Ann Meyers Kaplan Transcript

PAMELA BROWN LAVITT: This is the oral history interview of Ann Meyers Kaplan. I am Pamela Brown Lavitt conducting the interview for the Jewish Women's Archive's "Weaving Women's Words" Project in Seattle. We are sitting in the apartment of Ann Kaplan. Ann would you state your address for us?

ANN KAPLAN: My address is 7810 Southeast 30th Street, Apartment 120.

PL: And that's on—

AK: Mercer Island.

PL: Mercer Island, Washington.

AK: Washington.

PL: Today's date is Friday, March 30. The year is 2001, and it is approximately two o'clock in the afternoon. Terrific. Let's begin. But before we do, in Seattle, I just need to get your agreement that you have agreed to be interviewed and that this interview is being recorded. Do you agree?

AK: Oh, yes.

PL: Oh, terrific.

AK: Definitely.

PL: Wonderful. Okay, let's begin. I want to start talking briefly about your family life and your childhood. So why don't we start with where were you born?

AK: I was born in New York City and I was born in Manhattan District, and I never was able to get a birth certificate. I had tried. I had written to the New York Census Bureau or whatever they—wherever you can get your birth certificate. And I had no—I had—they could not find my—the record. And I finally gave up and just decided that I would go by my school record if I ever needed to do that—to use it. So that's what happened and I've been going by that date of my birth, which was 1907. So I was born in New York and my parents had come to the United States from Russia to avoid the revolution there. And my dad and my mother were the first in a large family that arrived in this country, and they were the ones that finally got the rest of the family that was left in Russia to come to the United States. So while he was in Seattle—while he was New York, they had friends that had also come through Russia, came through to Seattle. And he kept in touch with these people and they suggested that he come to Seattle to start up a business because he—they had a big business in Russia, tailoring business. His father had a big, had a big shop in one of the big cities in Russia, and I don't know if it was Kiev or Odessa. I'm not sure. I have no proof of that.

PL: Tell me a little bit about—do you know why it is that your parents came to New York or what made their decision to come to New York? Were they married before?

AK: Oh, yes. They had been married. In fact, my mother had a baby. Her first child was born in Russia and it had died. It had had diphtheria and there was no way that they could save the child, so he was about ten, eleven months old when he passed away. And shortly after that conditions were getting so bad in Russia and the Jewish people were being persecuted, so they decided that – and they had friends who had come to America – and they decided that's what they were going to do. And through friends in, through non-Jewish friends in Russia, they were able to get through a lot of red tape, and they arrived in New York and had no problems.

PL: What neighborhood did they settle in?

AK: In Manhattan.

PL: Do you remember if it was on the Lower East Side or a different neighborhood?

AK: I haven't—I don't remember. I don't know because I was only two or three years old when they brought me to Seattle. I'm not even sure of that date, although I have pictures where I could have been about three years old.

PL: Okay. At what point did your family members decide to move to Seattle? When did they decide to move? You were three years old, you said?

AK: Well, around three years old. Yes.

PL: Do you have any early memories at all of being that young in New York or stories that your parents told you about your youth in New York?

AK: I have no more memory—

PL: Okay.

AK: —of any of those stories.

PL: So when you moved to Seattle, what do you remember about that move or about your early neighborhoods in Seattle?

AK: Well, I remember living in the Jewish district, you know, around Yesler, 16th and 17th Avenue. And I remember, well, I went to the Washington School and I remember World War I when the war was declared over. I remember that day very vividly.

PL: Can you tell me why you remember it?

AK: Well, because everybody was so excited and happy the war was over. And there—people were running in the streets and they were acting so crazy. They just

couldn't believe it that the war was over. And I can remember some funny instances on—in—next to a grocery store. They used to have barrels of cucumbers and herring or whatever. And one of the men fell from the roof, fell into one of those barrels. That was hilarious.

PL: Did you—

AK: I can remember that. And it was a lot of—it was a happy time for everybody in those days. Now, I remember how our war—our war number two—

PL: Let's backtrack a little because I want to hear more—what was—about your childhood before we get to World War II.

AK: Oh.

PL: Do you remember your, what was your first language that you—

AK: Well, Russian and Jewish.

PL: Jewish, meaning?

AK: Yiddish.

PL: Yiddish.

AK: And also Russian.

PL: Hmm, and so at what point did you learn English?

AK: Well, now that—I probably learned English. I can't remember. It just seemed to me like that was always my main language. Because when we moved to Seattle I immediately—I remember taking dancing lessons at the Settlement House. We always—that was our main area of entertainment and education. And they taught us, as

far as I can remember, I remember sewing classes. I remember during the war when I was only about ten or eleven years old – first war – why we used to make bandages. We were taught, and then we'd have our clubs. We'd have musical, we'd musical concerts. We did everything at the Settlement House.

PL: Was this something that your parents enrolled you in or were there people here in Seattle, the Jewish community?

AK: It was open to the Jewish community, to anyone in—I mean, it was a place where you congregated. I mean, there wasn't—it wasn't like we used—there was no other places where you could have gone in those days, actually, except the synagogue. And they did not have anything that would attract youngsters. It was mostly for people that wanted to daven [pray] and go to services and—

PL: So when your parents came here did they join a synagogue or did they belong to a synagogue that you remember?

AK: Yes, they belonged to the Talmud Torah [correction: synagogue] on 17th Avenue.

PL: Can you tell me a little bit about what you remember about the Talmud Torah [correction: synagogue]?

AK: Well, I remember that, you know, the men and women sat separately. I remember my mother, the family, they always wanted to get a new hat and new clothes, dress up for the holidays. That was something that they always wanted to do. We had to have our new dresses. My mother was a wonderful seamstress. She used to sew all our clothes and so we were always well dressed.

PL: What did that mean to you, to wear new clothes and the clothes particularly that your mother made for you?

AK: I just loved it.

PL: What in particular did you like about it?

AK: Because she'd make the things I'd want her to. I'd tell her what I wanted and she'd make them.

PL: Where did she get her fabrics from? Do you remember? Did you go select them with her?

AK: From those days, I don't remember where she got the fabrics – probably from the department stores, you know.

PL: So on the High Holidays—

AK: Don't forget, my dad was in the tailoring business.

PL: Tell me about that.

AK: Well, he opened up his store. He had people working for him.

PL: Where was his store?

AK: Right on Pike Street. Right on—

PL: Is that a picture of your father?

AK: It was 907 East Pike on Seattle, and the freeway goes over there now. And he had a dressing room over on the side where they could go in and put their clothes on, and then in the back he had all the machines and people working for him. And here he is here.

PL: Standing in front. What was the name of store? Can you read that on the photograph? What was the name of it?

AK: Meyers Tailor Shop. He also did cleaning. See, right here? [pointing to photo]

PL: Uh huh.

AK: You can see it on there.

PL: What do you remember as a child visiting him there? Did you do that often?

AK: Well, I remember he always used to give us fifty cents. [laughter] We always, well, we could visit and then we'd wait for the 50 cents because that was a lot of money in those days. So we would, and then we'd go spend it.

PL: Then did you visit often and get your fifty cents often?

AK: Well, we—I don't remember how often but I think it was fairly often.

PL: Did you remember your mother working in the tailor shop at all?

AK: My mother never worked in the tailor shop but she used to help him out many times. If he was very, very busy and couldn't come home for dinner, she would bring him his dinner and she would stay there and work with him until late and then they'd come home. And my grandmother at that time was living with us, and she used to see that we behaved and did what we were supposed to do.

PL: So at home then your mother and your grandmother and yourself, because you had – your siblings were not born for a couple of more years? Correct? Your first sibling was born in—

AK: Well, my sister was born in—she always claimed she was four years younger than me. So I'm not sure if it's three or four years because I'm not positive about my dates.

Because according to my school records, some of them say 1908 and some say 1907. But I picked 1907 because that was on most of everything.

PL: So there were two daughters and your grandmother and your mom.

AK: And then there were two boys.

PL: And then two boys.

AK: And then my brother, my brother, Sam, and then my brother, Jack, who is still living. But my sister and my middle brother are gone. Yeah.

PL: What do you remember then since your parents were both – your mother was a seamstress and your father was a tailor – what do you remember about the importance of learning how to sew yourself? You mentioned sewing at the Settlement House. Was that an important part of your—

AK: No, that really is not. That was very—I was never too interested, although I learned to sew very well. I knew how to work a machine but I never—I never felt that was going to be part of my life.

PL: Did you use the skills that you learned later in your life for your own children?

AK: Oh, yes. I used to sew all of my daughter's costumes for her dancing classes when they'd give a program, when they'd have a, the year-end program. I'd always sew her costumes.

PL: Now, you showed me a photograph in which your mother had sewn the outfit for you in—

AK: Yeah, she made that dress. Yeah.

PL: And when did she make that dress for you?

AK: Well, it was during those days. I mean, I don't—

PL: What production was that?

AK: What?

PL: Where was this taken, this photo?

AK: Well, this was taken at the Settlement House from Madame Butterfly.

PL: Madame Butterfly?

AK: Yes.

PL: How many people came to see you in that production?

AK: Well, they had a big show, you know, and I was Lord Pinkerton's wife. And in those days, although I can't speak so well now, I had a fairly good singing voice and I did sing a little song. He had a good voice and it was, it was one of their main productions. And they took a picture and it was publicized, you know.

PL: What did it mean to you to be the female lead in this production?

AK: Well, I really wasn't the lead.

PL: Well, one of.

AK: I had a good part in it, because Madame Butterfly had the lead. I don't have her picture. [laughter] But I was an important part of the play. And I can still remember. We used to rehearse quite a bit for it and that was it. I mean—

PL: Can you tell me a little bit more about what you thought of Seattle growing up as a child? Specifically, there was—do you remember anything about the relationship between the Sephardic and the Ashkenazi children in—at the Settlement House as well?

AK: Well, when I was at the Settlement House there were very few Sephardics, because we weren't, we never did get to know the Sephardics. In fact, there was, we wouldn't, we didn't want to associate with the Sephardics. In fact, I used to get a lot of calls for dates and I didn't want to go out with them, which now, when I think back I was quite a pretty foolish.

PL: Why do you say that?

AK: Because they're doing pretty well. [laughter] But I—a lot of us girls didn't want to go out with them because they were nice but they were different.

PL: Were there expectations within your own family as to what your Jewish identity meant that caused you to refuse those dates?

AK: No, it was just my own—not really. It was just how I felt and I just didn't like the person. I didn't like their aggressiveness and the way they acted. It's—but there was not anything bad. It was just their way.

PL: How did you know them, that they asked you for dates? Where did you meet them?

AK: Through the school. Through the school.

PL: Through public school?

AK: Uh-huh. Yeah, they all went to Garfield.

PL: Ah, so you went to Garfield High. Can you tell us—Garfield—what— those were between eighth and 12th grade, I believe?

AK: What?

PL: When did you go to Garfield High?

AK: Well, I graduated in 1926 and I was very active at Garfield. I'm trying to look for the book.

PL: Okay, so—

AK: I was advertising manager of this book.

PL: What is this book?

AK: This is the Garfield High School Annual.

PL: And it's called The Arrow, "1925, Ann Meyers."

AK: Do you find me there?

PL: What did it mean to be the advertising manager?

AK: Well, I was a junior at the time. I was very active in—I—with the newspaper. I wanted to be a journalist. That was my ambition.

PL: How did you decide that you wanted to be a journalist?

AK: Because I loved to, I loved working on the newspaper. I liked recording and I loved to go out and get ads for the newspaper, which I did and I used to get a lot of ads and—Is this on now?

PL: Yes.

AK: [laughter] —and I used to, I used to enjoy doing a lot of skipping school, if you call it that. And I'd get time off.

PL: Tell me about that. Was that because you were busy getting ads?

AK: Right. I'd get dismissal slips. [laughter] I had some very good teachers. And I was a, I was on the scholarship list, well only once, but I had a fairly good average when I graduated. And here's my, here's my picture right here.

PL: Ah, so you were on the staff. So you were one of the staff writers for the Arrow? It looks like there were three men and two women. How did you work together?

AK: Oh, wonderful. Wonderful. These are all Jewish boys. Well, Jewish, Jewish.

PL: So out of the staff of the five people, the editor, the sports writer, the art editor, the business manager and you, the advertising editor, the vast majority were Jewish students?

AK: Yeah.

PL: Why do you think that was?

AK: Because Garfield High School was the high school that had most of the Jewish students at the time, although they had a variety. We were mixed. We got along with everybody. There was no problem with race. We had the most wonderful football team, basketball teams. We were number one in the city.

PL: That's amazing.

AK: So the problems that they're having now are, seems so utterly ridiculous to some of us. Why is this happening?

PL: Can you elaborate what it is that you mean by comparing the problems today? What do you mean by that?

AK: Well, I think there's something wrong, I really do, with the public schools. Because there shouldn't, they shouldn't have those problems.

PL: Help me understand what problems you're talking about.

AK: Well, the problems that they're having now with the guns and the killing. I've never heard of such a thing. This is ridiculous that our country has to put up with that. This shouldn't be.

PL: Absolutely.

AK: How do we look to the rest of the world, you know?

PL: So, but comparing it to then your experiences going to school, how do you see that difference?

AK: Well, we wouldn't even dream that there would be such things going on. Why, it never would occur to us. It would occur to anyone. I mean, this is unheard of to have things like this happen.

PL: Do you think that anything – the fact that you, that in your high school you wouldn't have imagined anything like this happening – did it have anything to do with the neighborhood, with Seattle, with growing up Jewish?

AK: I don't think so. I don't think that had anything to do with it. I think it's just that there's—because there's so much immigration from various countries that live differently, that have lived a harder life than we've had. And they come here and they get into bad company and then they—we never had drug problems, and when this came in this was one of the bad things that happened to our youth. And, I mean, there's so many other things that—we were small compared to what it is now, that you have to fight and encounter. But I don't see it getting better. It's not getting better.

PL: Was being the advertising manager—

AK: [coughs]

PL: Are you okay? Take a sip of tea.

AK: I'm okay.

PL: I'm going to pause this for a moment.

AK: Yeah. Yeah.

PL: I think what you're talking about is actually very related to my next question, which is, you know, I'm very interested in Seattle as a place that Jews lived. And Garfield High, being a place that there were obviously many Jewish youth, very active Jewish youth like yourself, how do you then think that the city, Seattle specifically, has changed in regard to this over the course of the time that you've lived here?

AK: Well, it's changed a lot because, oh, there's a lot more schools and a lot of children that are coming into the schools that don't even know how to speak English. They don't know what you're saying to them or they don't know where they are. They're confused. There's not the proper—when they're young they have to have English before they go to school. They should have an English education before they even go to school regardless of what age they are because they can't comprehend.

PL: And when you were at Garfield did everyone speak English?

AK: Everybody spoke English. The Black – we didn't call them Black the, we called them "colored" – and the Orientals; they were smart, very smart. Even in those days they were smart. And we had all sorts of people. We got along with everyone.

PL: What was it like to go to such an integrated school?

AK: Where?

PL: At Garfield. What was it like to go to such an integrated school?

AK: Well, I lived within walking distance of Garfield and I walked, I mean, I'd say it was about seven or eight blocks. We didn't think anything of it.

PL: Was your neighborhood similarly integrated?

AK: Oh, yes. Definitely. I lived—absolutely.

PL: Did you have friends who were Japanese American or "colored," as you said or—

AK: Black, yeah.

PL: Yes.

AK: Not too many.

PL: Were those friendships encouraged or discouraged?

AK: They were—it was—well, you just didn't—you didn't want to be seen with a Black person, not that they were bad but it just was one of those things. And, oh, even with a—anyone that was different than you that didn't, that wasn't Jewish. In those days you did—you very seldom made dates with non-Jewish boys, although we used to do it on the side. We didn't tell our parents. [laughter] Later on, we'd meet them at the library.

PL: Tell me, where was the library?

AK: The library was on Yesler Way. It's still there. Let's see. I think it's 23rd and Yesler? I'm not sure. I think it's up that way. It's still there where we used to meet.

PL: So were there—

AK: Even Jewish boys. We'd meet up there.

PL: What did you do?

AK: Well, we just used to go, we used to—I would just sit and talk. I, you know, as far as I can remember, sit and talk and visit and go for a walk over to the candy store and—or go to a movie on a Friday night.

PL: So do you remember a particular time when you did wind up dating somebody who you shouldn't have?

AK: Yes.

PL: And what happened? When was that?

AK: Well, I just—I had—there was a boy that—when I was at Garfield that I used to get letters from. You know, "I love you," and all that. And I used to wear earrings. My parents—I had pierced ears then, had little gold earrings. And so I sat in front of him so he used to—he wrote me a poem about my earrings and put it on my desk, and a lot of little things like that, you know.

PL: Now, why was he someone that you wouldn't normally have dated?

AK: Well, I just, in those days, like I said, you went out with Jewish boys.

PL: So he was not Jewish?

AK: He was not Jewish. And this one particular boy that had a "case"—he was a year ahead of me, though, and then he went to the university. And he called me up and wanted to take me to the prom and I refused him. I said, "I'm sorry. I can't date you." I remember that and—

PL: How'd that feel?

AK: Well, I was very fickle in those days. I mean, I didn't care. I didn't—I wasn't in love with him and—just a friend.

PL: Well.

AK: Yes, and one of my albums that I have when he was at Garfield he wrote underneath, "The girl I loved." [laughter] It was cute.

PL: Did your parents ever find out about your library visits or your dates—

AK: If they did they never said anything because it was very innocent. And, in fact, one of my dear friends, who used to meet her husband there in those days, she used to, she used to be one of us that used to meet David and they would—finally got married and early. See, I didn't get married as early as some of my friends did. I think I was fickle. Really, I didn't, I wasn't the kind that cared about settling down. I had ambitions.

PL: What were those ambitions?

AK: Well, I wanted to—when I graduated Garfield I got a job. I always took bookkeeping. I took the commercial course because in those days I had two brothers who were planning to go to the university. And so my sister and I wanted to go but our parents couldn't afford it. So we had to go out and get a job after graduating. So I used to go to summer school so that I would graduate. I graduated a half a year earlier because of going to summer school. Instead of graduating in June of '26 I graduated in January. In those days they had two graduations a year, in January and June.

PL: Were there different expectations for you, being the two girls in the family, as there were for your brothers with respect to education?

AK: What do you mean?

PL: Meaning, did your parents expect your brothers to do something different or go to college?

AK: Yes. Yes. They—my brother, Sam, wanted to be an engineer and my brother, Jack, was in business insurance. And it just so happened that my brother, Sam, went to the university. He went—he was an engineer.

PL: He went to the University of Washington?

AK: Yes, and he was in—he graduated from the university and he rode in the crew races. In fact, the year that he rode they went to Poughkeepsie and they—he was one of the crewmen then. And then he took a year off and worked in Washington, DC, and then came back and graduated from the university. And then he joined the—he was a lieutenant colonel in the Army, World War II, yeah. He was—he died in 1968. Heart attack. And my sister passed away in 1967, a year later.

PL: That's a shame.

AK: A year earlier, I mean.

PL: That's a shame.

PL: What did that say to you about your role as a female growing up, that you were ambitious and yet you couldn't go to college? What did that say to you?

AK: Well, I wanted to get a good job. So I got this job. When I graduated Garfield, I got this job for $10 a week, which lasted about three months. And I thought to myself, "I'm going to look for a good job." And so I can't remember where I, where I went, but the General Motors Truck and Coach Company were hiring and so I went in there and applied. They were up on Broadway at the time. So I went up there and applied for the job and – Accounts Payable – and they hired me. And I was getting $30 a week all of a

sudden, you know.

PL: What did that feel like to have earning power?

AK: Oh, I felt wonderful. I had a wonderful job and the office was on Broadway, the General Motors Truck and Coach. And they had a balcony where the bookkeeping—they had the trucks below and the bookkeeping department above. And I worked on the Accounts Payable for a year or more. Then they had a vacancy downstairs in the office for a secretary. Well, I never cared about taking dictation. I didn't care for shorthand but I knew some of it. But Mr. Faye and Mr. Quackenbush – I can still remember their names – asked me if I'd like the job? And I said, "I sure would." I said, "But," I said, "I'm not good at dictation." They said, "Well, we don't, we don't dictate. We just—what we'll do is, we have—we're on the road a lot. We'll have to telephone you. You write the letters." And so I was transferred to their department and that's where I stayed. I worked there for, let's see, about three or four years. Then I went to San Francisco for vacation. I went to a convention, National Council of Jewish Women convention in San Francisco.

PL: What year was this?

AK: 19—

PL: Twenty-nine?

AK: 1929. Twenty, 1930, or— So while I was in San Francisco I had friends there, and friends of the family were living there. And I stayed with them and their daughter was a friend of mine. She said, "Ann, there's a job opening in San Francisco. Some people that we know, they have a fur manufacturing business and they need a bookkeeper badly, because the one that they had left for good for personal reasons." So, I said, "Well, I don't know. I've got a good job and"—but I loved San Francisco. So I didn't even think I'd get the job. So I asked—so I went over and they had an interview and they

offered me the job, so I had to decide, “Well, what am I going to do?” So I thought, “I’ll get a leave of absence.” So I sent them a telegram. I sent my boss a telegram and I said, “I would like a leave of absence, as I was offered a position here in San Francisco, and perhaps I will want to return to Seattle. I’m not sure.” Well, I got a telegram back saying, “If you don’t come back, you’re fired.” [laughter] So I was fired.

PL: What prepared you to take those steps?

AK: Well, I don’t know whether I should say this or not. I had a—I had—I was—had a—feelings for a Jewish boy in Seattle, and it was not, it was not mutual to some extent because he never wanted to get married and so I knew I had to break it. And so I—that was my reason for staying in San Francisco. And that’s what happened.

PL: Did you wind up talking to him or telling him or did you not tell him?

AK: He knew.

PL: Was it good for you to do that? Was it a good decision?

AK: I’m not sure, even to this day. But he’s gone now. I mean, he isn’t living in Seattle. He left and went to California so I lost contact with him, yeah.

PL: Was this a relationship that you had or was it a relationship you wanted?

AK: It just happened because I was very friendly with his sister. And so, you know, things, things happened in those days that they don’t—they didn’t happen. It isn’t like what’s happening now.

PL: Explain to me what you mean.

AK: Much different. I mean, we never, we’d never go and live with anyone, have a companion to live with and set up housekeeping. We didn’t. You wouldn’t dare do that in

our day. It wasn't even thought of – not alone sleeping with them, you know, like they do now.

PL: So what kind of courtship would you have with someone or with this particular person? How did that work?

AK: Oh, we went out in crowds and parties and get-togethers and—or we'd go to a movie. He'd always bring me a box of candy in those days. [laughter] I had a lot of boxes of candy.

PL: So what was life like working in San Francisco and it was the first time you had moved away from home?

AK: I had made some very good friends with some women that I had met at the convention, Hannah [Lando] Abrams and her family. They lived in Oakland and they accepted me as their stepdaughter. And I used to go over to Oakland on weekends and her parents were very hospitable and we used to get together. And Hannah introduced me to a lot of young men there. I had a very nice boyfriend in San Francisco I could have married, but I, I just couldn't make up my mind what I wanted to do. So I was unsettled in that respect.

PL: Were there women in your life or women that you saw around you, perhaps your mother, that were role models for you in terms of your ambition to—or your fickleness? [laughter]

AK: No. No, my mother—no, because they came from Russia and their life was different than what we were experiencing. They never had the kind of life that we had, even in those days. And my folks were able to give us a lot of things that maybe some of the people that come in and were not able to, because my parents were financially able to set up business and always—we owned our own home. And we were sort of middle class, you know, in those days. So it's a little—so I don't quite understand how that

would happen.

PL: Do you feel that being middle class gave you the freedoms that you had?

AK: We were all free. I mean, we used to meet on corners. After school we'd meet on corners and talk for hours – be three or four, just stand there and talk and gossip, you know.

PL: Did they—

AK: We don't do that anymore, I don't think. I'm not sure.

PL: Did your trip to San Francisco, was that a big deal for a group of women? I actually have here a—some pictures from a scrapbook of yours, I believe, in which you took a trip by boat to the convention—

AK: Oh, yes.

PL: —in San Francisco.

AK: Oh, this is another time. This was in, yeah—after our convention I went to Los Angeles by boat on the HF Alexander. Do you want this on tape?

PL: Yes.

AK: And I was seasick all the way to San Francisco and there were about five of us that went from the convention to Los Angeles on this ship. And I was seasick all the way. And then we were all the way to Los Angeles, so then we got off the ship and I was fine. We had a wonderful vacation in Los Angeles. Coming back, I was—I wasn't seasick one bit going in. Well, wait a minute. I was seasick going from Seattle to San Francisco. From San Francisco to Los Angeles I was not seasick but coming back to San Francisco I was seasick! Oh. And that's when I was offered the job.

PL: Ah.

AK: Yeah, I got sick.

PL: What was it like to travel with a group of women like that?

AK: Oh, we had a lot of fun.

PL: Was that a typical outing? Was that a usual thing?

AK: Well, she had, this friend of mine that I roomed with, she had friends in Los Angeles and we stayed with them. And then we dated. There were some boys that we met, Jewish boys. And we dated them; they took us out around the town, and we were there only for a short time. Then we came home.

PL: Now in that scrapbook there are some pictures of some gentlemen and I—

AK: Really?

PL: Uh huh.

AK: You got pictures? Where did you get some of those? Where did you get those pictures?

PL: This is the scrapbook that you had donated to the Jewish Archives Project at the University of Washington.

AK: This is—there's Lillian Clein! I don't remember these pictures. That's Clara Rubin. These are all gals in there. You know they're gone now?

PL: Are these women part of the Junior Section of the National Council for Jewish Women?

AK: Yes. Yes, very definitely.

PL: Who got you involved with that organization?

AK: What?

PL: How did you get involved with that organization?

AK: How? We all used to play mahjong. That was one of our favorite games. We used to meet at each other's homes, and most of these women were involved with the, with the Evening Group. They were business people. They wanted me to join.

PL: What was the Evening Group?

AK: Evening Group of the National Council of Jewish Women.

PL: The Seattle Section.

AK: Seattle Section.

PL: Was that particularly a young women's—

AK: Yes.

PL: —club?

AK: Oh, yes.

PL: And so you played mahjong? What else did you do together?

AK: We played mahjong. We had our parties. We had luncheons. We had a luau. I gave to the Archives the—I was chairman of a luau party that we gave at the Masonic Temple. I don't know if you got that. Let's see. There's Clara. She's at the Kline Galland Home right now. Have you interviewed her?

PL: I don't believe so.

AK: Well, she's got Alzheimer's. I don't know.

PL: Let me ask you a little bit then—

AK: I don't know where you got some of these pictures.

PL: This is all in the scrapbook that you had donated.

AK: There's me with my fur coat.

PL: You had a fur coat.

AK: In my fur coat, muskrat.

PL: Where did you get that from?

AK: I got that in Seattle. I went down with my fur coat and I got that when I was working for General Motors. [apartment intercom interrupts] I got that when I was working for General Motors and I got that from a local Jewish furrier.

PL: What did it mean then to purchase a fur shawl at that point?

AK: Oh, I loved it.

PL: Was that with your own money that you—

AK: My own money. Oh, yeah.

PL: Was that a popular style at the time?

AK: Yes. Yeah.

PL: And in terms of your shopping, I'm curious. Did you only shop at Jewish-owned businesses? Do you remember the stores—

AK: Frederick & Nelson [and The Bon Marché. They were not Jewish-owned but had many Jewish customers].

PL: Tell me about Frederick & Nelson. What did it mean for you to shop there?

AK: Well, I used to work there during Christmas selling jewelry, during Christmas holidays. And we always used to love to go over there to eat, eat lunch down in the Paul Bunyan Room. And my daughter to this day remembers the wonderful milkshakes she used to get down there, you know. She used to love to go there for their milkshakes.

PL: Did you take her there for the milkshakes?

AK: Oh they don't have them anymore.

PL: Why did you shop at Frederick & Nelsons? Was—

AK: Well, because it was only the two department stores. Frederick & Nelson and The Bon. And the Frederick's used to have a child area where you bring your children for a few hours. They'd take care of them while you shop. And if you wanted to they could stay for lunch and you'd pay for it, of course. And it was very little and that was our childcare.

PL: Did The Bon Marché have a similar childcare?

AK: No, they didn't.

PL: So did that lead you to want to shop more at Frederick's?

AK: Absolutely, yes.

PL: What about other Jewish women and shopping? Did they like to choose one shopping store over the other? Was there a reason—

AK: Well, that would be a good reason and many—that was very popular with the Jewish women. Oh, yes. Frederick's was THE store in those days.

PL: Can you tell me why?

AK: Well, because they had everything there. They had the facilities there, the departments, the clothes. But The Bon was just as popular in many ways. They had the bargain basement, The Bon Marché, because I used to work in The Bon when I first started. And The Bon had all the big sales, the weekend sales, the month-end sales. I mean, they were both very good stores and they were very close together. So to this day if you talk to any women in my age at all we remember Frederick's and The Bon. Oh, Bon is still here but Frederick's is not.

PL: Was that a sad day when Frederick and Nelsons closed?

AK: Oh, yeah. It really was.

PL: I'd like to ask you about your work, like at The Bon Marché, a little bit later. I did want to ask you—this is backtracking a little bit. We didn't talk about your Jewish education at all. And I saw on your pre-interview questionnaire that you said that you went to cheder [religious school].

AK: Yes.

PL: And I—and we didn't talk about that so would you mind backtracking for a minute?

AK: Well, you see, I forgot but I—actually, I went. I loved, I must have loved being Jewish. And I always wanted to go. I wanted to learn my alef-beys, veys, gimel, dalet, hay, vov, zayin, khes, tes. I knew my [Hebrew] alphabet and I learned it because I went

to cheder. And we had—I—only several girls in the class and that I, I remember the teacher with the ruler. And if you didn't know your alphabet, you know, he used the ruler.

PL: How old were you?

AK: Oh, I imagine I must have been around six or seven or eight years old.

PL: And where was the cheder?

AK: In the back—it was like a shack. And I remember walking through a lot, through—it was a, it was really a shack where they had the cheder.

PL: What neighborhood was it in?

AK: It was right in the neighborhood where I lived.

PL: Which was Yesler and Cherry.

AK: Yesler area, yes.

PL: Who ran the cheder and—

AK: I don't remember. I don't remember.

PL: When – I know that you said that you were very interested in being Jewish and learning your alef-beys – from when did you learn that? From where and from whom?

AK: Well, I don't know. It just seemed like—I used to go to the synagogue with the family and sit there with my mother and watch them da[ven], watch them pray. And another thing that when I was a kid, I remember going, visiting the Sephardic synagogue. And they made so much noise and yelling and screaming there. I ran out of there. I was scared to death.

PL: Who took you to that—

AK: I went. We used to go visit in between.

PL: So this was at Bikur Cholim? So—

AK: That was when my parents belonged.

PL: So when you said Talmud Torah earlier, Bikur Cholim is where you're talking about or—

AK: Well, Bikur Cholim is what I'm talking about. I bring in the Talmud Torah but the Bikur Cholim is where my parents, my family—my uncle was one of the founders of the Bikur Cholim, in fact.

PL: What was his name?

AK: Pass, David Pass.

PL: So—and your whole family went there. Was that at the time the Sephardic—when you said you visited the Sephardic was that in the basement where the Sephardic—

AK: No, it wasn't in the basement. It was—they had—their synagogue wasn't far, not far from the Bikur Cholim.

PL: Do you remember what it was called, the name of that synagogue?

AK: Sephardic Synagogue, I mean, as far as I know.

PL: What were your—so, your experiences, you got scared because it was so noisy. Can you recall that at all?

AK: No, I just remember running out of there. [laughter]

PL: But yet you still had a strong desire to go to cheder. How did you talk to your parents about this at such a young age?

AK: Well, they evidently let me go. I don't know what circumstances at the time, but finally, I didn't stay very long because they didn't want any girls in there.

PL: Let's talk about that a little bit. I'm very interested because my images of a cheder have long been passed down from literature and things where the image of the ruler on the hand—

AK: Was it?

PL: It being a very strict place for boys to learn—

AK: Yeah.

PL: —their alef-beys.

AK: Yes.

PL: So can you elaborate and describe what it meant to be a girl there?

AK: [coughs]

PL: Would you like—

AK: I believe that because of being so strict is one—is the reason why I left. Because they demanded so much of you as a youngster. But you'd go to the public school and they didn't treat you that way. So when comparing the two I guess I decided at that time that that isn't what I wanted.

PL: What did you learn while you were there?

AK: Well, I learned at the beginning of Hebrew, thinking that I would learn a second, other language, you know. But it never materialized. Yeah.

PL: And when you said that they didn't want girls there or that girls weren't as welcome, how did you sense that? What did you feel?

AK: Because they treated us the same as they treated the boys.

PL: Explain why? I'm not sure I understand.

AK: Well, because probably they didn't know. Maybe where they were taught there were no girls. They weren't familiar with having girls in the cheder.

PL: So how were you treated the same? When you say you were treated the same, what do you mean by that? Meaning, did they track girls and boys the same way? You were taught in a co-ed classroom?

AK: We were taught in one classroom. We had seats like they do in the school. And if you didn't learn or know your – or if you couldn't learn or remember – they'd punish you for it, which I decided that wasn't for me.

PL: Do you remember being hit on the hand?

AK: I think probably I must have been. Uh-huh.

PL: How has that in any way shaped your Jewish knowledge?

AK: Well, in those days we didn't have Sunday schools like they have now. We didn't have anywhere where we could go for a Jewish education, so my Jewish education was limited to that extent, that there was no place. So that is why we went to the Settlement House where we got—but we didn't get a Jewish education. We got other things but we didn't get a Jewish education. There was none. The Talmud Torah, the Bikur Cholim

didn't offer us an education, the youth.

PL: Was that something that disappointed you? Were you aware of that?

AK: At that time I was not. Later on I was.

PL: Did your—what kind of Jewish education did your mother have?

AK: That I don't know. She was raised in Russia and I have no idea.

PL: What kind of Jewish education did she perhaps endow upon you in the home? Were there ways of cooking or recipes?

AK: Where?

PL: In your home.

AK: Oh, my home? Well, my mother was a good cook and I remembered her—she always had a big pot of, always cooked for big families. You know, with two growing boys and two girls she always had food on the table, and substantial food. She wasn't a fancy cook but she had, she cooked everything that Jewish people cook.

PL: What do you remember in particular about her cooking?

AK: Well, I can remember, I can remember the gefilte fish they used to make and they used to get the chickens. Sometimes they'd even pluck the chickens. And I was very good friends—I had a very dear friend whose father was a shochet [kosher butcher/ritual slaughterer].

PL: What was her name?

AK: Bessie Kopstein. He was the shochet at that time and her mother was a marvelous cook. She used to cook for the men; they used to come on Friday nights from shul, from

the synagogue, and they'd come there to eat. So many times I would tell my mother, "I'm not going to be home for dinner. I'm going to eat over at Bessie's." [laughter]

PL: How did your mom respond to that?

AK: Oh, she didn't care because she used to make things that my mother didn't make, like she'd stuff little tongues. She'd make those baby tongues and stuff them, you know?

PL: No.

AK: Oh, that. She'd make everything. My mother used to make wonderful roasts, pot roasts and meatloafs and stuffed cabbage and borscht. Lots of borscht and chicken, chicken soup and k'naidels and all that stuff. You know, she used to make all that, yeah.

PL: Yeah. Did she keep a kosher home?

AK: No. But when my grandmother was living with us we had a kosher home. We had separate dishes, separate silverware, everything separate. When my grandmother passed away, it all, the boys, we all started mixing everything up. We did it for my grandmother. But my mother didn't care because as long as she had kosher meat in the house the rest didn't matter. She would never, never have anything that was not kosher, as far as food was concerned in the house. Kosher meat, kosher—she used to buy fish from the fish market. And it was different in those days. They had, they had the butcher shops. They had the fish markets. Separate, you know, from the—we didn't have real supermarkets in those days.

PL: Did you go shopping with her?

AK: No, I never had time to go shopping with her. [laughter]

PL: You mentioned that it was difficult because your mother's first language was not English. Do you want to elaborate or describe that to me?

AK: Well, my mother picked up English very well, but writing was difficult for her. But my dad did beautifully because he was in business. And he spoke, he spoke English very well, picked it up immediately. And in New York I think they took lessons in English. So when they came to Seattle they were fairly well, doing pretty well with their English. You know, to be living in New York, they have—I imagine they have the facilities there for people that came from the Old Country to improve their language and so forth.

PL: Did Settlement House play a part in their also getting acclimated to life in Seattle?

AK: No.

PL: It was mostly for the children?

AK: Just the children, yeah.

PL: Can you tell me how that was a significant Jewish learning experience for you with Settlement House?

AK: Well, it wasn't really a Jewish experience. It was a place where you could meet other people. My parents used to belong to the Jewish organizations here, the Workmen's Circle. They were members of that and they were members of the Eagles Lodge. What's the name of that lodge? There was a lodge that they were members of where they got – we got – they had physicians there. My mother used to use their doctors. We didn't belong to clinics like they belong to now, you know.

PL: Was it a Jewish lodge?

AK: Well, the Workmen's Circle was Jewish.

PL: No, the Eagles Lodge or the one that you're talking about.

AK: I think it was mixed. Yeah, it was mixed because they got the doctors and all. They got their—it was like a place where you—because when we were born she used those doctors. Not I [unclear]; my brother and sister's.

PL: The Workmen's Circle. Because I also saw that you were active in the Workmen's Circle yourself. What did—it was obviously a very social organization.

AK: It was a very social Jewish organization.

PL: So how did your parents get involved and did they introduce you to it?

AK: No, because a lot of their friends were members of it when they came to Seattle. It was where they met. That's where they congregated and met. And I remember as a child I used to take dancing lessons and I used to—when they had programs I remember I used to dance. I used to put on a Spanish dance. I still have the castanets. I still have—I used to do a Spanish dance. I used to do a ballet dance, you know, in those days.

PL: Was that – performances – were they for the parents? Were they for other children?

AK: They were for the organization and then they used to throw money on the stage.

PL: Tell me about that. [laughter]

AK: I remember them throwing money on the stage.

PL: How did that make you feel?

AK: Well, I used to pick up the money and I'd say, "Thank you." [laughter]

PL: Do you remember the Workmen's Circle and the classes being in Yiddish or were they held in English?

AK: Oh, Yiddish.

PL: So you were—

AK: It was all Jewish people from the same part of Russia, a lot of them. There were different—it was a big organization, the Workmen's Circle. Have you heard of it before? You must have.

PL: Well, I'm interested because the Workmen's Circle also had a very socialist agenda in some places.

AK: Well, I was going to say that but I didn't know if I should. I danced with a red flag. [laughter]

PL: I would love for you to describe this because it's no longer; it's a wonderful part of history.

AK: Yeah, well, the—I guess my folks must have been socialists.

PL: Ah.

AK: Because when they joined the Workmen's Circle they were very active and when they put on programs I had to be on the program. So I danced. I danced, I'd have a red skirt on and I don't know. And I danced, and so that's why they'd throw the money on the stage.

PL: I don't understand. So they'd throw it on the stage because—

AK: Well, they were—they'd throw. Of course, I didn't keep the money. I gave it to them. You know, that was, my parents wouldn't let me keep the money.

PL: What did it—how old were you at the time that you were—

AK: Well, I mean, I was around ten or eleven years old.

PL: Did you understand the socialist leanings of your parents?

AK: Not really.

PL: When did you finally understand?

AK: Later on when I—I said, “I’m not Socialist.” [laughter] “I’m a Democrat.”

PL: Did you go to Workmen’s Circle camps?

AK: We never, I never, we could never—the boys—I never went to camp but my sister was a Campfire Girl for years. My brother was a Sea Scout, Sam, the one that was in the Army. Jack was also in the Army. My mother used to say, “I have a Major and a Minor.” [laughter] Jack was a Boy Scout, an Eagle Scout. They were both Eagle Scouts. So. But I was the oldest and I never had that opportunity.

PL: The time that you danced in the red dress, do you remember that? Do you remember—

AK: I remember it. I can remember that incident but, you know, there’s a lot of things I don’t remember. But that was something that stuck with me.

PL: Do you remember any songs that you used to sing or—

AK: I don’t remember. I remember they used to have essay contests, Communistic. I used to write, I used to write—there was a friend of ours who used to come over, and I used to write an article and then he used to add in stuff. And I’d send it in. But I never won anything. I mean, [laughter] it was a contest but I never won. But it was interesting, I can remember that.

PL: Were there other friends of yours or other girls that you socialized with at the Workmen's Circle that you remember?

AK: I don't remember. I just don't remember that. I was pretty young.

PL: At what point did you recognize that the Workmen's Circle, that it was a bad thing in your mind; that you didn't want it—you wanted to distance yourself from their, the socialist label?

AK: I think when I, when I started going, involved in my school activities, I dropped—I didn't—we—they—I think the thing got very, was very, the farthest thing from my mind. I wasn't interested. That there were too many other things that were taking my time and I just didn't want to go to that. And my parents also finally dropped out. I mean, they weren't interested. And some of the people that were working with the organization, as far as I remember. But that was a social place where they went. That was a social place where they met, where they met the people that came from the Old Country that came into Seattle. That's where they met, got together.

PL: Great. Let me ask you a little bit then about how and where you met your husband.

AK: Yes. At the time we were members of the Herzl. My husband—no, my, we weren't members of the Herzl. Just a minute. How did I meet him? We went to a dance at the Herzl. They used to give dances on Saturday nights where boys could meet girls.

PL: The Herzl—

AK: Herzl Synagogue.

PL: —Synagogue, which was located where?

AK: They were located on 19th Avenue, I think.

PL: And your husband to be's name was—

AK: Ben [Kaplan]. And he came here from St. Paul, Minnesota. He came over to Seattle and he started up a roofing business, construction business. But at that time he was just—I don't know. I think he was new to Seattle, sort of. And he probably heard about the dance and he came to meet, to meet people at the dance. And here we were, a bunch of gals that came. We didn't have dates. It was not a dated affair. So that's where I met him and that was during the time that I had come up from San Francisco for my vacation from—between—after my job at General Motors. I was pretty independent and I wasn't very interested in anything personal. So I—but he stuck with me all that evening. He just wanted to dance with me, and so we became friendly. And then I left. He used to write to me all the time.

PL: You returned to San Francisco?

AK: And so he was really instrumental to me moving back to Seattle.

PL: Tell me about that. How was that? You kept a correspondence for how long?

AK: For about a couple years, uh-huh.

PL: What finally won you over?

AK: Well, he wanted to get married. But, you see, it was during the Depression and he was starting up this business, and it was difficult. And I couldn't see, you know, getting married. And my sister had gotten married a year before I did because she—they all said they got married a year before and they didn't have much to get married on. And my folks couldn't afford to give them—well, they didn't want my folks to give them a big wedding because they knew they couldn't afford it. So they went to the rabbi's – to the rabbi's study, studio, or whatever – and the immediate family and she got married there. She and her husband were married there. So I didn't know what I was going to do. She

was younger than me and got married before I did. So I thought, "Well, what am I going to do?" So we decided to elope. So we went to Vancouver, Washington and got married. I came up on my—I came up to Seattle. I quit my job, came up to Seattle and then we went to Vancouver, Washington and we got married.

PL: How did you make the plan to elope and what did it mean in those days for you to make that independent a decision from your family?

AK: Well, it was a big decision because I knew my mother would feel bad. But at the same time I knew there was no one in Ben's, in his family that would come. So I decided that, being that they wouldn't be here, we decided that we would just go off and get married. Which we did but my parents gave me a beautiful reception in their home. They had all my friends. We had a big, big party that night with the booze and the whole bit. [laughter]

PL: Before—I would like to hear very much about this party. But I'm curious a little bit about the period of courtship, because three years and you were twenty-eight years old when you got married?

AK: I was, yes.

PL: And that was in what year?

AK: I got married in 1935.

PL: Okay. So you were twenty-eight years old. At that point, had a lot of your friends, were they already married and settled?

AK: They were married, yes.

PL: So what was it like when your sister got married before you? You said that you had some feelings about that. Can you explain what it meant to be an independent woman

living in San Francisco with a long-distance relationship, deciding to elope? Reflecting back on this, what do you think about your decisions and your independence, your sense of independence?

AK: Well, I was very independent. I've always been very independent. Maybe it's because I was the oldest and my sister. And I were very close, although we had close to four years between us. And she sort of looked up to me. And she always wanted everything I had. Like, if I had, I had a lot of candies, you know, and she'd always sneak and she'd take a bite of candy, a half of it. Didn't like it, she'd put it back in the box. In those days we wore silk stockings – not rayon, silk. And I'd come up, I'd come, I'd go in to get a pair of stockings. Well, one was okay; the other had a rip in it. She had worn them. And another thing she used to do. She, well, you know, in those days we wore hats and one time she took my, one of my favorite hats, and she took it to work, walked—I mean, she went to work with it. And I was going to—I wasn't working at that time. I was up here on vacation and I wanted to go—I wanted to wear that hat. I had a luncheon date and she had the hat. So I called her up and I said, "Marion." I said, "You have my hat. Please see that I get it right away." So she had it delivered by special delivery. [laughter] And I wore the hat.

PL: That day? That's fabulous.

AK: I remember that so vividly. But we got along beautifully and—but that's sisterly things, you know. That happens in all families, I'm sure, similar.

PL: How did she feel that she couldn't attend your wedding? The same way you attended—

AK: Well, she was busy at the time. She was busy at the time with her life. But she felt badly that she, that they weren't there. But they all came to the party and we had a wonderful celebration.

PL: In a moment I'm going to have to change tapes, but I want to continue this line of conversation. Okay? So hold on to your thoughts just a moment.

[End CD 1; Begin CD 2 of 4]

PL: We are—this is tape two of the oral history interview with Ann Meyers Kaplan. Again, it's March the 30th, 2001. We are in her home and this is the second of two minidisk tapes. So to continue. I wanted to continue by asking you, do you have any stories you can tell me about your courtship period with your husband, Ben Kaplan?

AK: Well, in those days our social life was meeting with various couples, and we were active with the – the gals were, we were all, the gals that were active in the Evening Branch of National Council of Jewish Women and our mahjong group – so we socialized with dates together and we'd go to—I love the opera. When I was in San Francisco I went to the opera all the time. So my boyfriend in those days, he didn't, he had never been to the opera. And he comes from St. Paul, Minnesota so they're not as art, they're not into art as much as we were out here. So I introduced him to the opera and we went to a few operas. And he had an old—I remember he had an old truck – a "Chev," Chevy in those days. And we used to go "clunk, clunk" up to the opera house. [laughter] And I introduced—so I did get to go to the opera. And, but we used to meet mostly with groups and gangs. We used to meet for, in those days, we'd drive out, down the highway for fried chicken. Every Saturday night we'd always meet a few, just went with two or three couples. You'd go out there; you'd meet everybody. It was just, you know, it was very—and nothing was too far away.

PL: Do you remember any particular stories about how he won you over, since it was a long distance? He was writing you letters?

AK: Well, I don't know. You know, the feelings that you have when you're young – young! – are different than the feelings that you have when you get older. You're more

realistic than you are when you're young. And so in those days I was thinking, well, I worked. I was a bookkeeper all my life. Wherever I worked I did bookkeeping and so I took, I started taking care of the books, his books, and so after we were married, why, I continued doing that all my life. I did the bookkeeping for my husband for 50 years or more until he retired. And I wasn't madly in love with Ben but he, you know, he was like an old shoe. You're [laughter]—we got along fairly well and he seemed, he seemed to be very much in love with me. I can't say that I was overly head and heels in love with him, but I did agree to marry him. So I'm sure I must have felt that way, you know. And so we—and it was a struggle in the beginning. I was working for the Swedish Hospital at the time.

PL: Here in Seattle?

AK: Yeah. I had gotten a job at the Swedish Hospital. When I quit my job in San Francisco when I came up here, why, I looked for a job right away. And through Lillien Clein, who was a pharmacist at the hospital, had—I—she said, "Ann"—and I knew her very well. She said, "Ann, there's going to be a vacancy in the office." She said, "Why don't you apply?" She said, "I'll talk to Miss Hulteen" [phonetic]. She was the superintendent at the time; I remember her name. And she said, "And make an appointment with her." So I said, "Okay." You know, I wasn't sure, working for a hospital, and so I went in and had my interview with her. She was—she said, "Do you—have you ever worked a switchboard?" I said—I thought, "Switchboard?" [makes sound] I said, "Yes." I had never worked a switchboard. It was a ten-trunk line. You know, the kind you push in?

PL: Uh huh.

AK: I had never worked one. And I said, "Yes," and so forth. She looked at my record and she said, "Well, we'd like to have you start." I got the job. I never had trouble getting a job. And so I got the job and do you know? I loved that switchboard.

PL: It was a different—a change from bookkeeping.

AK: Well, I did that half a day and the other half of the day I did reception work. I would—when patients would come in I'd write up their history and get their deposit and so forth and so on. It was quite an experience.

PL: What did you like about working the switchboard so much?

AK: I loved it because I had contact with the doctors. They would call and leave the—I—they would leave the name of a patient that was coming in or I would have to see that there was a room available. And then I used to take care of the mail in those days and I got to know some of the patients. And I remember, in several instances, some man that came in from Alaska. They had, must have had a lot of money. They were down from the gold mines or whatnot, I don't—I remember one man. He had cancer, was dying. He—all he wanted was tomato juice so I used to make sure that he got the tomato juice. But he died. But a lot of them—they—but there was a lot of experiences. I worked three shifts. I worked the morning shift, the afternoon shift and the evening shift. That was three different months and my husband didn't like that. And it was time. We were getting busier in our office. We were looking for another office, which he got. He got an office downtown somewhere. I forget the address.

PL: The other office, meaning his business?

AK: Uh huh.

PL: And what was his business?

AK: Roofing and siding construction.

PL: Was it his own business under his name?

AK: Yes, uh-huh. It was a bonded roofing company. And he had salesmen working for us. So we were getting busier, getting better known and so—previous to that he was on Broadway. He had an office on Broadway. So we decided we'd open up a bigger office and I'd quit my job, stay in the office, which I did.

PL: His office?

AK: Yeah.

PL: So you quit the job at Swedish?

AK: Yes.

PL: Okay.

AK: And stayed in our office.

PL: How did you—how did that come about? Since you loved your job at Swedish, how did you feel about leaving it?

AK: Well, I felt it was a necessity because if he's going to open up a bigger office he's going to need someone in there. We couldn't afford to pay a girl to work in the office and be a bookkeeper. And that, after all, I married him, you know. I had to help do my share, which many times I thought I was doing too much.

PL: Explain what you mean.

AK: I think he demanded an awful lot of me, more than he should have, because I resented it. So I was very independent. So we—sometimes we didn't get along.

PL: Was this something you recognized during your courtship or was it after marriage?

AK: After marriage. Oh, yes.

PL: And when—and how did you recognize it? What kind of, what kind of things indicated to you that he was asking too much of you?

AK: Well, like, I had—he wanted me to do all, to receive the calls that came in. And in those days I'm not sure if there was answering service or not. I'm not sure because later on we got the answering service. But he wanted me to be in charge of the business. In other words, people call up, you know. I had a very good business voice and was pleasant to talk to and whatnot. So he appreciated that, which was fine. I didn't resent it. But at the same time it was—I could not go into the clubs and things that I wanted to go to that I used to go to. So I had to drop out of my mahjong club and a few things. But I finally gave that all up and then I got pregnant with Maxine.

PL: How many years after—

AK: Three years. And we had our office up on Roosevelt Way and the war was on. That was in '38. And the war was on and—well, we were living at the John Marshall Apartments.

PL: Which were located where?

AK: Right on Roosevelt Way. Near the John Marshall School. I think it was John—I'm not sure if that was the name of the apartment but it was one right next to John Marshall High School. So finally, well, I got pregnant. So the war was on and we had to hire somebody to stay in the office because I was pretty sick with my, with Maxine. So we couldn't get anybody, so you know what Ben said? "You know," he said, "I think that we'll—" What did we do? I'm trying to remember what we did right at that time. You know, I can't remember—

PL: Turn it off? Hold on.

AK: When I became pregnant I stayed home to answer the telephone and he transferred the office to our home, and we couldn't get—and salesmen were hard to get at that time because they were going into the Army. It was a very difficult time. So I stayed home to answer the telephone and get as much business as we could. And Ben worked from the home.

PL: How did you feel about that decision? You said you were sick and you were pregnant.

AK: Yeah, but I did it and I—somehow or other my memory is not too good as to what happened at that time. But I know that it was hard. We had a one-bedroom apartment. It was very difficult. And then—and then when we were in this apartment my daughter was born in '38. And we lived there for three years. Of course, when I—when we moved there I was pregnant, you see. So it was three years we lived there and doing business from the home. And then Maxine got sick. She had the mumps. She was due to take her tonsils out that morning with Dr. Norman Clein, a pediatrician here, a very known pediatrician in Seattle. And he canceled the—I—so that morning she came down with the mumps.

PL: How old a child was she? She was three?

AK: She was almost three and she came down with it in July. On her birthday she would have been three September 9th, because she was almost three. So we canceled the operation and the next day she went outside. She got outside to play. She wasn't sick at that time. But she had had these tonsil, bad tonsils. So she was a very lovable child. And here's this little girl. Her mother let her out to play. She had the mumps. And Maxine loved to play with her. So she went up to her and gave her a hug. I don't know. She played with her all that day and then she caught the mumps from her.

PL: This was another little girl outside?

AK: Yeah, because Maxine got sick shortly afterwards and that was when she lost her hearing.

PL: How soon did you know that?

AK: Because we talked to her and she wouldn't answer us. And she was very, very quick. I mean, when she was two years old she was roller-skating. She knew every nursery rhyme in the book backwards because I used to read to her all the time. And when I'd read to her, why she—if I made a mistake she'd correct me. She was a smart little thing. When she was four she was riding a bicycle and my husband used to put blocks on the—What do you call that where you put your feet – pedals – so that she could reach them. She did. She was very—she was very much like a tomboy, very—loved sports, everything. So all of a sudden she's not hearing anything and it—I never knew anything about deaf people. You know how we used to say "deaf and dumb?" And you never paid—you always said, "Oh, they're stupid," you know. People never thought much of deaf people. Of course, you wouldn't know that but that's the way it was in those days. So I was devastated. I mean, we were both devastated and we didn't know what to do. And we had a doctor that used to live next door to my family, who lived next door to us, Dr.—oh, Nev—no, Nev? Dr. Nev was his name. Not Nev. [Correction: Dr. Jacobs] Anyway, this doctor that lived next door to us tried to help us but there wasn't much he could do. But Dr. Clein said he thought maybe her hearing would come back. There was a 50/50 chance. But I wasn't going to wait for that so there was a very wonderful eye, ear, nose doctor in Seattle, very prominent doctor. And I knew him through the time when I was working at the Swedish Hospital. And in fact, when both of my children were born they were born at the Swedish. Dr. Torlief Torland, he was my doctor [Swedish Hospital obstetrician]. And so this doctor—what was his name? I can't remember his name—he said, "Her hearing, " he said, "she's got a nerve deafness. It will never come back." He said, "I would recommend that you educate her. Give her all the education that you can that she'll take." He says, "That is my answer for your daughter."

And so I took it and I cried, you know. What could I do? That was a bad time for me. When I think of it I still want to cry, you know? Really.

PL: That must have been very hard.

AK: Because she was so adorable. She was such a sweet baby, little girl, so full of life. And so he said, "But I want to tell you, Ann." He called me Ann. He said, "Look. Have another child." He said, "That would be the best medicine in the world for you and for your daughter to have another child in your family." Well, I had sworn that I would never have any more children. If this can happen, what do I want another child for? So I thought about it and I said, "Well." I said, "That's the farthest thing from my mind." But it kind of dwelled in back of my head, you know. And I knew my husband wouldn't want it.

PL: Why?

AK: I knew he wouldn't want any more children after what we'd been through. So—but in the meantime my husband's sister was a doctor in Tampa, Florida. She had a clinic there. And she wrote us and said—this was in '38, '39, '40, in '41, the war. We hadn't yet—we were—it was just before the war was declared by President Roosevelt. And I was in St. Paul, Minnesota. I had taken Maxine to Florida by train all the way, and my sister-in-law was going to see what she could do to help Maxine. And so we were there for about three weeks or so. And they took her up in an airplane and this was just before the war was declared. And so we were in—they couldn't do a thing. They took her up—they tried to disturb the Eustachian tube.

PL: Meaning, in the airplane there was a medical reason for taking her?

AK: Yeah, and make a quick drop down to see if they can open up the Eustachian tube in her ear, which nothing happened because she had a nerve deafness. Like the doctor said, nothing would help, which we found out. So we stayed there and then I decided it was time to come home. Things were getting bad and everything sounded so terrible,

you know, with the war; the war was not declared yet. Pearl Harbor had not happened yet. So we—I took the train back to St. Paul. We thought we'd stay there for a week and visit with Ben's family. So while we were there war was declared. I'll never forget that night when President Roosevelt spoke and said there was—what happened at Pearl Harbor. And one of Ben's nephews was on the Tennessee, U.S.S. Tennessee,, and we didn't know if that was one of the, one of the ships that was involved or not, although he was there. So it was very, very bad. So I said, "Well, I better get home." I said, "This is getting bad with war is coming." You know, it was frightening. So I booked a—I couldn't get a, I couldn't even get a sleeper on the train. I had to, we had to stay up all night and we got on the train, there was all these young fellows going to camp. I—that was some experience on that coming home. Maxine had a ball. She was sitting on all the laps of all the young fellows that were going to war. [laughter] She had a wonderful—she doesn't remember it but I do. And I had a little toilet for her that I'd take her into the ladies room, you know, and she'd sit on this little toilet. Well, one day she comes, going like this, down the aisle sitting on the toilet—

PL: [laughs]

AK: —on the train. I didn't get in there to take her off, you know. So she was going like this down. I said, "Oh, my God!" And so [laughter] that was an experience. That was so funny. They—well, they got a big kick out of it, you know. But you never forget. I can never forget that ride home.

PL: Tell me more.

AK: It was—it was so frightening and they blacked out the train, you know.

PL: No, no. What do you mean?

AK: Everything was blacked out.

PL: Meaning the windows were blacked out?

AK: Yes.

PL: Why was that?

AK: In Seattle, particularly, when I got home everything was blacked out. You couldn't turn on your lights at night. The lights would—because they were afraid of an attack.

PL: So your own home or businesses—

AK: They were—the city. Well, I—the city was blacked out, practically.

PL: What did that feel like for you?

AK: Well, it was frightening for all of us, you know, with the war.

PL: Uh huh. And Maxine's situation is going on in the background. So how is Maxine dealing with all of this?

AK: Well, she wasn't aware of it at all.

PL: She wasn't aware that she had lost her hearing?

AK: Oh, yes. She went from a hearing world to a deaf world. She used to wake up at night with nightmares, crying. So I didn't sleep half the night, you know.

PL: Had she started talking already? She was—

AK: Well, that's another thing. So he said, "Educate her." She was three years old. So I used to take her to the Speech and Hearing Clinic. Well, first of all, I started in at the Summit School where they had—children had hearing problems. And I wanted Maxine to start kindergarten as early as possible, but they said they only could take her in the

morning for half days. And so, so what we did was I used to take her in the morning and she like went from a hearing world to a deaf world because she still could talk but she couldn't hear. And children hear—learn by hearing. So gradually she was losing that. That's why it's so important for children when they're first born to talk to them all the time. Very important. And so she had to go, so I always say to Maxine, "I'm talking to you. Look at my lips," you know.

PL: And you're pointing to your lips right now.

AK: Yes. Oh, yes, because she was deaf and she couldn't hear what I was saying. So I knew—and she was different from a lot of the deaf children because the children that are born deaf are different.

PL: How so?

AK: They have a different voice tone and their aptitude is different. I mean, they don't catch on. Their IQ is different to some extent. They're smart. Once they catch on, they're very smart. But it takes them a little longer and it takes a special kind of a teacher. And they had wonderful teachers there for the deaf.

PL: Now, you mentioned that you had done a lot of things to try to educate her and to also—was there an opportunity that you had to try to get her hearing back? I understand that there was a healer that you went to at some point.

AK: Where?

PL: Did you go to a healer?

AK: Yes, I did.

PL: How did—

AK: I was—I went—I was—needed help of some kind myself. But there was no place where I could go.

PL: When you say you needed help, you meant emotionally?

AK: To cope with a deaf child. You know, you have to—you can understand that here I have a child I can't even talk to. I have to—she didn't know what I was telling her or what to do. So I needed help. Ben, of course, did help to some extent. He was always there to take us where we had to go. But he was busy with the business. So it was brought to our attention through the newspaper that there was a healer in—where was this? In Oregon.

PL: Oh. This was with the Seattle Times? The PI? [Post-Intelligencer] Which newspaper?

AK: I think it probably was one of the newspapers.

PL: Okay.

AK: And the word came to us that this healer had done work with deaf children or deaf people, and they'd gotten their hearing back. Well, and he had—and she had healed many, many sick people. So I thought, "Oh, God. Maybe I've got a chance here to see if she can help Maxine." Because I had been—we had taken her up in an airplane. I had been to the Rochester Clinic. We took her to Rochester, Minnesota at the time that I went to Florida. They couldn't do anything. And I thought, "Well, at my last resort; maybe she can do something." Well, it was so sad. You know, I can't think of the think of the name. You don't have—

PL: That's okay. If you remember you can tell me later.

AK: Yeah. So I was there for about a month one summer. Ben drove us up there. He didn't want to stay. And I—there was a hotel there where a lot of the women with their children or sick people stayed for the summer. So I got a hotel room with Maxine and I stayed there. It was a nice place. They had a beautiful twin swimming pool and Maxine – I'm just trying to remember exactly what happened. And this healer was up in the hills and you had to walk up there, and she had chairs like a theatre. And she had an apron on. You'd have to put a dollar or two in her pocket. Mind you, that's how she made a living, I found out.

PL: What did you think of all this?

AK: And she—well, I didn't know, really. But I'll tell you—

PL: Please.

AK: She'd come around and she'd put her hands on Max—and on your, wherever you were sick. If it was your arms she'd put her hand on your arm and she'd give a prayer. And now, I, you know, I found out later she was praying to Jesus Christ. She was—and she—but she always wanted for you to put money in there. So I went about three or four times a week with Maxine.

PL: Where was this exactly? It was in, you said—

AK: Ashland, Oregon.

PL: Ashland, Oregon.

AK: Yes, Ashland, Oregon.

PL: That was a far drive from Seattle.

AK: Oh, it's not a drive.

PL: Oh.

AK: In those days, it was a driver or we took the train. I probably took the train.

PL: So you went three or four times a week for how long?

AK: Well, I'd stay there all morning or afternoon. I don't know.

PL: What was going on for you?

AK: Well, I met a lot of women with sick children. I found out that my condition wasn't the worst. It helped me mentally, actually. There was a lovely woman there with a baby that had one of these big heads. There were a number of them, "water heads." You don't see those around. It's sad. The baby is—this little boy is – I can still remember his name, Frankie – but she had to keep him in a buggy. He was about three or four years old. Smart as the dickens. Great big water head, probably weighed more than he did. And they don't live long. She was trying to get help for him. I met a woman that had some sort of a sickness, a young woman. Maybe it was cancer at the time. I don't know if she—I'm sure she wasn't helped. There was people there on crutches, in wheelchairs. It was sad. And it made me realize that Maxine being deaf was not the worst thing in the world. She had her mentality – smart as the dickens – her hands, her feet. She was lively. She still was more active than a lot of hearing children her age. So I had in mind, "Well, I'm going to get her to talk. I'm going to give her an education where she doesn't have to use the sign language." You see, in those days they didn't approve of the sign—the schools did not approve of the sign language. I would have had to send her away and I wasn't going to do that, like some of the women. When they're that age they send them over to the deaf school in Vancouver. Well, that's ridiculous. So I kept her home, took her to Summit School every morning, took her to the Speech and Hearing Center and gave her lessons in speech, in lip reading. I don't know sign language to this day and she understands everything I say to her.

PL: By lip reading.

AK: Lip reading.

PL: What did the doctors tell you about sign language, or what did they tell you were the medical options?

AK: Well, because they would, they thought that educationally it was not as good as the other. But they have to have the same—they have to have both. Now, Maxine wanted to go to Galludet College. The schools did not prepare her for that.

PL: The schools, meaning the—

AK: The Seattle schools did not prepare her. When she graduated Lincoln High School they did not prepare her for Galludet. To go to Galludet she would have had to go to Vancouver and take their courses for two years.

PL: Galludet is a school for—

AK: For the deaf.

PL: For the deaf.

AK: No, for the deaf in Washington, DC.

PL: What was it like being her mother and watching her interact with other children and also in terms of going—I'm very interested in the healing experience, because being Jewish, what was it like to go to this—

AK: Well—

PL: —healer and realize later—

AK: Yes.

PL: —she was praying to Jesus Christ?

AK: Right. Well, I took it as a matter of course. I didn't believe in Jesus Christ and I could see that it wasn't going to help Maxine. But it was helping me to a great extent because I could see the difference. And I finally felt that I could accept it, not totally, but I would accept it and do all I could. I still was mad at God for doing that to me, you know? But why would that happen? Why should that happen? And—but, you know, Maxine grew up wanting to be Jewish. She loved Sunday school. We became members of the Herzl [synagogue]. She went to Sunday school from the time she was five years old. Rabbi—what was his name? Well, Cantor Frankel, he was, he taught her until she was at junior high, and at Herzl he was—she was his pupil. Do you know him?

PL: No, unfortunately.

AK: He's now retired from the Herzl. And he, one day he called me in and he said, "Ann." He said, "It's time for you to take Maxine out because the teenagers are very, they can be very selfish. They can be very cruel because Maxine is deaf and they don't understand it, and they treat her like"—they treat—they didn't treat—they didn't know about a handicapped child. They weren't taught. I think children should be taught about handicapped children because they're smart, a lot of them.

PL: How did the Jewish community otherwise—were there places in the Jewish community where there were other Jewish deaf children?

AK: No, there weren't. Very few. Very few. And there was no place where I could send her for an education, except to the public schools.

PL: So when you took her out—you did take her out of school after he recommended—

AK: I took her out of Sunday school, yes.

PL: How did that feel for you, being her Jewish mother?

AK: Well, I felt badly but I realized it. At that time I was—at that time I had a better education with deaf pupils because I had—I had my son.

PL: Okay. When did you have your son?

AK: Six years later. And he and Maxine were very close. And he was also a—went to Sunday school. He had his bar mitzvah at the Herzl and he was also my son's teacher for his bar mitzvah. And my son, to this day, still remembers his days at the Herzl, you know.

PL: When Maxine left Sunday school did you pick up her Jewish education in the home in any way?

AK: No, because I didn't have a Jewish education. I didn't have the education so I figured that it was all she could do to master the—her deafness, to cope with her deafness. Not to pile a lot of other things on her. And she belonged to the Girl Scouts. But one thing about Maxine, she always had hearing friends and they were wonderful to her. And she took dancing lessons from Patricia Perry's School of the Dance. I've got a picture of her. Did you see it?

PL: I don't think so.

AK: Oh, where is it?

PL: You can show it to me after. I'd love to see it.

AK: Yes, I have it here.

PL: Now, how would you say that you described yourself? How would you describe yourself as a mother to—you have two children. What kind of mother were you?

AK: Well, I was—I think I was a good mother. I was a modern mother. I was not—I did not—I always was very active in organizations from the time—from the time I was in high school. I was always involved. It seemed like I always got involved, unintentionally, however. And I joined an organization and before I knew it I was working in a committee of some kind. [laughter]

PL: Did that—

AK: And eventually you go further, you know. And you make friends that way and it seemed like—I was very active in the PTA I became very active with the Parent Teacher Association. And when my—I was very active in the Deaf—we started—actually really started the Deaf PTA

PL: Can you explain to me the starting of the Deaf PTA and what it is?

AK: Well, when Maxine was going to Summit School they weren't prepared for the, for the parents. We'd take our children to school. What were we going to do all morning? So as a group of women we would walk down the hill downtown. Summit was on a hill. That's one block from where the Summit is now.

PL: Right.

AK: We'd walk one block down the hill. There was a restaurant. An Italian man used to make the best soups. So we'd go in there for either coffee or donuts or soup and stay there for an hour and then go back and get our kids.

PL: So how did the Deaf PTA begin and how did you meet other mothers?

AK: Well, we used to meet at each other's homes and we used to—in fact, my daughter's husband now is—was her friend when the time they were going to school. That was her second husband, by the way. I have her picture. Well, I'll have to show it to you later. I have her—I have a picture of when they were in school. My daughter was in—she was around ten years old. Brian, Maxine and four other youngsters; they're sitting around a group hearing aid. And you know who gave that to them? The National Council of Jewish Women. I was not responsible for that.

PL: How did that happen?

AK: I don't know. They got interested in the deaf program for some reason.

PL: What is a group hearing aid?

AK: Well, you'll see it. I have a picture of it.

PL: It's a device that sits in—on the table?

AK: Yes, and deaf children around it with hearing aids. If you want a copy of it I'll let you have it.

PL: Hmm. So then you met the other mothers of deaf children—

AK: Well, through the PTA, of course.

PL: And what did you do together? Was it some social or did you—were you activist in any way?

AK: It wasn't social. It was just meeting at each other's homes. Everybody had different circumstances and different kind of lives, you know. But we're—I still see some of the women because our daughters—they're still friends. It's a very, it's a very small, the deaf community are—they're very – how would you say it? – they stick together.

They're—they still have their big meetings and they have their picnics and their gatherings and their socials. And they're busy. They're more active than hearing people, actually more social.

PL: How was your husband sharing some of the responsibility?

AK: Oh, yes. He was very good about transportation and he was very good with Maxine. And he would, many times he'd—see, he'd work on the outside. He would take us places and then pick us up.

PL: Was he—how would you say that your values as a mother were passed on to your children? Maxine is a mother now of one child?

AK: Yeah.

PL: How did you see her style of childrearing differ? Did it have anything to do with her being—

AK: Well, it was different because when Henry wasn't quite a year old she divorced her husband. So that was a lot different. And I used to go down there every—I was working at The Bon at the time and they—I would take time off and I'd go down there whenever she needed me. And when they had their big earthquake, after that I went down—

PL: Where was she living?

AK: She was living in Los Angeles in the Valley. Do you know Los Angeles? Yeah, she was living in the Valley and she, she finally—she was living in Sepulveda at the time, I think. Then she moved. She got a divorce when Henry wasn't quite a year old. But they were living in Sepulveda at the time when she got the divorce, and then she moved to Van Nuys. And there was a big earthquake in the Valley and—when was that? The water supply was hit by the earthquake so they had to vacate their apartments for about

a week. And my brother was living in Los Angeles at the time, my brother, Sam. So she and Henry went and stayed with them. But she was living in an apartment. She had separated from him. So that was a bad time. So her life was a little different.

PL: What was it like watching her as a deaf mother with a hearing—Henry is a hearing son?

AK: Well, it was—at first, it was very difficult. Henry was a very smart little boy. He knew the sign language from the time he was born and she only conversed with him in sign language. She knew the sign language very well at that time, by that time. And when he was born she immediately put him into a hearing, hearing center for—to be with hearing children, so that he kept—now, I remember when I was in Los Angeles, which I was very, very upset about, I took him to the Jewish Community Center, the two of them. I wanted him to join the Jewish Community Center and they would not accept him because Maxine could not pay their fee, and they didn't accept them. I'll always have that against Los Angeles Community Center.

PL: You went down there to sign him up or to speak your mind?

AK: To sign him up. I never spoke my mind. I was too upset to decide to do anything like that.

PL: How did that make you feel about—

AK: I felt very bad. So we found, we found other places where we sent in because at that time it was a difficult time for my daughter.

PL: Were there activities that you and your daughter particularly enjoyed together?

AK: Yes, when she went to dancing school we—she was in a lot of recitals. And to this day she's got friends. When she went to New York later on, she used to work—well, of

course, I'm going ahead with her. She did a lot of things. She, this girl, these girls that she danced with – a couple of them particularly – they were the leading dancers. And one of the girls went to New York to go—to get into the, into the Follies.

PL: The Ziegfeld Follies?

AK: Uh-huh. She wanted to but she never got in, so she got a secretarial job. [laughter] So she was living with some girls and then she and Maxine were corresponding. So she said, "Maxine, why don't you come to New York?" She was in New York. She said, "Why don't you come to New York?" She says, "And we're, and," she says, "I'll get an apartment and we'll room. Well, I'll get a two bedroom apartment and we'll share," because she was working in Denver at the time. She was—my niece was teaching school in Denver, my sister's daughter. Maxine was very close friends with her and she wanted Maxine to come and live with her. Mind you she's teaching school. Right now Sandra is now – Sandra Arkin in Denver – is now a vice president of the National Council of Jewish Women. But she's going to be treasurer next year. She said she didn't want to be president. [laughter]

PL: Did your daughter follow your lead—

AK: So she was there one year and then Sandra got married. So they, so Maxine came back to Seattle and went to New York. And there's where she met her husband at the convention.

PL: At the convention?

AK: There was a deaf convention.

PL: So her husband was deaf as well?

AK: Yeah, because she met him. He was from Los Angeles and he met her at this convention. He wanted her out on dates. She wouldn't date him because she says, "I'm all dated up for the whole week." He says, "Well, when I come back to New York," he said, "I want to date—I want to see you." So she said, "Okay." So it wasn't very long. A few months later he wrote and said, "My mother is coming to New York on a buying trip." His mother had a boutique in California, somewhere in Los Angeles. I don't know, remember where. And he said, "I'm going to come with her and I want to—I'll be there for one week and I want to date you every night." He fell in love with her.

PL: Was he Jewish?

AK: Yeah. Oh, yeah. So she said, "Okay." And that's what happened. And the first thing I knew, she was flying to Los Angeles. That's how her romance started.

PL: Do you see—do you see in Maxine things that are similar to you in your personality?

AK: Yes, because she also has that – where she gets involved with clubs and organizations into depth. She's always in charge of a picnic or a dinner. She has to find a hotel. She's doing the same thing I used to do, I'm sorry to say.

PL: I'm going to pause for a moment.

[End CD 2; Begin CD 3 of 4]

PL: This is the oral history interview session two of Ann Meyers Kaplan. Today is April 23, 2001. We are sitting in the living room of Ann Kaplan's apartment and I'm just going to ask if you would again state your address for the record.

AK: Well, Ann—just a minute. [coughs]

PL: Yeah.

AK: [unclear].

PL: Let me ask you first though. What's the address that we're sitting? Where are we? What's your address?

AK: Where?

PL: Right here.

AK: My address here is 7810 34th. You know, I—my address here—I never have to give my address.

PL: I have it here—7810 Southeast 30th Street.

AK: 30th. 30th.

PL: Apartment 120?

AK: Yeah.

PL: Okay. Mercer Island, Washington.

AK: Yes.

PL: And this is Pamela Brown Lavitt, oral historian for the Jewish Women's Archive's '"Weaving Women's Words" Project in Seattle and this is the third minidisk recording, and this is session two of the interview. I just wanted to ask you again to get your agreement that you agree to being interviewed and that you understand that this is being recorded.

AK: Right.

PL: Good. Okay.

AK: Okay.

PL: Let's continue.

AK: Yeah.

PL: So I remember when we began our interview last time—looking back at that interview and reading over some of the notes that I had taken, I noticed that throughout the interview you said on many different occasions—you called the women of the National Council of Jewish Women—you referred to them as "the gals."

AK: [laughter] Well, we were a group of women that had known each other for so many years. And so possibly, I just—you know, "the gals"—the gals that we saw day in and day out and they were part of our lives. And at the time that I joined Jewish Community Center I—I was at loose ends. I had—I wasn't—I was still working at The Bon at that time but I needed something different.

PL: What year are we talking about here? When in your life is this?

AK: This is in my—I was in my late seventies—in my middle seventies. And I was about to retire. And so some of my friends suggested, "Why don't you come to the Jewish Community Center?" I said, "Oh, no. Way over on the Island [Mercer Island]? No. No way." And so finally one time they persuaded me and I went over for a meeting, and I saw people there that I hadn't seen in years. And I had never had much contact with Sephardic people. Well, half of the people were Sephardic and they were very cliquey. Sephardic people are cliquey. And—but I was interested in—and because some of these women I knew. Some of them came up to me and said they knew me many years ago as a—going to school. And so I decided I would join the Golden Age Club and I became a life member. And while that particular year National Council of Jewish Women was having some problems with the, with NCJW and they needed a liaison and Sylvia Sapperstein was liaison at that time.

PL: Can you spell her name?

AK: Sylvia Saperstein.

PL: Spell her last name for us?

AK: Huh?

PL: How does she spell her last name?

AK: S-y-l-v-i-a Saperstein—S-a-p-e-r-s-t-e-i-n. And she suggested, "Well, why don't we ask Ann Kaplan because she goes to the JCC and she's a past president of NCJW, of Shalom Branch, and ask her to be a liaison. So I was the liaison.

PL: So you became the liaison between the Golden Age Club and—

AK: And the NCJW.

PL: And NCJW. But I wanted to backtrack because you started going to NCJW events when you were in your, in your early 20s. In '29—can—give me little bit—

AK: Oh, that was different. That was Junior.

PL: Okay, that's where I wanted to start.

AK: Oh, I started then when I was—how old was I? That was in '26.

PL: So what happened in 1926 that got you involved with the Junior Council?

AK: Because girls that I – the women that I was friends with, you know, they invite you to come and join. I was working. I never was interested in women's groups. I joined Hadassah first. Didn't like it.

PL: Why? What compelled you to join?

AK: I don't know. The women, the women there. I just wasn't—I didn't think that I fitted in. They weren't—they were nice. They were lovely ladies. But they just—I just wasn't interested in what they were interested in.

PL: Which was—

AK: Hadassah. I mean—

PL: What were they interested in?

AK: Hadassah. You know, all the projects that they did in Israel. I didn't think much of Israel in those days. It wasn't my major interest and—but National Council of Jewish Women had programs. When I joined the Junior Group, why, I became—that suited me much better than the other group so I stayed with it. And I met some very lovely people and we became friends.

PL: Why did they call it the Junior Section?

AK: Well, there was the Evening—first, there was the Junior Section. After you graduated high school, or when you were first married you were Juniors. And—but it started in being an evening group. Professional women—there—women that worked—so the meetings were held at night and not at, during the day. So that was more convenient for us because we were working, working gals. And then we had—we played mahjong on Saturdays, and Sundays we'd go on picnics. And we'd have parties on Saturday night. So I mean, that worked in real great, you know.

PL: Did it—where were the parks? Where were the picnics that you took?

AK: They were held at Seward Park, out at Leschi, or we'd take the boat over to Mercer Island [laughter], over to the B'nai B'rith picnics that we'd go on. And that's where a lot of, a lot of couples met.

PL: So the picnics weren't just, and these events weren't just for women?

AK: Oh, no. Men and women—oh, yeah.

PL: What—and—

AK: Oh, for the women's groups they were just for women. But these organizational picnics were for men and women. Oh, yeah. And I'm trying to think back. And so I—it seemed like no matter where I joined, mostly, I always get involved. They'd want a treasurer or secretary. Well, I'd always get involved that way.

PL: So, how—what was the first position that you held?

AK: Was when my children were in school and I became active in the PTA, like I showed you. For Maxine I became—I was very active in the Deaf PTA and I was treasurer and secretary. I was president for two years. Then, six years later when my son went to Stevens School – my daughter was already settled in going to school – I was active with my son. And I did the same thing there.

PL: Now, for NCJW, what were your motivations for undertaking leadership positions there?

AK: It's because we all were a circle of friends that met and were involved with NCJW, and that's where we felt at home. We'd meet in our own homes and we'd play mahjong. And I wasn't a bridge player in those days. It was mahjong and poker, believe it or not. We had a poker club—played wild poker. And we used to go on picnics and outings and had fun, you know.

PL: Do you remember any particular stories from any of those picnics or parties?

AK: Well, I don't know. Not particularly. It was just, just having fun, you know. I was never particularly interested in any one boy. I liked to go dancing a lot. So whenever

there was dancing I'd always—always had partners for dancing. But I never wanted to become involved with any—although I had many opportunities, and I just used to—I used to get away with—you know, just let it ride.

PL: So how was it important to you to have a community of women? Since you said on a number of occasions that dating wasn't quite as much of an interest to you as it might have been to other people. Why was it important then to have a group of gals?

AK: Well, when I was going to school it was a different story. When I started working, I was – I had a boyfriend – and I, so I didn't—I wasn't interested in dating other boys because I had—was kind of set on this particular boy. And we dated but, however, there's some of my friends would call me and say, "Ann, how about a foursome" or we'd do that. You know, we'd go out. But my recollections are not that clear. I mean, everything went so fast. I don't know.

PL: Now, I noticed that you were the first editor of the Junior Section newspaper.

AK: Yes.

PL: And in the first issue President Lillian Clein, who was the president at the time, she writes the following. She wrote, "This bulletin is the realization of one of our early dreams." And you were the first editor of that.

AK: Yes. yeah.

PL: What—why was that a dream for the Junior Council?

AK: Because we could never get anyone to do it. Everyone was too busy. They didn't want to. And so that was the beginning and with the help of Lillian Clein – she was a wonderful person – and with her help we were able to start the first newspaper. And we had a lot of women that were very capable. They could have done it, I'm sure but they

didn't want to. So, after starting it, why then I believe it went on.

PL: How long were you the editor for?

AK: A couple of years, I guess.

PL: And what years do you remember that was?

AK: Oh, we started in—what's the date that we started?

PL: I think it was 1929.

AK: Nine. Well, I was editor for about a year, I think, or maybe less. I'm not sure. I don't remember.

PL: What was it like, being in a leadership position?

AK: Well, it was a lot of work. You know, actually, it was a lot of work. And you had to keep, you had to know what was going on. Well, you know, being an editor, I wouldn't want that job again for anything. I never would accept that position for anything because it is a lot of responsibility and you have to know the true facts of what you're doing.

PL: So how did you, how did you do that? How did—given it's a volunteer position, how did you manage?

AK: Well, we weren't that big a group.

PL: How many women were there?

AK: I don't quite—I don't know. I don't remember. We could, we could have had easily around forty women. Forty, fifty women.

PL: Can you—can you identify what values of the NCJW kept your participation in the organization, because the Junior Section eventually became the Shalom—the—what was—

AK: We became the Shalom Branch.

PL: And why did you become the Shalom Branch?

AK: We were—our branch did Ship-a-Box from the very beginning and that was a very important part of our being there. And one—we had a name contest and Shalom was sent in from one of the women. And that name was voted on and that's how we became Shalom Branch.

PL: So how many years – I just want to get the history straight – how many years were you the Junior Section before you became the Shalom Branch?

AK: We were—that I can't tell you.

PL: Okay.

AK: I can't. I'd have to look that up.

PL: How significant was it that you became a branch versus a Junior Section?

AK: We were always a branch.

PL: The—but you were called the Evening Branch.

AK: Oh, Evening Branch and then we became the Junior—well, first we were The Juniors. Then we became the Evening Branch and then we became the Shalom Branch.

PL: Now, you mentioned Ship-a-Box.

AK: Ship-a-Box has always been our project.

PL: Can you, can you give a full description, what Ship-a-Box was, whose idea it was and what it was?

AK: Well, now, I have—you have a paper on Ship-a-Box.

PL: I do. I thought I did.

AK: You took it with those other papers.

PL: Let me pause this for a moment and see if we can find it. So you have here—can you describe to me what this piece of paper is that you're holding?

AK: I went to a conference where I had to present a paper on Ship-a-Box and inasmuch as I was—we had a group of women that would come. We met once a week. No, it wasn't once a week. Yeah, we met. We met once a month, once a month. All year round we'd meet once a month. And the toys that we sent to Israel were bought at wholesale. And Jessie Jaffee, who was Ship-a-Box chairman at the time, she and I used to go and buy the toys. We'd go to the wholesale house, buy the toys—pick out the toys and we would pick out the toys through letters that we would get from Israel from the different schools. Schools where they had handicapped children, disadvantaged children – the kind of toys that they needed. And they would write us and tell us what they needed, so we would remember that. And Jessie and I would go down to the wholesale house and pick out toys that we would send to Israel that the children would profit by, that they could use for their education. And that's what we did. And the money to buy the toys was through donations, through luncheons that we'd give, through raffles, yearbooks. All of this money was used to buy toys that we would send to Israel, and that was our main project. And we'd meet, oh, we met one evening a month and packed two boxes of toys, which we mailed to the Department of Education in Israel. And also our women hand crocheted. Then they knit afghans and lap robes, which we would mail to

the Department of Welfare. Let's see, and that was what we did in the beginning.

PL: Who started this? Where? Was it a Seattle—

AK: This is a project that was started by the national office.

PL: Well, that's very interesting because it seems to me that there—that—when I was at the Seattle Jewish Festival on April 10th here in Seattle a number of women came up to the Jewish Women's Archive booth. And one woman—it might have been Emily Schaefer—

AK: Schaefer.

PL: —said that Ship-a-Box is something that many different people over the years have taken credit for starting.

AK: It was started by National Council of Jewish Women.

PL: And why do you think that that, out of all of the different events that you created, why was that a significant one, and why Israel? Yeah.

AK: Well, because they needed it. Israel at that time was coming into their own. They weren't a state yet.

PL: So this was pre-state.

AK: Yes, and they needed, they needed so much. I mean, it was, it was brought to our attention and this is what National wanted.

PL: So why for you was it significant? Did it make you feel good? Did it—when you went to buy these wholesale items—

AK: That's when I became interested in Israel actually. Before then it wasn't that important. But when we started getting—now, they must have in the archives letters that we got from Israel and pictures.

PL: Can you describe them to me? Do you remember reading them?

AK: I don't have them but just thanking us, saying what—we would have—we couldn't have done what we're doing without them. They were a godsend to them.

PL: Did you associate—

AK: Are you recording this?

PL: Yes. Did you associate anything—what particularly about the relationship was it, for being an American Jew, did you find it significant, your interactions with Israel at that time?

AK: Well, with Israel at that time, of course, was like a foreign—of course, was a foreign country as far as I was concerned. I didn't think I'd ever get there or be there, which I was. I did make one trip to Israel. And—but I was interested because here are all these people from all over the world that were coming into Israel—they were Jewish—that we never even thought of. And here they're so—these people are hungry. They're—they have no place else to go. And this—the least we could do is help send them toys for the children, you know. And they really, they really looked forward to receiving these toys until not too long ago. We stopped because they were able to buy toys in Israel cheaper than what we could do to send it to them.

PL: So Ship-a-Box lasted for—

AK: So that's where we lost our job.

PL: So what other kind of activities did you feel compelled you?

AK: Everything dwelled on Ship-a-Box. We'd have our luncheons. We'd have get-togethers. I don't know. We'd always contribute. We'd have raffles and all the money that we could get together went for Ship-a-Box toys because, of course, Council gave us an allotment. They gave us money every—so much we could spend every year. So that, if we used all of that money, well, we still needed more. But we got our—we were able to spend money through the Seattle Section. They paid all the bills but we had, we tried to make money too, which we did. And we did. We did a lot. We sent them a lot of wonderful things for the children.

PL: Around what year do you remember Ship-a-Box falling—where—when you said that you ended the program? Around what year was that?

AK: That's a good question.

PL: Would you say it lasted—was it a ten-year program, a twenty-year program?

AK: Ship-a-Box was even before I ever joined Ship-a-Box they had Ship-a-Box. Ship-a-Box started way back. I don't even know exactly. We used to meet in people's homes, in their basements for Ship-a-Box until we had to scout around where we could meet because we never had Council House at that time. We had to meet. We used to meet at the Panorama [House, a recreation room]. We'd have our meetings there a lot.

PL: What's the Panorama.

AK: Panorama House. That's a, that's an apartment house up on Capitol Hill. And some of the women used to live there and they had a recreation room, and we used to have our meetings there. But our Ship-a-Box, we used to meet at different homes until Council House was built. Then everything opened up for us. We had Council House and we had a special room where we kept our toys and where we met, and we had our meetings there. And we'd get—and we'd have a Sunday brunch there once a month. The women all looked forward to that.

PL: So what kind of satisfaction and rewards—

AK: Well, because we were women that—we were socially friends, friends socially. And so we all worked together. We worked in the kitchen and fixed wonderful brunches and we had people wanting to come to our [Sunday] brunches. Of course we'd charge. Minimum charge for members. And so we'd say, "We'll accept you the first time but we want you to become a member."

PL: What was your experience when Ship-a-Box faltered, when it was no longer a needed program? What did Council—what did you do?

AK: Well, I was very—I was very sad about it because, by the same time it was getting very difficult. And the toys were getting harder, more expensive, harder to get. And we couldn't get the choices that we wanted. And finally we realized that there was a change. And then there was a—they suggested that some of the people in areas were sending them money instead to buy their toys. But we didn't want to do that. So then National decided that we had to stop.

PL: Why do you think money was considered—was not an option?

AK: I'm not sure. Some of them—I think some of the sections did. I think some of the sections must have sent money. Now, what—why, I'm not sure about. But Seattle Section was not in favor of it. They had other options. They thought they could send other things and when that happened, why then, by that time I had other interests.

PL: Before we talk about what those other interests were, do you remember what specific kind of toys you shopped for?

AK: Yes, we used to send toys like, we used to send clocks, building toys. I wish I had kept some of those lists, which I didn't. I gave—I'm sure that Archives must have some of that.

PL: The University of Washington?

AK: Because I turned everything over to Emily Shafer, I'm sure.

PL: I'm more interested instead of the facts of what you remember.

AK: All sorts of toys of children—educational toys that they'd have. What was that main brand that—we used to try to go for good brands. We didn't send cheap toys because we knew that they had—and they could not have—one thing about our toys, it could not have American writing. It—no American writings on the toys because they were all Hebrew. They spoke Hebrew and they didn't want any American letters on toys. So we had to be very careful and we used to send, I remember, one time we sent them dollhouses. They loved dolls, baby dolls. So we used to get these baby dolls and they learned how to dress them – baby clothes. All the kind of dolls that we could send for the children. And little engines and things for boys, you know, where they could, they knew what they were. Different building toys. I mean, it—when you stop to think what you'd sent them, you can imagine when you have children what you would buy for a child.

PL: How did you manage the—this is a time when you were a mother that you were still involved with Ship-a-Box.

AK: Oh, yeah.

PL: So how did you manage the obligations of family and your volunteerism?

AK: Well, see, I didn't get involved with Ship-a-Box until way later when my children were in school. See, I wasn't one of the early ones. I didn't get involved in Ship-a-Box until 19-, let's see—you see, I was working until 1975. I'm not sure. What does it say? What did I say there? See, I'm not so good on dates anymore.

PL: That's okay.

AK: I didn't, I wasn't one of the originators of Ship-a-Box. I was, just got involved with it and became a—I did the inventory and buying.

PL: So you said when it ended that you were involved already with other things or interested in other things. What were those other things?

AK: I became involved with the Golden Age Club.

PL: So how old were—so you were already a Golden Ager when the Ship-a-Box program ended.

AK: Yes, right.

PL: So, tell me—so at that point you started, we started today when you talked about getting involved with Golden Age Club.

AK: Yeah.

PL: So tell us how you, your interests started.

AK: Well, through—I joined and then I became—I became—NCJW had me as a—

PL: A liaison?

AK: —liaison and I wrote articles for the paper on the activities of the Golden Age Club.

PL: Which paper? They had a newsletter?

AK: The NCJW Newsletter. Just a little article on what we used to do—just a few lines. And then NCJW used to give the Golden Age Club $4,000 a year, and they wanted an accounting of their money. And [JCC] at that time could not give them an accounting so they [NCJW] stopped. They [NCJW] didn't want to be involved anymore with [JCC].

PL: So the Golden Age Club was initiated as a program of NCJW?

AK: The Golden Age Club was a program of NCJW and they met at the Jewish Community Center.

PL: Can you describe in your own words what the Golden Age Club is?

AK: The Golden Age Club is entirely different now than it used to be.

PL: What was it then?

AK: Then it was a wonderful club where Jewish people got together and socialized. They had a wonderful choir. They gave stage performances. They gave—they had picnics. They had outings. They went to Harrison Hot Springs every year. They were very active in the community and there was—at that time to be a life member it cost $25. And when I joined I was amazed at all these people, so many people that knew me. And I knew of them and they knew my family. But the Sephardic people I did not know but I became acquainted with them. They were very nice, wonderful cooks and loved to do handwork. They were wonderful with knitting and crocheting. And they were home people, really. And so I met a lot of new people. But however, I was also working at the time. So I would come there on my day off and I would—I don't—let's see, what day did we go? It was—it seemed like I'd come there on Thursdays, was my day off. I would come to the J.

PL: Your day off from The Bon?

AK: Uh-huh.

PL: You worked at The Bon from 1961 to—

AK: From 1960 to 1980-something.

PL: So you got involved with the Golden Age Club at around what year and how old were you?

AK: I got involved with the Golden Age Club in 19-, in 1976, I believe. I was working.

PL: Okay, so you were working and on your one day off you would go to the club?

AK: Yeah, yeah.

PL: And what were your favorite activities, because I understand there were quite a few.

AK: I would join the choir and the—and also the acting. Mim Zimmerman. I have somewhere, I've got some—I've got—find that and give it to you. I have programs from the JCC. What did I do with those programs? I've got them somewhere. And we gave performances. We gave one performance at the Temple de Hirsch auditorium.

PL: What kind of shows were you doing?

AK: We gave a play. I didn't have a very important part but I was in it. And then I loved going to Harrison Hot Springs. And then they were having a—what year was that? They were having an election and they needed a secretary. And so one of the people put my name in as secretary and I was elected as secretary. So from then on I was—from that time I was secretary for years until I became treasurer, and I was treasurer for years. And then one year I turned it over to somebody else and they made such a mess of it. So I went back and straightened it out and then at the end there, why, I became president for a couple of years. And by that time – I'm talking fast – by that time the senior program was getting very big at the J[CC] and the Golden Age Club was losing their members. We were becoming very small so the organization of the executive committees of the Golden Age Club and the Jewish Community Center had made a decision that it should be one big senior center. And this is what they're thriving for now, is to have one big senior center where everybody meets and they have, and they have

their programs. And we get—do you—have you ever seen their program? I have to show you their program.

PL: So that shift for you—can you describe what that shift is then?

AK: It was a relief because there was nobody that wanted to take very much responsibility. You can't carry on an organization with one or two people. You have to have the cooperation of a lot of people and people were getting older. A lot of them were getting sick and they felt that they had done their work many years ago and they didn't want to start in again. And I don't blame them. I was beginning to feel that same way. I didn't want to do it anymore. And we could get no one to do anything, I mean. And, you know what? I was being a treasurer and a president. We had one girl that was president for a number of years because nobody else wanted it. And so I took it for two years and that was the end. And now it's running very nicely without any officers. They have a director; they've always had directors. They've always had—you see, this is why National Council of Jewish Women gave $4,000. That paid for a director for the Golden Age Club. But they [the JCC] would never give them an accounting of how that money was spent. So this is what discouraged NCJW so they decided that they would just eliminate this program.

PL: But it thrived on its own.

AK: But it thrived on its own.

PL: So where did it get the money from?

AK: Well, the money was—well, that's a—I was treasurer so I should know. We'd have—they'd have bazaars. They'd have a bazaar every year and we used to, our women used to make the most wonderful hamentashen [Purim cookies]. We'd go in the kitchen and do it all by hand and we'd make—and women would donate cakes. And we'd have a booth at the fair and we'd sell hot dogs. We used to make several thousand

dollars at these affairs.

PL: Was it a Golden Age Fair?

AK: Yes.

PL: Where did it—

AK: Well, no. It was a—it was a fair put on by the Jewish Community Center. They do that at the Purim Festival once a year. They still do it but we don't do it. It's not like it used to be. We used to go to Brenner's [Bakery in Bellevue, WA] and make hamentashen. Later on, we used [unclear] and then sell them [at the JCC bazaar]. We used to get orders for them. And we used to have a booth, a "notions booth" at our meetings [donated by Muriel Brill]. We used to have the booth.

PL: If you remember you can pop it in later.

AK: Yeah. I have to remember her name but we used to make money.

PL: How did you—how did you negotiate any conflicts within this organization? You have different people who are involved. You have the Sephardic and you have Ashkenazic. Were there ever any conflicts around, or perhaps just decisions that had to be made around, what food to make, or were there contributions from both different groups?

AK: There were contributions from both different groups and they would bring us a lot of their delicious things that they would make: borekas and all of those things. I never knew what they were. And they used to do a lot of the baking too. We used to sell their things. Now, we made quite a bit of money and this is what kept us going. So I'd take this money and buy CDs with it, kept a certain amount in the bank. And we started out with—see, way before my time they had already accumulated some money. When I

became treasurer they already had money in a CD. They had a $10,000 CD, which I kept adding to it every year and when I left the—when we turned our money over to the, to the Jewish Community Center, I turned over $27,000.

PL: Did you feel very proud of that.

AK: Yes, and I spoke at a big luncheon they had. Let me get that. I've got something I want to show you.

PL: Okay, I'll pause for a moment. So you mentioned that you had turned over a check that was $27,000 to the JCC. Why did you turn your money over to the JCC?

AK: Because we were paying them $400 a month. The Golden Age Club, we had to pay rent to the JCC: $400. And our membership had dropped down. We didn't have any money coming in. I would have had to take this money and give it to them anyway and like this, let them pay all the bills.

PL: You can restrict whatever you like. But my question is, you essentially were sort of tenants within the Jewish Community Center?

AK: Yes,

PL: Were other clubs—did other clubs have the same relationship?

AK: I have no idea. Oh, here she is. This is Muriel Brill who had the boutique.

PL: What's the boutique?

AK: Oh, she used to have the—all kinds of trinkets and things and the money—and she'd give us a certain percentage.

PL: Was it a boutique that was associated with the Golden Age Club?

AK: Yeah. Well, she—no, it was her own boutique. We didn't get all the money. You know about Muriel Brill then?

PL: What were you going to tell me about Muriel Brill?

AK: Oh, here is the Golden Age Club, acting. Here it is.

PL: So these are programs from your acting days?

AK: Yeah.

PL: What performances did you remember?

AK: [unclear]. Here it is here.

PL: So what kind of performances did you put on?

AK: Well, skits. Skits, skits.

PL: Ah, so here's the "Di Grine Kuzina" [Yiddish play: "My Green Cousin"].

AK: Ah, oh, carnival we did. Here is—and here is one of the—here is the [unclear] Purim Carnival and Golden Age Club that I was telling you about.

PL: Tell me a little bit about these skits. Who came to them? Were they—

AK: Well, families and—they had a lot of families and people that go to the—that went to the center. And I also, one reason, another reason why I joined the JCC was because I went and took the exercise classes right away and swimming. I was very—I went swimming every chance I—not swimming but water exercises. And here we are in the pool and I don't know.

PL: So why were—why were these leisure activities so important to you? Why was—

AK: Because this was my life. This is what I did. This is how I socialized.

PL: So here it says, “Playmates of the Month frolic in the JCC Olympic-size pool.” What were Playmates of the Month? Is that a group?

AK: The what?

PL: The Playmates of the Month?

AK: Yeah, they just called it Playmates.

PL: It was a swimming group? An exercise group?

AK: Yes, uh-huh.

PL: So how did you exercise? Where did—

AK: Well, we had a woman that we’d do water exercises in the water.

PL: How many years did you do that for?

AK: Oh, the group, you can see there’s quite a group there. And here this—here are some of the ladies—these—here’s Golden Age Club on the go.

PL: So it sounds like the Golden Age Club privileged being very active?

AK: Oh, yes, very active.

PL: So can you tell me—since you were a very active person, was your—was this—was Ben, your husband, involved in any of this?

AK: My husband was not involved because he had his own business and he was always busy with the—and I used to help him in his business too. I was his bookkeeper for 50 years. I did the bookkeeping.

PL: So how did you feel that you—I mean, you've been such an active person. How have—how did you juggle family life and your active life?

AK: Well, I was doing this when my children were already through school. I didn't do any of this until my children were on their own. It was not until 1976—

PL: All right.

AK: —when I retired from—1976 or when did I retire? 1980 or something like that.

PL: Now, I wanted to talk a little bit about your work life, but is there anything more that you want to say about being part of the Golden Age Club, because clearly being part of the Purim, the Purim skits or the Purim spiel, was important to you so—

AK: Yeah.

PL: Do you have any stories or do you remember any particular performances that you were involved in?

AK: No, not particularly. I wasn't that great a performer.

PL: Did you do—did you like to sing or were you the comedian?

AK: I just liked—I just liked the feeling of being in with the group. Actually, I didn't have that much to give. Oh, here it is. No, now I can't find that.

PL: You know what, let's pause for a moment. Just to wrap up the – because we talked about the NCJW and we've talked about the Golden Age Club – I guess I'm just wondering how you feel your life has been shaped by the friendships that you've made in these organizations.

AK: I had a family to take care of. My husband—I couldn't make—I didn't go out with the girls at night because I had my husband and family. But during the day I felt belonged to

me and that's what I did. And I wasn't going to stay home and/or work in the office. He—during—there was a time when I – oh, my husband and I – opened the office of the Bonded Roofing Company and I used to be in the office. And we had salesmen working for us. And during the war, you know, it started getting harder to get salesmen to work for you, so we had to make other arrangements. And we worked—we finally had to open up an office in our home. And however, business kept going. And he wanted me at home to answer the telephone and do that and I put my foot down. I said, "I'm very sorry, Ben, but you're going to have to do it without me because I'm not going to do it." And so we agreed. And we got telephone service and I went ahead and did all the things I wanted to do. I asserted myself.

PL: How did he respond to that?

AK: Huh?

PL: How did you negotiate that with him?

AK: Well, it took awhile because he said, well, he said, "I can't get along without you on the phone." I said, "You will." I said, "Just have the answering service." So it worked out very nicely and we managed it.

PL: So the friendships then that you made in these—in—

AK: And it was social too. Some of the women's husbands—and they had a poker club. They used to be—once—every Monday night he played poker and my husband was a past master of the Thomas M. Reid Lodge. He was a Mason and a Shriner and he used to go out on Saturday nights. He'd go to meetings. He'd go to a meeting about once a month. There was a Shrine night or Masonic night, and he'd go to that.

PL: So what did you—

AK: I'd stay home with the kids.

PL: So—

AK: We had a babysitter when we wanted to go out and so we were both leading busy lives. Really?

PL: Given the sense of independence that you felt in your life, and you've mentioned the word "independence" a number of times and—

AK: What?

PL: Independence.

AK: Yeah.

PL: How now do you look at feminism?

AK: I don't think you should rely on a man to support you. I mean, to say she's got to look out for herself. I mean they should work together—work together but there should be that understanding that it's 50/50. You see, in the olden days it wasn't that way. The man was the boss. If you wanted money for groceries you got an allowance. That's the way our marriage started. And I was not independent in those days in the beginning because I didn't have the money to do the things I wanted to do. And my husband is a home—was a home guy. He didn't like traveling. We'd go to picnics, you know, outdoor picnics. He liked sports like all men do. And so it was a—that's the way the marriage was. We had our few friends. We'd go out together, play cards and—

PL: I'm going to ask you—I'm going to ask you a personal question.

AK: Yeah.

PL: And if you feel uncomfortable answering it you can tell me so. I'm wondering how, given your sense of independence that you – that grew during the time of your marriage – how did that affect your sex life?

AK: No, it didn't have anything to do with your sex life, really.

PL: How would you say your sex life was with your husband?

AK: Fair. [laughter]

PL: Why only fair? [laughter]

AK: Because it's so different nowadays.

PL: How do you mean?

AK: It's more outspoken. And they—and they make so much emphasis. sex is [unclear]. We speak of sex; you don't even think anything of it. In those days you mentioned the word sex, you wouldn't dare. I mean, it was altogether different than it is now. Would I ever get an apartment and live by myself? No. I lived with my family and gave them some money each month. You didn't go get an apartment; that was unheard of. You see, our lives were different than they are now. This generation is altogether different. The couples live together before they get married. So it's like day and night.

PL: Did you and your girlfriends talk about sex?

AK: No, we never talked about sex. And now, I imagine it's a—it's a—I imagine they do now, don't they talk about sex?

PL: How about the female body or body image or—did—the way—

AK: No, we never talked about it. You know?

PL: It was mum?

AK: Yeah.

PL: Well, you worked at The Bon Marché—

AK: Yeah.

PL: —from 1961 to 1980 and I imagine you dealt with a fair amount of—

AK: 1984 or ‘5

PL: Okay. Can you tell me because that was a—you worked in a women’s section?

AK: When I started working at The Bon I was very naïve. I didn’t even know what gay was. [laughter] Really. I, you know, gay or lesbian. I didn’t know what lesbian was. I—and when I went to The Bon all of a sudden I’m waiting on some very unusual people and that’s where I got educated. I learned to know there’s nothing wrong with gay people. There’s nothing wrong with lesbians. That’s the way they were born. That’s like day and night. A gay person, you cannot make over into something else than what they are. That’s their tendencies. Their feelings are different.

PL: How did you have interaction or know that people were gay?

AK: Because I was—I met a lot of gay people. In fact, I lived in an apartment house where our manager was gay after my husband died and I moved. The manager was gay and we had gay people living in the apartment. They were great.

PL: Did you—

AK: I have nothing against gay people.

PL: The Bon Marché in particular is where you said you got your education.

AK: I got my education on gay and lesbian people—not lesbian—men. I had men come in and buy wigs from me. I'd sell them hats – adorable people. Cute.

PL: What made you decide to work at The Bon Marché?

AK: Well, you see, I had been doing the books for my husband for a long time and I was still doing it. And I thought, "Gee, I'd like to have something different where I could be with people." And my kids were in school. I had free time. And I needed the money. I wanted money. I wanted to go places and my husband was a little tight with his money. You know? He worked hard and he—we had expenses. So I decided I would work and go on some trips. So I didn't know if I could get a job. I wondered where—that I could get a job. So as it turned out, I had two offerings. I went to The Bon and I took a test and they called me up the next day and told me to come in, and they offered me a job. A part-time job is what I wanted. Then I had—there was a Jewish outfit that needed a bookkeeper. And they wanted—they liked my handwriting. I had applied, thinking maybe I would take a bookkeeping job and I thought, "How foolish! I'm doing bookkeeping for my husband. Why should I do—take another job, although I'd get paid for it?" My husband never paid me. That's another thing; never work for your husband. Anyway. Period. [laughter]

PL: What else do you have to say about that?

AK: Well, I don't approve of it. I don't, really. So then I decided I'd take the part-time job at The Bon and I loved it. They put me into the men's—in the men's department and I worked part-time, which was great. My son was in high school; my daughter was in junior high, somewhere in there. And anyway, so I started working there and I finally, they said, "We have an opening in the millinery department. We see by your"—I used to work at, around Christmas I would work, but I was going to school. I used to work at the Rhodes and Frederick's [department stores]. They said, "We'll put you in the millinery department full time." I said, "Great. I like that." And I wasn't there very long when they

put in the wig department. We were the first ones to get the wigs, so I got in on the main changeover and we did a tremendous business.

PL: Who came and bought wigs?

AK: Huh?

PL: What came and bought wigs? Who did you help and how did you help them?

AK: I sold wiglets, shannons [phonetic; partial hair pieces], full wigs. The first wigs that came in were—was real hair. They were already styled. So we couldn't do anything with them but sell them the way they were. If they wanted a change in style they'd have to take it to the beauty shop. Then the—then the wigs came in, synthetic wigs started coming in, where you styled them yourself.

PL: How many year lag was it between the hair wigs and the synthetic wigs?

AK: Any what?

PL: How many years before synthetic wigs came in?

AK: I think about a year later.

PL: Okay.

AK: Yeah.

PL: So, those you could style?

AK: Yeah, but I wasn't a stylist so we had beauty operators that were hired. We used to have around three and four beauty operators and booths where we would sell them and turn them over to the stylists to style them. And the wigs in those days were only about $25. Now, they're $125 or more. And they were synthetic; they were manageable. And I

learned to work with them. Yeah. So I used to—I didn't really style them but I used to comb them. And many a time I styled them later on.

PL: Did you have to wear a wig?

AK: Well, we'd have a promotion. Why, the people that would come in to sell the wigs would make us wear one. Yeah.

PL: So did you experiment with being a blond or a redhead?

AK: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

PL: What were your experiences of that?

AK: I didn't care for it.

PL: Did you ever go out of The Bon wearing a wig?

AK: No, never.

PL: Why not?

AK: I never did. I'd take them off and leave them there.

PL: So who came in to buy the wigs and how did you—

AK: Well, I sold wigs to sick people. A lot of women that had cancer would come in. We had a booth where we'd fit them with wigs. I even sold wigs to children that had cancer. I sold wigs to elderly women that were losing their hair. I sold shannons and wiglets to young people.

PL: What are shannons?

AK: Shannons are partials that you put on and wiglets were these little wiglets that would—and then—and shannon also. Long—I forget what you call them now.

PL: Extensions?

AK: Yeah, long hair. They'd put on partial long hair.

PL: What was the satisfaction that you got out of helping these folks?

AK: Well, I used to enjoy it. It made them feel good and then it was—it was to my credit to be able to do it, and I'd make customers that way. And the next time they'd come in they'd ask for me. So I had a lot of customers.

PL: Did you work on commission?

AK: No, I didn't work on commission.

PL: Were any of your clients Jewish women?

AK: A number of them were, yeah.

PL: Do you remember any particular—

AK: Well, yes, but they're gone now.

PL: What do you mean by that?

AK: They're dead; they're gone.

PL: So what do you remember when they were alive?

AK: Well, they'd come in for a wig, yeah.

PL: Were they Orthodox women?

AK: Well, some of them might have been. They might have been. And women whose hair was unmanageable or they're losing—a lot of women lose their hair, you know. A lot of women lose—they're wearing wigs that you wouldn't even know. They look that real. I don't want to mention any names.

PL: That's okay. Without mentioning names, do you remember any particular stories of a wig sale that you made or a relationship that you had with someone at The Bon Marché?

AK: I made a relationship with a woman that was from India, and she'd come in and buy wigs from me every time she'd come into the United States. [Unclear] and she'd have something on her forehead and she would always come in and ask for Ann. She'd come in about once a year or more, and I'd sell her two or three wigs, you know, as many as she wanted. And we became fairly good friends. She'd talk about herself. And then there was a lot of Jewish women that came in and bought from me. Yeah. And I made friends with—I had customers that would come back time and time again, but I didn't really socialize with them afterwards. No.

PL: Was there any sense of secrecy around wig culture?

AK: I never wanted to talk about it because I didn't feel—it's a very sensitive subject and a lot of people that wear wigs don't want to be pointed out as having a wig. I would never do that.

PL: But you obviously saw people in the street that you had sold wigs to, so—

AK: Oh, they would come up and say, "Hello." They'd recognize me. I'd say, "Hi. Come in and see me." [laughter]

PL: How many years did you work in the wig department?

AK: I worked there most of the time that I was there.

PL: And you were there for almost twenty—twenty years?

AK: I was there for over twenty years but I sold millinery and wigs. It was together. I sold as many hats as I did wigs.

PL: So when your clients were gay men—

AK: Some of them, yeah.

PL: —what was different about that sale?

AK: Well, they just acted normally. But I remember one particular gay young fellow. You know, Pam, he was so cute, really. And he'd look in the mirror and put the hat on and pretend, you know. And I can still see him; the cutest, nicest guy. And I just wonder what ever happened to these—And you know, there are some artists that are gay. In California, when my daughter was in California, I did meet a few gay people that were deaf. They had an affair down there and, you know, I didn't pay any attention to them. And, you know, gay and I thought, "Whoo!" I didn't want to associate with them. That was the first time that I ever came close to it, to gay people. So I came to The Bon and got acquainted with them, waited on them. I thought, well, how foolish! You know, you look at people and you can't, you can't really have an opinion on people unless you know who they are. And, of course, now there, there's just so many that it's unbelievable. Unbelievable, really.

PL: So I'm wondering a little bit more about—obviously, there were many satisfactions with working at The Bon. Right? Getting to know people, getting to know different kinds of people.

AK: Well, it was a wonderful time in my life because I was working. I came home; if I didn't feel like cooking we'd go out to dinner, which my husband didn't—he didn't mind doing that. And we'd take the kids with us and we'd go out and have dinner. And in those days there were a lot of restaurants that were—they were not that expensive but you get—they used to have an assortment of foods, buffets, where you go and it was really wonderful. The Royal Forks, and what else? Do you remember the Royal Forks? And then I liked to cook. A lot of times I'd cook at night. I'd cook for two or three days. And I loved to make—my mother was a great cook because she used to make all kinds of things. She'd cook soup in big pots, you know, for family. But I used to make chicken soups and stews and meatloafs and salmon patties. To this day my kids won't touch them.

PL: Won't touch them?

AK: Because I used to love to make them. She—they won't eat salmon patties because Mom used to make them all the time. [laughter] And let's see, what else?

PL: Were there any—

AK: But my husband would not travel. So the Bon Marché had a trip to Alaska – a trip to Hawaii – for one week for the employees and my husband wouldn't go. He says, "I don't want to go to Hawaii." I said, "Why not?" He says, "I don't want to go." He says, "I don't like boats and I don't want to go." So I said, "I'm going." And I didn't have anybody to go with so I signed up and I said, "I need a partner to go with." And so they gave me—they said, "There's a girl, there's a woman who would like a partner and I'll have you both meet. You can meet at a—we're going to have a get-together before we embark and see if you want to room with her on the trip." So I said, "Okay." "And she works in Everett," they told me. "She works at a Bon Marché store in Everett." So we met and we became friends right away – a very lovely gal. We were both born in March and we liked similar things. And we became very good friends. We went. I have pictures of my trip. I'll show

it to you one of these days.

PL: So part of the reason, though, that you were working at the Bon was that you wanted to travel. So—

AK: I wanted to earn money.

PL: You wanted to earn money.

AK: But my husband—I didn't want to ask him for the money.

PL: So then when you went—

AK: If I'd go on my own without him, because I knew he didn't want to go—I wanted to go to Israel. He didn't want any part of it. So I went to Israel with a friend of mine from—that I met at the JCC, the Golden Age Club. So we went to Israel and Egypt.

PL: How old were you when you started these travels?

AK: Well, I was—I went on my first trip to—

[End CD 3 of 4; Begin CD 4]

AK: I wanted to go.

PL: This is the second minidisk tape of the continuing oral history interview of Ann Meyers Kaplan. Today is Monday, April 23, 2001 and we are continuing the second session of the interview. So we were talking about—your first trip was to Hawaii.

AK: My first trip was to Hawaii with this girl that I met through the Bon. My second trip was to Alaska with the group from the Jewish—from the Golden Age Club. And there were four of us that went, that joined, that went together. And we went to Alaska. My second trip was a trip with this—with the same gal, Bessie Lewis. She and I went to

Israel. Her brother had a—had a home and an orchard in Israel.

PL: Bessie Lewis. Can you spell her last name?

AK: Bessie Lewis. She's—she also was a member of the Golden Age Club and a dear friend of mine. And we went—from Israel we went to Egypt and we went on a cruise down the Nile River to Aswan and then flew back to Cairo. We flew to Cairo.

PL: What year is this that you're taking—

AK: Well, I have to look up the dates.

PL: Okay. Do you remember anything about the situation in Israel? Was it—

AK: That was very good. At that time there were no—there was—they did have fighting on the—now, what do they call that—the—we met the soldiers and all. Oh, yeah.

PL: Were the two of you traveling alone or were you a part of an organized group?

AK: No, we went—I went with the National Council of Jewish Women. They had a trip to Israel and that's when we went. We went with them.

PL: Tell me about that trip.

AK: Yeah.

PL: I'd like to hear about that trip. What was it like to visit Israel?

AK: It was wonderful. I enjoyed it. It was just stupendous.

PL: What do you remember? I mean, going to Egypt too.

AK: Egypt also. It was—I met—I'll have to show you pictures. I've got pictures of my trips. That's one thing; I took pictures. Wherever I went I took pictures.

PL: What are some stories that you remember from your trip to Israel, because a lot of people talk about their first trip to Israel as being a very memorable event.

AK: Our driver, the one that took us driving, he was a very, very positive about Israel. They would never, never give Palestine any land. That's the last thing they would do. And he was very devout. Israel was too sacred to turn over to people who would not appreciate it, who were not entitled to it. And this was the feeling. They were against it. And he took us all over. We were all over. It was wonderful. It was a wonderful trip. I'll never forget it. And from there we flew to Athens, that—we had to get a—see, when we flew to Israel we had to go through Athens because we were going to Egypt, and we had to go a different way. We had to go on a different plane and then when we were going to Egypt we had to fly to Athens then get on another plane and fly to Egypt, to Cairo. Yeah, in those days.

PL: Why?

AK: Because they were afraid. Because they—what if somebody bombed the plane or something in that—

PL: So you're saying that you couldn't go from Israel to Egypt?

AK: That's right. They didn't. They went to Athens.

PL: How were you greeted in Egypt? Did people know that you were Jewish?

AK: Oh, sure. We were, of course, the National Council of Jewish Women. We had our—they entertained us in Israel. We went to some of their—we went to the—our projects in Israel. They had a luncheon for us. I can't think of the name right now. And we did a lot of sightseeing. We saw the Holocaust exhibit. We went through all of that. We saw it all, yeah.

PL: And then when you went to Egypt, how did you contrast Egypt in your mind?

AK: Egypt was altogether different. I never expected to see what I saw. You can't visualize it unless you're there. You see all these beggars. You see these men in their turbans and camels, and they are forever wanting you to buy something from them. And it's very—even when you're sitting on the buses they come tapping at the windows with their—I can show you. I've got some articles here that I bought from Egypt.

PL: What kind of articles did you buy on that trip?

AK: Whatever they had. I gave some to the children. There's a camel I got in Egypt right down there, the little one.

PL: Uh huh. And I see on your walls, you—

AK: There are three of them. I've got all kinds of little things, yeah.

PL: What did you buy when you were in Israel?

AK: Well, I got that picture.

PL: The picture of the young woman—

AK: Yeah.

PL: —lighting the Shabbos candles?

AK: Yeah, and I got some knick-knacks and stuff, you know, in Israel. I gave my daughter a lot of it.

PL: So in terms of your travels it sounds like you've been to a lot of places. And a moment ago off-tape you said, "I've lived a crazy life. I've traveled."

AK: Yeah.

PL: "I've never stopped moving."

AK: Yeah, and then I went to—I've made three trips to Alaska. I went to Las Vegas and the Death Valley—made a trip there. I've been to—made a lot of trips to San Francisco—to Los Angeles when my daughter was there. I have family there. I made a trip to—like I told you, to China, you know.

PL: No, you haven't mentioned that.

AK: Hong Kong. Well, they're China now. We went to Bangkok.

PL: Who did you travel to Bangkok with?

AK: My brother and his wife and a friend of theirs—four of us.

PL: Tell me. How did you make the decision to go on that trip?

AK: Because I've always wanted to go to the Orient.

PL: Why?

AK: I loved—I think I read, used to read all the Orient books.

PL: Such as what kind of books?

AK: Well, books on—mysteries and trips of—you know, books on the Orient, on China, Japan.

PL: Were those—

AK: I used to always go to their exhibits. I have a wonderful book on China now that I bought at one of the exhibits. I was interested in the Far East.

PL: Where do you think that interest came from?

AK: Because I used to read a lot about it.

PL: As a child or as an adult?

AK: As a child and then as I grew up I liked—I used to like to read a lot—

PL: Do you—

AK: —as a child. We didn't have TV in those days.

PL: So then—I wanted just to sidetrack for a moment then. Do you have favorite authors that had an impact on your life?

AK: I used to but I don't anymore. I don't remember.

PL: But particular kinds of books. You liked mysteries.

AK: I liked mysteries and I liked family stories and I used to like biographies, and later on I got interested in opera—used to love to go to the opera and plays, especially Jewish plays. I used to love Jewish plays. And here we never got many of them.

PL: What do you mean by Jewish plays?

AK: Jewish actors in Jewish plays. And I never found it—we never had much of that here.

PL: So how did you get interested in it?

AK: Well, because I used to read about it and I was always interested in theater.

PL: Are there particular actors that you can remember?

AK: At one time there was.

PL: I understand that Boris Tomishevsky once came to—

AK: Who?

PL: Boris Tomishevsky, who is the Second Avenue Yiddish Theatre—

AK: Yeah.

PL: —came to Seattle and other actors came to Seattle. Do you remember seeing—what do you mean by Jewish plays? Maybe that's what I should ask.

AK: I mean even Yiddish plays or Jewish plays. Of course, I did see Fiddler on the Roof I don't know how many times. And—

PL: How is that central or important to your sense of being—of Jewish identity?

AK: It was entirely—a lot of people didn't think I was Jewish, actually. When I worked for the Swedish Hospital and I worked the switchboard there no one thought I was Jewish. And one day [laughter] a fellow came in who was really Jewish, and he kept talking to me in Yiddish, Jewish. And here people are waiting and finally I said, "Would you excuse me, please?" [laughter] I said, "You better go upstairs. I think you'll find what you want up there."

PL: So you understood him?

AK: Oh, yeah, to some extent.

PL: But he picked you out as being Jewish?

AK: Yeah. He knew me, I guess.

PL: Did that surprise you?

AK: No, no. I didn't ever try to hide my identity.

PL: So when you went to Bangkok what experiences did you have traveling in the Far East that impacted you?

AK: That did what?

PL: That had an impact on you that you remember?

AK: Oh. Yes, it was very humid. [laughter] We had to carry our water with us all the time. It was so beautiful and so different, and the people were so nice. They were treated—they were very gracious. And they were so different from anything that you would imagine because—of course, we stayed at a lovely hotel. It was right on the water.

PL: Do you remember the name of the hotel?

AK: At night it was like fairyland. Like fairyland.

PL: Do you remember the name of the hotel you stayed in?

AK: I have everything written down but I think that I will save that for another time.

PL: Absolutely.

AK: I'll give you that information.

PL: So did you ever travel with your husband?

AK: Yes. Oh, yes. We went for a beautiful trip – a motor trip with the children. We drove to St. Paul, Minnesota. We went to the Yellowstone National Park and we used to

go to all the picnics. And we—my husband was not an outdoorsman. You know, like my son turned out to be a skier and he belonged to the Explorers. And he to this day, and he goes skiing with a group of friends. He's an outdoors type, loves boats. And my husband liked to go fishing once in awhile but he never was a fisherman. So he—he was—his main object was Masonic work, and he trained a lot of people. He trained them. You had to train to be a Masonic. He had his hobby; I had mine.

PL: And what would you say yours was?

AK: Mine was just doing what I was doing.

PL: Were there particular role models in—historically, women that you looked to as being models of how you should live your own life, or perhaps even in your own family?

AK: I think I grew up being independent. It took me a long time to decide to marry my husband, and I—I had to give up – there were a lot of stuff that I wanted to do – to get married. And my sister was married before I was. She was younger than me. And so I decided to get married. She had a baby and I wanted to have children too, see.

PL: Can you think of any women who were in the public eye that you looked to?

AK: Not really.

PL: Some people might say, "Well, Eleanor Roosevelt" or—

AK: I never really ever thought that I'd ever be any—be a president of anything. I just sort of fell into things. I never—it isn't something that I was working for, attained, wanted to be. I mean, except the Golden Age Club; I did want to be president because I had worked very hard and I thought that I had—and it was coming to a point in the life of the Golden Age Club that there had to be a change. And I felt that I was going to make that change. And I did. That was my object, to be president. Not to carry on, to be president,

but to make that change. I didn't want to be president but I knew I had to be.

PL: So looking back at your life from the age of 94 that you are now, what has been your experience of aging?

AK: Well, I tell you, I never felt my age until these last couple years. This last year especially has been hard because I have arthritis. Even this hand is—I have to keep working with it. And I think the arthritis is bothering me right now.

PL: What's that like to—

AK: It's not easy, really, and it's getting harder, so it's not that—it's something that I guess as you get older, until they find medication that will help elderly people with this arthritis, it's very devastating. Really.

PL: What about the process of going through changes physically? Other—for instance, when did you go through menopause?

AK: I was late. I was late. Friends of mine were menstruating when I—nothing happening to me. And I thought, "Well, gee, I'm not going to—what's going on here?" You know how you think when you're that age. And finally, I think I was around fourteen or fifteen years old.

PL: When you hit puberty?

AK: Yeah, yeah.

PL: What was that like to hit it late?

AK: Well, I knew all about it. I was expecting it and it's not very, you know— you manage. It's something that happens to you every month and [laughter] It's wonderful when you don't have to worry about it.

PL: So then throughout your life when you got to the point of going through menopause, did that also occur late?

AK: I think so. Yeah, probably.

PL: How was your menopause? What do you remember about it?

AK: You know, I have friends now that tell me they were married when they were eighteen and nineteen years old, twenty years old. My life was just beginning at that age. See, I didn't get married until I was almost thirty. So—and I had traveled some and I had done some things that I had set my mind to do. And here some of these women were married and had children already. Well, that to me wasn't what I wanted.

PL: You mentioned that you had had a hysterectomy? At what point—

AK: Oh, that was later in life.

PL: And why—can you tell me about—

AK: I don't know why but it did. Yeah.

PL: Was that a choice you made or was that a medical—

AK: Oh, that was after I had had my first child. No, after I'd had my second. Oh, after Henry—after Arthur was born, sure.

PL: So you made the decision on your own or was there a medical reason?

AK: Oh, no, I had a dropped—I had a dropped uterus and so they decided that while they were doing that they would do the other too. Yeah, that was it.

PL: How did you feel physically after that?

AK: There was no feeling. I didn't feel any different.

PL: So then, did you then go through a menopause?

AK: I don't remember. I never did go through—I never had high blood—I mean, never had flushes—

PL: Hot flashes?

AK: My daughter did. I had nothing like it.

PL: What was it like experiencing it with her? She probably talked to you about it?

AK: Oh, yes. And she'd tell me and I'd say, "Well, Maxine, I don't know because I didn't have it. I never went through that." She did. Yeah, altogether different.

PL: Is there anything else about your experiences of health or illness that have been significant in your life?

AK: Well, the worst one was when I was mugged. Previous to that I'd had a few operations, but being mugged and having your hip broken was something I wouldn't have dreamt about.

PL: What happened?

AK: I was waiting for the bus at 10:30 in the morning and this young black man, nice looking, walked across the street and came right at me and grabbed my purse. And I wouldn't give it to him so he knocked me over and took my purse. Ran through the park, got into a car and disappeared. And I laid there and then the bus came by. They called 911 and they took me to the hospital, x-rayed me and discovered I had a broken hip, a partial. So I was in the hospital for two weeks.

PL: Okay, so physically you were injured. What about emotionally?

AK: What?

PL: What about emotionally?

AK: Well, I was very upset, of course. I was very emotionally upset. I was in shock for a few days.

PL: What did you think about?

AK: I just felt like, “Why did this have to happen? Why did this have to happen?”

PL: You were in front of the JCC?

AK: I was in front of Volunteer –no, this was when I was in front of Volunteer Park.

PL: In front of Volunteer Park. You were on your way to the JCC?

AK: Uh-huh. I was taking the bus. In those days we took the bus.

PL: Do you remember your—people often associate being mugged—I’ve been mugged as well—

AK: What?

PL: I’ve been mugged as well.

AK: Have you?

PL: Uh huh.

AK: Oh, my. Where?

PL: In New York City when I lived in—

AK: What did they do?

PL: I can tell you off-tape. [laughter] It's your oral history, not mine.

AK: Okay.

PL: But I do understand the experience of being mugged and I recalled going over it over and over again. And the relationship between you and your mugger, where you think about that moment of negotiation that you have with someone who wants something as simple from you as your money. And I wondered, did you go over that experience in your mind? Did you talk to this person?

AK: He didn't ask me for my money or anything. He just came right at me. He didn't want to talk to me. He would have—if I had given him my purse he would have taken it and ran. There was a car waiting for him.

PL: Why didn't you give him your purse?

AK: Huh?

PL: Why didn't you give him your purse?

AK: Because it came on so suddenly. I didn't expect it. I didn't know what to do.

PL: The fact that—

AK: But it was just that split moment that I was trying to decide what to do he knocked me over. He didn't give me a chance to give it to him, really. It was so quick.

PL: Did you fear in any way after that experience because your attacker was African American?

AK: No, I—no.

PL: Did that impact you?

AK: You see, we didn't have a bus stop at that time. I was just standing there by this sidewalk waiting for the bus. Our—after that I made it a business of mine to write to the Chamber of Commerce and tell them we needed a bus stop. I could have been sitting down. That wouldn't have happened. And I said, "We need a bus stop on that corner where I was mugged. And through my letter we got a bus stop but it was—took one year to get the bus stop—the bus stop that's there because of me. I have the letter somewhere to prove it.

PL: I'd like to see that letter.

AK: I will.

PL: Did they write you back?

AK: No. No, I never. Just a letter telling me, telling me that they would put a bus stop in. It took them a year. I have the letter. I will show it to you—

PL: Good for you.

AK: —when I find it.

PL: So, I think—I want to ask you a little—

AK: I have to go to—I have to go.

PL: All right. Let me take a moment. We'll pause.

AK: Yeah.

PL: Okay, so I—

AK: I wanted you to go through some of these things here.

PL: Okay. I think what we'll do is we'll end here and there are a few other items that we'll continue on next time.

AK: Okay.

PL: Okay.

AK: Yeah.

PL: Thank you.

AK: I don't mind.

PL: It's been wonderful.

[END OF INTERVIEW]