Ruth Cowin Transcript

RUTH COWIN: – [inaudible] be a president of [inaudible] Jewish Women in America because it was a question of, at that time, what some of the limitations were for Jewish women. It was very interesting to me because I remember one thing very clearly. I was a graduate student at Simmons College, School of Social Work. Kate McMahon, who was the dragon, who was kind of at the head of the curriculum, said to me, "Now I'm placing you for your second year at Beth Israel because as a Jewish woman in Boston, your chances of getting in" – I was in medical social work – "getting into any of the hospitals is very remote." That was rather interesting to me because I had never really been very conscious of any kind of antisemitism, and here I was, twenty-one or twenty-two years old, getting this smack straight in the face. It made a big impression on me, as you can well imagine.

JOAN KACHLIA: I mean, your whole life, I think about experiences you've had, and I'm really anxious to hear more. I actually was very curious about – for example, you were born in Brookline, and you've lived your whole life here.

RC: That's right.

JK: Now, your grandparents, though, were all born in Europe.

RC: My grandmother was born actually – came over here when she was three months old, and they settled at the foot of the monument in Charlestown. I don't think – not much has been written about any Jewish people in Charlestown, but my grandmother and relatives of hers, the Klauses, they had houses right around the monument in Charlestown. My grandfather was born – [recording paused]

JK: Okay, we're back on the record. Was your mother raised in Charlestown as well?

RC: No, my mother was born – they moved then, and my mother was born on Columbus Avenue in the South End of Boston.

JK: Did your parents meet in the South End? How did they meet?

RC: I actually don't know how they met, but I think they met through – my mother went to Roxbury High School, and there was a gang of young kids together. I guess, in one way or another, she met my father.

JK: What do you remember about their relationship?

RC: Well, their relationship was extremely close. I was an only child, and they were very, very close. I think he depended on her a great deal for – he was not a man who ever went into the kitchen. I never remember him getting himself a glass of water or anything like that. He was a businessman. He was in the shoe business and worked very hard, long hours. She was a very domestic lady, [laughter] ran a wonderful home, had fantastic taste – rather untraditional taste. For instance, with the Tiffany lamp over there.

JK: I see it. It's magnificent. So beautiful.

RC: She loved that Tiffany lamp. When I was a little girl, of course, everybody thought everybody needed to take piano lessons. I didn't have any musical ability, but my father had a friend who was in the shoe business who – and the shoe business was having its ups and downs. I guess he was in his downs, and he said to him, "Billy, you should have a piano for Ruth." It was about a year old, and it was a Knabe, which was used by the Metropolitan Opera Company and so forth. So, my father bought the piano. When he went to see it, he looked at it, and he said, "I like that lamp that's on it." The man said,

"You like it? It's a Tiffany. You can have it." Nobody thought much in those days. I think he paid thirty-five dollars for the Tiffany lamp. My mother adored that Tiffany lamp. So, I have it now.

JK: That's wonderful.

RC: Yes.

JK: And now your mother worked at one point in –

RC: My mother never worked.

JK: Oh, she didn't.

RC: Oh, yes, she did.

JK: Yes, I noticed on your –

RC: I shouldn't say that. Before she was married.

JK: Right.

RC: Yes, she worked.

JK: It said that she was a court stenographer.

RC: She was a court stenographer, and she was a most – I wonder if I have any picture to show you of her. She was a most beautiful woman. She died in her ninety-fifth year. She never lost one bit of height.

JK: Strong bones.

RC: Yes, she was straight as could be, and she was not – and when I said to her, "I want to go to graduate school," she looked at me, and she said, "Ruth, men don't like women

who are over-studious." She was very much against it, but my father said, "You want to go? Go." Not too many people – that was in the early '30s – went to graduate school at the time.

JK: I noticed that and I really was just so curious about the influence that obviously encouraged you and motivated you because it was really rare.

RC: Well, it was. Now, my parents were very interested in education, and I went through the public schools of Brookline. I went to the Devotion School. [laughter] I always remember one incident at the Devotion School. There were not too many Jewish people in Brookline at the time. I came home, and I said to my mother, "There's a little girl I eat lunch with. She eats soap for lunch." My mother said, "Why, that can't possibly be true." [laughter] I asked her what that pink stuff was in her sandwich, and she said it was lox. That was my orientation to –

JK: That's great.

RC: We never heard of bagels. We never heard of lox.

JK: So, did your parents keep a Jewish home? Did they observe holidays?

RC: Did they observe –? We always observed holidays. I remember always having extra special good food on the New Year's and at Passover – we observed them. I do remember when my son was in Sunday school at Temple Israel, getting into a scrap – I think I was on one of the committees with a lovely man by the name of Jack Levy – because I said to him that I was very much against all these Jewish children staying out on the lesser holidays – out of school. [laughter] He said to me, "There are no lesser holidays."

JK: In fact, were your grandparents more religious than your parents? Do you remember anything about the Jewish quality of your grandparents' homes?

RC: No, they were what I would call – I saw in the paper an expression this morning when I was reading about Madeline Albright – secular Jews. I mean, they were identified as Jews, but they never kept any kind of kosher house, or I never really saw any German – any of the Jewish cooking that I now am familiar with.

JK: And that's both sides, maternal and paternal grandparents?

RC: That's right.

JK: Did any of your grandparents light candles on Shabbat, for example?

RC: No, I never remember that either. Of course, I remember – I grew up in Temple Israel, when we had Sunday morning services. No Friday night services until Rabbi Liebman came.

JK: What is your earliest Jewish memory of any stripe?

RC: Well, my earliest Jewish memory is going – I lived on St. Paul Street in Brookline and living above us was a wonderful lady by the name of Jenny Fischel, who had been very, very active of the Sisterhood. My mother actually was active in the Sisterhood at Temple Israel. They would have a fair, a temple fair, and she supplied aprons. I think she was on the apron table because everybody had maids then, and the maids were all dressed up in very nice aprons. And this Jenny Fischel would take me to little celebrations at the temple. I remember that.

JK: About how old were you, would you say?

RC: Six, maybe. Five or six, something like that.

JK: Did your parents observe Chanukah when you were growing up? Did you light menorahs?

RC: No. No, we didn't. We did not observe Chanukah, and I'm ashamed to tell you I had a Christmas tree.

JK: That's nothing to be ashamed of.

RC: [laughter]

JK: A lot of people –

RC: Who had a Christmas tree – I remember my mother called it a Chanukah bush.

JK: I think you were in good company in those years.

RC: Yes, I think so.

JK: Nothing to be ashamed of.

RC: Yes, I think so.

JK: Clearly, you have a strong Jewish identity.

RC: I have a very strong Jewish identity. It's very interesting because my parents must have imbued it in me, you know. We didn't have the trappings, but there was a very strong identification with the Jewish people. And in the summers, we went to Lynn, and there were a lot of Jewish people there. Mrs. Herman – I don't know if you've ever heard the tradition of Mrs. Herman.

JK: No, tell me, please.

RC: Well, Mrs. Herman was a fantastic lady. In fact, the Combined Jewish Philanthropies had one big fundraising event each year, and it was at Symphony Hall. My mother tells me of going there and that (Hennie?) Herman led the grand march with Governor Walsh. She was a wonderful lady. [recording paused] –was president of the

temple when I was a little girl.

JK: Wow. What was her name –

RC: We all grew up together.

JK: – before it was Jane Weinberg?

RC: Kaffenburgh, K-A-F-F-E-N-B-U-R-G-H.

JK: And does she live in the building?

RC: She lives nearby. She lives on Still Street. We've all been in Brookline all these years.

JK: It's so wonderful to have the community.

RC: She lives right at the corner of Sewall Avenue and St. Paul Street in that stucco house.

JK: I know exactly which one.

RC: You know that house there ?

JK: Right, right.

RC: It's an inn or something like that.

JK: It's a beautiful house. Right.

RC: That's it.

JK: Now, we were talking about your early Jewish memories and your Jewish identity, and it's clear that –

RC: Oh, yes, I was telling you that we went to Lynn in the summer, and Mrs. Herman was there. Her husband made shoes for the United States Army [and] was a friend of my father's, and there were a lot of Boston people that went to Lynn. When I was about eleven or twelve years old, my mother said, "I don't want to go to Lynn anymore. It's too citified." Our doctor, the doctor that everybody had, was Henry Ehrlich, E-H-R-L-I-C-H. Dr. Ehrlich, because he was Jewish, could not get on the staff of any of the hospitals and did not want to be on the staff of Beth Israel, which was in Roxbury. So, he made a connection with the Mixters, and they had a hospital called the Elliot Hospital. Of course, not too many people in those years were admitted to hospitals. But if anybody had to go to a hospital, they went to the Mixter Hospital.

JK: And where was it?

RC: That was in Brookline somewhere, and I'm not quite sure where. But it was interesting that when Beth Israel moved to Brookline, and there was the affiliation of the medical school, the Mixters were made the chiefs – one was made the chief of the surgical service, Charles Mixter, and the other one, who I think was Jason Mixter, was head of the neurological service. That kind of carried over. But Henry Ehrlich never made it to a hospital. He took care of all of us. So, he said to my father, "Oh, why don't you come to Clifton in Marblehead?" My mother said, "Oh, I'm not crazy about Clifton. I would really like to go to Marblehead Neck. So, they rented a house on Marblehead Neck, and there were two Jewish families living there. One was (Lee Friedman?), who you've heard.

JK: Right.

RC: And (Lee Friedman?) and his sisters – two maiden – he was a bachelor and two maiden lady sisters and his blind mother. They lived there. The (Peavey?) family lived there. We were there in that house for a year, and my mother liked it very much. Then they went to buy the house, whereupon there was objections by the neighbors. My father

was ready to back out immediately when the real estate agent, a Mr. Hathaway, said, "Oh, no. No way. We're going to deal with this." Eventually, they bought the house, and we lived there for a number of years. In fact, my first marriage – I was married there.

JK: Were you aware that the objections were explicitly because you were Jewish, or did they try to couch it in other terms?

RC: No, no. They were specific. They just didn't want it. They didn't couch it in any way at all. It was very – [laughter]

JK: Did it make your father angry?

RC: Well, yes, it did, but they were very self-sufficient people, and it didn't bother them. They weren't intending to have any do with the neighbors. But it was very interesting over the years how the neighbors came around. I mean, they were very quiet living people, my parents. They kept the house in very good condition. Apparently, after a while, I remember that they all came around, and the (Rust?) family, who lived next door to us when the son was getting married – they brought his fiancée over to meet them. There were a variety of things that happened over the years. I think we were good – what would I say? We were good messengers, let me put it that way.

JK: I'm sure you were. Do you have a specific memory of that? You said you were eleven or twelve at the time, or did you hear about this later as you—

RC: No, I have a specific memory of it because there was a girl by the name of Margaret Emerson who lived on Powell Street in Brookline, and she and her mother and father lived with a maiden sister in a house right nearby, and we played together. So, it didn't really affect me terribly.

JK: Oh, but that was another episode or instance of antisemitism –

RC: Yes, that's right.

JK: – in your life. But you say that other than that and the situation about getting a job at the Beth Israel, there were not –

RC: That's right. I never really was aware of it.

JK: So Brookline was free from antisemitic influences even though there were not, as you say, many Jews in those years?

RC: That's right. I just never paid much attention to it.

JK: When did Brookline start developing its Jewish character?

RC: I would say that probably after the war when we had – when there was really quite an influx of Jewish people who came here from Roxbury, Dorchester – came in –

JK: It's when it started to –

RC: – and started to move into Brookline. It was the social thing to do and so forth. They were upwardly mobile, and they came in.

JK: I noticed yesterday there was an article in the TAB about how multicultural Devotion is. My children go there now.

RC: Oh, really?

JK: Was it multicultural then? Were there children from other cultures or is that also a new –?

RC: Well, not many. I remember one Greek boy whose father was in the produce business or whatever, and I remember helping him with English. But there were not – I don't remember. For instance, we didn't see – there was one or two Black children who [inaudible] who were the children of janitors, something of that sort. I don't remember anything else. It was a very lily-white town.

JK: How would you describe your relationship with your parents?

RC: Well, it was very close. It was extremely close. I often think back. It was maybe too close. I don't know. I don't think they were very crazy about my getting married. I really don't. [laughter] I did get married. It was interesting. I was married two and a half years when my husband died.

JK: I saw that. I'm sorry.

RC: My father came over. I was living on Alton Place in Brookline, and Billy was about eight months old. He said, "Ruth, you're going to come home with the baby." And I did.

JK: How did you meet your first husband?

RC: Well, we lived on Clinton Road in Brookline, and my father had met with business reverses, and they decided to sell a house. I was sick in bed with the grippe. The people who were going to buy the house said that the woman's brother was an engineer, and would they mind if he took a look at the house to see how it was built? They said, "No." And he came, and I met him, and that was it.

JK: Boy, you must have been the prettiest patient, sick in bed or not. Was he your first love, if that's not too personal a question?

RC: Well, no. At that time, we didn't go steady. I was talking to somebody who was my age, and we talked about the difference in dating in those years, and how many heads

you could have on your belt, and so forth. So I had a number of people that I had been going with, but nobody that really moved me to that extent.

JK: And it must have been very, very painful –

RC: It was.

JK: —to have lost him after two and a half years.

RC: It was a part of my life that I just wouldn't want to live over again. But my parents were fantastic.

JK: And how long did you know your husband before you married him – your first husband?

RC: Well, I only knew him about four or five months.

JK: And was he –?

RC: I actually knew him. I shouldn't say that. I really met him about a year and a half before that, but we didn't start seriously dating until maybe four or five months before we were married.

JK: So you were a young widow and a young mom –

RC: Yes, I was.

JK: – moving back home.

RC: Yes.

JK: What was that like for you?

RC: Well, that was difficult. That was really difficult because close as I was to my parents, I had independent living, you see, for two and a half years. So, that was not easy, but it was a wonderful support. They loved my child, and it was a much more normal home life for him. Also, it enabled me to go back to work, which I needed to do. Fortunately, I had already had my professional training, and so that was a big thing. I first started in working – interestingly enough, in spite of Kate McMahon, my first job was at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston. I worked two days a week and then gradually built it up as he got older.

JK: Did you feel any discrimination as a single mother? I know we've talked a little about antisemitic discrimination.

RC: No, I really didn't. What happened was, interestingly enough, when I was working at the Brigham, it was during the war, and I had a lot of friends here who had little boys, and the fathers were in service, so there were a lot of single moms around. A group of us hired a theological student at Boston University, a man, who, three or four afternoons a week, took these little boys. So, there was a man around. If the weather was nice, they'd play baseball, or they went and played football, or they went coasting, or whatever. If the weather wasn't nice, they took turns at other people's houses and did other things with them. So these boys were together. There was also a little music school, Mrs. (Mellows?), in the old (Taussig?) house, which is the big house at the corner of Powell Street and Beacon. She had her music school in the basement of that house. I call it the (Taussig?) house because friends of my parents lived there. This had this little music program together, these boys.

JK: So you were a real visionary in terms of daycare experiences and early social experiences –

RC: That's right.

JK: –the fact that you bonded together.

RC: So, it was during the war, and there weren't men around during that earlier period. I remarried when Bill was nine years old. That was a crisis with my – when I took that child away out of their household, you would have thought – and I took him to Park Street in Brookline. I took him around the corner, practically. That was awful.

JK: How did you meet your second husband?

RC: Well, I met him in my own backyard in Marblehead. Somebody brought him there after the war. He had just come home from Hawaii. That's where he had been – he was very myopic, and he couldn't get any – no matter what, he signed waivers and what have you when he came into the Navy, and he couldn't. So, he left his law firm and became a civilian. He organized the Office of Price Administration, the legal aspect of it, in New England. And then, because he was a bachelor, they shipped him out to Honolulu. It was when he came back from there that I met him.

JK: And was your son born in Beth Israel, or in what hospital?

RC: In Mount Auburn. Beth Israel did not have an obstetrical service at that time.

JK: If it's not too personal to talk about, what was the experience of birth like when your son was born?

RC: Well, at that time, they really knocked you out, so that you went – you had some labor pains, and you had the experience of labor pains and so forth. But you really didn't know what was going on, whether that was good, bad, or indifferent, I don't know.

JK: And were women encouraged to breastfeed their children when you were [inaudible]?

RC: Yes, they were, and I did breastfeed. They were encouraged to breastfeed.

JK: Good.

RC: And I also, from my own medical, social work experience, knew of the value of breastfeeding in terms of immunization, sterility, not having to boil – I mean, at that time, we were in the period where they had to boil everything. You sterilized the spoons, and of course, breastfeeding was easier.

JK: As well as healthier. Now, what was your life like after you remarried with the three of you? Did you enjoy traveling –?

RC: Well, here was a bachelor, forty-four years old, with a nine-year-old boy who had not shared me with anybody. I made up my mind that I was going to make this work. I really did work at it. I think also, Phil was very good in that his timing with this child. I mean, he had a chance to get to know him for two or three years before we married, do you see?

JK: Yes.

RC: So that they weren't strangers. Also, I kept telling Bill how much better it was going to be for him, how much more time I would have to spend with him, and so forth, which I did. Phil was wonderful because he taught him to ski, to ice skate, things of that sort, do you see? Then took charge of his musical education – said, "You know, I think that teacher, that Mrs. (Mellow?), she may be okay in the group, but she doesn't know how to teach him to play the piano." He found, through his law partner, who was very musical, this very good teacher, Mr. Gray. And in a variety of ways, it enriched Bill's life. He was a very good role model. Bill became a lawyer.

JK: So they were close?

RC: They were close, yes.

JK: It's interesting, hearing you talk about your nine-year-old son and piano. I have a nine-year-old son, and getting him to practice, I feel, is quite a struggle. Was your son a willing student?

RC: Not really, but he became through this senior associate of Phil's, who, when Bill was about eleven or twelve, took him to see La Boehme one Sunday afternoon. My mother always referred to Mr. Foss as "Jiminy Cricket" because he was kind of a little man. He was a bachelor and so forth. Bill became absolutely hung up on the opera. Absolutely. He has become really very sophisticated about opera. It's a tremendous pleasure and hobby of his. And he was head of the Metropolitan Opera Association in Boston when the –

JK: That used to come to John B. Hynes.

RC: That's right.

JK: I remember those years.

RC: It used to come here.

JK: And what kinds of Jewish rituals and holiday observances did the three of you and your extended family observe in those years when your son was growing up and school-aged?

RC: Well, when he was growing up, we observed Yom Kippur and New Year's and Passover. We always had a Passover dinner with matzoh balls and all the rest of it. He was confirmed at Temple Israel, and there was no bar mitzvah. They had introduced bar mitzvahs, but nobody in our family had ever had bar mitzvahs. In Reformed Judaism,

they really didn't do much with Bar Mitzvah; they did confirmation. That's about it, but he's very Jewish-identified. We had an unfortunate experience with Rabbi Gittelsohn, which soured Bill on organized religion, so he's not a member of the temple. That has been a great kind of grief to me. When Bill was getting married – he married a Jewish girl – he knew of my mother's identification. My father was dead by that time – identification with the temple. He said, "Do you think it would please grandmother if Rabbi Gittelsohn married us?" I said, "Yes, I think it would." So, they went to Rabbi Gittelsohn, and they told him that they wanted to be married in the Interdenominational Chapel at Harvard. He agreed if they were married in the choir stalls. Well, at that time, Bill was an assistant attorney general under [Edward] Brooke, and Judy was a speechwriter for Brooke. The wedding got bigger, so it wouldn't have fit in there, and then the rabbi refused to marry them in the chapel. He called me up. I was a Trustee of the temple at the time. I said, "Look…" He said to me, you know, "Rabbi Gold, who was the rabbi at Hillel House, is a sick man, and he doesn't want marriages in the temple." I said, "Well, I'm sorry that you feel that way, and I'm sorry about Rabbi Gold," who, by the way, is still living.

JK: Right.

RC: I said, "But it's not my wedding. It's the Arnold wedding, and that's up to you if that's the way you feel." So the Arnolds then were, I think, members of Temple Sinai, whatever, and they went to the rabbi there. He said, yes, indeed, he'd marry them. Then he looked at Bill, and he said, "Are you affiliated anywhere?" Bill said, "Yes, Temple Israel." He said, "Well, as a courtesy, I'm going to call Rabbi Gittelsohn." Bill wasn't angry that Gittelsohn wouldn't do it; that was up to him. So, they went and talked to this rabbi, who then called Gittelsohn. Gittelsohn said, "You don't marry them." That was what finished Bill. "Don't marry them." There have been all kinds of – finally, I was on the faculty of the Harvard School of Public Health. It meant a lot to us. Harvard had a big role in their growth and development. My husband was Harvard 1924 and the Law

School of ’27. Bill had been at Harvard and Harvard Law School, and I was on the faculty. So, I called Dean Price, the dean of the chapel, and I said, “Look, I’m an identified Jew. My rabbi is really making me feel very badly about this.” He said, “Oh, don’t be ridiculous, Mrs. Cowin. There are thirty-five sects that belong to the Interdenominational Chapel, and the Jewish faith is one of them.” They couldn’t have been nicer. Well, anyway, the Arnolds got a rabbi, and they were married there, but it was the one fly in the ointment of a lovely marriage. I was really sore at Gittelsohn after that because it was so unnecessary. And what it did – Bill taught the children himself. They’re very Jewish-identified, but he doesn’t have any temple affiliation for which I’m sorry.

JK: An upsetting story.

RC: That’s right.

JK: I mean, it’s just like particularly that he responded as he did to the rabbi from Temple Sinai. [inaudible]

RC: Well, that’s right. Yes, that was the thing that really got us [inaudible].

JK: It’s to your credit that you didn’t yourself leave the temple after such an upsetting –

RC: No, I did not. I did not. I think some people thought I should, but I didn’t. I thought the institution is much bigger. I was married by Rabbi Levi, and I was married by Rabbi Liebman.

JK: What were your weddings like? Were they both –? You said one was the back of your home.

RC: Well, my first wedding was small. It was in Marblehead, and it was the family and just a few close friends. My second wedding was extremely small. It was in my own apartment. We were living on Brown Street in Brookline, and it was small – my husband's family and my family, and that was it.

JK: Did you observe any of the Jewish traditions like breaking the glass?

RC: We broke the glass. Yes, indeed.

JK: You drank a cup of wine?

RC: Yes, we did that.

JK: Did you have a chuppah?

RC: No, no chuppah. We never knew about a chuppah. Have you seen that movie of the weddings?

JK: Oh, the Jewish –?

RC: Yes, you remember my friend Marion Eiseman saying, "A chuppah? Whoever heard of a chuppah?" I had never heard of a chuppah.

JK: Right, right. Definitely.

RC: We didn't have anything like that.

JK: And what are some –? You told me of a very strong and powerful Jewish memory from Temple Israel, but what are some other memories about Temple Israel that you have?

RC: Well, I'm just trying to think.

JK: In the early years.

RC: I used to love to go to the Sunday morning services. They were like community church. I mean, they were on intellectual things and that sort. My husband and I often went to Friday night services because whatever you had to say about Rabbi Gittelsohn, and he was not a favorite of mine, he was very stimulating. He gave some very interesting and stimulating sermons, and so we did that. I have pleasant memories of Temple Israel. My mother particularly was active with Sisterhood, and I remember that when she was in her nineties, they always, on her birthday, sent her flowers. I remember writing notes each birthday thanking them for the flowers. I have a very warm feeling about the institution. I've done my best to keep in touch and to do what I could. As you probably know, I was the first Chairman of the Grossman Committee.

JK: I do know. That's a gift [inaudible].

RC: That was of interest to me because when they asked me about forming such a committee, I was very much against it. I remember being at a meeting with Rabbi Mehlman, and Justin Weiner was, at that time, president of the temple, and saying, "Now look, we have so many agencies in Boston. How does the temple need to start something like this? But at the end of the meeting, I was convinced that maybe an interim step was needed. It was really fantastic to see how that has developed.

JK: It's been a terrific part of the –

RC: It really has been a very important –

JK: – synagogue's life. I mean, it has so many different dimensions –

RC: Facets to it.

JK: – and facets. Thank you for overcoming your initial objection.

RC: I was convinced by the time that we got through discussing it that something in the middle was needed and that we started mainly with the friendly visitors at that time because the rabbis were calling people. They were calling people once a week and finding that it wasn't enough. It also took a lot out of their time, do you see? Some of the visits that were made and the things that were done were really quite miraculous. That's a wonderful memory I have.

JK: There's so much here. It's very hard to know how to organize it, but I'd like to go back, if you don't mind, to your childhood and just ask a little bit more. Clearly, you have had an extraordinary educational, professional, and vocational life, and I wonder what early influence helped shape that. You mentioned how your mom reacted when you told her you wanted to go to grad school, and certainly your family value placed on education. But what would you say were the early influences that so profoundly moved you toward education, higher education, a career, a serious career?

RC: I don't know. In the first place, I had a very privileged childhood. I really did. My mother was a reader. She liked to read, and she liked to do things, and we were companionable, she and I. So, I remember that. Also, I remember that when she and my father would go out for an evening or something if it was a Saturday night, she would try to have one of my friends in for supper, something like that. I remember a happy childhood. I remember the Thanksgivings and the Christmases and my grandparents going out in my family. People didn't drive themselves then. They had a chauffeur. I remember going to pick up my grandparents to bring them here for feast days of one kind or another. And then my mother had a maiden aunt, a sister of hers who was my maiden aunt. When they were away, she often would come and live here for a week or so. They didn't go to Florida then; they went to Atlantic City. There were no planes. I remember a happy home life.

JK: That's very fortunate.

RC: The compatibility of my parents and a very happy home life. Then I remember in the summer going and picking up my grandparents and bringing them to Lynn or to Marblehead for a few days. I remember my father had two nieces who were maiden ladies. I would love to have them come, and we would – [recording paused]

JK: Okay, back on record.

RC: So, I really was very fortunate in my growing up. And then, when I was in college, my father seemed to weather the Depression all right. He sold his business, and he did very – but then he got into the real estate business, and he wanted to make investments. It was at the time of the Depression, and they really became – I would say their resources were seriously diminished. Then I got married. The house was sold on Clinton Road, and I got married. I think that an uncle and an aunt then moved in with my mother, and they kind of shared their resources. And I had it on – always in the back of my mind that I might have to help them. After I was widowed and went back home, I did a great deal toward helping with their finances – paid the rent and so forth and went to work.

JK: How was the experience for your parents, having gone from such relative affluence to a state of some dependence?

RC: Well, I think it was very difficult, but all of us had the philosophy that if we were healthy and together, we were going to make it. I think it financially was difficult. My mother was a proud woman, and I think she drifted away from certain social things. She had a group of intimate women with whom she played bridge, and so she had that companionship. She had a cousin to whom she was very devoted. But it was very difficult. I think my father was a broken man as a result. But they had each other, and that was extremely important.

JK: You were very, very fortunate.

RC: I was.

JK: It sounds like you passed it down to your son.

RC: I think I did.

JK: A wonderful tradition. It sounds also like you're close to your extended family, the way you described picking up grandparents and nieces and aunts.

RC: Yes, we were very close.

JK: And that's both sides, maternal and paternal?

RC: Both sides, that's right. In fact, I just had a visit last year from a – who got in touch with me. He lives in Washington. It would have been a grand nephew of my father, who was in the Counsel of Economic Advisors and happened to run into my grandson, who was at the George Washington University and was an intern in the Counsel of Economic Advisors. We renewed acquaintanceship that way through Billy.

JK: So a spread out but accomplished and still connected family.

RC: Yes, that's right.

JK: What kinds of expectations did your parents have for you? You mentioned that your mom –

RC: I think their expectation was that I'd get married.

JK: Traditional Jewish expectation?

RC: That's right – expectation in those years. I don't think they expected that I was going to want to do other things, but interestingly enough, I always did it. I did it at college, and I remember being the first president – they developed a Junior Auxiliary at

Beth Israel Hospital. Because I was a student there, I became the first president of the Junior Auxiliary. I was entirely different from my mother from that point of view because my mother was extremely domesticated [and] not interested particularly in the outside world.

JK: And how about your cooking and cleaning and sewing? Were you interested in and willing to do those kinds of things in addition to all of your professional activities?

RC: No, I really wasn't. I didn't know a thing about the kitchen. When I was marrying the second time, I said to this maiden aunt of mine, "Now look, teach me to make blueberry muffins" – there were a couple of other things. I gradually taught myself so that – that was one thing I was angry at my mother about. She hated the kitchen. She always had plenty of help. I said, "You know, mother, you should have taught me how to cook." But she didn't know how to cook herself – didn't do much with it.

JK: I noticed that you had gone to a school called Madame (Shard?) School. I've never heard of it.

RC: Madame Achard.

JK: Achard.

RC: A-C-H-A-R-D. I had flunked a geometry college board, so I needed to take a year in order to get my geometry up to snuff. There was a French school in Brookline called Madame Achard. I went to that school for the year. It was really interesting because I brushed up on my French and really became quite good at French. We had a lot of French in high school here, starting in the seventh grade when I was in Brookline. I had six years of French, and then I went to this school. It was a very interesting experience before I went to college.

JK: What was that school like? Were you the only Jew in that school, if you remember?

RC: Probably. I never was very conscious of that because I had a lot of friends on the outside at that point. I was driving. I was over sixteen, and I was driving. I had a good friend, Helen Schulman, whom I would pick up at the Latin School. I would pick her up at Boston Latin – at Girls' Latin, and a variety of us would be together and so forth. So, I don't think that I – I had one or two friends at that school, I remember. There were two or three Jewish girls in the school.

J

K: So you had a car at sixteen.

RC: I had a car. Oh, yes, I did.

JK: That must have been quite a sense of –

RC: I had a car at sixteen.

JK: – independence.

RC: And I got my license.

JK: What kind of car?

RC: My first car was a Flint.

JK: I haven't heard of a Flint. Was that a manufacturer?

RC: Yes, it became – well, it shortly became orphaned.

JK: That must have been exciting. What color was it?

RC: It was green. I remember very well it was green, and I always remember having the tires – it was a fad then – now, you have whitewalls, but we painted our tires white.

JK: Oh, how fun.

RC: Painted white to make it look very sporty.

JK: And were you responsible for taking care of it and maintaining it and buying gas?

RC: No, we had a chauffeur who did it at that point.

JK: Was traffic in Boston easier than it is now?

RC: Much. It was much easier. We lived up on a hill. I wonder if I have any of those pictures. Let me just see. [recording paused]

JK: We're going back on the record now, looking at photographs. Is this your study?

RC: Yes, this is my study.

JK: So, if you don't mind just describing these once again, please, for the record.

RC: Yes, well, this was my husband's twenty-fifth reunion picture from Harvard, and this is me being sworn in at that Medical Advisory.

JK: By Governor [Francis] Sargent.

RC: By Governor Sargent.

JK: And what year was that?

RC: Oh, that must have been '71.

JK: And that was in the State House.

RC: Yes. This is at the Boston Bar Association Christmas party. It's my husband and son in deep –

JK: Deep discussion.

RC: That's right. And that's Phil in the summer.

JK: And where was that?

RC: That's in Marblehead.

JK: Do you still have the home?

RC: No, we rent one. That's Bill, a young picture of Bill and Judy, his wife, and Phil. That was at his sister's wedding.

JK: How many children do they have?

RC: Three. They're right here. That's April graduating from Harvard.

JK: So you're now three generations –

RC: That's right.

JK: – at Harvard.

RC: Yes. This is me. I was President of my fiftieth reunion.

JK: At Simmons.

RC: At Simmons. And this is Jackie and Billy.

JK: So you have two granddaughters and one grandson.

RC: That's right. And April. Where is April? She's over here somewhere. This is April.

JK: She's beautiful.

RC: Yes, and she just got married in August.

JK: Mazel Tov.

RC: Yes. Her announcement just came out in the paper. Here they are. That's Bill and Jackie and young Bill and April and Judy. Judy's a judge now.

JK: Yes, I know. She's a wonderful judge. I'm a lawyer.

RC: Oh, you are?

JK: Yes. They are a very handsome family.

RC: This is my cousin, Ada Louise Huxtable, and I don't know if you – she's the lady who wrote for the New York Times.

JK: I've read many, many of her columns. Now, how are you related?

RC: Well, now, her mother and my mother are sisters. Actually, this is her mother here, and this is me at the age of about seven.

JK: You were a nice tall, lean –

RC: Yes, and that's me and my Flint.

JK: Oh, there it is.

RC: That's it.

JK: It's a magnificent car with your running board and spare tire –

RC: And that's Ada Louise's mother.

JK: So your mothers were close.

RC: Yes, they were very close.

JK: And were you and Ada Louise brought up as close cousins?

RC: Yes, we were, although she lived in New York. But my mother was – her father died when she was thirteen years old, and my mother was very good to me. Growing up, he was sick. So we've been very close because she stayed with us often summers. This was me when I was on the faculty at BU [Boston University].

JK: It's a beautiful picture. I see the family similarity, though, very strong between you. [recording paused] – if we could. This is a wonderful collage.

RC: Well, Phil and I went to England in 1957 with the American Bar Association. I kept the invitations because this is from the Queen.

JK: Oh. Whoa. And her name is on it.

RC: Oh, yes.

JK: "The Lord Chamberlain is commanded by Her Majesty to invite Mr. and Mrs. Philip Cowin to an afternoon reception in the garden of Buckingham Palace on Monday, 29 July 1957, from 3:30 to 5:30 o'clock p.m. weather permitting. Morning dress or lounge suit." What was that like?

RC: A lounge suit meant – England – they didn't wear sports jackets. It was a business suit for my husband. For me, they told us to wear long dresses and certain kinds of hats, but we had sense enough not to. I had a little feather turban that I wore. Here, I was a social worker at the Children's Hospital with Dr. Lennox. He was the international authority on epilepsy. Here I am, nice and thin. I was already a widow at the time but not remarried yet.

JK: What a wonderful collage for you.

RC: And I'm a charter member of NASW [National Association of Social Workers].

JK: Oh, I see that.

RC: This is April's graduation.

JK: Someone's graduation. Did one of your grandchildren make this?

RC: No, I made it.

JK: It's beautiful. This is really special.

RC: Yes, this is my husband and myself coming back on the Constitution from Europe.

JK: What year was that?

RC: That was '57, the same year that we were –

JK: And is that your son?

RC: That's my son.

JK: You took him with you?

RC: No, no.

JK: Oh, that's in Boston?

RC: This is Commonwealth Avenue, and my friends, the Rosenthals, lived at 43 –

JK: It looks so European, but then, again, Commonwealth looks –

RC: That's right. It was an Easter Sunday.

JK: Oh, your bonnet.

RC: Yep.

JK: This is very, very special.

RC: And this is Billy when he –

JK: Was this a special occasion?

RC: Yes, that was his birthday. It was Phil's birthday in '85, I think.

JK: How about this picture?

RC: That picture was –

JK: It looks like a special event.

RC: – that was his twenty-fifth reunion at Harvard.

[END OF SIDE A, TAPE 1]

RC: Yes, and my mother answered the phone and she slammed it down and said, "Oh, it must be my cousin, Bertha Klaus, making fun of me or something." It's a wonder I ever got married.

JK: Did she do that because it was so staticky or because –?

RC: Yes, she thought it – she couldn't imagine anybody calling from a boat.

JK: Oh, so she thought it was a prank.

RC: That's right.

JK: Wow. This is wonderful.

RC: And that's Bill coming out of his dorm at Harvard. [recording paused] A lot of stuff that – didn't take a lot of stuff with me, but this is my – I was named a Social Work Pioneer, and I'm in the Hall of Pioneers in Washington in NASW.

JK: Congratulations. And what are the criteria for becoming a pioneer?

RC: Well, that you've done original work or made contributions to education and practice to the social work profession. And this is from BU.

JK: Do you mind if I read that –

RC: No.

JK: ¬– inscription into the tape recorder?

RC: No.

JK: "To Ruth Cowin, friend, mentor, inspiration." Would you like to read it?

RC: Either way. "A love and respect for a lifetime of selfless service, wise counsel, and abiding wit. You will remain a beacon to illuminate our better selves. Faculty, staff, and friends, Boston University School of Social Work. December 1992."

JK: It must have been wonderful. Was that a ceremony?

RC: It was. They called it a Ruth Cowin day.

JK: Oh.

RC: This was just a Certificate of Appreciation.

JK: It must have filled you up. Well-deserved, I'm sure.

RC: Anyway, then I have this Harvard chair from my – let me see which one it is. This is the one that has the plaque on it.

JK: Oh. Would you like to read that?

RC: Yes.

JK: Okay.

RC: I'm very proud of that because it was my – I did my best work, I think, when I was on that faculty.

JK: I am a graduate of that school.

RC: Oh, you are.

JK: I am. '78.

RC: Let me see.

JK: Howard Hiatt was the dean.

RC: Oh, he was the dean?

JK: Yes.

RC: [inaudible]

JK: We can talk about that off the record.

RC: Poor Howard, yes.

JK: Sweet man.

RC: But anybody who came in there after Dean Synder. I was in the Department of Maternal and Child Health. They put us over in the laundry room.

JK: With Dr. Valarian?

RC: Yes. Valadian.

JK: Valadian. Thank you. Boy, your memory is much better than mine.

RC: But the thing is that with Dean Snyder, if you weren't a microbiologist, the social scientists and the social workers and everybody, we were put in the laundry building. But I did good work while I was there. "Ruth Ada Cowin, Harvard School of Public Health, Department of Maternal and Child Health, 1961-1970, Instructor in Applied Public Health Social Work with admiration from your MCH friends."

JK: That's wonderful. That is very special. I wonder how many women got Harvard chairs with such inscriptions.

RC: So anyway, poor Hiatt Hyatt. No matter who came in there after that would have had trouble.

JK: Right, and he really tried hard.

RC: Did you do anything with your public health degree? You became a lawyer.

JK: Yes, I'm a health lawyer. I'm a health lawyer.

RC: Good for you.

JK: And I'm very interested in hospital advocacy –

RC: Well, you are.

JK: – and social work, so I told you this is going to be weeks, not hours, this meeting of ours.

RC: Well, I have to tell you that we – what's happening to my profession in hospitals, the downsizing today is not to be believed.

JK: It's a tragedy –

RC: Yes.

JK: – because social workers are the front line. They're really the ones who do the –

RC: Well, today, that's right.

JK: – the buffering between –

RC: And today, with this business of having them come in and go out, they come out sicker than they go in sometimes. And there aren't the family supports, do you see?

JK: [inaudible]

RC: I think of myself as a widow going in and having a loving grandmother and a loving aunt with my child, a loving grandaunt with my child, do you see? I think of the young parents of today – I think of these poor people with a nanny. I just can't believe – I realized how privileged I was and what family supports I had. When the family goes down the drain, Joan, that's it.

JK: Unfortunately, not only are the family supports gone, but like you said, the benefits are gone, and the entitlement programs are gone –

RC: Everything.

JK: – and insurance status is everything. So probably when you worked, and again, I'd love to devote another whole session to your professional experiences, but I'm sure people weren't refused care, and I'm sure they weren't treated on two-tier –

RC: Right, I could go – when I left the Harvard School of Public Health and went to Cambridge Hospital to develop their social work program, they had just become affiliated with the medical school. I don't know. You may be too young to remember, but in the early '60s, NBC did a "White Paper" on bad hospitals. Cambridge was picked as a shining example. And president Cusey is supposed to have said, "It's a disgrace to have this hospital in the backyard of a great medical school." At that time, Dr. Leona Baumgartner, who was Health Commissioner in New York, married somebody who was at the School of Public Health, whose name escapes me now. She lived at 1010 Memorial Drive in Cambridge. He went to her, and he said to her, "You've got to do something about this." She developed a city ordinance, which my husband read when I went to work there. He said, "My God, she created a position of a czar." I mean, a commissioner. I don't know how it ever went through the Cambridge City Council. She merged the Health Department and the hospital to become the Department of Health and Hospital. At that time, they decided that they needed to strengthen the social work program, and I came over to do it. It was a most fascinating and interesting experience over there. It was extremely interesting to me as to how this kind of came about from this television program.

JK: Of course, I don't know what part you had in it, but now the Cambridge Hospital is world-famous, at least nationally known, for its community programs, its domestic violence programs, its social services. I mean, their whole –

RC: That's right.

JK: – Victims of Violence program is revolutionary.

RC: Yes, I really feel that I had a lot to do with it. There was a marvelous psychiatrist there who died young.

JK: Right, right, I know about Lee Macht.

RC: Well, Lee and I worked for two years very hard because, for instance, in Somerville, the mental health program – they had a locked door between the social service and medical part and the psychiatry part. We worked for Cambridge to say, "Look, we're going to have neighborhood health services, family care services, and if you want to do prevention of psychological problems, you've got to have them together." We got them to work together. I feel that that was one of the great contributions that we made, really.

JK: That's a major breakthrough, and of course, that's now the model.

RC: It really was and –

JK: This collaboration.

RC: – it's become quite famous. The Domestic Violence Program is famous.

JK: Right, Judy Herman.

RC: Yes.

JK: And Jenny [inaudible] –

RC: Yes, it's really a wonderful program, so I feel very proud of that.

JK: As well, you should.

RC: I feel proud of the – I also helped to develop the Dual Degree Program at Boston University School of Social Work between the School of Social Work and the School of Public Health. So that in three years, you can get an MS in Social Work and an MPH.

JK: Now, were you at the School of Social Work when Anna Freud was teaching there? Sophie Freud?

RC: Sophie Freud. Oh, indeed I was.

JK: What was that like? Her motorcycle driving days?

RC: Well, she wasn't that – she wasn't teaching there when I was there, but I had a lot of contact with her because while I was in Cambridge, the National Institutes of Health asked Simmons to vary their program a little bit. Simmons was very, I thought, myopic or narrow or limited in relation to their teaching. They were very much in terms of personality development on the Freudian basis, and they didn't catch on as quickly, I thought, to what we learned from Childhood and Society by Erik Eriksen that there were a lot of influences on human behavior in addition to Freudian theories. Nielson came from the Institutes of Mental Health and asked that Simmons broaden its program. They picked Cambridge while I was at Cambridge Hospital to try to develop a two-year program wherein the students would be in the same milieu. They would go from one agency to another, but they could follow some of the same families and so forth and really see the influences of the environment and other things on them. In that way, I had quite a lot to do with the Simmons faculty because I was one of the key field people there in the hospital. I ran into Sophie a lot. But the most interesting experience that I had with her was that the same program that I was talking to you about at Brandeis, the role of Jewish women and so forth, she took the occasion – it was three or four days after her mother's death. I couldn't believe how this woman did it, but it was absolutely fascinating. She talked about her relationship with her mother, which was not all that good, and whether –

JK: Do you remember the specifics?

RC: Well, I remember the specifics that they always had her kind of dressed up, and they had certain fantasies about what she was supposed to be, and she apparently never got along with her mother. I don't know that they ever worked this out before the mother's death. But she certainly used this occasion, and none of us – I mean, we were all kind of shocked, but she did it magnificently. It stands out in my memory, although I don't remember so much what she said, whether I blocked it out or whatever. But it was a very interesting experience.

JK: Now, how did you become interested in medical social work in the beginning, or was it just a circumstance of your job placement?

RC: No, as it happened at that time – I don't know if you ever heard of Maida Solomon.

JK: No.

RC: She had not yet come to Simmons. She was the wife of Harry Solomon, who was Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard, and she was the daughter of the same Mrs. Herman that I happened to tell you about. She was trained as a social worker. Again, that was an early professional lady, and she had even – I think she had five children. I remember my mother meeting Mrs. Herman over the delicatessen counter one day, and Mrs. Herman said, "My daughter Maida does" – I was already in social work. "My daughter Maida does it gratis." I remember that, so it was people like that who kept social work salaries down for years.

JK: That explains it.

RC: That's right. Just one of the blamings. But what was I saying to you at that point?

JK: What brought you to medical social work?

RC: She had not yet come to Simmons, and Simmons was noted for its training in medical social work. I didn't know medical social work from psychiatric social work at that point. But in the spring of my first year at Simmons, I was placed at Boston City Hospital on the neurological service, which was the most terrific privilege. Dr. Lennox was already there working with Dilantin and the drugs that would help people relieve some of their seizures. And the brights in neurology were there at the time – Houston Merritt, of whom you may have heard. Tracy Putnam. Donald Monroe was the neurosurgeon. Stanley Cobb was the chief of the service. I mean, they were the really historic people in the field of neurology, and I got hooked – very, very much hooked right then and there.

JK: And decided to stay in the field, and it takes so much compassion—

RC: Yes, yes.

JK: – to be in medical social work and also a lot of courage.

RC: It takes a great deal of compassion and courage, but in those early years, it also was more hopeful. I remember being on a panel with Dr. Janeway just after penicillin had been introduced and the sulfonamides, and what a change it made taking care of kids with rheumatic fever. We began not to see rheumatic fever anymore because if a kid had strep throat, they got penicillin. It made a tremendous difference in social work practice. My part of the panel was to tell about the impact of the introduction of these drugs on social work practice.

JK: Now I know that some social workers over the last couple of decades have complained about their perceived conflict of interest. Do they represent the patient, or do they represent the institution? Who pays their salary? And sometimes, it's hard to stand up to institutional policies or administrators because of that obvious connection and dependence. Did you ever feel any of those conflicts about wanting to do something for

a patient but knowing it was against hospital policy?

RC: Yes, I did.

JK: How did you resolve it?

RC: I did have it. Well, I remember not resolving it very well when I was at Peter Bent Brigham. I had a woman with multiple sclerosis, and she had a couple of children. She was in remission, but it was very evident that this wasn't going to last. I'd seen her through a couple of remissions and so forth. I raised fifteen dollars through our ladies' committee to pay for her to go to an obstetrician so that she could get family planning advice. It was against hospital policy, and somebody caught me because I had it written on the check, "For special purposes" or something like that. I remember the Assistant Administrator calling me to account for it. I had promised that I would never do anything like that again. I can't remember how I got around it after that, whether I did it through a family agency or whatever. I didn't stop doing it. This was when you couldn't even give married women birth control advice in Massachusetts because it wasn't until 1964, I think –

JK: Bill Baird.

RC: – when they changed that law. That's right. So, I remember that. I also remember teaching – that we had a dual role, that we had a responsibility to the patient, but that we also had a responsibility to the administration. I remember being on various committees where we would discuss cases which brought up this conflict. But we were able to do much more. For instance, when I was at Cambridge Hospital, I could go into the emergency service, and I could say to the physician there, "Look, I'm familiar with this particular patient. Can you give us two days? Can you admit her for social reasons for two days to give us a chance to make a plan?" Now sometimes we were very lucky and not only for social reasons but it was found that she really had something very wrong with

her, do you see? But we were able to do it. Today, you can't advocate for a patient. Entirely different.

JK: When that episode with Family Planning, which I think illustrates a lot of things, but the fact that you, number one, really cared about this woman and even though you knew it was against policy, you weren't going to not help her. Did you ever feel a connection between your desire to be in social work and your desire to help people and your Judaism? Did you feel that any of this social consciousness and community-mindedness came from your Judaism?

RC: I don't know that I did. I felt that it came from within me from a lot of influences – my family, the fact that I was lucky to have a family like that and that I was lucky – I don't know that I particularly connected it to my religion. I always had great respect for my religion, and whether this had an influence on me or not, I don't know. I can remember early on going out in blizzards to be sure that somebody had their medications. I can remember that very well, driving to Everett or wherever it was to be sure that this person had this medication.

JK: So your sense of civic duty and community spirit is really extraordinary.

RC: Yes, it really – I mean, I probably – I'm very conscientious about it. Now, of course, I'm Vice President of this Committee to End Elder Homelessness. It killed me the other day because I had a cold, and I couldn't go to a particular meeting. I said to myself, "Ruth, you're not so young anymore. You've got to just stay put."

JK: Well, it sounds like you're leading an extraordinarily active life and doing wonderful things. I saw that committee on your questionnaire, and I actually, at some point, wanted to talk to you because Devotion is looking for some community projects to get involved with, and maybe we can do something to help.

RC: Oh, my heavens, you certainly could. We need volunteers, and we need money.

JK: Anything. We should talk when the interview's over because – in fact, Shirley Thorne, who used to be –

RC: Oh, yes, Shirley Thorne is on our committee.

JK: Right, and she's coming to Devotion in April to talk about it. Maybe you could come as well.

RC: Well, I certainly would love to.

JK: It's the 27th.

RC: I'd love to show that picture there; they called us the Old Girls Network when we got started. I don't think they ever thought we could get it together, but we did.

JK: Well, it's quite remarkable what you're doing –

RC: Yes.

JK: – from what I understand. We'd love to help. We want to try to make it a Devotion Sister project so we can really give you resources, funds, and people.

RC: Oh, that would be terrific. That's right.

JK: Now, I wanted to ask a little bit more about what role models and mentors professionally you've had either at high school or college, who struck you as being particularly influential in your both educational and professional development.

RC: Well, in college, the person who always had a tremendous impact on me was in my freshman year. It was a history professor, and his name was Warren Stenson Tryon, T-R-Y-O-N. And the first paper that I wrote for him I remember very well because he gave me a "C+" on it, and he said to me, "You are intellectually very lazy." Well, that did it. I thought nobody, but nobody is ever going to say that to me again. I really jacked myself

up and never got anything below an “A” on anything in his course. And then, I took another course with him in my junior year, which was “The Economic Interpretation of American History.” I remember doing a book review for him, and he wrote to me and said, “You would make a – you could make an honest penny in book reviewing.”

JK: What a compliment.

RC: But I remember that very clearly. I also remember a wonderful research professor that I had at the School of Social Work, Miss Channing, who really taught me the value of research. The main mentor I had, of course, was Harriet Bartlett. I don’t know if you ever heard of her.

JK: Harriet Bartlett, no.

RC: She was a remarkable lady. She was a graduate of the London School of Economics and a professor at Simmons. I first knew her when she was the head worker and had charge of education for social workers at Mass General Hospital. She was a lady that stood about six feet, and she was my mentor all during my professional life.

JK: And what was it about her that impressed and inspired you?

RC: Well, in the first place, she was a scholar. Now, remember, social work education was not all that scholarly at the beginning. It was an apprenticeship kind of thing. You would go and practice and were put into a school of social work. But she was an educator; she was a scholar. I admired her enormously. And she wrote, and she made us write, and she had the most tremendous influence on me all through my years, even into my retirement. She died maybe three or four years ago. As a matter of fact, her cousin is Judge Souter of the –

JK: Oh, the Supreme Court.

RC: – Judicial Court.

JK: Oh, so she's –

RC: That's right. She was a wonderful lady. And again, she was one of the people that depressed social work salaries because her father, I think, had been President of the Boston and Maine Railroad. They were people who had mills. She was a wealthy lady, and so was Helen (Adley?), who was a wonderful social worker. She was the (Adley?) of (Dewey?) and (Adley?). These women didn't need money, so medical social work salaries were the lowest of the whole lot. But they were all wonderful influences on me.

JK: And now, clearly – did people like Eleanor Roosevelt – that was clearly after you had graduated and gone to work, but did her interest in social services and helping people do that?

RC: Well, I admired her enormously, and I always watched the things she did, and I thought she was a most courageous woman, but she was kind of far afield from me.

JK: Right, right. Now, what was it like –? Your first job was at Children's Hospital. You've spoken of some of your internships during school, both at getting this hospital –

RC: Yes, my first job actually was at Peter Bent Brigham.

JK: Peter Bent?

RC: Yes.

JK: Okay.

RC: Peter Bent Brigham. And then, while I was at Peter Bent Brigham and I was taking students –

JK: And what year was that?

RC: I went into Brigham in ’42.

JK: Okay.

RC: I stayed there until – no, no, excuse me. I went to the Brigham – my husband died in ’38. I went to the Brigham in ’39. ’39 to ’42. And while I was there, I had students from Ms. McMahon, who was the same lady that said I would never get a job in one of these hospitals. She called me in, and she said, “Ruth, I want you to go down to Salem to develop a social work program for Salem Hospital. Salem has been named as the best community hospital in the country, but they don’t have a professional Social Service Department. Dr. Phippen and the administrator, Mr. (Plant?), have been up to see me, and they wanted somebody to develop it. Now you know the North Shore because you’ve been at Marblehead, and you know Salem, and I want you to go down there.” I said, “Oh, Ms. McMahon, I can’t do that.” I said, “At the Brigham, I can get home to lunch if my child isn’t well.” And she looked at me, and she said, “You want to make a career out of your profession? Then you will go to Salem.” Just like that. So I came home to my mother, and I told her, and she said to me, “Well, look, if this is what you really want to do,” she said, “why don’t we live in Marblehead for six months of the year? Billy isn’t of an age when we have to worry about school yet. And you’ll only have to commute six months of the year.” And so, I thought, well, I better do it. I better do it. Remember, it was during the war. It was from ’42 to ’46 that I was there, and gas was rationed. we didn’t work five days a week then; we worked five and a half days. So, I would save my gas for that sixth day so that I could get home early in the afternoon. I took the bus. I would leave when it was dark, took the streetcar to Haymarket, took the bus to Salem. And for the first six months, I – it was a very hard adjustment. But gradually, it was the most wonderful experience – one of them – of my professional life. She was absolutely right. It was terrific. I not only developed a social work program there, but I improved the services in the community. Salem was the most benighted community after being in Boston. That’s why I was so miserable those first six months. But it was a fantastic

proving ground. And at the end of four years, I had a staff of two or three people. I had a firmly developed social work program. The doctors had wanted social work down there like they wanted a hole in the head. But Dr. Phippen more or less said to me, "Why can't the Welfare Department do it?" – this, that, and the other thing. I had to teach them that people are sick at all socioeconomic levels; it isn't just welfare. But I did get the Welfare Department to do things that they wouldn't have done. I don't know if you can see that elephant over there.

JK: I do; I love that.

RC: Well, it was a Chinese laundry man who developed cancer, and at that time, he couldn't stay at home. He had a little room behind the laundry, and I sent him down by ambulance to the Rose Hawthorn Lakewood Hospital in Fall River, which was a terminal cancer hospital. After about three weeks, a friend of his, a town member, came to see me in Salem, a Chinese gentleman. He said, "He's so miserable. The nuns are trying to make him into a Christian down there and so forth." I thought to myself, "This can't be." So, I went down to the Department of Public Welfare, and I said to them, "We have to bring this man back." I read the law to them. [laughter] It was the obligation of the Public Welfare Department. Sure enough, they paid for the ambulance, and we brought him back to a nursing home in Salem. I went to see him frequently during that time. About three weeks after his death, the same Chinese gentleman comes up to me with this elephant, which weighs a ton, and said to me this was his only possession and he wanted me to have it.

JK: It's really moving. A parable of good luck for that culture.

RC: Yeah, that's right.

JK: And when you said you went to visit him several times, you weren't obliged to do that.

RC: Oh, no, no. I just did it. I just did it.

JK: I get the feeling that –

RC: I had an interest in my patients and my patients, many of them – that's why I say that while there were things in medical social work that were very tragic, there were other things you saw people improve. It wasn't so much like mental illness, do you see, which was – there might be a little improvement, but it was like banging your head against the wall in some cases.

JK: I also love the way you describe your "reading the law" to the people at Public Welfare and telling them he had to be brought back. Was that something you found yourself frequently doing?

RC: Yes, I did. I remember when I developed the Martha Eliot Family Health Center.

JK: You developed the Martha Elliot –?

RC: Yes, I did, along with a variety of other people, but I was the one who was in that little well child clinic over in the Bromley Heath Housing Development, out of which emerged eventually – I got the first grant from the poverty program. We added the gynecological service then and then came through the big grants of maternal and infant care and children and youth. Well, another mentor that I had – a wonderful lady who just died last year, Elizabeth Weiss, had made arrangements on this trial program because I did this while I was in the School of Public Health, that our children didn't have to go to City Hospital. You see, anybody who didn't have insurance and was on welfare had to go to City Hospital, but because we were doing this demonstration program, they should be able to go to Children's Hospital. And our mothers went to Peter Bent Brigham. We also wanted our men to go to – the fathers to go to Peter Bent Brigham. One of our fathers got turned down. Well, it happened – I knew the charter of Peter Bent Brigham because I'd worked there, and it was for the sick, poor of Suffolk County. So I marched

myself over to Peter Bent Brigham, I went to the assistant administrator, and I said, “Now look, you’ve turned this man down. You know what your charter says. I’m going to go to the United Way if you don’t let this man back in because your charter says you’re supposed to take care of the sick, poor of Suffolk County. He’s sick, he’s poor, and he lives in Suffolk County.”

JK: And he got back in?

RC: Yes. And the paper that I wrote, interestingly enough, was published in the Journal of Public Health on “Social Work in the Child Health Clinic – Report of the Demonstration.” I pointed out that a lot of it had to do with the conflicting roles of public health nurses and social workers because there was a great overlap. I tried to factor out what they did that we couldn’t do and what social workers did that they couldn’t do. And one of the things I said was we understood agency policy and were able to get services for people because of that understanding.

JK: Your courage is extraordinary. And did you ever –? During any of these –? Specifically, during these pioneering ventures at Salem or with your demonstration project at Bromley Heath’s, or in general, did you ever feel any gender discrimination? When you walked into the office of the administrator of Peter Bent, was that a man or a woman?

RC: It was a man. Well, the interesting thing is I think my family must have given me a lot of security. They must have given me a lot of security because I never really thought about it. But while I was a widow and working in Salem, every Monday, I would give up my office to the Services for Crippled Children. They did the surgery for that area at Salem Hospital, and I would just give up my desk [inaudible] to the physician and the social worker. The social worker, Catherine Casey, took an interest in me, and she said to me, “Ruth, why don’t you apply for a federal job because the benefits are better and everything else.” So I went to see Colonel Huber, who was at the School of Public

Health and he was the Head of the Services for Crippled Children in New England. We had a very nice interview and so on and so forth, and [chuckles] he said to me at the end of it, "I like everything about you, but I have to tell you, I never hire women with children." I didn't fight it; I accepted it. I said, "Well, too bad, but I'll stay where I am." But at the end of four years at Salem, Harriet Bartlett was on my committee, and Ms. McMahon from Simmons was on – I had an advisory committee to help me with the development of the program, and they met about once a year. I would tell them what was going on and raise any issues and so forth. So, I had been in touch with Kate McMahon, and she called me up and said, "Ruth, you've developed this program now, and it's moving along nicely. I want you to come up to Children's Hospital and work with Dr. Lennox. He's just gotten a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, a ten-year grant, and he needs a social worker. So, I was going around with Phil at the time, and I thought to myself, "Gee, he won't let me take a new job if he has any serious intentions toward me." So, the next time I was out with him, I said, "Now I've had this request from Simmons College to go up to the Children's, and what do you think I should do? I'm happy in Salem, and I've gotten used to the travel." He said, "Oh, by all means, I think you should take it because I really believe that it will bring you back into the mainstream and traveling has to be difficult." So, I said to myself, "Well, so that's the way the ball bounces; I still like him. But I will take the job at Children's," which I did, and six months after that, we were married. Dr. Lennox had a fit because I said, "With a new marriage, I needed to spend more time at home." I did stay part-time with him. It was a wonderful experience at Children's being with Dr. Lennox. That's the picture you see there.

JK: Yes. Was it hard on your son during the time that you were commuting?

RC: Well I think it was, except that he had this loving family around him all the time. And Saturdays – and I didn't do anything else. Saturdays, Sundays, and evenings, I always was with him. And I didn't do – if I was – I didn't do all that much dating actually. For the first five years, I didn't look at anybody.

JK: So, you were very devoted and present.

RC: Very much. I was present all the time, and he took priority. Then I said to him when he was – told him that we were going to get married and that I was – and I said, “It will mean that I will have more time with you.”

JK: I know that you alluded to the fact that there were mothers around because people were off at war. Were there other ways that you felt, in Brookline and in your job, the influences of being at war – our country’s being at war during World War II?

RC: Oh, well, yes, I certainly did. In the first place, I traveled by bus because I didn’t have all that much gasoline. I remember giving Billy the coupons when we’d go in to get a little butter or something like that, and he was in his carriage, and he would hold the coupons. I remember that. I remember being very – we were very worried. I was on the committee with Ida Cantor for the Civilian Defense for social workers, and that’s the time of the Coconut Grove disaster. Because we already had our system developed for social workers, they called us in for that. And I went into the Mass General Hospital, and I remember Ida Cantor saying, “If you can’t do anything more, then find a nickel to help somebody telephone. That’s a service.” I remember her saying that to me.

JK: That must have been—

RC: It was a horrendous experience.

JK: I read in your book about that.

RC: Remember, we never knew anything about grief reactions until that time when Dr. Lindemann, studying these families and patients and so forth, developed the literature on grief as a result of the Coconut Grove disaster.

JK: I didn't realize that.

RC: So, that when I started, so much of the theory that we go on now was developed during my lifetime –

JK: In general, so many of the people you've worked with have been pioneers. You've been a pioneer and are recognized as such, and it seems like such an exciting time. You hear about Boston as the medical Mecca.

RC: That's right.

JK: But you lived it.

RC: We did. We did. I often feel sorry for the young people today because they can't grasp. We got it gradually. Do you understand? An evolutionary process? These young people really can't grasp what's – I don't think they can grasp what we lived through.

JK: I'm also struck by the extent to which, despite having grown up in a very privileged home environment, you are an extremely hard worker and always take on more than you must. You don't do the minimum; you do more than the maximum. To what do you attribute your work ethic? You said your dad was a hard worker.

RC: He was a hard worker. I contribute the work ethic to my family's attitude. They never spoiled me. I never knew what it was to go into a store and charge anything. I remember we had S. S. Pierces. They had a marvelous candy counter. Occasionally, I would go in with my mother, and she would select the candy. I remember a couple of times going in and when they knew me there, selecting a candy and charging it to my parents, and when they got the bill, they told me I never was to do that again. I never charged anything without my parents. I was brought up in a very, I would say perhaps, a somewhat frugal fashion.

JK: Which obviously had wonderful benefits –

RC: Yes, it really did.

JK: —because you didn't take anything for granted.

RC: I never took anything for granted. And when my family had reverses, I really did all the driving. I was always there for them when they needed me. I don't ever remember feeling really – after my teen years – feeling really carefree. I cannot say that I really felt – perhaps it's a terrible thing for me to say, but at this particular point in my life – I'm going to be eighty-six – it is perhaps now the most carefree time.

JK: That's a wonderful thing to say.

RC: Because I don't – I still am fortunate enough that I have friends. I have my family reasonably close by. Do you see? My son and daughter-in-law are here. My granddaughter is settling in Boston for the moment, although she travels a lot, but she and her husband are living in West Newton. My middle granddaughter is a sports reporter, and she's living at home with her family because she's not home that much. My grandson is in New York. So I'm fortunate that I have them around, you see? And they're doing okay. Now, what will happen when I have great-grandchildren, as I did a lot of – I did a lot of caretaking for my grandchildren – a great deal of it because my daughter-in-law was at school. She was at law school, or she was working, and if the babysitter didn't come, or they needed somebody, I was there.

JK: That must have been a gift for them.

RC: Yes. It was a gift for me, too.

JK: It was a wonderful thing to do. And certainly, your son and daughter-in-law could not have done it without you.

RC: No.

JK: Working parents need a wonderful safety net. [inaudible] So beyond the gas shortage – we're still talking about World War II effects and influences – how you felt that the gas shortages and men away. Anything else? I mean, did you read the news and listen to the radio?

RC: Oh, yes. Oh, we did all the time, but of course, it was very nerve-racking because underneath, I think we all had some – I don't know whether it was subliminal knowledge or what it was, but something was going on with the Jewish people that was very frightening.

JK: About what year –

RC: Extremely frightening.

JK: —would you say this—even subliminal knowledge?

RC: I would say that this must have been in '43 or '44.

JK: So, it was that late.

RC: Yes, I think so. At least, that's when it first became apparent to me. We were friendly with Walter (Berenger?). Walter (Berenger?) did a tremendous amount in bringing refugees over here, and that was when it first became apparent to me. The (Griswiches?) brought over a young woman, (Analisa?), who was a relative of theirs because they already had suspicions that things were going on and made things unsafe. So there were various people. Okay? My mother had a friend, Mr. Wax, who was in the florist business. And he had a – I have a feeling that it was a sister and a son. The son he brought over became a famous musicologist at Harvard – a professor. He was already a man, I think, when he brought him over in his fifties or sixties. So, we had

glimmerings that things were going on. And we saw people over here, and I think this was – I'm trying to think if I was married. I think this was in the '30s, actually – before '38, that there were – that some of these people were beginning to come over. And then my friend Helen Schulman, her parents would go to a spa in Austria in summers. They were a very wealthy family, and in that spa, they met this couple by the name of Hirsch. He was a very well-known physician in Europe who actually was a mentor of Harvey Cushing here, who is the famous brain surgeon because he had a technique of getting into the brain through the nasal passage, which he taught to Harvey Cushing. And Mr. Schulman, during that period there, said to him, "Begin to send money over to the United States because things are going to blow up over here." And the first people to – at first, he came over, Dr. Hirsch, and then the mother, and the two children came over. Mr. Schulman saw to that. They already had resources over here. And that was in – it was before I was married. I was married in '36, so it must have been in the middle '30s. And they came over maybe around '38.

JK: Having three out of four grandparents born in Europe, did you have any distant cousins, aunts, uncles –?

RC: We didn't have anybody left over there that I –

JK: Nobody left over there.

RC: No. No one.

JK: So, when you started to hear the news about the transports and the camps and the exterminations, you weren't entirely surprised about having [inaudible]?

RC: Well, it was most frightening. I mean, it was very hard to encompass how horrible it was. But as we saw more and more people who were over here who began to tell us these awful stories, and particularly, I remember a lecture I went to with (Dr. Viebring?) – did you ever hear of Dr. (Viebring?)?

JK: No.

RC: She and her husband were both psychiatrists – analysts from Vienna. She became the Chief of the Psychiatric Service at Beth Israel, and I took a couple of seminars with her. She talked about being in her office and hearing the boots and the stormtroopers coming into her office and questioning her, and so forth. I don't know who brought them over here, but they came over.

JK: Is she Jewish?

RC: Yes.

JK: And did your family, your parents, and their siblings have any discussions about the development of the State of Israel or immigration policies of the United States, or refugees during that time?

RC: Well, no, none of us were I'm almost ashamed as I look back on it now, but we were anti-Zionists. We were kind of brought up in that tradition by Rabbi Levi, who did not believe in Zionism. It was only after the Hitler business that many people got interested in the State of Israel, do you see? I had so much else to worry about at that point that it was remote for me. But I remember feeling quite good about the fact that we had a State of Israel. Also, there were a number of us that worried about the fact that – what would it mean? Could we be good citizens of the United States and also be interested in Israel? There was always the question of whether this would in any way affect our relationship to the United States. There was some concern and worry about it, and my reaction to Israel was not a hundred percent favorable. It's been over the years that I have realized the inevitability of having a Jewish State.

JK: Have you been to Israel [inaudible]?

RC: I've never been to Israel. It's something I would like to do. I've not been to Israel.

JK: It's not too late to take a trip.

RC: Well, I don't know. [laughter]

JK: It's a wonderful country.

RC: Yes, it is. I'm sorry that I haven't been to Israel.

JK: Have any of your –? Has your son or –?

RC: My son has been to Israel. He represented a man who was very religious and who insisted that Bill and Judy come over for their daughter's wedding. And they spent ten days in Israel.

JK: I wanted to ask you a little bit about your teaching at Boston University School of Social Work. That sounds like a really –

RC: Well, I actually started there in the early '50s when there was a professor over there who asked me if I would help in correcting some of the papers on health care. I took these papers at home at night and did it. Then, she suddenly got pregnant, which was unbelievable in a School of Social Work at that time. But she did get pregnant, and they needed somebody to teach her seminar. It was while I was at Children's Hospital, and I got permission from Dr. Lennox to do it. I taught the seminar on Social Work in Health Care and the implications for practice and how it affected social work practice, being in a health care system. And then she didn't come back, and so they asked me to come on to the faculty. I stayed there until 1956 when I quit because my father was sick and I felt that my mother needed help. I had already remarried, and so I quit for that year and did little odd jobs. My father died the following September. I'm trying to think of how I got back to BU. Oh, I got back to BU in my retirement. [laughter] I was retired about two

days from Cambridge Hospital when BU called me up and said, “Ruth, we don’t have anybody on our faculty who’s particularly expert in health care, and a lot of our students are asking for it. Come back on your own time as a faculty advisor and – [End of Side B, Tape 1] as a faculty advisor. But then I saw lots of things that needed to be done. I had written a memo to the dean who was leaving at that time. Dean Jones then picked up that memo because I said I thought we ought to develop a health sub-concentration. And we did develop this health sub-concentration, which went very well. And then, through Louie Lowy who has – remember Louie Lowy?

JK: I do know him. His daughter and I went to Israel together.

RC: Did you? He was wonderful.

JK: She was wonderful. Sue Lowy.

RC: He devised the notion of having a dual degree program. I implemented it from then on. He identified it, and I implemented it.

JK: Now, he just died a couple of years ago.

RC: Yes, he did. That’s right.

JK: So you have had so much influence on not only social work in general but medical social work in particular and the degree-granting programs in this metropolitan area.

RC: Yes. And also, I’ve had a lot of influence on students. I think that’s been good.

JK: Are you a believer in the importance of internships and hands-on experience during education? Or do you feel there should be concentrated curricular experiences?

RC: No, I believe in that. I think it’s extremely difficult today. In fact, it’s hard to find teachers today because there’s such an emphasis on PhDs You see, I don’t have a PhD.

If I was starting out today, I could never have gotten any academic positions. But in my day, the master's degree was the terminal degree. The problem today is that with these young people immediately going off to their—for their PhDs we don't have people teaching [inaudible] wisdom. And that's been a serious problem.

JK: How have the roles and the responsibilities of hospital social workers changed in the almost fifty-five years since you began working in the hospital setting?

RC: Well, interestingly enough, I don't think that they have changed all that much. I think there has been more of a preoccupation and more sophistication about dealing with the psyche than we had. Do you see? On the other hand, we always were conscious of people's feelings and what was there in their personality that might have contributed to this illness or is going to interfere with their carrying out recommendations for the illness, or what other social factors that are going to interfere with their ability to do this. Can they buy the insulin? Can they do all these things? How do they feel about being dependent? How do they feel about giving up their independence? We always were geared to that kind of thinking long before we became very sophisticated. Then what happened – we had such a marriage with Freud that we forgot our roots. I was really seriously concerned about that because I would go through record after record where the mother was complaining about the child's frequent colds, but nobody ever went to see what kind of housing they had. I felt that that was a serious problem. Then, in the 1950s came Childhood and Society and the Erikson theories of behavior. Again, we began to integrate culture and social factors and environment as influences on human behavior. My feeling is that we improved because we had more sophistication as to why people got well or didn't get well or why people were behaving as they were behaving. You see? But the actual kernel of medical social work, which was so important, has never changed. Now we're having a terrible time at this point because we're not allowed to practice our skills.

JK: So, your career has been intertwined with Simmons and B.U., which are two of the most progressive schools of social Work in the country.

RC: That's right.

JK: And you've had a lot to do with the direction of each place.

RC: Well, I think, in a way, I have.

JK: And the face of the field, as you say, is changing because of externals. But the principals that you helped to put in place are enduring.

RC: That's right. Now, how long they're going to endure I don't know.

JK: I mean, it must be very difficult now for people. Again, benefits and insurance [inaudible] –

RC: Oh yes. And the other part of it is, interestingly enough, that for a long time, we didn't really teach social workers entitlements. I'm a great believer that one of the great areas of expertise that social workers have is their knowledge of entitlements. And you can give a physician, even on a team today, the most erudite explanation of why this kid's behaving as he is. But if you also say, "And I have a resource that is going to meet his needs," that's the thing that titillates it. Not the rest of it.

JK: Right, a little practicality.

RC: You have to know [inaudible]. I'm going to have to quit. Now you wanted—

JK: Okay.

[Recording paused]

RC: – Germany to become a musicologist.

JK: Mr. Wax, was it?

RC: This is Mr. Wax, and it was his nephew. There he is. And that's his mother. He brought his nephew, his sister, and the son over from Germany. This is my mother.

JK: Who is this?

RC: That's me.

JK: Oh, you were so elegant.

RC: That's me. In Atlantic City.

JK: [inaudible] What a coat.

RC: In Atlantic City.

JK: Is that a raccoon coat?

RC: It's a raccoon coat with skunk trimming.

JK: Beautiful.

RC: And that was me there. That's my mother.

JK: She was a handsome woman as well.

RC: And that's my father. That's a picture of my father in Marblehead [inaudible] grass out of the way.

JK: Was he a gardener?

RC: Yes.

JK: What a beautiful, beautiful picture. Now, is this in Brookline?

RC: This is in Brookline, yes. This is in the back of the [inaudible]. This is in Atlantic City.

JK: My goodness.

RC: Must have been a school vacation.

JK: Well, did your father tend these roses, or was that –? Did someone else take care of those?

RC: He had a gardener, but he also tended them himself.

JK: They're lovely.

RC: And picked over them.

JK: Have you enjoyed gardening or any [inaudible]

RC: Yeah. I'm a gardener. I love it. I love it.

JK: Well, let's talk about that next time. I don't want –

[END OF SIDE A, TAPE 2]

JK: This is Tuesday, February 25th, and Ruth was just starting to tell me in response to a question about whether she's ever had an interest in spending time in Florida. That she has too much to do. She was just starting to tell me about the Rosenfeld Foundation. We will continue that on the tape.

RC: This was in the '40s, but the people who were the trustees were getting much older. The trustees at that time were Lee Friedman and his two maiden sisters, Elsie and

Sophie. Of course, Lee Friedman, at one point, was head of the education committee at the temple and had also been a president of the temple, I believe. And Judge Rubenstein, who was very elderly at the time, and Abe Weber, who had been the corporation counsel for the city of Boston. They decided, I guess, that they needed somebody younger on the board. I think it might have been the Friedman sisters who recommended me because Elsie Friedman was the first woman, I think, on the Board of Overseers of Public Welfare in Boston.

JK: What year was this?

RC: This was in the early ’40s, I think, maybe late ’30s. No. I was married in 1947. It was very shortly after that. So, it might have been in the late, late ’40s. I don’t know. I got recommended, and I got appointed. I was the youngest member there. So, they made me the treasurer, and I’ve been on it ever since. And at times, I’ve been the chairman of the committee and so forth. When the Friedmans were on it, you absolutely had to be poverty-stricken to get this money. Of course, you couldn’t write a will like that today that was for women, number one, and for Jewish women, in the city of Boston. They interpreted Boston as the hub.

Now, then, a few younger people – as these people died, a few younger people came on. We extended Boston to mean metropolitan Boston. Of course, originally, we trained them for the needle trays, hair-dressing, and that kind of thing. And then, gradually, we branched out and gave scholarships for kids to go to college.

JK: Can you tell me again what the purpose and the mission of Rosenfeld Foundation is? I found that very interesting.

RC: Well, I asked Mr. Friedman when I got on there – I said, “Mr. Rosenfeld must have been very interested in children. Did he have children of his own?” And Mr. Friedman said to me, “No. He was a bachelor. But he saw these prostitutes walking by his liquor

store, and he didn't want Jewish women to have to go into prostitution." Interestingly enough, when I was on that panel at Brandeis and they gave me this book Jewish Women in America, indeed, I found out that some of these Jewish women who came over here as immigrants and didn't have any trade or anything, did prostitute, which I never knew. So it's a very interesting book which I have, and I'll dig it out for you.

JK: Tell me about the ceremony at Brandeis.

RC: Well, it was a panel, actually. I was asked to be on the panel as somebody, a Jewish woman, who, early on, when Jewish women didn't do it, got professional training and worked. I was on that panel. I'll tell you who else was on it, which was extremely interesting, was Freud's granddaughter, Sophie Freud Lowenstein, who was teaching at Simmons. Her mother had just died. It perhaps was not more than three or four days after the death of her mother. She took an hour or an hour and a half and spoke so beautifully about this really not-good relationship with her mother. It was almost like a catharsis for her. I was spellbound. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't imagine anybody doing anything like that. She did it so beautifully it was unbelievable. She was an unbelievable woman.

JK: Like a motorcycle rider.

RC: That's right. She has dropped the name. She is divorced, I think. She dropped the name Lowenstein and goes by the name Sophie Freud now.

JK: Now, when we were talking about where to focus, I told you that I wanted to know more about everything because I just was so inspired by our meeting. But we had talked about pursuing this issue about how it was that at a time when many women, Jewish or non-Jewish, stayed at home, you really did not only pursue education, a higher education, and employment, but you quickly went to the top of your field. You took posts in different cities. You took risks. You obviously have always done more than the nine-

to-five, clock-punching job. It may be the air you breathe, although that's hard to articulate the reasons, the motivations, and the inspirations. But if you could talk a little more about what it was like to be a trailblazer in the higher education sense but ultimately in the professional sense and how that affected your life as a working mom.

RC: Well, I have to say that I don't think I'd want to do it over again. It was hard. There was no question about it. There's always guilt when you're a mother, and you go out to work, and your child may not be feeling so well. Now I was very lucky because I was at home, do you see, and I had a mother and a maiden aunt there. It was easier for me. I don't know if I told you before that my husband died when this boy was eight months old.

JK: You told me, but none of the circumstances.

RC: Yeah. His mother said that he had malaria when he was a child. But he must have had rheumatic fever in those days. Do you see? And what happened was that after – before Bill was born, before I was pregnant, I remember that he would say, "I'm terribly tired, and I have to go to Troy. Would you drive me?" And I did. And I didn't really pay that much attention to it. Then, of course, I don't know if you ¬– before the war, before 19 – when this business was going on in Germany, he was in the reserve for the Army. He was summoned to go to Fort Drum, I think, someplace in upper state New York that summer because he was an expert in inventory control, and they needed to take a look at that. So he went on to active duty for about two weeks. So, after all, he was in the Army, and he was physically fit. He developed kind of flu-like symptoms, and very quickly, maybe within twenty-four hours, got terribly ill. He was hospitalized and was dead in five days of sub-acute bacterial endocarditis, which today is treatable. This was in 1938, and they didn't have – they just started with the sulphonamides. But those didn't hit a staphylococcus infection, which is an infection of the heart lining. And he had a bloodstream infection before the days of penicillin and went very quickly. I went home with an eight-month-old baby. I was just thinking – I often have thought of my mother

because of having somebody come home with a baby. But they were wonderful.

JK: It's such a hard time for you –

RC: It was a hard time.

JK: – being a young married person looking forward to – with your whole life ahead of you.

RC: Yeah. And then you feel – you do feel guilty because you're the one – you're the only parent, do you see? You're kind of like the man of the household because you're managing the finances, and you're managing the child. But as I told you, it was wartime, and there were kids without – this picture is interesting because in this day and age with so much mobility, you don't see this much continuity of friends. This is Alan Morse, Jr. I don't know if you ever heard of his father, Alan Morse, Sr.

JK: No, I did not.

RC: Well, he was at one point president of the American Red Cross. He was a very influential man in the temple. Before we had assistant rabbis, he used to read on the High Holidays and help Rabbi [inaudible]. This is his son Alan Morse, Jr. He had built – this is my son.

JK: Right.

RC: Are a month apart. Alan was born March 28th, and Bill was born April 28th. His mother, Theresa Morse, who's the – you know that housing building is named after her, the Morse apartments on Longwood Avenue, that street that – because she was head of our housing authority for about twenty-five years. She had been very active in the League of Women Voters. She was president of Camp Country Week, which was a Jewish charity camp on the old Shuman estate in Beverly Farms. I would wait for the

milkman to make his formula, and then we would trot off. She was president of Country Week, and I was on the board, and we would go. So, these kids have been friends from the cradle. Fortunately, their wives get along.

JK: They live in Boston.

RC: Yes, the Morses live in Boston. At the moment, they live up on Beacon Hill. And he is now a head of – I think he's just under the CEO for Harvard Pilgrim. He's been on the board of that for years, and then they gave him a paid position. Now, the Morses were owners of the United States Trust until it got sold. So that's Alan and Bill. They've been friendly all their lives.

JK: And has Alan stayed involved in Jewish life?

RC: Oh yes, he has. They're members of Temple Israel. And his wife, Cecily, is a very brilliant – she was a summa cum laude at Harvard. And she's in the – I got her into the book after Theresa, after my good friend Theresa died. It was a couple of years ago I got Cecily into that book club. Kind of a tradition. She's a lovely girl. She and my daughter-in-law get along very well. Now, the other three. This is Dick (Wall?). He's a doctor, a head of the x-ray department out at Leonard Morse Hospital in Lexington. This is John (Alpin?), and he never got married. He is one of the great mathematicians in the world. He's at the University of Chicago and goes all over the world. And that's John. And this is Bob (Keller?), who's a wonderful – comes from Connecticut. And his father, Alexander (Keller?), did something with the Marshall Plan. So they lived in Holland for a while. All of these boys lived together at Harvard, all of them. So, it's been a matter of forty years these have been friendly. These two boys are now fifty-eight. And so that's fifty-eight years. This is about forty years. They are absolutely inseparable. When anything happens, good, bad, or indifferent, they're all there.

JK: What a gift, and how rare.

RC: Which is very rare in this day and age.

JK: Your son is so good-looking.

RC: Yes, he is. He is good-looking.

JK: It sounds like having an extended family, living within the extended family during those years when you were widowed made it –

RC: It made it much more possible for me. After all, I was a young woman. I put my heart and soul into my child and into my profession. Those were the two things. And so by the time I remarried, I was too deeply embedded in my profession, you see, to give it up.

JK: Did you feel that you got some additional support from the synagogue community as a widow with a young child? I mean, did they show any special interest in your son, or did they try to make sure that you were all right?

RC: Not really. I don't think it was quite as much of a community. Whatever you say about Rabbi Mehlman, I think he made it more of a community. But In taking Billy to Sunday school and that kind of thing – I think for a while, I was on the education committee at the temple. It was a support to me. I enjoy going there on the high holy days. It was good. I felt that I belonged somewhere, and that was important.

JK: Did your parents go with you to Temple Israel on the high holy days?

RC: Oh, always. Oh my God, yes. As I got older and we went – and the High Holidays were – I'd have to say, with all the vicissitudes, I had a happy life because my parents – we always made a celebration. What we used to do on New Year's Day, everybody – and it was over promptly at twelve-thirty. We would all go to that beautiful room in the Copley Plaza, a number of us, for lunch. You would see the temple right there. Or we

would go to the Hotel Touraine.

JK: Where was that?

RC: That was at the corner. It's very shabby now. But it was wonderful. It was at the corner of Boylston and Tremont Street.

JK: So near the Little building.

RC: Yes, but on the opposite corner.

JK: Right. Where I think it's like ABCD.

RC: Or something.

JK: Right.

RC: Whatever. We'd all go there, and everybody'd be dressed up. As I said, Mrs. Herman would – she wouldn't come in. She had her pew in the second row. She would turn around, put up her lorgnettes, and see who was there.

JK: What are lorgnettes? Are those glasses?

RC: Those glasses, those things that you hold up.

JK: Surveying the crowd.

RC: Yeah, surveying the crowd. She was a wonderful-looking lady. So we'd all dispatch ourselves down there. It was a happy time. It was a holiday. I don't think that we did it on Yom Kippur because you're supposed to fast. Although I don't think too many people fasted. I remember my mother always said you don't want to be seen out on Yom Kippur.

JK: And did your family observe some of the other festivals; Succoth, Simchat Torah –?

RC: No, we didn't observe. We knew it was Succoth or whatever you call it. But Passover and Shavuot, confirmation – when I was a trustee of the temple, of course, I always went. But that was when we had confirmation.

K: They still have confirmation at Shavuot.

RC: Yeah. That's right.

JK: A wonderful tradition.

RC: Yes, it is. But we didn't have bar mitzvah in the temple at that time.

JK: And were you confirmed?

RC: No, I was not because I was kind of a sickly kid. My mother thought that the school was enough.

JK: Did you ever have an interest in learning more about Judaic history and culture?

RC: Yes, I did. And I have, more or less, over the – as Bill was going through it, I did. Oh, and I had a terrible time with Bill that confirmation year. He was on the tennis team at Brookline High School. I'm trying to think of the name, a nice man that was in my husband's class at Harvard who was the head of the school at that time.

JK: (Lillian Bovay?) was the last—

RC: Oh, no, no, no. This was –

JK: Rabbi Friedman and then Lillian –

RC: No, no. It was long before that, long before that. I'm trying to think. I'll think of his name or look it up in my husband's class book for you. Bill never could get to the confirmation rehearsals on time. Finally, he called me up, and he said, "Listen, he's supposed to be here," and so forth. And so we arranged – I think the coach, the tennis coach, brought him a couple of times. But I remember, finally, he got confirmed.

JK: And did he enjoy going through the Temple Israel religious school?

RC: Yes. Well, I think he did because I think these kids raised hell there. They really did. I'll tell you who was the rabbi at the time. It was Klausner.

JK: What was he like?

RC: He was a very, very interesting man. He was a non-conformist. He married one of the Haskell girls, I think, who was a dancer, which killed the congregation.

At that time, they were used to Mrs. Levi, who was – Ruth Levi was a marvelously dignified lady. But Klausner was a very interesting man, and Bill liked him very much. He enjoyed that confirmation year when they went into comparative religions and that kind of thing. I think some of the – when they were in the lower grades, I don't think he was so crazy about it. But he went, and he was confirmed.

JK: I know you told me about your son's marriage and the whole story with Rabbi Gittelsohn, which was awkward, to say the least. But were you remarried at Temple Israel?

RC: Oh yes, I was remarried by Liebman. And Rabbi Liebman and I struck up a very interesting relationship. I have his book, and I'll show you how he autographed it. But he married us. I was married in my parents' apartment, very small wedding. Rabbi Levi, of course, married me the first time.

JK: And what were some of the Jewish symbols or rituals that were incorporated? Did you break glasses at each of those weddings?

RC: Yes. Yes, we did.

JK: Did you drink from the wine cup?

RC: Yes, we did.

JK: And so we were going back a minute when we started to talk about photographs. You talked about how difficult it was to be a working parent although during war years more women worked.

RC: That's right.

JK: But at some point, did you ever think, "Enough career. I'm just going to retire and play bridge and participate in my book club." What was it that just kept pushing you to do more and keep on working?

RC: Well, there were a variety of things. One was economics because I really did a lot to support my parents. So, from that point of view, that was one of the things that pushed me. The other thing was that I did not find – I had a lot of friends, and I love my friends, but I found it not that interesting to be with them all the time. I really didn't. I find the same thing today. I like them very much. They play bridge. I never had been used to hanging around with a bunch of women. And when I really did retire, which was maybe about – I'm just trying to think whether it was '90. Just the year before, my husband broke a hip, so it must have been '91, maybe '92. Then, I began to hang around with a bunch of women. I didn't like it so much.

JK: Because you had had that professional world, a world of ideas –

RC: That's right. So, I made up my mind that I wasn't going to give it up. The only day that we had snow was the day that I had arranged to take Dean Wilkins, who's the new Dean of the School of Social Work, around to see the sites – the two sites that were finished and the one that's now being built. Somebody at BU said, "Oh, I don't think Ruth's going to come out in this kind of weather." The dean said, "She'll be here. Don't worry." [laughter] And I was. And we had a very interesting morning together as I showed her these things. So then she said to me, which was very interesting, "Now, what are your expectations of me?" She said, "When you write something down so that I will have it because" – she's, at the moment, chairman of the deans of the Schools for Social Work, the local schools, which is Salem State, Simmons, Boston University, and BC. And she said, "I'd like to talk to the other deans." So, I sat down one night – last Monday night a week ago – and wrote out what I thought the committee's expectations would be of her in terms of money that we need to go after her faculty. But, also, we would like to have a student who might do a doctoral dissertation, which would be very interesting on elderly homeless and what has brought them to this human condition. Also, eventually, we would like to have students when they're properly staffed so they can see these things because one of our goals is to heighten people's awareness about the fact that the people on the streets are not just young families and Skid Row bums. They're elderly.

JK: Right.

RC: Frail people.

JK: With the end of rent control and escalation in housing costs.

RC: That's right. It's going to be really a crisis. So if there were – there were both things that motivated me – one was that I really was kind of bored with just playing bridge and doing something like that. And the other thing was that there was, for a while, a real financial need to do it.

JK: We talked about the changes in social work and medical social work specifically. I am so struck by, again, your compassion and how you visited families and always did more than was required. In general, now that you're working so hard on elderly homelessness, do you think that the field is becoming a little more proactive given the federal cutbacks and the huge need because there's such a disparity in income? Do you see that social work schools are taking up the slack and trying to do more in the community on a practical basis?

RC: Yes, I think they are. I think interestingly enough, what Dean Wilkins said the other day has been sticking in the back of my mind. I don't quite know how to evaluate it. She sees a shrinking need for social work as we know it. That really bothered me. Because she said still some social workers haven't caught up with the fact that practice is different. Insurance companies are only going to pay for minimal amounts of therapy at this point, very limited. If you have more than seven visits, I think you have to get re-approval, that kind of thing. People who are supporting the mentally ill don't necessarily have to be master's level social workers. Do you see? So the question is, what are we – what's going to be left for social work? Do you see? Activity is going to be out in the community. It's not going to be in acute hospitals anymore. And you're not going to have long-term therapy being paid for. Now, many social workers have done extremely well for a time in private practice. Number one, they're cheaper than psychiatrists; number two, they know how to get services for people they can combine what their original was with this additional knowledge, psycho-dynamic knowledge. Of course, now we're more sophisticated. We know why some interventions work and why some don't work. We know more about that. But I am concerned about what social work is going to be in the future. I told you that I did this paper way back in the '60s about what our specific role was in relation to public health nursing because there was a great overlap. And that's fine. In certain instances, it doesn't make any difference whether a public health nurse does this, or a social worker does it. But there are certain things that we can do that nurses can't do. I think that if they do away with social work, they're going to

have to reinvent us.

JK: [inaudible]

RC: It's a question of how long that's going to take and how well the social workers adapt. And what Dean Wilkins said [was] there are a lot of other people who can do better some of the things that used to be attributed to us as our function. I think she needs psychiatric nurses at this point who understand a lot more about the medications perhaps than social workers do. Now, I think we were astute – at least I was always concerned and interested – about medical-legal implications when I was in the hospital and how careful you have to be. Of course, now you have to be super-duper careful. We didn't have to be quite as careful as that. But still, there were, even in those days, medical-legal implications. I was always very careful in my seminar to bring that out to students and to have them exercise great caution in terms of what you told –

JK: Issues of confidentiality –

RC: Confidentiality was one thing and particularly –

JK: Making sure people didn't give you information that you'd be bound to report –

RC: That's right. Particularly when we were having – years ago, when we were treating syphilis on a weekly basis, when we didn't have the antibiotics, do you see? They were getting arsenic treatment hypodermically once a week for eighteen months. Of course, most people would have fired them if they knew anything about this. How did they get out –? How did they get away from work to have these treatments? So, this was a very important role for social workers.

Gradually, as medicines change, we have to adapt our roles. I think a lot of social workers hung on to the original roles of one-to-one therapy, do you see? When somebody needed a roof over his head or food, it was fine to do the therapy once you

took care of these human needs. There was a wonderful author, Charlotte Towle, who was a pioneer in my profession. She wrote a classic little book, Common Human Needs, which was very important in the profession.

JK: Do you know if it's still in print?

RC: I think it has to be. It has to be still in print. Common Human Needs by Charlotte Towle, T-O-W-L-E. She was a wonderful lady.

JK: Now, a lot of people think that physicians in particular, but the medical establishment in general, have felt threatened by the use of any para-professionals or auxiliary professionals so that they have had a great deal to do with keeping the role of social workers or physicians' assistants or psychiatric nurses limited and circumscribed.

RC: And how about midwives?

JK: And midwives. Right. Another wonderful example. Did you ever personally feel any prejudice? I know you were in a hospital-based context, and you obviously quickly earned respect. But did you ever observe or personally experience any bias either because of your gender or because of your professional status?

RC: Well, maybe I had a tough hide. I never particularly noticed it. I remember that John Mack at Cambridge Hospital always said, "Well, the good thing about Ruth is she never takes any of this personally." So whether I just had a tough hide or what, I don't know. But I did get it smack between the eyes, as I told you when I was interviewed by Colonel (Hubert?). He said he never would hire women with children. So other than that, I never particularly – I never was aware of it. Now, it might have been there. But I worked well – I had wonderful physicians in the first place to work with. I never particularly was aware of anything like that.

JK: And you never observed – I know it probably has much less kind of in medical workplaces. But there's so much talk about sexual harassment. And, again, gender and equity between doctors and nurses in sort of a –

RC: Well, we never talked about sexual harassment. That was a term we never knew. I was in Salem Hospital from 1942 to 1946. The administrator of the hospital at that time was a wonderful man. He'd been the park commissioner. He left about a year before I left to go to be the administration at Rhode Island Hospital. And a young, rather attractive man came in as administrator. Sorry, I can't remember his name now. I didn't pay any attention to him. I would take a bus from Salem home, and there was a bus that I would catch at five ten or something like that. I noticed that he began coming into my office – I knew his wife, and I knew he had two or three children – pretty much near the time that I was going to leave. I would say to him, "Look, I need to catch this bus, and I'm also having bridge at my house tonight." He said, "Oh well, you can make – stay for a drink. You can make brownies in a minute when you get home." And it didn't dawn on me. I never called it sexual harassment. I was scared of my own shadow at the time. I quickly got out from under somehow or other. I think he was a gentleman that took the hint. But that was the only time that I ever had that experience.

JK: How did you feel about the women's movement in the late '60s and early '70s, when things really started to become very vocal and political?

RC: Well, I am of two minds about the women's movement. I believe in women being able to do what they want to do. I think that I have some qualms about women trying to be all things to all people. I worry about my granddaughter, April, wondering how she's going to make out. I think that there have been some crazy elements in the women's movement that bother me. But I hope we can push those aside and say, "Well, all right. There's kooks in every group," and realize that this is really very important. I had dinner last night – a lady who lives in this house who I have just seen in passing in the corridors

and so forth, one of the trustees of this building. She called up, and she said, "Informally I'm having some people in the house to supper. Will you come? We never have really a chance to chat?" And among the ladies, was an Iranian woman whose apartment I had gotten into by accident three years ago when I was hunting for the painter. I got up there, and her apartment is absolutely stunning. It's all in black and white. And she is usually dressed in black and white. Interesting lady, and she told when she goes back to Iran how bad the situation is for women there. They've got to be completely covered. If by any chance a piece of hair is out or something [sound of slap], they're punished. She was telling me how lucky we are to be in America. So, I am a great one to believe in equal access, equal pay, equal opportunity for women. I don't go for some of these crazy movements.

JK: What are some of the specifics? I'm just curious if you can elaborate because you obviously lived women's [inaudible] –

RC: I think they kind of downgrade men. Then, there is the lesbian movement, which I wouldn't condemn them and I wouldn't penalize them. But for them to say this is the best way of life, I think, is ridiculous. So those are the things, I think, that bother me.

JK: But the concept of women being able to compete in the professional world is something that you were [inaudible] –

RC: That's right. And I was respected by physicians.

JK: And loved by patients, it sounds like.

RC: Yes. My patients, really – I had very fond memories of some of my patients. As a matter of fact, you know that picture you saw of Billy and me on Commonwealth Avenue. That is a very interesting story because we were in the – walking in the Easter parade. We used to like to go down there. But they had live rabbits, and Billy liked to see the rabbits.

JK: Did you get new hats?

RC: Oh, absolutely, always had a new hat. We always had a new hat for –in February – by February, you had to have a kind of a straw hat. There was a lady by the name of Fannette. She made hats or fixed up – if you wanted the brim a little bit narrower or whatever. She did these things. And all the Jewish ladies from Temple Israel shopped at Fannette.

JK: Where was Fannette?

RC: I'm trying to think of where she went. She was on Newbury Street in those days. But she was in Boston, and she was very well known. We all had hats.

JK: So, you bought a hat in February, and then would you buy the outfit to match the hat, or did you have the outfit before you bought the hat?

RC: No. We kind of bought – well, usually we bought – well, mother and I would buy something that was neutral and would go with everything. But on that day, this man came up and said, "Oh, I'm from the Globe, and let me take your picture." It was the husband of one of my patients. It was a rather interesting story because I remember his name. It was Oliver, his first name. This woman came in. And at that time, if you came into the hospital for anything – this was when I was at Peter Bent Brigham. That was before I went to Salem. Let me see. My husband died in '38. I went to Brigham in '39. And by 1940, they had made me head of the syphilis and gonorrhea clinic. It was a venereal disease clinic, and there was state subsidy for it. I was the social worker. This lovely looking woman came in because they did routine Hintons at that time to determine – and not the Wassermann but the Hinton to determine if a person had syphilis. It was a preventive measure because it was very important. If you didn't know it, or if they did know it, they got treatment. This woman came in, and she was devastated. She had apparently had a hospitalization. And during that time, they found that she had a positive

Hinton. She was absolutely devastated. What we used to do at that time was to have the contacts come in so that they were tested to be sure that we could get them. We started her on treatment, and her husband came in. So, I met husband and wife there. It appears that at some point, he must have gotten this and had maybe an early indiscretion or whatever that could happen to anybody. I counseled these two people for months. The marriage was saved. They had children then and so forth. I kept in touch with them. They were very faithful about their treatment. And he spotted me in this, and he took that picture.

JK: At the Easter parade.

RC: Yeah. So it was really very – I remember them so well. I can see him so well – tall, slender man. He was on the photography staff at the Globe.

JK: Did your son mind promenading with you in the Easter parade? Or was that something he enjoyed as well?

RC: Oh, he enjoyed that. He loved it when he was little. But by the time – I didn't do it after he was five or six or something. But when he was a baby, he loved it. He liked seeing it. And oftentimes, we'd go on the swan boats.

JK: You story just now about syphilis reminds me – I don't know if you ever worked with women who either had mastectomies or breast cancer or surgery to explore infertility causes or if you ever had a special interest in or experience with men with women-based ailments.

RC: Infertility, it seems to me, wasn't talked about very much in those days. So I really never had any experience with it. But one of the things that I do remember about breast cancer, and it didn't seem to me, as I look back on it, that it was as endemic as it is today. But one of the things that social workers did in those early days was if an individual was suspected or diagnosed with a malignancy and didn't come back to keep

an appointment, the social workers were sent out to find them.

And I do remember following up with some women for whatever reason. We always then tried to find out the reason why they didn't come back. If it was the fear, it might be money. They didn't have some kind of health insurance program. It might be who is going to take care of my children. We did that with tuberculosis. It was very interesting. One of the thing we did when these women had to be hospitalized for months with tuberculosis in the days before there was any serum for it, we had to make plans for the children. When I was at the Harvard School of Public Health, one of the studies that was going on at that time was what happens to children of mothers who are hospitalized with mental illness. They didn't do nearly as well as the children whose mothers had TB because the public health nurses – it was reportable, you see. Public health nurses were in there and they made a decent plan with either a social agency or whatever for the children. We found in the state hospitals they didn't even ask whether the woman had children when she was admitted to the state mental hospitals. After that study, they put it on the admission sheet.

JK: How important.

RC: I mean it was – it was really – things were primitive in those early days. When I first went – I don't know if I told you that when I first went to the Children's Hospital there was no psychiatry there.

JK: Very interesting.

RC: Yep. Which was very interesting. There was a man by the name of Bronson Crothers that had been a rather distinguished minister who was his father in Cambridge, by the way – the Crothers. And Bronson Crothers had a sister, Marjorie, who was a maiden lady, social lady, who worked with me at Peter Brigham Hospital. She was a flattering lady. She was simply marvelous with older people. She was incredible. And

Bronson Crothers was a neurologist. He also practiced a little, I guess, unofficial psychiatry. And that's all they had. And when I went to work there, visiting hours were on Saturdays from two to three. That was it.

JK: You mean even the parents couldn't even go?

RC: No. If a kid came in, let's say, on Sunday or Monday – I can remember so many times going to the telephone and calling a mother and saying, "Look, Johnny's better. He ate his breakfast this morning, and so on," trying to – because I was a parent. And I couldn't believe it. Well, finally, they brought in a man by the name of Dane Prugh, P-R-U-G-H. Well, this would have been – let me see. When did I go to Children's? I went to the Children's in '47. I think it was '47. They brought this man in, and they kind of slipped him in. The nurses were very much against it. They liked the business of having only somebody come in – they said it disturbed the children. The children cried after the parents left, and so forth. Well, they brought this man in, and he introduced the idea of parents helping in the care of children.

JK: Nationally or within this hospital?

RC: That was within this hospital. Now, I don't know if other cities did better. I'm somewhat provincial because I only worked around Boston.

JK: It's a medical center.

RC: But anyway, there he was. And then they developed this really very strong department of psychiatry there. But they kind of got it in through the back door.

JK: That's unthinkable.

RC: And you know what? Then, the Judge Baker Foundation became part of the Children's Hospital Department of Psychiatry. But during the time of the last big polio

epidemic in ’55, I was doing some instructing at BU at the time. And they asked me if I would come back to Children’s because so many of the workers were making plans for getting some of the polio patients out so they could get polio patients in. They needed a social worker in the outpatient department. And I did. I came in from nine to one thirty, or something like that, to the outpatient department. I found after about six months, looking at my statistics, that I saw very few children who had any kind of organic disease. The kids who were referred to me were either pulling their hair out or having some kind of behavioral problems. There were a few sickle cell anemias, but nothing much. I finally went to Sydney Gellis, who was the chairman of the department, and I said, “You know these doctors are referring these cases to me and saying no appointment to return.” I said, “Really, I do studies, and some of them I can handle quite easily myself with some reassurance to the mother and some suggestions and this, that, and the other thing. “There are others on the other end of the spectrum that are so sick that I know I can’t deal with them, and I have to do something else with them. Then there’s a whole gray area in the middle where I really would like to have a chance to discuss something with the physician. So if they’re going to refer these cases, we have to have one more appointment for them to return so that I can talk to the doctor and determine in one way or another what we do.” I mean, there was nobody – no psychiatrist around that you could –

JK: The chairman was supportive, I hope.

RC: Yes, he was very supportive. Then he had the order go through that – in order to refer to a social worker, there had to be one more return appointment.

JK: I read somewhere that – I think it was before the ’50s – sometimes, they didn’t even tell children what the diagnosis was.

RC: Oh, no. They didn’t. I mean, it was primitive. It was unbelievable to think how primitive it was. That’s only forty years ago.

JK: How did the –? Who helped the kids cope with the terror of being in a place without their parents and not knowing what was wrong with you, not knowing what would happen to you?

RC: Well, there were some nurses who had, you know, who were able to do this and did it just naturally. There were social workers who did it.

JK: So, was that part of the role?

RC: That was part of our job. Particularly, working in the seizure unit was a terrifying kind of thing for children, having to – well, there were all kinds of things.

JK: That was before Dilantin.

RC: Yes. They were just having Dilantin. But then there were a lot – there were a lot of seizures that were very difficult to control, psycho-motor seizures of one kind or another. They were experimenting with a lot of different medicines. And Dilantin didn't work with petit mal. There was one research patient, a woman who was a typist at Boston City Hospital, that Dr. Lennox had, who would have fifteen hundred a day of these lapses. So, Dilantin has been a wonder drug. But it hasn't worked in all kinds of cases. These children would be the butt of – I can remember when I was in Devotion School, one child would have seizures. It was frightening for all of us.

JK: Did you prefer working with children to adults or did you just enjoy both experiences?

RC: I enjoyed both experiences. I found it very – having a child of my own, I found it very hard to work with sick children. I found that difficult. The child is not a small adult. He's different. It was really very different, and I learned a lot. At that time, interestingly enough, if there were emotional problems, it was very different than it is today. The psychiatrist worked –

[END OF SIDE B, TAPE 2]

RC: The social workers worked with the families, so even in a children's hospital, most of our work was with the parents. But of course, we saw the kiddies, and that was hard for me. But that's why – I remember still calling up the mothers because I thought to myself, "I'll make a call to that mother. She'll be so relieved." [laughter]

JK: You really related [inaudible]

RC: Yes, I really did, and it was hard for me.

JK: Was there a Jewish chaplain in the hospital, or did the clergy from the assorted synagogues come to visit kids, or was that not [inaudible] Children's Hospital?

RC: I don't have any recollection of that. Once in a while, I'd see a priest walk through because you could tell; they were in muftis, so you could tell. But I don't have much of a recollection of that. Now, pastoral counseling came in later, it seems to me.

JK: It seems to be a strong presence now.

RC: Very. A very strong presence.

JK: At least in the Boston area [inaudible]. We were going to talk a little bit about how child rearing has changed.

RC: Well, child rearing has changed. Naturally, my daughter-in-law was working in the State House when she was pregnant with April. That was her first pregnancy, and she went to work immediately. Oh, a very short time after April was born, and I think at the beginning had a former maid of her household who was taking care of the babies. I remember feeling a little bit strange about it, thinking that here she was, married and had a nice husband who was working, and why leave this baby? But then I realized that there are some women, and I admire it. I admire those women who can stay at home

with children, but there are some women who wouldn't be good staying at home with children. I think one has to recognize that there are different levels of child rearing, all of which are good. Now, Judy would be the first one to admit that she had a lot of support. I was available many times. Her mother was very available. The father was very good. We did some child rearing in that household, particularly since, later on, she went to law school. She was, I think, pregnant when she went to law school. And the year that my son – the eighteen months or so that they were in Washington with Senator Brooke, she started at George Washington Law School and then transferred up here to Harvard when they moved back here. Well, what was very interesting to me is when I would go out there in the morning to be with the children, Judy was able to put herself upstairs and study and not appear. I couldn't understand it, but I do understand it now because as I've been reading about these au pairs, they have to leave them with children for a whole day. We used to have what was called a "mother's helper," but the mother was around. She might be out marketing for an hour or something like that, but she wasn't leaving a young person there. Judy and Bill always screened the help they had. They did it together, and they fortunately never had any bad experiences. And then we were around. Do you see?

JK: Right. So you probably, growing up, never had a babysitter that was outside the family.

RC: Well, as I was growing up, my mother had two maids, Canadian sisters. One of them was my nursemaid, and the other one cooked in the house. And she was Agnes – and Claris – and they were there for a long time. But my mother was always around. She was always around, do you see?

JK: So, what was the job description of a nursemaid?

RC: Well, the job description of a nursemaid was, as I remember, Claris would get me dressed, and they would – I think they took care of my clothes. That was one thing. I

remember her taking me out to walk and to the playgrounds and coasting. We could coast. It was Amory Park that we would coast at. She would read to me. Maybe we'd make little tea parties and things like that, and that was it. I had a nursemaid until I was maybe seven or eight years old.

JK: Did they live with you, or did they come every day?

RC: No, no. They lived right there. [laughter] There was a (Griswish?) family in Boston. I don't know. You're too young probably to have heard of them – members of Temple Israel. They lived across the street from us. I used to be driven to school. They would say, "They'll ruin that girl. They'll absolutely ruin her. She's being driven to school." But when their granddaughter was born, Edna, they did exactly the same thing. [laughter]

JK: And the proof is in the pudding.

RC: That's right.

JK: How did families decide – how did your family, for example, decide what synagogue to join of the existing synagogues? Was it locale? Was it what's closest to your home, or did each temple have a personality?

RC: Well, I really don't know. A lot of people were members of Ohabei Shalom. How my family decided that they were going to Temple Israel was before I was born, so I just don't know. But I suspect that it was because my father was in business, and a lot of his colleagues were members of Temple Israel. I suspect that probably was the reason. Also, my mother was brought up in a very Reformed kind of household.

JK: And your father, was he brought up in Conservative or Orthodox –?

RC: Well, he came over here from Poland when he was about eleven or twelve years old. His brother, with whom he lived, was a member of Ohabei Shalom when he was a

young fellow, thirteen, fourteen years old. But they chose Temple Israel, and I suspect it was through his business associates, maybe.

JK: Would you characterize your parents' connection to the religion as similar, or was one more connected religiously?

RC: My father, I think, was more connected religiously than my mother, but she went along with it, [laughter] had her new hat for the fall holidays or whatever.

JK: And do you remember any of the discussions over the years at Temple Israel of when, for example, I know – I've only heard and heard quite superficially about changes in the prayer book and changes in the liturgy and changes in the choir. Do you remember any of those specific ¬–

RC: Oh, I certainly do.

JK: – evolutions. Could you share [inaudible]?

RC: I was friendly with the son and daughter-in-law of Jessica Morse. Jessica Schwartz Morse was a lady who came from Albany – very musical, and she was head of the temple committee on music. We had the most beautiful music. The choir was – you could barely see them in the old building on Commonwealth Avenue. But they were in choir robes. We had the most beautiful music. My son, who's very sophisticated and interested in music, would come home from college because, who do you think did the solo for Yom Kippur on the cello but one of the symphony players [inaudible], and it was just beautiful. There was a great concentration on music. (Fromm?), of course, was a marvelous man. Gradually, over the years, to me, it's been ruined. Number one, they're not dressed properly. Number two, they're on the floor of the temple. [laughter] And it has lost some of its glamour for me, and some of the part of which we enjoyed so much was that beautiful music.

JK: It was an all-professional choir?

RC: Yes, more or less.

JK: If anyone wanted to join the audition?

RC: Yes, they could. That's right, but it was a professional choir, and it was not made up – and I don't think even today it's made up of all Jewish people, but at that time it wasn't either. It was a very important part of the services for all of us. My husband too, he went. I remember those cello soloists. The Kol Nidrei was so beautiful.

JK: I still love the music in general.

RC: It's better. Yes. that's right. Well, it just hasn't got the same kind of flare that it had for me. The prayer book, that's the other thing. [laughter] I have the original prayer books with my mother's signature in it, and we had two prayer books, one for my mother and one for my father. I don't know that they ever got one for me. But I looked on with them. [laughter] And that became the new prayer book.

JK: What year was that? Do you remember?

RC: Well, I don't know, but Rabbi Mehlman was already here because I spoke to him about it and got nowhere because the services now are so full of Hebrew, you see, that those of us who were brought up differently can't follow the – we can't follow it. Of course, people do like those 5:45 services. I've been to them a couple of times when it's been Yartzeit or something. I'm perfectly willing to see change, and it doesn't particularly bother me because if it was up to me, the institution wouldn't go on, and I feel the institution is bigger than any one individual. But as I told you, we did a study once about why people joined Temple Israel, and they said they joined because they liked that ambiance, they liked the atmosphere, they liked the dignity, and so forth. Now they're doing everything in this world to destroy it if you go to those – have you been to those

5:45 meetings?

JK: It's definitely – depending on the way your family lives. For me, I really love them because I often zoom home from work, pick up my kids, and we go. And so for us, it works well. If I come home from work, make dinner, and then were I to try to get young children shepherded out of the house at quarter to eight, it would be futile.

RC: Well, during the time that we had the temple meetings and were talking about it, I really woke up to the fact that the lifestyle of today does not lend itself to the lifestyle of yesterday. And therefore, I go along with those meetings.

JK: I wish that –

RC: And I happen to like Cantor Einhorn. I think he is a love of a man.

JK: I have found him all encouraging. I think it's an extraordinary group.

RC: Yes, and Rabbi Zecher is marvelous.

JK: Oh, she's terrific.

RC: Of course, little Ruth Alpers. I haven't seen her for a while, but she's lovely.

JK: Very, very special people, all of them. They work so seamlessly as a quartet.

RC: I know. Yes, they do.

JK: The rabbis and the cantor. I admire and respect and [inaudible].

RC: Yes.

JK: I didn't know any of the other rabbis. I really loved Ronne Friedman, and that was hard.

RC: That must have been hard, yes.

JK: He [inaudible] a very special person.

RC: Yes.

JK: Were you involved in that brouhaha?

RC: Fortunately, I was not. I was involved – the first brouhaha that was awful that I was involved in was when Rabbi Cohon left Temple Israel to form Temple Sinai.

JK: What was the precipitant?

RC: Well, now Rabbi Levi died. Cohon was, I think, if not the first assistant – he didn't have assistants. Do you see? We had people in the congregation like Alan Morse or Judge (Laurie?), who helped out. Judge (Laurie?) is the grandfather of Ruth Alpers.

JK: I knew that she'd had a grandfather who was a congregant, but I didn't know the name.

RC: Well, that was it. He was also Chairman of our Board of Selectmen in Brookline. Very interesting and humorous man. They would assist the rabbi, you see. Well, then Cohon might have been – no, I think there was maybe one or two assistants before him. He expected to succeed Rabbi Levi, and there was a big faction that loved him and walked out with him, and he formed Temple Sinai.

JK: That must have been painful.

RC: That was a very, very painful thing. So, I was not really involved in it, but it was painful for the congregation. I deliberately kept out of this other brouhaha – kept out of it completely. I must say that I'm very fond of Rabbi Mehlman. I think he's made a real contribution. But I also have to tell you that I think he was a very, very foolish man in the

way he engineered that move. I don't know what there was in the relationship between Ronne Friedman and Mehlman, but Mehlman brought him more or less along with him, do you see? After the Cohon debacle, they put there – an assistant rabbi who could only be around for something like three years or five years at the most and then had to go on. It was like a proving ground, do you see? Somehow or other, and I don't know how it happened because my father always went to annual meetings, and after his death, I have never missed an annual meeting. [laughter] I don't know how it slipped by, but they changed. He got that changed, and he kept Friedman here, and he did more or less independently what he wanted to do. And then he wanted an academic position. Now, I think it's one thing – Mehlman is an excellent teacher. I think it's one thing to teach a course when you have the prestigious pulpit of Temple Israel under you, but as an academic, I have to tell you that he can't get a real academic position because he hasn't published. I don't know what's finally going to happen in this thing. Presumably, he said he was going to be through in four years. But he never signed the statement that they wanted him to sign. Now, I think the thing that was a mistake.

JK: What statement? I didn't even know there was a statement.

RC: There was a group of the trustees, I think, that have been negotiating with him. Now, I think, Joan, that he made a mistake. There were several people who went to him and said, "Don't let this come to a vote. Do not let it come to vote." He didn't listen. I think he felt – and I think – what's the name of that—don't quote. I shouldn't put this on the tape.

JK: I'll turn this off for a second. Hold on [recording paused] I know it was a huge turnout. It really was.

RC: So, it was a shame, and I really feel that Friedman was the sacrificial lamb.

JK: He's an extraordinary man, and I considered him to be really one of the best teachers out there.

RC: Yes, he was. Yes, he was.

JK: He was very special, and he was totally devoted to the congregation.

RC: Yes he was. He was wonderful with the children; he really was.

JK: So, the [inaudible] congregation is very lucky to have him [inaudible].

RC: That's right. How's he doing up there?

JK: Extremely well.

RC: They like him.

JK: He's beloved as he deserves to be.

RC: Well, that's good. It's probably the best thing. I think it's the best thing for him.

JK: It's still hard for me to –

RC: I know. I know it, but what is [inaudible] –

JK: All the rabbis are aware of it.

RC: Yeah. They are. They're really very special people.

JK: Special place. I like the sense of social consciousness that they all brought to bear.

RC: I think so.

JK: That's been a [inaudible] in your life.

RC: Yes, I think this has been very good. Very, very good. You have more of a sense of community.

JK: In fact, I'd like to hear more about your Committee to End Elder Homelessness and, again, how you keep finding both the energy and inspiration. We talked about whether you cited Judaism for any part of the social consciousness, and you said your father really was your muse in that regard. But I'm still interested. There are so few people in the world in general – so few people who really translate their beliefs, their thoughts, and their commitments into action the way you do. I'd just like to hear a little bit more about the role that social justice has played in your life and how you just keep [inaudible].

RC: Well, I suppose that I was brought up in a kind of an atmosphere where you didn't tell lies and you didn't cheat people. That kind of thing. You didn't owe money. You paid your bills, and you didn't live beyond your means. I don't know. I think that from that point of view and going to professional school and seeing people in need at the height of the Depression, really seeing – at that time, you saw real hardship and sadness and desperation. I think all of these things had an impact, an influence on me. Then, of course, my very first job – I don't know if I told you this – after graduation was with the Emergency Relief Administration.

JK: No, you never – I didn't see that on your questionnaire either.

RC: It was very interesting. Katherine Hardwick, who was the Director of the School of Social Work at Simmons – at that time, they didn't call them deans; they called them directors. She was drafted by the government to head up our Emergency Relief Administration in Boston, and so she asked me – I had just graduated. They had a project for employment of the physically handicapped. In fact, there was a lady by the name of Florence Birmingham, long before you were born, at that time, who was making a big fuss on Beacon Hill because single women couldn't get employment on Emergency Relief Projects. It was for families. They had top priority. She started a homemaker

service, helping – women were sent into homes, women who just had babies or who were sick, or if a mother had died and they needed somebody in there. She started that. It was an Emergency Relief Administration Project. Then, the old Boston – when the ERA went out of business, the old Boston Provident Association took it over. When they merged with Family Service, that old homemaker service is still going on at Family Service. In fact, I've been chairman of it for years. I just gave it up a couple of years ago, of that homemaker service. Well, they also had a question then about physically handicapped people who couldn't get on there. So we started this project of training these physically handicapped people who had never worked in their life – it wasn't that they were unemployed as a result of the Depression – to be power machine stitchers. I was to review all of the applications of these people and determine who would be eligible financially and who physically was up to it. There was a place called Community Workshops, which made uniforms for people in hospitals at that time. There was a committee of people, the Industrial Aid Society, which was a group that worked with ex-prisoners, community workshops which made these things, which was kind of like a consultant group to this power stitching machine operation. And that was my first job. Really, to live through the Depression and to see the needs of people, I think furthered my interest in trying to improve the welfare of individuals.

JK: When you were a social worker in the hospital setting, how did they handle people who were uninsured? How did you handle people? You said sometimes people didn't come back for follow-up visits or treatment

RC: Well, that's right. Well, all of the hospitals had money –

JK: Free care?

RC: – free care provisions at that time. How much was the free care when I was – I mean, three dollars and a half was the per diem, right? [laughter] Things weren't as expensive. We didn't have all of these terribly expensive mechanical things – MRIs,

scans, God knows what. It was a different way of practicing medicine than it is today. There was a free care fund. I don't know if you remember the Hill –

JK: I do.

RC: The Hill-Burton Law.

JK: They required anyone receiving federal funds to take care of –

RC: That is correct. And so that was very important.

JK: So you didn't see many people turned away for lack of ability to pay?

RC: No. In my experience, I never saw anybody turned away, but what they did was to turn them away to city hospitals. And then what happened, of course, when Medicare and Medicaid came in, in 1967, these teaching hospitals were glad because they got the money, so they tried – I remember the Boston Lying-In – our mothers at the Bromley Heath Housing Development liked City Hospital, always had a wonderful obstetrical service. Duncan Reed, who was the Chief over at the Boston Lying-In, came to me one day over at the Martha Elliot Center and said, "I don't know. We need to get more of these mothers over here to the Boston Lying-In." Well, they didn't like to go to the Boston Lying-In. I hated to tell Duncan Reed that. [laughter] I said, "You know, it's not as friendly a place for them as City Hospital. They're happier there."

JK: This is another theme I admired so in our discussions. You seem so sensitive to and able to empathize with the needs of different cultural groups.

RC: Yes.

JK: And clearly, you've worked with a lot of African Americans –

RC: That's right.

JK: – Latinos and people from other cultures. You talked about an Asian family in, I believe it was, Salem.

RC: Salem, that's right.

JK: You told me about them.

RC: The elephant.

JK: Tell me more about your genuine commitment to living life as a person without prejudice and with empathy. That's also rare.

RC: Yes. I don't know. I can't tell where that came from except I think that – I have to say my social work training was the thing that did that for me. And also, the fact that I was trained – part of my professional training was at Boston City Hospital, where I was used to working with the different cultures. I just never thought about it.

JK: So, you don't think that, for example, some people feel that Jews have a special relationship with African-Americans or at least a special sense of what it's like to be a minority group because they, too, are a minority group.

RC: Yes. I never really and truly felt myself as a minority. I never did, and I don't know whether –

JK: Living in Brookline –

RC: ¬– that was stupidity on my part or whatever. I just don't know.

JK: And working at City Hospital must have been – in terms of the facility, that must have been harder in terms of getting services.

RC: Well, that was very interesting. The two stints that I did at City Hospital I found absolutely fascinating. And going through those dungeons to get from the main

administration building where the social service office was and get over into the outpatient department, you had to go through what we called the catacombs. [laughter] And the different smells. I can still remember it.

JK: The piles and [inaudible]

RC: It was really a very interesting experience, but of course, the kinds of cases that we saw was unbelievable. It was a fantastic place for training. I remember one of the things that was of great interest to me on the neurological service was the diagnostic problem with this young girl, who was maybe fifteen or sixteen years old, and the question came up as to whether or not she had multiple sclerosis. I think that up until that time, they didn't think that anybody that young would begin to develop it. It was a question of whether it was hysterical or whether it wasn't. I was the social work student who was asked to do a history on this young girl. And it was interesting. I can't remember now, but there were certain things within her growth and development that made one suspect that this could have a hysterical basis. So, it was interesting. These were some of the things that they used social workers for, was to help really with diagnosis when there was a very gray area.

JK: And have you felt in your experience, which is vast, both in terms of the breadth of it but the number of institutions that you've worked in, do you feel that there's a two-tier system of health care in our country? Have you observed it first-hand?

RC: Well, I felt that the very poor and the very rich got the best care because the very poor were taken care of in teaching hospitals. I never thought that it was bad to have medical students and interns because they had very, very good supervision, do you see? I thought these people got superb care. I think it was generally the middle class that was kind of shopping around that perhaps didn't get as good care. But certainly, the very poor got excellent care when I was around hospitals. How it is today, I don't know – how it is for anybody today. But I always was interested in medical education. In fact, in the

intern office that I'm taking care of now, they have medical students because there's a new arrangement now at the Harvard Medical School, where they expose the students much earlier –

JK: [inaudible]

RC: ¬– and they put them in doctor's offices. They give you a little slip and say, "Do you mind having a medical student with you?"

JK: So, if you were asked to cite the professional accomplishment of which you're most proud, or accomplishments – there's so many – what would you cite as either the pinnacle of your career or the single achievement [inaudible]?

RC: I think the ten years that I was at the Harvard School of Public Health. That really was. That was when I was published the most, and I found it stimulating. Social work has always been preoccupied on the one-to-one basis, and what public health taught me was that you have to look at the greatest good for the greatest number of people and that you have to think in terms perhaps of priorities. I think it was that outlook. The other thing was, of course, you always feel good about something that you think you helped to create. Remember, when I went to the School of Public Health, I was sent out there. I worked two days a week. I was sent out there on Tuesdays to this Well Child Clinic, which was in a gymnasium.

JK: In what town or cities?

RC: This was in Jamaica Plain, Bromley Heath Housing Development. I don't know if I told you that Martha Elliot took that –

JK: [inaudible]

RC: – took that clinic over because it was used for the teaching of medical students and health offices. People were training for health offices. It was a once-a-week clinic. And then, through the poverty program, we added a gynecological service, and we were able to do a little more treatment. And then, later on in the ‘60s, came the big maternal and infant care and children and youth grants. We developed it into this center, which eventually became the Martha Elliot Family Health Center. I feel very strongly that I had a very, very important role in the development of that service, which is a fantastic service now. As I said, Children’s Hospital has just built a state-of-the-art center there.

JK: That must be an extraordinary source [inaudible] you supplied [inaudible] a safety net –

RC: That is really the thing that I have the most – that I feel the most satisfaction in, and I think that those papers have been in – I’m trying to think of what – some important publication, some of those papers were included as references. So, I feel very good about that.

JK: Have you kept any kind of journal or diary or log of your activities?

RC: No, I haven’t. The other thing is I can’t even show you – I can show you one reprint that somebody just sent to me. I don’t know what happened to those reprints when I moved out of Boston University. Of course, I can give you the references. It’s in my vitae if anybody ever wanted to look them up.

JK: Wonderful. You might think about an autobiography for your next project.

RC: Project. [laughter]

JK: It’s just extraordinary what you’ve accomplished. The other thing that I wanted to hear a little bit more about, and again if it’s not comfortable – I noticed that you wrote on your questionnaire that your second husband, Phil, adopted your son.

RC: Yes.

JK: And I have an adopted son, obviously with different circumstances. But I wondered if your son – if that was an issue for him. Did he stay in touch with his grandparents?

RC: Well, that part of it was very interesting and painful. My first husband's family, I kept in touch with. They really didn't reach out to me as much as I might have thought. They didn't like the idea of my going to work because I think they felt that it reflected on the fact that maybe my husband didn't leave enough money to take care of me and so forth. But I kept in touch with them. I usually did the initiating.

JK: Were they from Boston?

RC: They were from Boston. His mother was living. She had been widowed very young, had three children. There was my husband Irvin, there was a brother, Melvin, who has since died, who was a very brilliant man, worked for Fortune magazine, and a sister, Evelyn Cohen, who was a – they were members of Temple Israel. Julian Cohen was the Blackstone Plush Mills, and they were wealthy and had two children, Robert and Charles. Charles committed suicide, and Robert is quite friendly with my son. They're first cousins. I told them when I was going to get married again. They wished me well, but they wouldn't come to the wedding. It would be too hard for them to come to the wedding. I could understand that. But they really didn't accept my husband, and it wasn't as if I didn't marry somebody nice. But they didn't, and so gradually, while I kept in touch with them, I saw less and less of them after I was married. Phil kept saying, "You know, I really need to adopt Bill. It's important." But I thought, well, Irving's mother was still living, and maybe that would be difficult. Well, one day, Billy came home from school and said to me, "Mother, the kids are all asking me why my name is different from yours." So, I thought to myself, "That's it. I've got to really live for the living." So, we went through what's called a mother-child adoption. We were at Phil's twenty-fifth reunion at Harvard when the summons came for us to go to the probate court, and so we

left briefly They take the child in chambers. He knew what the process was.

JK: You had to go to Dedham?

RC: To Dedham. They take the child in chambers and talk to him if he's under fourteen as to whether he wants this. Of course, Bill said he wanted it, and so that was it.

JK: Did he continue to see his paternal relatives?

RC: Yes. Yes, he did. He continued to see her. They really began to take an interest in Bill again – oh, and then they gave a joint engagement party. Robert and Bill were engaged at about the same time. They gave a joint occasion party for these two kids. But then they began to take a real interest in him when he ran for office, and then he had an election party or something at their house. And then, of course, the boys became – Robert and Bill and the wives saw each other. So they've kept that contact.

JK: And obviously, your second husband was very supportive of your work.

RC: Yes, he was.

JK: [inaudible] very proud of you.

RC: It's so interesting because the tradition of women not working – I was very, very careful. I sublimated my career to that of my husband, which women don't do today. But to me, I still was brought up in the idea that the man was the breadwinner, you see? If I had worked full-time at the Harvard School of Public Health, my salary in those days would have been $7500 a year. But I didn't work full-time, so you can imagine what I got. [laughter] But anyway, he was supportive, but it never really interfered with him because I always tried to leave after he left in the morning and get home before he was home at night. I did go on a few things on my own. If I had to go to Washington for anything, maybe for two or three days, I'd go. I remember going to some legal meetings. He was

the President of the New England Branch of what was then called the City Solicitors and Town Council. He was Town Council for Brookline. We went off to Kansas City, and I was to read a paper at the American Public Health Association in Detroit. I remember having to leave him in Kansas City, go to Detroit, read this paper, and come back to Kansas City. I can't remember. It was a terribly roundabout route to get back to Kansas City. But I really and truly did work around him. That's what I would say.

JK: It's such an honor to give a paper at APHA.

RC: Yes.

JK: It must have been a great –

RC: Well, it was. It was great.

JK: They get thousands of people.

RC: I know. [laughter] That's right. That's where my papers were published was in the Journal of the American Public Health Association. I had one paper published in the Social Work Journal, which is when I was with Dr. Lennox called "A Patient Faces Epilepsy." And I did one – then I was on this panel for children with severe burns, and that was published in Children, which was the magazine of the United States Children's Bureau, which is now defunct. It's under the Public Health Service.

JK: I wanted to ask just a little bit about – I know you mentioned you still go to synagogue for Yahrzeits.

RC: Yes.

JK: Do you observe your parents and grandparents or your husbands and parents? I'm just curious how far back –

RC: No, I don't. Once in a while, I go on either my mother's or father's Yahrzeit, but mostly, it's for my husband that I go.

JK: And do you burn candles on Friday night?

RC: No, I don't. Interestingly enough, my kids I see on Chanukah. I always go there. I see that they have all the candles.

JK: So, would you characterize your son and his wife and their children as about the same level of observance as you and Phil, or would you say they're a little bit more observant?

RC: No, a little bit less, I would say.

JK: A little bit less.

RC: A little bit less. In their home, they're more observant, but they don't go to synagogue.

JK: Do they have any institutional –?

RC: No. Many times, I say, "How would you like to go with me? I have an extra ticket," or something like that. But I don't get any takers. But my grandson-in-law – my new grandson-in-law has come with me.

JK: But do the kids all identify as Jews?

RC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, completely. Completely.

JK: So it's a strong cultural [inaudible] –

RC: But I can't believe that April brought home a Jewish – because she was around with everybody, but when push came to shove, I guess. It was interesting when she was – I

said to her, “How did you meet Jeff?” She said, “Well, I met Jeff through (Carla?).” You talk about prejudice and the rest of it, (Carla?) was a Black girl and was a friend of his at Harvard. (Carla?) came from Detroit, but she would have many meals with me at Christmas. April would say, “(Carla?) isn’t going home for Christmas. May I bring her to Christmas dinner?” Or “May I bring her to Thanksgiving dinner?” or something like that. And (Carla?) was just lovely. (Carla?) eventually went to law school here, Harvard Law School, and had a brilliant career and went out to California. Got a job in a law firm out there, but then was selected to be a law clerk for whatever that circuit is out there, the Fifth Circuit or whatever it was. Her law firm said, “Okay, take that assistant for a year and then come to us.” Well, she said she met him through (Carla?). So, I had a couple of sleepless nights wondering to myself was he Black. I said to myself, “Now, Ruth, you’re the great liberal. Stop it. So finally, I got up my courage to say to Judy, “Judy, let me ask you about Jeff. Is he Black?” She said, “Why Mother, of course not. Carla only dates WASPS.” Well, it seems that (Carla?) married his roommate, who was a Jewish boy. And (Carla?), of course, was the maid of honor at April’s wedding last year.

JK: Where were they married?

RC: They were married at home, in their house in Newton. I thought they might have a judge, but they had a Justice of the Peace. Very nice. I’ll show you – I have a little picture that just came out in the Globe that I’ll show you.

JK: Oh, so it’s that recent.

RC: It’s that recent. I have some pictures of the wedding, which you might like to see.

JK: I’d love to see them. Just maybe closing for now, we’ve talked about your greatest professional successes, and we’ve talked a little bit, although not in a concentrated way – maybe we can meet again – there’s so much here. But I’d love to know about your greatest adventures, either travel or personal, or what has been especially fun and

exciting for you.

RC: Well, for me, of course, the biggest thrill was my first trip to Europe, which was when Phil said, "Now, we've got to plan ahead, and we're going to go when the Bar Association goes to London." And we had to go to – I think we had to attend either two or three other annual meetings of the American Bar Association in order to be eligible to go that time. In '57, we went to one in New York and one someplace else. Well, that first European trip for me was absolutely unbelievable. And when I got to Paris, I left Phil to unpack, and I went out on my own, and I didn't come back until about 7:00. And he kept thinking to himself, "How am going to look for her in Paris?" It was absolutely – it was an incredible experience for me. That was a wonderful adventure. The other thing was when my husband took me back to Hawaii. I'd never been to Hawaii. Of course, he'd been there during the war, and he was still a member of the Hawaiian bar. When we went back there, that was a fantastic experience for me. I loved it.

JK: What you were in Europe, you said you went to London and Paris, did you go to other –?

RC: Yes, we went to Italy. And Rome. Rome was just unbelievable. I had a wonderful experience. I don't know if you've ever heard of the Examining Committee of the Boston Public Library. Well, there was an Examining Committee of eighty. I don't know if it was established by the Legislature or whatever. One year, they must have decided – and thirty-five percent of the use of the Boston Public Library is from suburbia outside of Boston. So, they do have members of the committee from the suburbs. I don't know how I got appointed, but one particular year, they must have decided they wanted to put social workers on there, and Elizabeth Maginnis and I were put on. Elizabeth Maginnis was the daughter. She was a social worker at Children's Hospital, but she was the daughter of Maginnis of Maginnis and Walsh, the famous ecclesiastical architect. She and I were put on. Whether I got put on through the Friedman's, I don't know. I think Lee

Friedman had been a member. So, I was put on. At that time, Archbishop Cushing was the chair of the committee. Here was I going to Rome, and I was dying to have an audience with the Pope. Not a single audience, but an audience. Sure enough, I spoke to him, and he wrote a letter and said I was a valuable member of his flock. [laughter] So, when I got to Rome –

JK: This was the letter from Maginnis?

RC: This was the letter from Archbishop Cushing, who was the chairman.

JK: Oh, from Archbishop Cushing, okay.

RC: So, armed with this letter, when I got to Rome, my husband was exhausted, and he said to me, "I'm not going to go with you." I was to go take this letter to the North American College, so I took a taxi in Rome the first day to the North American College. Who do I meet there but a Father O'Hare? Father O'Hare came from Brookline. He was the curate that received me. His father was the famous O'Hare, who I think had done the first appendectomy or whatever, and he was at Brigham. [inaudible] We had a wonderful reunion, he and I. And I thought to myself, "Oh, I got it made." He said to me, "The Pope is, of course, at [inaudible], but there are a lot of important people in Rome at this time, and he may come for an audience. If so, we'll get in touch with her at your hotel." We were staying at the time Excelsior on the Via Veneto. I haunted that mailbox every morning, but none came. [laughter]

JK: So you didn't get your audience.

RC: I didn't get my audience, but Rome was – I like Rome almost better than Paris because Rome – I had been a big scholar of Latin and loved it.

JK: I heard.

RC: And going over the Appian Way and all the rest of it, it was a fantastic experience. We went to the to the [inaudible]. I just adored it.

JK: Did you go to an opera?

RC: Yes, we did. Aida.

JK: Aida?

RC: And I never wanted to see Aida again after that. [laughter]

JK: You can't. There's no other place to see it.

RC: No, no other place. So, that was wonderful. I loved it.

JK: It must have been.

RC: Now, more recently, I took an Elderhostel to Sorrento. That was a fantastic –

JK: Beautiful. Had you been to Northern Italy the first time?

RC: I had been to Northern. I had never been to Southern Italy. This was a really wonderful experience. This was after my husband died, and this friend of mine, Ruth Smith, from New York, who had taken a number of Elderhostels, said to me, "Ruth, look, I really think this would be good for you, and I think you ought to do it." I thought to myself, "Gee, I never traveled alone, and I don't know, maybe this is the way I ought to …". This was a couple of years ago. So, I went on this trip, and it was a marvelous experience, really, I just loved it, particularly going to Pompeii and the early Greek settlements there.

JK: Did you go to the Grotta Azzurra?

RC: Yes, I did.

JK: You took a boat.

RC: They took us on a hydrofoil to Capri.

JK: Jackie Kennedy used to shop there.

RC: Yes, that was – absolutely. It was such a blow to me when I saw Capri, and then I saw like this little alley. I went down this alley, and there was Ferragamo and Hermes, and I couldn't believe it.

JK: Lots of shopping.

RC: Then we went up to Anacapri.

JK: I don't know where that is. [inaudible]

RC: They provided a little bus for us to go up there, and that is where, if you [inaudible] San Michele, there was this very interesting Swedish man, very wealthy man, and he built this villa up there. It's got the most fantastic view and never did you see such mosaic floors in your life, and the stuff that he collected. It's a marvelous thing to see. They took us up there. And we went to Paestum, which is this early – I remember this early Greek settlement. And they talk about – with their Italian – we had some marvelous – [End Of Side A, Tape 3] – mozzarella. I couldn't imagine what they were talking about. Well, they have this flock of water buffaloes there. They make this marvelous cheese. This Elderhostel – we stayed at a hotel, [inaudible] in Sorrento, and they would pack a lunch for you, but then they would stop where you could buy wine, and there they stopped, and you could have a salad of this marvelous tomato, buffalo mozzarella, and olive oil.

JK: And basil.

RC: Basil, that's right. Wonderful. So, it was really great. We enjoyed that trip very, very much.

JK: That sounds great. So maybe you'll do more Elderhostels.

RC: Well, I just did one in Albuquerque.

JK: Is that right? You went to Albuquerque in February.

RC: That's right.

JK: Did you enjoy that?

RC: I enjoyed it very much, yes.

JK: In what year did your husband die?

RC: September '94.

JK: [inaudible]

RC: [inaudible] I'd never lived alone, interestingly enough. Now, a lot of young women have lived alone today. Now, my granddaughter worked in New York for four years after college before she went to business school. She lived alone, but I never lived alone. That was hard to get used to.

JK: [inaudible] Did you ever think about going to do some kind of community housing where there's more structured interaction?

RC: Yes and no. I've thought about it. Number one, I have to tell you that a place like Fox Hill or North Hill are very, very expensive. Very expensive. I don't have equity in anything. If I owned something – I rent this place. So, I would have to take out a big hunk of money if I went there, and I honestly don't feel that I'm ready for that yet because

the people there are really quite infirm. Some of them are. Some of them aren't. But they're infirm. Recently, when I was asked to be on the Board of Goddard House, I refused. Goddard House has just put up some assisted living where the old [unclear] hospital was.

JK: Right, I've seen that under construction.

RC: It's very pretty. I thought to myself, "Gee, that's right in the center of things," do you see? But the rooms are so small.

JK: You have such a beautiful space.

RC: I don't think that – I'm just not ready to consider that yet. I also feel if you have a little money to turn yourself with, and you're on a car line the way I am, you can get help if you need it.

JK: [inaudible]

RC: So, I've kind of postponed thinking about that, but I was on a panel for the MIT [unclear] just a few years ago. They wanted to know about these retirement places. And at that time, we studied Fox Hill, North Hill, Brookhaven, which had just opened, which is in Lexington, and [inaudible] which is the oldest one. That's in Bedford. And one of the things that's very interesting is that they all have different arrangements as to what happens when you have to go into the health center. They all have health centers connected with them. And those arrangements are very different, and you really need a lawyer to take a look at it. Now [unclear] and Willard was the most specific. You get sixty days a year in the health center for free. If, at the end of sixty days, you can't go back to your home, to your own apartment, or what have you, then it was $135 a day. It probably would be more now. So, in addition to putting down a big hunk of money, you need a lot of cash because the maintenance fees are high per month, plus you really have to put in your budget something for transportation if you no longer drive because

you're out in the sticks.

JK: Those places have never appealed to me either, and it sounds like you have a nice group of friends who are still around.

RC: I do.

JK: People checking on each other.

RC: Yes, I'm fortunate in that that there are people around here.

JK: Tell may about your book club.

RC: Oh, the book club.

JK: That sounds like fun.

RC: Amaranth, it's called –A-M-A-R-A-N-T-H. I don't know how they ever got that name, but it's a club that must be close to a hundred years old. Originally, it was like the sewing circles in Salem where your mother was a member, and then you became a member.

JK: You inherited the –

RC: That's no longer necessary. I remember when I first made the acquaintance of those sewing circles in Salem, I couldn't believe it.

JK: [inaudible] generations.

RC: That's right. But anyway, that's how it first started, and there are still some people in the club whose mothers were members. But gradually, they've taken in other people. I had several invitations to come in but never could accept them because I never was free on a Tuesday. But when I retired, then I went into it. And it's made up – we have about twenty-two members, and we try to keep it at that. We have a leader, and they're

a bunch –

JK: A leader who is one of you, or does the leader rotate?

RC: No, no. The leader is – we pay him. He was first an instructor in literature at MIT, and now he's at Harvard. He's really very, very good. He's a Greek. Theo Theoharis is his name. Theoharis, have you heard of him?

JK: I've heard of Theoharis.

RC: Have you heard? That's right, and he's really very good. And this group of people is – they're very intelligent, very, very intelligent.

JK: Is it all women?

RC: All women. All women. But now, the leader happens to be an expert on Joyce. I had never read Ulysses because I was in graduate school, and I was already reading professional literature. I never got to it. Well, they decided that as long as he was such an expert in Joyce, that anybody who wanted to volunteer for a group and pay a little bit more money, for four sessions with Theo on Ulysses, so we decided – there were a group of us decided that we would do it. And Betty Vorenberg kind of organized it. Her husband –

JK: I know Jim.

RC: You know Jim. Okay. Well, anyway, she more or less organized it. I mean, there are really – for this particular thing, two husbands decided that they would join. And Jim was one, and the other one was Howard Hiatt. So, these men are not fools, and I want to tell you, they weren't buying the interpretations of the leader. I mean, I would never have been able to go through Joyce without a leader, I can tell you that much. We had four sessions, and the last session was a potluck supper. We really had such a good

time. [inaudible]

JK: Well, this book club is amazing because now they're all the rage, but it sounds like this is one of the real [inaudible]

RC: This is one of real early ones, and what we have is – like they did in Salem, we serve tea, coffee, and cookies or cakes or something when they first come in. We meet in different people's houses.

JK: You rotate.

RC: Yes, and now we're meeting a lot in the retirement homes. That's how I'm getting to know the retirement homes. Now, I went to Orchard Cove the last time, and that's the one that was built by the Hebrew Rehabilitation Center, and it's in Canton. It's got all the others by a mile. I can tell you it is beautiful. It really is.

JK: Space and everything's cheaper, probably. The farther you go from Boston.

RC: I don't think so. I think it's more expensive.

JK: Land?

RC: Well, I think that the apartments are bigger, and each apartment has its own washer and dryer and [inaudible]. Of course, the people are younger because, at Fox Hill and North Hill, they've aged in place. [laughter] That's been the difference.

JK: [inaudible] you've approached aging with such vitality. I meant what I said, I mean, you really have just so much more energy and spirit than people my age, myself included. I feel so [inaudible by you. Do you do anything health-wise that's special for you in terms of –?

RC: No, I don't.

JK: Have you over the years?

RC: No, I never did. Well, I played tennis when I was younger, and Phil and I used to play a little golf together. We had a nice pitch and putt thing out in Middleton, and in the summers, we'd do that. He played tennis; he was an avid tennis player and only quit when he was in his upper eighties, really. There was a group of older men down in Marblehead who would play tennis together, and that was nice. I was no athlete in any way, shape, or manner. I walked, and I walk a lot.

JK: It's your genetics, too.

RC: And that's all I do.

JK: You obviously watch your diet because you're so slim.

RC: Well, yes, I do. I'm not as careful about it as I should, but I kind of – I move around a lot. Let me put it that way, and I walk.

JK: It's interesting –

RC: And that's why it's a wonderful place for me to live because I can walk everywhere.

JK: It's a great location [inaudible]. I feel tired a lot, raising children and working. Some tell me, when you get into your fifties, you get a new energy surge. Do you remember that at all? Someone said that women, as they enter menopause, really start to feel more energized.

RC: Well, I'm trying to think.

JK: You've probably been energetic all your life.

RC: I have had a lot of energy, but also, I had a hysterectomy in the '50s just after I came back from Europe, and I felt, after that – because I was kind of worn down every

month. But I felt after that that those were really the good feeling years of my life – very good. I had a lot of energy because, as I say, my husband never went into the kitchen. So I kept house, and I had help, good part-time help, I would say, who cooked. But after dinner, I could sit down, and that's when I did a lot of my writing. Now, I can't work at night. I really can't. Once in a while. I did do that paper for Dean Wilkens at night and certain things that I do. I take care of a lot of my own finances. So, I'm at my desk a lot, and I do that.

JK: So to just close for today, I was thinking about if your three grandchildren and perhaps someday, great-grandchildren were in front of you, what kind of advice would you give them in terms of living their life or what has mattered to you and what values you would impart?

RC: Well, I would tell them to really get very interested in something, whether it's a hobby or something like that that you feel really committed to. Now, I hate to ask people for money. That's the most difficult thing for me, and yet I'm very committed to this project of the Committee to End Elder Homelessness. To some extent, I feel in a way I'm being exploited because they're honoring me at this function – as our treasured elders, Elsie Frank and myself, are going to be.

JK: When is this going to be?

RC: This is going to be on the eighth of April. And Elsie Frank, you know, is the mother of Barney Frank. It's a money-raising scheme, okay. I just hate it. So I'll be very glad when this capital campaign is over. But I would tell them to feel deeply about something, to really feel committed. If you are really committed and interested in something, you are not so preoccupied with yourself. I think that's an important thing. Be interested in other people and help other people as much as you can. I want to show you some of these wedding – [recording paused]

JK: Okay, we're back on the record, and I'm looking at a wonderful picture of Ruth and Ruth Smith in Sorrento in front of some gorgeous ruins. [inaudible]

RC: This is –

JK: Are these your grandchildren? Is that what [inaudible]?

RC: Yes. This is the bride and groom. I gave her –

JK: She's beautiful.

RC: I gave the brunch after the wedding for the out-of-town guests.

JK: Where was that at?

RC: And this was at the Marriott Hotel, and you couldn't take – you couldn't serve any liquor until noon. They wanted it at 11:00, and so now I'm announcing that the bar's open.

JK: She's lovely.

RC: Yes, there she is.

JK: Oh, my goodness. Oh, what a wonderful picture. Now, what kind of work does he do? You've told me about her work.

RC: He's in Fidelity.

JK: Beautiful. She looks like a real blend of her two parents from the pictures that –

RC: Yes, she does.

JK: So [inaudible] your son and –

RC: Yes, they are.

JK: Oh, that's nice. This is a beautiful photograph.

RC: There she is. And there I am [inaudible].

JK: I love your dress.

RC: Well, the dress is marvelous. I have to tell you about that dress. [laughter]

JK: Who is this gentleman here between Bill and Jeff?

RC: Oh, that's Billy. Young Billy.

JK: Oh, young Billy. I haven't seen a picture of him since he was a little – I mean, I saw some pictures of him as a child. Is that Jeff's sister?

RC: No, that's Jackie.

JK: Oh, I see.

RC: That's my middle granddaughter. And this is Judy's mother. You see, Judy is short, and her mother is short, and we're all so tall. [laughter]

JK: This is [inaudible]

RC: And Jackie is the sports reporter.

JK: Oh, how great. She's the newspaper –

RC: [inaudible] for the Middlesex News. She graduated from Columbia.

JK: She looks like she lives in Florida.

RC: [inaudible]

JK: Wow, what a suntan.

RC: She's a cutie. These are the two.

JK: Beautiful picture.

RC: Well, the dress, I have to tell you, I thought to myself, "Now, what kind of a dress am I going to get?" An older woman, I have to have long sleeves and so forth. So I fussed around and fussed around different places and didn't find anything that I liked. It was a summer wedding. So finally, I swallowed my pride, and I went to where she was having her wedding gown made, which was at Yolanda's. If you've never been to Yolanda's, you haven't lived. It's a zoo, an absolute zoo. So I walk in there, and I explain my situation; I was looking for a dress. And she brings out stuff for fifteen hundred dollars, so I said, "Well, now look, you know – let's get this – I don't want to waste your time, and I don't want you to waste my time, but I'm not paying that kind of money." So she looks at me rather snottily, "And what were you prepared to pay?" So I said, "Well, somewhere between two and three hundred dollars, and the nearer two hundred dollars you could get, the better." Well, she brought stuff out, which was good. [laughter] So, that was the story of the dress.

JK: Were you married in a wedding dress for either of your [inaudible] –?

RC: Yes. And Jackie has the picture. You didn't go to the –?

JK: I did, but I don't remember the wedding exhibit. I saw it so long ago, I mean when it first opened.

RC: Well, anyway, I was there. It's a white satin dress, and it's in front of the door in Marblehead. I was in Marblehead. Jackie wanted that picture, so she has it, but I took it away from her for the exhibit.

JK: Is the dress still around?

RC: No, the dress is not around. I paid $29.50 for my dress. When I thought of what my granddaughter paid …

JK: Where did you buy your dress?

RC: In (May Lasky's?).

JK: Where was that?

RC: It was right on Beacon Street in a house, and she was a very nice lady – $29.50. [laughter]

JK: Oh, boy, And you wore a veil. I mean, was it a traditional, formal –?

RC: Oh, yes. Yes, it was. The second time I was just married in a dress [inaudible]

JK: This is a [inaudible] photograph.

RC: Oh, that was last summer.

JK: Where was this?

RC: This was in Marblehead, at my house in Marblehead.

JK: Do you still go there every summer?

RC: Yes, I do. I'm just making up my mind whether I should do it this summer or not. I don't know if you ever knew Harriet [inaudible].

JK: No.

RC: She was the advertising manager for [inaudible]. Her sister, Florence, was a social worker, and this is cousins of theirs, and this is me. [inaudible]

JK: Do your grandkids come visit you during –?

RC: Yes, they do. And these are the two girls at the wedding. This isn't a good picture of my Billy.

JK: Your son is so good-looking.

RC: That's [inaudible] And there's the three children [inaudible] grandchildren.

JK: These are wonderful pictures. You have such a handsome family.

RC: This is the picture that I love of April. April, is, by the way, April Ruth.

JK: Oh, that's [inaudible]. Was she born in April?

RC: No, she was not. [laughter] I don't know how they picked the name April. Both of her parents were born in April.

JK: [inaudible]

RC: That night was so beautiful. It was just one of those gorgeous nights. This is Jackie and their father. She was the maid of honor.

JK: Beautiful dress. How tall is your son?

RC: He's six feet three.

JK: Whoa. [laughter] He really has very few gray hairs. I've noticed him in a picture of his friends. He has the [unclear]

RC: And young Bill taking me down the aisle to the wedding.

JK: Does he have a –?

RC: He has a girlfriend. Yes, he has. [inaudible] I don't know. I think his mother is having a fit, not that she isn't a nice girl, but he's too young. [laughter]

JK: Is it important to you in terms of [inaudible] if their kids marry people who are Jewish, or is that not such an issue?

RC: Yes, I think it's a big issue with Judy. She would really like it. I don't know about Bill. It's an issue with me from this point of view that I think it makes for less opportunities for friction. I think there's more camaraderie. I noticed it with Jeff. Now, I visited Jeff's mother on Saturday, and she's a lovely lady. She was just here for [inaudible] sixtieth birthday, and we had a nice time together. There's just something more – I don't know what it is.

JK: Connected.

RC: Connected.

JK: You know they say that –Fiddler on the Roof, "A fish can love a bird, but where would they make their home?"

RC: Oh, that's right. [laughter] There's just something about it. I don't know. [inaudible] He's a lovely man. This is our table at the wedding. This is my cousin, Ada Louise Huxtable. This is my good friend, Jane Weinberg and (Jarred?), and her father was the President of the temple, [inaudible].

JK: So you've known her since childhood?

RC: Oh, yes. And this is Judge [inaudible]. And this is Judge Zoll from the –

JK: He's terrific. Right.

RC: You know Judge Zoll. You know Judge [inaudible]?

JK: I do.

RC: And this is Mrs. [unclear]. She's an architect. That's why they put them with Ada Louise. Well, this is Marion Eiseman here. Marion Eiseman – have you seen the tapes of the wedding?

JK: I've seen –

RC: The wedding exhibition? Do you remember she said –

JK: [inaudible]

RC: "A chuppah! Whoever heard of a chuppah?"

JK: "Whoever heard of a chuppah?" I remember that line.

RC: She's ninety-one years old, this lady.

JK: And this woman is –?

RC: And that is Judge Zoll's wife, who has gotten very fat. Judge Zoll lives on Chester Street in Salem. He used to deliver newspapers there. You see, Judy was – she worked for Judge [inaudible], and when Judge [inaudible]died, Zoll became the chairperson, and he inherited [inaudible], and they've been fast friends ever since.

JK: [inaudible] Do you go to New York City much?

RC: Well, I'm going the 29th of April. Ada Louise is speaking at the New York Public Library on her book, which is Architecture, Real and Unreal, which is going to come out at that time. so I'm going to go [inaudible]

JK: I see such a strong resemblance between the two of you.

RC: So, I'm going to go there. And Billy is in New York. So, he will go too.

JK: Is he at Columbia?

RC: No, he's working for Fox TV. He's finished. They're all educated, and they're all working.

JK: A wonderful sense of [inaudible].

RC: Oh, this was this New Year's Eve, right here [unclear].

JK: Did you have a party?

RC: Yes, I did. I had a party for all – I wasn't going to do anything, but all my widows wanted to do something, and Bill and Judy surprised us by dropping in to say hello. And this is Ben Banks. Do you know Dr. Ben Banks

JK: Oh, is he the orthopedist?

RC: No, that's his brother.

JK: That's the other Banks. I know that name.

RC: His brother. You know that name. He was on the Board of Trustees.

JK: I know Dr. Gellis, by the way. He and I are –

RC: Sydney Gellis? Oh, you do!

JK: Yes. I met him at Tufts. We did a lot of work there. He's a lovely man, and now I know his son.

RC: Well, that's it. That was just this New Year's, and that's still [inaudible]. There was an engagement party given at The Country Club by Alan and Cecily Morse for April and Jack when they were engaged. This is (Clara Mae Friedlander?). I don't know if you know her. Her husband, (Mark Friedlander?), who died a couple of years ago, was brought here to edit the Adams papers –

JK: Oh, my gosh.

RC: – under the auspices of the Mass Historical Society. This lady was originally at the – she comes from New Orleans. She was secretary to a rabbi there. And she can tell you about the scriptures. She is marvelous. She's about to have a ninetieth birthday, and she's just a wonderful, wonderful lady.

JK: Now, have you ever gone to any of Rabbi Mehlman's Torah study classes?

RC: No, I haven't. I'm ashamed of myself.

JK: That's okay.

RC: I haven't got the time. Now, this is me at the croquet tournament in the summer.

JK: That looks like fun.

RC: Yeah, it was. [inaudible] I need to sort out some of these pictures, but I like that one in Sorrento. This is in Capri. Remember the clock?

JK: Yes, it's gorgeous.

RC: [inaudible] I bought a sweater. Oh, you've seen this. This is [inaudible]

JK: So when you spoke about how social work is changing, do you think the NASW is doing a strong enough lobbying job to try to stem the tide, or do you feel that their hands are tied because of the –?

RC: Well, they are doing a lot of lobbying and advocacy and so forth. In fact, sometimes, I didn't go along with them because I thought they weren't doing enough about social work practice. They were doing a lot of political stuff. But now I think maybe that has to be.

JK: Let me just turn this off for one second. [recording paused]

RC: I've never been a photographer. All my grandkids are photographers. They take pictures of everything. [recording paused]

JK: If you don't mind telling me [unclear]

RC: Ada Louise's paternal grandfather settled in Palestine before it was Israel, and when Ada Louise was born, he sent half a dozen of these silver spoons for her birth.

JK: Beautiful.

RC: And I guess that her name is on here –

JK: – in Hebrew.

RC: – in Hebrew. Ada.

JK: And what year was she born?

RC: Well, now, let me see. She would be seventy-six in March, the 14th of March.

JK: So 1920, '21.

RC: I guess. Yes.

JK: And so he sent these from Palestine.

RC: And he sent these from Palestine.

JK: Beautiful.

RC: Ada Louise then married out of the flock. She married a Christian Scientist, and she wasn't using the silver around. So, her mother said, "Well, now look, Ruth uses silver, and we don't." One of them got lost. I have five of them.

JK: Beautiful.

RC: And they're beautiful little spoons.

JK: Do you mind if I photograph one?

RC: No. Certainly.

JK: That would be lovely; we could put them down.

RC: Certainly you may. Do you want more light?

JK: Very special. Yeah, that will probably work out well.

[recording paused]

RC: And we called her Tanta Friedman, and he was very good to her. She would have these coffee klatches once a month, and she had a daughter, Esther Friedman, who was married and lived in Holton, Maine, which was way up. But when Tanta Friedman died, Esther Friedman, the daughter, brought me the spoon, which she wanted us to have.

JK: It's beautiful. Do you know if this is from Europe? It just looks –

RC: I don't know whether it's from Europe or not.

JK: It looks very old.

RC: Yes, it is.

JK: It's so beautiful. May I photograph it?

RC: Yes, you may.

JK: It's a spoon that's in the shape of a leaf on it. It's just exquisite.

RC: It's really a beautiful spoon.

JK: It really is. It's really clearly so lovingly hand-made. It's beautiful. Did your parents own kiddush cups? I mean, was that something that your parents had when they were –?

RC: No, I don't think so. Of course, I never saw any. Whether my grandparents had them or not, I don't know.

JK: Did you ever buy challah on Fridays, was that something you did as a family?

RC: Yes, we did. We called them twists. [laughter]

JK: Did you buy them other times of the week or just on Fridays?

RC: No. Well, I don't know. I can't remember whether they did or not. We never made a thing of it on Friday nights. My father was very particular about bread. He used to say, "Oh, this is wonderful. It's just like silk." I remember him saying that. And some of them were. Twists we called them.

JK: Where did you buy them? Was it like Green Freedman?

RC: Well, there wasn't any Green Freedman that I can remember. When we lived in Lynn in the summer, there was a Jewish bakery in Lynn that they always went to. I can't remember where they got them here because there wasn't much in the way of Jewish bakeries. I don't remember that. We had a chauffeur, and they used to send him in to feel the bread to see if it was fresh. I always remember that because they were very particular about their breads. I'm a bread-eater to this day.

JK: I love good bread. Did you like things like matzo ball soup and—

RC: Oh, I love matzo ball soup.

JK: And who made it in your family?

RC: In my family, the maids made it.

JK: Who instructed them?

RC: Well, I don't know who instructed them, but sometimes, they worked for other Jewish people, and –

JK: Learned?

RC: – had been instructed somewhere. I don't know. Or my grandmother maybe instructed them. She made marvelous matzo balls.

JK: This is your maternal grandmother?

RC: This is my maternal grandmother. What we called gefilte fish was not really the gefilte fish – the fish stuffed with a fish. It was haddock, and it was made with a milk sauce. It was delicious, and then we'd fry it the next morning.

JK: Oh, that sounds wonderful!

RC: [inaudible], and she'd have carrots in it and so forth. I think it was more a German – like a fish ball or something of that sort that she would make. But she would once in a while, if we teased, she'd make blintzes.

JK: You talked about going out to the Copley Plaza or this other hotel after High Holiday services on New Year's. Did you ever have festive family meals at your parent's house or your grandparent's house that you remember?

RC: Yes, we did. Well, we always had festive meals for holidays. Now, maybe we'd have it the night before or whatever.

JK: What would be some of the foods that they would [inaudible] traditional?

RC: Well, we would have chicken, or we would have roast lamb or something of that sort. It would be nice and a special dessert. Maybe in the spring, it would be strawberry shortcake, something of that sort.

JK: And you mentioned that you always had seders.

RC: Yes, we had seders.

JK: Were those a fond memory for you?

RC: Very. And we'd read a little bit, not the whole schmear but –

JK: From the Maxwell House Haggadah?

RC: That's right. [laughter] It was a festive – it was a fun time.

JK: And you ate matzo that night.

RC: Yes, we ate matzo, always had matzo.

JK: Did you have matzo for more than the seder? Would you have it for a couple of days after that or just –?

RC: We had what you called [inaudible] matzo.

JK: Oh, I love that.

RC: I don't know why they called it [inaudible] over and over.

JK: Over and over. Right, you get sick of it after –

RC: That's right. But we did that, and we had matzo ball always. And (Clara Mae Friedlander?) now makes the best matzo balls. She gave me the recipe.

JK: [inaudible]

RC: Because after Elsie retired – Elsie made matzo balls and all the rest of it. But after Elsie retired, I was on my own for making matzo balls.

JK: I bet they're great. Do you make chicken soup from scratch?

RC: Yes, I make chicken soup from scratch. I make very good chicken soup.

JK: I do have to have that recipe. I mean, different people put different things in. Some people put in leeks.

RC: Well, I don't do anything that fancy. I put in onions and carrots and celery and chicken.

JK: Dill? Do you put in dill?

RC: No, I put in thyme sometimes.

JK: Oh, interesting. I think it's very labor-intensive, making chicken soup.

RC: Well, it is. It is. Have you ever discovered the New England Soup Kitchen,

JK: Oh, I love it.

RC: It's obscenely expensive.

JK: It is expensive.

RC: But it is very good.

JK: It's so good. I love their soups. When I was planning my daughter's bat mitzvah, I was thinking, "Gee, we're having one of the brunches for the out-of-towners at our house, and I thought, wouldn't it be great to have soup from the New England Kitchen?"

RC: That's right.

JK: But it's delicious soup. I love their exotic flavors.

RC: You know, Judy did a – it was Jackie's twenty-fifth birthday, and she did a surprise brunch for her last week. It was very nice, and it was very simple. She got turkey – that honey-baked turkey from where they have the honey-baked ham. Do you ever –?

JK: Right, yes.

RC: Honey-baked turkey and bagels and cheese and smoked salmon and big bowls of fruit.

JK: Sounds lovely. Did she do that at home?

RC: Yes.

JK: Was Jackie really surprised?

RC: Jackie was surprised, and what they went through to surprise her, I said to them, “Don’t ever surprise me. I don’t want to be surprised.” But this child was surprised, really. What they went through to do it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]