it's quite different. They have been getting these cantors at Temple. They keep getting cantors, and they have different music. They all bring in their own music, and they have new songs so that what you knew [at Temple] as a child, they don't sing anymore. So you don't even know what

they're singing. I don't particularly care for that.

PBL: I saw that you still belong to both synagogues.

BMR: Yes.

PBL: So do you still attend both?

BMR: Yes.

PBL: And when do you attend Temple? When do you attend “Ezzie Bezzie”?

BMR: Well, I don't go as often as I used to now, with my husband ill. I go basically for what you would call yarzheit, what I call zehira, zakhor, to remember. I go to honor my family for the services. Once in a while, I'll go to a Sabbath service at Ezra Bessaroth, and once in a while, I'll go to Temple on a Friday night. Not very often, unfortunately.

PBL: I'm curious about¬ – you mentioned that your sense of being Jewish began in the home. I'm just wondering if there were other ways or other things such as [ways] that your grandmother's mother might have endowed you with more customary forms of Judaism such as recipes, ways of dressing – anything like that that also increased your sense of Jewish identity? Did you keep –? Were your parents still Orthodox even though you were both going to Orthodox shul and Reform?

BMR: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. That made no difference.

PBL: So what holidays, for example, did you celebrate in the home, and how did you celebrate them?

BMR: Oh, we celebrated everything. Well, for instance, for Sukkot, we didn't have a sukkah. But one of our neighbors down the block had a big sukkah, and all the Jewish people would go. Well, not all of them but just the ones in the neighborhood [three to

four families]. There weren't that many families, Jewish families, at the time, would go to that. So, that was fun. The rest of the holidays – we celebrated everything at home with our relatives, and there was no special way to dress except you always dressed nicely when you went to Sunday school and to the synagogue. You didn't go like today with the jeans and the tennis shoes and all that stuff. Out of a matter of respect, you were taught that. I noticed the churches still do. The children go to Sunday school all dressed up, and I'm really rather envious of that because I figure the Jewish people should be leading it, not the Gentiles. But maybe they'll get back to that. Recipes? Well, yes, because Sephardic food is different, and I never really appreciated it until I went to Europe and my husband took me on our tenth wedding anniversary. First-class trip all over Europe. It was magnificent. And then we'd go to all these fantastic restaurants, and I'd – for these expensive dinners, and I thought, “My goodness, my mother makes this. Better than this.”

PBL: What were some examples of the foods that you –?

BMR: Oh, they had all the way the vegetables are fixed.

PBL: Such as? How were they fixed?

BMR: Well, for instance, like zucchini or eggplant or exotic vegetables – the type that most people don't know how to cook. They just boil it or something like that. The different sauces that the Sephardics make. The way the fish is fixed. You'd get all over France or Italy. So, it was a wake-up call for me. A recognition that when I came home, I started eating these things that I never ate before, and I really appreciated it and started making them too.

PBL: What were ways in which you now, looking back, the holidays or the foods were prepared? Do you remember particular holidays where you participated in the preparation of food that you'd call Sephardic – specific to Sephardic culture? Such as for

Passover?

BMR: I did not. I was a musician, a harpist. My mother would not allow me to do anything with my hands except play the harp. So, when some of my friends from Temple would say, “Do you help do the dishes?” And I'd say, “What do you mean ‘do the dishes’?” I didn't know what you did to the dishes. Well, what they meant was, “Do you help wash the dishes?” No. My mother wouldn't allow me to put my hands in the water to do dishes. The only time I'd put them in water was to wash myself or something of that type. Because that was my profession. That was my career. I had to protect my hands; they were part of my instrument. I never was allowed to do anything like that. I wanted to, but my mother would say, “No, you just watch. You can't do this.” I wanted to sew. “No, you can't sew. You just watch.” I remember one day she was out of the house, so I took the sewing machine, and I was going to do it by myself. Well, I did it by myself, and the needle went through my finger. Well, when I was stuck because I couldn't get the needle out. I didn't want her to know about it, and I was in a lot of trouble.

PBL: I'd like to talk a little bit then about – you started playing the harp at what age?

BMR: Seven.

PBL: How were you introduced to it? Who introduced you to it?

BMR: I wanted to be a ballerina. I guess all little girls want to be a ballerina. So, my mother took me to see the ballerina mistress when I was two. She said, “Oh, she has the perfect body. Very flexible and very, very good. So, she'll be very good.” My mother came home and told my dad, “I've enrolled her in ballet school.” “No, no,” he said. “They travel all over the country. A Jewish girl can't do that. She's got to stay home.” So then my mother was thinking, “Well, what? We don't want piano. Everybody plays the piano.” She was talking to my aunt, my uncle Dr. Mossafer's wife, and she’d say, “Well, I have a friend who plays the harp. She's a teacher.” “Oh,” my mother said. “Fine. So bring her

around." So, she came. She brought a little Irish harp, which I have upstairs, and she showed me how to do something, and I played some chords right away. So, she says, "Oh, she's a natural. She's marvelous."

PBL: Bernice, hold onto that thought. I'd like to continue and change the tape, okay?

[END OF CD 1 of 5]

PBL: This is the continuing oral history interview of Bernice Mossafer Rind. This is the second minidisc tape, continuing the interview. We left off with you talking about the teacher who came to your home and brought an Irish harp.

BMR: Yes. I started harp lessons with her, and her name was Edith Knapp Lundgren. She used to come from Tacoma to teach.

PBL: Can you spell her name?

BMR: Knapp Lundgren. L-U-N-D-G-R-E-N. She died just a few years ago. Seven or eight years ago, something like that. I studied with her, and then when she would go on a vacation or whatever, I would have Mr. Graf, who was with the symphony.

PBL: Can you spell his name as well?

BMR: G-R-A-F. He was very brusque. He used to scare me to death. Very strict. He was a very good teacher, but he scared me. I was just a little child. Then I started giving recitals when I was eight, and I continued straightaway until I was twenty-three. I was tired of giving concerts and recitals. I wanted to get married and have a family, so I went into semi-retirement.

PBL: Let me talk a little bit about before your retirement because this is a very significant part of a child's life to be so dedicated to an instrument. What was that like? Were you touring outside of the Washington State at eight years old at that point? Where were you

going?

BMR: No, the first few years were basically within the state. And then, as I got older, and my mother could leave the two boys with my dad, then we'd go down the coast.

PBL: What kind of music were you playing?

BMR: Classical. All classical. And then my own compositions too. When I was eleven, I made my debut with the symphony in Los Angeles. James Sample, who was a young man at the time, was the conductor. He was very nice to me. Very nice. We lived in Los Angeles for a short time. My mother took me down during the summers to study and sometimes to give concerts. There was a Lyon & Healy. Lyon & Healy is the name of a harp manufacturing company, and they had a magnificent store there. So, I would go down and practice there, and I remember they brought in a new harp, and it was for Harpo Marx. They let me play it. So whenever I went there, I could practice on Harpo Marx's harp before he even got a hold of it. I was really quite thrilled about that. It was a beautiful harp. Then I was practicing one day, and a young man comes in, and he was in an orchestra, a violinist, and he asked if I could go out on a date. I said, “Oh no, I can't. I said I'm only eleven years old. I can't go out on a date.” I told my mother, and my mother says, “It's not that you're eleven years old. It's that he's a gentile. You can't go out with a gentile.” At the time, that was the major thing. It wasn't your age so much. It was whether you were Jewish or not. At any rate, of course, he would just come and listen, and we would talk about music, and it went that way. I don't know how old he was, but he probably wasn't very old, but I thought he was. Maybe was eighteen, nineteen, something like that, I suppose. At any rate, that was one of my recollections of playing on Harpo Marx's harp.

PBL: What's the life of a child? Did they call you a prodigy in those days because you were so young?

BMR: Yes, yes. A child prodigy. A harp virtuoso.

PBL: What's the life of a child virtuoso like?

BMR: Well, you don't really know anything other than you go to school, and then you practice, and you prepare, and you don't really have any companionship because it's just musicians. And it's usually older people. Until I went to college when I was fifteen, I didn't know any slang expressions because I was always talking to adults. There were a lot of things I didn't know. I didn't even know you had sororities. I didn't know that there were Jewish sororities or what they were for or anything else because that had nothing to do with me.

PBL: How did you feel about your harp playing? What was the experience of it like for you both on and off stage?

BMR: Well, I was a nervous wreck most of the time preparing, but once I got onstage, I was fine. But before each one, I was nervous. I couldn't eat. But then you'll find that most musicians are that way. They can't eat before a recital or a concert. They eat afterward because it's a relief to get it over with, and you can relax. I didn't know any differently, you see, so I can't really tell you what it's like. But I do recall as I got older, when I was in my late teens and early twenties, I was taunted quite a bit by some of the young people down in San Francisco, Palo Alto particularly, and here in Seattle, about – for instance, they'd say, “I'm not going to have a career like you when I grow up. I'm going to have a husband and children.” I didn't say anything, but it hurt to have them say that to me. They made me feel outside the human circle, which I was basically outside their circle. But I was a human being, and I wanted things, too, when I grew up. So, just as probably today, some of the feminists will pick on some of the stay-at-home moms, well, I was picked on in the opposite way in those days. It was a bitter experience for a young person. But I never said anything to anybody. I never complained to my mother because I figured she had enough to contend with without having me tell her anything. I

just grinned and bore it, shall we say.

PBL: Were there any stories that you remember from particular performances? Things that happened? The way that people responded to you? You think about Midori Ito and all these young child prodigies, at least in my lifetime. That's become quite the thing to have a young person headline a symphony. I'm wondering if there were particular things that happened to you or stories that you remember.

BMR: Yes. Let's see. When I was around eleven or twelve, they wanted me to be in the movies. They always wanted child stars. I thought, "Well, my mother said, 'Well, it's up to her. She has to decide. I won't make that decision because it's her life'" – which I always appreciated very much. I said, "No, I want to go back to Seattle." Then I realized also that my mother and I were living in California, but my dad and my two brothers were up here in Seattle. I didn't want to split the family up. There wasn't anything in the world that was worth doing that for. I said, "I want to go back to Seattle. I want to graduate from school. I want to go to Sunday school. I want to go home."

PBL: How old were you at this point?

BMR: Eleven, twelve years old. Then when I was about seventeen, sixteen. I don't know. Sixteen, seventeen. I was asked to be in the movies again. My brother was telling me something the other day, which I recalled. He said we were at Griffith's Park in Los Angeles. It's a beautiful park, and we had taken our dog there. Oh, I was more than seventeen. I was about nineteen, yeah. He says this fellow was in his car, and he parked his car and came out, and he was talking to my brother, and he said, "Who is that girl?" He said, "That's my sister." He said, "She should be in the movies. She's a beautiful girl." So, my brother said, "You know who that was?" I said, "No." "That was Robert Taylor." I said, "Oh." He was my idol in those days, you know. I remember the man but I don't remember that it was he. He had been on a shooting thing with Clark Gable. They used to go hunting. So, he had a beard because he had to go home and

clean up. He'd been away the weekend. I said I didn't remember that. I didn't know that. I remember being in Griffith's Park. I remember the man in the car, but I don't remember who it was. They told me another time when we were in – well, it's still Los Angeles but practically Westwood or something like that. This woman walked by with this man, whose name I can't remember, and she said, “Look at that girl. She should be in the movies.” It was Gene Tierney. Now these are names that are unfamiliar to you.

PBL: I remember Gene Tierney. [laughter]

BMR: Oh, boy. But she was a beautiful woman. I don't think she's living.

PBL: It sounds like these were more about being in a particular place because they didn't necessarily see you playing the harp.

BMR: No, they were just interested in my face.

PBL: What do you think about that? Looking back at pictures of yourself.

BMR: Being in the movies, you mean?

PBL: Yeah.

BMR: Well, I was always very flattered, but I never considered myself an actress.

PBL: I understand, though, that as a harpist, you did study harp for movies at USC and UCLA.

BMR: Well, that was just for writing.

PBL: When did you start writing compositions for the harp?

BMR: Eight.

PBL: At eight years old. Was that something that was encouraged, or it just came out of you?

BMR: It just came. Harp music is a rather limited repertoire. I felt that the harp could do so much. Most everything is just so weak sounding that it doesn't show the strength of the instrument. Whereas the piano has the percussion. You have your strength in the sound. In the harp, you cannot. There's just so much depth that you can get in the sound. Because otherwise then, you get a very coarse sound on the sounding board if you pull too hard. So, I started playing music that I thought was flattering to the instrument and unique to it.

PBL: Do you remember the name of your first composition?

BMR: Yes. “Catina de terle.” It means a chain of little twirls.

PBL: Why did you name it that?

BMR: I just got it out of the music dictionary. I wanted to call it something different, and I liked the sound of it. I knew what it meant.

PBL: Were you able to perform that piece?

BMR: Yeah. I wrote it down in a very childish script of music. It was just a little child's piece.

PBL: In terms of other recordings, I know, was it [around 1944 at age seventeen when] you recorded another composition of your own. Is that “Rhapsodie in F Minor [for Harp]”?

BMR: Yeah. Let's see, that was in the ‘50s.

PBL: Can you tell me about that piece?

BMR: Yes. It's a rhapsody. It is very demanding of a harp. It brings out a lot of the harp that people don't really hear. Because usually, if you know when you go to a symphony when you hear the harp, it's a small portion. It's usually a little tinkle-like sort of thing or a glissando. This is more demanding in the bass and some strength in the body of the music. It's also very Oriental, Asia Minor Oriental, so it's very close to my heritage.

PBL: Let's explore that a little bit. Where did that come from? When did you write the piece initially?

BMR: I was about thirteen when I wrote it. Then, I wrote it for my mother for Mother's Day. Then it was published when I was seventeen. It won me some awards.

PBL: What do you think about that piece now?

BMR: It's one of my favorites. I know it's not a real mature piece. It takes time and years to be a mature composer or musician, or writer, or anything. But for the time and for my age, it was good.

PBL: Now you said that you wrote it for your mother for Mother's Day. What did she do when she heard it?

BMR: Oh, she adored it. She cried.

PBL: How do you think upon that now, thinking about that moment, that you wrote her this piece that you eventually recorded? Does that have any particular resonance for you?

BMR: Well, it's kind of special because of the memory. We were very close. More than just an ordinary mother and daughter because she was my manager, my impresario if you want. She worked very hard at it besides trying to raise a family, too, and she was involved in the community. It was very time-consuming. She was very protective of me.

I remember when I was growing up, and she would tell me when I was eleven, twelve years old – she says, “You have to do a lot of practicing now because pretty soon, because of your age, you're going to be interested in boys. You're going to be interested in growing up. You're going to feel differently. Your body's going to be developing. So that you have to devote all your time right now.” And she was very wise, as I said.

PBL: That's pretty incredible.

BMR: Yes. As I say, she was very bright. She had an IQ of 172, so you can see she was very bright. People say, “Oh, you're just like your mother.” I'm not even half like her. I haven't got her brain. I wished I did, but I just don't have it. She was so much brighter than I.

PBL: How did you see that? How did you see her special talents?

BMR: Well, I wish that she'd had the opportunities that I had. Had she had the money, she could have had someone take care of her children and gone to the University, and she would have achieved great things. She was so bright. She had a phenomenal memory, also. Great retention. Tremendous. My dad did too. It runs in the family, great memories. I don't know about my generation [laughter], but my parents and my grandparents had marvelous memories.

PBL: I'm curious as a woman, as a very young woman, how did you relate to the harp in terms – or did you relate to the harp in terms – of being a female? Was it considered an instrument for women or for men? Is the harp a gendered instrument?

BMR: Not really. It just happened that there were very few harpists in Seattle. Very few. Basically, because of the cost of the instrument and perhaps the lessons, but they weren't any different than piano, I'm sure. But there were more women studying harp at the time than men. There was only one male harp teacher, but there were several female harpists, harp teachers. Today, I don't know that I would say it's 50/50, but

there's more of a balance than there was years ago. There's a great number of male harpists. Some of the best harpists I knew in California at the studios were males. Several of them were quite good friends of mine.

PBL: Was there any folklore around the harp or stories?

BMR: Well, there's an interesting point of the Irish harp or the small harp – it's a non-pedal harp or a lap harp, which is also similar to what the Irish play. And that is their very old instrument. There's a great number of people in Ireland that play it as part of – they have a harp in their home like we have pianos in our homes. They play the small lap harp, and they're called “harpers.” A concert harp or a standard-size harp with pedals – a person is called a harpist, male or female. But a “harper” is one who plays this small Irish harp or the lap harp. And today, there are a lot of companies that have started up making harps. Now, whether or not they're any good, I don't know. I've never tried them or played them. Heard them. They don't sound too bad. But they're not standard harp size.

PBL: The fact that in the composition, the “Rhapsodie” composition, you brought in – would you call them modal scales or that you considered more Oriental, part of your own heritage – was that something that other people recognized? Was that unusual?

BMR: My teacher used to say—she said, “You play your music is as if you're reincarnated.” That's the way it affected her. Which I thought was rather strange. So I thought, “Well, that's legitimate as a Sephardic Jew.” [laughter]

PBL: Did it bring you into the synagogue?

BMR: No.

PBL: Was it very separate, the two?

BMR: Yes.

PBL: Why so?

BMR: Well, I don't know. And I would play for different occasions for the Jewish community. But it was not in a liturgical way. If they had affairs or fundraisers or something like that, then I would play. They would ask me and I remember they would always offer to pay for transporting my harp or pay me and my father would say, “No, I'll take care of it.” He was insulted if someone wanted to pay me. But I never played within a synagogue except at Temple when my youngest boy was bar mitzvahed, I played for him.

PBL: What did you play at his bar mitzvah?

BMR: What did I play? You know, I cannot recall. [laughter]

PBL: I'm wondering at what point you recognized that you wanted to stop playing at a young age, twenty-three, and what was going on for you.

BMR: Well, my mother was very ill. And she wanted to see me married and in a home with a mate before she died. And I knew that she was living on borrowed time for a long time. She had a very enlarged heart. And I remember when I was 17 and took her to the doctor, a heart specialist, and I said, “Is there anything you can do for my mother.” And he said, “You take her home. She'll be dead in six months.” And I just broke out crying. And my mother was sitting on the table with the little hospital gown, you know? And she put her arms around me and she said, “Darling, don't you worry. I'm going to outlive him.” And by sheer determination she did.

PBL: How did she do that?

BMR: She was very strong. She just tried very, very hard. One day my father was very upset and was working, and someone came by and they said, “David, we never see you with a face like that. What's the matter?” He said, “My wife is dying and the doctors can't do anything for her.” He was just brokenhearted. That was quite a love story, my mother and dad. She says, “There's a young doctor here who is – he's just a general practitioner but he's just a marvel.” So she gave him the name. and my dad called him up and he came over. He made certain prescriptions that she should take and diet and so on and so forth, and within about a year, she was in better shape. He took care of her from a number of years, and she died when she was almost sixty.

PBL: So she died around late 1950s?

BMR: ’57 [1958]. Something like that.

PBL: At what point had you decided to stop professionally playing? What year was that?

BMR: I can't remember the year, to tell you the truth.

PBL: If you were twenty-three?

BMR: It was in the – my, gosh – ’40s, late ’40s, early ’50s. Something like that.

PBL: What was going on for you besides the fact that your mother was ill and that was a very important part of the decision and her wishes for you?

BMR: Well, you see, she always went with me when I gave a recital. I played for her really. I wanted her opinion. I didn't care what the critics said. I always wanted her opinion. She would always say – and after a recital or a concert I'd say, “How was that, mom?” She'd say, “It was good but you could do better.” So, I had to work harder. When she couldn't come with me, I just didn't have the heart to play because she wasn't there in the wings for me. She was my incentive. So, I just felt that it was time that I had

to level things off a bit. And, I mean, I still played but not to that dimension.

PBL: Reflecting back on a career which most people have never had by the age of twenty-three, what would you say were your greatest joys and perhaps dissatisfactions with such an extensive period of your childhood, teenage years, devoted to that?

BMR: Well, I had no regrets because I didn't know any better. I remember I hear a lot of girls talking about what they did when they were this age or that age, and I have nothing to contribute there because I had a different kind of life. The only ones that can understand what I was living were young musicians who were experiencing the same thing – or whatever profession they're in. I don't know what else to say.

PBL: In terms of earning money, did you feel a sense of your earning power at that age or did your parents take care of it?

BMR: No, there was never much money. No. In those days, you just wanted the opportunity to perform. Actually, sometimes it would even cost you more by the time you got your harp there or whatever. So that it would have been nice but it wasn't that thing. The only time that I was offered a lot of money was I remember I was offered a job when I was thirteen on the “Bing Crosby's Kraft Hour.” That's before your time. They offered me seventy-five dollars a week. Now that doesn't sound like much today, but the average family I guess was only making thirty-two dollars a week or something like that. Movie stars were only making two hundred dollars a week. Shirley Temple was making $250 a week and she was the biggest thing there. So seventy-five dollars a week for someone who was not anything big on a program was very, very good. But I'd have to move there, and I said, “No.” I thought it was marvelous that I'd make all that money, but I couldn't live there. So I remember that. And that was big in those days.

PBL: Were you part of a union or were unions part of the dialogue at that point?

BMR: Yes. My mother had me join the union here.

PBL: Was the name of that union?

BMR: [Musician's Union] #76 [A.F.M], I think.

PBL: The musicians' union.

BMR: Then, I remember when I went to Los Angeles, she thought I could transfer, but no. I had to join all over again. Initiation. This, that and the other thing. You can't work for six months on certain work. You can't work with [movie orchestras, symphonies, etc.] for something else for one year, for residency you see. It was quite different.

PBL: Did that cause any problems for you as a working musician?

BMR: No, because I was a soloist, so I had nothing to do with that. I was always a soloist. Then, when I was in an orchestra – I was in the Youth Orchestra in Los Angeles for a very short time, and that's a privilege to be in. I mean most of us, if we could afford it, we would have paid them to let us in there. [laughter]

PBL: Why was that? What was the youth orchestra like?

BMR: It was Peter Merenblum, who was the –

PBL: Can you spell his name for the record?

BMR: Merenblum. M-E-R-E-N-B-U-M, I think. Merenblum. He was quite the big name in student orchestras at the time, youth orchestras. He headed the Los Angeles Youth Symphony. He was very strict, and he was a Jewish man. He was a very fine conductor, and I was in there for a very short time. It was very difficult for me to get my harp there because my brother was at the university, at USC, and he had the car. So [my brother] had to rush home from school when he could, get my harp, and take it over there [to the rehearsal hall] for me. Otherwise, I had no way of getting my harp there, you see. So, the greatest inconvenience is moving that thing. It's very tough to maneuver. It doesn't

weigh very much. It only weighs 87 pounds, but it's awkward to move, and it's so fragile and valuable—

PBL: What did your harps cost?

BMR: My first harp was the little Irish harp. I think that was seventy-five dollars. I think.

PBL: Which is about how much today?

BMR: Golly, now they're selling for several thousand dollars. It's hard to believe. Then, my next harp, my mother and dad bought me a student harp, and I was eight. I couldn't reach the pedals. I wasn't very big. I had to sit right on the edge of the chair so that I could reach the pedals to play. My mother had cashed in an insurance policy to buy the harp because they didn't have the money. That cost $250. It was a used harp, but I was thrilled. I played on that for many, many years. And then, when I was twenty-one, they bought me a concert harp. It was a used harp. And it cost over two thousand dollars at that time. Today, that harp is $36,000. I was just looking at something yesterday, and I was thinking about that. That's what they cost. Each year, they keep going up.

PBL: What did the critics say about you when you were playing? Do you remember any particular critic's remarks?

BMR: Well, let's see. There was a critic, Frank – can't even remember his name. Frank in Los Angeles. I can't think of his name. He was a Jewish man. He thought that I had great musicality and was very versatile as an instrumentalist, which was a great compliment from him because he didn't give many compliments. Frank?

PBL: We can footnote it if you want.

BMR: Yes. I can't remember his name right now.

PBL: I'd like to, maybe in the next session, explore – because it's in your married life and when you had children that I know that you did play periodically in public. But maybe we can, since you related the end of your career to your mother's illness – and it sounds like there was actually a period of fifteen or so years in between – can you talk about the passing of your mother and what that was like for you since she was so many things to you? What do you remember about that time?

BMR: It was very difficult for me. I knew that my father was suffering in silence, but he never said anything. He would just say, “I do miss your mother,” or “She would do this,” or “She does this.” But he never talked about the pain that he felt. They were very close. They loved each other dearly. I couldn't talk to my brothers because they felt badly enough as it was. We three are very, very close. So, sometimes I thought I would just go crazy I missed her so much because I would ask her about everything. Then I would envy some of the girls who had their mothers with them, and they would say, “Oh, my mother just called me up. She's always calling me up.” I thought, “My God, how lucky they are that they have their mother.” I couldn't understand how they could talk about that. But I guess they had different experiences with their mother. So it was a different relationship. Both my husband and I were very fortunate in our parents. When they would come over to see us, to see the little grandchildren, as they were being born, they would come, and they would stay “five minutes” [relatively speaking; perhaps 30-40 minutes], and they would go. “Sit down, stay awhile!” They were so afraid of intruding in our lives. They just wanted to see us, and then they would leave. We had marvelous relationships with our in-laws. My mother and dad adored Marty. They loved him dearly, and my mother-in-law always said, “You're closer to me than my own daughter,” which I thought was a very great compliment.

PBL: Maybe we can pick up next time with when you met Marty, and we'll continue from there. So thank you for the first part of this interview.

BMR: Sure, okay.

[Break in recording]

PBL: This is the continuing oral history interview of Bernice Mossafer Rind. This is Pamela Brown Lavitt, oral historian for the Jewish Women's Archive “Weaving Women's Words” Project in Seattle. Today's date is August 10th. The year is 2001. We are at the home of the Rinds. We are continuing this interview with Minidisc #2. Nice to see you again.

BMR: Thank you.

PBL: I wanted to start talking about your relationship with your husband – when and where you met and lead up to your courtship and your decision to get married.

BMR: I knew Marty in Sunday school. He and my brother were very good friends. I was in kindergarten, Sunday school, and he and my brother were – I think it was the third grade. And, of course, nobody ever pays attention to the little brothers and sisters, but I do recall him and his sister, his older sister. There were just the two of them. I remember that after Sunday school was over, all the kids would be waiting in front of the Temple so that the parents could pick them up, and she would kind of look out for the little ones, and I was included in that. And then, all through Sunday school, I saw him, but I was never interested in him in particular. Then I met him again later on. It was after the war. And he and my brother were, as I say, good friends. They hadn't seen each other during the war years. They were in different theaters of the war. Then we started going together. We started dating. Of course, my dating was that I would have to go with him to exercise his horse. He's an international champion equestrian jumper, champion jumper. When you have a horse, it's like being an instrumentalist. You have to exercise your horse every day just as you practice every day. That was the beginning of it. We became engaged about a year later. Then, three or four months later, we were

married.

PBL: Where did you go on your dates?

BMR: Usually horse shows. Things like that. Anything that had to do with horses. If I went to anything that was musical, then I went with – I wasn't engaged at the time – I'd go with some other young fellow who would invite me. Marty was never interested in that sort of thing, plus the fact that he didn't have the time. He was obligated to his horse. When we were married and we were expecting our first child, we bought a very nice little house on the McGilvra ¬– on McGilvra Boulevard in Seattle. And then, when the baby was about a year old, he couldn't decide if he could afford to keep the horse. I always tease him that he had to make the decision to either keep me and the baby or the horse. But he wanted the horse to be well-cared for, so he gave it to a girl that he used to ride with, and she and her husband have a magnificent farm out in Roy, a small town near Olympia. So they took Tiny, that was the horse's name [despite the fact that he was a big horse since Marty was tall at 6'2 1/2"], and she took excellent care of him. Kept him until he died [at age 37]. He was a fantastic jumper, and he was very big because Marty's 6' 2 and a half", so the horse was 17'2", which is a very big horse. This horse was so sweet and gentle with my children. Well, we just had the one at the time, but Marty – when the baby was six months old – he takes the baby out of my arms and puts him on top of the horse. I about died. Thinking that "My God, what's going to happen?" Because this horse is accustomed to active people. He just stood there and just trotted very slowly and carefully. Marty hadn't gone to the baby. Then he took the baby and put it up to the horse's nose, and the baby didn't cry. He was accustomed to seeing the animal because we had dogs in the house. So he was accustomed to animals. But our first one was never interested in riding. It was my daughter who was interested in riding and having horses.

PBL: I'm going to ask you a question.

BMR: Yes.

PBL: I know that you had talked briefly in the last segment of the interview about belonging to both Ezra Bessaroth and going to school at Temple de Hirsch. And Marty, is he Sephardic or Ashkenazic?

BMR: He's Ashkenazic.

PBL: Can you describe anything about your expectations with respect to dating, either one of you or your families with the Sephardic/Ashkenazic differences in your backgrounds?

BMR: Well, we didn't find any difference at all. We had no problems. You see, his family is from Czechoslovakia, and they didn't associate with Ashkenazim either. They associated with German-speaking people. When they came to this – well, they first came to this country in 1874, his family to Chicago, and then from Chicago, they came to Seattle in the early 1890s. They associated with people of the same background of German-speaking Czechs or Austrians, who were mostly gentiles. They were the only Jews. They didn't at that time. Nobody went out of their way to associate with the Russian Jews or Polish Jews. Everybody, I assume, stuck to their own little group, just as the Rinds did. So, when I came along, there was no difference for us because we just thought of ourselves as Americans, and my mother always told me as I was growing up – because she gave me a very good background on who I was and where we came from and all about our background, but she said, "In this country, you're an American. You're an American Jew. That's number one. But you always have to know who you are and where you came from, and you're a Sephardic Jew. You're a Spanish-speaking Jew." And so that's it. I grew up with that idea, knowledge. I found no difficulty with it, and neither did Marty's family.

PBL: Did you have any desire – or in your dating life, were you conscientious or conscious of who was a Sephardic boy versus who was an Ashkenazic boy, and did you date both?

BMR: Oh, I knew the difference, yes. I really didn't know too many Jewish boys. When I went to the University, I was fifteen, and I didn't know anything about sororities. Never heard of them. I just went to the university because I felt I had to have an education. I mean, that's the only thing that I knew about a university. Most of the boys that I met there were non-Jews. So, I went out with non-Jewish boys. If they happened to be Jewish, well, that was fine. There were a couple of Sephardic boys that I grew up with from the time I was an infant. So, we would date. But there was nothing ever. Nothing serious. I would always tell my mother, "I may be dating a non-Jewish boy, but I'm not going to marry a non-Jewish boy. I'll always marry a Jewish boy." It was never my intention to do otherwise.

PBL: Where did that value come from that you placed on marriage?

BMR: Oh, I think because my mother told me so much about the family background and who we were, and then I felt it was so important for a matter of family survival. I just grew up with that idea.

PBL: I've heard dating between Sephardim and Ashkenazim referred to in terms of "inter-dating," and I'm wondering, even though you say that you and Marty were fine with it as Americans, how was it received or how did people respond to it or what have you heard about it in the community in terms of the way people have responded to dating?

BMR: I don't think anybody really thought about it, in particular about us. Because they just thought, well, we're a product of Temple de Hirsch because that's where we met, that's where we grew up, and we were just a couple of kids from Temple, which I thought was great. I don't think anybody thought of it any other way. They knew I was

Sephardic, they knew Marty's family was Czechoslovakian/Austrian, his background. And that was it.

PBL: Did you ever have any experiences where boys who were Ashkenazic would not date you because you were Sephardic?

BMR: Oh, no, no. A lot of them wanted to take me out. They say there aren't very many blonde, blue-eyed girls. My mother wouldn't let me date very much because she felt I was too young and inexperienced. I was very innocent, let's put it that way. I was basically a student. So, she was very protective of me. I think that after the boys would meet my mother and meet me, why then they were really very good to me. Took very good care of me. They never tried to take advantage of me in any way. So, I was very fortunate.

PBL: Since you say you were so innocent and partly because of your travels, how did you then learn about sex as a young kid? Did girls talk about it? Were your parents frank about it?

BMR: No, I had no special girlfriends because they weren't interested in the things that I was interested [in]. I didn't have time to socialize. You see, I went to school, and then I practiced, and then I gave a concert, and there was no time for friendships. You'll find that in any young artist who is very busy. There is no time for friendships. And in regards to sex, my mother would tell me all about it, and then she would show me medical books and tell me about these things. Then, she first told me when I was around eight or nine years old – told me about the menstrual period, which didn't seem to enter my brain. But you see, she had first menstruated when she was nine. And then she stopped and then she started full-course, which was eleven. She figured maybe I would take after her. As it happened, I didn't. But then she says, “Now, I have everything in this drawer in your room, and you'll have a sanitary napkin, pads, and the whole works there.” She told me all about it and what to expect. Well, I had forgotten all about it, and

then we always had a dog, and I remember my little dog was poisoned, and she was hemorrhaging terribly. My mother was down at my aunt's house, her sister's. Couldn't get the telephone. Somebody was on the telephone so we couldn't call her. My little brother ran down three blocks, ran as fast as he could to tell my mother he'd made a special announcement, “Bernice is bleeding. She's dying.” Well, I wasn't dying. But then I forgot everything she told me, you see. Well, then, the next day, everybody in the family knew exactly what happened to me. My cousins would say, “Well, you're a woman now.” I about died. Just about died. [laughter] Never forgot that. That was my introduction to that particular period of my life.

PBL: How old were you?

BMR: I was almost fourteen. My mother was very concerned. She said, “If within the next year, you don't have your period, we'll have to go and see a doctor.” “I am not going to a doctor.” Well, anyway, I would have gone if she made me go, of course, but as it was, it was a very natural evolvement of what nature intended. So, that was one experience. But I didn't miss any of those things. I was very adult as a young person because I had no association with girls and boys my age. I was very grown up. I didn't know slang. I didn't learn slang until I went to college because grownups don't talk like that, you know. It's a different speech pattern. So it was completely different.

PBL: So, when you went to the University of Washington at fifteen, and you mentioned the sororities, was that of interest to you, or did you try to enter –

BMR: No, no. One sorority had invited me to lunch a couple of times, but I really wasn't interested. I didn't particularly care for all the paraphernalia they did. And then that was a Jewish sorority. A gentile sorority – a couple of the girls that were in my music classes that I was very close to wanted me to join that particular sorority, but I felt I really didn't need it, and so I didn't join. A lot of the fraternity boys – with the gentile fraternity – boys would ask me out. And I remember, in particular, I was invited to a party with a champion

– he was from the Olympic team, a diver. I can't remember his name. At any rate, we went to this magnificent house. It was the first time I'd been to a home where they had a butler. He opened the door, and we entered this gorgeous mansion. We went downstairs to where all the game rooms were, and it was a palatial place. As I say, being kind of naïve, I said to somebody – I said to my date, as a matter of fact, "Where is everybody going? Why are they all going into those little rooms?" Well, they were all going to have sex. Well, I didn't know that, you see. I just didn't know what they were doing. I mean, I wouldn't have asked the question if I had known. It took me years later to find that out. I was so embarrassed, years later –

PBL: Were gentile boys faster or more promiscuous than Jewish boys?

BMR: No, I don't think so. Though one thing I found about the gentile boys was that they never forced you to do anything. They never forced you to let them touch you or something like that. Whereas the Jewish boys were a little freer. I found that.

PBL: Why do you think that was?

BMR: I don't know. Just maybe because they were young? I have no idea.

PBL: So, back to you and Marty. Did you somehow kind of have a camaraderie because of your commitments, your great commitments to these activities? Is that something that you really communed about – his equestrian interest and your musical interest? You made the analogy before, if you could take that any further?

BMR: Well, not really. It was very important to him. It was the only thing. When he got out of the Army, like most of the boys, most of their friends weren't around anymore – the kids they had grown up with or gone to the University. He did have one particular group of friends that he went to the university with. They went all through Queen Anne High School and the university. They went to ROTC and into the Army together. Then they got separated. I guess he located a few of them. They have remained close to this day,

which I think is remarkable. As a matter of fact, not too many years ago, I ran into somebody that he went to school with, and we were talking. They didn't know that the Rinds were Jewish. Nobody looked like – know what a person would look like. My mother-in-law looked Scandinavian. She was tall and slim. Very lovely and very low-key people. And just never knew that. And then they thought we [the Mossafers] were Catholics. We lived in Montlake, and for some reason or other, they thought my father was Irish Catholic. I don't know where they got that from, but people have very strange ideas that they make up.

PBL: Is it something about Seattle that people don't wear their religious affiliations on their sleeves?

BMR: I think so. It's a small town. Well, it was a small town. It still is a small town. At that time, Jewish people were very self-conscious about saying that they were Jewish. It was not a welcome piece of knowledge that other people wanted. And as I mentioned before, it took many years. It wasn't until the State of Israel and the war of Israel and the respect that the nations throughout the world gave the State of Israel that we, as Americans really felt we can say, “I am a Jew, and I believe in the state of Israel” – a certain amount of pride.

PBL: I understand that had a particular impact upon you personally. So what do you remember about that time?

BMR: Well, it wasn't until being very active in the cultural life of Seattle. I was very active with the symphony – still am – with the University of Washington and a few other cultural groups in the city. Nobody ever asked me if I was Jewish, and you don't go around announcing that you are. If they knew it, well, that was fine. If they didn't like me because I was Jewish, well, that's their problem, not mine. But one time at a board meeting at the symphony, we were discussing something – some financial difficulties we were having – and I remember I stood up and mentioned that, well, in the Jewish

Federation, we do this and this and this. I never would have said that at any other time to admit that I am a Jew in front of people because I felt before that I would have been shunted or asked to leave or just sort of forgotten about. Because I was the first person, first woman, asked to be president, even though I had worked on the committees for a long time, the idea of having a Jew there was something quite abhorrent to them. Because it was run by Broadmoor [which] at that time was very highly restrictive.

PBL: What are you talking about? Which organization?

BMR: Symphony.

PBL: It was run by Broadmoor. What do you mean?

BMR: Well, Broadmoor is now not restricted, supposedly. At that time: no Jews, no Blacks. The same thing with the Highlands. The same thing. At any other neighborhood, you could move in and out, more or less. With certain freedoms. But at that time, that was it. Now we lived on McGilvra Boulevard in Madison Park, which is not far from Broadmoor, but that's not – and I wouldn't move into Broadmoor even today if they gave me a house free of charge. The restrictions were dropped when they had – I think it was the liquor license came to a head, and in order to have certain clubs, you had to be free of all restrictions in order to have a liquor license. So, that was that difficult. I think the first family that ever moved there was Dr. Blue. He is a convert but a very devoted Jew. His wife is not. Then there are the Polls. Mel and Roz Poll moved there. I don't know of any other Jewish family that's there.

PBL: Were those restrictions outwardly written, or were they just known by word of mouth?

BMR: Common knowledge. Common knowledge. Now when we had to move from where we were – we built our house in Enatai.

PBL: Can you spell that?

BMR: E-N-A-T-A-I. It's near [the town of] Beaux Arts. Near the Channel Bridge. We were trying to decide where to move or what to do, and my oldest boy was around nine or ten years old at the time, and so he says, “Mom, why don't we move to the Highlands? I have a lot of friends there.” Because he was in seventh grade at Lakeside [School]. So, I thought, “Oh, this is going to break my heart.” I said, “Well, sit down, Bradley, I have to tell you something.” I said, “We can go and move to a lot of districts, but we can't move to the Highlands.” “Why not, Mom?” I said, “Because they don't allow Jewish people.” “Oh,” he said. “Mom, but if they know us, they'll like us, and they won't mind.” I said, “No darling, it's not that easy. They do not allow Jews in that district, in that enclave.” It broke my heart to tell my child that. I've never forgotten that. It made me feel very badly.

PBL: Does he remember it as well?

BMR: I don't know. I don't even talk about it. I don't even know if there are any Jews that live there. But that is another – that was a highly restricted area. There were certain clubs – for instance, I understand the Seattle Golf Club still doesn't have any Jewish members. There may be others. The Rainer Club finally broke down and has quite a number of them. The Athletic Club was the same thing. But they weren't as bad. I mean, they had a couple of token ones at the beginning. But now it's more frequent there. But there are still some areas where Jews – it's not a legal restriction, but it's an unwritten law, shall we say. I don't think that Jewish people would feel comfortable. And besides, we have too much to offer as a people that we have to be asked not to be a part of wherever it is.

PBL: I'd like to return in a little bit to your work with the symphony because I believe you told me that you were the only Jew.

BMR: Yes, the first. Well, I guess I'm the only Jewish woman who was president at the time and still the only one. And then one of only two board members for many years. Well, my husband and Sam Levinson were the only two Jewish board members. Then Sam Rubenstein was on. Then I came on. And then there weren't anymore, but now it's fine.

PBL: So we'll return to your activities with the symphony in a few minutes. I want to go back to your courtship with Marty and – you skipped through we got married and we had a child. I'm just wondering, when did you fall in love? What do you remember about falling in love?

BMR: Well, it was no big smash-bang thing. It just sort of evolved, I would say. It's not like in the movies, as you know, being a young woman with a husband also. It's something that grows even in a very short time that you may know somebody. You sort of have an inkling of what it's going to be in the future. My biggest problem with Marty was that he was so quiet. He still is. I always had to do all the talking, and I was not a talkative person. But I became so over the years because one of us has to do the talking. So, that was a big problem. I guess he expected me to know all these things by osmosis or something rather. Whereas most of the boys that I would go out with were always telling me all kinds of thing about how they felt and how much they loved me or what they loved me or why they loved me, and all that sort of thing. With Marty, he'd send me flowers. He would just put "Love, Marty." I mean it was ¬– but I knew that from him it was very specific and it was very meaningful. He was just not big on words. It bothered me. It still bothers me, but that's his nature. But I think what really made me so secure with him was that I never had to fight him off. Sometimes I'd come home, and you would think I was through the wars. I'm sure you've had the experience where, with some boys, they can't keep their hands off you and you're practically in shreds by the

time you get home. But it was so nice that I knew that I didn't have to go through that with him. Because, at that time, you didn't sleep with the fellow the first time you went out with him – or the second time or the third time. [laughter] You waited until you got married. It was a different psychology, a different world.

PBL: When you decided to get married, where did you decide to do it? Which temple and what hall and tell me about your wedding.

BMR: Well, I didn't want to get married at Temple. I didn't want to get married at Ezra Bessaroth because I didn't want to play favorites to either one. I remember the dates – and the Olympic Hotel, their dates were all filled. So, we had it at the Glendale Golf Club. It was out in Burien. I think we had about four hundred at the wedding.

PBL: Big wedding.

BMR: Well I must have had it almost two hundred just from relatives. So that took up a lot of relatives. It was a lovely wedding. Marty's relatives came from different parts of the country and some of mine did too. Most of my relatives live here. So there was no problem that way.

PBL: Did you have a rabbi marry you?

BMR: Yes. Rabbi Levine.

PBL: So was the rabbi from Temple de Hirsch?

BMR: Yes.

PBL: Why did you decide on the rabbi from Temple de Hirsch as opposed to Ezra Bessaroth?

BMR: Well, that was Rabbi Kahn. I had wanted [internationally known scholar] Rabbi David DeSolaPool. I don't know if you know who he is.

PBL: No, would you spell his name for the record?

BMR: David is D-A-V-I-D. DeSolaPool is D-E, capital S-O-L-A, capital P-O-O-L. He's part of a very prominent family. He's deceased now. Probably one of the most prominent Jewish families in the history of not only Sephardic but Ashkenazic Jews. He used to fly every weekend to France to conduct shabbat services for the Rothschilds. Well, being young and naïve, I didn't know that if I wanted him, well, then my father would have to pay for him to fly into Seattle and pay his expenses and then fly back. Which of course my father couldn't afford to do that but I didn't know that. I just wanted him to do – to perform the services. Because I asked him years earlier when I met him, and he said, "Be happy to." [laughter] But then my father-in-law, Max Rind, asked my father. He said, "Can we have Rabbi Levine perform the service?" Well, my father was so thrilled with Marty, and so happy that the Rinds were going to be his mischpachá that he said, "Yes, anything you want." So, that was where I got Rabbi Levine.

PBL: How did you –? Why did you feel strongly about the other rabbi? What is it about his pedigree and his intellect that you were so impressed by?

BMR: Well, I'd read his books. We have several here. I met him in California but I knew of him when I was a very young girl. My mother had told me about him and about his family. The have a very long history of very prominent rabbis, of professors, and his wife was also a very learned woman. And since he was the best there was, that's who I wanted.

PBL: Did you wear a white dress?

BMR: It was pearl gray. Oh, I'll have to show it to you. My mother bought me a – it was a what do you call it? – kind of stole of pearls and crystals which was magnificent.

Handmade for the Empress Eugenie. It was an antique. Ralph Burse had an antique shop on Broadway. At that time, there were a lot of antique shops. And Ralph Burse is Jane Powell's uncle.

PBL: How do you spell Burse?

BMR: B-U-R-S-E. He sold this to my mother and my mother made it into a wedding gown. It's just beautiful. And she had it wrapped in a sheet to keep it protected. Being ignorant, I took it out of the sheet and put it in a plastic bag, which as you know is the worst thing you could do. It changed the color of the gown. When my daughter got married, I couldn't have her wear it because it was no longer a pearl gray. It was sort of a pink. I wouldn't have known. I don't know what to do with it. But we chose the pearl gray because of the antiquity of the stole.

PBL: Tell me more about that.

BMR: Well, it's a magnificent piece. I don't know how the Empress Eugenie wore it. She may have just had it over her shoulders or over her head or something or other. But my mother made it – used it as part of my wedding gown.

PBL: Did you feel regal as well?

BMR: Oh yes, yes. It was beautiful.

PBL: What do you remember about the ceremony that you chose and are there different things that you both pulled from your different backgrounds?

BMR: It was a standard wedding that they had in those days or in these days. Nothing unusual about it.

PBL: Did you have an engagement party?

BMR: Oh, yes. We had a beautiful engagement party. I'll have to show you pictures.

PBL: Did you do the sort of –? We talked earlier in the interview about certain Sephardic customs. Did you have a trousseau?

BMR: Oh, yes.

PBL: Can you talk about that a little?

BMR: Well, like most Sephardic girls – or I assume most little girls of any faith [or culture] I suppose – my mother got me all the linens. She gave me all the silver from the family. What else? So many things. When we bought our house, she gave me a little loveseat, three Oriental rugs.

PBL: Did they hang the trousseau?

BMR: Yes, she did. She wanted my in-laws to see what she was giving me. I said, “Oh, no, we don't want that.” “Oh, yes, yes, we're going to do that.” “Oh, no, I don't like that sort of thing.”

PBL: I was told that the engagement custom and your embarrassment, there's a word for it. Ashuar?

BMR: Ashuar. Yes, that's right.

PBL: What does that mean?

BMR: Ashuar is a trousseau.

PBL: Is the same thing.

BMR: Yes.

PBL: Is it typical that brides are embarrassed by this? Are they meant to –?

BMR: Oh no. [Just me.]

[Break in tape]

[END OF CD 2 OF 5]

BMR: I'm not involved in—you know, when your mother is gone, it's different. And I had no sisters. And my brothers don't know anything about this. And my cousins are older than I am. A lot older. And so I don't talk about any of these things. All these words, I forget. And sometimes when I go to the Ezra Bessaroth for one of the services – which I enjoy very much – then I'll hear certain Sephardic words, certain Spanish words, and I have to stop and think, what does that mean, and I'll have to ask somebody. Well, they'll say, “Didn't you speak Spanish in your home?” I said, “No, my parents spoke English because they wanted to be Americans and speak English.” And when my grandmothers would talk to me, I understood them, but I didn't – I couldn't, speak the language very well. But I understood everything they said. So there was a lot that I didn't know.

PBL: So what does the word “ashuar” mean versus “trousseau”?

BMR: I don't think there's any difference. Ashuar is a trousseau. I hadn't heard that word in so long, and I'm glad you knew it because if you asked me for it, I wouldn't have been able to tell you.

PBL: Were there any other words that you associate with this time of your life in the Sephardic life?

BMR: Well, my mother did ask me—she said, “Now what about the mikveh [ritual bath]?” The mikveh, you know. And I said, “No, I'm not going to go and do that.” I said, “I heard one of the girls say that you take this dipping or whatever, and the rabbi is there watching

you. And I'm not going to do that in front of a rabbi." Well they don't do that. But then, how was I supposed to know? This is what all the girls were talking about? "Well the rabbi is right there watching you. I'm not going to stand there naked in front of the rabbi." So you see how misconceptions have been. My mother laughed, and she tried to tell me, "No, no, that is not the way it is." So she said, "Well, all right, if you don't want it, it's all right."

PBL: Was it important to her for some reason?

BMR: No. She wanted whatever made me happy.

PBL: I've heard, I think it might have been part of the Adatto family, sing gorgeous songs to women for their bridal engagement and for the mikveh ceremonies. Were these anything that you heard at this time?

BMR: No. I think because my grandmothers were gone, probably my older cousins did when they were young. But by the time anybody got around to me or my younger cousin, there wasn't anybody around to do any of that. So it wasn't at all familiar to us. And there was a big fuss with the older cousins, I remember. Everybody was sewing, everybody was cooking, everybody was doing everything. And that didn't happen for the ones that were left.

PBL: Do you have any sense about that now?

BMR: Well, I loved my grandmothers. Particularly one that I absolutely adored. I was very close to her. I would have liked to have spent more time with her. I wished I could have done so. So that's about it, really.

PBL: Is there anything else about your wedding or party that you want to talk [break in tape]

BMR: Well, let's see. My engagement party was absolutely fantastic. A beautiful engagement party. It was at the Edmond Meany [Hotel]. My mother and dad invited all the relatives on both sides and some friends. I don't know, there were two- or three-hundred people.

PBL: To your engagement party?

BMR: And I have a big family. There were my aunts and uncles and their children, and some of them had children of the children, and so on and so forth. There's a lot of cousins. And Marty's family is small. My family is big. And it was gorgeous. The flowers were magnificent and everything was just beautiful. A lot of photographs were taken. Yes, I enjoyed it.

PBL: Where was your shower?

BMR: Oh, I had several. A couple of my cousins gave me showers. I don't remember where they were. I think one was at the Olympic and one was at a restaurant which I don't recall which one.

PBL: Was it all women?

BMR: Yes. One was with just young girls – cousins, friends. And the other one was with mothers and daughters and so on, and very close friends. It was a big one. That was a big shower. And then the rest were different parties. The usual. Dinner parties that people would give you and small parties in the homes of people would entertain you and fiancé and their relatives and so on. That was about it.

PBL: What did you do for your honeymoon?

BMR: We went to Sun Valley. I had never been to Sun Valley. I wanted to go to Hawaii. All my life I wanted to go to Hawaii. Well that was the idea, the romantic idea in those

days. You go to Hawaii. Well, Marty couldn't take that much time off to go to Hawaii. And so we went to Sun Valley, which was great. I enjoyed it very much.

PBL: What did you do there?

BMR: Well, I learned skeet shooting. We rode horses. We took the lift down from Mount Baldy. We rented a car and went all over. Played with the dogs from the dog sled, and ice skated and swam. One of the hotels has a pool. I think it's the Challenger Inn. Then there's The Lodge right across the street or across the way from it. We drove into Ketchum quite often, or we'd walk in. It was very great.

PBL: Who paid for your wedding and your honeymoon?

BMR: My parents paid for the wedding, and my husband paid for the honeymoon, which of course I think is a legitimate way it's done, I think.

PBL: What was Marty doing at this time, work-wise?

BMR: He was working for his father at the Milwaukee Sausage Company. He worked there. He was learning good business. He had worked there before, for the Army. Before he went into the Army. He was familiar with that. But he had to learn how to do every job in the business so that one day he could take over. It was a big business at the time. It was one of the most important manufacturing companies in the area.

PBL: Why was it called Milwaukee if it was in Seattle?

BMR: At the time, it was assumed that since there was a tremendous German colony in the city of Milwaukee and they always made the best sausages, they gave it the name Milwaukee. But it's strictly a Seattle-based business. It was originally strictly kosher. But then they had so many battles with all the rabbis that they decided that they would have kosher-style and no more kosher. It worked out very well.

PBL: How did the community respond to that shift? Do you remember? Were you aware of any of that?

BMR: It was before I was born, before Marty was born. His father was just about twenty years old when he and his brother-in-law started the business. They were just a couple of kids.

PBL: When you got married, you had already – how old were you?

BMR: Twenty-three.

PBL: So you were twenty-three. You had already had this incredible career in music. And you were pre-med at the University of Washington and studied music there as well. What were your aspirations or intentions in terms of working?

BMR: Well, I knew that working in the music world here in Seattle was very limited. Very, very limited. Being a concert harpist, there was really nothing that could be done here. So I just devoted myself to compositions [and] continued that. And occasionally, I'd give a recital. As I say, there was very little that could be done. There was no radio work, no movie work. The harp was not really accepted as a concert instrument in this area. This was a very small town. Very limited in many ways. I always told people at the symphony – I said the trouble with Seattle is we don't have enough Jews or Italians who love music and who give to music. Or the arts. But that was about the best that I could do. Now I could have gone into teaching, but I didn't particularly like teaching. When I was at Cornish School, Miss Cornish wanted me to teach harp there, and I tried it for a year. My biggest problem was that the students were older than I was, and I couldn't handle it. I couldn't get the respect that I felt that I should get as a teacher to teach them. It's very difficult for someone who is younger to be the teacher of older students.

PBL: How old were you when you were teaching there?

BMR: Fifteen, sixteen. This was after school.

PBL: Can you just describe what the Cornish School is?

BMR: It was and still is a very fine school of fine arts. It used to be called at that time "The Cornish School of Music and Arts and Dance and Drama." I started there when I was around seven, taking music theory, eurythmics, solfege, and so on, and progressed with each year, different classes, which they have for children. Then, when I was older, I was there taking more advanced classes. Never studied the harp there. But it was mostly music background. Then, I remember one particular time they had one of the teachers asked me if I would wear a costume like a Renoir and pose for a picture because they had this little outfit. I'll show you the painting of – well, it's an etching I have by Renoir. I wore that, an outfit like that because I had a very small waist: twenty-one-inch waist. So, I could fit into this jacket, just barely, if I didn't breathe. I posed for that, and they took – the art students painted me. I remember I told my mother, "Oh, there was an artist in the class, and he wants me to go to Yakima, and he wants to paint me." And my mother said, "Yes, is that right? But you're not going anyplace." She says, "That's not what he wanted, and you're staying home." [laughter] Of course I believed everything everybody told me because, as I said, I was very naïve, and I thought that if you said something to someone, you must have been sincere. You must have said it. So that was my experience with being a model for the painters.

PBL: You made a decision not to teach music, but you were pre-med. Did you have aspirations to go to medical school?

BMR: No. I remember when I graduated, I kept thinking, "Now, what should I do? I should have another profession. Should I go to law school? No, I don't want to be a lawyer." I think everybody was going to be a lawyer in our family. I counted all the cousins and uncles, and there were going to be twenty-seven lawyers, and nobody was making a living at that time to speak of. I knew that there was this girl who had

graduated from law school, and she couldn't get a job. She was a secretary in a law firm which I thought was very degrading for this poor girl. She was brilliant. So I figured, what chance would I have if she's not doing so well? At that time, it was very difficult. You either went out on your own, or you ended up being a clerk or something like that. And medicine, I felt no, I couldn't give the time. I cannot commit myself to that sort of thing. That would be a twenty-four – at that time, it was twenty-four-hour days, seven days a week. It's not the schedules they have today where they have two, three days off, and they have a little community of doctors working and so on. It's a different story.

PBL: After you married, where did you and Marty settle?

BMR: I remember when we were engaged to be married, he said, “Well, we have to go and find an apartment.” I said, “I can't go live in an apartment. They won't take my dog.” He said, “Well, leave your dog with your mother.” I said, “I can't get married without my dog. I have to have my dog.” So he thought that was the most ridiculous thing he'd ever heard of. Whoever heard of anybody not getting married because they have to take their dog? So we looked for apartments, and they smelled awful, and I was not accustomed to living in an apartment. We finally came upon this builder who was building six little houses – three-room houses. Brand new. Right outside Broadmoor. Went there one day, and Mr. Hilliker – young fellow – and we went there, and we said, “These are very nice.” I said, “I have a dog. Would you rent to us?” He said, “Of course.” We took one right away. It was delightful.

PBL: This was in Madison Valley?

BMR: No, Madison Park.

PBL: Madison Park.

BMR: On 37th, right next door to Broadmoor. We lived there for less than a year because I was pregnant, and we had to find a house, and we moved to McGilvra

[Boulevard].

PBL: What were your expectations around getting pregnant? Did you hope to get pregnant shortly after marriage?

BMR: Yes.

PBL: So, was it a planned pregnancy?

BMR: I think so.

PBL: So Bradley was born in 1950. He was your first child. Can you describe if there were any significant experiences that you had around childbirth and the rearing of this first child in your life?

BMR: Well, I thought it was very special. I kept thinking, "I don't really feel anything yet [about being a mother]. I'm worried about that. There must be something wrong with me. I know this is my baby, but I don't feel anything yet." But when the baby is just a few days old or a few weeks old, you don't feel anything. It takes time.

PBL: You mean emotionally.

BMR: Yeah. I remember a woman would say, "Oh, he's gorgeous. Oh, he's beautiful." I didn't see anything gorgeous about it, but I didn't say anything because I didn't think – he was all red, you know? Little, tiny baby, all red. I didn't think he was gorgeous at all. It wasn't until I would compare him to other children [a couple of weeks later] as he got older and as I was accustomed to looking at babies – I didn't have much experience at the time with babies – well then I realized he was a very beautiful baby. Big long lashes, big, big blue eyes. Little pug nose and beautiful child. So you learn things through experience.

PBL: How did you and your husband –? I'm sorry, were you going to continue?

BMR: No, I was just saying it was a marvelous experience.

PBL: In those days, how did doctors give you prenatal care or advise you about what to do?

BMR: Well, I had Dr. Charlie Fine, who was sort of family. I think most of the Jewish girls went to him. He was positively brilliant, and he had a touch that you didn't even know that you were being touched; he was so gentle and so thorough. He would tell you everything and explain everything, and I remember after he examined me to tell me that I was pregnant and come into the office, and I sat there, and he gave me a little booklet. He said, "You read this, so on and so forth." He said, "Now, you'll probably find that you have to urinate a great deal." He said, "Don't worry about it." Well, I found that I didn't have to urinate. I just urinated like I always do. I didn't have that problem. That's all right. That didn't bother me. Then, after a few months, my back was really bothering me a lot, and he said, "Well, now this is not normal. He said some women have back problems but not the kind that you're having." Sent me to an orthopedic surgeon. Well, it seems that I have a couple of slipped discs, and so on and so forth. So, I weathered the pregnancy very well and got along okay. But then, as time went by, my back always bothered me. I was supposed to wear a back brace, but being young and vain, I wasn't going to wear that stupid thing. I don't know if you've ever seen one of these, but they're all lumpy. You can't wear your clothes and look smooth. At least, I didn't think so at the time. But I had no problems with my pregnancy, thank God. I was sick all – well, all my babies were just barely eight months. They were all preemies. They were all very anxious to enter the world. I remember he'd say, "Well, you'll just be sick three months. The next three months will be fine." Well, when it was six months, he says, "Well, the next three months will be all right." Well, it happened all the time. The first few months, instead of gaining, I was losing weight because I was always vomiting or had diarrhea or something or other.

PBL: The fact that your four children were born about six weeks early or so, was that –? What did they talk to you about regarding that? Was that okay? What did they do for the health of the children at that time?

BMR: Well, the babies were five-pound babies, very healthy babies. And just in a hurry to come, I guess.

PBL: Were you nervous, did that scare you?

BMR: No. Well, they were so tiny. I remember the first time I diapered Bradley, I was afraid of pinching him. We didn't have these diapers like they do today. So, when I picked him up, the diaper fell right down because I didn't have it tight enough, but I was afraid. Then I was going to give him a bath, and my mother calls, and she says, “What are you doing?” I said, “I'm going to give the baby a bath.” “Don't touch him, I'll be right there.” [laughter] She took a cab down and came back. I said, “I can do it by myself.” She said, “I have to be here to” – she was so sure I would harm him or something. [laughter]

PBL: How did you and Marty –? I mean, over the course of about eleven years, you had four children. Mazel Tov. How did you share childrearing roles? I mean, these kids were spaced out over a period of years. What was that like?

BMR: Well, with the first one, he was afraid to even touch him. After he got a little older, a few months, then he'd pick the baby up. Stuff like that. But he never changed the diapers. But then if I was busy with Bradley – because there was only seventeen months difference [between Bradley and Sherry] – and was doing something or other, why then I'd say, “Well, you take care of the baby.” So he learned to diaper Sherry, and he would take care of Sherry. He would help me. And then, from then on, with the others, he was accustomed to it. So, he'd help when he had to or could. His hours were pretty long. He'd leave the house at 6:00, 6:30 in the morning and didn't get home until around 7:00

or 7:30. So it was a long day.

PBL: Did you have help?

BMR: Yes, I had live-in help when I could get it, which was great because they were terrific people. I had two in particular that were with me for many, many years. Some of them just came in during the day to give me a hand and babysat, and they did housekeeping and babysitting all at the same time in those days. Nowadays, you can't get that. Everybody is particular. They don't do both.

PBL: Who were these women, and how did you find them?

BMR: Usually, I'd put an ad in the paper. I'd interview them. I was very fortunate. I had, as I say, two very good ones. They were both Lavinia. It was Big Lavinia and Little Lavinia. They were both Black. Oh, and there was Margaret Brown, too. She was very good. They learned to cook the things that I would teach them. If, say, I was late, [they would] start dinner or whatever, wherever I was. They took excellent care of the children. That was the prime thing if I was gone. Originally, when I hired Little Lavinia, she was hired as a for one day a week cleaning help. And if she was laid off at certain jobs, then I would ask her, and if I could afford it, I would ask her to come in, and she would work for me a couple of days a week. And this way, I felt very free and very comfortable because I knew she would take good care of the children. I've had very good help when I had it.

PBL: Where were you financially at this point in comparison to other women who were young mothers? Was help a common thing, and what kind of financial situation did you need to be in in order to afford help?

BMR: Well, everybody thought we were very financially well-off because it was a big business. But we lived very modestly. After four years, I think, we built this house. There were very few young couples in their late twenties at that time that could afford to build a house like this. So we were considered extremely well-off. But we lived very

modestly. We gave more charity than we spent on ourselves. We still do.

PBL: Even in your early youth, your charity was an important thing for you.

BMR: Yes.

PBL: Where did that come from?

BMR: Well, with Marty, he learned from his parents. And with us, the same thing. My grandmother always told me about tzedakah, and for instance, she would even say – she was blind, my grandmother Rachel – and she would say, “Bernice, what's the weather like outside?” I'd say, “Grandma, it's snowing.” “Go get the bread and take it for the birds,” that I should feed the animals and the birds before I feed myself.” She said that. She said that you have to take care of nature. She would always have a little can for tzedakah which we call a cuti [phonetic] which means “a can” in Spanish.

PBL: Can you spell that?

BMR: Cuti? I don't know how to spell it in Spanish.

PBL: That's okay.

BMR: Some have a diminutive, “cutiko” [phonetic], a little can.

PBL: What did it look like?

BMR: I'll show you upstairs when we go up.

PBL: Good. Can you describe it, however for the record?

BMR: Okay, it's a blue and white can with Hebrew writing on it. I think it says –well, this would be a modern one – “Karen Chesed.” Well, it's about thirty years old, but the ones I'm thinking of were much older than that when I was a child.

PBL: When did they come out? When did she introduce this to you? This cutiko?

BMR: Oh, I must have been three, four years old.

PBL: What does that word mean? Does it have a meaning?

BMR: Cutiko? We call it “cutiko de tzedakah,” a little can for charity. Well, we call it charity, but it's righteous, really. For the poor. We always have to share for the poor, for those that need it. She always did that. It’s just something that they were raised with. In Rhodes, her mother, who was widowed at the age of twenty-three, would go from house to house to gather things, like on Friday for Shabbat dinner. She would get a loaf of bread from every household and whatever food that they had extra and take it to some poor family who didn't have anything so that every Sephardic family on the island of Rhodes had fresh bread for the bracha and food for their dinner to celebrate the Shabbat. This she felt she was compelled to do. She would take care of all the poor on the Island. She saw to it that every young orphan girl was married properly – that she had a dowry, that she had all the things that a girl who had both parents. So it was just something that was just handed down from generation to generation.

PBL: How did it inform your choices of charity?

BMR: How did it form my –?

PBL: Inform.

BMR: Inform me? Well, we all felt we had to do it. For instance, I remember my brother came home one day, and he was soaking wet. My mother had given him twenty-five cents. He was downtown. She gave him twenty-five cents to go downtown and twenty-five cents to come back home. Well, he saw some poor beggar, so he gave him the twenty-five cents, so he walked home in the rain. Well, she bawled him out for one reason, and then she blessed him for the other reason. Because he got a bad cold

walking in the rain. [laughter] But he just felt that he had to give him his quarter.

PBL: Can you talk a little bit about your charitable decisions?

BMR: Well, it's difficult for me to say “no.” I give a great deal. I won't give the amounts.

PBL: To whom do you give and why?

BMR: Oh, dear. Besides all the Jewish organizations and the non-Jewish organizations, there's the cultural organizations, and there's medical: the University of Washington, the Overlake Hospital, the Virginia Mason, Harborview, [inaudible] Search and Rescue – what do they call that?

PBL: Medic One?

BMR: Besides the Medic One. They're even in my will. Search and Rescue. All the animal things. The National Humane Society. Local humane societies. The Goodwill. The Red Cross. I collect for the Mothers March and the Heart Association. I collect for them and Multiple Sclerosis. The Leukemia Foundation. And many, many more. Not to mention all the schools and universities. We are committed to eleven schools and universities in this country and abroad. So, for instance, my husband used to give to the University of Haifa fifteen scholarships every year for five years. The bulk of those scholarships went to the Druze, the Arabs in Haifa. I'm sure you're familiar with them.

PBL: Yes, tell me about that commitment. That's a very unique commitment.

BMR: Well, somebody from the University of Haifa came here many years ago, and he called on a lot of people. And usually, the first ones they called on were Marty, and so he committed himself to doing that for five years – fifteen scholarships. Then they'd send us letters telling us about the names of the students. The bulk of them usually were Arab students, which was all right, whatever the University chose.

PBL: But they were Druze, which is a somewhat persecuted group within –

BMR: Yeah, well, that's what the bulk of the Arabs in Haifa are, Druze. We were in the home of one of the Druze, and he was a member of Parliament. I remember we were there with all our four children, and our youngest one was four years old. He had a daughter, four years old. So, the two little ones went hand in hand to play. It was so cute. At this reception they gave for us in their home, there were no women. My daughter and I were the only females, and his little five-year-old or four-year-old. We never saw any Druze women. The room was filled with men. Full of bancos, the couches around. Everybody was just sitting around there in their Druze dress. Marty and I and the children. The two little ones went off to play. It was so cute. I knew that in a matter of a few years, they would never be able to see each other or play. Not that they knew each other anymore. But it was a very significant thing for me to see that. And then to realize that this was really a one-time thing.

PBL: Can you tell me more about what was significant about it for you?

BMR: The fact that when an Arab child, an Arab girl, perhaps, goes into puberty – I don't know when the cutoff date is – that she is no longer with men, with boys. That she is strictly with women. I know I was seeing something quite special. I don't know if my boy even remembers that. He may. I'll have to ask him one of these days.

PBL: So you took your children all to Israel. What year was this?

BMR: It was May of ‘67. We had just left Israel, and then a few days later, was the Six-Day War. I'm so grateful that we left when we did. But I remember when we got there; we took a taxi from the airport to Jerusalem, and so we were going through a certain area and the taxi driver stops, and he says, “Now, keep the children quiet because we're going through Arab country.” Well, I was scared to death because I could see – when they fired things, you see a spark, a light. He drove very quietly. We didn't make a sound. I

had my hand over one of the children's mouths. My husband had the other over the two youngest ones in case they woke up and cried out. We drove through this particular area to Jerusalem. But it was quite frightening.

PBL: How long were you there for?

BMR: Gosh, two, three weeks. It was for Israel Bonds. We had first taken the children to England, and gosh, it was spring, but we froze to death. Then we went to France. From France, we went to Israel. And then from there, we went to Italy. My children are not fat. Never have been. They lost so much weight in Israel. The food was so terrible. The waiter was always trying to give us gefilte fish which we don't eat. We never had it. We're not accustomed to it. Marty's family never ate it, so he didn't know what it was either. The milk was not cold; it was hot. This was a long time ago. They didn't know how to cook. They have improved. But everything was terrible. So, we were starving. When we got to Italy, my God, we ate and ate, we just couldn't get over it. Well, the only good meal we had in Israel, they took us to an Army airfield. They entertained us beautifully. I can't deny that. We were entertained royally. But the food was terrible. But we went to this – there was some good food at this Army air corps. The young boys, the pilots, were just – they were gorgeous human beings.

PBL: Did they do a demonstration for you?

BMR: Yes.

PBL: What do you remember of that?

BMR: They took this motor apart and put it together in seconds. It was incredible. There were all these Greek Jews. I said, “Oh my goodness, you're all Sephardic, and you're all blonde, blue-eyed. I don't know. I always thought the Greeks were black hair and black eyes.” But, of course, they weren't really real Greeks. They were Sephardic Greeks, so they were redheads, blondes and freckles, and so on. I felt so badly that I hoped that

they would all live because I knew there would be a lot of wars, and then, lo and behold, there was not just a few days later, you know. It was '67.

PBL: Were you aware that a war was ensuing?

BMR: No, no. I just assumed that that's the way it always was.

PBL: Did you go for pleasure? You said you went with Israel Bonds. Was there a delegation, or was it a group tour of some kind?

BMR: Yeah, there was a delegation. I don't know how many people from Seattle. We were the only young family. We were the youngest with our children. The others were older people.

PBL: What did you hope on that trip to –? What kind of values about being Jewish did you hope to invest in your children while you were there?

BMR: Well, so they'd know where their roots were. What it means to be a Jew and how fragile the life of a Jew is, and the history is just a repetition of all this. That it is nothing new. I had never been with so many Jews in my life. Particularly in Seattle, Easterners would feel differently because they're accustomed to being surrounded with their own people. But we aren't in this area here. So it was amazing to get on a bus, and they looked – everybody's Jewish. You go on the street, and everybody's Jewish. It felt good. I felt it was home.

PBL: What other kinds of things did you and your family like to do together?

BMR: Well, we've traveled a great deal. I always thank God that we traveled so much when we were young. We were able to do that. We took our children to just about every place.

PBL: What about locally? Were there parks or places that you liked to go to?

BMR: Oh, well, let's see. We would explore things in Oregon, here in Washington, Indian reservations, mountains.

PBL: Where are Indian reservations in the state of Washington?

BMR: In the Yakima Valley. Eastern Washington.

PBL: Were there tourist sites that you would explore, or could you be invited onto a reservation?

BMR: Sometimes. It all depended. Usually, you can even drive through them. So they're pretty open. And there's always a sign that identifies what the area is.

PBL: Why was that important to you?

BMR: Well, it's local. And we'd go up to the mountains, and for instance, it was Spring or Summer, and yet you could still go up there in your shorts and the children in their little diaper jeans and stuff, and there's snow. It was kind of like a phenomenon. It was beautiful. Anything that you find any place in the world, you can find right here in the state of Washington. Like people will say, “Oh, New Zealand is marvelous. The crevasses…this, that, and the other.” I said, “You'll find whatever they have in New Zealand” – and we've been there many, many times – “you'll find everything here in the state of Washington.” You've got desert, you've got mountains, you've got snow. This is a remarkable state.

PBL: Rainforest.

BMR: Rainforest, which is beautiful. That's right.

PBL: How would you describe yourself as a mother, Bernice?

BMR: Well, that was my primary object, or objective I should say. And not that I placed my husband second or anything, but I felt that we were a pair and to us our focal point was our children – their lives, their health, their future. Whatever we've done is for, hopefully, for our children. You always hope that you're making the right decisions. You hope and pray that what you're doing is for their benefit and that they're going to like it. That they'll appreciate it and that you're doing the right thing.

PBL: So how would they describe you as a mother? Perhaps differently. You have a lot of children, and did you have different relationships with each of them in terms of your mothering?

BMR: Well, I'm very close to my boys and my daughter. People always say—oh, I think there's a saying that "a son is a—when a daughter is a daughter but a son is a son until he gets a wife" or something or other. But I can honestly say – and I thank God for this – that I am very close to my boys. My daughters-in-law are very generous with their husbands. They don't get jealous of their husbands looking for me or their father. And that's a blessing because a lot of wives are very possessive and they want the husband just for them. But they're primary in our lives.

PBL: How did your style of mothering compare to your mother or even your grandmother's?

BMR: Well, my mother was very strict and tough. But I knew that in order to handle me with my music she just about had to be because she had to be sort of objective. She was very protective of me. And I had tried to be – perhaps I've given my children more freedom than I had because I wanted them to make their own decisions and learn to be responsible for themselves. But I'm there all the time. I hope that they feel that I've always done the right thing. I know that they know that I have tried. They know that I'm with a clear heart. But as parents or any parent, you always hope you're doing the right thing.

PBL: Were there significant experiences that you felt great joy in the things your children were doing and then other things that were really a great struggle? Moments in their lives that were bumpy or where they tested you?

BMR: Yes. I remember – because I was naïve and stupid, I would say – when my son Bradley was almost seventeen. He was a sophomore at the University. He came home, and he says, "Mom and Dad, I have to talk to you." We were sitting in bed reading. This is on the covers, you know. And so we sat up, and we said. "What is it, darling?" He said, "I smoked a cigarette, marijuana." I was so upset. But it took me years to recall that he said, "A cigarette." And instead of being very calm, I thought I was very calm, but I was very upset. I was scared. I don't even know what I said. But he seemed to be very happy about it. I guess I didn't say anything terrible. But then I was so shook up, I talked to doctors, I talked to [inaudible], because I figured, "Oh my God, he smoked a marijuana cigarette." I thought maybe he would take it up, you know, and just smoke it all the time or whatever. And then, after, it took me a couple of years to really think about it. How lucky I was that this young boy felt so close to us to come and tell us that he smoked a cigarette, a marijuana cigarette. How many kids would have done that? So then I felt so fortunate, and why couldn't I have said something like that when he told me – I don't know what I said. But I guess I didn't get him upset. But I always remember that.

PBL: You raised your children through a very permissive time in American culture – through the '60s.

BMR: That's why I was so worried.

PBL: So I was wondering, what was the context for this fear, and were drugs part of the parental conversation with your children at this point?

BMR: Not really, no. Not that. Nobody even smoked. They didn't smoke anything. Well, Bradley was the oldest. The only drinking that we had in the house was for

Shabbat and for Passover. So the kids never saw. Marty would have a cocktail once in a while, and I would have a cocktail once in a while. The children never had anything to drink except for the holidays. The little ones got grape juice. They didn't even get wine. So they didn't see anything differently in the house. And then, one time, we had some friends – we invited them for a Hanukkah party. And this one girl said – Marty was fixing cocktails for the adults, and so she said, "Mr. Rind, I'll have, whatever, some cocktail." He said, "How old are you?" She said, "Sixteen." He said, "Not in this house. You're going to have a soft drink, or you can have a glass of milk, but you don't get any alcohol in this house" – which I'd never known that young kids would really have the nerve to ask someone to give them a cocktail. By the same token, to show you the relationship between my children, when our youngest boy graduated from Lakeside, he was fifteen. I said to him – prior to that time, I said, "Miles, you're getting all these invitations for these graduation parties. Why don't you go, darling?" Every time an invitation, he always said, "Oh, this one sounds nice." "Why don't you go?" Well, after about three, four months, he says, "Mom, the reason I don't go to these parties is because all they do is drink and smoke marijuana." I said, "Well, where are the parents? They're supposed to be their chaperones." He said, "They're not there. There's nobody there. Just kids." So again, I felt here was my son, fifteen years old, trying to protect his naïve mother, that he didn't want me to be offended. He finally told me why he wasn't going to these parties.

PBL: Was there something that you had instilled in your children or particularly Jewish values that made them feel uncomfortable with those who were partying a lot more than them? Was it something that you taught them?

BMR: I don't think it's anything you can teach or you can tell them about. I think it's what you do that children are impressed with – how you live, how you act towards society, how you treat other people. I always tell them with their own children, "It's not what you say, it's what you do, for example." You want to teach your children? You do the right thing. That's how you teach them.

PBL: Did any of your children –? Were any of them drafted?

BMR: No.

PBL: What have your children gone on to do, and how have you been involved with their decisions?

BMR: Well, Bradley was working on his Doctor of Mathematics, of philosophy of mathematics. He's a brilliant mathematician. He had discovered the answer to some mathematical problem that has been at the forefront of mathematics for a long time. This was when he was 16. And it was published. Then he got a job teaching at one of the community colleges. Got hired in the spring and let go in the fall. Budget cuts. That happened three years in a row. So he decided that it was kind of hard on the nerves to keep doing this so he figured he'd have to do something else. And I felt so badly for him because there was nothing I could do. But he went on to do other things, and that was the end of his professorial ambitions. Sherry is a writer. She first thought she would be a zoologist, and she would have been great because she's very good with animals. Fantastic. She kept little tiny – she kept records for her hamsters and her guinea pigs. Marvelous records. Veterinarians used to call her up. How to take care when they'd get a patient, a guinea pig patient. They would call her the expert because they didn't have much knowledge of how to take care of a guinea pig, you know. But then, the only school that she could go to was in Pullman – Washington State University, The School of Veterinary Medicine. She didn't want to go to Pullman. So she went to her second love, which she always did anyway: writing. And she's been a very successful poet. She doesn't make a living at it, unfortunately, but she's a very highly respected, nationally known poet. And when she can't – well, she writes, and then she teaches at night in a community college so she can write during the day and take care of her family. She is a young widow. David was in the first school for gifted children here in the area, in Burien. He was four-and-a-half and taking physics and doing very well in it. He went to the

University when he was fifteen and graduated at nineteen. First, he said he was going to go to law school but wound up going to Israel first. So he went to Hebrew University for a year. Then he wanted to stay there. They offered him a job at Hebrew University. And my husband was very upset. He said, "Well," – he was only nineteen, so he said he had his twentieth birthday there. He said, "Well, you come home, and we'll see how you feel. If you still want to go back to Israel, you can go."

PBL: What was the job he was offered?

BMR: I think it was in public relations. And he was very flattered and quite thrilled because he had gone—this was prior to Sadat's visit to Israel. He had gone to Egypt. He went to Athens to get another passport and then went to Israel. I'll show you the picture. So he met Sadat at the Ismalia Palace, and Sadat was very good to him and him and another boy – both Jewish boys. And he was very generous. Offered them a car with a chauffeur to take them around anyplace they wanted to go in Cairo. And then that was during their spring break. Then they went home, back to Israel. Of course they went through Syria, then they couldn't get out of Syria. They were arrested in Syria, and I thought I'd never see them. They were missing for a week. They finally got out of Syria and went –

PBL: What were they held for?

BMR: Because they were Americans, but who knows why they were held there. It's no place to go, let me tell you. I had been trying to get a hold of him all week at Hebrew University. Nobody knew where they were. They were supposed to be back at school. And a week later, we found out where they were. Anyhow, he runs the business for Marty, and he's a very bright young man. Then our youngest, Miles, will be teaching at Brandeis [University] this year, and next year, he's got a fellowship. He also graduated from Stanford [University] with distinguished honors at nineteen and did his graduate work at Johns Hopkins and the University of Chicago.

PBL: Your children are all very gifted in very unique ways, and I'm wondering what it is that you shared with them about your prior career as a harpist, or did you shield them from that for any particular reason?

BMR: They don't really know too much about my background because I didn't think it was that important that they know too much except that I'm a harpist, a composer, and that I have been playing since I was a child.

PBL: Why do you think you made that decision not to share it with them in its fullness?

BMR: Because then it would seem like bragging, and my primary relationship with my children is the fact that I'm their mother. I want their own accomplishments and their own lives to be very important to them. That whatever I do or whatever I have done or whatever their father does as parents, that's the most important thing. I don't think it's modesty. I think it just seems like bragging.

PBL: Why do you think bragging is a bad thing?

BMR: Well, I don't. It just would make me feel synthetic or – I don't know, it's just not my nature. I wouldn't be comfortable.

PBL: Is it somehow because also when you entered into marriage that you essentially left part of your life behind?

BMR: Could be. Could be.

PBL: What is it that you then talked to your children about in terms of Sephardic heritage?

BMR: Well, it's only been in recent years. When I say recent, maybe twenty years, I have mentioned too much or anything about it. And being that if they were 100% Sephardic, then I would have told them all the time. I don't want to be unfair to my

husband's background, which I am not. Because I've done all this research strictly on my own to find out about his family. So I've traced his family back to about 1700. That's the best I could do. And so what was the question now?

PBL: Well, how did you and your husband negotiate certain decisions about teaching and about your heritage? It sounds like your interest in genealogy has been for both families.

BMR: Yes, I've done it for both families. Marty didn't know too much about his own family. Was never interested. And his cousins didn't particularly care. Nobody seemed to care. HIs aunts, one particular aunt who lived to be ninety-nine-and-a-half, wouldn't ever tell me anything. She felt they were strictly Americans and everything else doesn't matter. And so I had to do all the exploration myself. Locating the cousin back in New York, who told me a few things. There was the theory – which is an interesting theory – that the family was originally Sephardic, the Rind family, which may be because a lot of them went to Austria (one branch of our family was in Austria [the Rinds]) and could have intermarried with the Ashkenazim at any time. There weren't any Sephardics left in that family. Which happens all the time. So that's the only thing she's ever said.

PBL: Why is it important to you to trace this genealogy? Is it for yourself? Is it for your children, for your grandchildren?

BMR: Yeah, I think so. It was important for my mother to tell me all about Sephardic Jews and to tell me about the Island of Rhodes and about the Colossus and about that part of the world. I always found it interesting, and my children are interested. Now, for instance, like last week, my youngest boy sent me a tape, a CD that he says, “I was in a music store, Mom, and I found this tape.” He said, “But I thought before I send it to you” – rather the CD – “I would take it home and try it first.” He says, “It sounds kind of weird but you might recognize some of the music.” Well, I played it. I didn't recognize any of it. But you see, there are Sephardic Jews that have been in all these Arab countries, so

their music is more Arab than Spanish, whereas the Jews from Rhodes and some from Turkey, the music is still Spanish, is still from the old country of Spain. So this CD he sent me is not at all familiar to me, and I didn't understand a word they sang. So I don't know.

PBL: Did you make efforts in the home to play Sephardic music or Ladino folk songs?

BMR: No. I didn't even like them. When I was little my grandmother would sing them, and she'd say, “It's a beautiful romanza.” I said, “Oh, Grandma, it's terrible.”

PBL: Was that your classical training speaking?

BMR: [laughter] Well, strictly speaking, as an American kid. Then I'd say to my dad sometimes, “Dad why don't you take mother dancing?” So he'd do the Greek dancing. “That's not dancing. That's not the kind of dancing I –” – so, it's two different cultures mixed up there.

PBL: Was there something that you really embraced, however?

BMR: About Sephardics?

PBL: That you really culturally brought into your home and made it a Sephardic Jewish home? Either around your Passover holidays, did you make certain foods that Ashkenazim don't necessarily make and things of that nature? Kitchen Judaism?

BMR: Yeah, I guess I do a few things. There's a few meals that I will prepare that are very Sephardic. The only thing is that when the children were little they didn't like any of those things so I never made anything.

PBL: Can you be more specific?

BMR: Well they never liked any of the, what we called desayunos, the little fila things. They never liked anything like that. The only thing my daughter liked and she was the only one who ate fish. My mother would cook fish for Friday night. So she'd send over a little dish full for Sherry. Friday night fish. Nobody else liked fish. Biscochos, the little biscuits. All these little cookies and things, she'd make those and send them over. Marty never liked anything. The boys never liked anything. They didn't like any of the vegetables. Now that they're older, now they like them. But then you see, when I was younger, I didn't like them either. I learned to like these things when the first time I went to Europe, Marty took me on our tenth wedding anniversary, we went on a grand tour. And of course we went first-class, everything was first-class. And we'd go to all these fancy restaurants and I'd eat all these things and I'd say, “My God, my mother makes this. What am I eating this here when I don't even eat it at home?”

PBL: Such as?

BMR: Oh heavens. All the vegetables. The different sauces. That sort of thing. And so when I came home, I started cooking some of these things that were so expensively and extravagantly served abroad and I learned to appreciate. You have to become a certain age and then you appreciate what your parents were either trying to tell you or to show you or whatever. I'm sure you experienced the same thing.

PBL: What Jewish holidays did you celebrate in the home?

BMR: Every one of them. The major ones, of course: Passover, Purim, Shavuot, Sukkoth and Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Hanukkah. I usually had a Hanukkah party, and I'd invite family and a lot of friends, the children's friends, my parents. We'd have a couple hundred people. I'd serve dinner and things.

PBL: Your Passover seder, what was it like?

BMR: I'd say it was sort of Reform. Yeah, it was. I thought my father was so good and sweet because he lived with me, and he would never say anything. Of course, he adored Marty. It was mutual. Marty did the whole service, and he did a very nice job of it. My father would always do it when he had his own home in Hebrew and in English. He didn't have all the repetitions. He would condense it to a certain extent rather than the way he did it when we were children which would take hours and hours. So Marty did it, and my father never complained or said, “Well, in my house, I did this or…” He never said that.

PBL: When you made the charoset, maror sandwiches, and stuff, did you use the dates and the nuts, or did you use the prunes, or did you use apples? What was the recipe?

BMR: Well, I had my own recipe, [laughter] which was I made applesauce and then I'd put the wine. If I wanted it red, then I'd use the Concord, the Manichewitz. If I wanted it white, then I'd use a white Kedem. then I'd put cinnamon or whatever. Sometimes, if the children didn't mind, I'd put raisins or dates, but they didn't like it that way. They wanted it plain. I ground up nuts, put that up. I ground it up real tiny so that [inaudible]

PBL: Did you make your gefilte fish with what kind of fish?

BMR: I didn't even make gefilte fish.

PBL: Yes, you mentioned that. Why not?

BMR: Well, Sephardic Jews don't make gefilte fish, and Austrian Jews or Czechoslovakian Jews don't eat gefilte fish. They eat fish. I mean, salmon usually – as a salmon.

PBL: I'm wondering about the decisions made around bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah for your four children with three boys and one girl.

BMR: We had three bar mitzvahs. At that time, they didn't have the bat mitzvah.

PBL: Was this at Temple de Hirsch?

BMR: No place in the city did they have them.

PBL: Did girls have an alternative ceremony or a party of some kind?

BMR: No. They didn't have anything. They always—I remember when I was a child I asked my mother, “How come the boys have a bar mitzvah and I don't have anything?” “Oh but you're going to get married and you're going to have a wedding.” Well that didn't seem very fair but that's the way it was in those days. And for instance we used to have—the Alhadeffs lived next door to us, Victor and Susan Alhadeff. When their daughter had her bat mitzvah, they had a party here at the house. There was no service at the synagogue. But I do remember when Rabbi Levi was at Ezra Bessaroth, I went one shabbat for services and they had this girl and she gave a speech. She had her bat mitzvah. I guess she celebrated another day but then they allowed her to give a speech, which I thought was very nice and very enlightening of him.

PBL: Did all of your children get their education and go to synagogue at Temple de Hirsch, or did you introduce them also to Ezra Bessaroth?

BMR: No, they went to Temple. They didn't learn that much Hebrew at first, and all their friends went to Temple. They couldn't keep track of the services at Ezra Bessaroth. And Marty couldn't keep track of it either. But I can because I know Hebrew, I read Hebrew, and I liked it, and my children can read Hebrew, but they're not familiar with the songs or anything. So, it's different. It's different.

PBL: How did you feel about that?

BMR: Well, I felt that I married a man whose family was at Temple. And I had to honor that. And I don't believe in this business of trying one synagogue and I don't like that, I'll move to another synagogue and if I don't like it then I'll go to another synagogue. I

believe in loyalty. So I support both because his family were founding fathers of Temple and I support the Ezra Bessaroth because my family were founders of the Ezra Bessaroth.

PBL: Did you ever feel that you were compromising some of your own desires for your children to understand more of those traditions from Rhodes?

BMR: Compromise? Well, I'm sure I did to some extent. Because I didn't have it as a major thing. For instance, they really had no association with Sephardic Jews except for their cousins. The first Sephardic that Bradley ever knew was at Lakeside. He says, "Mom, I know this boy, his name is Larry "Benaroyal." I said, "Oh, I don't know that name." He said, "Yeah, he just came into [our] school. His name is Larry "Benaroyal." [laughter] It was the Benaroyas. He was only ten years old, and that was the first time he had ever heard the name. So that was his first – what was amazing with all the children at Lakeside, they were the only two Jewish boys in the class. Happened to be Sephardic.

[END OF CD 3 OF 5]

PBL: Continuing with the oral history interview of Bernice Rind, this is minidisk tape #4. Are there any in your personal life, now – not so much as a mother but in your personal life – have you participated in any other women-centered Jewish activities? Whether they are social clubs, or they are book clubs or circles of that kind, bridge clubs? Things where the women are Jewish.

BMR: Well, I used to be very involved with the Women's Division of Jewish Federation. Past president. I was involved in all areas of the organization. I was very active with Hadassah at one time, ORT, and I've never been too involved with National Council of Jewish Women for no other reason than just a lack of time. It's a very fine organization. And the JCC, I did a lot of fundraising for them along with my husband, who is the

founder and campaign chairman, to start that organization.

PBL: You were president of the Women's Division of the Jewish Federation and Council from 1972 to 1974. Is that correct?

BMR: I think so.

PBL: Can you talk about your involvement? When did you get involved? How did you get involved?

BMR: Well, I became involved because my husband was so involved. I was overly involved, I would say. I didn't want to be that much involved, but the community kept calling us, and he was so involved [that] I felt that as his wife, I had to be there, and we never said no. Whatever we were called to do. We gave very generously of our time and our support, financially and emotionally.

PBL: Can you describe your involvement?

BMR: Within the Jewish community?

PBL: Particularly within the Women's Division. And what your role was as president. What did you do, what were the activities that you oversaw?

BMR: Well, first year was very enlightening, very important. You learned to gauge some of the women, some of those you could count on and some who you knew that just were there because they wanted to see their name on the roster but they did come through with their support and never carried through on a job. I worked with Timmy Fagan of the National Council of Jewish Women and together we started the High School of Jewish Studies.

PBL: What brought that to be?

BMR: Well, I don't really know how it got started except I've always enjoyed working with Timmy. We were and are good friends though I haven't seen her for a long time. But she's always been very involved with Council, and I guess we just felt the time was right, and the product was sort of facing us in the face. I do recall that Hilda Asia, God rest her soul, at board meetings – Federation board meetings, this was the overall board – was always trying to emphasize to everyone how important it was that the children should have a good Jewish education. I always felt badly that she never received the recognition that she should have. She was a brilliant woman. Very overpowering. I think she came on a little strong, and some men don't like to have a strong woman tell them what to do or what's right. But she started talking about education long before the Educational Council ever came to birth. She was added, and that was one of her prime advocacies, so it may have been the impetus of Hilda's idea. I don't know. But somehow or another, Timmy and I got this thing going with the cooperation of the Federation office, and it's just gone up, and it's quite successful.

PBL: I'd like to understand the importance and the need for creating a High School for Jewish Studies. Many students and many kids in their high school years I imagine were going to Hebrew schools up through 13, possibly through confirmation for some. So what was the need in the community for a High School of Jewish Studies and how was it modeled? What was it modeled after?

BMR: I don't know that it was modeled after anything. I think the greatest need that was facing the community was that there were a lot of children whose parents are not affiliated with the synagogue, who have no Jewish education, and we wanted to get a unity of the community so that the children would at least know each other. Children from Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform know that we're all Jews, basically, and that there shouldn't be any division. I recall that what really made me feel so good about giving so much of myself to Federation was that we were working together – go to a board meeting, and maybe it was a president from a Reform synagogue or the secretary

from the Orthodox or Conservative. But we were one people. We were working as Jews. They weren't up there saying, “Well, we don't do this,” “We're not that,” “We're so and so.” But that was wonderful. So once in a while, they had these divisions or these misunderstandings that they make such a big point of or that this one isn't a Jew and that one isn't a Jew. It offends me so deeply, and I don't know what else we could do except to eliminate that kind of thinking and just think that, basically, we're Jews.

PBL: What's going on at this time that the need to service the unaffiliated is so at stake and how did you learn? Were there polls taken? How did you learn about this group of unaffiliated people that needed further study? Where did that come from?

BMR: Well, I don't know, but I know that periodically the Federation does have demographic studies. They hire experts from the University of Washington to carry these on. So that they do have a legitimate record of that particular interest. Now whether or not they did it for us, I don't think so at that time. I think it was just an idea that there was something that the Jewish children needed.

PBL: So, what is the High School for Jewish Studies?

BMR: It is classes that take up different subjects that they feel the children would be interested in or that need the knowledge about regarding the various groups of people involved. Or the different kinds of study. Whatever the subject may be. And to enrich them. Hopefully that they'll learn something.

PBL: Can you specifically talk about some of the early classes? Do you remember the types of classes? Were they secular? Social history? Religious?

BMR: I think most of them were religious and on history. It's been so long, I don't really recall, but I know that the students were very enthusiastic about it. It was a little difficult and tiring for parents to keep taking their children here and there and everywhere. But then they got older and the kids could drive themselves.

PBL: Was it an after-school program, or was it an actual high school that conferred a degree?

BMR: It was in evenings. I think it was a couple of nights a week.

PBL: Did your children attend?

BMR: My son David did and Miles. The others were already through that part so they didn't.

PBL: I'm sorry, continue.

BMR: Well they complained about, “Oh my goodness, do we have to go? I have studies to do” and so on and so forth. “Yes, you have to go,” I said as one of the co-chairs that started this. “You have to go.”

PBL: How do you feel that it enriched them?

BMR: Well, I think they would have learned something, depending on the subjects. If not that, they would learn something about some other groups of Jews that they haven’t met before, wherever they're from, if they're unaffiliated, or from a different synagogue or something or other.

PBL: Was there anything unique about Seattle because of its different cultures and Jewish affiliations that made the high school – do you remember any of those early conversations around what would be taught or how to raise money, or who to raise money from? How did you go about helping make some of those decisions in the establishment of this high school?

BMR: Well, it was sponsored by the Federation, and I think they took care of all the expenses. The first year it was just sort of trial and error, and they had the teachers and, in time, established certain priorities for those who were teaching. They had to take

classes themselves and make sure that they were qualified to teach. So it got to be more professional. I don't really know. I have been out of it for quite a while, so I can't tell you how things are done now. But it is under the aegis of the Educational Council.

PBL: Which was established how many years later?

BMR: Well, not too much later because it was just a committee, and I was on that committee. Goodness me. They didn't have – one of us was a chairman of the committee. I was never the chairman of the committee. I couldn't take on another job. But they always had someone who was quite dedicated. And then, in time, we had a professional. We had [Carol] Starin – what's her name?

PBL: Carol?

BMR: Carol, yes, who's just great. She's been doing a terrific job.

PBL: So it was first a real volunteer effort, and then eventually you hired somebody on?

BMR: Well, the Federation took care of it. Once Timmy and I got it started, and got it developed and going, then we bowed out because we had other responsibilities.

PBL: What exactly did you have to do to start it?

BMR: Well, we worked with – I think it was Murray Schiff at the time, who was the executive director in the Federation. HE did a lot of the work. So he really took care of all the nuts and bolts.

PBL: As Women's Division president, what was your most passionate campaign? What were the things that you were working towards?

BMR: Well, the following year, we had the 1973 War. I was down at the Federation office every single day. We were there calling people up to give money, to come and

help, to do things. Because that was such a shocker, the Yom Kippur War. I remember that was the first time I met Rabbi Levitan.

PBL: How do you spell his name?

BMR: L-E-V-I-T-A-N, I think. From Chabad. He was a young man in his twenties, and I remember he shook hands with me, which is so unusual for an ultra-Orthodox rabbi. But we were working there, and there were a lot of volunteers, and I remember a lot of people would come with their little tzedakah boxes and their little piggy banks and give everything they had. I remember we were supposed to have a swimming pool. Yes, a swimming pool that year.

PBL: In your backyard?

BMR: No, that was the '67 war. Yeah. So Marty called me up one day and he says, "You know the money that I put aside for the swimming pool and the landscaping?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "I sent it to Israel. I gave it to Israel." I said, "Okay." He said, "Maybe in a couple of years, we'll have it." I said, "I'm not going to wait a couple of years for the mud, with all that mud." So the children and I did it. No swimming pool, but we took care of the grass and everything. Did the landscaping such as it was.

PBL: How did you feel about his decision? He made it without you, it sounds like. [laughter]

BMR: Well, I was kind of upset, to be honest. I don't know what I would have said if he'd asked me. But I was kind of upset. Gee whiz. Because you know what it's like in Seattle when it rains. If you have a yard of dirt, you have a yard full of mud. Mud with four little kids. It was terrible. [laughter] But it's all for the best.

PBL: I want to ask you about a particular program that I read about, and I guess this was in January of 1973. There was something called "I Am a Jewish Woman, It All Begins

with Me."

BMR: Oh, yes. We had a marvelous program. I never realized there were so many ignorant Jewish women. I had no idea. They didn't know – not only nothing about themselves. They didn't know anything about Jewish history. We had rabbis as speakers, prominent, knowledgeable individuals to speak to them. The attendance was fabulous. It was really thrilling.

PBL: Whose idea was it?

BMR: I don't know. I guess Timmy and I got together and just thought about it. Sort of a follow-up from the High School in Jewish Studies. Everybody was very enthusiastic, and I wouldn't be surprised today if it would be helpful to have something like that again.

PBL: Well, it's interesting. I can't remember if it was about the workshop or there were workshops, and I think I remember seeing a program that said that it was "a self-searching educational process towards the attainment of more dedicated individuals."

BMR: That's a sentence.

PBL: It quite is. It was training classes and speakers and things like that. I'm just wondering—and there was Hebrew and Yiddish and all this kind of stuff. What was so important about solidifying Jewish identity and feeling at this time? And why Jewish women? Why not just –?

BMR: People?

PBL: – everyone?

BMR: Everybody. I don't know. Perhaps because it was probably Murray's idea. He was very knowledgeable. Very brilliant man. Very modest and quiet. But probably because somebody discovered that there was so much ignorance. Here were our

American women with so many opportunities, and they don't know anything about themselves.

PBL: Do the men know more?

BMR: You know, probably not. I don't know. I think most of them, because they've had their bar mitzvahs, could read Hebrew, whereas some of the women couldn't read Hebrew, which I found amazing. They weren't interested. I don't know. But it was an excellent program.

PBL: Was there anything about the fact that women make more decisions necessarily about the education or the Jewish education of their children or that somehow you believed or the Federation believed that women are the purveyors of Jewish survival or Jewish identity within the family?

BMR: Well, the woman of the family has always been assumed to be, I should say, the one interested in educating the children, taking care of them. Whether or not they are educated or not. But mostly, from what I can gather, the only ones that – females that were educated were those from rabbinical families. Where it should be, everyone should have an education and at least a curiosity of knowing something about your background. But I was absolutely amazed at the ignorance. I just could not get over it.

PBL: Were there any standout Jewish women educators at that time that were part of the speaking series or teachers? Was it mostly male rabbis?

BMR: Yes, yes. I don't recall the list of names that we had. But women? I can't even remember any women speakers. If there would have been, the only one I could really think of is Hilda.

PBL: Hilda Asia?

BMR: Yes. Because even if she didn't know, she would have gone about the learning. But then I'm sure she knew.

PBL: Well, it was interesting to see that there was Hebrew and Yiddish in the program but not Ladino.

BMR: Well, if you want to learn Spanish, you can just go anyplace and learn Spanish, and there's not that much difference. For instance, our English is almost equal to what Ladino is. Because when we speak English, there's a lot of Yiddish words in our English language. There's a lot of Hebrew words in our English language. So it's the same thing. And with what they call Ladino, it's fifteenth-century Spanish. Pure fifteenth-century Spanish with the Hebrew words in it – like "Yom Kippur," "Pesach" and that sort of thing. And then up until the 1900s, 1890s – up until that time, the language was quite pure. Then they started getting in whatever host country they lived in – Greek, Italian, Turkish, Arabic. Well, they were incorporated just as we incorporate English. And then, when they came to this country, they added English in it too. So, it's a mishmash. It's no longer pure fifteenth-century Spanish.

PBL: I understand also you told me that even the epithet "Ladino" has its own strange history to it.

BMR: Yes.

PBL: That it's not an inherent term to Judeo-Spanish speakers.

BMR: No. What it actually means is the "written language." When the Jews were leaving Spain— you see the bulk of the Jews during all the wars they had been trying to get rid of all the Jews in parts of Spain, the Jews would migrate to the state of Aragon. There was more freedom there. That was the last state that they had any freedom. When they got to Aragon, all these Spanish Jews spoke different dialects, just like we speak here in the United States. You have the different parts of our country that speak different dialects of

English. So, what they did was they felt they should have a uniform language. In order not to forget who they were or where they came from, they said we're going to write it down. You write it in Rashi. You write it in Hebrew. But it's Spanish. So when you read it, it's pure Spanish. It's beautiful. My father would read it to me, and it's beautiful. So, that's what it meant was "to write in Ladino" is to write in Hebrew characters or Rashi characters in the Spanish language. It was a preservation of your Jewish heritage.

PBL: As part of the Hebrew, the High School for Jewish Studies or the Jewish Awareness Institute, or any of these programs that you were involved in, when do you remember Ladino being taught?

BMR: Never. It's just beginning in some cities they're teaching it. But it's never really been taught. It is so close to pure Spanish or even Castilian that any person, any Sephardic Jew, who speaks the language can get along in any Spanish-speaking country.

PBL: But there's a richness to language just like Yiddish which has to do with proverbs and sayings and things of that nature.

BMR: Yes, but strange as it may seem, they're very similar to Spanish customs too. For instance, we have some friends in Whittier, California. She's from a very old Spanish [Catholic] family, originally from Spain to Mexico to California. I remember the Spanish Jews are very superstitious, but I guess most Jews are anyway. And the plant – have you ever heard of the plant Ruda? Well, there is this plant – I have some upstairs. If you remind me, I'll show you – and they use it for superstition. When a child is a newborn baby or especially beautiful, then they'll pin it on there with a little blue bead. That's to ward off the evil eye. Well, I was talking to this woman. She came to visit us, she and her husband. She says, "Oh, you have a Ruda." And I said, "Yes." I said, "I've been trying to raise it for a long time. I've never liked it as a child, but now I wanted it because it reminds me of my childhood." So, she says, "Oh yes, we have it in our family too. It's

an old Spanish custom, superstition, to ward off the evil eye."

PBL: Do you remember any other –? Were you done with that story? Were there any other types of home remedies and superstitious things that your mother or grandmother would do around the home? When you were sick or any other reason, for luck or evil-eye-type stuff?

BMR: I can't think of anything.

PBL: So, just to continue with your work with the Jewish Federation and the Women's Division, I'm wondering if there's anything else that you wanted to add about your time as president. Not everyone gets to be president, and what special talents did you have or can you put your finger on that made you a leader in this position?

BMR: [laughter] I think it's the same for anybody – commitment and dedication. In any organization, it's not easy to get someone to commit to take on a responsibility. Everyone wants to be something or other, but they don't want to do the work. So, you have to look for somebody who will come through. And then that's not always easy, whether it's the Federation or the symphony or the ballet, it's the same thing, same problem.

PBL: Well, I was going to say that in 1973 – correct me if I'm wrong – you declined becoming president of the Seattle Symphony Board to continue your work with JFC, and I think you were quoted as saying in the President's Report of 1973, you said, "I am Jewish, and I am aware of our members. Our numerous problems regarding intermarriage, survival, education, the state of Israel, etcetera. I feel I must pay my debt to the community in which I live so that my children will be able to know that I tried to do my share."

BMR: Well, I became president in '46. Was it '76, I mean? Yeah, wasn't even a teenager then. In '76, the Symphony – that was the Women's Association.

PBL: There was a Women's Association of the Symphony?

BMR: Yes. When I was asked to be President of the Symphony Board, of the whole board— goodness me, I can't remember what year that was, but I didn't feel I could afford the time or the money. It was suggested that I give a donation of $100,000 [yearly to the Seattle Symphony Orchestra], the bulk of which would go to Federation – not to any other organization. Because if we Jews don't give, who is going to give?

PBL: Is that generally how much a board member of the Federation would give? Is $100,000 what annually people give? What's the minimum?

BMR: There is no minimum.

PBL: What did people give?

BMR: No, this was for the Symphony. It was suggested that I give $100,000. Well, at that time, nobody gave $100,000 or even $50,000 or even $25,000. But I mean, that was an impossibility. That was a stretch that we couldn't have made under any circumstances. But it doesn't hurt to ask.

PBL: Can we talk a little bit about the Symphony and your involvement in the Seattle Symphony? How you led up to being asked or becoming part of the Board, and what does the Board do?

BMR: Well, I attended my first concert when I was four years old. My mother took me. And she bought one ticket because she couldn't afford to buy two tickets. And I remember she went in, and she sat me down, and then she went out and waited and made me feel so badly. I still remember sitting in that chair, my feet stuck out because I couldn't reach down below. And I felt so badly because she was waiting outside for me. But she wanted me to have that experience. At any rate, when I was in college, I would volunteer at the Symphony for whatever they needed if there was something I could do to

help. As I got older, when I got to be a young matron, a married woman, it was one of the things that I got involved in. I've enjoyed it very much and working with some of the women that I work with and particularly now the last ten, fifteen years, it's been a different kind of make-up of the Board.

PBL: Can you be more specific? How has it shifted?

BMR: Well, we have a real working Board. We don't have the old school and the dead wood that we had. We got rid of them. We have people of different ethnic groups, several Jewish people now, and they work, and they give. It's great. I remember my first meeting in 1974. My husband was on the Board, and so I sat next to him at the board meeting, and I remember they were saying, "Well, we have to have – board members have to give first. You can't go around collecting money if the board members don't give first." Well, this one man stood up, president of a bank. Very wealthy man. He says, "I don't have to give. My name is enough." His name is not going to pay the bills. Another woman was asked to give twenty-five dollars. Twenty-five dollars. She resigned. That they should ask her to give money. That's the way it was. So, when Marty went on the Board for the Symphony, being accustomed to giving like for the Federation and so on, or the synagogue, he sent them a check for five hundred dollars. What? They were so thrilled. Never had anybody to do that unsolicited, to give a check.

PBL: Is there something about the culture of the Symphony Board versus the many other Boards that you had served on within the Jewish community that you could pinpoint the difference in those cultures?

BMR: Well, Dana [talking to the dog] – the difference in the cultures? Well, of course, the different people. The interests were different. Whereas, with a Jewish organization and particularly the Federation at that time, we were all interested in the survival of Jews and the future of our children, and the future of our Jewish communities. Whereas a cultural organization, it's not that it's a luxury nor that it's superfluous, but it's not life-

threatening. It's entirely different.

PBL: Are you talking about the differences between communal interests versus self-interest? Who is on a Symphony Board? What kind of people joined the Symphony board? I think of that as power and clout. That these are big people in the community. So what comprises power and clout in the Jewish community? What comprises it in – I don't want to call it “the gentile community” because it's diverse, as you're saying.

BMR: Right. Well, I would say both organizations are looking for the same thing. They're looking for people who have the intelligence for leaders. People who have the financial means to give. If they don't, if they have the wherewithal to find the means, and if they're associated with particular business organizations who have the money to contribute. That's what the Federation looks for too. So it's basically the same.

PBL: What was the status of the Symphony? [laughter] That's okay [referring to the dog]. What were the projects that you worked on with the Symphony Board? You had the building of a major building in the last couple of years, Benaroya Hall. So what was happening in 1974 when you first got involved?

BMR: Audience development. To try and get people to attend concerts, to buy tickets, to support the Symphony. Basically, they’ve always had me in with the fundraising. Which I don't like, but I do it. I don't know of anybody who likes to fundraise. But I've always done it, and I'll do whatever is necessary, whatever organization I'm working for. I think that was the basic thing because we were always in the red. Always in the red. I cannot recall a year when we were not in the red except for these last few years. So, that was the main thing. Of course, then there were labor problems with the unions and the musicians trying to – they'd get themselves straightened out with the union, then we had to get straightened out. Or they wanted more money when we didn't have any more money so that it's the same old thing.

PBL: So what happened? You hired non-union musicians to perform?

BMR: No, about [fifteen, twenty] years ago, a committee of the orchestra members started a union of their own. A guild. And they seem much happier. They make their own rules, and they run themselves, and it's worked out very well. We've had less headaches.

PBL: So, the union's been a positive thing?

BMR: The Guild.

PBL: The Guild.

BMR: Yes.

PBL: So, when you said labor struggles, what do you mean?

BMR: Well, when it comes time to negotiate contracts between the musicians and the management, we have so much money to spend. It's not that we don't want to give them more money, but if we don't have it, we can't give it. Because then there's the pension and the medical and the dental and all that sort of stuff. Many other things besides the straight salaries. And then they want more work. Well, in order to have more work, they've got to sell the tickets. So one thing leads to another. So you have to have a board that's going to work with those things so that you can get more money. You can earn more money, so that you can give your staff what they need, the music staff. It's not just the musicians; there's all the people behind them that work. There's the stagehands, all the staff that work, the librarian, the music manager, the orchestra manager, etcetera.

PBL: What knowledge and abilities did you bring as a former musician yourself to the table?

BMR: Well, I used to serve on the Artistic Advisory Committee, which helps from both programs. Now it's not always what we suggest. As a matter of fact, it's very seldom what we suggest for a program. It's the conductor's choice. He's the conductor. He has that liberty. But we can make suggestions, and we can hopefully press on with some particular program that we don't want or that we do want or make some new suggestions that perhaps are accepted and are very helpful. So I served on that for a long time so that my background would be appropriate there. Another thing is just understanding the guest artist and what their needs are. Some people have no idea. They just see the artist perform that one time; they figure, "Oh, that's a cinch." But you've got years of background behind that, and most of them are tired because they go from place to place. They're alone. They're lonely. And some of them would like to have company, and some of them don't want to have company. Every person is different. One of the most jovial ones that I found was Gil Shahan.

PBL: Can you spell the last name?

BMR: S-H-A-H-A-N. Was a brilliant young Israeli violinist. There was a reception for him a year ago – two years ago. I was introduced to him. Jerry Schwartz introduced me [and] said, "She's a fabulous harpist. Fabulous." I said, "Jerry, you've never even heard me." [laughter] So then Gil looks at me in the eye, and he saw this [pointing to her necklace medallion], and I had my little Hebrew University pin here.

PBL: By this, you mean the family crest on your necklace.

BMR: Yes. And then I had my Torch of Learning from Hebrew University, and he said, "Did you go to Hebrew University?" I said, "No, but I represent them here in the State of Washington." "Oh," he says. "Very good." Because he went there. He says, "My father is involved with Hebrew University." I said, "That's wonderful." So we chatted a little bit in the few little words of Hebrew that I spoke. He's a wonderful young man, brilliant artist. Very happy, young, carefree young fellow, but that's unusual. Some of them are. The

younger ones today have a different responsibility than the ones from different generations, and it's a little freer life. A lot of them are very pleasant, very nice.

PBL: I'd like to just talk a little bit about the Symphony before we move on and ask a little about who in Seattle goes to the Symphony. Who is it important to? Has that shifted over time? And what's the status of the Symphony in Seattle? Is it important as it compares itself to other symphonies elsewhere? I just want to understand as someone, myself, who is not very familiar with the Symphony.

BMR: Well, it's a major orchestra. There are different categories of orchestras in the United States, and it is a major symphony orchestra. She [referring to the dog] made me lose my train of thought. [laughter]

PBL: It's a major orchestra.

BMR: I can't remember what I was going to say. Tell me the question again.

PBL: When did the Seattle Symphony get its start here in Seattle?

BMR: Oh heavens, it's almost a hundred years ago, started by Henry Hadley. And Henry Hadley started the orchestra, and I think they played at the Moore Theater or the Metropolitan. I'm not quite sure. But they've had quite a number of conductors in that time, and some have been very good, and some have been terrible. They've had Sir Thomas Beecham, who said Seattle was a dustbin, something like that. Well, they were a dustbin. It was a small town, and people didn't really support the arts too much, and it's very conservative. I think you asked the question of who supports it. Who goes to the concerts and so on. It's a smattering of all types of people. On different nights you will see a different class of people completely from the other. The support these last few years since we've had the new building has been tremendous. It's made a lot of difference. People don't like to just give money and have it go into a big hole to pay bills. That's nothing. They can't see it. But to see the building, that is something. They can

see it, they can be in it, they can touch it, so then they give. The support has been tremendous from people we never expected.

PBL: Such as?

BMR: Well, we got from a stranger that we never heard from before. We got a check – $50,000. We have a man working for us – he's a volunteer, he's a docent. He's just been involved three, four years.

PBL: A docent at the Symphony?

BMR: Very nice person. I know him very well. We work together. And one day, he goes up to the office and gives them a check for half a million dollars. We all about fell over. Didn't even know he had that kind of money. So, it's amazing. And then, of course, we have people who give very little but then it's the best they can do and that's tremendous too.

PBL: How has the role of the Jewish community within the Symphony changed over time or who has been very involved in it?

BMR: Well, the one who has been there the longest and given the most is Sam Rubenstein. He's been marvelous. And he's very low-key. He doesn't make big noise and all the fanfare. Sam Stroum came in, and Sam was a wonderful guy, very generous. But he likes people to make a big fuss over – he liked people to make a big fuss over him. He wanted that fuss. He wanted all this paraphernalia to go with it.

PBL: What do you mean by paraphernalia?

BMR: A special title. He insisted that he had that special title no matter what. By-laws had to be changed. He insisted. Well, see Dick Cooley, who was the president of the Sea First Bank at the time, was asked to be chair. Well, Dick didn't want to take the chair

completely because he couldn't give all the time, so he brought in Sam Stroum to be his co-chair.

PBL: Because Sam also served on the board of Sea First.

BMR: Right. Well, then you would have thought that Sam Stroum was the one who brought Dick Cooley in. He sort of took over. He was happy. He loved it, just loved it. And everybody made a big fuss about him and he loved that too. He was always reminding [us] that he was doing this and getting this much, and so on and so forth.

PBL: Is this when the building campaign started?

BMR: Just [inaudible]. Just before that. So, he'd go out and collect. He'd go out and raise money with Dick Cooley. Well, the reason they gave money [was] because Dick Cooley was there. He's the president of the bank. They didn't give it because of Sam Stroum. He couldn't give them any money from the bank. But Dick Cooley could, you see. So, of course, all the corporations were giving and we got into the black. Which was great. So, that happened for three years. And Sam did a lot of work, and he just was having the best time. He loved it. He liked all the fuss that people made, and he plugged – all that sort of thing. But now we've had people like Sam Rubenstein or Buster Alvord, or perhaps you've never heard of the Alvords.

PBL: Spell that last name?

BMR: A-L-V-O-R-D. Buster and Nancy Alvord. Buster is a pathologist –

PBL: Jewish? Or not Jewish?

BMR: – at the University of Washington. No, not Jewish. His family came over on the Mayflower. He's got a family history book this thick. It's got every day of their lives there. Beautiful. Well, Buster is a brilliant pathologist, very modest and very quiet. And without

his support, the Symphony would have gone under twenty-five years ago. He has poured in millions, year after year. His family is very, very wealthy. His wife, they tell me, is even richer than he is. They're very modest, very quiet. You never hear Buster say, “I did this, and I gave that,” and so on.

PBL: And yet there are Symphony Halls, and there are spaces within the new building that are dedicated to particular people.

BMR: Yes.

PBL: I'm just wondering how it is that the hall came to be named after the Benaroyas.

BMR: Well, Jerry Schwartz is a very good fundraiser. As Jerry says, “Jewish people are very good fundraisers.” He worked on the Benaroyas for two years. They never gave much. They gave five hundred dollars. I used to call [on] them, and I was lucky I got the five hundred dollars. That's all they gave. They never came to concerts. They weren't interested in the Symphony. So he worked on them. He wanted a new hall badly. He wanted a new hall for himself as well as to leave some kind of a heritage that he did something for Seattle. Now that's my surmise. And so he worked on the Benaroyas, and he got them very enthusiastic. Entertained them all the time – Becky and Jack and Alan and to some extent Donna and Larry, but not very much. He got them all excited about it, and he got the money out of them.

PBL: How much money did the Benaroyas –?

BMR: Fifteen million.

PBL: Now, I've heard a story that Sam Stroum was also involved in getting the Benaroyas. Is that true? Was there any fact to that?

BMR: It could have been, yeah. But Jerry was the basic one. Yeah, Sam could have influenced them quite a bit because they live in the same – they lived in the same building and see each other often. They were good friends. Yeah, I could see that. Sure, absolutely.

PBL: Is there anything else that you'd like to add about your work with the Symphony?

BMR: Well, just that I enjoy working with the fantastic number of people that we work with. They're dedicated. They're really remarkable. We've never been so fortunate to have such good people. It's great.

PBL: What does it mean to you, if anything, that the Symphony is named after or bears the name of a Sephardic Jew?

BMR: Well, it doesn't really mean anything to me that way.

PBL: Does it mean anything to any other people in the Jewish community?

BMR: I don't think so. I think it's a Symphony Hall. It could have been named after anybody who would have come up with the $15 million. We've had people give five million dollars and seven million dollars. And I think if they wanted, they could have gotten another few million from the Nordstrom family and could have called it Nordstrom Hall, but that would have been something kind of commercial, too, when you think about it. Or the Boeing Company, which has done so much for us. When Ron Woodard [phonetic] was our chairman and our president – he is remarkable. And so there are any number of people that could have had their name up there that gave a sufficient amount. Maybe not quite fifteen million dollars, but pretty close to it.

PBL: Did you ever want it to bear the name Rind?

BMR: No, no. Wouldn't have fifteen million dollars to give them anyway. [laughter]

PBL: So, let me ask you a little bit. You mentioned your work with Hebrew University. What's the story?

BMR: Well, Hebrew University – it's American Friends of Hebrew University. Three years ago now, they have been without a president. I'm sort of chairman of the Board retired, I would say. It's been quite inactive. They have sort of – they've been on a very big campaign, raising several hundred million dollars, and their goal was to raise six hundred million dollars. They raised eight hundred million dollars

.

PBL: For what?

BMR: For Hebrew University. This is the national office in New York. And so now they've raised it to one billion dollars. Well, they know that there's not – there is money here, but there isn't anyone to go and raise it. I can't do anything more for them now. There wasn't anybody to take over for me. So we were sort of at a standstill. But they're just going to have to – I don't know what the future is for Hebrew University as far as the State of Washington.

PBL: Well, in 1979, you negotiated a statement of understanding between the University of Washington and Hebrew University.

BMR: Yes.

PBL: What got you interested in doing this work, and then you were also given a number of awards for doing this? Can you start at the beginning, and how did this come to fruition?

BMR: Well, Marty was President of the Jewish Federation at the time, and we had a visitor from Hebrew University who was traveling – the State Department was sending

him around. His name was Mordechai Abir, A-B-I-R. I think you might mention him someplace. So, we had him for dinner, he and his wife and daughter.

PBL: He was the provost at Hebrew U?

BMR: Yes, yes. He'd had a meeting with the Jewish community during the day, and so then we had him at home for dinner. I remember he seemed so sad. Well, I knew that his daughter, one of his daughters, one of his teenage girls, had died several months before, so I thought maybe that was it, but he seemed more troubled about something else. I asked him if there was something that we could do to help him in some way. He had a big sigh, and he said, "I have been trying for two years to get some arrangements made with the University of Washington and Hebrew University, and nothing's happened." I said, "Well, Marty and I are both alums. We both graduated from the University of Washington. Is there anything that we can do to help?" He says, "If you can get all the faculties and all the different schools – the different disciplines – to agree to accept Hebrew University as a partner, that would certainly help us." I said, "Well, I'll see what I can do." So, I called Ed Stern [professor of physics], and I talked to him, and he said, "Well, we haven't been able to – we've been kind of busy. We haven't been able to do anything the last couple of years." So I went to see the president. It was John Hogeness [M.D.] at the time, and he told me which faculties had not signed yet – if anybody had objected to it. This was to accept the credits of all students from both universities to the other University, graduate students as well as undergraduate students, the exchange of faculties, which always went on, but to have it official. And so everybody accepted it, and then John Hogeness was going to sign it, and I was representing Hebrew University, so that would have been done. Well, John Hogeness accepted a job in Washington, D.C. So, the first thing that Bill Gerberding ever signed was the Statement of Understanding between Hebrew University and the University of Washington.

PBL: When he became the new president of the University of Washington?

BMR: Yeah.

PBL: Did the University of Washington have Statements of Understanding with every other international school? Was that a common practice that you needed this Statement of Understanding in order to do exchanges? Why Hebrew University? Why this relationship between these two particular universities?

BMR: Well, most universities have them with other universities throughout the world. It makes the exchange of student credits legitimate – full value. Otherwise, a student, particularly an undergraduate student, may lose perhaps a third to a half. I don't know what the percentage is. I'm just guessing a third or a half of credits in the transfer. There's a whole year shot that a student has given to the place of study. So this was making it that the credits from Hebrew University are all full value and the credits from the University of Washington are full value.

PBL: What did you have to do to negotiate this? Did you have to go talk to professors and department heads? How much work did you have to do?

BMR: It took me a year to get all the different schools to sign on. Hopefully, nobody was going to object – which nobody did. The University had had exchanges with Hebrew University, particularly in the sciences and the faculty, for thirty-five, forty years. So, it wasn't anything new. But the students – the graduate students and undergraduate students – were not really recognized as full students. This is what they were trying to get. It was more of a benefit for Hebrew University.

PBL: Was there any resistance?

BMR: No. None at all. It's just something that hadn't been done, that's all.

PBL: I understand you were given an award for doing this. What was that?

BMR: Torch of Learning. It's upstairs. It's a beautiful sculpture by Haim Gross, who was a very famous Jewish sculptor. I'm sure you know the name.

PBL: Who awarded this to you?

BMR: Abe Harmon, [Chancellor Emeritus of Hebrew University and former Ambassador to the United States].

PBL: Was it through Hebrew University, or was it through the University of Washington?

BMR: Hebrew University.

PBL: What are some of the satisfactions and rewards that you got from doing this?

BMR: Well, I had gotten involved in Hebrew University initially because of my son, David, who had spent a year there. I didn't want to take on any other jobs, but I felt as a parent that I couldn't very well say no. I'm very conscientious. So I took that on. And Professor Abir said that it was terribly important. He was so miserable about it, and I knew it was important for the University. So I felt fine, I'll just do this, and then I'm all through, which I thought I was.

PBL: But?

BMR: But then when I was through with that, they said, “Oh, would you take on American Friends of Hebrew University,” the chapter. So, I started a chapter, and it was very successful at first. Very successful. I did that for a number of years. I can't even think of how many years I did it.

PBL: That was to raise money in the community for Hebrew University.

BMR: Then I had little satellite chapters, different parts. Got one in Richland, Bellingham.

PBL: How did you get people interested and excited in this University, so far away?

BMR: Actually, they did it because of Marty's involvement with the Jewish community. His name and my name. Most of them had never even heard of Hebrew University, and until David mentioned that he wanted to go, I really, never really even thought about it myself. It depends on how something touches you so that you become aware of it.

PBL: Well, let me ask you then how it is that you were touched by creating the Sister City in Beer Sheva.

BMR: Jack Spitzer started that. Jack Spitzer is a marvelous builder. He will start something, but then he wants to dump it and go. So he started it, and then he dumped it on my husband.

PBL: When was this?

BMR: Oh, God. 1977, '78. Something like, maybe earlier, something like that. Marty wasn't interested. He says, "I haven't got time for this sort of thing, and I'm not interested in it." I said, "We can't let it drop." So, I took it over. Then I did that for – God, I think it was seventeen years, and nobody would continue it. Then Dorothy Schroeder took it over, and she used to be the mayor's secretary. She took it over when she retired as his secretary, and then Hilda was chairman. Then it was sort of dying out, and a few others I don't know of – and now we get letters because it's on its last leg. Jack Spitzer's gotten involved again. He hated to see it die – well, of course.

PBL: What's the meaning and importance of creating a sister city in Beer Sheva? Why Beer Sheva?

BMR: Well, it's also strange because Beer Sheva is a desert city, and it's so different from Seattle. You figure there's nothing in common there. But the fact – it needed a sister city to promote economic advantages for Beer Sheva, really. Now the one thing that they do with Seattle is Boeings. They buy airplanes here. I guess there's some high-tech stuff, I suppose. But there's a lot that can be done to promote business. It's all a matter of economics, really.

PBL: You were president for [at least] nine years. What sustained your interest, and what motivated you to continue being involved for that long?

BMR: Only because nobody else would take over. [laughter] Otherwise, I would have just served two, three years, or four years, and that was it. But there wasn't anybody who would take it over. Everyone wanted to belong and do everything and go to all the activities, but nobody wanted to take over the responsibility.

PBL: Well, through all of these – I mean, there are so many things that you've been involved in, and as you said to me off the tape before, “When I give, I give one hundred percent.” It certainly seems that way. I'm wondering if there are any other volunteer, paid or otherwise, organizations that you have been involved in that I haven't asked you about yet that you wanted to talk about?

BMR: Well, I used to be very active with the American Association of University of Women. I worked for them for years. Thoroughly enjoyed it. It was just great.

PBL: What got you involved with them?

BMR: I got involved with them about the second year I was married. I met a very nice group of young women my age or a little older. As a matter of fact, it was my first association with an older group of women to belong to a book club of university women. And there was this – well, I thought she was very old. She may have been fifty, I don't know. So I thought, “Well, we've got different ages here.” See, now here we were in our

twenties, and here's this old lady. Everything's perspective. We all thoroughly enjoyed each other's company. We were discussing different books that we would read that we were reviewing. That was one of the things I enjoyed there. Plus the fact I was the editor of their bulletin once, and we put out a yearly bulletin. I gave lectures one time and –

PBL: What was the subject of your lectures?

BMR: I can't even recall, except that we gave them at the Holy Names Academy for a while there.

PBL: And it was professors? Who is part of this organization?

BMR: Yeah. Yes, professors, teachers – anybody who was a university graduate is a member. We give scholarships to students. We give grants. We promote women in education. We work very hard for women to get equal pay as professors, which is difficult, and they're shortchanged. What else do we do besides? Well, educational purposes are the most important. We have an educational tea and an educational forum that they try to raise money, and I haven't been active in it in – oh, I'd say fifteen, twenty, years. The two girls that I was involved with – and we were girls at the time, in our twenties – they both died of cancer a number of years ago. Then, little by little, everybody was dying off, and they were just in their forties, so it – and I got more involved in Federation and the Symphony, so I just didn't go. I still pay my dues, but I don't attend any of the meetings or anything anymore.

PBL: How did you juggle all this activity with – you had children from ten to twenty or so at that time, in the late ‘70s. So how did you manage it all?

BMR: Well with anything I ever did, I did during the time the children were in school. I was never out of the house when they were home. As a matter of fact, when my

daughter started school – she was in pre-school – and she'd say, “Now, don't go anyplace.” She was so afraid I would go and leave. “No, I'll be here all the time.” Well, I had to go to the store. I had to go out. But I was right at home when she got home. So from the time that they left for school and the time that they came back, I would be gone that time. Not all the time, but whenever – but never the time that they were to be home. I was there. So, they always saw me there. For University Women, what I did when I couldn't go out and do anything, I would do just telephone work. Whatever I had to organize, I would do by telephone. The same thing for the Symphony or for when the kids were in their various schools. I did everything at home. I never left.

PBL: How did you spend your leisure time, if you had any? Or what was your greatest guilty pleasure when you did something just for Bernice?

BMR: Well, my husband and I would go out. We would go out for dinner quite a bit. That was very nice. We liked to go out alone so that the two of us could spend our time together.

PBL: Where did you like to go?

BMR: Let's see, we would go to the Canlis – there weren't many restaurants in those days – and the Crabapple here in Bellevue used to be terrific. We would go there. That was before your time. And there was the [inaudible]. Oh, and what is it? Rosselini's [inaudible]. Yeah, that was great.

PBL: Where was that?

BMR: That was across from the Olympic Hotel. That was terrific. We liked to go to the Boulevard Room because they'd have entertainment so we would have, we'd sit there, and we'd have a drink and listen to the entertainment, usually a comedian who was fantastic.

PBL: Was that in a hotel?

BMR: No, it was just Rosselini's Restaurant. Then we'd go into the restaurant and have dinner. It was great. Things like that would just get us away from the house so we could spend time together and talk. Because it's very difficult to talk when you have children – to have a conversation, [laughter]

PBL: Were there any hobbies that you've developed over the years?

BMR: Yes. I'm a goldsmith and silversmith, jewelry designer. I do fashion design and fabricating. Whatever my children's hobbies were, I got involved. Like David was a rockhound, so we had a marvelous collection of rocks. When we would travel to different parts of the world, I always went to lapidaries and met people and got some samples and buy them for him. For the other children, I would always go to antique bookstores to look for some particular books that they were interested in, some old author or something. So, I've had lots of hobbies, lots of things.

PBL: You told me when we first met that you're ABD. You're “all but dissertation.”

BMR: Yeah.

PBL: Tell me a little bit about your return to education.

BMR: Well, it's been a continuation. When the children were little, I was always enrolling in some class. Usually, I'd go at night. Maybe just one class. And Marty would babysit. But it was hard because by the time he'd get home, I'd have to make a mad dash, and it was late. But I'd usually take one class – which, you can go fifty years before you get anyplace. But that was about the best I could do at the time. But it's been an ongoing thing that I have thoroughly enjoyed.

PBL: What subjects have you been taking classes in?

BMR: Oh, dear. I took a lot of Jewish study classes. In the first years that they started, they had some very good classes. They didn't have music classes that I needed or that I hadn't had. Although I could certainly use a review now because I've just about forgotten everything. I've taken some medical classes off and on. Various things. I've been in and out of all the schools.

PBL: How did your interest in classic cars begin?

BMR: Well, I always loved cars. I think perhaps because we [my dad] only had one car [before marriage], and we were lucky to have that one in those days. Then when Marty and I got married, we just had one car, and I didn't have anything to drive. I took the bus, like anybody else. And then, he bought a little used truck, and then I had the car so I could take the baby out. But I was always interested in classic cars. I could always admire them. I never thought I'd ever have one. Then I started – and then I'd look at ads in the paper, and I'd call them up, and I'd find out about them. They were so inexpensive, but I didn't have any money. I mean, I didn't have any myself. My husband wasn't interested, so I didn't bother talking to him about it. He certainly wasn't going to give to cars. Never heard of that. [laughter] So it took quite a number of years later until I saw one ad where this man was selling a whole bunch of cars here in Tenino, and I called my husband, and I said, “We've got to go out and see this Bentley.” So we went, and we bought it, and that was the beginning of buying cars.

PBL: What year was that?

BMR: What year? I don't remember what year it was that we bought the car. It must have been about 19 – in the ’70s, late ’70s.

PBL: What did you pay for it?

BMR: $5500.

PBL: I'm going to pause for a moment, Bernice.

[END OF CD 4 OF 5]

PBL: We are continuing the oral history of Bernice Rind, and this is minidisk tape #5. So, please continue. Your first car was a Bentley S1.

BMR: 1956 Bentley. It was in the – what would you call it? – the livery. It was part of the Queen of Belgium's car. It is a left-hand drive. Yeah, something stuck now. Left-hand drive. It only had seventy-some-thousand miles on it. We've had it for twenty-some years. It runs beautifully. It looks beautiful.

PBL: Do you drive the car like that? Do you drive around town?

BMR: Yeah, it doesn't have power steering, so it's hard to drive it. But if you're going straight ahead, then it's okay. But it's beautiful to drive. It sounds gorgeous, and it's a beautiful car. Really beautiful.

PBL: Now, is this the car that's displayed in the foyer when you walk in?

BMR: No, no, that one's a 1931 Victoria – a 1931 Nash Convertible Victoria. It's a very rare car. Very rare.

PBL: When did you purchase that?

BMR: Marty bought that for me. I don't know. Must have been seventeen, eighteen years ago, or something like that. It doesn't even have 25,000 miles on it. And this old lady – well, I don't know if she was old. That's what they tell me. This lady had it on her estate, and she just drove it around her estate. So it was never registered. [talking to dog] Dana, get your nose out of there, girl. Good girl. You come around this way. And then we bought – let's see which one did we buy? Oh, well, we've – Marty's had his – that was 1974 – his E-type, a Jaguar convertible. A Jaguar convertible E-type. He bought

that for me, and I was having problems with it all the time. I was a jinx. So, I told him he could have it. I loved the car, but I just couldn't manage it. We just recently sold it two years ago because of his inability to drive it with a stick shift because he only has the one arm available now. Let me see, then we had a Triumph. I can't even think of what it is. A six – what was it? Anyhow, a Triumph. We sold that. And a Porsche. We sold that. Marty couldn't stand to have a German car here, although he called it "a Nazi-mobile." So we got rid of that one. We have an '81 Rolls convertible Corniche with less than 32,000 miles on it. I have a little Ferrari with ninety thousand miles on it. And Marty's Jaguar, which he used to drive every day except for the last couple of years. His '87 XJS.

PBL: Did you get to learn about the cars – the mechanics of the car – or were you really involved with the people who owned cars?

BMR: Well, we are now involved with the people that own cars because we belong to a lot of car clubs. The Rolls Royce Club, the Classic Car Club, the Jaguar Club, the Nash Club, and so on and so forth. Marty took care of the mechanics part and then we always have a mechanic for that specialty, and I took care of the cosmetics of the [inaudible] because I don't know anything about mechanics.

PBL: Did you ride your cars in the Seafair parade?

BMR: No, but we were involved in rallies and—

PBL: You'll have to explain what that means.

BMR: A rally is like a race, except you're given so much time to go from point to point. They give you directions of where you're supposed to go, and you had to find where all these points are and different – sometimes it involves several cities, it involves several hundred miles, and you had to get a certain point, and then you check-in. Somebody's there at that particular point to check you in. If you pass them [or] you skip something,

you're out.

PBL: Kind of like the Cannonball Run.

BMR: Yeah, I don't know what that is, but [laughter] –

PBL: So this was something that you and Marty very much shared together.

BMR: Yes. He was the driver, and I was the navigator. I couldn't possibly be the driver of that because I suffer from heights – acrophobia, I guess you call it. We'd go around these mountain cliffs. You're right on the edge. I couldn't stand that. And being a navigator, I didn't even know what I was supposed to do at first until I learned you have to count every millisecond. They give you a time clock that you wore around your neck, and you were timed from each place that you're driving. It's very involved. It's a real science. Well, you see in the new Mille Miglia that they have the Tour de Elegance. It's that sort of thing. Well, they have it in the States too.

PBL: What kind of joys did car ownership and classic car ownership –? What has it brought you?

BMR: Oh, it's fun. All the people that you meet and the same interests. People from all over. It's great. Yeah.

PBL: I want to turn to the last part of the interview and talk – to sort of play off of the many things that you and Marty did together. I'm curious about how the two of you – you're lucky enough to still have each other, and many of the narrators in this project no longer have their partners. So, what's it been like for the two of you to age together?

BMR: Well, we don't feel aged, for one thing. Don't feel any different. I think most people will tell you that. Unless I look in the mirror and I'll see my gray hairs. I don't feel any differently now than I did thirty years ago. I don't think my children treat me any

differently now than then or my grandchildren. I don't know. If it hadn't been for his stroke, we were just in fantastic shape. People couldn't believe Marty was his age, and they couldn't believe I was my age.

PBL: When did Marty suffer from a stroke?

BMR: Seven years ago. And it's been difficult, but we're thankful that things are as good as they are, shall we say, and not worse. There are a lot of people that are worse off.

PBL: How did his stroke change your lifestyle?

BMR: Oh, it changed it completely. From little things like how the bedroom is set – how we have things accommodating him – to the bathroom accommodations to our social life, which is practically nothing now. It's very limited. There's just so much that he can do. I don't enjoy doing things by myself without Marty. So it's different. It's completely different. I have to weigh and measure every activity that I think that he might be able to manage, which is very limiting for him.

PBL: So what kind of things do you enjoy together? Does it involve more things in the home? Are there television shows or things that you watch together and things like that?

BMR: He doesn't like television. We read a lot. He reads three, four books a week. And you've met Kashette. She's the nurse's aide. She helps him with his therapy.

PBL: How does she spell her name?

BMR: K-A-S-H-E-T-T-E. She very capable. Doing a very good job. I showed her at first the various therapies that he has to have, and she can carry on now. It’s a great help to me.

PBL: Before you had her help, did you have to caretake?

BMR: Yes.

PBL: How many years did you do that on your own?

BMR: Oh, wow. She's been only with us a couple of months. I had someone else, and she was only with us for a couple of months. She was also excellent, but she got a job in Portland. Off and on, actually, mostly myself. When I have had someone, it's been a very short time, short periods of time. It's usually after he's been ill, then the nurse's aide will come and see how he's doing and come for a few weeks, and that's it.

PBL: Is that because you would prefer to take care of him yourself – when you need to?

BMR: Well, I think mostly it's because there's always not someone who's satisfactory available.

PBL: I'm curious how it is that the role of caring has played into your life in terms of whose role it is and women in terms of what you saw in your family or what you were taught and how women caretake. Do you want to comment on that?

BMR: Well, sometimes I think I was born just to be a caretaker. See, when I was young, my mother had a heart condition. She was very ill. When I was five, we almost lost her. So I'm worried about losing my mother all my life. As I was growing up – I remember when I was little, I would take a mirror when she was asleep and put it in front of her to see if she was alive because I was so worried. I'd get up during the night to check. She was very fragile to me. But she lived to be almost sixty out of sheer willpower. I took care of her. I would drop in and out of school, or I would see that she was all right. I would run to school, take some classes at the University, go back. Didn't have time to study or anything, but I just did the best I could. With Marty, I'm very good at taking care of people or a sick dog.

PBL: Are there any other health practices from the community that have been beneficial for you? Ways that people nowadays get help for keeping someone at home? I don't know if you understand that question.

BMR: Yes, I do. No, I don't think – well, the community at large, there's a lot of different avenues of help if one needs it. We seem to be managing quite well under the circumstances. We certainly do go to doctors an awful lot, and labs and things like that, which is very time-consuming. Since Marty is not driving now, I take him everyplace. My time is spent that way.

PBL: How has your relationship changed or grown through the years and particularly through this last process? I guess I'm wondering whether or not there have been any significant health experiences that you have had to deal with.

BMR: Health experiences?

PBL: Yes.

BMR: My health?

PBL: That have been extremely significant to you.

BMR: My health. Well, I don't like to talk about personal things. [laughter] I am grateful for the health that I have, good, bad, or indifferent. As long as I can manage and get along fairly well, I think that's great.

PBL: How have you felt that the image of women in aging has – you've witnessed the way people respond to you. You said you looked in the mirror, and that's when you realize, “Oh, I'm a little older than thirty.” [laughter] I'm wondering if there are public ways that Americans or your family view women's looks and things of that nature.

BMR: Well, I think people do. I think when women make the mistake is with older women ¬– not the younger women. The older women, I think, where they make the mistake is that they feel that if they dye their hair, that's going to make them look younger, but it doesn't always do that. I think if they keep their brain active and if they're physically looking younger, not all of a sudden, at the age of sixty decided got to lose sixty pounds or twenty pounds or whatever it is. That if they'd done that – taken care of themselves when they were younger – I think that they would have aged gracefully. And gray hair doesn't always make you look older. So many young people have premature gray.

PBL: So you've chosen not to dye your hair.

BMR: Yeah, I think about it. And if I did, I would use a rinse that I could wash out every week. Something like that. But I don't see, if I didn't have children, perhaps I would, but my oldest boy has gray hair, and now wouldn't it look funny for me not to have any gray hair? Although in families and in our family, one part of our family has premature gray and the other part doesn't. Like Marty's aunts were eighty, ninety years old, [and] didn't have hardly any gray hair at all. But you could tell it was natural.

PBL: Have there been any cultural heroines or women that you've particularly admired in this age group or throughout your life?

BMR: Oh, I always admired Mrs. Roosevelt. I used to write to her when I was a little girl, and she always responded.

PBL: Personally?

BMR: Yes. She was such a lady. Louis Howe would write for her. I used to write to her.

PBL: What did you write to her about as a young girl?

BMR: Oh, I would tell her about myself and hope that someday I could come to the White House and play for her. I was only seven, eight years old. My mother would help me.

PBL: Did you ever play for her?

BMR: No. But I thought and all through the years I thought she was a remarkable person. Who else? Let's see. I can't think of anyone else. I'm sure there are some other people.

PBL: To end the interview, I'm wondering if there's anything that you'd like to say – and it's your final words here for this interview. Or if there's a motto or philosophy or something that you've really garnered over the years that you'd like to share as the last part of your interview. Or something we've forgotten.

BMR: I don't think so, except I remember I asked my father, “Dad, what would you say to your children and your nieces and nephews about life?” He would say, “Mi alma” – which means my soul, my darling ¬– “to be kind. Always think of the other person.” To be kind. In other words, chesed. If you're kind, you're thoughtful, you're generous, you're good, and I think to do the right thing. I think that's a pretty good philosophy for any Jew.

PBL: Have you told that same philosophy to your own children?

BMR: Yes.

PBL: Thanks Bernice very much.

BMR: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]