



Esta Maril Transcript

Marcie Cohen Ferris: Today is May 22, 2002. My name is Marcie Cohen Ferris. I'm with Esta Cook, is that right? It's kind of going in and out. And we are in her home on Roxbury Place in Baltimore, Maryland, about to do an interview for Weaving Women's Words of the Jewish Women's Archives in Boston, Massachusetts. So we will get started.

[microphone noises] What I'm going to do is just kind of walk you through from your first years through now. And we'll just take that journey and see how far we get. And we'll be talking about the neighborhood and family and your parents and your country of origin and just those backgrounds and your career, life, marriage, things that have been important to you. And I'll be pulling some from the survey you filled out too because I know you said a lot of things there that were helpful. So the first thing we do is we establish your date of birth and give me your full name.

Esta Cook Maril: Esta Cook Maril. 9/13/21.

MCF: OK. And where you born, Esta?

ECM: In Sinai Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland.

MCF: Tell me a little bit about your folks. Their names and where were they from?

ECM: My mother's name was Pauline Shapiro.

MCF: How do you spell that?

ECM: S-H-A-P-I-R-O.

MCF: That's an interesting way of spelling it.

ECM: Yes. And she was firm about spelling it that way.



MCF: I bet.

ECM: And my father was born in New Madrid, Missouri.

MCF: Where was Pauline born?

ECM: Well that was very interesting because I didn't learn until I was in graduate school that she really was born abroad. Since she must have had such a hard time as an immigrant when the courthouse in Belair burned down, she and her sister established themselves as having been born in America. And I didn't learn this until I was grown.

MCF: Do you have any idea where in Europe?

ECM: Yes. On our mother's side, it was Alsace Lorraine, and on her father's side it was Strasbourg. Her mother's maiden name was Seaman.

MCF: How do you spell that?

ECM: S-E-E-M-A-N. Or S-E-A.

MCF: Do you know when she was born.... Pauline?

ECM: No. I'm not sure.

MCF: Approximately?

ECM: I'd have to really look at the papers, yes.

MCF: So when did she come to the United States?

ECM: She must have come as a small child. My grandfather came over ahead of time and decided to settle in Belair because he could make a living better there.

MCF: Belair, MD?



ECM: Belair. B-E-L-A-I-R. I guess. Maryland.

MCF: Where is that?

ECM: It's about 30 miles from Baltimore.

MCF: Small?

ECM: It was a small town then. But they had a farm and he had a store and he was a jeweler and did watch repairing. He also farmed. Eventually the property became very valuable but they unfortunately sold it at the wrong time. He died young, in his late 50s.

MCF: And what was your father's name?

ECM: Jerrold. J-E-R-R-O-L-D. Lyle, I don't know why the Lyle.

MCF: Can you spell the Lyle?

ECM: L-Y-L-E. Cook. C-O-O-K.

MCF: And he was born in New Madrid?

ECM: Yes, Missouri.

MCF: I know where that is.

ECM: It's on the fault-an hour from St. Louis.

MCF: How did his family get there?

ECM: My grandfather was born in Chicago.

MCF: His father?



ECM: Yes. He was quite an entrepreneur. And I wish I had had the curiosity when I could have found out but now I would love to know more about them. But I don't know how or why they came. But I know that he was quite an entrepreneur and that his family were active in politics and some held office. One was mayor of a town.

MCF: So what did the family do in New Madrid?

ECM: Well he was -- at that time the easiest way to put it, he was a salesman for many things.

MCF: Do you remember his name?

ECM: Yes, Adolph.

MCF: Was he a traveling salesman?

ECM: Well, he was more than that but -- he did travel, yes.

MCF: Did they have a store in New Madrid?

ECM: No, he evidently was the entrepreneur and had a net-work of contacts.

MCF: Right, like a drummer?

ECM: Yes, yes.

MCF: For a firm?

ECM: I have no idea. But they were one of 3 Jewish families and therefore my father had no Jewish background other than what my grandmother could impart to him.

MCF: What was her name?



ECM: Sadie Green. G-R-E-E-N. And she was born in Nashville, Tennessee. And they're buried there. And they were evidently very integrated in the community. In fact she sang in the choir of the synagogue and I have the gold necklace that they gave her us.

MCF: She sang in the synagogue in Nashville?

ECM: Yes. And they gave her a gold chain, necklace, because she never charged them anything for her services.

MCF: Would they go to Nashville for service, for the holidays or something?

ECM: No, oh no, no. They didn't. After she left, they became very integrated in New Madrid, a the small town. She was very musical. She was an amazing woman. If she had come through at a different time she would have really done more with her talents.

MCF: So when would you see them when you were little?

ECM: We went to visit when I was 4. I remember that vividly.

MCF: What can you remember about that?

ECM: I remember being told about certain things, such as to look at the Mississippi River and I did. I remember they had chickens, and that was new to me. And it was a very different experience than living in Baltimore. She was very active in the community there. She put on operettas. Her biggest disappointment was that I was not musical. She also was a great cook and did beautiful fancy work. She was the matriarch of her family, took care of her mother, her maiden sister. In that era that was what you did. My father was an only child. They didn't have gynecologists, and she went through change of life early but she lived to 78 with no prior medical care whatsoever so they must have been of good stock.



ECM: She did not work for money, but she put on operettas. She made beautiful lace, and embroidery. I have examples of a lot of the things she made.

MCF: And tell me what you remember about her cooking.

ECM: She was a fabulous cook. And I remember asking her to teach me and she very wisely said, "Everything will be different when you're ready." And she was right. But I have her recipe book in her handwriting.

MCF: And do you remember specific things that she cooked?

ECM: Yes, I do. She made an angel food cake that was legend. It had to be whipped 100 times by hand and I remember her doing it. And then you couldn't stomp around or disturb the oven. (laughter) And it was light and beautiful.

MCF: Do you remember anything else?

ECM: Oh yes. She did an almond tart thing with a meringue. She made candy. She did southern dumplings. She had been raised in a Jewish family. They made their own noodles and, everything was from scratch. They didn't have frozen food or mixer in those days.

MCF: So you're saying she mixed those Jewish traditions with the Southern way of looking.

ECM: She did, but she really was a Southern cook of the highest order.

MCF: When you say southern dumplings --

ECM: Dumplings with gravy. But she knew how to make matzah balls, too. But I've never had those kind of dumplings anywhere else. They were flat. I use the same matzah ball recipe today.



ECM: The dumplings were flat and floating in gravy.

MCF: Any other southern dishes that you remember?

ECM: Southern fried chicken.

MCF: Did she have help in the kitchen or in the house?

ECM: No. I suppose she'd get people to come in and do heavy things, and she was a great gardener. I know they came here to live after my maternal grandmother died, (my mother's mother). They visited Baltimore, and then they moved here to be near their only child.

MCF: OK so Adolph and Sadie moved to Baltimore when I was 5 or 6 years old.

MCF: All right. So we've got a little bit on your father's background. And you said he was born in New Madrid. Do you know what his country of origin was, that grandfather? Your grandfather's? I mean --

ECM: ...they must have been German, Koch, K-O-C-H.

MCF: So it was a German family.

ECM: They were of German background. But I don't know what town. And I don't know why they came and I wish I did.

MCF: OK that sounds like Sadie's Jewish cooking traditions were pretty German, too.

ECM: Her mother was Polish. I found some papers, I'm named after my 2 great-grandmothers and that's why I spell my name the way I do because her papers spell Esther as Esta, E-S-T-A.



MCF: OK so your 2 great-grandmothers were Esta and Selma, no. Who is your great-grandmother?

ECM: Selma on my mother's side.

MCF: Selma.

ECM: Yes.

[phone ringing - phone conversation not transcribed]

MCF: So tell me how your father, Jerrold, came to --

ECM: Oh well, my father was a very bright man, but lazy and spoiled. All these women that were extended family and one child and a father who was a strong, rugged entrepreneur who traveled and wasn't always there. And he would have had to have been strong to stand up to him. He took the line of least resistance. He could have gone to college. They had the money. But he got a job through political pull. Anyhow, he got a job in Washington and there he was, like a fish out of water. (laughter) In the East. And that was before and after the War I.

ECM: My parents didn't marry until after the War I. They were engaged but they didn't marry until he came back. But my mother's sister was married to a man who worked for the government. He was a lawyer, my Uncle Mike. And he met my father and felt he was kind of lonely and didn't know anyone and they introduced him to my mother and that's how they met in Washington D.C.

MCF: OK so the connection was who? Who introduced them?

ECM: My uncle Mike. Her sister's husband, her brother-in-law invited them for a holiday meal I guess.



MCF: OK and that's Pauline, right?

ECM: Yes.

MCF: And so when did they get married?

ECM: Right after the War. The first World War.

MCF: Right after World War I. Do you know the year?

ECM: I'd have to look it up. I will try before this is finished to document the things.

MCF: And then what happened after they got married? What was Jerrold going to be doing?

ECM: Well, he never really did very much at all. In fact when I think of my Jewish heritage, it's very matriarchal.

MCF: How so?

ECM: Because the women were the strong, giving ones and my mother was the one in the family who managed and looked out for her siblings.

MCF: Managed what?

ECM: After her mother had become a widow my mother then moved the family here from Belair. In Baltimore they even had a big extended house. And I grew up with all these people. My maternal grandmother, Aunt (mother's youngest sister) and companion for my grandmother.

ECM: I have no siblings. I'm an only child.



MCF: So you were born in 1921, how long do you think they were married before you were born?

ECM: Not too long. Within the first 2 years.

MCF: So where were they living in Baltimore when you were born?

ECM: Near Druid Hill Lake on Newington Avenue.

MCF: Newington?

ECM: Yes. 815. A row house in a good middle class neighborhood.

MCF: How do you spell Newington?

ECM: N-E-W-I-N-G-T-O-N.

MCF: And that's near Druid Hill Park?

ECM: It's a couple blocks away, yes.

MCF: Lake?

ECM: Yes you can walk to the lake.

MCF: Is that the park? Druid Hill Park.

ECM: Yes. And in those days it was safe to do so.

MCF: What was the house like? Can you kind of describe it?

ECM: Oh it's a row house. Had a coal furnace.

MCF: What did that look like from the outside and then when you walked in?



ECM: Just a row house. It was nothing special.

MCF: Brick?

ECM: It was brick.

MCF: Did you have a front porch?

ECM: No, no porch. We had a backyard. And we grew flowers and we had dogs and cats. There was a vestibule before you entered the house.

MCF: So what room did you come into when you walked into the house?

ECM: You came into an entrance hall on the right and then the parlor as they called it was to your left. The steps went right up to the second floor from the entrance hall and it had a dining room and a kitchen and pantry.

MCF: Was that on the first floor?

ECM: Yes. And when I was very young, they had an outhouse along with inside plumbing. And that was the era when you didn't have soup kitchens, the homeless would rap on the door and no one would ever go away hungry. My mother or my grandparents -- the women of the house would always take them into the kitchen and give them a good hot dinner. And you certainly can't do that today. (laughter)

MCF: So who was in the house? Describe the household to me where you were growing up.

ECM: Well, my mother's youngest sister.

MCF: And that was --

ECM: Minna.



MCF: So her last name was --

ECM: Shapiro until she married. And after my maternal grandmother died, the Cooks moved up. From Missouri.

MCF: Did they live in the house with you?

ECM: Oh yes, yes.

MCF: And then your mother and your father.

ECM: Yes. And my -- before my grandmother died, because they wanted her to have company, they had, I guess you would call it a boarder, someone else who could speak German and who could keep her company because she had moved from Belair, and knew no one in Baltimore, to here and that woman stayed with us for a while, I remember, she wound up in Sinai Home when it was at the hospital.

MCF: What was her name? Do you remember?

ECM: Fannie Rosenberg. Called affectionately Aunt Fannie.

MCF: And your mother's mother name, remind me one more time.

ECM: Bertha. "Betty" we called her. Betty or Bertha.

MCF: And your mother's maiden name was Shapiro.

ECM: Shapiro.

MCF: What do you remember about Betty?

ECM: I remember her good cooking. Her cooking was much different than my other grandmother. My southern grandmother. She'd make a tzimmes and chicken soup and



different things. She also was a good cook.

MCF: Who was doing most of the cooking in the house where (inaudible)?

ECM: The grandmothers. They all cooked. My mother was very capable but she really didn't take over the cooking until much, much later. My mother had a big job. She was an early working woman. (laughter) She ran an office, a printing office, The Sun Printing Office. A printer in town. And she worked for them until they went bankrupt. She was in charge of the whole office. She was a very, very capable lady.

MCF: So she wasn't around during the day?

ECM: I was raised by my grandparents. But she was also very involved. In fact, I wrote an autobiography which I found in college in which I talk about the various things that I got from my mother and I will Xerox that and cut out those parts because I would be saying the same thing today.

MCF: That's great, that would be wonderful.

ECM: I've been looking for documentation. I also found an old letter that when Grandfather Shapiro, who I never knew, wrote to them when he went back to Strasbourg, I guess, and brought his mother over on the boat for a visit. I have the letter.

MCF: That would be great.

ECM: I have that letter and you really get a feeling of what he was like. When she came, I was not born. I never knew her. But she brought the samovar that's in the hall.

MCF: So that belonged to who?

ECM: My maternal grandfather's mother. That's on the Shapiro side. That's their samovar. And she brought her teacups and I've given some of them to my cousin



because it's kind of special.

MCF: And so they came from Germany, you're saying?

ECM: They're from Strasbourg. Yes. They must have been well off because they had portraits of the grandparents and you wouldn't have had that if you were poor. But I guess my grandfather was not the oldest child. He would have had an inheritance. And he had to make his way on his own.

MCF: OK so we have in the household that you're growing up in, on Newington Ave., Minna, your mom and dad, your grandmother before she passed away, and then the Cooks. Right? Is that correct?

ECM: Yes.

MCF: And then was there also household help at all?

ECM: Yes, they had some help come in.

MCF: White or Black?

ECM: Afro-American I guess you'd have to say today.

MCF: What would they help with?

ECM: Cleaning. Ironing. We didn't have the fabrics that you don't have to do anything with back then .

MCF: How many bedrooms were there in the house?

ECM: 5.



MCF: So what do you remember about the food that was served in the house like just for regular meals during the week? Any remembrance of that?

ECM: Well, I remember my father who lived until 86 began the morning with a shot of bourbon as was the Southern custom. And had bacon and eggs and toast and butter every day of his life. 2 eggs. And bacon. And cream and sugar in his coffee. And then he smoked cigarettes the rest of the morning. In the afternoon he switched to a pipe. And in the evening he had a shot of bourbon and he could eat the fat on any meat, it did not matter. Always dessert and coffee. And then a cigar in the evening. And he did not get lung cancer.

MCF: Kind of amazing isn't it?

ECM: Well I offered his lungs for research and I was very disappointed that they didn't want them.

MCF: Really interesting. So what were typical meals for you? Did you eat breakfast in the morning and then head to school?

ECM: I was not bacon and eggs person every day, yes. I didn't like milk, I remember that vividly. I probably just had toast.

MCF: Do you remember any favorite meals that you had (inaudible)?

ECM: The dinners were a favorite and they also liked Chesapeake Bay seafood; I mean we went in a lot for crabs and things like that. They made a wonderful crab soup as well as matza ball soup.

MCF: So a fair amount of good regional (inaudible)

ECM: Good regional and good desserts.



MCF: What kind?

ECM: Oh my grandmother would make cakes and pies and kuchens and everything under the sun.

MCF: Which grandma?

ECM: My grandmother Cook.

MCF: So tell me a little bit about where you went to school, what was your first school?

ECM: I went to public school.

MCF: Which one?

ECM: 61.

MCF: What are your memories of that? Where was it?

ECM: We walked to it. Either -- my grandfather would like to walk or the boy next door when I was very little -- somebody always walked, and it was not a bad neighborhood in that point but it was just the way you were handled. And I remember I had a lot of trouble with my -- it's interesting -- with my throat, with sore throats. I had my tonsils removed twice, and I remember being sickly in the 6th grade. I should have gone to the accelerated school but I had been sick and didn't, but then I skipped a grade so that was peculiar. I was a good student. However, and this is very interesting, my teacher realized I couldn't see the blackboard at the end of the first grade and so I had to wear glasses. And not many people wore glasses. And that was a real chore, and I would take them off when I wanted to look good. You didn't have contact lenses -- you had no other recourse. And so I lived with it. But then after I'm over middle age and have an ear infection and I was put on Prevazone for an ear infection, and it accelerated my beginning cataracts. I was up on Cape Cod and I felt I really needed a seeing eye dog, it was awful and I



networked and found about a Dr. Stark at Wilmer Clinic JHH who was supposed to be the one. I went to him and he said oh yes, he said but I can handle your congenital problem when I do the cataracts. But I didn't have any idea what he meant. I was just so eager to get back to where I was. And when he did the surgery he put in a new lens. And I can read the phone book now without glasses. So that shows you how science has moved. I'm sure in retrospect that I probably had a minor learning disability which I compensated for because after that happened, I noticed I could read so much more quickly and I can't help but feel if I hadn't had the problem, that I probably would have been a better student or it would have been easier for me. But that's progress.

MCF: So the Public School #61, that was a grade school?

ECM: Yes.

MCF: Went up to what grade?

ECM: 6th.

MCF: And do you have fond memories of those early years?

ECM: I don't have unpleasant ones.

MCF: What was your circle of friends like? They were neighborhood kids?

ECM: To a degree, yes. Much more neighborhood. I never fit in with the more well-to-do or aggressively intellectual group because my family really didn't have resources and they were very proud so no one would ever know that we didn't have it.

MCF: Financially?

ECM: Yes.



MCF: And it sounds like that was your mother's doing because she really was -- wasn't she contributing the major amount of money to support us.

ECM: Yes, yes. My father went from one thing to another, wound up in the insurance business and then couldn't make a go of that when they had the Depression because he couldn't try to collect the money. His biggest boom was during World War II. He was bright and he worked for the shipyard in the accounting department. He had no special training. But he was a very intelligent man. Very bigoted because he was raised in the South. He was very spoiled and charming. But content to just read the newspaper and watch television when he was older. I took him into live with me after my mother died because he couldn't fend for himself. There was no way; he had never taken care of himself. He'd been taken care of by his mother, his grandmother, his maiden aunt, by my mother. And then by me, his daughter.

MCF: So the community of kids that you were friends of with or kind of didn't fit in all that well with, were those mainly a Jewish community of kids or mixed?

ECM: Really mixed but there was one girl next door who was a little older, who was a good friend and then later, in school, I did have a few friends. But I was given all the privileges of upper middle class. I went to Baltimore Hebrew, I was confirmed. But it was a very superficial education and I never felt I belonged.

MCF: What was your Jewish education like during -- I mean would you go to Sunday school?

ECM: I went to Sunday school.

MCF: Every week?

ECM: Every week. And you had to go to services a certain number of times. My parents had seats at Baltimore Hebrew until they changed to -- Oheb Shalom. My mother got



involved with later the Sisterhood there.

ECM: Oleb. O-L-E-B. Shalom. They all had begun with a more Orthodox beginning. Now my late husband was from a very Orthodox family but he got fed up with that and yet he really was a very spiritual person.

MCF: But no Orthodoxy in the home as far as kashrut?

ECM: We didn't keep kosher but my in-laws wouldn't eat in my house, even on paper plates with Kosher food, and my son was bar mitzvahed but in a very unique way. We could not with conscience be a part of one of these congregations that want you to pay a great deal for this privilege. This just wasn't in the cards for us.

MCF: Tell me your husband's name real quick.

ECM: Herman. Maril.

MCF: OK I just wanted to get that straight because it wasn't your parents that kept a kosher home either right?

ECM: No, no. Although I'll tell you a lovely anecdote about my grandmother, my southern grandmother. She would not eat pork on Saturday or the Jewish holidays.

MCF: That was Sadie?

ECM: Yes.

MCF: Or the High Holidays?

ECM: That's right.

MCF: While we're talking about holidays, how were holidays celebrated? Shabbat and Passover?



ECM: The New Year, the day of atonement, the feast of Lights, Purim. My grandmother Shapiro lit the candles and said the prayer. I have her candelabra. I'm going to have it repaired. It's quite lovely. It reminds me of her. I remember that. We celebrated Hanukkah.

MCF: How did you do that?

ECM: Light the candles. Had gifts.

MCF: Any special foods?

ECM: When Grandma Shapiro would do the foods. I remember for the Passover, they would cook the traditional things. They did try to do the Passover. But we missed something because we didn't have the man do the Seder.

MCF: What about your dad?

ECM: He had no knowledge about Judaism and nothing rubbed off on him. And that was what was very sad because he did fit into that small town community but coming to Baltimore, he didn't fit in anywhere.

MCF: So as far as Jewish events and holidays, he was just --

ECM: He was out of it. He ate what they made.

MCF: Was he a participant?

ECM: He went along but it didn't mean anything.

MCF: So would the Seder be -- in whose house? Your house?

ECM: We had the Seder, but we didn't have the man to do it.



MCF: So who did it?

ECM: I was thinking it was my uncles on my mother's side. My mother had 2 brothers.

MCF: But your mother would not think about --

ECM: Oh she could do -- they would all read but you didn't have a man directing it and I think I lost out on that. In fact I know I did when I got older and we went other places. You could see the difference.

MCF: And what about for High Holidays. Did anything -- like Rosh Hashanah?

ECM: Oh they went to synagogue. My mother would drag my father but then he stopped going. It meant nothing to him. My mother did tie in with it. She did. And she was active in True Sisters and the Sisterhoods.

MCF: What's that?

ECM: That's a Jewish philanthropic organization.

MCF: What's it called?

ECM: True Sisters. I think they still exist.

MCF: What is that?

ECM: It's a lodge, you know like the Miriam Lodge.

MCF: Associated with one particular temple or synagogue?

ECM: No.

MCF: Did you remember any other Jewish foods that (inaudible) prepared besides things like tzimmes or matza ball soup?



ECM: Gefilte fish.

MCF: Who prepared that?

ECM: Both grandmothers could do that. And brisket, and roast chicken.

MCF: So from grade school, and you're in grade school, how old were you when you started going to Baltimore Hebrew as a little girl, when you started grade school (inaudible)?

ECM: I suppose so, yes.

MCF: So what was that? You had your school group and then you had --

ECM: I didn't fit in. I was not rejected. I mean if they invited everybody, they would invite me. I never felt that I fit in.

MCF: Because of that kind of class issue?

ECM: No it just was different.

MCF: How so?

ECM: Nobody else had mothers who worked outside the home then. I mean most of the kids in my Sunday school class, the mothers were ladies who stayed home and had help and the fathers made a living. (laughter)

MCF: And so from public school, elementary, where did you go for--

ECM: I went to the other -- the regular junior high and skipped. They had an accelerated school called 49 but I was sick that year and then I went to the regular junior high.

MCF: What was it called?



ECM: On Lafayette. And they skipped me, (inaudible) anyhow, then I went to high school and started at Western and hated it and my mother had the sense to change me to Forest Park. And that made all the difference in the world because I majored in art along with my other subjects.

MCF: It was at Forest Park?

ECM: High school, yes. And I graduated fourth in my year.

MCF: Tell me about high school because it sounds like that was kind of a special experience.

ECM: Well that was special because of the art classes

MCF: -- a coming out time.

ECM: -- that was much better. I had some friends. I had Jewish and non-Jewish friends. But I still was different in terms of what I was placed in, meaning my mother had very upper middle class values for me. For example, when it came time to go to college, and I often laugh about this, there wasn't any decision to be made. They didn't have the money to send me away. I was smart enough to get into Hopkins and go in the afternoons and evenings and to graduate in 3 and a half years. I got an excellent education and I worked part time. But there was no question that I could go away or think about something like that. Goucher was out of the question in terms of cost. Besides, nobody went to Goucher that was working and going to school.

MCF: So where were you working part time?

ECM: I worked at Hutzler's Department Store part time.

MCF: How do you spell Hutzler's?



ECM: H-U-T-Z-L-E-R-S.

MCF: What did you do there?

ECM: I sold (laughter). I sold books, I sold stockings.

MCF: Makes me think about, where did you all shop when you were a little girl for clothes and --

ECM: Oh when we did shop, we went to the good places.

MCF: And those were --

ECM: That would be Hutzler's, you know. And Hoschild's.

MCF: Is that H-O-E?

ECM: H-O-S-C-H-I-L-D-S. Hoschild, Kohn.

MCF: H-O-S-C-H?

ECM: I-L-D. Yes.

MCF: That was downtown.

ECM: Oh yes. But she had to stretch it in order to keep up appearances.

MCF: Now, were you aware that's what she was doing when you were little?

ECM: Oh sure.

MCF: So you knew there was some discrepancy between what was real and what was --

ECM: It was real. I never felt inferior, let's put it that way.



MCF: Your mother must have been such a strong woman.

ECM: She was.

MCF: Wow.

ECM: She was.

MCF: Now how did she and your father kind of negotiate?

ECM: He didn't care.

MCF: About what?

ECM: He simply was oblivious to anything but his own needs. He was not someone that you would look up to but you couldn't dislike him because he was gentle and kind of pathetic. What this does for you is it pushes you into using your own resources and being creative and making something of yourself.

MCF: Any other high school memories that you have, good or bad or any other that I haven't touched on about those years?

ECM: Oh no I really enjoyed. I was on the debating team in high school.

MCF: What happened in the summertime when you were a young girl?

ECM: I worked --

MCF: Where?

ECM: I kept the same job. Oh a couple of summers I went to college in the summer. That's why I graduated early. I got out in 3 and a half years.

MCF: What was your major at Hopkins?



ECM: English.

MCF: So tell me a little bit about your experience in Hopkins.

ECM: It was excellent. I had wonderful teachers and I made friends, I had a social life.

MCF: What was your social life like? What kind of things would you --

ECM: Oh, intellectual and then you'd go to the Peabody Bookshop or you didn't do things that cost a lot of money because the kind of people that I was involved with were all working part time and trying to make it on their own.

MCF: Were you living at home?

ECM: Oh yes. First of all it wasn't stylish to leave home and secondly, who had the money?

MCF: What year did you go into college, into Hopkins?

ECM: I graduated high school in 39 and I went right in.

MCF: So how did the war developing affect those years? Were you -- did it shape or color anything?

ECM: Well, (inaudible) were involved with the USO and then I got into social work and --

MCF: In college? At university?

ECM: No right after. (inaudible) in the war. I was going to graduate school in the war.

MCF: Skip back a little bit to English as your major. What were you thinking about?

ECM: I really wanted to write and I knew that I had been in such a protected environment I really didn't have anything much to draw upon. And that's what led me to



social work, to learn more about life. But I got an excellent education. In fact I wrote the head of Hopkins about that. And the interesting thing is, I'm not conceited but I do write well. And I've gotten a lot of compliments on letters that I've done and reports I'm over the hill on one hand in physical terms, but mentally I'm very "with it" and I'm really looking forward to writing about some of the things that I do have something to say about. That was the thing my one professor said: "The big thing is to have something to say and then know how to say it." And he was right. And I do have things to say now and I'm working on them at present.

MCF: So you got into social work, kind of tell me about that road. How did you --

ECM: Well, because I knew I was too sheltered. I needed to get more of a taste of life. And then it was a very good thing to help support a family and raise a family. And I have no regrets.

MCF: So what happened after you graduated from Hopkins?

ECM: I got a job as a social worker.

MCF: So how did you get your training in social work (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

ECM: I went on a work study plan. I was not self-sufficient financially --

MCF: After Hopkins you went on a work/study?

ECM: I was stuck until I gave the agency the year that I owed them. And then I was ready to take off.

MCF: OK. So after Hopkins you went into a work/study program.

ECM: No, I worked one year at the Department of Public Welfare and then from that, you had to work there to get into the work/study program. I worked a year there, and then I



went into the work-study, but they didn't have a social work school in Maryland.

MCF: So one year with the Department of --

ECM: Public Welfare.

ECM: There was no social work school in Maryland. We commuted to the University of Pennsylvania. And that was during the war, World War II.

MCF: So how many times would you go there?

ECM: Once a week. We stayed overnight.

MCF: So did you get a master's of social work?

ECM: Oh yes, yes.

MCF: From Pennsylvania?

ECM: University of Pennsylvania. And I was delighted to tell my grandsons because everybody asks you about these prestigious schools and their college boards and I got into Hopkins and I have a degree from Hopkins and I have a degree from University of Pennsylvania. There was nothing to it. Either you could do it or you couldn't.

MCF: Right. So what year did you graduate from that program?

ECM: 42—Masters degree.

MCF: And then you did the work/study?

ECM: Then I owed them a year.

MCF: And then what was your first position or social work job?



ECM: Welfare was the first. Then I got into children's work. And I wound up specializing in children's work and got my clinical credentials later.

MCF: And where were you living and what were you doing at that time?

ECM: Oh I was living at home because there was no money to do anything else.

MCF: So tell me what happened? You were working, socializing, how old were you in the 40s?

ECM: I'm in my early 20s.

MCF: So what were you hoping for? To continue working full time?

ECM: Well I was looking and I dated. I went that route. But the way I met my husband is interesting. Because I had a very progressive teacher at the Maryland Institute. My mother saw that I got music lessons and I took courses at the Maryland Institute when I was in high school.

MCF: Of arts?

ECM: Yes, Maryland Institute of Art.

MCF: Took music lessons there.

ECM: No, not there. I had a private teacher. I mean she saw that I got all the right things to mold me. And I had a very progressive teacher when I was in high school and taking courses at the Maryland Institute. And she suggested I take my portfolio to my husband, who was an up and coming young artist. Which I did. And my mother was really upset because coming from a bourgeois background, the idea of a girl going in New York and studying art was off the wall.

MCF: So was Herman in New York?



ECM: Oh no. This was after the Depression and he had a studio at that point in his parents' house.

MCF: Lived here?

ECM: At 3810 on Park Heights Avenue, yes. But he was already getting recognition. And so I called up and made an appointment. I was 17 (laughter) and I took my portfolio and he was very kind.

MCF: How old was he?

ECM: Well he was 13 years older. So he looked at my work and he sized up the situation and he said, "Well yes you have some talent but he said, you know, you ought to go to school like your family wants and take art courses. And if it's meant to be, it will be." This was just right because he didn't clip my wings but it was a nice way to handle it. And that's what I did. And I did take art courses. I took art history at Hopkins. Anyhow. Then years passed and I'm a social worker and I'm just about ready to be free of all my debts and take off and I'm out on a date and I happen to say you know, I really should take an art course again. I once took my work to Herman Maril. And the Afro-American waiter overhears this and he says oh, he says, he has a studio at Fellowship House. You ought to go down there and see what they're doing. And I said well gee, thanks, I think I will. And the young man I'm with said I'll take you. On a Saturday we'll go. And so because I didn't have a car, he took me. I looked around at what they were doing and I said, you wait here I'm going to see if Mr. Maril is in his studio, I want to thank him for how kind he was to me when I was in high school. So I found his studio and I rapped on his door, I said you don't remember me I'm sure, but when I was in high school I brought my portfolio to your home and you were very kind and I always wanted to thank you. He was so flattered that he said well, gee, what are you doing now? And I said I'm a social worker. And he said oh his sister was a social worker in New York. And then he said how about having dinner with me next week. And I said sure. When I went back to the fellow I



was with, he said, "Well, did you see your Mr. Maril?" I said yes, and I'm having dinner with him next week. And that was it. And I always tell people and my children, the moral of this is to follow your impulses. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. I find that to be very true. He was ready and I was ready. And that was in the fall of 47 and we married in June of 48.

MCF: In the fall of?

ECM: 47.

MCF: And you married in the spring of June 1948?

ECM: We couldn't really take a honeymoon; we took a weekend in New York. But we took the honeymoon in August; he took me to Cape Cod as a bride. We took the train and the boat and we stayed in a Portuguese fisherman's house for \$24 a week. With room and bath and kitchen privileges.

MCF: Where was it on the Cape?

ECM: In Provincetown.

MCF: That's great. So when he asked you out to dinner that first time, did you know there was some romantic --?

ECM: Well he was flattered.

MCF: --romantic interest?

ECM: He's a very interesting man and very talented and I've been very lucky. I've had a very happy and interesting life.

MCF: So did you just start -- after that first dinner did you start courting or dating?



ECM: Yes.

MCF: Just doing things together?

ECM: Yes.

MCF: How did he ask you to marry him? How did that (inaudible)

ECM: Oh, propose? Oh that's nice. He said somebody said to him are you serious with that girl? He said yes. (break in tape) And he said well I think so. And he said aren't I "(laughter). And since I was -- he kind of felt out whether he would be accepted."

MCF: And where did you get married?

ECM: In my mother's house. On Newington Avenue. And we were trying to please 2 families and not spend much money. (laughter) We had to have 2 rabbis because his family wouldn't accept a Reform rabbi.

MCF: So they were associated with what shul?

ECM: You know, I am not sure but they were very religious and we worked it out.

MCF: And what was his family's names?

ECM: Well he changed his name. His given name was Becker. His father was Isaac Becker.

MCF: Is that B-E-C-K-E-R?

ECM: The reason he changed it was there were 2 other Herman Beckers painting at the time that he started to get recognized. And he didn't want to be confused with them. He took his mother's maiden name, which is Maril, and Picasso did that. A lot of artists had done that. So it was quite acceptable.



MCF: He took his mother's maiden name, you said?

ECM: Yes.

MCF: So what was the wedding like? What do you remember about it?

ECM: Yes, I did remember it. I remember that it wasn't the way I wanted it. (laughter)

MCF: How so?

ECM: Well we're trying to please everyone else and not the bride. (break in tape)

[END OF CD 1]

MCF: OK. So I was asking you about how you would have rather had the wedding and what happened because you were trying to please all those people.

ECM: I just remember all the tension. I guess if they could have gotten together it would have made it better for me but anyway --

MCF: Your parents? You mean as the parents?

ECM: Well they were so far apart. And I must say his parents were so happy that he was going to marry a Jewish girl (laughter) that they were delighted and I was looking forward to having siblings which didn't turn out because that's a whole other story.

MCF: How many siblings did he have?

ECM: He was the youngest of 6. But he was the change of life baby and all his life he was afraid to demand anything because his mother was such a complainer.

MCF: What was her name?

ECM: Celia.



MCF: C-E?

ECM: L-I-A.

MCF: Becker?

ECM: Maril.

MCF: Maril.

ECM: Maril was her maiden name.

MCF: OK. Becker was her married name.

ECM: Yes. She was one of a big family of sisters and all of them married better in terms of income than she did. And my father-in-law was a very gentle, sensitive man who worked for some relative spirit in the clothing business but did the designs for the clothing. That's probably where my husband got some of his design background. And he was very gentle and very sweet but my mother-in-law was never happy. She never thought that my husband made it. And it's very touchy. I know I gave the Jewish Historical Society a portrait of her, (a drawing), because I thought it might make her feel proud she had some respect (laughter) if her portrait were there.

MCF: The Jewish Historical Society and Museum?

ECM: Here, yes.

MCF: How did he relate to his parents?

ECM: He was always very sensitive to their needs but he made a different life for himself.

MCF: Did Celia work outside the house?



ECM: Oh no.

MCF: Now did you all spend, tell me a little bit about the Jewish life that you and Herman created together. What was it like creating a family at the beginning?

ECM: Well, he wanted his son to be bar mitzvahed and I have to give him credit. He worked it out at a very small synagogue. He had David tutored and we went there in the middle of the week they were delighted to have us.

MCF: What was your son's name?

ECM: David Herman felt it was very important to know your heritage. It certainly rings true today with the hatred for the Jews. You have to understand your heritage and be proud of it.

MCF: Well let's step back a little bit. When you got married, where were you all living initially?

ECM: We got an apartment. It was very difficult to find affordable housing after the war. Everything was very costly but he had just gotten a job at University of Maryland.

MCF: Doing what?

ECM: Teaching art.

ECM: Art. And that's how he made his living. He never had to prostitute himself. He taught and the rest of the time he painted, because you don't teach every day. And the summers were his to paint. He had creative freedom to do what he wanted.

MCF: Did you always go to the Cape?

ECM: Yes. But we did some other traveling but other than 1 summer, the year my son was born, we didn't quite feel we could manage it.



MCF: What year was David born?

ECM: 1950.

MCF: And your other children?

ECM: My daughter--

MCF: What's her name?

ECM: Nadja. We named her Suzanne but she changed it. I didn't give her a middle name because I didn't like my middle name.

MCF: So she was born what year?

ECM: 4 years later.

MCF: 54?

ECM: Yes. We spaced them so they wouldn't be in college at the same time.

MCF: Yes.

ECM: Really.

MCF: And any other children?

ECM: No. I should have had a third but I didn't.

MCF: So Herman was teaching at University of Maryland in the Art Department.

ECM: Yes.

MCF: How long did he stay at University of Maryland?



ECM: He was there about 34 years.

MCF: Now was that College Park?

ECM: Yes.

MCF: So what a wonderful career there.

ECM: Well he's much loved as a teacher. Many he taught are heads of art departments now. You should see some of his writings. They were really beautiful. And all this is unpublished. It's a lot (laughter) to preserve.

MCF: So you're living in an apartment. Where was the apartment when you first got married?

ECM: Down the street, we knew the family and the price was right.

ECM: No, no. It was down the street from where I grew up. And a year later we bought a house, a modest house, in Mount Washington, a couple of blocks from here.

MCF: And were you working?

ECM: Oh yes. I worked. When I had David I worked part time. And then we had a wonderful system because on the days that he was home, I worked away from home and then we also had some help come in.

MCF: On the days that he worked, that Herman?

ECM: At the university, here. Even though we had help coming in, the child had one parent there always.

MCF: So it sounds like you all had, was it kind of a non-traditional relationship as far as raising David? It sounds like you both were more involved.



ECM: We both were involved.

MCF: Typical of the time.

ECM: Yes. Yes. We were involved but -- we didn't need women's lib. I could do my own thing. And I was the head of the clinic. When I married him, I was the head of the Mental Health Clinic in Baltimore County of the Health Department. I had a big job. And I had students. I met many clinicians so that when I had my second child and left, I could go into private practice with some of these young professionals.

MCF: So after Nadja?

ECM: Yes. I went into private practice. And I also did consulting for private schools. But I could work it out at my own pleasure. And since I was working with mostly school age kids, we could take the month in the summer and then we extended it to the whole summer.

MCF: Did you all buy a house on the Cape?

ECM: 1959, Nadja was 5 years old. Oh yes. When things were cheap. It was cheaper then renting a place.

MCF: In Provincetown?

ECM: Yes.

MCF: Is that still where you go?

ECM: That's where I go.

MCF: That's great. What year did you buy the house in Provincetown?

ECM: 1959. In the 60s. For \$12,000.



MCF: It's been a good figure for you.

ECM: Well more than that, those were the days when the realtor helped you. Because he went to her and he said, Harriet, I don't think I can continue to come. My kids are different sexes, I have to have different rooms, I have to have a room to work in and the rents are going up. And she said why don't you buy like all the other artists. And he said I don't -- can I? She said I'll work it out. She worked it out for us.

MCF: That's great. Well what was you all's social world like in Baltimore?

ECM: Oh we had a very rich and interesting life. First of all I was in with all the clinicians and he was the fair-haired creative person. And we had a very full and rich life, many good friends and we also were in Provincetown at the height of all the activity and we lived next door to Rothke and -- his daughter and my son rode bikes together. We'd swim at the same beach.

MCF: So when you say the height of activity, what do you mean?

ECM: Well that's the 60s. Everybody was in Provincetown.

MCF: What's his daughter's name? Rothke.

ECM: Katie.

MCF: Katie. Yes, because Natalie, their daughter, is my daughter's closest friend.

ECM: Oh how wonderful.

MCF: Yes. At Sidwell. Friends. Yes. So they're good friends. I'll have to tell her that.

ECM: Well now, my God is she that old already?

MCF: Yes.



ECM: She was in my Baby Toddler Group when they were in Baltimore. I ran a Baby Toddler Group. But I doubt that she would remember now. Katie's younger brother went to Park School and he did know me. I was very active then. I gave seminars, and he took one. He was curious about psychiatry -- and he later became a psychologist. You know. Now I did not know him when he was little but when Katie came to Hopkins, she looked me up and it was very touching. Because we were neighbors and I didn't know what she remembered from that time. It's amazing how life works out.

MCF: Yes. Their daughter Natalie is going to University of Chicago.

ECM: I'm not surprised. Yes.

MCF: Yes, it's a great school.

ECM: It is a good school.

MCF: She's a great kid.

ECM: What is she interested in?

MCF: I'm not exactly for sure but she's totally the arts and writing and --

ECM: She would be, yes.

MCF: She's just a free spirit and very much her own (inaudible)

ECM: Well she was lovely as a toddler.

MCF: Yes she's a (inaudible)

ECM: See, I ran a Baby Toddler Group.

MCF: Yes, she's great.



ECM: Tell me, what was I going to ask. The son. Where is he?

MCF: I don't know. Katie's son?

ECM: Yes. He was a twin, you know. He was a preemie.

MCF: I forget where he is. I can't remember.

ECM: She had premature boys. And one died and then he had certain disabilities.

MCF: Right, right. I think he's in the area. I forget where. All right. So you all were going to Provincetown in the summertime. Very involved with, it sounds like Herman's artist friends, your clinician people.

ECM: Well we knew all the -- we knew the psychiatrists, we knew the artists, and my husband was respected by both the traditional and the more abstract because he's middle ground. His work is abstract even though it's recognizable. And he's --

MCF: Now were you all going to any kind of -- participating in any Jewish institutional life besides --

ECM: Not in Provincetown. (laughter)

MCF: Well back here. Any affiliation or just --

ECM: No, my husband would not go to work on the high holidays. He felt it was a time to reflect and that's the way he handled it.

MCF: Stayed at home.

ECM: Yes.

MCF: So what happened with your family here during the holiday time?



ECM: Oh we would have a Seder. He would do a quick one.

MCF: Would you spend time with his, with your in-laws or with your parents?

ECM: No. The times we went to Seders at his family's were never pleasant. Everybody was always overworked. I never understood why he didn't like most of his siblings until I got to know them. They were all complainers. And I had the closest relationship with his older sister. That was the one who was a social worker.

MCF: What was her name?

ECM: Mazie.

MCF: M-A?

ECM: Z-I-E. And she had a big job at the Jewish Board of Guardians before she retired. But she --

MCF: In New York?

ECM: Yes. But she was on the same wavelength. And she had been very supportive of my husband. But the others were sad. In varying degrees.

MCF: Now when you were working, raising your kids, were you also doing the housework, the cooking, the --

ECM: Oh I had help. Off again, on again. One of the problems was if you go away in the summer, if you're not affluent enough to pay them, you can't expect them to wait for you. But I've always been able to get people to come in and do this and that. But I never lost my ability to be frugal because we were never materialistic. We still aren't.

MCF: Did you like to cook?



ECM: Yes, I'm an excellent cook. Not like my grandmother, but I'm a good cook. I can make excellent matzah ball soup. But I can also make Portuguese soup. And I enjoy cooking. And I enjoy people.

MCF: Did you all used to have a lot of folks over to the house?

ECM: Oh yes, we did. Yes.

MCF: Just evenings or for dinners and things like that?

ECM: Any time. I have someone coming for breakfast this Sunday and tomorrow my oldest grandson graduates from the honors program at Maryland with honors.

MCF: Tell me your grandchildren's names.

ECM: Justin is the oldest. And he just turned 21.

MCF: And his mother is --

ECM: Nadja, yes.

MCF: What's her last name?

ECM: Well, it's changed. She lost her first husband unfortunately. He had an aneurysm at a young age and left her with the 2 boys. So Justin and his brother Christopher are from her first husband. And then she remarried Peter Crilly and her present husband is Peter. She has a --

MCF: Can you spell that last name?

ECM: Crilly. C-R-I-L-L-Y. And Alexandra is her daughter with Peter.

MCF: How old is Alexandra?



ECM: She will be 11 on December 14th 2002.

MCF: Where do they live?

ECM: In Annapolis. Now Alexandra is going to a Jewish school because the public school is so bad and it's worked out quite interestingly.

MCF: What does Nadja do?

ECM: Nadja is a writer. And she writes part time for the Capitol.

MCF: What's that?

ECM: A newspaper in Annapolis. And then she does work on -- how can I put it? She works for the Art Council in Annapolis. She also is an authority on antique lighting. That was something she was involved with with her first husband There are two (illegible) on that.

MCF: And where did she go to school?

ECM: She started at Smith but she wound up graduating from Santa Barbara or (illegible).

MCF: And then what about David? Where did he go?

ECM: Clark. And he's in the newspaper business.

MCF: Where does he live?

ECM: In Massachusetts. Franklin. It's 20 miles from Boston.

MCF: So what were your mothering and childbirth experiences like? Were those -- difficult?



ECM: I was very lucky. I planned my children and I didn't want to be pregnant in the summer and I had them both in the spring. And I didn't realize how lucky I was until much later.

MCF: What were your pregnancies like?

ECM: Really uneventful. Alan Guttmacher (transcriber decision) delivered David.

MCF: Is that G-U-T-M-A?

ECM: C-U-T-T-M-A-C-H-E-R. His associate delivered Nadja who was Suzanne until she took her middle name which she gave herself.

MCF: Why did she change her name?

ECM: I didn't give her a middle name. I told her she could pick it out. And she selected Nadja. And when she transferred to California, to Santa Barbara, she became Nadja Maril and different things happened when you wrote that on the bulletin board. (laughter) So it's worked for her.

MCF: So good pregnancies it sounds like.

ECM: Yes, no problems.

MCF: And then (inaudible). I wanted to make sure that we covered some of the other issues that you mentioned in your survey. I know you talked a little bit about the Holocaust was a defining time.

ECM: Oh I think so. I think that you have to understand your roots. I believe this strongly. And I believe philosophically that when anything gets too rigid, you have a problem. And I think that's what's wrong with the very rigid Orthodox Jews and I feel bad about it but I feel that the Palestinians do need a homeland and I think there's got to be some



compromise. And I think that so many of the Jewish stories are very beautiful and have wonderful truths to them and they deserve to be shared and not lost.

MCF: When your kids were growing up, you said you didn't have an affiliation with a specific synagogue or anything here.

ECM: No, no.

MCF: (inaudible) go to temple.

ECM: We couldn't. It was, well I'll tell you what I feel is wrong, because I think this is important, this is what I stand for. I found it very difficult to be pressured to pay money for various things. We were just scrimping by and I remember we used to give to the Associated Jewish Charities. One year, one of these wealthy people called me trying to get me to double the amount. And we simply did not have it. And I, having been raised to not ask for anything special or different, was not going to tell her my financial problems. And it was none of her business. But she really pressed my button when she claimed I didn't know what good they were doing and I wound up telling her off and I remember saying don't you ever speak to me that way again. I'm a social worker and I work with problems and I've worked with the poor and take my name off of your list and I want to have nothing further to do with you. And that's the unsavory side of it. In like manner, we got fed up with being exploited by getting suckered, there's no better word, into my husband giving a painting and then some very wealthy person would buy it as a tax deduction and my husband got nothing and we wound up going along with the creed of Artists Equity which is that you don't give something for nothing if you're a creative person. You get a portion of it back. And to this day, I remember that. And I think they did themselves in as far as we were concerned. This is unfortunate. I do feel they do a lot of good. And I know my mother did a lot of sending of clothes and things during the war and I know that we always have supported the right things. But for somebody to tell you how much you should give is really obnoxious.



MCF: What year did Herman pass away?

ECM: In 1986.

MCF: And what was that, tell me about his death.

ECM: Well, it was one of these things that you hope will never happen to a loved one. They made a mistake at the hospital. He went in for elective surgery, which they don't even do anymore. And they put too much dye in him and although he recovered at first, he was never as strong. He was the youngest in his family to go. They all had longevity and that was one of the reasons they kind of persuaded him to do this elective surgery. He could have lived another 10 years maybe. Today they would use preventive medicine—not surgery.

MCF: So what was that like for you, after his death? How old were you then?

ECM: Let's see. I was just in my 60s. And you go with the flow. I mean a year or 2 later my daughter lost her husband, a young man in his 40's. But you survive. There are no assurances in life and you have to be strong.

MCF: When did you retire?

ECM: Well I haven't really retired. I've changed emphasis. I've changed my course. One of the things that pushes one into making a change is many of the clinicians I worked with have retired and I must say I find this new system of payment and insurance and all the hassle not to my liking. Two projects. Many amusements. Marjorie Harley. I'm still getting requests to join groups and be a part of things and mentally I'm certainly able to do it but I don't want to be a part of the new insurance plans. I feel I have another responsibility now and that is to manage the estate of paintings which is pretty significant and see that the archives get organized. We need to decide where the works are going and we need to have some thing published. We're working with a number of different



groups and it's funny that now I'm going to be using my writing skills. (laughter) I put these skills on the back burner. I didn't lose my credentials. I wanted to leave the option of work open because if God forbid we had a disaster and they needed social work to be done, I'm qualified and I could just go back and join the other professionals.

MCF: We didn't talk any about this house. And I want you to tell me about moving here and finding this house and what this community has been like. (inaudible)

ECM: Well we always wanted to live in Mount Washington because it's not a neighborhood that stresses conformity. In certain neighborhoods you have to abide very strictly with the zoning and maybe they'll have all their shutters green or all the grass has to be a certain height or what. So we never wanted to live in anything like that. We really were public school people and we looked for a neighborhood that would have a good public school. Unfortunately, they didn't plan on the extended building around here. And when my son enrolled in the public school, they were overcrowded and about to go on a shift and one of the clinicians I worked with encouraged me to work out an arrangement with a private school so that I could give them clinical time for my children's tuition. Which was what I did.

MCF: What year was that?

ECM: It was in the 60s, I can check those dates. I'm not a meticulous kind of a person but I can check because I'm working on the archives. It was in the 50s. We bought our first house because we knew we were going to have our first child. And that was just a few blocks from here. We were motivated to buy this because we had to take my father in. My mother had died. And we needed more space and my husband's hope was to have a studio on the second lot. But it was in very bad condition. The stone wall on the one side was buckled. Nobody knew quite why. Whether it was hit by lightning or what. Now it had to be taken down and put back up. And we didn't do it all at once. We did what had to -- we did a little at a time. Also being married to an artist, my husband could



do an awful lot when he was younger. We never had to have the interior painted. He would do one wall each year and they always were off-white so you could never tell where it stopped or started. But it was fine because he could work right in the studio. I'll show you that when we leave and I'll show you the back. It's quite lovely. But we've done a little bit at a time. And at the time we bought it, everybody was buying those split levels. And they weren't interested in the old house.

MCF: Is this where you want to stay?

ECM: Oh I don't believe in these retirement homes. I believe you should be with all ages of people and I think that's what keeps you young (laughter) and interesting. It's not for me. And I'm slower moving because like my maternal grandmother I've developed some arthritis, but I can manage. And steps are good for you and I'm careful and I don't mind living alone.

MCF: So what would you say are your challenges of these days?

ECM: I want to see that a portion of my husband's art, the work gets in the proper hands.

MCF: Herman's work?

ECM: Yes. So that it can be seen. I take a very dim view of some of these museums that never exhibit your work like the Baltimore Museum. I feel the new director is trying her best but I think the goal has changed. I want to see that some of his writings are published. And I want to record some of the wonderful experiences that I have had being married to an artist which are unique. And which tell a lot about the culture. Since only I know these things, it's up to me to keep strong and be able to share them by writing about them.

MCF: It doesn't sound like we've touched on those things today.



ECM: No.

MCF: Is that something that you want me to come back and we would spend more time going over? Because we could.

ECM: I don't know, what do you think? I don't know that this is the place for it, do you?

MCF: Well it could be. You know. I mean I think that it's definitely part of your -- it's part of your long story. And it seems like I don't know what would be a more appropriate --

ECM: All right, well let me give you an example. For example, you're into folklore. Well I've been privy to how he got certain things and how the role of an artist is in our culture, and I've been privy to what he meant to a lot of his collectors. It isn't just money, that's not the most important thing. It's the fact that people get pleasure from art and hang paintings and enjoy them and pass them on to others.

MCF: Who do you think have been, when you think back about -- first of all, I guess I want to ask you because I feel like I should probably wind this time down a little bit. Are there things that I haven't asked you about that you wanted to cover that we haven't?

ECM: No because (laughter) I don't care on one level. Because I'm working on 3 other levels. So that if it doesn't get covered here, it will get covered.

MCF: So the 3 other levels are?

ECM: Well I'm working on his papers and how he was as a teacher, which is of real interest to a lot of people. Things about the art world and our society.

MCF: I think because I want this focused on you because I think you're covering Herman's career and how you saw --

ECM: Yes.



MCF: --that and that's really good but this is about you. And I know that's a part of who you are too but I really wanted to make sure that I don't miss out on things.

ECM: Well there's one interesting thing that would interest you about me and that is how naive I was at first as to the workings of some of this. Early in our marriage, he was with the Babcock Gallery and his dealer was Carmen Delisio, a very kindly man who had come up the hard way.

MCF: How do you spell that last name?

ECM: D-E-L-I-S-I-O. I have to check these things for you because I'm a lousy speller. Anyhow, Carmen had been a errand-boy really at first at this gallery and was completely self-made and --

MCF: Was that here?

ECM: Oh no, New York. And he was married and a very traditional, nice wife. And unfortunately they had no children but he was a family man and he was very interested in the fact that we were a nice couple with 2 young kids and a dog and a cat. And many of the New York artists were scrounging to make a living and when a wealthy collector would come into town, their wives would immediately try to invite these people to dinner and cater to them to try to get them interested in their husband's work. And I thought this was horrible. And not the way to go. I was completely naive and idealistic. Not that you would ever have to go to the lengths that some of them went but I really didn't appreciate how difficult it was with prices so high in New York to exist and we were lucky in that my husband had this teaching job at Maryland and I was working and some of these other women were of an era where they hadn't been trained to a profession or what they would do would be quite menial. If they went out on the job market. So all they knew was to cater to their spouses and try to promote them and at any rate, Carmen Delisio called me aside and said, you know, you ought to be nicer to people. (laughter) And I was unaware



of what he meant until much, much later because I certainly didn't want to be like some of these women but then these women didn't have the education or opportunity that I had to practice my profession and help. But see I didn't know that until much later.

MCF: That's a great story.

ECM: But it was a very competitive time.

MCF: So tell me about how your time is kind of structured these days. How do you do your -- what's a typical week like for you? Your days.

ECM: Well, first of all -- I'm going through all these papers and reading them and then I have to decide how the thing gets cross-filed because eventually we're trying to get them all on tape. Because you have to get them in some order. That's my primary thing. But along with that, we're involved with exhibits. I'm involved with the relationships that I have with people that I've known for a period of time and what's happening with them and their children. I have a garden. I keep up with my mothers from my Baby Toddler, they're still around. In fact I think we're going to try to plan a reunion before I go. And I'm not through with that phase completely. I can see myself, if I get this underway, I can see myself giving a day to the school down the hill, even if I didn't get paid. Helping to organize a good pre-school program. Because I really believe in what we did and I know that the kids and the parents got a lot out of it.

MCF: When was that and where was that?

ECM: I started it at Baby Toddler Groups and now the oldest child is 21. Brenda Libbitz Reamer's little girl who is now graduating from college, was the first member of a Baby Toddler group. So figure this out. We started with 3 kids. We used it to teach early child development in a private school. So it had several facets. It was a place for the parents to compare notes, for the kids to socialize, and for the children in the school to learn about babysitting. It was a great program, really. So that's still alive as far as I'm concerned.



And I'm still in touch with these people. See that's the beautiful part about it.

MCF: I'm going to check the notes here.

ECM: Well I would feel I'll get you dates for the record.

MCF: Yes, any like the autobiography you mentioned.

ECM: Oh I'll Xerox, I will take the parts out of it.

MCF: Or just you know what, give me the whole thing. You don't have to pull it out. Because what they're trying to do with this is just to do pieces that give a sense of who you are. What was important to you and so that's important. But I think we've really covered a lot of material.

ECM: Well I've had to think about it because I'm doing it on different levels.

MCF: All right, let me wind this down. And I didn't ask you much about your experience as a grandmother. What's that been like?

ECM: Well I'm very lucky. Let me brag about Justin. He's a taller version of the way my husband looked when he was young. I'll show you the picture. Christopher looks just like his father and he even has a voice like his father and they're both very gifted. He was an unusual child and one of my colleagues that I worked with who is an amazing analyst, Margery Harley; I don't suppose you've heard of her? But anyhow, she was one of my best friends and --

MCF: How do you spell her name?

ECM: H-A-R-L-E-Y. She was a very respected analyst, child analyst. And unfortunately she did not have children of her own. She had step-children but she didn't have any children of her own and she was very interested in my children because we were such



good friends. And she made some very interesting observations about Justin. She said you know, he's very bright but he's going to have to learn how to not threaten people. (laughter) In order to get the most out of his intelligence.

MCF: He's just graduating with honors from Hopkins?

ECM: No, he went into the honors program at Maryland. They're really catering to these bright kids and he got a scholarship his second year, he's been in England and he came back and he has a 4 point average and he made it in 3 years. So that's really impressive. He's very focused. He didn't show this much promise in high school. He had honors enough to get into the program but now he has.

MCF: So how have you been involved?

ECM: I have spent quality time with them.

ECM: My husband and I shared raising our children. We both worked together, yes. But today a lot of these feminists want everything on their terms. They don't want to be at all maternal.

MCF: And that's really important.

ECM: Well I think my daughter got the best of the fact that we worked as a team because she knew when she was widowed that she wanted to remarry and she felt she needed someone to help raise the boys.

MCF: Anything else?

ECM: So Justin is going to graduate Thursday and we're going to the smaller graduation. There was no point going to that enormous thing. He wants to go to law school. He knows what he wants and I think he'll be successful.



MCF: Just want to check this, I'm about to run out of tape too.

ECM: Well, it's time. (laughter)

MCF: I've kept you long.

ECM: No, you're probably more -- you've got to drive back.

MCF: You know, one thing I wanted to ask about or just talk to you about, have you talked to any, regarding your husband's collection, have you talked to any institutions yet?

ECM: We're in negotiating. You know everybody wants things but it's what they're going to do with them.

MCF: Who would you --?

ECM: We're working on a contract, on an agreement, legally, with the University College, which is where we had the agreement now. But we're working on that. Because administrations change. If the new head leaves in a year or two and somebody comes in and doesn't think much of the art, they might decide to (inaudible) to sell and we don't want that. We want the Collection to go to another tax free organization where the works can be seen and taken care of and studied. They cannot be sold. We don't want them to make a profit on it, on what we gave. Yes, I'm sure you understand that.

MCF: I know one thing that (break in tape)

ECM: We are in the process of working this out. Fortunately my son has been very active in working with our lawyer and the people at University of Maryland to accomplish this.

[END OF CD 2]



ADDENDUM - November 15, 2002

Because of scheduling it was not possible to arrange a second interview to complete this project. Therefore, in reviewing the material obtained by the interviewer I realized that there were a couple of key points that had not been covered and which contributed to strengthening my professional life and purpose.

There were two women in my field professionally who had tremendous creative gifts and fortunately for me they became my closest friends. They were Dr. Mary Ainsworth, a clinical psychologist whose field was Early Child Development and Dr. Marjorie Harley, an analyst who had begun her training as a clinical psychologist. Dr. Harley, when I met her was a child analyst with a small practice and the professional job of training those interested in Child Psychiatry in the Baltimore Washington Analytic Group. Since I worked closely with both of these women and often shared responsibility on cases, my professional contribution was greatly enriched.

The one creative enterprise that I did at a private school with mothers and their babies and toddlers proved to be very exciting professionally. Contacts that developed from this sixteen year experience shaped my direction clinically and I feel that I have been fortunate in being able to have such a rich experience. Future friendships, both personal and professional, continue even though I am not actively involved with a group at this point of my career.

The other influence that has played an important part in shaping my beliefs and has been consuming my energies is involved with the artistic ideals which developed as a result of my being married to an artist. At this point I would like to make a distinction between people who use their skills artistically purely to make money and who go on an (ego trip). The true artist draws, paints, or sculpts because of a dedication to express himself in our complicated world. Often he or she is not good at promoting himself. In like manner the direction comes from within and does not follow particularly any fashion or style being



promoted at the time. This makes for a sometimes lonely position, but this is the way that true creativity works and one must sometimes forfeit popularity or hollow fame if one sticks to his own direction.

My husband was wise enough to work out a way to make a living so that he was free to paint the way he wanted to. We were also blessed with the fact that his work did reach a certain group of people who supported him sometimes by buying a work and other times by writing about it.

In view of this happy circumstance of being married to a truly creative person, I have resolved to spend most of my time at this point recording interesting facts about his career and other observations about his collectors and what he and his artwork meant to them. Luckily, my children are of the same point of view and we have taken on the mission of recording this and also working with educational institutions and museums that are interested in creativity and in protecting and exhibiting his legacy of work. Since my son has more mobility he has been able to play a very active part in helping to locate people and institutions that are interested in our legacy of paintings.

[END OF INTERVIEW]