Harriet Cohn Transcript

HELENE BAILIN: Today is Thursday, January 9, 1997. I'm Helene Bailin interviewing Harriet Cohn.

HARRIET COHN: Harriet Segal Cohn.

HB: Harriet Segal Cohn.

HC: S-E-G-A-L.

HB: S-E-G-A-L. In her home in Westwood under the auspices of the Jewish Women's Archive Temple Israel Oral History Project in Boston, Massachusetts. Well, we were just – you were just mentioning to me about your grandfather. Can you tell me a little bit about him and where he was born?

HC: Abraham Segal was born in Kovno Gubernia; I think that means the county of Kovno near the city. Either his father or his grandfather had been a learned rabbi. They were always interested in learning. He had tickets originally to come to New York, and somebody said to him, "New York is where the money is, but Boston is where the culture is." Well, he changed his ticket immediately to come to Boston. So, he landed in East Boston, and that's where he settled, or he settled in East Boston. I assume he landed there. I don't know whether everybody had to land on Ellis Island or not, but I think Boston – anyway, he settled. I was born in East Boston. He came first with his older sons and my father. The older sons had been, of course, to the Hebrew School and also to the gymnasium wherever they lived. My father, who I think was the brightest, was not admitted to the gymnasium, and I think my grandfather, although he was steeped in the Old Testament himself, wanted his boys to have a secular education as well as a Jewish one. He came anyway, and my father stayed with his mother and his two younger sisters

and came alone at thirteen. When my grandfather came here, he began to read. Well, he always read, and he began to read in American literature – or all literature, I guess. But he read a Mr. [Robert G.] Ingersoll, I think, who was maybe an atheist. I don't know. But I know that when he first lived in East Boston, I was told he would – of course, he didn't ride on Shabbos, so he didn't take the – and there was no synagogue in East Boston when he was there. So he didn't ride to Boston on the ferry, but he would walk through Chelsea and Charlestown to get to Boston where there was a Jewish synagogue. On his way once, he thought, "Really, man can serve God best by serving mankind."

HB: What year are we talking about?

HC: Sometime in the 1880s.

HB: 1880s. So, what synagogue would he have gone to in Boston, do you know?

HC: I don't know. Shul, I guess you call it a shul –

HB: Shul.

HC: – then. I don't know. But he went on Sabbath, so he turned around. He didn't enter a shul again until he came to my confirmation at Temple Israel quite a few years later because this was before my father at thirteen even came, I think. But at any rate –

HB: Now, your grandfather came first, and then your father?

HC: With two sons and then my father came alone.

HB: I see.

HC: I know the story of when he got to the border; the guard had been changed. So, of course, they then had to send back to raise more money to bribe the soldiers or whoever

it was. So, the group he was with left and left this thirteen-year-old boy alone. So when it came in, he then got to Hamburg, but of course, by that time, he'd missed his boat to America. But he got to Hamburg, and then he got a boat to Liverpool. I don't know how he lived, and he never wanted to talk about anything. That was a very bitter time evidently for him. And then he finally came to this country. He and his brother Joe worked with their father in a grocery store that he had in East Boston. His oldest brother, Samuel (Schmoll?), never, as far as I know, never had a – he was studying Spinoza by himself, so he was a great Spinoza scholar, but didn't do much in the economic world. That's the story of that grandfather. My other grandfather came from – and later, my grandmother came with her two little daughters, one of whom was I think the first Jewish woman doctor. She graduated from Tufts Medical School in 1906.

HB: Now, who graduated from Tufts?

HC: My Aunt Jenny Segal.

HB: Oh.

HC: And there weren't many women –

HB: No.

HC: – in medicine anyway, and there weren't, I don't think, any other Jewish women in her class. I think Dr. Abe Myerson, I think, was in her class. He was a great neurologist in this city and one of the early ones. But at any rate, she came with her two daughters later. Now what? Oh, then my other grandfather came with his wife and older children. My mother came later with a sister. He was in the woolen business in Worcester. He settled in Worcester. He was Orthodox, and he never was anything but Orthodox. So, when my mother, who was brought up Orthodox, came to Boston, East Boston, into this family that had given up –

HB: How did she meet your father?

HC: She was visiting some friends in East Boston, and she met a man connected with the family. Her older sister, Julia, had married Louis Rome from Fitchburg – from Worcester. She and Mr. Rome lived in East Boston – (Barney?) Rome. Judge Charlie Rome's father.

HB: Yes.

HC: So, (Barney?) Rome saw my mother, who was connected, and Louis was his nephew, so this was Louis' wife's sister.

HB: One of my sons at Temple Israel won the Judge Charles Rome Award.

HC: Award? Well, that's the family.

HB: Yes, when he was in religious school.

HC: So he said, "Where are you staying, Etta?" And she told him, and he said, "Oh, there are too many boys in that family. I think you should come and stay with Anna and me." He was just married, and then when he – she said he was a well-to-do man at the time. Barney Rome had real estate in East Boston. That was in 1899 or early 1900 because she was married in 1900.

HB: Your mother?

HC: Yes, so it must have been 1899. And then he was there, and he said to his wife, "Anna, I'm going to take Etta down and introduce – I'm going to take Etta with me. We're going to the grocery store. You need some flour." She said, "No, Barney, I don't need any flour." He said, "Yes, you do. You need some flour. Etta, put on your hat," after she was having tea with Anna at the Rome's. "Come down with me; we're going for a little walk." So he took her to the grocery store and introduced her to this very nice grocery

boy that he evidently had an eye on who was just my mother's age. I'll show you my father's picture.

HB: Oh, wonderful.

HC: I'll show you my mother's picture too. He was a man, but he was fairly [inaudible].

HB: I'm looking at her father's picture, and what was his name?

HC: Jacob Segal.

HB: Jacob Segal, and he's a handsome white-haired man –

HC: Yes.

HB: – with a three-piece suit and his hands in his pockets, and his jacket slightly parted, looking very distinguished.

HC: Well, he had a distinguished mind.

HB: Yes.

HC: And he was the one who brought supermarkets to New England – the first Big Bear. I don't whether you ever heard of that.

HB: Of what?

HC: The Big Bear.

HB: The Big Bear. No, I haven't.

HC: Well, it was near Tufts. Is that Medford?

HB: Right.

HC: This is my mother's picture.

HB: Oh, and your mother is a lovely-looking woman also.

HC: Oh, yes.

HB: She looks quite young.

HC: Well, that's when she was just – she was married then. She's wearing some of her trousseau.

HB: She's wearing her trousseau. Her hair is piled up on top of her head, and it looks like a white lace, high collar, and a draped chest. It's a lovely little picture.

HC: She was wearing a dress from her trousseau.

HB: So this would be around 1900.

HC: Yes.

HB: And what was her name?

HC: Etta Lavien – L-A-V-I-E-N – from Worcester.

HB: Etta Lavein from Worcester.

HC: L-A-V. I really think it must have been Lavine, and they must have misspelled it –

HB: Right.

HC: – at the entrance to this country. There's my mother and her brother, Philip, and her younger sister. So it was a very attractive family.

HB: Yes, it is. And they all lived in Worcester?

HC: Yes, they all went to school in Worcester. They were brought up in Worcester, and the younger members of the family were born in Worcester.

HB: And your mother was born in Worcester?

HC: No.

HB: Where –?

HC: She came here when she was six.

HB: Where was she born?

HC: (Suray?). I do know the name of the town because Rabbi [Roland] Gittelsohn knew it. I don't know. S-U-R-A-Y, I guess. I don't know. But it was in Kovno Gubernia.

HB: And your father was born in Kovno Gubernia?

HC: I think so because we were Litvaks. My husband was –

HB: My grandfather was born in Kovno Gubernia, too.

HC: Oh, really?

HB: Yes.

HC: My husband was from German ancestry, but I was a Litvak, and I used to tell him we'd make him an honorary Litvak someday.

HB: Litvak. [laughter] Well, let's see. Where were you born?

HC: East Boston.

HB: And what business was your father in? He was working in the grocery –

HC: Grocery business. And the time I was born, he was, I think, a wholesale – had left and was building up a wholesale grocery business in Boston.

HB: And did he go to the shul – to the synagogue? No?

HC: He did, I suppose. He must have when he went – oh, when he was courting my mother, by streetcar from Worcester to Boston, he met her at Thanksgiving. Well, he fell flat for her at that time in –

HB: In the store with the flour?

HC: – when he met her at Mr. Rome's. Well, he met her under very favorable auspices, you see, too. This was one of the rich men of East Boston entertaining a young girl. And then Mr. Rome invited him to tea, you see, so he came, and he saw this young lady twice, and then he asked her if he could take her to the theater. And she said – whatever the theater was in those days. She said, "Yes," but then she got panicky, and she left and took the train or the streetcar back to Worcester.

HB: [laughter]

HC: So then, in a couple of weeks, he went out to Worcester by streetcar, and he courted her. A man from Boston came. My grandfather – [inaudible] came. My Grandpa Lavien came and went out to see his friend in Worcester and said, "Harris, did you know that young man who's courting Etta? His father's an atheist," because he, you see, had left the shul –

HB: Right.

HC: So they called him – I learned afterward they had a word for it, from one of the Greek philosophers – people who – he was a nonbeliever of anything, I mean. But anyway, my grandfather said, "I don't care what his father is. We like that young man

very much, and if he chooses to marry my daughter, I'll be happy to have him as a son-in-law."

HB: Even though your – her father was a very Orthodox man.

HC: Very. Yes.

HB: That's unusual, don't you think, that he would – usually, they're very stringent –

HC: Well, he liked Jacob, and I suppose he thought his daughter was brought up right anyway. No, I think actually Jewish people don't mind what you think. I think they mind if you start teaching what you think. But you remember, if Spinoza had stopped teaching non-belief atheism he would not have been excommunicated. He could have remained a Jew. They just said to him, "Would you" – he could have believed anything he wanted. In Holland at that time, they were hearing that their Portuguese Jews were being killed for being Jews – burned at the stake.

HB: Right.

HC: And they were living in a Christian community, and they didn't want any fuss spreading before the Spanish had conquered Holland, so they didn't want the Inquisition. So they just wanted Spinoza just to stop teaching. They never told him he – and when he refused to stop teaching, they excommunicated him. So I think you could generally believe what you wanted as long as didn't start spreading it around. At any rate, I don't know whether my grandfather went through all that, but I know that – the other thing was he had a daughter who was twenty years old, or twenty-one, and another younger daughter. So girls in those days were very often betrothed at seventeen or eighteen. Anyway, I don't know what his – but I know that they were married in Worcester, so they must have been married with a rabbi, and she came to Boston. But I remember my mother telling me – the first time she rode in a streetcar on the Sabbath, she never thought she would get off alive. She'd never ridden on – they hadn't even driven in their

carriage on a Saturday in her father and mother's house. In my mother's household, her father – my grandmother – her Worcester household [that] she was brought up in, her father and mother went to shul, of course, every Friday night. And then they brought – and then the three girls stayed home and set the table and got everything ready. Then the mother and father brought home any strangers because, at the time, Worcester was one of the weigh stations between Boston, Worcester, Springfield, [and] New York. So any strangers – they never knew how many there were going to be for dinner. She told me how carefully they kept the Sabbath, and I said, "What did your mother do on the Sabbath?" She said, "Every Saturday, my mother walked to the Worcester Hospital and called on people there who had no visitors." Now, I imagine she went to see the Jewish people who had no visitors. But my mother's mother wrote to one of her sisters, who was well off in Lithuania – it's now Lithuania [unclear] – and said, "But you must come here because here education is free, not just for the boys but for the girls too."

HB: [laughs]

HC: So the (Lewisons?) who'd had their own farm, which was unusual in those days, and a house and family, and their mother and my great-grandmother living with them, all migrated partly because of my grandmother's influencing. My grandfather had begun to prosper here.

HB: You mentioned to me before we started the tape that one of your grandfathers wrote some socialist – belonged to the Socialist Party?

HC: Organized it.

HB: Organized it. Can you tell me about that?

HC: Well, that was Segal. That was Abraham Segal from East Boston. Because he was a Socialist, they assumed he was an atheist, and that was when he also had stopped going to shul. As a matter of fact, he'd come to this country – instead of bringing pots

and pans, he brought scrolls and books. When he left the shul – when there was a shul in East Boston, he gave his scrolls and his books to the shul in East Boston. I don't think there is a shul in East Boston anymore.

HB: I don't know.

HC: But there was about forty years ago. Yes, because one of my cousins in New York, George Segal, said, "What about you and me trying to buy those scrolls from the synagogue, from the shul, because that would be a family thing to have?" But I was going to tell him – call him and tell him, "George, it's probably the greatest treasure this shul has. Let's leave it," when George Segal died. So, of course, I never pursued any of it. And that was George Segal, the father of the actor, George Segal, who hasn't had any good parts lately. He was a good actor. He is a good actor.

HB: So it was his father that organized the socialist –

HC: No.

HB: No.

HC: No, it was his grandfather and my grandfather – not the actor's grandfather.

HB: I see.

HC: It was his great-grandfather and my grandfather who helped organize the Socialist Party in Massachusetts. The children in the family – not my mother's children because they were named after people who had died, out of respect, but his brother's children and his sister's children were named – one was named Eugene Victor for Eugene Victor Debs. Another was named Donald (Verton?) for Donald (Verton?), who's one of the great Canadian socialists. So they were named for socialists.

HB: Now, your mother married your father, who was not religious, and she came from the Orthodox home.

HC: She kept a kosher home –

HB: Did she?

HC: – for many years. She was manager of the house. My father didn't observe it, and then gradually, little by little, she gave up because then when she moved to – then we moved to Winthrop. And it was probably hard to be the only person in the whole family that kept a kosher house because none of the others did.

HB: And how were you raised? Were there –

HC: My father went –

HB: – Shabbat dinners like your mother experienced?

HC: My mother lighted the candle every Friday night. I can still see her leaning over the table, covering her face, [and] saying her prayers over the candles every Friday night. My father went to work on Saturday.

HB: How did your mother feel about that?

HC: Oh, I think she – whatever he did, that was – she didn't have any housework done in the house on Saturday. We had hot meals on Saturday, of course, but she didn't ever have an – we had a cleaning woman come in to do laundry and things like that. She never engaged or worked when the maid was in our house; they had a live-in person. But she never had extra help on Saturday. It's interesting. I have a grandson who wasn't brought up anything and then married a Christian girl who is the granddaughter of a minister, and he was married in the Methodist church. It was a Saturday wedding, but my grandson [chuckles] said, "But after sundown." And you know what? I thought, "Isn't

this strange? He wasn't brought up in a Jewish household."

HB: Well, it's like the Marrano Jews who –

HC: After sundown.

HB: – do things, remnants of being Jewish –

HC: Yes.

HB: – like change their linens on Friday or light candles –

HC: Yes, yes.

HB: – and they don't know why.

HC: Yes. Well, then, my father and his family always went to lectures in Winthrop. I went to a Jewish Sunday school in the few years we lived in Dorchester. It was the Fowler Street one, which was Orthodox. My father didn't go near it, but I did. But then we moved to Winthrop, and there wasn't any in Winthrop when we moved there in 19 – let's see, I was eight years old – in 1914, or 1913 we moved to Winthrop.

HB: And there was no Jewish community there, then?

HC: There was at the beach, but we didn't live at the beach. We lived at the Winthrop Center at Thornton Park, and his brother lived there and it was an entirely Protestant neighborhood. Anyway, there was no shul there either then. I don't know what the people at the beach did. So my father went to the Unitarian Church because there was a very good minister there who gave a good sermon every – he didn't object to religion. He just didn't like Orthodox. He thought it had a lot of superstitions. So we went there, and I went with him. And then one Sunday, the woman said to me – one of the ladies there said, "Wouldn't you like to go to our Sunday school while your father's at sermons, dear?"

I said, "Yes," because I found the sermons boring, but I'd do anything to be with my father. He had said to my mother, "You know, there's a very good rabbi in Boston – Rabbi Levi." But she said, "Well, Jacob, if I have to ride on the High Holidays, Yom Kippur, and Rosh Hashanah to go to synagogue, what's that to me? So don't join that for me." So he didn't join. Well, I came back from Sunday school one day. I must have been in fifth grade, and I said, "Mama, I was asked to have a lead in the thing they're going to put on – the celebration. But I didn't take the lead because I didn't think you'd like it." She said, "Why, dear? What was the lead?" And I said, "Well, they asked me if I would carry the cross at the beginning of the procession."

HB: Oh, dear. [laughter]

HC: "So I didn't think you'd like it, so I didn't take it." She turned to my father, and she said, "Jacob, I'll join Temple Israel." That must have been 19 – well, it was before the First World War. Anyway, we joined Temple Israel while I was in the sixth grade. I started Sunday school there.

HB: That's a wonderful story. It is.

HC: Well, yes, and she loved the temple. I must say she told me once – she also had been invited to join the Winthrop Women's Club, which was strictly Protestant, and she did. She once told me. She said, "I had a warmer reception at the Winthrop Women's Club than I did at the Temple Israel Sisterhood when I first joined it." Because it was almost all German. I remember when Mrs. (Dangle?), I think, was the first non-German to be President of the Sisterhood. My mother was delighted, and that's when she told me. Well, she said, "I'm delighted because I had a warmer reception at the Winthrop Women's Club than I did" – but she went every Tuesday and made friends there because they had a sewing group. They used to sew on Tuesdays while Rabbi Levi read to them or told them Bible stories or discussed things with them. They sewed for some children's hospital, I think. So, she loved Temple Israel. My Orthodox mother loved Temple Israel.

HB: Isn't that interesting?

HC: She also got to learn to eat treyf.

HB: Oh, dear.

HC: But we had milk – we had mixed butter and milk, finally. She gave up that kosher, except when her aunts would come from Chicago, or her sister, Julia, from Fitchburg. She'd say, "Children, we're having fish tonight. And you can have bread and butter with fish. But tomorrow, when we have chicken or something, don't ask for butter." [laughter]

HB: When did you first realize you were Jewish?

HC: Well, I always knew I was Jewish. Four years old in East Boston. We lived next to the Episcopal Church there on Saratoga Street, and our next-door neighbors were the Allens. I knew that I was Jewish and all my cousins – I certainly knew it then. If I didn't know it then, I certainly knew it when I moved to Winthrop. No, then we lived in Dorchester. No, then we lived in Dorchester from the time I was four to seven. And there, they – well, I played – Dorchester then was Irish, Yankee, and Jewish.

HB: And what year – when was this? About 1913?

HC: No, when I was four years old – 1910. And the people across the street, the Fitzgeralds, were very – no, what was their name? They were very nice to me. They were older, and they had older girls, and I always was over playing with them. They made a lot of me. But I knew that we were different.

HB: How did you know? What was the experience that made you –?

HC: I just knew we were Jewish. I don't ever remember not knowing I was Jewish or not wanting to be Jewish. In a mixed world from the time, certainly – well, even in Dorchester because my best friend was a little Catholic girl across the street. I played with her all the time, and I knew she went to church, and I went to my Sunday school. I always found it – when I could, I found a Jewish Sunday school. Oh, in Winthrop once, when they built a Jewish Sunday school, built a synagogue, I went right down there, and I came home on a Sunday, and I said, "That's a funny place down there. The rabbi hits children over the knuckles if they say something wrong or something." My father said, "Don't go there again." I guess the children were hit over their hand if they didn't know what they were being taught. But you see, before, I went to Jewish Sunday school in Dorchester, I found one. My brother didn't go, who was four years older. He didn't go.

HB: How did you find these? You, yourself, found it, or your mother?

HC: No, she didn't go either. She didn't join the Fowler Street one. It's Beth El, I think, isn't it?

HB: I don't know.

HC: I don't know. No, I don't know. I found one.

HB: Through friends? Through your –

HC: No, nobody else went. No, Charlotte Dane on the next street, we went together, but I think she went because I went. I used to call her every Sunday morning, and she was always late. [laughter] I don't know why, but I always knew it, and I knew that that was it. Possibly from my cousins from Fitchburg who used to visit. Oh, sure, I knew, because my grandpa from Worcester would come to visit, and I would see him in the morning put on the phylacteries and daven, stand in the window, and say prayers. So I must have – at three, from the time I –I certainly never saw my Segal grandfather do it. I suppose I

must have – the way I must have learned – he must have come to see us in East Boston then because I knew that we were Jewish, and he was praying.

HB: You mentioned you would do anything to be with your father.

HC: Yes, I loved him. I just adored him, and he was very close to me, and I was very close to him.

HB: What kinds of things did you do with him?

HC: Oh, I only saw him Sundays because he came home late. He worked late. He was a hard-working man, building up a wholesale grocery business. I saw him Fourth-of-July, and holidays and Sundays. As a matter of fact, I think, going to Sunday school, we learned about God the Father, and I came home Sunday morning, and that's when I would see my father. I think I kind of carried that over. [laughter] Also, my mother was a wonderful mother and meant to be, but I think she favored my older brother. He was the boy and came first, and it may have been – maybe my older brother never caught my father's eye. I don't know. But I knew that my father cared a lot for me. I mean, that I caught his eye.

HB: How did you know?

HC: Well, I knew it because I was so comfortable with him. I knew it because he told me once that when I was born was the happiest morning of his life. He said he walked to work that morning – I was born in the morning, and he thought, "That's a beautiful baby girl, and she came early in the morning." He said, "I walked to work at seven in the morning with tears rolling down my face of just joy. And she came at seven, so I could go to work." Something like that. I don't know whether he said that as a joke because he was poking fun at himself quite a bit. But I knew that he loved me from the time I was born, but I only saw him on Sundays.

HB: Your mother – what kind of a relationship did you have with her?

HC: I don't think I really appreciated her until after my father died.

HB: Why is that?

HC: What?

HB: Why is that?

HC: She was a good mother, and you know I loved her, but when I went to visit my family in Fitchburg, it would always be my father that I would be homesick for. I'll tell you, and this sounds very unfair to my mother when I say this, because she was never anything but good to me. There were two reasons. One is, six years later, when I was six years old, I had a baby sister, and I think then my Uncle Leo was living with us at the time, my mother's brother. I think my father was enlarging his business and concerned. And I think she felt the baby – she hadn't been as happy that year as – I don't know. She doted on my sister Anna. And my sister – I was a husky little six-year-old when she was born. She suddenly said – and she said to me one day, she said, "I always thought of you as my little girl and then when Anna was born, I realized you were a big girl; she was my baby." She didn't say that in any mean way.

HB: No.

HC: But that's the way you suddenly do realize that I guess. Have you more than one child?

HB: Yes, I have two sons.

HC: Does one child – you love them both.

HB: Right.

HC: Does one child interest you more than the other?

HB: Well, they both interest me in different ways.

HC: Yes, is one more akin to you in the way he interests you?

HB: Maybe.

HC: Yes. Well, I just think my brother and my sister captured my mother's interest, and here I was, this husky kid. I think I was bolder than either my brother or my sister, maybe because I was the middle one. Anyway, then another way I realized – I didn't realize it at the time. I expected the older one, [who] was a boy, and the younger one was the baby, and I adored my sister. She was my baby. Oh, I had said – because the little Catholic girl across the street, she had a new baby in her house every other year. I said to my mother, "Oh, I wish I had a baby sister or a brother," and my mother, who must have been then eight months pregnant, said to me, "Why don't you pray for one, dear?" She sat at the dining room table. I put up my arms, and I said, "Oh, please, God, send us a baby." Of course when that baby came, that baby was God-given – answering my prayer. It didn't occur to me it was anything else. She was always the answer to my prayer, and she still is.

HB: And what about your brother? What kind of relationship did you have with him?

HC: Now, you wanted my relationship with my mother. Well, she was a good mother. I came home – oh, I'll tell you when I was – anyway, a saleswoman was selling – came to sell books. My mother was busy, and she said, "You go talk to her, dear, while I do something else. So I went in, and she was – and she talked, and she told me how wonderful they were, and I thought they were. And then she said, "How old are you?" I said, "I'm seven." She said, "They're just your age." Then I said, to me what was perfectly sensible, "Well, then my mother will never buy them." She said, "Why won't your mother buy them?" And I said, "Why should she buy something just for my age at

seven when I've got a brother, eleven, and a sister a year old?"

HB: That was very intuitive.

HC: Well, I thought that made sense.

HB: Right.

HC: But then, I think – oh, and she said to me before she left, she said, "Remember dear, the middle of the sandwich is always the best." Now, why did I remember that? If I hadn't somehow – oh, I remember. My brother was skinny, and my sister was skinny, and I wasn't. I was fat and blonde and rosy-cheeked. My father was blonde too. But at any rate, I remember – in a baked apple, there's always a jelly that forms or something, and my mother said, "Oh, that's good because Philip loves that." I thought, 'Doesn't she know I love it too?' Oh, that's the only time I remember thinking, 'Doesn't she know I love it too?' But I never said anything because I thought, 'That's the way life is.' I mean, that's life. He's the oldest, and he's – anyway, the fact that I remember "the middle of the sandwich is always the best" makes me think I must have had more things than that that makes me remember. Now, she never meant to show partiality, but she always – the strong people didn't interest her. You see, I was the tough one. My brother had a much finer nature than I had, was sweeter. My sister was this little thin baby that was crying a lot, so we were always trying to make her happy. Now, you asked – oh, my relation with my brother. I was reading in today's paper about children not sleeping together. We shared one room until we were – well, I was seven, and he was – yes, in Dorchester. I was seven, and he was eleven. We had separate beds, and my mother put a chair between our beds and read to us every night. First, he would choose a story, and I would choose a story. And she was reading Tales of Shakespeare. They must have been abridged. It was a beautiful big black leather book, and I remember he would choose Macbeth or Othello – things that frightened me. So night after night, I chose Taming of the Shrew. [laughter] But I remember when – but I remember she read to us,

and it was perfectly – she meant to be fair, I know. But like, with my brother, I think I must have wanted to tag after him, and he would take my arm and twist it or something. And then I would cry, and she would say what happened, and he'd say, "I didn't touch her, ma, I didn't touch her." So I was blamed for crying or something. And I guess I was a naughty girl a lot because I remember we had a big, round oak table, a dining room table with a tablecloth hanging over it. So when I was naughty and I didn't want anybody to know, I'd take my doll and crawl under the table. Of course, after a while, if you play there you forget you're playing house, and I'd stand up and "crack" on my head. Mother would say, "That's God punishing you because you told a lie," or you did this, or did that. So I always thought God punished you pretty quickly with that crack on the head. [laughter]

HB: What was your house like in Dorchester?

HC: It was a two-family house. The (Cohens?) lived upstairs. Three of those four girls went to Radcliffe, and they were very nice. And we had three bedrooms downstairs. The maid had one of them, and my father and mother had another, put the baby in there. And my Uncle Leo, who went to Tufts Dental School, and my brother had one bed, and I had another one in the third bedroom. It didn't seem crowded. It seemed all right. But I mean, I don't mean to say my mother was – the World War in 1914 started. I must have been in the third grade. Well, I remember hearing about Belgians marching in, and children and everything, because we talked about – my father must have been home for dinner, but dinner conversation couldn't be on food – he didn't like it – or prices. It had to be on world events. So I knew about the war.

HB: Now, wait a minute. He didn't like food, or he didn't like talking about food?

HC: He didn't like talking about how you prepared a meal or "everything was good." I think he thought everybody was lucky to have dinner set before them. Anyway, I went to school and began in school in the third grade, seven or eight, thinking about the Belgian

children and their families being [inaudible], and I began to cry. The teacher said, "What's the matter, Harriet?" I knew nobody else in school knew anything about the war in Europe, so I said, "I have a toothache."

HB: How did you know about the war?

HC: I heard about it at the table because we couldn't discuss – we had to discuss world events. So, I heard about the war at the table. So I came home, and my mother said, "What are you home for, dear?" I said, "Well, I began to cry in school, and I told the teacher I had a toothache." She said to the maid, "Well, I'm taking Harriet to the dentist; you look after the baby." I said, "But I don't have a toothache. I was crying for the Belgian children." My mother never heard anything, but I had a toothache. So I remember we got dressed up, and we went in Boston to Dr. (Fenton's?) office on Boylston Street, and of course, he found a cavity and filled it. But the minute she heard toothache, she didn't hear anything else, she had to take me – so that she was an attentive – anything to do with health. We'd get on a streetcar, and they were crowded. And if I stood next – at Franklin Park – we lived on Michigan Avenue on the corner of Blue Hill Avenue, and there's Franklin Park's streetcar, and you went to Dudley Street. Anybody with a fur coat – with a fur next to it, she'd say, "Don't breathe; don't breathe; don't breathe." She didn't want me to breathe in any germs. She was all for germs. We were washing it – very clean. So, I knew I was Jewish. Well, then I went to Sunday school in Temple Israel from Winthrop. We lived in Winthrop then because I had been going to the Unitarian Church in Winthrop, certainly not in Dorchester.

HB: Well, so you were in Dorchester, and you moved from Dorchester –

HC: Winthrop.

HB: – to Winthrop. Why did you –? What was –?

HC: But not to the Jewish section. Why did we move?

HB: Yes.

HC: They were putting a moving picture house up on the corner of Blue Hill Avenue.

HB: What do you mean, a moving picture?

HC: Well, there was no moving picture house in Dorchester.

HB: Oh, oh, a theater.

HC: Theater.

HB: A movie theater.

HC: Also, my mother had seen girls and boys walking up and down Blue Hill Avenue, and she didn't like that, but she didn't want us that near a moving picture house. Who knew what crowds would be coming there and what they'd –? And my father was doing better at that time. So it was time we had more quarters than they – so we bought a lovely house in Winthrop in Thornton Park, but not down at the beach where all the other Jewish people – because my uncle had a big one-family house – my father's brother, with whom he had been in business, and they were very close. So, we moved to Winthrop in Thornton Park. Also, it meant you didn't have to go away in the summer.

HB: You had the beach right there.

HC: Yes, because we used to – well, a mile away, but the climate was really very good in Winthrop because it was not as cold as – I don't know about East Boston – I don't remember – or Dorchester. But it wasn't as cold as Waban, where I lived, or even in Brookline.

HB: So, in the summertime, did you go to the beach a lot? Is that what people did? Go to the shore?

HC: Oh, you mean – what people?

HB: Well, you and your friends, your family.

HC: Well, when I lived in Dorchester, we used to go to – summer in Winthrop. When I lived in Winthrop we didn't need to go –

HB: Anywhere.

HC: – anyplace. I went to camp. But anyway – not until I was older. We would go to the beach with my cousins across the street. We'd make up a picnic lunch and go to the beach but not every day. It was a while down and a while back, and if you were in a wet suit, that wasn't so good anyway.

HB: When you were young in your family, what kinds of Jewish traditions do you remember? Do you remember any of the holidays, Passover, and how they were celebrated?

HC: My mother would talk about, "This is Shavous," but of course, it was nothing. She was living with me and my father's family. My mother celebrated Passover. She changed the dishes. In Dorchester, I used to wonder why we had the prettiest dishes in Passover, but we did – that was with the Limoges dishes that came out – or maybe that was the fleishig set. Anyway, there was one very pretty set that came out in Passover, but when we moved to Winthrop she continued – [recording paused.] She would make a Seder – no reading from any book or anything, but we always had matzoh in the house and supposedly no bread. And for a while, she changed dishes too; that was a big do and made the whole kitchen [inaudible]. But then, my uncle's family across the street would invite us over for Easter Sunday. We would invite them for Passover, and they would invite us for Easter Sunday. They were both born Jewish, but he had married a first cousin, so, of course, she – first cousin on his father's side, so she wasn't brought up without any religion either. But she knew she was Jewish. She may have known the

holidays; she didn't observe them at all. She didn't change dishes. They didn't keep – then my mother gradually – well, although she changed for Passover, we gradually – I told you she'd introduced butter and meat. We'd had that together for some time.

HB: Now, where did you go to school?

HC: I went to Winthrop School. Well, I went to Dorchester through the third grade, and there you knew there was a division between the Jewish children and the non-Jewish children.

HB: How did you know?

HC: Because they didn't mix together. Charlotte Dane and I were in the same – and Ben Castleman was in the same grade, and you knew who the non-Jewish kids were because they – and then, once I went to that – there was a small zoo before Franklin Park. Franklin Park was lovely. There were sheep when we lived there – sheep and no golf course, and they began to put a flower garden in. [Recording paused.] Oh, and I was talking about that incident. I was at the water fountain outside the zoo, and the girl in front of me got a mouthful of water. I'll tell you that story a little later.

HB: Okay. Now, where did you go to high school?

HC: Winthrop High School.

HB: Is that where you graduated?

HC: I graduated from Winthrop High School, and then I went to Miss Choate School [Miss Choate's School for Girls] in Brookline.

HB: And what was Miss Choate School?

HC: It was a private school where 1600 Beacon Street is now. It's a great big apartment house. It was a house and a hockey field and a gym, and it was a very nice school. I was at camp. I was at Aloha Camp. [Recording paused.]

HB: Can you tell me what the name of the camp is again?

HC: Aloha – A-L-O-H-A. It had been run by the Gulicks, who had been missionaries in Hawaii, and there's some Gulick Streets there. That was the man's name, and Harriet Farnsworth married. I think she was a descendent of missionaries, too. Gulick married her. So it was run by the Gulicks. I was admitted to Connecticut College, but I had flunked math at Wellesley – Wellesley, and – [Bell rings. Recording paused.] Well, I was at this fountain and – well, you want to finish first about where I was in high school?

HB: Right, and then we'll go –

HC: All right.

HB: Wait a minute. We've had a little interruption here. There was a workman that came in to fix the bell, and Harriet Cohn didn't want to tell a specific story from her youth at that time. Do you want to tell it now or do you want to –?

HC: Yes, all right.

HB: Oh, she's going to finish the story now.

HC: This Irish girl, I mean – and then when I got to take my drink, she spat the whole thing in my face. Now, I don't know whether I was with other Jewish children. I thought I was alone, and I thought, "How does she know I'm Jewish?"

HB: How did you know she did that because you were Jewish?

HC: Well, of course, I don't, but I couldn't think of any other reason. Maybe she did it to any stranger. I don't know. But I said, "How does she know I'm Jewish?" But anyway –

HB: Was that your first antisemitic –

HC: Yes.

HB: Okay.

[END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

HB: This is side two of Harriet Cohn. Harriet Segal Cohn.

HC: [inaudible] in Dorchester. No, well, I knew that the – that that group who stayed by themselves mostly, they were polite. I mean, we just didn't mix. No, I knew when we moved to Winthrop. I don't know that I – I was the only Jewish girl, not only in my room, in the whole building, from the part of Winthrop that we lived in.

HB: What did it feel like?

HC: What?

HB: What did it feel like?

HC: Well, all the people – all our neighbors were non-Jewish except my cousins across the street, and I played with them. I like people. We played together. I can tell you about some parts later. But I didn't – my mother used to say to me when I was going to a birthday party, "Now, remember, dear. Remember your manners because they're going to judge all Jewish children by you." "Yes, please, thank you." But I think that's an awful burden to lay on a child. But she was just doing what she thought was right, I mean. I think that's true; we are apt to judge if we don't know many people. They didn't know many – the kids at school didn't know many – that I went with – I didn't notice any in Winthrop schools. All my friends happened to be non-Jewish, but when I was a Girl Scout, I was head of my scout troop. And I organized – well, I helped organize it with another girl. But I knew it did exist, and I once said to one of my – and I knew when I

went to the beach with one of my non-Jewish friends, Marjorie Hall – I said something to somebody, and I said, “Well, that man is Jewish.” She said something – she said, “How can you tell?” I said, “Well, I know. I know if I see Jewish people.” She was interested, and I don’t know how I happened to say it, but I think I knew it existed. Of course, I knew it existed, but I think we all, in those days, didn’t expect that the world was at our feet. We knew that there were ups and downs. When my mother would say, “Mind your manners.” I’m trying to think of it around Thornton Park, where we lived. I had lots of friends. We went to dancing school, and we went to – oh, and before my mother entered me in the dancing class, she called the (Brightmans?) who ran it. I heard all my friends were going to a dancing class, so I told my mother about it, and she said, “Well, I’ll inquire about it.” I hadn’t been invited by anybody to go. So she called and said, “I’d like to enter my daughter, but I want you to know that I’m Jewish, and I don’t want her to go where she won’t be welcome. I don’t want to send her where she won’t be.” And they said, “Oh, Mrs. Segal, we’d love to have your daughter.” So I went there, and I don’t think they knew my mother. But anyway, I went there, and then we had one dancing class – no, then one Alice Hall said, “Oh, we’re going to have a dancing party at Dorothy Curtis’, two doors down. Well, I was in high school then, so that was many years later, in high school. And I said, “Oh, I didn’t know it.” So I put on my bloomers or whatever we wore and my ballet slippers. I walked two doors down and went in the back door, and they said, “Oh, don’t” – one of the maids – they had two maids there – they said, “It’s a party; it’s not dancing school.” So, I thought Marjorie Alice Hall told me about it. So I went home and got dressed up and went. And it was only after I got home I realized – and nobody said anything. I was there, but I realized I wasn’t invited, so it wasn’t just the whole class, because then there were some other people from the center who weren’t in the dancing class. So that was the time I realized I had been excluded from the party. I was a freshman or a sophomore in high school.

HB: And it was because you were Jewish?

HC: Well, I assumed so.

HB: Assume so.

HC: I didn't assume that I wasn't as nice as any of the other children that I played with.

HB: Right.

HC: And then those girls went as well away to private school, the (Curtises?) and we didn't' mix much after that.

HB: Now, you mentioned that you went to Miss Choate School –

HC: Well, Miss Choate School.

HB: – after high school. Was that like a finishing school?

HC: No, no. It was a preparatory school. No, it wasn't a high school. It wasn't a finishing school, except they had courses in – for the people who weren't going to college – general arts or something. But I was at camp, seventeen years old, and my mother said – I said, "I'm going to Connecticut." My mother said, "Well, dear, Connecticut wasn't what I had in mind for you. I always had Wellesley in mind for you." And I said, "I know it, mother, but I flunked the math." My mother, who was six years old when she came to this country, had never gone to college. I don't know if she had finished high school. I don't even know if she went to high school. I think she probably went – said to me, "But my dear" – and I had a roommate picked out there because I'd visited there – "Connecticut wasn't what I had in mind for you, and nobody says you have to go next year. You can go to private school and try again for Wellesley." I said, "All right." She said, "You better get yourself excused from camp and come back home, and we'll make an appointment with Miss Choate to see about admissions to Choate School." Who, with a daughter, seventeen, would say, "I don't have that in mind for you, dear?" This little,

mild-looking woman. I'll show you another picture of her. And who would dare interfere with a child like that? Would you? "I didn't have it in mind for you." And what child wouldn't say, "Well, I planned to go next year." I thought, "Well, I'll go home." So I came home and went to Choate for a year. Miss Choate accepted me, and we loved each other. As a matter of fact, I didn't pass the next year. I got sixty and sixty – well, my other exams were good in English and history and geology and French and Latin – were all good. I think Wellesley might have considered that a year before, but anyway, when I went to see Miss Knapp out at Wellesley, she said, "We've averaged your math marks, and you're accepted." The second time. So I went to Wellesley. Well, I think it's interesting, not just Jewish or non-Jewish, but what parent at this age interferes with a child like that?

HB: Well, I think it's more done today where they're really directing the children's lives.

HC: Well, they're directing them earlier, but who says, "Dear, I didn't have it in mind for you?" And who, then, says, "Well, I want to do what Mama had in mind for me?"

HB: How did you feel when she said that?

HC: I thought, "I'm in a fix here. I want what she had in mind. I don't want to disappoint my mother," because you didn't want to disappoint expectations. I think that's the burden we lay on – that this generation lays on them now are the high expectations, "You've got to get in here. You've got to get in here." But my mother didn't put it that way. Years later, she told me why she didn't want me – one of the reasons she didn't want me to go to Connecticut. I had a roommate who was a daughter of a friend of hers from Haverhill – not a friend, an acquaintance. She knew the Segal family, and they had come from the same shtetl, but I don't think my mother thought they were quite refined or something like that. And then she said to me – or she thought we should be – I don't want to sound snobbish, but my mother had ideas of what was fine and what wasn't. And she said to me – years later, she said, "Well, I knew that you had a roommate; I knew she was a

junior, and I knew she was quite sophisticated. I knew you had been brought up very simply. And I really didn't think that that was a good choice – a good suitable – I couldn't say anything because we were acquainted with her parents." And she wanted me for a roommate. She said, "When you come here, you'll be my roommate." But she said, "I just thought that was one of the reasons I didn't want you at Connecticut. I thought you would be out of your element with the sophisticated roommate two years older." So she was quite a wise woman, I think.

HB: Right. Did you feel her direction like that in any other way in your life?

HC: Well, she was so gentle about it. I once said to my sister, "She bound us in steel corsets." She wouldn't allow my sister and me to wear suits to temple on the High Holidays. We always had to wear our dark silk dresses.

HB: Why was that?

HC: Well, she told me why. She said when she was a girl, her Victorian – that whole family must have been very proper – the sheer shirtwaist had come in, and her mother wouldn't allow them to wear the sheer shirtwaist. They had to wear the dark silk dresses. Well, that was in 1890 or 1880, you see. So, in 19 – my mother still thought you wore a dark silk dress; you didn't wear suits to temple. So it was years before my sister and I wore suits to temple. So, you see, she didn't lay down the rules, but it was more seemly. It was what was more – she used the word "seemly" quite a bit. It's more seemly to act thus and so. The other is rough or violent or something. I'll show you her picture when she was – there are four generations – my mother, my younger daughter, her first daughter, and me.

HB: Right, I saw this picture in the Boston Globe.

HC: Oh, that's right.

HB: It's in the article.

HC: But I think you can see my mother's – she looks gentle there, doesn't she?

HB: Yes, she does.

HC: And she's ladylike.

HB: Very refined-looking and gentle. Very well groomed and looking very proud.

HC: Oh, always well-groomed.

HB: Always well-groomed?

HC: When we used to take summer places at the beach, we would sometimes see people come into stores in their bathing suits – not children, but women in them, and my mother was just – she just couldn't imagine that. I mean, that was no way for a lady to dress.

[Recording paused.]

HB: Mrs. Cohn is talking about a picture that she bought –

HC: By (Aronson?).

HB: – by (Aronson?) in Provincetown.

HC: Yes.

HB: It looks like an oil painting, a portrait –

HC: Yes, yes, my mother said –

HB: – of a man with a beard.

HC: My mother said, “That’s a crafty-looking Jew if I ever saw one.” I said, “Mother, he was a medieval Jew; he had to be crafty to stay alive.” She said, “Well, don’t put him over the fireplace. We have such nice-looking people in the family. I don’t want anybody to think that he’s a relative.” [laughter] So, she didn’t like anybody who looked crafty.

HB: Oh, that’s funny.

HC: My husband didn’t like it either. But I saw it in Provincetown at [inaudible]. In the summer, he had a painting shop down there. In the winter, he had a shop on Newbury Street. I loved it, and my husband said, “Well …”. And I had my own little money set aside. I said, “I’ll buy it.” He said, “Well, think it over. If you like it, we’ll come back to Provincetown tomorrow.” Well, I thought it over all night, and I thought, “I like him. I like him.” So we went back and bought – but my mother was very afraid somebody would think it was somebody in the family. Of course, he may not even have been Jewish. He may have just been an Italian, but I felt very much – when I first landed in Rome, I felt very much at home among all those Italians.

HB: Why was that?

HC: I don’t know. I think because we were Mediterranean people too once. And I felt –

HB: Did you have any boyfriends? Do you remember your first love?

HC: Yes. A boy from Sunday school. Well, no, I had –

HB: Now, was this the Sunday school in Winthrop or at Temple Israel?

HC: No, at Temple Israel, in my confirmation class.

HB: What was his name?

HC: Well, I don’t want that in the record.

HB: Oh, okay.

HC: It was Joe (Lowe?). His sister is – yes, all right. His sister is Mrs. – is it (Aaron Fried?)?

HB: Oh, yes. Well, (George Aaron Fried?) wrote a book on the history of the Jews of Boston.

HC: No, I don't whether this – what's his wife's name?

HB: I don't know.

HC: But he was a very nice – in my confirmation class. No, I was – before that, I had crushes, and the first dance I went to was with a non-Jewish boy in Winthrop. But it never occurred to me that I wouldn't marry a Jewish man, although my friends in college used to say to me about double-dating or something, and I said, "Well, yes, but I don't believe in intermarriage." I had mostly Christian friends in college, and one of them said, "Why?" I said, "Because I think marriage, you have to make it work, and the more background you have in common, the better it is. So I don't believe in it." I must have impressed that on my girls, too, because when my older daughter was at Beaver, she was asked to double-date, and she said, "No," quite often, and I finally said, "Why? She keeps asking you to double-date. Why?" She said, "Well, I know that you don't believe in intermarriage, so why should I get started on anything."

HB: Well, that was smart.

HC: Well, her three children inter-married. But anyway, she didn't. Neither of my girls did.

HB: What was it like at Wellesley? What did you study? What was your major?

HC: I started with a history major, and I ended with an English major. I happened to live in – I was the only Jewish girl in the small house I lived in. I didn't live in one of the big dormitories, and I had asked for a single. I think coming home from class the first year – we lived in the village, so we would walk back from campus, Mary (Barringer?) said, "What denomination is chapel? Is it Episcopalian?" I said, "I don't know." She said, "Well, what is it, do you think? I'm a Methodist." I said, "I don't know what it is. How do you think I should know?" She said, "Why?" I said, "Well, I'm Jewish." She said, "You are not." I said, "Yes, I'm Jewish." She said, "Then how happened do you go to college and classes on Saturday morning?" And I said, "That's when classes are, so I go." Then, there was another girl in our small dormitory who, I think, was at least half Jewish. And two of my – I liked her. Two of my Christian friends did not like her. They said to me, "We don't know why you're so friendly with her. We don't like her." I said, "I like her. Why don't you like her?" They said, "One of the reasons we don't like her is because she makes jokes that have Jewish people in them, and we don't like it." They didn't like it for me. I said, "Oh, I just pay no attention." But I thought that was very nice that they felt it for me, but I think the fact that she made them was to prove that she wasn't, and I think she was. She was Louella Parsons' daughter. You remember the movie?

HB: Right.

HC: And I think Louella Parsons was half Jewish or was brought up Jewish because her name was – well, it was a German Jewish name from the Middle West. Now, maybe out there, they were brought up so that it didn't make – the German Jews I knew in college had been brought up – from the Middle West – had been brought up knowing very little about Judaism and having Christmas trees. Oh, even in Dorchester, my brother and I, when we lived in a Jewish – my brother and I hung up stockings at Christmas. When I think about it, I think, "How did it happen?" But I suppose because we both went to school – maybe because my best friend was Catholic across – anyway, we hung up stockings, and we would get canned oranges and walnuts and one toy. It was no big

deal, but we hung up our stocking.

HB: And your mother did that?

HC: She let us, yes. We wouldn't have done it if she said no.

HB: Did your father have any discipline in the family? Did he exert any discipline, or was it all from your mother?

HC: For some reason, he didn't have to. If he said, "I would rather not" – I was in college – in high school senior year and told him I was going tea dancing and he said, "Oh, that sounds nice. Tea and dancing." He said, "Where are you going?" And I said – well, I think it was the Brunswick in those days or Shepherds. It wasn't Shepherds because that was a store. But Brunswick or the Copley. He said, "That's very nice. Who's chaperoning?" I said, "Oh, you don't have chaperones; just everybody's tea dancing there, and there's no chaperone." He said, "In a hotel?" I said, "Yes. Sure, Papa, that's where it is." He said, "Well, I would rather you didn't do that unchaperoned." So, I didn't go tea dancing that day.

HB: Oh, you were so excited about it.

HC: Yes. I didn't go. All he had to say was "I would rather you didn't."

HB: And you didn't put up a fuss or –?

HC: No, he never said – oh, no, when I was a little girl, I once said to him – I had – somebody gave me a dime, and I bought a Hershey bar. Gee, it was good. I was going to get another one. He said, "I wouldn't if I were you. You enjoyed that first one so much, and it was so delicious; if you get the second one, it won't be so delicious." That was the silly – I couldn't believe it. So, I bought the second one, and it wasn't so delicious. He taught me the law of diminishing returns. But he didn't say, "No, don't do

it." He almost never – I don't remember him saying no, but we knew what he would like. He only hit one of us once, and she cried, not because – but because Papa hit her. I mean, my mother would spank us if we were naughty, but I don't ever remember him – or raising his voice to us. But he had a great air of authority. Well, except the next time I was invited to go tea dancing. I just didn't tell him; I just went. [laughter]

HB: Oh, that's how you solved that problem. [laughter] What kind of dances did they do at tea dancing?

HC: Waltzing, foxtrot.

HB: Did the Charleston come in then?

HC: No, it may have been when I was in college; I couldn't do it. Yes, the Charleston came in because some of my classmates could do it, but I couldn't do it.

HB: Why couldn't you do it?

HC: I don't know; I never learned it. I always thought I was a fat girl so I was shy about it.

HB: Were you heavy?

HC: I was 114 when I went to college. I gained a lot of weight there. I think I was chubby in high school, yes. But when I was trying on dresses – party dresses because I used to have nice party dresses to wear to family weddings and things like that and having my mother – having them made at her dressmaker. So, we would go up Newbury Street – no, not Newbury then – Boylston, and she would see something she liked, and we'd have it made like that. But anyway, I remember when I would try on dresses, she'd say, "No, no, take it off. That's not good on you; it would be good on Anna." You see, Anna was my sister and very thin. So, I would take it off. I must have been chubby.

What did you ask me about? Did I have what? That's when I had the best figure. Then I got fat.

HB: In college?

HC: Yes.

HB: From eating the starchy food.

HC: Yes.

HB: It still goes on today too.

HC: But I had trouble eating the pork. We didn't have pork at home. But I remember my –

HB: So what did you do?

HC: What?

HB: What did you do?

HC: I think I tried it. When I knew it was pork I just didn't eat it. And I think one year at college, I became a vegetarian, just didn't eat meat at all, but that was just for one year. But I remember my mother, in later years, liked seafood. But she wouldn't order a lobster, but she would say to me when we went out, "Order a big one, dear." So, it meant I would split it – why she couldn't order a lobster – then she spent – when we used to rent houses at the Cape, she would come down and stay a couple of weeks with us. She and I would go out driving and for lunch, different places. And she loved – what is it? Crab bisque. And I remember at one very nice place, she said, "This is the best crab bisque on the Cape." I thought, "Mama, think of you being an authority on crab bisque." And she laughed. One of the things I inherited from her was the oyster forks, but we never

had oysters at home. But she had them for the lobsters. She didn't have lobsters until after I was married and my brother was married, and she would have a house in Clifton. And we would say, "We would love to have lobsters for Sunday night or something." Well, anything the children wanted. So we went down and bought them, and she would allow them to be boiled in her house. And then, Haskell, to kind of get her used to it a little bit more, he would race – he would say, "We're going to have a lobster race, nana, look at them on the floor. Put them on the kitchen floor." I can imagine how she got how she got that floor scrubbed the next day. But anyway, she got to like lobsters and crab meat, which amazed me.

HB: When did you meet your husband?

HC: Well, I knew him when I was – I met him when – he was a sophomore at Dartmouth, and my brother was a freshman at Dartmouth. We were at Fabian's that summer. My mother took us. She went to the mountains; she thought that would be better air – dry air would be good for us. We didn't stay at the beach all summer. Anna, my sister, and I went to camp, and she would – then we went to the mountains, I guess – no, before we went to camp. I met him when I was thirteen. Of course, I don't know any difference then. But then his mother died. He came from Concord, New Hampshire, and his mother died. He came down. His sister went to private school in Cambridge, and he was at Harvard Law School. So mother would have him for Sunday dinner, and I'd come home from college, and she'd say, "Haskell's going to be here for dinner today. I hope you haven't got a date. I hope you'll be around." I said, "No, Mom, I have a date this afternoon."

HB: So your mother liked Haskell?

HC: She adored him. Loved him. So I would go on a date with whoever I went – she'd say it Sunday after Sunday, and I'd say, "I've got a date." And then one night, he called to take me out. I said, "Mama, he does that" – I don't know how I was at home from

college. No, this was when I was at Choate, though I was still going with this other boy in college. He called to take me out one night when I was at Choate living at home. She said, "I told you he liked you." I said, "Mama, you've been so nice to him and his sister. He's just being courteous to you." And then he began to call me to go out. Then freshman year, when I'd come in, I'd say, "No, Mama, I've got a date." Well, then he began to call fairly often or call and want to come out to Wellesley to see me. So I thought, 'Gee, he does like me.' And I sure was happy because I thought he was great, but I thought he was just being nice to my mother. Anyway, you don't want to know about that.

HB: No, I do.

HC: I would like to tell you how I feel about the temple – Sunday school.

HB: Oh, okay. Then we'll get back to Haskell.

HC: Because I feel – oh, I'm very proud of him. I feel it helped me enormously. In the first place, I met other Jewish boys and girls, and I couldn't understand why that crowd that came from Brookline was always fussing because they had to go to Sunday school. Let me tell you from Winthrop how I came to Sunday school. I got on the train at Thornton Park Station. I got off at the end of the Narrow Gauge and took the ferry boat to Rowes Wharf.

HB: Oh, my.

HC: From the ferry boat – from Rowes Wharf, I took the streetcar to South Station. From South Station, I went down and took the elevated train to Park Street. And from Park Street, I took the streetcar to Commonwealth Avenue, where the temple was.

HB: Now, how old were you?

HC: Sixth grade.

HB: Did you do this alone?

HC: I did it alone. Yes.

HB: And you did this because you wanted to go.

HC: And I was so delighted to be going to a Jewish Sunday school where there were nice children and where there were nice teachers, and no rabbi hit the children. [laughter] Oh, it started, but then I left. I was in the sixth grade in Sunday school. Yes, I went in the sixth grade, sixth, seventh, and then I was confirmed. I had a very good teacher.

HB: Do you remember her name?

HC: I think it was (Seitland?), Miss (Seitland?). She ran a girls' camp, too, and she wanted me to go, but then Francis Ehrlich, who was in the same class, told me about Aloha, so I went there.

HB: Now, did the rabbi come in often? Did you know him? Was he a figure –?

HC: Every Sunday, he led the assembly – Rabbi Levi. I remember that, and I remember learning about the Old Testament, all the stories. Well, I shouldn't say Old Testament – learning about our Bible stories.

HB: Did he teach that?

HC: No, he didn't. Miss (Seitland?) taught it. No, he just taught to the general assembly, but I revered him. And then he did teach – and then our next year, I had Mrs.-somebody, a very lovely woman, and then I had Mr. Epstein, and then we were confirmed. I don't know.

HB: What made you revere him? What was it about Rabbi Levi that – I've heard other people say this too.

HC: He was a man to be revered. He was a saintly man because when Liebman came – was it Liebman who followed?

HB: Yes.

HC: And one of the men were talking about with him, and they said they wanted different things from him. And they said, "Well, I guess we were used to Rabbi Levi, and we wanted some of his gentlenesses." And Rabbi Liebman said, "It's not fair to say that to me because, in the rabbinate, he was known as a saintly rabbi. There was something wonderfully good about him. He didn't have as much ego. Some of these rabbis, there's a good bit of ego, and there was with Liebman. I guess you have to have – there certainly was with Gittelsohn. How long have you been a member of the temple?

HB: Eighteen years.

HC: Yes. Well, I think we joined in 1917 or 1916, so it's just – and I know – so, I've been a member, what? Eighty years or something like that.

HB: You've seen a lot of rabbis.

HC: I'm now ninety, so – I can't do math, but I've been a member for Klausner. Who did we have after? Gittelsohn.

HB: Gittelsohn, and then Mehlman.

HC: Mehlman. I'm very fond of Mehlman. And I was fond of Gittelsohn, too, although I thought he had his sharp points, but I liked him. We were friends. We were good friends.

HB: Do you still have any of your friends from Sunday school?

HC: They're all gone.

HB: All gone.

HC: But did they become lifelong friends?

HB: Well, Charlotte Dane was with this church. She married Ben Levin, with whom my husband became partners. We were lifelong friends. And Ruth Abrams wasn't in my class, but she was with Dreyfuss. We were lifelong friends from Choate. But the fact that – and at camp, there were about five or six Jewish girls, and I knew immediately who they were and felt a warmth. They didn't always feel a warmth to me, I guess, but I felt a warmth for some of them. Sunday school, I think, enabled me to move easily. I always moved pretty much in a non-Jewish world because in Winthrop we were in such a non-Jewish neighborhood [from] eight to seventeen. Those are very formative years. My brother later married his high school sweetheart after his wife died and her husband died, and she was Catholic. But anyway, it enabled me to live in a non-Jewish world and not ever want to be anything else but Jewish. It enabled me to know enough about the Torah and beyond the Torah – the Prophets, so that when I took Bible in college, I was at home with it. But the first year, it was compulsory. The first year was all the Old Testament, and I was at home with it.

HB: So Temple Israel had a very –

HC: Had a wonderful Sunday school.

HB: But it also had a very large impact on your life too, the way you lived your life.

HC: Oh, it did. It did. And Rabbi Levi did, and I asked him something in temple in our confirmation year. I said, "Rabbi Levi, I've been to a non-Jewish – in the public schools,

we say the daily prayer every day. I went to a camp for two years run by ministers, and we said the Lord's Prayer every day. Is there anything in it I shouldn't say?" When I went back the second year. He said, "There's only two lines in it that Jesus didn't learn probably from Hillel. The only lines that aren't strictly Jewish are, "Deliver us from – deliver us from [inaudible]. Let us fear no evil. Deliver us from temptation." He said, "In the Jewish religion, we know there's evil, and we know one of the great gifts God gave us was our own conscience to choose between good and evil. So, those words are the only words that – it doesn't hurt you to say them, but they're not part of Judaism." I have told that to a few ministers that those were the only – I told it to the minister at my grandson's wedding. I said, "I enjoyed your service very much, and I appreciate the service you did give, and you didn't bring Jesus Christ into it, although I know it's a good Methodist church." Then I said, "Of course, the only words in the Lord's Prayer that aren't strictly Jewish…". "Well," he said, "I never knew that." And he was interested.

HB: How did you feel –?

HC: It enabled me in college, when I was a sophomore, to – I left the Bible class, and I had a feeling for the Bible. Louise Pettibone Smith, who was a spinster – Easter vacation when we all walked out the door, yelling and everything, happy, I looked back at her and I saw this terrible look of loneliness in her face.

HB: Was this your professor?

HC: Bible professor.

HB: Bible professor.

HC: Full professor. And I went back to her and said, "Professor Smith, would you like to spend a Saturday with me?" She said, "I'd love it."

HB: Wasn't that [inaudible] of you?

HC: I said, “Well then, come in next Saturday and be with me.” Then I went home, and I said to my mother, “Oh, what have I done, Mama? What have I done?” She said, “What have you done?” and I told her. She said, “Well, if she’s your Bible teacher, we’ll take her to temple and introduce her to the rabbi.” I don’t remember. I think it was still – sure, it was still Rabbi Levi because he married me. “And then we’ll come back here for lunch, and then I’ll get you tickets for the matinee.” I think how smart my mother was. To think how callow I was because I was embarrassed at the way she introduced her to the rabbi. She said, “Rabbi Levi, I want you to meet an instructor my daughter has.” And I thought, “Instructor? She’s a full professor. Doesn’t my mother know she’s a full professor?” Well, I think my mother [inaudible] so much better than I did. But anyway, she introduced her, and she was so interested in services. She said to me after, “What a pity you people have translated so much of your Hebrew. The Hebrew is so far more poetic than the English is.” So she enjoyed the part – the little bit then that was in Hebrew in the service then.

HB: And at that time –

HC: It was very little.

HB: Right. Rabbi Levi took a lot out.

HC: But she enjoyed saying the Torah. We had no Hebrew instruction in Sunday school in those days at all.

HB: Right.

HC: But I felt happy to take her to temple. I was proud of temple.

HB: What did your instruction consist of? You didn’t have any Hebrew. Did you just learn the Bible stories?

HC: And ethics. There were certain stories that have moral problems connected with them. That was great with Mr. Epstein – Henry Epstein, who later died. He was a brilliant Harvard student and a brilliant New York lawyer. He taught us – he was a very – we struggle with the question of Josephus in those days – with him, I remember. Do you remember Josephus wrote a whole book? He lived in Rome and wrote a whole book, and then he was – one was Masada. We didn't know about Masada then, I think. Well, maybe we did. Anyway, what was Josephus' function in life? He wrote history as he saw it. But some of it was good, and some of it wasn't good for the Jews. I mean, Josephus – and we had that moral debate.

HB: Did you ever want a career when you were at Wellesley? Did you think about –?

HC: Oh, I thought about teaching.

HB: Teaching?

HC: Yes.

HB: And then what happened?

HC: But not about teaching Hebrew or Jewish things or anything. I thought about teaching – I think they call it social – we didn't know about social studies then. I thought about teaching history and literature together. I thought one of the ways to teach about England and how it was was to take Dickens and what the school system was like in those days. I thought one of the – to teach economics almost from literature. So I thought of – and I thought, "I don't know that anyone teaches that, but that's what I'd like to teach." And I loved Chaucer. I loved English literature.

HB: So what happened?

HC: I got married.

HB: Did you get married right after college?

HC: No, I got married in my spring vacation in my senior year. We'd been engaged since May of the year before. Haskell thought, "Could we get married?" And I said, "If we got married, s there money enough to live on and pay tuition both?" It didn't occur to me –

HB: What was Haskell doing at the time? Had he graduated college?

HC: He was a lawyer. He'd graduated Harvard Law School.

HB: So he was a bit older than you.

HC: Four years older. He was in – what was he? – one of the youngest people. He graduated from college at twenty, so at twenty-five, when he got through law school in '21 – and I didn't go to college until '23 – he had been working at Hale and Dorr for two years. But he started at twenty-five dollars a week. His secretary got more than he did. I said to him, "How come, Haskell?" He said, "She knows her business. I'm learning mine." That was all right with him. I said, "Can we afford it? Afford for me to go to" – didn't occur to us that we could ask my father for tuition because I thought we'd be independent. But at any rate, we decided we couldn't get married [until] I finished my senior year, so we were engaged. Well, in those days when you were engaged, you may have necked or petted, we called it, but you didn't live together. Then facing spring – then my senior year, the big exam, the president said she had a great treat in store for our class. We were to have a five-hour exam in our major. I thought it meant the whole field in your major, so I switched to English literature immediately. I had thrown away my history notes, but we had that five-hour exam coming up. Anyway, towards February, I thought, "Gee, we're planning a wedding right after graduation." But I thought, "The exam and a wedding, that's a mess."

HB: Right, too much.

HC: A five-hour exam that nobody knew about before.

HB: Right.

HC: Let's get married spring vacation of our senior year. So you had to have your parent's permission, of course, to get married, and you had to have the dean's permission to get married.

HB: The dean?

HC: No, not to get married; to have an extra vacation. We wanted to go on a honeymoon. So I went to the dean and said, "Could I have an extra week before and after the red calendar days of Easter vacation?" She said, "That's a very unusual request, Miss Segal. Why do you want that?" I said, "Well, I want to get married and have a proper honeymoon." And for years, I – she looked at me with these piercing brown eyes. "And what will you do if I say no?" And I said, "We'll have to wait until after graduation, of course because although I have my parents' permission, I have to have your permission." I think I said, "Well, we'll wait until after June, of course, " and she seemed to have softened. I couldn't understand it. She said, "Let me look up your record, Miss Segal." So she came back and she said, "Yes, you can have the time, and we'll give you your permission. We'll give you your penalty when you come back." Well, who cared?

HB: What was the penalty?

HC: Well, I found out when I came back. I couldn't cut classes. Well, who would – I could keep my room, but I couldn't sleep in it, of course. I knew that, but I thought, "Who wants to sleep in it?"

HB: Right. So, where did you live?

HC: Well, my father – we had a big house on Babcock Street – a huge house. There was the maid's room, the bathroom, the guest room, and my brother's room on the third floor, so that was going to be my apartment. There was still the maid's room, but we had our own living room, and we had our own bedroom, and we had our own bathroom, except for the maid. So that's where we lived, and I had arranged it, so I just had courses every other day – Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays or Monday, Wednesday – I don't know which. My father gave me a car – his car because he didn't use it. So, I had a car.

HB: Now, what year was this?

HC: Senior year – oh, 1928, I was married.

HB: What kind of car did your father have?

HC: A Buick, I think. I don't remember. A five-passenger sedan, I think you called them. No, he didn't have a Cadillac or a Packard or anything like that. He didn't like ostentation at all. He never forgot his socialism background, you see. Before we bought the big house, he knew we had a maid, and he knew we had a laundress, but that was in the daytime, so he only saw the maid. He didn't see the laundress. What he didn't know was my mother had a cleaning woman quite a few days a week, too. Well, one day, when we were in – he said to my mother, "Etta, can you run that house one in help?" She said, "Oh, yes, Jacob, I can manage." So we bought the big house on Babcock. We'd lived in a two-family house – upstairs in a two-family house. We bought a big house on Babcock Street. He had the grippe one day, and he came home, and that day, the cleaning woman was there, the laundress was there – the cleaning woman came five days a week in that house, the laundress was there, the maid, of course, was there, and the seamstress was there. You had a seamstress in those days come in twice a year to let down hems or put up hems – whatever. So, the next day, he got up and he said, "I'm going to work." I was in Choate, so I was home that – I said, "Papa, what are you going

to work for? You had the flu yesterday." He said, "I thought I was running a simple household, and your mother is running a factory here. I can't stand it." So, he said, "I'm going back to my office." It was very hard for him to know that he wasn't living – he thought he was living an unostentatious – he couldn't stand ostentation. When my sister was going to be married, we told him that – my mother and I went around, and the Ritz – yes, the Copley, the Summerset, and the Ritz were all the same price. He said, "Don't choose the Ritz. He said, "I couldn't bear to tell my friends my daughter was being married at the Ritz." You see, it sounded so ritzy. So he said, "We'll have the engagement reception at either the Copley or the Somerset and the wedding at the other place." So that's what we did. She had a reception at the Copley and the wedding – no, her engagement reception was at the Copley, and then her wedding was at the Somerset.

HB: And what about you? Where was your wedding?

HC: Oh, I was going to be married at our home in Brookline, which was quite beautiful with the curving staircase. And we had (Siler's?) engaged to cater it and Frasier's for flowers engaged – to do the flowers – Frasier's in Wellesley.

HB: Did they used to be in Brookline?

HC: No, they were always at Wellesley. But then Haskell's father had surgery, and so we went to Haskell's father's apartment in Cambridge. And then I had to cancel all my classmates and my friends who were coming.

HB: Oh, so you weren't married in your house?

HC: No, married in Haskell's father's – and we took a noon train and went right off to New York.

HB: And where did you go on your honeymoon?

HC: We were going – I don't know where we were going, but Esther and Charlie Rome persuaded us to take a cruise. They had just come back from a cruise to Europe, and it was wonderful. Well, we couldn't go to Europe, so we went to the West Indies on the Hamburg American Line.

HB: Wow.

HC: And on that boat, I saw a sign. It was a German boat – the Hamburg American in those days. This was 1928. I saw a sign, and I said to Haskell, "Haskell, there's a sign on this ship every place you look, and I don't know what it means. It says "(Leffe-boats?)" He said, "Show me where it is, Harriet." So I showed him. He said, "If you hadn't had so damn much Latin, you'd know it said 'Lifeboats.'" [laughter] But, in Latin, I was taught – and I didn't take but two years of Latin in college, but then I still kept up with it sort of. I couldn't translate anything for you now. But we were married, and I commuted. I passed the general. I don't know how because I thought you should pass it in the whole field of English literature. So I had never taken Wordsworth poetry, or I had never taken Victorian prose. So, I studied a lot of things I hadn't had. Well, I went in there; I found I only needed to have known my Shakespeare and my Chaucer and my [inaudible] novel, and then a general survey course. I'd had those four courses. So I don't really know how I did pass it, but I passed all my generals. I passed my generals. I passed it. So, I was married.

HB: Did you have any hobbies during that time? It sounds like you were very busy studying. You did a lot of reading.

HC: Oh, yes, always. I came in twice a week to do work at – yes, I did. I heard Eva Whiting White or somebody from Simmons talk about social work. So I said to (Jenny Ropa?) – she became (Jenny Whitney?). I said to (Jenny Ropa?), "(Jenny?), I think I'd like to do social work." She said, "So would I." So we went to Dennison House twice a week by train from Wellesley. You got off at South Station and walked to Dennison

House. That's in the –

[END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

HB: Today is Thursday, January 16, 1997. I'm Helene Bailin, interviewing Harriet Segal Cohn for the Jewish Women's Archive Temple Israel Oral History Project in Boston, Massachusetts. This is part two of Harriet Cohn's interview. Okay. Now, we left off last week with you being a senior at Wellesley College and getting married. Because of your father-in-law's illness, I believe the wedding couldn't be in your home in Brookline – in your parents' home.

HC: Yes.

HB: I believe you got married, you told me –

HC: In Cambridge, at my father-in-law's apartment.

HB: And can you tell us about your wedding?

HC: Well, it was very simple. I wasn't going to wear my bridal – my white velvet dress, but Haskell said he'd love it if I did. I was in my white velvet, pearl-beaded dress, and he was in a gray business suit because immediately after that – well, my father took the family to lunch, but Haskell and I said, "No, we'd go right to New York," because we were going to sail on a cruise the next day. And I remember Rabbi Levi holding both our hands in his as he married us. I thought my husband's hand was shaking, and I thought, "Uh-oh." I remember thinking during rabbi's speaking, "What's he shaking about?" He's been wanting to marry me for three years.' I learned after that that Rabbi Levi had palsy and had it badly. It wasn't my husband's hand that was shaking at all; it was dear Rabbi Levi's hand. But I learned an interesting thing about the wedding long afterward. My mother had – I think I had said we had had Frasier doing the flowers and (Sila?) doing

the catering. My father and mother had a lovely big home in Brookline with a curving staircase, lovely chandeliers, and things like that. But at any rate, my sister, years later, when she was being confirmed, said that Rabbi Levi told a very interesting story about charity, the seven degrees of helping people. And then, he said, "And once I got two checks from a lady who came to see me, and said to me, 'We had planned a lovely wedding for our daughter, but unfortunately we couldn't have it. Her father-in-law was ill, so we weren't able to give it. Only you will know who would love to give a lovely wedding and can't afford it in temple, Rabbi Levi. So I want you to have these two checks, one for the caterer and one for the florist. The only thing is, I don't want her ever to know or them ever to know where the checks came from, and I never want to know to whom you gave it.'" And at the end of that lesson, he called my sister up to him and said, "Do you know, Anna, anything about those?" She said, "No, I thought it was an interesting story." He said, "It was your mother" –

HB: Oh, my goodness.

HC: – "who gave me the two checks." Of course, that comes right after the other, so you might have guessed that. But that was my mother's way of doing things. Did I tell you about when I asked her once why she never had jewelry? Did I tell you that?

HB: No.

HC: Well, I asked her once why she never had a pearl necklace, a string of pearls or diamond earrings, or a diamond pin. And she said, "Well, I'll tell you, dear. Your father keeps his mother with a nurse, and my father and his second wife in their own little home in Worcester, where my mother was brought up. He has his little home there and his garden, but I know my father would never feel like a mensch unless he could give in the community because he used to be an important man in the Worcester community. So, I send my father money all the time so that if anything comes up…". Well, Rosh Hashanah, I think, or one of the holidays in the Orthodox, they get up and say what they'll

do for the year. "So my father would be able to feel like a mensch." She said, "I don't feel like asking your father for jewelry when I do that extra bit on my own for my father." Well, that was mother's idea of doing things nicely. When I was confirmed, everybody came with new bracelets or new necklaces or new rings or something. My mother – I had an add-a-pearl necklace; she'd added a pearl. But she made me a life member of the old people's home. That's the [inaudible] – I think it's the Jewish Recuperative –

HB: Hebrew Rehabilitation, right.

HC: But she thought, like a bar mitzvah, you become a man in the community and you have responsibilities. She thought that was a fitting confirmation gift, and I couldn't help but agree with her, but I also couldn't help – I had some little ornament to show. So I was brought up with a socialist father who didn't want any ostentation but didn't know how well he was living. I think one of the reasons – he didn't like any discussion about money either, so I think he deposited so much to my mother a year. She took care of all the things with that, I suppose. She made out the checks for – I don't know – but I just suppose from that, that she must have made out the checks for her mother-in-law and her father.

HB: Excuse me. Is that your doorbell?

HC: Yes, and it's the cleaning woman. [Recording paused] – my wanting a fox neckpiece in high school?

HB: No. About you wanting a fox neckpiece when you were in high school?

HC: Yes. Senior in high school. And I said to my mother, "Could I have a fox neckpiece?" you know. And she said that there was a light, fluffy fox –

HB: Was that the rage at the time?

HC: Must have been – in 1919, I guess, yes. She said, “Oh, yes, they are nice, dear, and I will get you one, but you have a cousin four years older than you are across Thornton Park.” That was my husband – my father’s niece, but she was good to all the nieces and nephews. “She probably would love one too. So when I can buy two of them, dear, I will.” Well, I thought that was, you know, the way things should be and perfectly logical. Later she bought my cousin, Esther, and me each a fox fur neckpiece. But when I told that once when I was having some trouble and seeing a psychiatrist, I was telling her about my mother because actually, I knew these things, but it was my father I was close to. I was telling her these things about my mother, and she said, “Didn’t you resent it? Didn’t you mind?” And I said, “No, I didn’t mind.” It seemed to me perfectly reasonable that she would think of my cousin across the park – the other girl four years older.” Well, she thought that was very strange that I felt no rage. She thought that I must have suppressed rage a lot, I guess. I don’t know. It doesn’t seem strange to me. I mean, if you’re reared that way. Of course, my father happened to be the only one in the family at that time who was – another nephew was later – he was the only one who had means and the first one to have a car. We had a seven-passenger car. You probably don’t remember them; they had two pull-up seats. We never went riding, but when we went around the corner to see if Grandpa wanted to come or if Cousin so-and-so across the – we always went out for a drive with all seven seats filled, so I grew up in a household where that was the usual thing.

HB: Why did the psychiatrist think that you would feel rage? My husband grew up in the same type of house where his – he had a sister, and his mother and father made sure that what they did for him they did for her.

HC: For his sister.

HB: For his sister.

HC: Well, that’s his sister.

HB: They made it very, very equal. It was always equal. There was a very large emphasis on everything being equal.

HC: Yes.

HB: And then, ten years ago, when his sister was forty-two, she developed breast cancer and died very quickly at the age of forty-two, and he had a very difficult time, saying, “We were always equal.”

HC: Yes.

HB: “My parents always did things to make life equal, and life isn’t equal”.

HC: I can understand that with siblings.

HB: Yes.

HC: This wasn’t a sibling.

HB: Oh, that’s true.

HC: I mean, this was a cousin across the street and across the park. And the psychiatrists think – I think she thought I had some – well, I think she thought – well, I did want my mother’s approval. So I think she thought that I had sublimated or crushed a lot of anger on my part to win my mother’s approval and that I was actually a lion inside or something.

HB: After she pointed that out to you, did it make any sense to you?

HC: No, no. I still think that was a perfectly nice thing for my mother to do, and I don’t know why I should have been angry. I mean, I waited a year. I got it within the year, you know. My mother said, “I will try it; when I can see that I buy two of them, I will.” That’s seemed – no, I don’t see anything to be angry about. I do realize now that I was

searching for my mother's approval.

HB: And did you ever feel you got it?

HC: I think, at times, she was proud of me. I'm not sure, and I think she thought that I was attentive to her because when she went south, I would call her every Sunday. She said, "You're the only one who does that, so I sit waiting for the phone, you see." But it didn't occur to my – and when she went away, I would write to her, and I realize now I would write fully of what my brother and sister were doing, hoping I would interest her. So I don't know whether I ever had it.

HB: That what you were doing wouldn't have interested her?

HC: Well, then I just knew – I didn't think what I was doing wouldn't. I just wanted to make sure that she read my letters with some interest. So, I'm not sure. Then I remember that when she died, Rabbi Gittelsohn said to me about three or four months later – more than that – half a year later, "I'm glad to see that you're looking better, Harriet, because I realize that you took your mother's death – that you grieved for her most." Well, I now think that was because I felt, "I'll never make it." Maybe the child who knows they haven't got their mother's interest does grieve the most. I don't know. But there's that feeling – I remember, "I've lost my chance to make it …". And I was attentive to her and – well, no more than I should have been. But at seventeen, I was rude to her.

HB: In what way?

HC: Oh, I talked back to her. The reason I can remember that –

HB: Were you at Wellesley then?

HC: No.

HB: While you were still at home.

HC: Living at home. I was in high school, fifteen or sixteen. Maybe adolescent girls have that – no, I must have been about fifteen because I remember once saying – thinking, "If she slapped me across the face now, she'd be right." Of course, she never did because I don't think if I was rude, it made all that difference to her. [laughter] Or maybe she just thought, "That's just a childish whim or something." I don't know.

HB: Do you remember having fights with her? Arguments with her?

HC: No, I remember her more, as she was always the naysayer. She was the one that always said, "No, don't do this; it's raining," or "Don't do this; it's snowing," or "Don't do this; it's too far," or something like that. But I was thinking the other – I've thought of this quite a few times. I began having pain in this side – I remember when I took horseback riding lessons at thirteen, and after that, I would have a pain and then in high school. One day, I thought, "I better see a doctor." My Aunt Jenny was a doctor but hadn't been well herself. She'd had an operation herself. Anyway, I didn't go to see my Aunt Jenny. I thought, "Well, I'll go see Dr. Bragdon because he delivered me." So I went by myself from Winthrop to see a doctor in East Boston that I had never known, made an appointment –

HB: Had you told your mother about it?

HC: No, I just did it –

HB: Just all on your own.

HC: Yes, I was fourteen. I was a sophomore, and he told me I had appendix – examined me. He said, "Oh, yes, you have an inflamed appendix." So I said, "When will you operate?" He said, "I think you better talk to your parents about this." So, I came home and told my mother and my mother was terribly upset and told my father. They

talked to Aunt Jenny immediately, “Who’s the best surgeon in Boston for Harriet?” So she said, “Dr. Lahey.” It was before the Lahey Clinic, but she knew about Dr. Lahey. So Dr. Lahey took my appendix out. But I thought, “What fourteen-year-old child goes to see a doctor instead of telling her mother, ‘Mother, I’ve got …’ and goes to the doctor and says, “Well, when will you do it?” or something. I must have been very independent.

HB: Right. You really took care of yourself. Maybe you felt you had to.

HC: No, I didn’t have to. It just didn’t occur to me to bother her; I don’t really know why. But I just remember getting on the train and the streetcar and going to see this very nice Dr. Bragdon, who I knew was a good doctor.

HB: Was your brother and sister as independent as you?

HC: No.

HB: They weren’t.

HC: And I think that’s why my father favored me.

HB: You felt he favored you?

HC: No, I didn’t know it at the time. [Recording paused.]

HB: Now, let’s get back –

HC: I’ll tell you something else about my husband. This can stay in. Somebody once offered him – wanted to give him a gift of stock in his business, you see. He said, “I’ve paid your bill; this has nothing to do with the bill. I’m so grateful to you. I want you to have some.” Haskell said, “I can’t accept it.” The man said, “Why? It has nothing to do – it’s out of what I feel you have done for me.” Haskell said, “As long as I have no interest in the business, I can always give you completely objective advice. I’m not sure

if I had an interest if I could keep my advice as objective. And my profession to be objective, to give you the best possible advice.

HB: Right.

HC: So, I know he was – I once said to him, "You have very strict ethics – legal ethics – all ethics, but to no one do you apply them more strictly than to yourself." He said, "I hope so."

HB: Let's go back to your wedding. You mentioned to me the last time that you were going to tell me how your mother felt about it being at your father-in-law's in Cambridge after she had –

HC: Oh, she thought that was only right.

HB: Oh, she thought that – oh, okay.

HC: The only thing I said to Haskell –

HB: Well, maybe it was the story about the money to the rabbi that you wanted to tell me.

HC: Yes. The only thing – no, no. She felt that that was the only thing to do because when both our sisters graduated – his from Smith and mine from Wellesley at the same time, so I thought, of course, I would go to my sister's at Wellesley and that Haskell would go to Smith or something. She said, "No, no. You owe it. You should go to Smith with your husband because Ruth has a stepmother there but not her mother. But you should go to Ruth's." So I did.

HB: And how did you feel about that?

HC: Well, I felt I would have liked to have been at my sister's. I said to Haskell, "You go." And he said, "No, I'll go to whichever one. If you want to stay here, I'll go to Anna's too. I love Wellesley." That was that. I went there.

HB: When did you stop –

HC: So, she had a great influence on me.

HB: Well, she certainly did.

HC: But she did on all of us. I think the way we – don't you think the way you're – and this gentle woman. You've seen her picture.

HB: Right, right.

HC: A gentle woman. But we were bound with hoops of steel.

HB: She sounds like she was a very gentle but strong woman.

HC: She must have been. She must have been to live in this atheistic family happily, and they all adored her.

HB: And she being brought up Orthodox.

HC: Yes, and when my father died, his family – nieces and nephews – were just as attentive, in fact, more so than her own. Her own were always attentive, but one nephew's wife in Florida – not a Jewish woman – invited her to come down and spend the winter with them. She said, "I know you like to go to Florida. This will be a hard year for you. Come down and spend it with us in Jacksonville," because they lived in Jacksonville, which was very – this was very nice to do for your husband's aunt.

HB: Right. Now, I wanted to ask you. You mentioned that – I wanted to talk about sex in college. You mentioned that –

HC: Oh, when I went to see the dean to ask for a week before and a week after –

HB: Right, right.

HC: She looked at me, and she said, “What will you do if I say no, Miss Segal?” I told you that.

HB: Right, right. You told me that.

HC: Well, a year later, when I was President of Students’ Aid, did I tell you that part, and during the Korean War – well, during any war – during any time, if a girl got married, her college scholarship stopped all financial aid to her. I never liked it, and I had said so. The Students’ Aid was a separate body. We were independent. We had rooms, and we lived at Wellesley. I mean, we ran our office from there, and we worked with the college. But we gave to other needs. So it put more of a burden on this, but I didn’t think it was fair of the college. And one day, the President and the Dean of Admissions called me in and said, “We’re making a change, Mrs. Cohn, and we think you will be pleased to hear about it. Come into the President’s office.” And they said, “We want to tell you that we no longer are stopping financial aid to girls who get married.” I said, “I never knew why you were.” So many of them were marrying soldiers who were going overseas or something – going to Korea. I said, “I never knew why you were.” The Dean of Admissions said, “We never knew why we should endorse students who had broken one of the society’s laws.” And I said, “What laws did they break by getting married?” And she said, “Well, don’t you know? Most of them are pregnant when they get married when they are in college.” I said, “No, it never occurred to me.” I thought they were – it didn’t occur to me. They’re getting married because it’s their last chance to maybe see their fiancés. I didn’t say anything to them. I realized why the Dean had looked at me like that. Those piercing brown eyes, “What will you do, Miss Segal, if I say no?” And I said – because I asked her in January, you see, or February, and I said, “Then we wait until June until I graduate because I have to …”.

HB: So that was her way of finding out if you were pregnant or not.

HC: I think so. It must have been. Because she immediately said, “Oh, just let me look up your record, and I’ll tell you whether you can have a week before and a week after vacation.” But it hadn’t occurred to me that anybody would think that.

HB: Isn’t that interesting?

HC: And if she had done more, I would have said, “Don’t you know I’m a Jewish girl?” It didn’t occur to me Jewish girls got pregnant either before they were married.

HB: [laughter] Did you ever discuss these things –

HC: No.

HB: – with your friends about whether or not to have relations with a man before you were married?

HC: We just assumed you didn’t. In the 1920s, we just assumed you didn’t. There was nothing to – yes, I remember one of our friends was going to New York – being driven to New York in a car sophomore year – no, junior year – so it was 1927 – in a car. And we said, “What if the car breaks down? She’ll have to stay overnight someplace.” Because that’s unpleasant for them. Well, it didn’t occur to us they’d have sex – I guess maybe it did. No, we were quite innocent – quite stupid, maybe.

HB: Did you talk to your mother about sex at all?

HC: Yes.

HB: Did she instruct you?

HC: She said, “I’ll tell you very frankly that people get close.”

HB: Is that what she said? [laughter]

HC: [laughter] I knew what it was before I got married from books, but I didn't have that much experience. There was necking or petting, or whatever you call it. I think we called it "going the limit." Is that still the phrase?

HB: No. [laughter] Going the limit.

HC: "Going the limit" was the phrase.

HB: I don't know what they call it now, but I was out with my niece the other day, who is twenty-five, and my son has a lovely girlfriend. He's in law school, and they're coming home in two weeks.

HC: Well, they're all living together.

HB: Right. And my niece said, "Auntie Helene. You are just out of it if you think that they're not sleeping together."

HC: Well, I'm sure you knew better, didn't you?

HB: I said, "Well, they've been dating awhile. I guess so."

HC: Well, one of my granddaughters went to Radcliffe and was going to take a year off. She'd been going with a boy – not a Jewish young man – not American, actually, but going with a very nice boy. But she was taking a year off and going to Israel. Well, it so happened he followed her. Then, when they came back, instead of going back to the dormitory, they were going to get an apartment. But anyway, they were looking for a place, and they didn't stay with – and I said to Ruth, "Ruth dear, I know you and so and so are looking for a place, but I can't ask you stay with me. I understand it, but it would be very difficult for your grandfather and for our housekeeper, Minerva, who had been …".

HB: Minerva?

HC: Oh, Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, believe me. She was with us for forty-eight years.

HB: Oh, my.

HC: I'm still in touch with her in Nova Scotia. But she was a Scotch Presbyterian and very strict. I knew it would be very hard for her, and I knew it would be hard for Haskell. Ruth said, "[inaudible]" She said, "I understood that. I understood you. I knew you would have – I understood you couldn't."

HB: Now, tell me, what was life when you first got married in the '20s, you and Haskell.

HC: '28

HB: In 1928.

HC: Yes.

HB: So that was the year before the Depression. What was it like as a young married [couple]? What did you do after you graduated college?

HC: Oh, well, I lived at home while I was in college on that third-floor apartment, and then we got a tiny apartment in Brighton on Wallingford Road, which is where the Ulin House is now.

HB: Right.

HC: And we had an apartment there, and my father came to see it. He looked out and I said, "That looks like a dump now …" [Telephone rings. Recording paused.] Oh, I said, "That looks like a dump," and he looked at it. He said, "It looks like the tin mines in

Russia." [laughter]

HB: This apartment?

HC: What?

HB: Your apartment?

HC: No, looking out – the view out. When I was looking for apartments, Haskell – we were looking for apartments, I would come back and say, "Yes, I did see some today, Haskell, and there's a lovely view from the living room window. There's a tree right outside the living room window." He said, "What was the kitchen like?" I said, "I don't know. I guess it had the usual stove and refrigerator." And another one I looked at, and I said, "Oh, yes, it's a nice apartment. It has a kitchen, and it has a stove and a refrigerator. And outside, you look out on a corner or something." Well, he [said], "What were the closets like?" or something. Well, finally, he began to look with me. Evidently, we got one that looked out on a tin mine, but we could afford it. He then was getting fifty-five dollars a week, and the apartment was sixty dollars a month, which you were supposed to not – you're supposed to not –

HB: A week's pay is supposed to be a month's rent.

HC: I think we got a month's rent [inaudible]. I thought it was wonderful. I said to my mother, "I don't know what I'm going to …". It didn't occur to me to get a job. It wouldn't have occurred to him either, even though he was earning fifty-five a week.

HB: It never occurred to you? No?

HC: What could I do?

HB: You had that wonderful education at Wellesley.

HC: Yes. What could I do?

HB: Could you have taught?

HC: No, I hadn't gone to – no, I didn't take education courses. I hadn't gone to Normal School – couldn't get accreditation. I didn't even try. My mother said, "Well…" I said, "I just don't want to do nothing [and] play bridge." She said, "What would you really like to do?" I said, "I'd love to take two courses at Radcliffe." So she gave me two courses at Radcliffe. I took a wonderful course in English, and I thought, 'Well, I might as well work for a Master's, and I took German. But then, I must have got pregnant around Thanksgiving – around January. I dropped the German – I didn't know I was pregnant, but I dropped the German course, and I still took the English course. I didn't take the exams, though, because I figured I'm not going for my master's because then in March, I found out I was pregnant. And the baby was born the next October. So I'd been married a year and a half.

HB: When the baby was born?

HC: Yes. Then, a couple of weeks after she was born was the Depression. When she was born, we moved out of that one-bedroom apartment. I thought it was wonderful. Oh, I remember, we had one sofa that we bought and one chair. When we lived on that third-floor apartment, I had bought a maple table that would serve as a dining room table and – maple table to study on. That was my desk. So that was our table to eat on, and we had very little furniture. My husband, when we moved, said, "I wish we had more things." I said, "Well, I took a course in Turkish history, and in Turkey, they don't arrange furniture; they arrange space. So let's make the best arrangement of space that we can make in this room." Well, we did. He thought it was lovely. [laughter] We were thinking not of furniture but of space.

HB: Space. [laughter]

HC: So I was very happy and took the streetcar to Radcliffe. Then when I knew I was pregnant, we knew we would move. So we moved to Beaconsfield Road.

HB: Did you have a group of friends that you spent the day with? What did you do?

HC: Well, I went to Radcliffe three days a week. Yes, I had some friends, and I worked for the Sisterhood. I was on a – they said, "Would you work on a committee?" I thought, 'Sisterhood, of course, I'd love to work on a committee.' So they said, "Well, we'll give you a list of names to call every week to see how many of that are coming on Tuesday, so we'll know how to plan lunch," because Tuesday was when the rabbi spoke when the women were sewing. So I did that every – well, I didn't think that was much of a Sisterhood. So I don't think I – then the next year, somebody in Scholarship asked me if I would join – be active in Scholarship. That was the Women's Scholarship Association. Do you know it?

HB: No, I don't.

HC: It's a group of Jewish women in Boston – still going – and they provide financial aid to all – and this was in '29, '30, and '31 – sixty years ago, wasn't it? – that provided aid to a lot of Jewish girls who were day students at Radcliffe, Simmons, and BU [Boston University]. So I worked there. I was head of a literary group there. I wasn't a speaker. I got the speakers and got the houses.

HB: So you started to get involved in volunteer work?

HC: Oh yes, in the Sisterhood and in Temple Israel.

HB: And was that satisfying to you? You have a very sharp mind.

HC: Oh, I read a lot. And I was invited to go to join a book club that met – we had Mrs. (Fairbol?) as the leader, and Ethel Rogal invited – yes, I had some of my – my husband

had introduced me to Ethel Rogal and (Lil Cohen?) – that's Mrs. (Abner Cohen?); she's now Mrs. Benjamin Levin.

HB: Now, are those Rogal the ones in the temple? There is a Rogal family that –

HC: I don't know. They were, but I don't think it's the same family now. Well, one was in the travel business.

HB: Yes.

HC: All right.

HB: Yes, they are.

HC: That's the same. Yes, Ethel was – there were two Rogal boys, Sidney and Eddy. Ethel had no – Sidney had no children, and this is one of Eddie's grandchildren, I think. Eddie and (Violet?). Yes, I had friends. (Maddie Brown's?) sister, (Shirley Saunders?) and –

HB: And then what happened –

HC: [inaudible] Rudman, yes.

HB: And then what happened?

HC: And (May Lansky's?) daughter.

HB: When the Depression came, how did it affect you?

HC: Oh, it was tough. I still had a maid. That was ten dollars a week. We lived in Brookline then, and we were paying ninety dollars a month rent. My husband was getting about that then. It was very close, and every month, I would sit when I was paying the milk bill. I can remember thinking, "Am I going to have enough in the checking account to

cover it?" And then Haskell saw me and said, "What's bothering you?" I said, "I wonder every month if I'm going to have enough to pay the bills." He looked, and he said, "You don't really have enough." I mean, there was no extra. Because I remember when I was asked to join that reading group, I think it was a dollar a week. I sat and talked it over with Haskell – did he think I should join? He said, "Yes, I think we will manage that." But it really was tight going. Then I had a facial paralysis, and I was seeing a doctor three times a week, but my father paid those bills. He took care of it.

HB: Did they help you in any other way, your parents?

HC: I think my mother went to Fitchburg where her family had a store and brought me home a dress because it was tough for them.

HB: They were feeling it too?

HC: They were feeling it, too, yes. But then, after Marjorie was born, by the time she was two, Haskell decided that we needed a bigger place, and we bought a house in Waban. My father did help us with the mortgage on – he did help us buy the house. Then came the real tough times – '33 and '34.

HB: Why were they tougher?

HC: Well, it was still a Depression. Maybe we shouldn't have bought the house, and I remember saying to Haskell, "Do you want me to come in?" And he said, "No." He didn't want me to work. And then when I was pregnant with Susie was when he left. After being at Hale and Dorr, he left after eight years to start his own firm with Ben Levin, who had married my best friend, Charlotte Dane.

HB: Oh, that was nice.

HC: Yes, very. And then for two years, in Waban – oh, yes, I do remember. We had a garage door, and the garage door needed to be fixed, and we couldn't pay for [inaudible]. In the winter, I would hear it swinging in the wind. That was the only time I remember feeling poor.

HB: Because you couldn't fix the garage door.

HC: The garage door, yes.

HB: The only time in your whole life, right? Because you didn't have those feelings as a young child?

HC: No, no. As a young child, we lived in Dorchester. I didn't think – well, you don't think when you're a young child, but I realize now that's when my father was expanding his wholesale business and my mother was being careful. But then, he bought a nice house in Winthrop when my mother didn't want to live in Dorchester anymore – didn't want to live where they were going to put a movie house on the corner.

HB: Right.

HC: We bought a two-family house in Winthrop.

HB: What was your role in your marriage with Haskell? What did you do, and what did he do?

HC: I was in a lot of community work by then – child welfare. Jewish Family and Children's Service and the Women's – and then I was active in Scholarship until they asked me to be president, and I said, "No, I would not be president." Then I was very active in that and in the beginning of Brandeis until they asked me if I would be president [inaudible].

HB: Why didn't you want to be president of these organizations?

HC: I don't think I wanted to give them that much time. For Brandeis, that was traveling all over the country then. I knew since Haskell wasn't interested particularly in Brandeis – he helped get them money. He had clients making out wills who didn't have a particular place, he would suggest Brandeis, but it wasn't one of his particular interests. I knew that I didn't want to be traveling away from him. It's something he wasn't interested in. I was interested in the temple. I was on the – it was called Education Committee, but it wasn't planning the programs. It was the Sunday school – planning the children's Sunday school. Rabbi Gittelsohn – I was on that committee for about seventeen years, and I was on that. They asked me to be a trustee there, and I said no. I said no then. I said, "Unless you put Haskell on some committee, I don't want to have night meetings any more than I have on the Education Committee and on Child Welfare. I don't want to have more night committees meetings without" – but they never gave him any. And I think there were other lawyers who didn't want him.

HB: Oh.

HC: He was well-known and powerful and – not well-known and powerful. He was well-known. He wasn't powerful. Well, I think he had some different feelings about the practice of law than they did. Anyway, I don't know who, but they never – so it wasn't pursued any further. President of Brandeis – as I said, I didn't want to go that far. I wouldn't have taken the president of Hadassah either because they were so intense. My sister once said, "If a woman says to another woman in Hadassah, 'You look tired,' that's a compliment." [laughter] But I did become President of the Jewish Family and Children's Service.

HB: And now, why did you accept that?

HC: Because that was –

HB: You were interested in social work when you were at Wellesley.

HC: Very interested. Oh, I had been on the case committee of the Associated Jewish Philanthropies. I was the first woman on the executive committee of the Associated Jewish Philanthropies, but I never wanted to be head of any money drive. Of course, child welfare was a dollar or three dollars for membership. That was mostly an education committee to – was when there was a Jewish home, and we didn't think everybody should go to an asylum. We thought they should go to foster homes. It was the beginning of foster home care. So that really was educating people in foster home care. Now, I was willing to be President of that because that – it did have money-raising, but that had a – too bad they ever gave it up, but anyway, that had [inaudible] weeks at camp. And that was finding children – well, I used to – I was on the board of Hecht House.

HB: I believe I still get the envelope that comes asking for that.

HC: For that?

HB: For the camp. Or I did up until a couple of years ago.

HC: You did up until a few years. I was on the Hecht House Board and interested in getting children to camps. I was interested in driving them. I have an interesting – all right, let me tell you about one time. I used to drive the children for Hecht House in Dorchester and Roxbury for a day at the beach. When somebody had a big house, they would invite them. Well, it was interesting listening to the children, but sometimes they would be sick to their stomach coming home.

HB: In the car?

HC: Yes. So when I would get home, I would take a hose and open both doors of the car –

HB: Oh, dear.

HC: – and hose out the car. And my little children – girls, four and eight, or five and nine, or whatever they were at the time, “Why do you take them, mom? Why do you take them?” And I said, “Well, I take them because they haven’t any place to play.” And one of them said, “Why can’t they go in their backyards to play?” I said, “They don’t have backyards.” “Well then, why can’t they play in the street?”

HB: Who’s asking you this, your mother?

HC: My children.

HB: Oh, your children, oh.

HC: Yes. No, this was when I was married, and I was doing all kinds of different social work and Girl Scout work. “Why can’t they play in the street?” And I said, “Well, they don’t live where there are streets.” Well, they couldn’t figure it. So one day, I put them in the car, and I drove both my children –

HB: How old were they at the time?

HC: Nine and five, something like that. Drove them down to North Station. There’s an elevated train over. I said, “You see, there’s the elevated train, and there’s all the traffic,” and then I drove them around the North End. I said, “You see all the tenement houses here. There are no backyards; there is no street.” Now, these children didn’t come from there; some of them did – from West End, I guess. That’s no longer there. I drove them somewhere where there was elevated and drove them along, so they didn’t say a word. They came home and went upstairs, and then they came down, each with a great big bag. I said, “What’s that for?” They said, “Next time you drive the children, these are some toys that we don’t really have to have.”

HB: Isn’t that nice?

HC: "So give them the bags of toys." So I thought they didn't have –

HB: Look at the way the teaching, what your mother did in evening out with the niece across the street, with the first doll.

HC: This was showing them. This was showing. Because I knew nothing when I said, "They have no back yard, and they can't play in the street." But they didn't even tell me what they were going to do, but they must have said to each other, and they never [inaudible], but I took [inaudible]. Then had refugee children then coming in. We were finding homes for them. We were teaching them about America. I remember when we had –

HB: Now, what years were these? The late '30s?

HC: When Germany –

HB: When Germany started –?

HC: I remember when children – we were telling them some things – oh, money. What is it that says, "In God We Trust?"

HB: The quarter. Doesn't it?

HC: What do you take us for? Fools? Why should they –? They were here. Their parents were gone. They were here alone. Well, we found foster homes, and we decorated a whole – we didn't believe in the asylum, but we bought a whole house in in Dorchester. I went round to furniture stores, wholesalers, asking if they would give us a couch or give us this or that with Cecil [inaudible]. She's no longer here. But I plowed through snow – I can remember that – going to all those places. Before we bought the house, I looked at everything for sale in Dorchester and Roxbury with people from the AJP Jewish Family and Children's Service. There was a lot of physical work here to do

all this. And then at that summer camp, we used to send children for three weeks, not for two. But I remember when I was on an all-camp committee for all the Catholics and Jews, Protestants, and all the camp committees. They said they were talking about for two weeks. And I said, “We figure the first week they lose weight; the second week they gain back to where they were; the third week they put it on.” So we had either – I think we had three three-week periods or two full-week – I don’t know. And then they were talking about sheets, a bottom sheet, and some of them just had blankets. And I said, “We have two sheets on every cot.” I don’t know why they didn’t throw me off the committee. But from the child welfare work, I was on many all-city appointments. And there was something else about camps. But anyway, I think that we did – oh, the refugee children. We once had planned a trip for them, and we couldn’t take them all in one coach, so we said to the others, “We’ll take you tomorrow.” And the ones who were going said, “No, we won’t go unless you take them all. There is no tomorrow."

HB: Wow.

HC: Really, until you know what these children – I don’t know how they ever –

HB: Now, how much did you know about what was going on in Europe?

HC: Well, I was speaking for the CJP, too, money-raising by telling about these children. But we wanted to cut their hair, and one girl said, “You can’t cut my hair; it’s been shaved off.” Well, of course, in the camps or wherever she’d been, they’d shaved it, but she was out. Now, the girl that the Liebmans adopted – they adopted one of our girls from camp. She had shrapnel in her lungs because she had been in one of these groups that are escaping in the forests.

HB: Now, is this –

HC: And both her parents were killed, but she got away and then to some place, and then she was here.

HB: So this sounds like it was after the war.

HC: Yes, I think so, yes. But she didn't have any number on her arm or anything. None of them did. None of them had been in –

HB: What did you know about during the war or the late '30s?

HC: No more than anybody else knew.

HB: What was the common knowledge amongst your friends and the temple people and –?

HC: Well, I remember when somebody – when Youth Aliyah started to get the children out – (Gisella Wisansky?) started to get the children out to Denmark and Sweden and England. So that must have before we were in the war. It was. Because we were getting the children out and setting them up in those other places, I think, or Youth Aliyah was. We were raising the money because I remember that that was eighteen dollars for one. – whether it was a month or not, I don't remember, but I don't think it could have been. But anyway, I remember Mrs. Dreyfus; her husband had been an ambassador to Czechoslovakia. Anyway, she called and asked me if I would come to hear (Gisella?). And I said, "I didn't know her." I guess I did know her from the Hecht House Board. I said, "Well, I know it's in your home, and you only have so much room, and I'm already a member of Youth Aliyah. I'm already giving my eighteen dollars. [Recording paused.] "I want you, Mary. And I want you to be with these other women that I'm inviting." Well, I got there. All the other women were the whole Cambridge, or the German crowd, who hadn't been caught up in Youth Aliyah yet. Because it was Mrs. Dreyfus' home, they came. And because it was (Gisella Wisansky?) – then (Gisella?) then-(Wahlberg?), they came to hear her, and I think they all probably became members of the Aliyah. But the

non-German – we had known it earlier from Hadassah. My mother was a strong Hadassah woman. When we lived in Winthrop, we had a house not at the beach where most of the people lived. It was a nice house.

HB: Right.

HC: A nice place. I remember my mother used to have – once or twice a year or whenever she was asked, would have her house – our house opened for all these people who would come up that I didn't know. She said, "Well, they're all interested in a good cause." I think she must have been one of the early – she was one of the – and then when we moved to Brookline, she was very active in Hadassah. So, I knew about Youth Aliyah before these other people did. So I knew that we were trying to get children out. We've strayed from –

HB: I know. Well, where we were –

HC: We've gone all over the [inaudible].

HB: Right.

HC: I don't think I told you last time when I was talking about what Temple Israel meant to me, what the prophets have always meant to me.

HB: Do you want to talk about that now?

HC: Well, I remember when I went to a Hosea – I thought of Amos, the god of justice, Hosea, the god of love, and then some of the others – and Micah, I always thought – I loved that. Micah. Is it Micah 19? "What does God require of thee? [To act justly], and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." That I thought was – what else is there? I remember freshman year in college, I took a survey history course. I remember the history teacher talking about Jesus at one stage in history, the message of Jesus that

later transformed the world. And then she said something about – it was the first time that there was a message "God is love" coming across. I thought to myself, "She doesn't know Hosea." [laughter] It didn't get me down that I didn't – I thought, "I know Hosea also taught other things, too – taught God is love." I did love the expression "God is Love." At Wellesley, one Sunday, one of the early Sundays you're there, there's a flower on the dining room table and then a little scribed message, "God is Love." I thought, "Oh, they all know it." Here in print. No, Isaiah and the sharing and never mind the sacrifices. It's the widow and the gleaning of the field and the tithing. Somebody told me tithing was a Christian idea, but I thought that – wasn't Boaz told to leave one pot of his field for Ruth and Naomi. For the poor to come and glean?

HB: Well, that's what they did. And then the poor came and picked up all the –

HC: Yes, yes, but isn't that tithing?

HB: I don't know.

HC: That you designate some part of your riches.

HB: Right, yes. Like a tax in a way.

HC: What?

HB: Well, it's like a tax.

HC: That you put on yourself.

HB: Right.

HC: Yes. So, I try to give one-tenth away. And we always enjoyed giving. I remember the first time we could give a hundred dollars to the Combined Jewish Appeal – oh, we were in heaven. Then when we could give a thousand we were equally in heaven.

HB: What we were talking about and then we strayed, was your role in marriage.

HC: As a wife.

HB: As a wife, what did you do, and what did Haskell do?

HC: Well, I went into all this education – all this community work.

HB: And what did you do in the home? So you had a lot of community work and volunteer work.

HC: And entertained at home. We did all our entertaining at home. I had cousins and family, and we never entertained clients unless they were friends. I never entertained people that were clients – to get clients because I always thought that would be prostituting hospitality. I knew some young doctor's wife – obstetrician's wife who did a lot of that and another obstetrician's wife who wouldn't do any. One of them, as soon as you engaged, she would invite you. So I was told. They were both friends of mine, and I never entered that game, nor did Haskell.

HB: Now, did you –?

HC: As a matter of fact, the only time we ever did it was for Joe Welch after Haskell had left the firm, and Joe had asked him to do it for somebody as a favor – a client of his who wanted very much to know Haskell.

HB: Did you run the household and take care of the bills and money?

HC: No, not the big ones. I didn't pay insurance or heat or the oil bill. I paid for all the household expenses.

HB: Haskell gave you money to do this?

HC: He deposited it in the bank each month. We didn't discuss it either. I knew as much as he could.

HB: And then what about your clothing?

HC: In Waban, I didn't even realize he didn't have any because for two years, he told me he didn't draw. And I said, "What did we live on?" I just knew things when I told him. He said, "I borrowed it from the bank for two years."

HB: And he didn't consult you when he was doing that?

HC: He didn't tell me. He didn't tell me.

HB: You didn't know.

HC: I just knew that things were very tight because he had just started out in his own firm and then had built up quite a bit and so forth from the time before.

HB: And when did things start to get better? Did Haskell have to go in the war?

HC: No, he wasn't drafted. He would have loved – if we had been people of means, he would have volunteered as some of his classmates did. (Andy Wheeler?) did, and (Mike Cutter?) did, and two of the three people did. And he would have loved to go into the – what do they call it? Register – it was some branch of the service. He couldn't because he had two children and me to support.

HB: Oh, so that put him out of the draft?

HC: And no inherited means. Yes. What did I do? I did a lot of philanthropy. Oh, in the household? I paid domestic bills, children's clothes. Well, I didn't buy any – my clothes. Yes, I did. I had one good suit. I wonder now if my father and mother must have given it to me, and it had a good blouse. It came with a satin blouse. (Ethel Wahlberg?) got it for

me wholesale. It came with a satin blouse and had a fur collar, and I bought a sweater. If I went out in the daytime I wore the sweater; if I went out in the evening, I wore the satin blouse. That was my outfit for years because I remember years later, when one of Haskell's nieces said to me, "Aunt Harriet, you have such pretty things, and every time I see you, you have something different on." And Haskell said, "There were many years when your aunt had no choice at all in what she wore. She's entitled to as many changes as she wants," or something like that. The niece said, "Of course, I didn't mean anything," or something. But I thought that was very nice of him to remember that for many years, I had no choice.

HB: What was your entertainment in the early years of your marriage? What would you do?

HC: It was going to people's houses or having them to our house.

HB: What about theater or music or dancing or going – what types of –?

HC: I remember that Sidney and Ethel and most of our friends belonged to Pinebrook at that time. And Ethel asked me if I would go to one of the dances. I said, "Oh, I'd love to." And then I said, "How much is it, Ethel?" She told me either twenty-five or fifty dollars. I don't know. And I said, "Oh, we can't go, Ethel. I know that." She said, "Why don't you talk it over with Haskell?" I said, "No, I know we can't go." But she said, "Harriet dear, sometimes if you ask for more, a man works harder, and he sees that you get it." I said, "Ethel, Haskell couldn't work any harder than he's working, and I'm not going to tell him there's something that I'd like to do that's fifty dollars." So that was the end of that. But mostly, we saw some of his Dartmouth classmates – a lot of them, as a matter of fact. And they didn't have to be Jewish, but we would go to their house, or they would come to ours. And we would play games – six or eight of us sit around – eight or ten of us sit around and talk and then – I don't know. I forgot what some of the games were, but we

would have a hilarious time. [laughter] I don't know whether we went to the movies. We did occasionally because we had – oh, and I remember one of his Dartmouth classmates asked us for – to come to their house for a night, and I said, "No, we can't because that's the maid's night out." She said, "Well, get a sitter." I said, "Oh, we've never done that." So we didn't go, and I think she was miffed for a little while. I've never paid extra. I mean, ten dollars a week was what the maid was.

HB: Now, did she live in?

HC: Yes. And we bought one thing on the installment plan.

HB: What was that?

HC: An oil heater for our house in Waban. Otherwise, Haskell would shovel coal. And we bought that on the installment – that's the only thing we ever bought on the installment plan.

HB: Now, when your friend invited you over, and you didn't have the babysitter – today, the young couples take their children everywhere.

HC: No. I know it. I think it's wonderful. When I first was doing volunteer – on the ladies' committee at the museum I would sit at the desk, and I would see these young families come in. This was in the '70s, and I would see these young people come in with babies on their backs, and I'd think, "Isn't that wonderful?" No, we never did that.

HB: What did you –?

HC: We took them to see family.

HB: What did you do as a family? The four of you?

HC: Oh, we went on picnics, and we took them to see family, and we took them to see our other friends who had children in the daytime but never at night. At night they were in bed – in their own bed.

HB: Did you take any family vacations?

HC: My mother and father used to take a house in Swampscott or Clifton and have one month for my brother and his wife and two children and maid, and one month for Haskell and me. And when we lived in Waban, my husband – he just came down weekends.

HB: Well, what happened to your sister Anna?

HC: She was at home or at camp. She was at home and there too, but she would live there. I mean, we would be invited for a month. She was six years younger than I was and ten years younger than my brother. So there was a difference, and they did that for years.

HB: Now, what effect did the Second World War have on your family and on Haskell, if any?

HC: His sister's husband was in it, was drafted, and then his sister came with her – that's Ruth, who just called me – with her oldest little girl to visit us for six or seven or eight weeks, I think.

HB: What was the mood like in the country? What would you talk about with your friends during the war? Of course, Haskell wasn't in it.

HC: No, but we were involved with bonds, and he was an auxiliary policeman. He was head of all the Newtons. No, Doug Francis was the head of all the Newtons, and he was Doug Francis' first man. He had to have the windows down, the curtains down. You don't remember.

HB: No, I was born in ’42.

HC: ’42. He was very busy with that, and then he was busy with the Lawyer’s Committee or the CJP raising money.

HB: Were you frightened when you had to keep the blinds down and the lights out and you had young children?

HC: Put the black thing – no, the only time that anybody showed any fright was the day that Roosevelt said that – “the infamous day,” that Pearl –

HB: Bombed Pearl Harbor?

HC: Bombed Pearl Harbor, and there was a call for all the auxiliary police to report, and our Susie went to the door, and she said, “Don’t go, Daddy. Don’t go.” She thought he was going to war. He said, “No, I have to go, and I’m just going to Newton Center to Police Headquarters. I’m just going to Police Headquarters.” She knew he was an auxiliary policeman, and our car had a special license plate. And things were rationed, and so we observed – of course, we observed the ration. We had fish all the time, and we grew to like fish very much. The children did more walking, walked to school even. Well, I could drive Haskell. I used to drive Haskell to the station and then to school. And then he walked to the station because even with the gasoline that he could have – he could get gasoline because he had that – he wasn’t using it for frivolous purposes.

HB: Right.

HC: And my mother said to – my father came out every Sunday to see the grandchildren. Well, my father and my mother used to come out often, but my father never missed a Sunday to see his granddaughters. And my mother said to him, “Jacob, you won’t be able to see the grandchildren every Sunday now.” And he said, “Mr. Roosevelt said I couldn’t use the car; he didn’t say I couldn’t take the bus.” He would

take the streetcar to Cleveland Circle, take the bus to our house, and then walk.

HB: And your mother didn't come with him?

HC: No, she didn't do that much walking. She was not old – she was not old at all, but she didn't do that every week. But he did every week. Sometimes she came.

HB: Now, what about holidays, religious holidays in your house with your young family?

HC: Oh, I should tell you about – when we were married, we didn't belong to the temple. Well, we did, I think, for one year, but I don't think after that, you're a member, or at least I didn't take advantage of it. We went with my father and mother in their pews, but I didn't go alone. And I remember one Rosh Hashanah night; we still lived in Brookline, so it was – Marjorie was a year old or something. Or Yom Kippur – I don't remember which it was and I don't remember why I didn't go with my mother and father. But anyway, I said to Haskell, "I'm going to temple." He said, "Well, all right, if you want to go, go." So I went, and when he came back, he said – it must have been when we lived in Waban. I don't remember – must have been because he said, "Was it good?" And I said, "Yes, except I got tired standing." He said, "You got tired standing?" I said, "Yes, I came in with the people who weren't members, and it was crowded, so I stood upstairs in the balcony." He said, "Oh, we'll join the temple." It was sixty dollars a year then.

HB: What year was that? Do you remember? Sixty dollars a year.

HC: I don't know [inaudible] '31 or '32 or '33. So he found the sixty dollars. He wasn't going to have me stand. Well, then it came that the children were going to Sunday school. I drove them. Well, of course, I couldn't drive them during the war, so they went by bus. It was the bus, and I would ride the buses. I think there was a special bus. Oh, we took turns driving – each family. No, the temple must have sent a bus because I remember being with the bus. Anyway, they had to have an escort, and then we would stop and pick up Charlie – oh, he was head of the temple at one time. They lived down

out on Beacon Street – Brookline now. Was it Gross? His wife isn't well. They live on Beacon. Anyway, I remember picking up their two boys. There wasn't the crowd in Boston then. They were all in Newton and some in Waban, and then there was a child in Wellesley. But anyway, at one time, my children thought they didn't want to go to Sunday school. So they spoke to their father. We lived in a non-Jewish neighborhood in Waban. There was one other girl – one boy in Marjorie's class, one girl in Susie's class, and that was all in Waban. That had been the way I grew up in Winthrop and the way my husband grew up in Concord, New Hampshire. So they didn't want to go to Sunday school. And they'd spoken to Haskell, and he said, "Well, see what your mother says. As far as I'm concerned, you don't have to go." So they came to me, and they said, "Daddy says we don't have to go." They didn't know the word "non-negotiable." They said, "We always vote in this family." I said, "We don't vote on this question. There's no vote on this question. You're going to Sunday school until you're both confirmed." So they went back and told their father [inaudible] – "Your mother says you're going."

HB: So he backed you up.

HC: Yes, he did, but he wouldn't – I once asked him – I said, "Sometimes we discuss things, and sometimes we differ, and all of a sudden you stopped." He said, "All of a sudden …" And he was quite a good arguer. He said, "All of a sudden, your jaw gets set a certain way, and I stop."

HB: He really knew you, didn't he?

HC: He didn't see me when I spoke to the children, but he knew I was set on that. No, he wouldn't have differed with me on that because I remember the first time he asked me if I would darn a sock, and I said, "I'll do it tomorrow, dear, because I don't sew on Saturday." That was still my mother's influence, so he knew that I had certain things that he'd never [inaudible] –

HB: Did you darn the sock on Sunday?

HC: Oh, yes. I darned it the next day. But for years, I neither darned nor sewed. I told you about the first time I went to have my hair done, didn't I, on a Saturday?

HB: No.

HC: The first time I went to have my hair done on Saturday, I thought, "This is the most frivolous thing one could do. I mean, it's the most worldly thing." Because I never shopped for clothes on Saturday either. All through college we only had half – that was the only time you could go, but I never shopped on Saturday.

HB: The beauty parlor.

HC: "I hope nobody sees me." Well, of course, I went there, and the place was filled with Jewish women. My goodness. They had been doing this every Saturday. [laughter] No, I now sew on Saturday and knit on Saturday, but I didn't – I didn't as long as my mother lived, I guess. That was it. I think when she died I thought –

HB: Did you go to your parent's house with the children for the holidays? Did your mother make the holidays, or did you?

HC: She did on Hanukah. She made a big thing on Hanukah, and my father joined her in that because he was having all the grandchildren together, so that's fine with him. She gave out candy and little presents. Then one year, we had given Christmas presents, you see. One year I decided I was going to make a big thing of Hanukah, and I wrote the first Hanukah pamphlet with Rabbi Liebman. He said to me, "Would you?" Because I was active in the Sunday school Board or whatever it was.

HB: What do you mean, like a service?

HC: Yes, it was a big yellow card, and he said, “Would you?” I said, “Rabbi, you don’t want me. We celebrate Christmas. You don’t want me.” He said, “Yes, I do, Harriet. You’re the one I want.” So, of course, I accept, whatever the rabbi wanted. I went with him, and we made up the whole – so, we had the card, and we lit the candles, and I gave the children a present every night. At the end of the eighth night, my older daughter, not the second, but the older daughter, said two – her three children all married Christians. My other daughter’s three children all married Jews. Anyway, my oldest daughter said to me, “Would you wrap them again, Mama, and give them all to me at Christmas?” So I thought, “Not much sense with this one.” Anyway, we celebrated Christmas, too, with them.

HB: With whom?

HC: My children.

HB: With your children.

HC: [inaudible]

HB: And what about Passover or Friday night?

HC: Oh, we went –

HB: Did you do anything with that?

HC: Yes, I started lighting candles at one time. I didn’t do it originally, but I started it. I didn’t continue it. But Haskell respected it, and then I have – my younger daughter did with her children too. I forgot what I was going to tell you. Oh, we were going to have Pass – I have never been to a real Seder until I was married.

HB: You didn’t have one in your own home?

HC: No, they just invited – my mother invited my father's brother's family for Passover dinner.

HB: Oh, that's right, you told me.

HC: We had a Passover dinner with matzoh and everything, and no –

HB: No service, I remember you telling me.

HC: No service. Haskell's father had a service, and I used to take the children there. I hated going through those curses on – the locusts and the vermin.

HB: The plagues. The ten plagues.

HC: Yes. We also didn't like it because he was a German autocrat. My husband's family was German, and he used to boss that second wife around. I just thought it was terrible after she cooked all that. "This knife isn't sharp enough. Get me another carving knife or something." Well, I didn't care for that. So we decided we would have the service – we'd have Passover service at our house, and we bought – Haskell found a very nice Haggadah. It was the first of the reconstructionist ones. We bought enough of those, so we had them, and we used them, and I invited, of course, Haskell's father and (Ray?). I invited my father and mother. My mother was tickled. My father left office early to come and see me at home before. He said, "Harriet, you're not going to go through with this, are you?" He said, "I thought when we came to this country we released you from all those superstitions." I said, "Papa, you go to the Baptist church every Sunday." He said, "Yes, I go to hear the sermon, and he always has something from the Old Testament in it." I said, "You go to Baptist church every Sunday." He said, "Yes." I said, "You come here Friday night, and if you come, you behave." So he came, and he behaved. But anyway, Haskell loved that seder. He loved it.

HB: And you planned it all.

HC: Planned it all, and we had – I did not change the dishes. But we didn't have bread for the week. I don't think we did, but anyway, we had matzoh. We had a big thing. Then when we moved to Brookline and had a big house, and then, by that time – actually, Jimmy's father had died. His mother had moved to Boston and remarried. So we had Ruth and Arnold and all their children so that we – and then one time I invited a gentile couple, one of Haskell's Dartmouth classmates, and that man didn't go to work that day. He stayed at home to read about it all day long. (Carter Hoyt?) Because he and his wife were thrilled to be invited, and they studied up for the whole day. Anyway, at that time even – our dining room table would seat eighteen, but that time, I had twenty or twenty-two. So my housekeeper and I changed our living room and our dining room around. We moved everything – the dining room table with another table into the living room. We moved everything but the piano into the dining room. So I said, "We'll never do this again, Minerva. The next [time], we'll only have eighteen." But we had eighteen, and then I would have a few girls from Wellesley whose parents I knew who couldn't get home. And then, once, Jimmy Segal invited me.

HB: He's now the president of the temple.

HC: "I could bring somebody from Harvard," and I said, "Jimmy, I'm not inviting some of the people I want to. We have eighteen, and that's all the table – I hate to say no to you, Jimmy. But I would love to have two more people myself and can't." Because eighteen was really all we could take care of. Minerva and I would cook. I learned how to make gefilte fish, which I'd had at home. My mother had had that. She would serve a Passover meal, and we did everything. Mother and I worked for days before it.

HB: What about your mother? Did she come to help you?

HC: She came. No, I don't think she brought anything. I don't remember that she brought anything, even to Waban. Maybe she brought them – no, I asked Ethel Rogal how you make matzoh balls.

HB: Your mother had never taught you how to cook? Or you'd never watched her?

HC: My mother wasn't so much of a kitchen canary herself. She made wonderful chicken soup. She made wonderful [inaudible].

HB: Oh, my grandmother made those. I've never heard anybody else talk about them before.

HC: Well, now we call them "schnecken" or coffee rolls but my mother called them [inaudible].

HB: Oh, do you have a recipe for that?

HC: No, my mother –

HB: That's what I remember about my –

HC: But I remember turning that thing around.

HB: That's what I remember about my grandmother. She let me turn it around.

HC: Yes, I remember turning it. My mother always had a maid, I guess. And I once said to my Aunt Jenny, who was the doctor, "How come, when my father was struggling, and you were going to medical school, that Mama always had a girl?" She said, "Your mother always had an eye that teared, and it bothered her to lean over the stove." She didn't say it, but my mother never was much of a kitchen canary. But she did make good chicken soup, and she must have chopped the fish. Of course, she had a maid. But anyway, she knew what to buy and how to do it.
HB: Right, and did you enjoy cooking?

HC: No. I think I did more the last years of my married life because I had a wonderful cook for forty-eight years: Minerva. If you have a good cook – and I had a wonderful

cook for ten years before that, a good Irish girl who was a good cook.

HB: So you never had to cook.

HC: So, the first year –

HB: So you never had to cook.

HC: What?

HB: You never had to cook.

HC: My husband taught me how you light the oven. I knew how to light the top of the stove. I didn't know what went on inside. By the time I was growing up, my mother had a good cook.

HB: Now, those delicious cookies you gave me the last time.

HC: Right.

HB: Did you make those?

HC: No.

HB: Those were homemade.

HC: Yes, they were. My housekeeper that I had for forty-eight years was a marvelous cook, but if I would have a fancy dinner party, she would get terribly tense. So I learned who some of the good cooks were, and Minerva was a wonderful woman. I didn't want her to be tense. She had enough in her own life to make her tense – terrible things in her own life. So I used to hire who everybody said was the big caterer of the day to come and help us. Minerva would help them, but she was as good – pretty nearly. Not as innovative, but good. Well, the person who came to help us always grew to like us both.

And then, when Minerva left, I lived [inaudible] nine years in Cambridge without any housekeeper. So whenever I had company, I would try to have Theresa come and do it. And this Theresa liked me, and I liked her, and she does wonderful cookies for me when I ask her. But what touches me about Theresa – also, my clothes happen to fit Theresa, so I like giving them rather than taking a –

HB: Tax deduction.

HC: I don't like to take a tax deduction for what you give. That seems to me, from what the rabbi taught me and what my mother taught me – oh, my mother said something too. Anyway, I'll tell you. Theresa gets wonderful things from me – soups and things. She also always gives me cookies to bring to my daughter, who's in a wheelchair. I think that's so good of her because she cooks for her church and she cooks for her own. But she always remembers Margie, so she's my good friend. She's not just somebody who cooks for me. I had one dining room table – not the one that I finally had that seated eighteen, but it seemed to me it was old. It seemed to me that everybody – it had a ledge coming down and four legs. It seemed to me everybody was always getting a leg. So I said to Haskell, "I want a pedestal table."

HB: That's just what I said last week.

HC: What?

HB: I said the same thing to my husband last week. We have a table with an apron.

HC: Oh, yes. He said, "If that's what you want, go get it." So I had a lovely big table that would seat about twelve [inaudible]. It was originally round, but you could put leaves in it. Because I wanted a round table originally. Well, so my mother – then I heard that Rabbi Jick – he was the rabbi of Temple Israel at one time.

HB: Right, Leon Jick.

HC: And he was divorced, and his wife had all – his first wife had the furniture. He had a new parish, you'd call – a new temple in Great Neck. So, I said to him, "I have a dining room table that would serve your study table for your study if you wanted it, Rabbi. Would you like it?" He said, "I'd love it." I said, "I want you to see it first. It will also seat a lot of people." So, I showed it to him. He said, "Oh, I'd love it, Harriet." So I sent it to him. When I put the new table in, my mother said to me, "What did you do with your old one?" I said, "I gave it to Rabbi Jick. She said, "You gave it away when you could have sold it?" I said, "Yes." She said, "You gave it to somebody who was leaving town, who could never do anything for you?" I said, "Yes, Mama, I did." She asked me a third question; I forgot what. I said, "Yes." She said, "Harriet, that's what I call a proper gift." So, I learned not to take tax deductions – not to enjoy tax deductions. Anyway, that's Minerva. How did we get on Minerva?

HB: About cooking.

HC: Oh, cooking.

HB: We were talking about the Jewish holidays.

HC: Oh, well, Minerva and I used to cook for those Jewish holidays. Maybe Theresa could too, but Minerva had worked for a Jewish family who observed them before she'd worked for me, so the first time I said, "We're going to have a seder," she was – I think she was with me in Waban. Anyway, they grew more dramatic when we had Jimmy Segal's mother. They grew bigger. Anyway, we worked both of us on them. But then I learned when – I had never roasted a turkey. I'd never roasted – I haven't roasted a turkey yet. I had never roasted a chicken until I moved to Cambridge.

HB: And when did you move to Cambridge? That was after you gave up your home, right?

HC: Yes, that was after we – that was now fourteen years ago. So, when I was –

HB: So, up until fourteen years ago, you had never roasted a chicken?

HC: Seventy-five – I had never roasted a chicken.

HB: And you were seventy-five years old? Right? Seventy-six?

HC: Yes, but I had done chickens. I had broiled chickens and broiled turkeys – turkey sections. I had done all kinds of – fancy broiling. I once felt I had to have a – if you ever want to use a – whatever they call those things. The boards that you can put in the oven, take them out – planking board. If you ever wanted to plank anything, I've got it. It's in a silver frame. I've got to look first to make sure I didn't give it away. I may have known I would never do it here. So I planked turkey – had planked turkeys. [inaudible] do everything, but then, in Brookline, I learned how to roast a chicken and then went, "Oh, I'm so proud of that." Then when I learned how and then when –

HB: What made you want to learn at that age? After you hadn't done it? You had gotten through raising your children, and your –?

HC: But I always had somebody who did it. If I wanted to serve roast chicken, we had it, but I didn't want not to be able to roast a chicken myself. So I roasted one. And I have a marvelous recipe for that too.

HB: [laughter] So a whole new world opened up to you.

HC: Yes, that's why it's wonderful to – and living here is another – new worlds are opening. Well, I felt that after Haskell died. It's another world opening – not one that I want, but there's a world opening for you, and you've got to enter it.

HB: And what kind of a world is it?

HC: It's a wonderful world – not to be without your husband. That's never the same, but that's gone. It's gone. It's a wonderful world to be with other people. It's a wonderful

world to know that you can make friends you care about when you're almost ninety. I was eighty-eight when we moved here, I think. No, I was eighty-six when we moved here – eighty-seven, yes. But to know at eighty-seven that you can make friends you care about and who care about you, isn't that something to learn?

HB: It certainly is, and just to be able to face life alone after all those years of being together. To see that you can do it.

HC: This is a long hall.

HB: Oh, it is. It's very long.

HC: And still, when I walk down the hall, I think of the few months Haskell and I had walking it together. The other thing was in the Globe, but this is really – it's very important because people would invite me for supper. If I'd go down there, they'd say, "Come sit with us here." Some of them I hadn't really known before but mostly people who knew me or knew him. Anyway, I walked down, looked at that hall, and thought, "You've going to walk this alone the rest of your life, Harriet, so throw your shoulders back. Put your head up and walk fast." You have no idea how much easier that makes it. There's a picture at the end of it, and Haskell once said to me, "She's still playing that same instrument; she changed the tune." So, I look at that picture, you see, and you walk like this. You're going to walk it the rest of your life. Straighten your back. Raise your sternum. Well, when you raise your sternum, you straighten your back. Straighten your back. Put your head back and walk fast. It makes a lot of difference, and it makes you able to walk alone places. I never wanted to go on any trip that we'd been together because people would say, "Will you go here?" or "Will you go there?" But we'd been a lot of places. Last year, for the first time, I went on the – well, it was three years then since Haskell had died. I went on the Huntington Theater trip again.

HB: And where was that?

HC: To London and to Ireland. That happened to be a thing I shouldn't have done anyway for other reasons. And I had an aunt who lived in Florida – my uncle's widow, who Haskell had taken care of. Wherever we were, we had to go to Florida each winter to see her. But I hadn't been able to go back to Florida. There was another reason. I was getting older, and I had a detached retina. And I thought, 'What if I go blind?'

[END OF INTERVIEW]