Bernice Frieze Transcript

ROCHELLE RUTHCHILD: January 16, 1997—I'm Rochelle Ruthchild interviewing Bernice Frieze in her home under the auspices of the Jewish Women's Archive Temple Israel Oral History Project in Boston, Massachusetts.

Bernice, would you like to just start by saying where you were born and where you grew up.

BERNICE FRIEZE: I was born in Lynn, Massachusetts. But, actually—my mother was living there at the time. But I was actually born in the Boston Lying-In Hospital. And I grew up in Roxbury until I was into the eighth grade. And when my family moved to Brookline I went to Brookline High School in my teens, and then off to Smith College in Northampton. I got married and thereafter lived in Newton, Massachusetts, in which town I live until this very day.

RR: Bernice, could you talk a little bit about your childhood? Did your parents—were your parents immigrants or had they been born in this country?

BF: My father came from Poland. My mother came from Russia, both as very young children. They grew up, of course, in this country. And my father and my mother both lost their own mothers at a very young age. And the fathers with lots of children had to remarry. And I honestly think—don't know about my father's father. But my maternal grandfather married in the old country—remarried, that is, in the old country—and then came to live in this country with her.

RR: Were there—did they have—how many children did they have?

BF: I have to count, one minute [counts]. My maternal grandparents had six children: five from the first mother and one from the second mother. My paternal grandparents had five children with the first wife and four children with the second wife—large family of nine children.

RR: Do you know where in Poland and Russia [microphone jostled-unclear].

BF: I don't know where my mother's family came from in Russia [microphone obscured-unclear]. Do you want me to call my brother and find out? I'll know in a minute.

RR: That's okay. We'll come back to it.

BF: Just give me one minute to think. Have you ever been to the Holocaust Museum in Washington?

RR: Yeah.

BF: Remember what was the name of that room with all the pictures around it?

RR: Yeah. Asheshach.

BF: Asheshach. And my father's family came from Asheshach in Poland.

RR: Did—actually if you want we can just put this down. I don't think you need to hold onto it. Let's just see how it is if we put it down like this. Were your grandparents and your parents very religious?

BF: Yes. Both my sets of grandparents were very Orthodox. And, as a matter of fact, my maternal grandfather when he came to this country, he bought a two-family house in Lynn. And got his income from the rental of the other half of the house while he studied most of the time.

My other grandfather was also very, very religious. And he was a carpenter. And I don't—his first—the family with his first wife was exceptionally religious. As a matter of fact, three of his grandsons from his first wife became rabbis.

My—the children of my maternal grandparents were not nearly as religious. Nor were the children--. I made an error here. It was the children of my paternal grandfather's first wife were not all that religious. But his four children from his second wife were exceptionally religious. But, I mean, completely Orthodox and even more so as far as you can go. And three of his grandchildren from this second family of children became rabbis.

RR: Now I just want to be clear then. Your mother came from the first set of children?

BF: Yes.

RR: Okay. And who were less religious.

BF: No. My mother came from the first set of children. But it was not my maternal grandfather's children who were so religious.

RR: Oh.

BF: I said my paternal grandfather's second wife's children were ultra, ultra religious.

RR: But your, your—it's your—you come from. Your father is from the first child from the first wife?

BF: Yes. Both my mother and father came from the first wives.

RR: And was this second wife also from Europe or somebody—

BF: All the wives were from Europe.

RR: Uh-huh. But they got married here.

BF: No. They got married in Europe.

RR: Oh, okay.

BF: I'd like to tell a very interesting story about my maternal grandmother because it's very interesting. When she was married to her first husband in Russia, he got a get, a divorce, from her because they couldn't have any children. And he claimed it was because she couldn't bear children. She was a disgrace as far as she was concerned because in those days to just be thrown out by your husband was a big disgrace.

My grandfather traveled on the road. And he had all these little children. And he had to get married very quickly to take care of the children even though he had had a most wonderful marriage with his first wife.

He married whom I consider my grandmother—his second wife. And the first thing that happened was she bore a child. And she had always claimed it wasn't her fault. And this was a very shy, retiring woman whom he had married. But when she had her own child every time she nursed the child she sat on her front stoop to prove to the world that it was not her fault that her husband had thrown her out.

RR: Oh that's a wonderful story. That's a great story.

BF: Yeah.

RR: You said that your—you lived in—you were born in Lynn. But you actually were—

BF: Well my mother lived in Lynn at the time. But I was born in the Boston Lying-In Hospital.

RR: So you were born in a hospital. But your mother was probably born at home.

BF: Oh, I imagine, yes. But the doctor who delivered me was so drunk—they didn't know that at the time—that he forgot to register me. And we never found out--. My mother thought he was sort of drunk. But we never found out he didn't register me until the first time I had to get a passport.

RR: Wow. So you never needed to—for school needed to—

BF: Well, I don't know. In those days I think we didn't need to bring our birth certificate to school.

RR: Could you talk a little bit then about--. So both of your parents grew up in pretty religious homes. Could you talk a little bit about your parents and just what their backgrounds were?

BF: My—both my mother and my father left school at a very young age. They didn't even enter high school. They were completely self-educated. My mother, as a matter of fact, was very well educated politically—maybe not so much with the best of literature and everything. But she still read wonderful books because they were recommended to her.

My mother made friends out of very important people. She was so interested in politics and government and things that went on that these people became her friends. She did not seek out important people to be friendly with her. And she was very well known [microphone drops and is obscured-unclear]—became exceptionally political during the Spanish War. And she got very interested in that. And that, I would say, is the time she became friendly with all these liberal people.

She was—my mother had a very, very bad heart condition. She was half of the time in bed and half of the time out of bed because in those days they felt that's the way you treat a severe heart condition. My mother was supposed to go to a hearing in Washington during the McCarthy era.

And a slight time before that she lived in Cambridge in an apartment building. She got out of bed—she wasn't feeling well—to do something and two strange men who had come into her living room. She got a severe heart attack. These men were FBI agents because she was going to be cited. She was cited and was about to appear at a McCarthy hearing. And the doorman had let them in when they showed their badges. She was unable to go to the hearing.

But Dr. White—who in that time was considered practically the biggest heart specialist in the country—and was the president's own heart specialist at that time—came to visit my mother. He didn't know her before then. But through a brother-in-law of my mother's—who was also a doctor and knew him very well—he came to visit my mother because my mother was afraid they would not accept the fact that she was too ill to appear because of their FBI agents. And, of course, when Dr. White sent a letter that she was his patient. And she was absolutely unable to appear—she had had this terrible heart attack and was confined at the time—then she no longer had to appear.

She would have wanted to appear. My mother was that kind of woman where she would have shown just how she felt about the things that were going on at that time. Interestingly enough, as liberal as my mother was my father was just as conservative. They were at opposite ends of the pole. So that particular thing was a sort of tough situation between them.

RR: Could you talk a little bit more about just—I just want to get some of the background of your parents and get back to this. Did your parents grow up in Lynn or did they grow up in Boston?

BF: My mother grew up in Lynn. My father grew up in Boston.

RR: Where in Boston, in Roxbury or--?

BF: Well in that area. You know they kept moving around. I can't tell you. It was all just--. But my father—after his bar mitzvah when "you are a man"—he was, as well as his older brother, were out on their own. My father started earning his own living at age thirteen, supported himself. Didn't live at home anymore even.

RR: What did he do?

BF: Loads of things. He did things like work for somebody in the suspender business. Then he worked for somebody in the cigar business. My father was very inventive. And when he worked in the cigar business he learned how to make cigars. And then he left and went into a little business for himself. And then he did all kinds of things.

One of the very interesting things he did was--. Houghton Dutton in Boston sold out. And one of the things that they had up for auction was a large figure of a cow. It was, of course, empty inside and everything. And my father said, "I'm going to buy that. That's an interesting thing to work with."

So in the summer he took this cow, rented a space on Revere Beach and filled it with milk, put a spigot in it. And did very good business. All the mothers would stop there to buy their young children milk. He had many ideas like this and this is just an example. He went on and on. And finally he went into--.

Oh let me say this. That my father--. Yes. Then he went into the jewelry business and—as an auctioneer for jewelry. He was engaged--. My mother was engaged. She went in to look at one of the auctions. She couldn't afford to buy anything I don't think. But just to stand around and hear. He fell for her like a ton of bricks, made her break her engagement. And he broke his and they were eventually married. I think this is sort of an interesting little story.

RR: It is, definitely. Now your mother at that point was also working. She had dropped out of school—

BF: Oh yes. She had to. These kids had to go to work. My father had to go to work to support himself. My mother had to go to work to help support the family.

RR: And you—what was your mother doing?

BF: All kinds of little jobs, whatever she could get to do.

RR: And that was in Lynn, also.

BF: That was in Lynn, yes.

RR: So what kind of jobs? Do you remember?

BF: I really--. She never told me. She just said little things, little jobs that she could pick up, you know. She, after all, was only a youngster, you know, not well educated at the time. She got what jobs she could.

RR: So, basically, both of your parents went through, what, about eighth grade of education?

BF: Somewhere between the sixth and eighth. I'm not even sure that they both went up through the eighth grade. My best—to my best of recollection they went the sixth for sure.

RR: And then you said your mother was a voracious reader. She read—

BF: I don't think at that time. It was after she began to sort of educate herself and have these educated friends who would recommend reading to her. She was very anxious to learn things about what went on in the world and life and to read good books because she really wanted to get the best education she could at that point.

RR: Did your grandparents speak Yiddish at all?

BF: At home my maternal grandparents spoke Yiddish. And if permitted I would like to tell a wonderful story about my grandmother.

RR: Oh, absolutely.

BF: My maternal grandmother. My grandmother and I were very, very close. I didn't understand Yiddish very much. And she was only starting to learn English in broken English. But I loved her so much. She—I can't tell you—she was the light of my life. I adored that woman. And she was so warm and loving to me.

And my father, at that point in life, was traveling on business. And my parents used to leave me with my maternal grandmother. And she was so anxious to learn English. And I was so anxious to learn a little Yiddish to be able to converse with her more. And she would say to me, "Dalale." That was her pet name for me. "Dalale, you speak me Yiddish and I will give to you, Dalale, correct. And I will speak to you Engish—that's what she used to call it Engish—and you will to me give a correct. Okay?" So we did that.

And I would try to teach her English words. But she would get--. If a word had more than two syllables she would get them confused. She would say things like this to me. For instance, her daughter's name was Jenny—her own daughter. And she would say to her, "Oy, my Jennala is so smart. But tell me darling. Why has she got such a terrible shipmanpen?" Meaning penmanship. And she'd say to me, "Ah, Dalale, it's so cold out. You must be freeze. I made for you the most wonderful tablevege soup." Meaning a vegetable soup. She was just wonderful. Anyone who knew this woman would have loved her. I could tell story after story about her. But I don't want to fill—

RR: That's okay. If you have other stories, that's fine.

BF: No. That's all right. But I remember she would--. You know they had to bank their stove at night. They had the old-fashioned big black stove and no other heating in the house. And so my grandmother—I was a very little girl and I remember this so well. In

the morning she would come in to get me out of my bed very early and throw me into bed with my grandfather to warm my body because she had gotten up earlier to stoke the fire. And then she would sit me on a chair by the—right by the fire where she had hung my clothes overnight with the back of the chair facing closest to the stove. So she'd dress me in these nice warm clothes. And take out of the fire, which had been very low and banked overnight. And give me this warm baked potato to hold in my hand to warm up my hands. And then if I wanted she would fill it with butter and have me eat it. Oh I remember all these kind of things about my grandmother.

RR: Those are great stories. So it sounds like when you were young your grandparents, your maternal grandparents, lived with you.

BF: No. They lived in Lynn and we, at that time, lived in Roxbury. But my mother traveled. Very often when my father was out of town for any length of time she went out to stay with him a couple of weeks and would leave me with my grandparents.

RR: I see. I see. But that was before you went to school or—

BF: Yeah, uh-huh. I remember this from when I was only about three years old. The kitchen thing, you know, by the stove. She was wonderful.

RR: How long did your grandparents live? Then how old were you when they died?

BF: Well my grandfather died just before my youngest brother was born because my youngest brother was named after him. My youngest brother is now—he's going to be seventy-five. So my grandfather died when I was seventy-five. That made me only nine years old because I'm going to be eighty-four next month. And my grandmother died—I don't know exactly what age. But I was already married. And I didn't yet--. Yes, I did. I had my children already.

RR: So—and did you remain close to her?

BF: Oh yeah. I loved my grandmother until the day she died. That was a very sad day in my life. I loved my grandfather, too. Now my father was not as close to his parents as my mother was to hers because with nine children it was very hard. And they were not as close a family in nature as my mother's family was.

RR: And your grandparents stayed living in Lynn until they died.

BF: Yeah in the same house. That's where my grandfather got his income.

RR: To study. If you want to tell some more stories about your grandmother that would be fine.

BF: No. It's okay. Well, I'll tell a story about my grandfather. When we first moved to Brookline--. Of course my grandfather never had a car and never knew how to drive. They were less than moderate means, but enough for them to get along. He would come by streetcar all the way out to Brookline on Sunday morning.

RR: From Lynn?

BF: From Lynn. And he wouldn't come in the house. He'd stand outside until I or one of my two brothers would come out. And then he would grin and give us a hug and hold out his two pants' pockets for us to go into them where he had what was at that time penny candy. Then he'd come in to see my parents. But first he had a surprise for his grandchildren. That was a very sweet thing.

RR: That was. That was very sweet. And where was your grandmother when he did that. She was home--?

BF: Well I felt—think he felt that it was be too much quote "schlepping" for her. But my parents went out to visit their parents, my grandparents, very often. Most of the time on a Sunday and spend the day with them, you know. Oh, and talking about candy from the

grandparents. My grandmother loved and adored chocolate covered almonds. And I got my allowance in those days, which, of course, that many years ago was only really--. If you got a quarter a week it was a tremendous allowance. And I never would spend my allowance until I could go into a store first and see how much I had to spend to get some chocolate covered almonds to bring to my grandmother. I really just adored that woman. Tears come to my eyes even thinking of her at this late age.

RR: And it sounds like she adored you.

BF: I think she did. I'm sure she did. I think I was her favorite grandchild because I was--. She had one other grandchild who lived in Lynn at that time. She had others--. I mean she had two other grandchildren who lived in Lynn and she had me and my two brothers. But I think where the other one lived in Lynn and she was also a girl. I was more of a favorite because it was special to see me, you see. And besides, my mother, of all the children, was the favorite child of these parents because I think she resembled the first wife more than any of the other children.

And my grandfather really adored his first wife. He loved his second wife very much and they had a wonderful marriage and were very close. But also my mother had strawberry blonde hair, which was very unusual. And he used to call her Marieke, for red head. So I think all this entered into it.

RR: Was your grandmother—what was the birth order? Was your grandmother the oldest of the first group of children?

BF: My, no—you mean my mother.

RR: Your mother.

BF: No. My mother had twin brothers. They were the oldest. Then she had a sister, then she and then a younger sister from the first marriage. Then she had one sister from

the second marriage. And of all the brothers and sisters the two that were closest together was my mother and her stepsister. And they resented very much being called stepsisters.

RR: Could you talk a little bit about--. You said that your grandparents were quite religious. What about your parents?

BF: My parents were—well I would say they were religious but not tremendously so. I mean, by the time I began to grow up my mother was no longer lighting Friday night candles. My father and she went to temple. They started with Temple Israel in Roxbury. No, excuse me. They did not. They started with Temple Mishkin Tefila in Roxbury and went right through the older temple and the newer temple in Roxbury. But when they were living in Brookline they joined Temple Israel. Mostly they joined because a dear friend of theirs—one of their dearest friends—became, I think, the first president of the Temple Israel on Commonwealth Avenue. And since going to Roxbury was quite a distance anyway, they—he got them to join Temple Israel for their new temple.

RR: And Mishkin Tefila is Conservative. Is that right or is it--?

BF: Mishkin Tefila is Conservative.

RR: So, in fact, they were moving more—

BF: They were moving more—

RR: Towards Reformed—

BF: Yes.

RR: Were your parents kosher? Did they have a kosher home?

BF: My mother never had a kosher home and neither did my father. And, interestingly enough, talking about kosher homes, my maternal grandmother, who was very kosher and very Orthodox, came to stay with me a few days when we were living in Newton. And, naturally, I ran out to buy some glass dishes and two or three pots or pans and a couple of eating utensils for her sake. And she sat down at the table and when she saw that I was serving her differently than we were—knowing I had bought some kosher meat for her—she said to me, "Dalale, do you know what a truly religious person is supposed to do according to God?" And I said, "No, Bubby." I always called her Bubby. "No, Bubby, what?" She said, "When you're in somebody else's house it is no sin to do what they do. You should not make them do extra work for you." She said, "You didn't have to do this just for me." And I said, "Bubby, I never knew that, never." And I truly think that probably came out of her own head. I never heard it. Did you?

RR: No, no. But that's interesting that she—

BF: She felt very strongly that you're not supposed to. She said, "You shouldn't serve me something I shouldn't eat. But you didn't have to do all this, Dalale."

RR: So then your maternal grandmother really didn't kick up a fuss really with the fact that your parents were much less religious?

BF: No, neither of them. And neither set of grandparents did because all the children from my paternal grandfather's first marriage were the same as my folks. They were not particularly religious. They went to temple. They observed, as long as they lived at home—they observed whatever the parents observed. But they all left very young because they were--. Well I don't know. The girls didn't leave until they got married. But the boys all left very young. But the children from the second marriage were exceptionally religious, just exceptionally.

RR: And they still are it sounds like.

BF: And they still are. Well, no. The son--. They had three daughters and a son. And the son was not quite as religious. Got married--. They were quite religious when they first got married but they grew away from it. I would say he was religious but not intensely religious, not Orthodox any more. And the great-grandchildren of the parents of the second family, three of them—grandchildren, not the great-grandchildren. Wait a minute. The grandchildren of the second family started out being just as religious. But eventually different things happened: they married mates that were not as religious, not so Orthodox and they gradually grew away from orthodoxy. But one daughter married—she had—her sons all became rabbis.

RR: Orthodox rabbis or--?

BF: I'm really not sure. They don't live in this part of the country. One was even a rabbi in Israel for a while. They all went to Maimonides.

RR: Probably Orthodox, so--. I want to just get back then to your—the family in which you grew up. Your parents got married—what about 1910?

BF: They got married--. Let's see. I was born in 1913. They got married in 1912, I guess—eleven or twelve because I'm the beginning—in February at the beginning of the year.

RR: And then they lived in Roxbury to start out.

BF: Well they lived at one time in some town in Connecticut because my father's business was there at the time. Then they moved to Roxbury and they lived in Roxbury until I was in the eighth grade at which time they moved to Brookline.

RR: Do you remember what street it was in Roxbury or--?

BF: Yes, Brookledge Street. They had lived in a different street before that. But as my father began earning a little more money and they were able to afford a house in a little nicer section, they moved to Brookledge Street, which is a beautiful area because on the street we lived there was nothing built at that time at the other side of the street. And you could see right into Franklin Park. It was beautiful.

RR: So it was up on a hill?

BF: No it really wasn't. But it was very level and you could see across.

RR: Were there a lot of Jewish families?

BF: Yes. It was mostly a Jewish area. I don't know if it was a hundred percent. But I would say you would consider it a Jewish area.

RR: And then you went to school in the Boston school system.

BF: Um-hmm.

RR: Do you remember what school you went to or--?

BF: Garrison School. And I went to the—I think it was Roosevelt School—I think that was the name of it—I'm not positive—in the seventh grade.

RR: Theodore Roosevelt.

BF: Theodore Roosevelt. And then I moved to Brookline.

RR: Do you remember what schools you--?

BF: Went one year to the Runkle School and then to Brookline High School.

RR: Where did you live in Brookline?

BF: On Addington Road.

RR: And is that where you lived until you got married?

BF: No. Lived on Addington Road, on Harvard Avenue—not Harvard Street—and then on—my memory is just going--. Oh, I know it very well and I can't think of it.

RR: It'll probably come, you know, later. That's fine. So then do you—would you also—did you also get a Jewish education when you were a child?

BF: I went to afternoon Hebrew school. But—

RR: At Temple Israel or--?

BF: No, in Roxbury, and so it was Mishkin Tefila. And then when I--. I'm embarrassed to admit I didn't like it one single bit because I hated my Hebrew teacher.

We weren't—didn't learn Hebrew. We just more or less learned the Hebrew history and all about being a Jew and Jewish customs. And I'm not going to put on tape why I hated him. It was not any kind of abuse. I don't want to make you think that. But it was a kind of thing I can't put on tape. And so I didn't go. I didn't go for quite a while.

And my mother didn't know that I wasn't going. And one day I bumped into this teacher on the street. And he said, "You haven't been to Hebrew school. Why?" And I said, "I don't know." And he said, "Well if you don't start coming I will not allow you into the class anymore." And so then I had to tell my mother that I hadn't been going. And she said, "You hate it so much darling?" And I said, "Yes. I do. I don't want to go there." And that was the end of my Hebrew education.

RR: Was it unusual for girls at that time to be getting any kind of Hebrew education?

BF: No. It was like going to afternoon school. Everybody went. The teacher wasn't particularly good apart from the reason that I couldn't go back. If you turn that off I'll show that it was very obvious. [Recorder is turned off and then back on.]

RR: So that was really the end of your Hebrew education then. And in your class was it mostly girls in your class or was it pretty—

BF: Boys and girls.

RR: Boys and girls about even.

BF: About even. I was young enough so that these boys were not really yet studying for their bar mitzvah. I guess they would start a year or two later. I was only about seven or eight years old. And they were getting the beginnings of their education in those days.

RR: And at that time girls didn't get bat mitzvahed.

BF: No.

RR: Or—I don't know about confirmation. I guess confirmation wasn't in Mishkin Tefila, I guess.

BF: No.

RR: Okay. So then you came—you moved to Brookline and you went to Brookline High School.

BF: Yeah. First to the Runkle School—

RR: And then to Brookline High School.

BF: Right.

RR: And were there certain things about being in high school there that you want to talk about or anything in your family at that point that you want to talk about?

BF: Well, I just want to tell how I met my first friend when I was very timid going into the Runkle School. And she became my life-long friend.

When the first day of school—the first subject that the teacher gave us was grammar, which I had never heard of in Roxbury. And when she started the class and was asking questions I was sitting there like a dummy. And she asked a question of me. And I said, “I don’t know.” And she said, “Didn’t they teach you grammar in your last school.” And I said, “No. I don’t even know what it is.”

So the teacher looked around the room and she said to this one girl, “You take this young lady next door into the library and you know enough about grammar. And you spend the day teaching her about grammar so she can catch up with us.”

So we went into the next room and she started to teach me grammar. And then we started like two young kids would asking each other questions about what do you do and where do you live. We never did another word of grammar and became best friends at that time.

RR: Was she—in the school were there a lot of Jewish children?

BF: Yes.

RR: So was the school mostly Jewish?

BF: No. I don’t--. Oh, no, I don’t think so.

RR: Was your friend Jewish or--?

BF: Oh yes. In fact her husband was Herman Snyder who would have been president of the Temple. And he's the one who interviewed Rabbi Mehlman, you know. And that—

RR: That's a great—that's a great story. So your friend still lives right around here.

BF: Well, Herman Snyder still lives in this building but Bernice died a few years ago.

RR: Uh-huh. Oh, you even have the same name.

BF: We even have the same name, yes.

RR: Did you as a child ever experience antisemitism in Roxbury or--?

BF: I never knew what antisemitism was because I lived in a Jewish neighborhood in Roxbury. And then when I moved to Brookline in the area where I lived there were—it seemed to me anyway at that time—there were mostly Jews. And I knew there was such a thing. But by the time I was in high school I knew there was such a thing. But, I myself, never--. I was never affected by it.

RR: So nobody ever made comments or anything?

BF: Nobody ever did. It seemed that all my friends were Jewish. There were enough friends to make who were Jewish. I didn't seek them out because they were Jewish. But there was--. I would say there were a great number of Jewish youngsters at that time. And somehow just naturally it seemed in those days we sought each other out and became friends.

RR: What kinds of things were you interested in in high school in terms of academic--?

BF: I was always interested academically more in languages than I was in the math or sciences. English and languages were always what I enjoyed most. I did pretty well in high school. And I think that I just had the same amusements and entertainments and

relaxation as most of the kids did. I wasn't allowed to do some of the things that some of the other kids did.

My mother was a little--. I don't think that she meant to be strict in that way. But I think my mother was sort of trying to build a close relationship with me. And so when I'd come home from school and say to her, "Mom, can I go to the movies tomorrow after school with the girls?" And she'd say, "What movie are you going to see?" And I'd either say, "I don't know" or "Such and such a movie." And she'd say, "No. I don't think you ought to go after school. I'll take you to the movies."

And she really thought that I would enjoy going to the movies with her more than with my friends because she wanted to be close to me. She didn't in any manner or means mean to deny me anything because my mother was trying to teach me what to enjoy and what not to enjoy.

Unlike a lot of my friends, my mother started taking me to concerts, to operas, to symphonies at a very young age because she wanted me--. She hadn't had this opportunity when she was young. And she wanted me to learn to enjoy them and appreciate them. And many of my friends on their Saturday and Sunday afternoons were going out and doing things, my mother was taking me to these places. And I didn't appreciate it at the time, believe me. But I grew to appreciate all this because I have a great—I don't have tremendous knowledge. But I have tremendous enjoyment going to concerts and operas and—

[end of tape 1, side A]

RR: No. I think this is great.

BF: Really?

RR: No, you're not at all—

BF: I didn't know what kind of things you wanted. I could talk forever you know.

RR: Well these are really—these are really--. I was curious also—it sounds like by the time you moved to Brookline your family was pretty well off and—

BF: We were comfortable. We were comfortable.

RR: Did your mother have paid work at that point?

BF: Yeah. She had paid help because she had--. When my father bought his first car it was--. I forget what make but one of the inexpensive makes. And you had a—

RR: Crank it.

BF: Crank it by hand. And at one time he broke his wrist. So he said he would never after that buy a crank-up car. And my father was proud of the fact that he had come as far as he had come starting only from his own abilities. And so he bought his first Cadillac.

RR: So when was—

BF: When we were living in Roxbury.

RR: So that was, what, in the early 1920s?

BF: Yeah. I would say. And well, maybe, it was a little after that. But, anyway—

RR: But it was when you were in Roxbury? Do you remember?

BF: No. I'm wrong. We were in Brookline. Yeah. When we lived on Addington Road that--. No. It was in Roxbury. I'm sorry. Is that on all the time?

RR: Yeah.

BF: Do you fix this up so you get out all the mistakes and things?

RR: Yes.

BF: I don't care. Anyway. He bought his first Cadillac. And at that time he got a couple in the house to help my mother. No, we didn't have the couple until Addington Road.

RR: So—

BF: He bought that Cadillac on Addington Road. I'm sorry.

RR: But he had—while you were in Roxbury he probably had like a Model—

BF: The crank-up car.

RR: Model T or something.

BF: Model T or whatever it was. On Addington Road he bought his first Cadillac. And my mother already had had full-time female help in the house. But then my father decided he would have a couple so that the couple—the husband could also be a chauffeur. And he had that for quite a while. And then—

RR: So your mother was not actually working outside the home?

BF: My mother never worked once she was married.

RR: Okay.

BF: All right. Then after a while [unclear]. Still on Addington Road they finally got rid of the couple because my mother wanted to learn to drive. And she kept the couple until she learned.

However, my mother went to where the car was sold because at that time you didn't take driving lessons. When you bought a car they showed you how to drive it and that was it. Well my mother took her best friend with her. And they got in the car and the salesman said, "You do this to go. You do this to that." Number one forgot to tell her how to back up. And they drove, they drove. And he forgot to tell her how to stop.

RR: My God.

BF: And they drove and they drove and they drove until they ran out of gas. And she didn't know what to do. Anyway, I guess she called my father and it was taken care of. And then my father said, "You really are—you can't drive like that. You really have to learn to drive." But she was never a good driver because she always thought that if she drove very slowly she was being careful but she was a menace because she drove so slowly. But, anyway, it was—

RR: And when was this about, in the early 1930s?

BF: On Addington Road so I was already in the Runkle School or high school.

RR: So in the twenties, actually.

BF: Yeah. Thirteen in the—yes, it had to be in the twenties. I would say at least the mid-twenties. Maybe a little more higher up in the twenties.

RR: So your mother was, basically, at home.

BF: Yes. She was at home. But my mother did a lot of volunteer work. There was something called the Woman's—I can't remember exactly—but it was like a woman's aid society. And she would go around and do volunteer work with sick people and poor people, you know, to see that they got food and things like that.

And then during the Second World War when there was that terrible influenza epidemic, my mother went out to take care of sick people. Now that was considered a very dangerous thing to do because she had young children at home. But she felt that she had to do this.

And what she did, she went out in the morning—I think she probably did it a couple of days a week. She went out in the morning, came home and got completely undressed in the hallway before she came into the house and put on a robe or whatever she had left in the hallway to put on when she came in. And then took her hot shower before she got near any of her own family. So we did not catch the flu from her.

My father got the flu. I don't think from my mother at that time. My father was a strong man physically. He was not a big man. He was only about five feet eight and slim. But physically strong and never gave into himself very much. When he got the flu, he got out of bed two or three days later and his custom was to walk from Brookline to his business in Boston everyday. He enjoyed the walk. He did not walk home but he walked to work every single day. As a matter of fact, he walked to his work as long he went to work for the rest of his life. And three or four days after he got the flu—he wouldn't let my mother take his temperature or anything—he walked to work. And thank God nothing came of it.

RR: Now you said your father had a business in Boston. What was it?

BF: The jewelry business. That business started as a small little wholesale business. That was the final business he went into with a brother of his, an older brother. But they separated and each went into their own business after a while. And he also auctioned—he bought going-out- of -business stores out of town and would auction off the merchandise. Or he would auction off the merchandise for the owner and get a percentage of it. And it grew and it grew and it grew. He did very well with his business. And it became a larger wholesale type business in downtown Boston.

As a matter of fact, I remember one incident. I used to on vacations work for my father sometimes. It was a one-man business at that time when I did that.

RR: Where was it?

BF: It was in downtown Boston.

RR: What was the name of it?

BF: It was Gordon Brothers because they had started as brothers.

RR: And your name was Gordon before you--?

BF: Yes. And it was on Province Street at that time in downtown Boston. And I remember one time when he said to me, "Bernice, I got to go out of town for a couple of days, maybe three or four days." He said, "You're the only one I got to leave here." I was only in high school. And I said, "But Daddy, Poppa—I used to call him Poppa—but Poppa I don't know what to do. I won't know what to do. What if somebody comes in and wants to buy something?" He said, "You know, darling, they don't actually come in to buy so very much. They send me their merchandise from out of town. They want me to buy it." He said, "And I see what it's worth and I tell them what it's worth. If something comes in, you call Mr. Goldstein. He's in the jewelry business. He'll come and tell you, darling. And if you get stuck, you call Mr. Goldstein. He's my friend. He'll help you out. Don't feel badly if you make mistakes, sweetheart. It's okay." And I did it. I said--. I was so proud of myself when I got through for those three or four days taking care of my--.

I thought it was a wonderful big business, you know. It was only a small, little business at the time. But it grew and grew. And he got secretaries and he got help. And he was wonderful with his business.

As it expanded—this is an interesting story, I think. As it expanded, and I got married, my husband had been—was an attorney at that time. It was the Depression. My husband was making very little money. And I had stopped working because I was pregnant. And my father, at that time, was doing well, very well. He wasn't wealthy, but he was doing very well at that time. And I think basically—though he never said this—he wanted his daughter to have a little more than she had, but didn't want to embarrass my husband and myself by offering us money or anything like that.

So he came to my husband and he said, "I want you to come to work for me." My husband said, "I don't know anything about business." And my father said to him, "But you're an attorney. And think what it would save me instead of having to use an attorney every time I needed something. You would be right there for me."

So my husband came to me—Phillip, his name was Phillip—and said, told me this whole story. And I said to him, "How can you do that? How can you go to work for my father when you struggled for an attorney for so long and you're just starting to do better and do well. And I don't even have to work now because I'm going to have the baby. I don't think that's right all the years you put in. You had to pay for your own college and law school by your own work. Your father couldn't afford to send you. I don't want you to do that."

So my father came to me and said, "Bernice, how can you do that to me?" He said, "I need Phillip. I really need him in the business. My sons aren't old enough to come in with me. I need him very badly. But you do what you want dear." So, of course, that--. I adored my father. It won me over and he went to work. He didn't need him any more than he needed a man from the street at that time.

And when my husband went to work for him, my father threw him right into the business, gave him responsibilities. And people in the business, customers of his, people he bought from, would come to him and say, "How can you let this young man do this, do

that, yet he doesn't know anything about the business?" And my father would say, "How is he going to learn: if I tell him or if he makes his own mistakes?" And he grew into that business until my father really depended on him, adored him—he always adored him anyway—and everybody—and everybody in the business began to love my husband. And my husband had a very, very, very good brain for the business.

RR: So he stayed in it.

BF: He stayed in it until the day he died. My two brothers got in the business: one of them retired very young because he had a physical condition. And, no, yeah, my--. Let's see now.

My son went into the business. My son had gone to MIT, the graduate school of business, after college. And the business expanded tremendously with my son. And my husband was so loved in the business by all the employees because he was—besides what he did in the business, he was a personnel man.

The business expanded--. They moved and moved and moved. And their last place of business is on Broad Street near the Aquarium where they have two floors. And they—the type of business has expanded so that they do going-out-of-business sales for all kinds of businesses besides the jewelry business: fur business, furniture business, clothing business, whatever, whoever is going out of sale. They're well known over the entire country. And it's a tremendous, tremendous business now.

And, as I said, my husband was the personnel man. He knew--. They had in Boston alone—they have branches now in New York and so forth. All together they have a tremendous number of employees. My husband knew every employee by first name always. If they had a husband or a wife he knew that; almost always he knew the children's names. So he was well loved by all his employees. And it started out—there was a point to this. Oh, yes. My husband worked until they day he died at age eighty-

four.

RR: How many years ago was that?

BF: Three years ago.

RR: Three years.

BF: Three years and a couple of months. And up until he died and left the business, he once or twice was getting older, made a little error or something in something he was doing. He was not doing the kind of work that he did when he was younger. But there were things that he did in the business.

He would say to me, “I can’t—I’m going to leave the business.” It was his whole life. But, “I’m going to leave it. I made a mistake yesterday.” And my son came to me one day and said, “Mom, don’t ever let Dad leave the business unless he’s physically incapable to come. He is my support, my moral support. It just won’t be the same without him. I don’t care if that man comes and just sits in a chair all day. I want to have him there, Mother. What difference is it if he makes a little mistake here and there every now and then. It doesn’t matter.” He said, “He’s too important to everybody.”

And I cannot tell you when my husband died how many of the employees really cried and cried, really. I mean. I cry myself when I think about all this, you know, not because of my loss. My loss was great. But I have nothing to be sad about. I had fifty-eight years of the most wonderful life with this man who, to me, was the most wonderful man on the face of this earth. I’m sure he wasn’t. You know there are plenty of wonderful people. But to me and to his family, he was.

RR: Well that’s the important—

BF: That's right. And to this day people come to me and say, "I miss Phil. I really miss Phil." To give you an example of the type of man he was, in this building we had, you know, all kinds of service men people, wonderful people. And when he died there was a doorman at this building. And this man cried and fell on my neck really sobbing and said to me, "I didn't lose a man I knew. I lost a friend. Mr. Frieze never talked to me as though I was an employee of this building. He talked to me as though I was his good friend. He told me jokes. On his way home if he bought a dozen muffins, he always gave me one on the way in." He said, "I'm going to miss him." I gave him my husband's brand new that he had never worn cashmere jacket because he was the same size. He never got over it. He's no longer with us in this building. I mean that's the kind of guy Phil was. He was a people person. And people to this day say, "I miss him. I can't help it." I'm jumping from one thing to another.

RR: No, no, it's okay. Actually why don't we just go back then to how you--. You say from high school you went off to Smith.

BF: Smith College.

RR: Is that where you met your husband at Smith or--?

BF: No. I met him just shortly before I went to Smith. And I went to Smith College. And I majored in French. I took my junior year abroad in Paris. My mother came to see me then. She wasn't as peppy as she usually was. She came, she stayed a week, she took my friends out with me and she went home.

And when I came back from Europe I arrived in New York. My father came to meet me with the car. And he didn't say anything to me until almost home where he said that, "You know, mother had a heart attack. She knew she was—she had a feeling she was going to have one. She was having problems and that's why she went to France to see you."

And he said, “Your mama almost died.” That was her first big heart attack. “Mama almost died,” he said. “And now she has to watch herself very carefully. She had a very bad heart condition. But she absolutely made the family promise not to tell you until you finished your year in France. And so, of course—

RR: That was what—what year was that?

BF: Well I graduated college in 1934 so it was either 1932 or ’33. You know it was between the two years. I don’t remember just what month she came.

RR: And your family wasn’t affected by the Depression.

BF: Oh yes, we were very affected by the Depression. As a matter of fact, when I was at Smith my freshman year—it was—nowadays it’s like nothing to go to college. It was $500 a semester, I think, including everything. And I was in a dormitory and when I was going into my sophomore year, I wanted to go into what was called the quadrangle. It was brand new. And it cost $25 a semester more than any place else at the college. And I called my parents to say, “Can you do that? Can you afford it? I don’t want to do it if it’s too much.” And they said, “Of course they could,” you know. But that’s—they were not—they were okay.

My father lost everything in the Depression, but everything. He had to start over completely. He was very heavy into the stock market at that time. He had to start all over. But my father was a wonderful businessman. He did very well. For somebody that had no business education and no real education at all. When it came to the business world my father had an intuition that was amazing.

RR: Maybe it was better that he didn’t have a business education.

BF: Maybe it was better. But yet look at my son and what he did to the business with his business education. And I have a brother in the business, too.

RR: So it's still going along—

BF: Yes. And at this point we're hopeful that one of—at least one of my son's children—boys. He's got two boys and a girl. That one of the boys at least will go into the business. And, hopefully, and maybe his daughter. Maybe his other son who works out in Texas might eventually come into the business. I don't know. But it would be nice to have the business continue and go on.

RR: And maybe his daughter. Who knows?

BF: I said, and his daughter might. She is a very bright young girl. At this point she's going to Harvard Business School, Graduate School of Business. So maybe—

RR: Yeah. It seems like—

BF: She's not—her interest at this point doesn't indicate that she would because she was an assistant editor of a magazine—sports magazine—before this. And she still would sort of like to combine it with the publishing business.

RR: So you say that you must have started at Smith then before the stock market crash.

BF: No. I think it crashed just before.

RR: Just before you started.

BF: Twenty-nine. Wasn't that the crash?

RR: Yeah.

BF: Well in '29—let's see. I'll tell you. I was born in 1913.

RR: What—do you—what month or—

BF: February.

RR: February.

BF: Nineteen thirteen. What month was the crash? Do you know?

RR: It was October, I think, black October.

BF: I was born in 1913. So 1929 I would be sixteen, which is before—just before I went to college.

RR: So your parents still had enough money to be able to—

BF: Well, yeah, I guess. I don't know what my father did at that time. When he said he lost everything, I was too young. Really in those days you didn't talk to your kids the way you did now to know whether that meant absolutely everything or what. But believe, me if it was practically everything, my father was smart enough to arrange loans for a while because he had been in business and always had to have loans, you know, from the bank anyway. So we managed to get along. I didn't see any difference in our mode of living.

RR: So then you must have done pretty well at Brookline High School to get into Smith. Was—

BF: It was easy. I guess I did okay. It was easier to get into college in those days. But I must tell you something about going into college. My folks with their minimum education didn't know, you know, that you should apply to several colleges. We didn't have the advice then in high school—all the advice that the kids get today. And so I decided I'd like to go to Wellesley or Smith, preferably Wellesley. And so I applied to both schools.

To my horror, to my horror, really even at that age that was the first time I ever encountered any antisemitism personally. I got a letter from Wellesley College saying

that my grades certainly entitled me to be a student at Wellesley. Unfortunately their Jewish quota was filled. However, I would be on top of that list. I was number one on that list; whereupon I didn't even consult my folks. I don't know what because my mother wasn't helping me. She didn't know about getting into college or anything; whereupon I wrote them a letter and said, "Thank you very much but I no longer care to be a student at Wellesley College."

Fortunately, right after that I got accepted into Smith. So I don't think I even told my mother about that letter. And I told my mother I was going to Smith and she said, "That's great dear. You wanted to go to either Wellesley or Smith." And I said, "Yeah." I said, "I didn't get into Wellesley."

RR: That's amazing that you just, you know—that they were so open about it.

BF: I didn't know. But they wouldn't be today.

RR: No.

BF: Certainly. My friend Bernice—and her name was Cirshen—she got into Wellesley. She was brighter than I was.

RR: So you both went to Brookline High School and then—

BF: Yeah.

RR: And so she went to Wellesley—

BF: She went to Wellesley and I went to Smith. We were no longer best friends. We remained close, close, close friends all our life. But we were no--. The separation made us no longer best of friends but amongst best friends.

RR: What was your experience like at Smith? Did you experience antisemitism out there at all or--?

BF: I personally didn't. There might have been a little there. I'm sure there was. But I never experienced any there myself.

I did well at Smith. I--. When it came to graduation to graduate with honors you had to have a certain grade. And I was borderline. And you had to take an exam. If I did well—if I passed the exam I would graduate with honors. If I didn't then I wouldn't. At that time--. And the exam was on a Saturday.

At that time I was going around with Phil, my husband. I was—we were—we were not yet engaged. But it was coming, you know. He was coming up that Saturday and I said, "To heck with the honors." I didn't appear for the exam.

RR: So you took your junior year in France. And so your major was languages and French—

BF: My major was just French. And when I graduated Smith, actually, I had a French teacher at that time. His name was—I even remember his name—Mr. Guilliame. And we became very close. And I didn't know what I was going to do afterwards like, you know, many students at that time.

And he—I don't know why. But I was talking to him and he said, "You know, Bernice, you're pretty good in French. You ought to do something with it. Why not apply for a Guggenheim Fellowship?" So I said, "Really?" He said, "Yes, really." So I did. And I got a letter back from then that said, "You have the qualifications but your parents were not born in this country so you're not eligible for a Guggenheim Fellowship."

So I called Mr. Guilliame—Monsieur Guilliame on the telephone and told him that. He said, "I want you to come over to see me." And I did. And he said, "That's not true." He

said, “That’s plainly antisemitic.”

RR: Guggenheim no less.

BF: That’s what Mssr. Guilliame said. He said, “I am about to write them a letter.” And he did. I don’t know what he said. He never told me what was in the letter. I got another letter awarding me a Guggenheim Fellowship.

RR: Wow.

BF: I had that and then I also had gotten a job with United Fruit Company as an interpreter for French interpreter—you know, English to French, French to English. But I got engaged to Phil. So I refused the Guggenheim Fellowship and, of course, the job.

And my mother was very, very upset with me, very upset. She said, “Look, Bernice. Not everybody gets a Guggenheim Fellowship. Or if you didn’t like that, not everybody gets an interesting job like you got. What’s your rush to get married?” She said, “Do some of this first.” But, of course, I was young and I was in love. My husband was in love. So I said, “Mom, no. I’m getting married.”

RR: So at that time it would have been really—it was very unusual for a woman to be married and also be pursuing these other options—

BF: Yes, it was.

RR: Within your circles even at Smith, even among women from Smith.

BF: Oh yes. I mean women worked when they got married if they had to. And I just got a job working, you know, when I was married. And I worked until I--. I worked before I was pregnant. I mean I left work before I was pregnant because I was in a terrible, terrible automobile accident. And I couldn’t work for such a long time.

RR: What work did you have?

BF: Well let's see what it was called. I'll tell you. There's a professional name for it and I can't think of it right now. But all I did was sell make-up. I got—

RR: Cosmetician or something—

BF: Yeah, a cosmetician. But there was another name they—when I was in New York doing it where I got trained. And then worked in Saks Fifth Avenue first. They had a fancier name than a cosmetician. I can't think of it now. But that's all I did.

I worked for a company called Antoine where you mixed your powder. You mixed everything personally for everybody. But it really in those days, you know, times were different. I didn't know any more really about mixing powder than you know right now. You know you put a little of this, and a little of that and you look at the color and that's it. And it was a very costly make-up at that time.

So my basic salary, which was pretty good for a women in those days, was $18 a week plus a commission. My husband as an attorney at that time was earning $15 a week during the Depression.

We—I will just tell you this one interesting thing about that. I had to—I was in Filene's doing this. I had to work a half an hour later than my husband did. So he was downtown. He would come and pick me up at Filene's. And once a week we gave ourselves a treat to go out on the town.

This is what we did. We'd go to the Essex Delicatessen. I think that may be still in existence. I don't know. And for twelve cents each we got ourselves a big corned beef sandwich with all the pickles and coleslaw and pickled beets you could eat, and three cents for a cold drink. And then we took ourselves off to the Tremont Theatre, the movies, which was fifteen cents to go in. We had a pass so it only cost us ten cents to

go in. And we had as good a time as anybody has now when they go out and they spend $75 for the evening. We had a wonderful time once a week doing this.

RR: And that was, what, in the mid-thirties.

BF: Yeah.

RR: So I just want to back track a little bit and ask you—how did you meet your husband?

BF: I'm embarrassed because everything to me is such an interesting story. You want all this?

RR: Oh, absolutely.

BF: All right. I'll tell you that's also interesting. My folks and my husband's folks were friends. Not intimate friends, but friends. They saw each other once in a while. And my in-laws had a terrible tragedy. When my husband was a young boy, he had a sister who was seven years old. And my in-laws had a maid at that time. And the little girl, Emily, was taking her nap. And my mother took my husband out to visit a friend. And the maid was supposed to bring Emily there as soon as she woke up from her nap. Emily was seven years old.

RR: You mean that was your mother-in-law that took—

BF: My mother-in-law. The maid was to take Emily to my mother-in-law where she was visiting. The maid left the room for a minute. The little girl ran into the kitchen, lit the stove, put paper in it and burned herself terribly all over, so badly. Fortunately, she died that night.

RR: [unclear]

BF: In the hospital. She was so burned because in those days they didn't have all those treatments and--. She was burned especially all over her face and hands and chest. Now people talk about hair turning white overnight. My father's hair—father-in-law's hair actually did turn white overnight.

My mother-in-law, every time she had a child it was difficult for her. And she was not supposed to have any more children. But she and my father-in-law wanted another girl as a replacement so badly. So she did get pregnant again and it was another boy. And she had a terrible mental breakdown. Then they decided to try once more and she had another boy. And then this breakdown was real terrible. My father-in-law had to take her away for a year. And my husband and the rest of the family were taken care of by an aunt during that time.

Now then all they lived for was to have their first son get married and they'd have a daughter. When they were at my folks' house for dinner one night, I came down from the bedroom, and they met me for the first time. And I guess my father-in-law liked me. Maybe something about me attracted him. And he said to my mother, "That's going to be my daughter-in-law. She's going to marry my son." And my mother said, "Big joke here that we're talking."

Well from the time I was—later part of high school my mother-in-law incessantly called my mother and said, "Come over for dinner and bring Bernice. Do this, bring Bernice. Bring Bernice." And I said to my mother, "I'm not going. I am not being fixed up with anybody like that." And my mother kept saying, "I don't blame you darling."

My mother avoided it and avoided it until my last year in high school at New Year's time—a little before New Year's my mother said to me one day, "You know, Sadie Frieze called me. Daddy's out of town." And she said, "Come for dinner, bring Bernice." She said, "You know Bernice, I can't stand this anymore. Would you go with me? Let's go tonight and get it over with and she'll never do it again, and we'll be through with it you

and me." So I said, "Okay, ma."

RR: So they lived in Brookline also then.

BF: Yes. So we went over there and he was no more interested at that point than I was. I had a boyfriend and I was very fond of him. He had a girlfriend. He was very fond of her. And I mean he was absolutely disinterested.

When I got there he wasn't even in the room. He was in his own room. And I hear this little music coming from his room. He was playing his mandolin. He played the mandolin. Mother left the room once and I know she must have got him—gone to get him. He was no more interested than I was with this.

And he came out and we really didn't—it was nothing, you know, nothing. And to be polite when his mother had said to my mother, "We're going such and such a place New Year's Eve. Why don't you and Jack—that was my father's name. They called him JB or Jack.—why don't you come? You'll have a good time. Phil is coming with us." So—and Phil, to be polite, said, "Yeah. I'll dance with you." And I said, "I'm sorry I can't go because I have a date New Year's Eve." That was it.

The night before I was leaving to go to Europe, to go to France, a cousin of mine who was my dear friend gave me—wanted to give me "a surprise party" in my mother's house. And she asked me who I wanted to have. And we were lacking one boy. And we were thinking and thinking and thinking. And I said, "Oh, ask that guy Phil Frieze just to fill it in, fill the whole thing in fine."

Well my folks the next day drove me down to the boat leaving for Europe and who's there but Phil Frieze. I don't know what happened to him that night.

I came back from Europe--. Oh and he wrote to me. Every week I got a letter from him. I got back dying to see my boyfriend. And I got back and I'm no sooner in my house than

there's a call from Phil Frieze, "I'm coming over."

He came over. I'm still—I'm not very interested. I like my boyfriend really. And my boyfriend at that time was going to be a doctor. So to be a doctor he wanted plenty of experience. And he was doing volunteer work at the Beth Israel Hospital evenings. And Phil was pushing, pushing, pushing.

And so this is what happened. In the daytime I'd see my boyfriend, whose name I'm not going to mention because he's a well known doctor at Faulkner Hospital. And in the evenings, I'd see Phil.

And my mother had a maid at that time who liked—didn't like Phil as well as the other fellow. And she was a wonderful baker. And she used to bake all these things for my, you know, my boyfriend at that time and lock them up when Phil was coming at night.

Well anyway, pretty soon I liked them both. But I really, you know, sort of preferred the boyfriend. And we were out once, one day, and he said to me, "Bernice, I want you to know I know you're seeing somebody else in the evenings when I'm working. And I want to tell you something. I think we should break up because—he said—I have many years to go yet." He said, "I'm in my first year, second year college. Then I've got to finish college. I've got to go to med school. I've got to start a practice. I can't make any commitments for a long time. I want you to know how I feel about you. But this won't work out if you're going with somebody else at the same time. And if you're at all serious with him." So we broke up on a friendly basis. And I saw more and more of Phil. And I certainly made the right decision I have to tell you.

But that was also interesting that in the end I did marry Phil Frieze. And my father-in-law got so drunk the night we got engaged and he saw it was going to happen. That after being sick and throwing up, he just got into the bathtub with his clothes on and slept there that night.

And to go on a little further with this, when we got married, he was actually so excited—he was so beside himself with happiness--. And it's not given, I must say--. To many brides, you know, to-be—to have their in-laws so anxious to have them in the family because the sons particularly, I guess, the mothers feel that nobody's good enough for their sons. But anyway, we got married--. Rabbi Levi—we were the last wedding that he performed.

RR: At Temple Israel.

BF: From Temple Israel. But we had--. I had just gotten my job and I had to be at work in two weeks.

RR: That was at Filene's?

BF: Yeah. No, I wasn't--. I didn't--. Yeah. I just got that new job. I had been going to secretarial school so I could work. And then I got this job. I didn't apply for it. They called me from Filene's. They called to have them send somebody from the secretarial school. It had something to do with secretaries, anyway. And they said to me—they told me what I was going to do and what the job was going to be and everything. And I had to be trained in New York—

[end of tape 1, side B]

RR: That's a good story, actually, that your mother gave you a present on your children's birthday.

BF: Yeah. Just the first birthday. Where was I now—what did I say? Oh, about my father-in-law at the wedding. We had a very--. I had to go start the job in two weeks. And we knew that we wouldn't have any time to have a honeymoon or anything. So we had to get married so that we had whatever time we could have before I started my job.

So Phil met me when I got back from New York and he said--. I said as we were driving home—I said, “Phil what are you doing next Sunday?” I came home on a Saturday I guess. Sunday—because we worked Saturdays in those days. He said, “Nothing. Why? What do you want to do?” I said, “Would you like to get married next Sunday?” We were engaged. And he said, “Sure, but why?” So I told him.

Well in those days you needed a week to get your license and everything. We didn’t have time for a week and have a week’s honeymoon. So we had to go to court to get a five-day waiver at that time. So we went to court to get the waiver. And I, I guess, being nervous and excited just as the judge was asking me the information, I had a call of nature and it was a big mess the whole thing. But we did get the five-day waiver.

My father lent Phil his car because we had to drive for our honeymoon. It was the Depression. We couldn’t afford much of anything. And we drove to Canada for our honeymoon. We took $50 for a whole week’s vacation in those days that Phil’s paternal grandfather had given us for a wedding gift. And my mother-in-law, who was a wonderful cook—just wonderful—packed us a basket of food—stuff that we had to eat first because it wouldn’t keep as long. We bought so little food in that week it was amazing. We stayed at what would now be called motels for about $2 a night.

When we got to Quebec, which was our destination, we splurged. That was our big splurge. We went out to have a drink at the Frontenak. Was that the hotel there? Where I only ordered soda or ginger ale or something and Phil had a glass of beer. But that was our big splurge.

And we had—nobody to go on a honeymoon today to go to Europe, to go any place to spend six months had a better time than we had in that week because times were different. We didn’t—nobody knew any better. Nobody felt that we were poor. We weren’t poor. You know. Don’t you want hot coffee and a cookie or something?

[Recorder is turned off and then back on.]

RR: Now you can just—oh, let me—

BF: Because it's not whether—[recorder is turned off and then back on].

RR: This is tape two—this is tape two of the interview with Bernice Frieze. It's January 16th 1997. And the interviewer is Rochelle Ruthchild.

BF: Before this is on let me tell you--. It's about--. [Recorder is turned off and then back on.] Passover at my maternal grandparents' house I remember from when I was a very young child was always very impressive because my grandfather really got into it.

The table was pushed up to the sofa in the dining room. They brought the sofa into the dining room. And he lay on the couch. He did not sit through the whole service. He lay, he reclined as you're supposed to. He put on his white linen outfit. The sofa was draped in white. And it was a very formal seder.

Of course I didn't understand a word of what was being said because it was all done in Yiddish. But even as a little child I was very impressed. My mother allowed me to have a teaspoonful of wine. And it went on.

RR: So it was all in Yiddish not Hebrew.

BF: No, Hebrew. I said Yiddish. Thank you for correcting me. And we—even as a little child I was not bored with this at all. It was always fascinating to me to see my grandfather. He looked like a different man. Who is this man, you know. My grandfather had a beautiful beard, very well kept, dark hair. And he was an austere looking man. For his times he was very tall. I think he was not that tall a man but he looked very tall and imposing to me always even though he was loving to me.

RR: This was your maternal grandfather?

BF: Maternal grandparent.

RR: Okay.

BF: And so this one year when I—I guess I was in my lower teens. And my aunt, my mother's younger sister—her step sister—was ten years older than I was. And she was always like a chum to me when I went to my maternal grandparents' home. She didn't treat me like a kid.

So this one year my mother said to my aunt—who was Aunt Jean as soon as she grew up even though her name was Jennie. I said to—my mother said to my Aunt Jean and I, and me, "I think you two girls ought to now do the dishes, begin to do the dishes after this seder."

So we got to the sink. And I had had my little wine. Every year they gave me a little more. I don't know how much wine she drank. And we're giggling, and laughing and carrying on like two chums. And I think we both had had a little too much Pesedic wine.

My mother came into the kitchen and saw us and said, "What's the matter with you two?" She said, "You get out of the kitchen. I' m not going to let you break Bubby's dishes. I'll do the dishes." So thereafter we always drank too much wine on purpose so that my mother would say, "I don't think you girls better do the dishes." We always went to my maternal grandparents' for the first night of Passover.

RR: For how many—even after you were married?

BF: No. By that time my grandfather had died and Bubby was, you know, at somebody else's house for Passover. As a matter of fact, my mother kept Passover for a few years--. You know cleaned the house out of all the chometz. But then she stopped even doing that. And second night of Passover we always went to my paternal grandparents' house. But that was a much larger family. Excuse me. And they had horses with

boards and extended—and fortunately their dining room was next to the living room, and it extended.

RR: You mean like saw horses.

BF: Yeah.

RR: Uh-huh.

BF: But it was not fun for me like the other one was because the other one was always much smaller. And here there were so many people and it took so long. And you sat and you sat and you sat for so long because so many people had to be served.

Now my grandmother, my paternal grandmother, had three of her own daughters with my grandfather. And the interesting thing to me—and I even noticed it as a child—was they never sat down. They were like servants. They waited. They would not let anybody of this mob of people—I can't tell you how many—never let anybody get up to help them. Those, the three girls and my grandmother never sat down through the whole seder.

RR: So the seder was basically conducted by the men.

BF: Oh yes. The women in both seders never had women do anything.

RR: They didn't read from the Haggadah or anything.

BF: Oh, no. They were too Orthodox for that.

RR: So you said that your mother, after a few years, stopped cleaning the house of chometz. Do you celebrate Passover by having seders at all or—

BF: Well after my mother's heart condition got so bad we didn't have it. I mean we'd have a holiday dinner, you know, and say a few words. But not a true seder because as a matter of fact I really then I had stopped so many years before I was married going to

seders because my—both grandfathers had died young that I don't think I really understood how to conduct a seder properly. I had seders in my house, you understand. And I always--. I didn't clean the house from chometz. But I had all the--. I'd have matze and I'd make all the Passover foods and all that. But when my son grew up--. So my children didn't really know from the right kind of seder.

RR: But you did--. You had Seders and did you just eat matzoh during—

BF: Oh no. I had seders. I made them as best I could. I got the Haggadahs and read from it. But basically it was not what I consider a really true seder. My son married a very traditional girl. My son—my children, I must say—

RR: How many children do you have?

BF: Two.

RR: Uh-huh.

BF: My daughter's marriage is an inter-faith marriage. So they weren't so religious. They came to temple—after they were married—they came to temple with me on the High Holidays and gradually got away from it. They come to temple when there's an occasion. My son-in-law—even once when my son and daughter-in-law were away over Passover called and said he'd like to have the seder at his house if Phil would help him.

RR: So your son-in-law is--?

BF: He's Protestant.

RR: Uh-huh. And he—

BF: He's an Episcopalian really.

RR: He hasn't converted or--?

BF: No. When I asked my daughter if she had considered asking him to convert when they were engaged, she said, “No mother, I haven’t.” She said, “I thought about it. Would you like it if he asked me to convert and I converted and became an Episcopalian? You wouldn’t like it would you? How would his parents feel?” So she said, “That’s my reason, mother.”

The only thing I feel badly about because he’s a wonderful, wonderful man—participates in all our things. Actually when we have a real seder he sings the songs after the seder louder than anybody, and sways to it and has a wonderful time.

But the only thing I regret in that marriage—and it’s a wonderful, wonderful marriage. And my son-in-law is a remarkable man in many ways, most remarkable—is their children were brought up neither here nor there.

Their son, of course, is Jewish because he was born from a Jewish mother. Their oldest child, who is a daughter, is adopted. And she--. Neither one of her parents were Jewish.

But the only reason they were able to get this child--. At that time they were very careful to give only children of the same religion out for adoption was because her mother said she did not care what religion the family was who adopted her as long as it was going to be a wonderful family for her child. Her--.

She was very well matched up to my daughter and son-in-law because her parents were college students. Her father was studying law, was very tall and very light and so is my son-in-law. And my son-in-law was a lawyer. And her mother was dark and tall and so is my daughter. And everybody keep saying, “Oh, she looks just like her mother. She looks just like her father.” But, anyway, I’ve gotten away from the point, which is when my son married this very—what word did I use before?

RR: Traditional.

BF: This very traditional girl who came from a very traditional family. And my son had not become at all irreligious, but would, like a lot of young people would, say to me, "Mom, I'm not going to temple so often. You'll tell me which holiday you want me to go and I'll go, ma. I'll go. I'll go happily and I'll go graciously. And do anything you want. That's it, ma." He married this traditional girl, as I said, and after they were married, she lit her Friday night candles. She did everything. They joined a temple the minute she became pregnant. And she got him involved in Jewish things.

RR: Where do they live? Do they live--?

BF: They live in Newton. In Waban. And he became--. You might not have heard his name so much. But he's very big in the Jewish community. I mean he was—he's had all kinds of positions. He won the Young Jewish Leadership. And he was—he--. See I'm trying to think of all the things in order. I can't. I can't. But he's a well known figure, very well known, in the Jewish community.

RR: What's his name?

BF: Michael Frieze. As a matter of fact, amongst other things, not only, you know, was he chairman of the CJP and was he--. But he was head of the, you know, when they started bringing the Russians into Boston. He came on the first plane with the Russians. He was the head of that. He—anyway.

So he would come to seders, of course, at my house. And one year he said to me, "Mother, I can't come to your house for seder anymore." I said, "Why, Mikey?" He said, "It's not a good enough seder." He said, "I can't do it. I'm going to have seder with so and so." Their best friends who were very, very traditional and religious. He said, "And you're more than welcome. We want you to come to us." So I said, "Well Michael, let's think about it. We'll see."

So when it came near Passover, I spoke to my daughter-in-law and I said, “What are we doing Passover? Are you having it with your friends and so forth.” She said, “Mother, of course not. We’re coming to you.” I said, “But Michael said he didn’t want to because it wasn’t—he didn’t have the right feeling at that seder.” She said, “Oh, Mother, what’s more important; being with family or doing it a little more properly.” She said, “Of course we’re coming to you, Mom.” She said, “We’ll have second night.” Fine. So, of course, what I did,

I called Michael and I told him what she said. I said, “Does that satisfy you?” He said, “Oh sure, Ma.” I said, “Well, you tell me what Haggadahs to get that you like. And will you conduct the service at our home because we’re the parents and we’d like--.” He said, “Sure, Mother. If that’s what you wanted to do why didn’t you say that?” I said, “I didn’t think of it.” So then for a few years we did—we had a beautiful seder.

RR: And your daughter and son-in-law.

BF: Oh, always there, always at the functions.

RR: And they also live in Boston?

BF: They also live, right now, in Newton. But they’re about to move downtown. But, anyway, then we started--. Then when I began gradually giving up doing these things at home we went to Michael’s. And they conduct the most beautiful seder and they collect all the people who would not, you know, probably be at a seder.

And they have many, many, many friends in Israel. And whenever their friends come they stay at Michael’s house. Everybody knows, “Oh, you’re coming from Israel? Call Michael Frieze. You can stay with him.”

But it’s really beautiful. There’s such feeling in his seders. And then he always, always in the seder has them read from Martin Luther King’s speech because my daughter was a

freedom rider. And she was in jail for a long time.

RR: How long?

BF: Six weeks. But she has very—she had very bad asthma. And the only reason we allowed her to go--. When she graduated college she said, “Mom, before I do anything else I’m going down South.” She said, “I just feel I want to and I must go.”

She said, “Now let me say something to you. If you say to me, I won’t allow you to go, then I won’t go. So, Ma, it’s up to you. You taught me certain things. If you want to tell me not to go, I won’t go. Can you tell me not to go?”

So I said to her, “Let me call your dad. And if he agrees with me, you can go but on one condition—.” She was very asthmatic and she had another—she also at that time had Crohn’s Disease, which now—Crohn’s Disease, which was then called ileitis. I said, “We’re going to your doctor and talk to him first. If he says, ‘Judy, I don’t want you to go.’ Then I will tell you you can’t go.”

So we went to him and we had a long talk. And he told her, “Take your medications with you—this that and the other.” And off she went. She was the second busload that went down there. And they were supposed to allow one letter a week back and forth. And—

RR: Where was she in prison?

BF: In Mississippi. And she--. We had the agreement the reason we would allow her to go--. It wasn’t allow—go, you know, was—if she wasn’t well, if she wasn’t feeling well, she would immediately let us know and we could bail her out. She didn’t want to be bailed out otherwise.

Well, we don’t hear from her for six weeks. But we figure she’s getting our letters, you know. After six weeks I really was sick with worry. So I don’t know who Phil knew who

knew somebody who knew somebody would could find out. And he found out and she said she wanted to get out. She wanted to come home.

And when she came out, it seemed that they didn't--. They never gave her the letters we wrote. There was a whole group. I mean she wasn't the only one that did this--. And the only one letter a week that they allowed into these girls—because she was in a women's jail—was crank letters, you know.

And she really had had a terrible, terrible asthma attack while she was there. They finally--. One of the other girls that was there said, "You've got to get a doctor." But this girl--. "Or at least let her get her medication out of her suitcase. She'll die if you don't." And the warden said, "We have a lovely, lovely little graveyard out in back." Finally they did get a doctor for her and she was frightened. And he got her her medication. It was just lucky, really, that we did this.

But there's one story I have to tell you since we're talking about this that's very interesting about all this. When they were in jail, Judy decided she was going to keep a record. Now they had no paper, pencils or anything like that. And all the girls got each day was one sheet of toilet tissue. And one of them had a lipstick. And everyday she kept her record on this one sheet, and rolled it up very tightly and put it in the hem of her skirt. She came home—. When we went down to get her we drove down to pick her up. She came home—

RR: You drove down to Mississippi?

BF: Yeah. We...I see this dirty little skirt. They didn't let them get a change of clothes or--. What does Mama do?

RR: What?

BF: Throws it in the washing machine. Poor Judy. Can you imagine that? After keeping six weeks of daily records there. Actually this was written up in The Globe as a daily series. She was interviewed and ran as a daily series for, I don't know, a week to ten days. But she has lots of stories to tell about treatment there but that has nothing to do with this.

RR: Well it does in the sense that it's interesting that there's that continuity between your mother, who was very socially active in the Spanish Civil War and being called to the McCarthy hearings. And I don't know if she was a member of the Communist party or if she was just—

BF: No. She was not. Everybody thought she was but she had never--. I mean these people, you know, the FBI and everything--. But she had actually never joined the Communist party.

RR: But fought for social causes. And it sounds like you imbued in your daughter also this feeling of fighting for social justice. And then on the other side, your daughter-in-law, in the same way that your maternal grandmother said when she came to your house and you wanted to give her separate dishes that your daughter-in-law was saying the same thing. That, you know, it's more important to be in a loving situation than to observe the letter of the law.

BF: Right. My daughter-in-law really I'm speaking to you to differentiate. But I never call her my daughter-in-law because no mother in this world could be blessed with a better daughter-in-law than I have. I mean, she's my daughter as well as my daughter is. And I can say that they love each other also.

We are a most fortunate family, so fortunate. Everybody loves everybody else in this family. Everybody will do, I mean, to their utmost when it's needed for any person in the family. And even the grandchildren are that way. So I say that we're awfully lucky.

RR: How many grandchildren do you have?

BF: We have five at this point. They're all grown up. The youngest is—out of the two families, three and two.

RR: Three is--?

BF: My son's, two my daughter's. And they range from twenty-six to thirty. None's married yet. They've all done very well, very nicely. And I just think it's a great, great family.

RR: That's very lucky.

BF: Isn't it lucky, very, very lucky, yeah.

RR: So I just want to go back a little bit to you got married then in the mid-thirties.

BF: I got married in 1935, graduated college in 1934—got married in 1935.

RR: Your husband went to school here and college in--?

BF: He went to BU Law School. He had to earn his own way through college. Times were bad. [Telephone rings.] Excuse me.

[Recorder is turned off and then back on.]

BF: Where were we?

RR: We were—you were talking about your family and how your felt really lucky because—

BF: Oh, yeah. We're very lucky. If I—even my grandchildren and all pay attention to me. I haven't got one complaint about family, not even one. You know, not even to love

somebody but find a little something that you can find to complain about. I can't.

RR: Do most of your grandchildren live in Boston or in--?

BF: Well at this point four of them are in Boston and one is out in Austin, Texas where his job is.

RR: I just want to talk a little bit more about some ritual, for example, just the way you talked about the Passover seders that your grandparents and how the seders really changed over time. And if there are other Jewish rituals that you do in the home at this point besides the seder. Or, actually, not a seder—you do it at your son's house, but—. Do you light shabbos candles?

BF: No I don't. My son does. He does it. And my son observes. My son has become more religious than I am.

RR: Did he have a kosher home?

BF: No. He did have a kosher home in Loon—Loon, New Hampshire, you know, where they have a little skiing place—because they bought it together with their very good friends who were kosher. And so my daughter-in-law used to joke, "I guess I'm the only Jewish person but has a kosher vacation home and not a kosher regular home."

RR: Do they belong to a different temple?

BF: Yes. They belong to Shalom and they also belong to Temple—what's that one, you know, Emmanuel because my son felt that he wanted to belong to a more Conservative type temple. But he finally gave up his membership there because his children didn't like it. They had been confirmed at Temple Shalom. They didn't understand the service. And there his children are very good about going to all the services and observing all the holidays, and coming home for holidays. And even my daughter-in-law much preferred

Temple Shalom.

RR: Is Temple Shalom Reformed?

BF: It's Reformed. It's an outgrowth of Temple Israel.

RR: Oh. I didn't realize that.

BF: Yeah because you're too young. But when my son and daughter-in-law had children and they were getting to be of age where they could go to religious school, my son said that he thought he'd probably join Temple Israel.

And living in Newton at that time and Temple Shalom having existed two or three years by that time, I said to him, "Michael I think you're making a mistake. Dad and I would love you to belong to the same temple we do but we think that you should belong to the temple where your children's friends are going, so they go to the religious school where their friends are going. You know that would keep them more interested in the temple."

And we really would have loved, you know, to have them with us. But now since Phil has died, on the holidays and for my husband's yahrtzeit we go sometimes to my—to Temple Israel and sometimes to Temple Shalom because it's not fair for me to make them come to Temple Israel on all the holidays.

RR: Sure. Do you—have you—how long have you belonged to Temple Israel?

BF: Over fifty years. I don't remember exactly how many. But when everything came around for those people who had belonged fifty years or more, I figured it out and I knew that it was over fifty years.

RR: And did you—were there certain—were there any historical events that caused you to want to belong to a temple? Was it, for example, World War II, the Holocaust? I don't know if Phil—was Phil in the service during World—your husband--

BF: No, no. Because he had—he had two children at the time. And his two brothers were in the service. But he did more of his share for not being in the service and having the two children. He went to business in the morning. Then he went to Raytheon from three to eleven every single night. And then two nights a week he spent the whole night on the watchtower.

RR: So he worked at Raytheon?

BF: During the war years because he felt—I won't say guilty. But he felt he should do a lot because his two brothers were in the service. And he wasn't because of his family. But he did do that all through the war.

RR: Did you belong to a temple during the war?

BF: Sure because we've belonged to Temple Israel over fifty years.

RR: Oh, over fifty years, okay. So you actually joined—

BF: Oh yeah.

RR: In the thirties.

BF: Yeah.

RR: And you said your parents—

BF: They belonged to—first to Temple Mishkin Tefila—

RR: And then they belonged to Temple Israel.

BF: Yes.

RR: So actually your parents and you both—

BF: We went together to temple.

RR: Were there any rabbis with whom you had a particularly close--?

BF: Gittelsohn, Rabbi Gittelsohn. As a matter of fact even though--. You know Rabbi Mehlman, whom we like very much, was the rabbi then when Phil died. We had Rabbi Gittelsohn perform the service. He wasn't doing many at that time. He and Phil loved each other and they were also fraternity brothers. And we were very fond of Rabbi Gittelsohn.

RR: So you had that personal connection to Temple Israel.

BF: Well we only became friendly with him from Temple Israel. They didn't even know they were fraternity brothers before because they didn't belong to the same chapter. And they found it out incidentally and they had a great time every time they met giving each other the old fraternity brother handshake, secret handshake, you know.

RR: So did your connection to Temple Israel though—was it mostly through attending high holiday services and then various family celebrations and—

BF: Yeah. And, of course, Michael was bar mitzvahed at Temple Israel. And Confirmation at Temple Israel and—

RR: And your daughter, Judy did--?

BF: Yeah. She was confirmed at Temple Israel. And then we also have a room in Phil's name, the family has a room in Phil's name in the nursery school. I find--.

It's very interesting. I never went to temple too much just like that, you know. "Oh so it's Friday evening or Saturday. I'll go to temple." Once Phil died and I went to his yahrtzeit--. Well I went to temple every week for the first month. And I went to the early service at Temple Israel.

I must say this. I had an altogether different feeling then about going to temple. My kids came with me every Friday night after Phil died, and my grandchildren. And then I started going myself and now I go very often to the Friday night service. Not so much do I go for religious reasons but because I enjoy it so much. It gives me such a peaceful feeling to have that hour or so of sheer relaxation and it's the only time I sit in my life and have this religious feeling. You know the type that's warm and embracing. And I really enjoy it. I don't do it quite so much in the winter in the cold weather. But in the nice weather almost every Friday night that I'm free from not doing anything I go just to go.

RR: And that's the kabbalat shabbat service or the later one. It doesn't—

BF: No. But I go to the early one. I'm out early. I don't have to worry. Even--. I have friends many of them who say, "If you go to that early service I'd like to go with you." But whether they do or they don't, if I say I'm going I don't care if I go myself. It doesn't matter to me at all. I just enjoy that service.

RR: Yeah. That is a really good service.

BF: I get a lot out of that service.

RR: And it also ends, particularly in the summertime and the spring and fall, when it's light enough so that—

BF: Yeah. Tell me, how do you pronounce it? I never knew. I see it written but I don't know how you pronounce it.

RR: I pronounce it kabbalat shabbat.

BF: Is that how it is?

RR: I think so, yeah.

BF: Okay.

RR: Let me see. What was your earliest Jewish memory?

BF: Oh in my maternal grandparents' homes. They lit the candles. They observed everything.

And my grandfather used to--. One of the things that is not religious in and of itself, but has to do with the religion. My grandfather used to make the Passover wine well before Passover of course so it would be ready for Passover.

And we used to sit at the kitchen table and he used to do whatever he had to do. And he made me think I was helping him, which I really wasn't. And once the wine was done he'd be tasting it at different times to see if it was just right. And he felt that having helped him I deserved to have a little taste, too, even though I was very young.

So what he would do is he would take a jigger glass and he would chop off a lot of nuts and put the nuts about halfway up in the jigger glass and take a teaspoon and put just a little wine in it to give it the little flavor. And then he'd say, "Now that's for you. You eat that. And tell me, how is it?" [Laughs]

RR: So those are really your earliest memories?

BF: Yeah.

RR: That's—

BF: I was very little at that time. I don't think--. I was still staying at my grandparents' from time to time. But it could have been in the summer so that I was a little older because I guess the wine has to age a little bit. So--. But I think I was no more than six or seven years old.

RR: I wanted to ask you also about the impact of events that particularly Jewish events, world events and other world events--. You talked about your daughter being involved in the civil rights movement. You talked about your mother and the McCarthy hearings. And you talked about your husband with World War II. I was just wondering particularly around the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel if that—if you remember?

BF: I remember. But, of course, we didn't know about the Holocaust too much in the beginning until practically after the war. Of course, like everybody else, we were horrified. It was awful. I used to have nightmares sometimes, you know, about it, about what was going on. And I imagine my husband did, too. But then when the State of Israel came into being I was very excited. I thought that Truman was a oh—he was a wonderful man, you know. And then finally on my first trip to Israel—I was married--. I went with a brother and sister-in-law—Phil's youngest brother.

RR: What year was that? Do you remember?

BF: Oh a long time ago. Because it was long before, long before we moved here. And we lived here eighteen years. I don't remember exactly the year. Well, I could maybe figure it out. But it would take too much time.

RR: Probably in the sixties.

BF: Anyway, I want to tell you, I always thought someday I'll go to Israel. And I never thought, "Oh I must get to Israel." But I want to tell you, once I got there like so many people--. Phil used to say about our trip when, you know, they'd say, "How did you enjoy it?" Phil would say, "Well my wife, my wife, she cried and she enjoyed. And she cried and she enjoyed." He said, "She cried. She watered the land in Israel." [Laughs]

Yeah. And from then on I always had this intense, intense feeling about Israel. I've been there, you know, since I've been there three times since that. But I still, I cry when I go there for this one thing or the other, you know. It's a very emotional place to go to Israel.

You've been?

RR: I was there in 1963 and I'm actually going in May of this year.

BF: Oh, you're going to find such a change, such a change. I don't know why. I never think it's going to hit me. I get off the plane and I always start to cry.

RR: Do you have any relatives there? Did you lose relatives in the Holocaust? I mean, did your grandparents--?

BF: They never knew exactly, you know, who was lost in the Holocaust, who wasn't lost in the Holocaust—

RR: They had sort of lost touch with you.

BF: Yeah, but we do have relatives. We have--. My mother had relatives there. It was very interesting that when we went that one time my sister-in-law had relatives there.

RR: In Israel?

BF: In Israel. And I had, I don't know, I don't know, between, I don't know from second cousins or cousins once removed. I've never figured that thing out. But we had family there and cousins. And the girl the first time she was in the Army. And we saw them each time we went to Israel. And my sister-in-law had relatives.

And we were taking them all out to dinner one night. And my sister-in-law said, "Gee I don't know what to do." She said, "You know, they all understand a little English so we can get by except one aunt who only speaks Hebrew and Yiddish. What are we going to do?"

I said, "Well I'll tell you. The only thing I can figure out is lets sit her next to me. My Yiddish is very broken from my grandmother." I said, "And maybe, at least, we'll have a

little communication."

Well, you know, it was very interesting. I started to talk to her and the more we went on the more came back to me because I hadn't spoken Yiddish for so many years. And you know, we got along beautifully that night. I couldn't express everything. I'd go around the bush, you know, to try to get her to understand. And she did and she helped me out. She'd sometimes get on, you know, have an intuition as to what I was trying to say. We had the most wonderful evening that lady and I.

RR: It's amazing how language—

BF: Comes back. Yeah.

RR: Do any of your children speak Yiddish at all or are they interested in it?

BF: No. They know a lot of Jewish words. Michael and his wife, Linda, took a course in Hebrew. They speak a little bit of Hebrew, not much.

But my daughter-in-law uses, interjects Hebrew expressions very often into what she's saying. My daughter-in-law, my daughter knows the general Jewish words that most people use. And my son-in-law knows several Jewish words. He went through a book. And he comes up very often and he says, "Oh he's a something or he's—you know, or this or that." In natural conversation he'll put in a Jewish word not only from hearing it but he learns very quickly. He catches on very quickly. Once when he was in temple with us when he was—oh, quite a few years ago.

I can't read Hebrew. I wish I could. But I--. From the little that I went to religious school I can follow. I couldn't read it. But I know--. And I can find my place if I've lost it.

And so he was sitting next to me and we were following. And pretty soon he could follow it. He didn't know the words but he--. You know he recognized the letters, the symbols.

I mean he couldn't—he's not—. I don't know if he would again because he hasn't been to temple in a long time except to go to bar mitzvahs and weddings and things like that. But I was—

[end of tape 2, side A]

BF: --day and I didn't want to be committed to go. You know, I'm eighty-four now—be committed to going out in the evening to take a course. Or if there was one in the daytime it happened that for other things that I was doing on a regular basis it wasn't at the right time. I would just love to be able to read it when I go to temple. I really would.

I had made arrangements with a friend of mine who could read Hebrew that I would do some of her needle point for her if she would teach me to read Hebrew. Unfortunately, after we made the agreement she moved to Florida permanently.

RR: What kind of—are you involved in any charitable work or have you been involved—

BF: I used to be when I was younger. But I don't go out and do charitable work now. The most I can do is I'm fortunate enough to be able to contribute to many things and I do that. I did very interesting, I think, charitable work when I was younger.

RR: What kind of work?

BF: You want to know that.

RR: Oh sure.

BF: Well let's say that I was never interested in organizational work to much of a degree because when I started doing just a little bit of that it seemed to me in those days—. This was many years ago because I only did it for a short while—that a lot of the women were in it for—I don't know—they wanted to be recognized for everything that they did. And that, to me, wasn't very important. It wasn't.

So I did charitable work. I read to the blind. I read a young man through Harvard Law School. Then I read to a blind priest from India. I did work at the Boston Eye and Ear Infirmary.

And the work that I did and enjoyed the most was at the Children's Hospital. I used to go in and do whatever was necessary: entertain the kids, feed the kids and so forth. And I did that one day a week when I was doing that. And Phil and I also did it one evening a week. And that turned into be a favorite thing of mine.

Do you want a story of how we got really interested in the Children's Hospital and have a big fund there? Well one day when I was at the Children's Hospital, one of the women who was in charge of the volunteer work said to me, "Today,Bernice, I want you to go up to a certain little fellow. We don't know what's wrong with him. He cries and he cries. And he won't eat. He won't let us feed him." The child was about six years old, I'd say. "He won't let us feed him. We can't do a thing with him. We're just so broken-hearted." So I said, "I'll try, you know. And where does he come from?" And she said, "Well, he's from Canada. And of course he's lonely. His folks can't come down to see him. They don't have the means to come down."

So I went in and I started to speak to the child, nothing, nothing. His lunch was there. Got it to feed to him, nothing. All of a sudden a bulb lit up in my head. This guy's from Canada. Maybe he's from French-speaking Canada, my major. Started talking to him in French. He threw his arms around me crying hysterical and hanging on to me. And I rocked him and I hugged him and we cried together. Who wouldn't cry with this child?

He ate every spoonful of his lunch. And I said to the nurse, I said, "This child doesn't know a word you're saying to him. He doesn't know if he's supposed to eat it. He doesn't know what he's supposed to do. You have got to find somebody who speaks a little French with this child." So he was--. Of course I went there --. I saw him for as long as he was there.

And then came my husband—a big birthday of my husband's. I forget now whether it was the sixtieth. I guess so. And I didn't know what to give him specially. And though I couldn't afford to give that big a contribution, I said to Phil, "You know what I'd like to give you for your birthday? I'd like to start a fund in your name at the Children's Hospital." I said, "I can't give that much. But it'll be something to let kids call their family or pay for the people's fare to come down."

And so we started this fund very, very modestly, very modestly just for that kind of thing, to keep the children in touch with their parents. And it grew as we did better and better in life. And it grew and it grew. And then it became a fund to do many things.

They brought parents and children from other countries here. It paid for parents to stay overnight at the Children's Inn or any place, you know, any inexpensive place, anything, anything. It came in both our names because Phil insisted that he wanted it to be the Phillip and Bernice fund. And we even then--. They have a room in our name. I hate to say this because it sounds like boasting but this really isn't boasting. I love this fund. But it sounds awful, I'll admit.

RR: Well, no, no. This is the kind of things that we want to point out about [unclear]. It's pretty important.

BF: We have a room at the Children's Hospital—a waiting room or a—a family room, let me say. It's not a waiting room. And my children have always been very respectful of this fund to us. They've done marvelous things there for us. Like they contributed a piano once on wheels so it could be wheeled to entertain kids in every place.

And to this day, my son—he doesn't do it. Excuse me. I shouldn't say my son. The business who knew that we had this fund and was so fond of Phil, since he's died for three years, they've run an outing—a golf and dinner outing. And they've raised a tremendous amount of money for this fund. And the fund is now invested and they do go

into the fund to take out capital if they need it.

But they, you know, run mostly on the interest. And they've done very interesting things. Like some kids go there and their kids are so poor. And the poor child dies and the parents can't afford to bury the child. Another time they had a child who had to be in the hospital for about a year and a half. And the child was mobile but the child didn't know how to get along with other children, had always been a sickly child. And they felt that the child needed to learn to deal with other children. And the child was sent to nursery school for six months. And it learned--. I mean it's used for anything that is needed.

In the beginning, they always called me, "Can we use it for this? Can we use it for that?" But now there's somebody, you know, who's in charge of this type of thing and he does wonderfully with it. And so, I say, unless it's something so unusual, "Whatever you feel is needed you do." And then I get a report periodically on what the money's been spent on. So that's our—that's our and now my main—I won't say charity because it's not charity. It's something I want to do. It's definitely not charity.

RR: So that's--. What about when you were younger were you actually a member of any like Jewish women's organizations?

BF: No.

RR: Or any other organizations?

BF: No. They weren't organizations, you know, just little Jewish groups. I mean they weren't Jewish groups. They were little groups but my friends were Jewish, you know, for this, for that, for the other, the knitting circle. Nothing that was really to be—nothing that you'd consider belonging to any group.

RR: And so really your major philanthropy then has been with the Children's Hospital?

BF: Yeah. That's our personal major. I mean we do, you know, contribute to other things naturally. I mean, CJP, you know, the--. I know it. My Michael was the head of it, too. The—

RR: The Soviet Jewry—

BF: Well we contributed to all that. Is it the big university there?

RR: Oh in Israel?

BF: Israel?

RR: Hebrew University or--?

BF: No.

RR: Technion.

BF: Technion. In fact, you know, I have that thing where we have very little money in Technion. But you know it's there that you get interest from. And we have, you know, some of the stuff Technion in our will—my will, I should—I'm still saying our. And—but right now I would say that the Children's Hospital is our biggest interest because, listen, you know I contribute what I can to things like CJP, you know. And I've increased each time. I won't say I give all that much. But, you know, I'm a "ruby". And—but I figured that this particular fund is the only fund of that particular kind that they have at the hospital. You know, I figure that's very important. Also I'm very interested in helping kids get to college because I feel they're the future of our country. And so, that also is one of my personal philanthropies.

RR: You mean through Children's Hospital or just—

BF: No, no. I find where the kids need to be helped through college.

RR: And how do you find them?

BF: Actually this is my first year that I'm helping two girls through college. I do not want to help people who would easily get scholarship. It's the level that could possibly get into college but not without some help. And that is very important to me because, as I say, they are the future of our country.

RR: Absolutely.

BF: Give them a chance.

RR: So you do this under the auspices of some organization or do you--?

BF: No. I only do it now--. For instance, my two girls this year come from Newton North High School. And in order to do it in the proper fashion I do it by contributing. I do—what I give these young people has to be done through the Newton Scholarship Fund. But they know, you know, I'm friendly with the girls. When they're home I like to know how they're doing and so forth. And they have to keep a certain average. We have—my son-in-law told me that I should have a written contract so that they know that if they don't keep a certain reasonable average they don't get it the following year.

RR: How did you decide to do that or how did you work that out? Is it only through Newton High School?

BF: No. These happen to be--. The thing was that I have--. My husband had a thing going with the IRS for a long time in which they kept saying he owed a certain amount of money. And he kept saying, no, he didn't owe it. And it went on for quite a long time and the interest was gathering.

And after he died all of a sudden--. Oh, before he died, one time he said, "You know Bernice, I can't stand this anymore. And I shouldn't just do it like this. But I can't take

this anymore. I'm just going to pay it and the heck with it." So he did.

And after he died, no letter or nothing came with it. But the amount of money he had to pay they had found out that he was right. And it wasn't such a tremendous amount of money. But it was several thousand dollars. And I said, "I never expected this money. I live as nicely as I want. I ought to give it to something good."

So that's when I first started and I added something to it. And that's what made me think of doing this. And I found out I have a niece whose husband is an educator. And through him—he, you know, put out feelers for me and everything.

And I found out where—what source I should go to to find these children. And the source he went to called me and said--. "You know," he said, "there are children right in your area, Newton North High School, who would be wonderful candidates." And that's how I found out.

Then he had the principal call me and we spoke. And then the woman in charge of scholarships at the high school, you know—maybe not of awarding all of them, you know. But through whom the kids got their money at the high school came in--. Actually we've become--. She's a young person, a very young person but we've become very good friends—lovely, lovely person.

RR: Are there other things that you--? That's wonderful that you're doing that.

BF: Well, I think, you know, between the Jewish organizations to which I contribute to the best of my ability, I think that's it.

RR: Are there specific Jewish—the CJP, Technion—

BF: Technion, all those--. And I'll tell you I wasn't--. Let me be honest with you. I always knew CJP when I was younger, you know. I used to go door-to-door collecting

and all that kind of stuff. I'm going to be perfectly honest with you. I didn't know about some of these things until my son became so involved. And naturally, I'd go to the things that he was speaking at. And I learnt much more about them. I always contributed, you know, to the Red Cross, to this, to that, the things that we all contribute to to the best of our ability. But I became much more interested in these things. Let me show you something.

RR: So you said that you often gave money to "Facing History and Ourselves" and—

BF: And I'm interested in "AIDS Action".

RR: And you give money for that more than volunteering time. But your daughter is—

BF: My daughter started as a volunteer there and she now works there. And she's also an artist so she only works there part-time, half weeks.

RR: Oh, could you just talk a little bit about your children—like where they went to school and—

BF: Sure. My son went to Newton North because Newton South was not in existence at that time. And then he went to Bowdoin College and then to MIT School of Business.

RR: And what is—what is—he's involved with CJP—that's his job at this point?

BF: Oh, no, no, no. He was only involved--. No, no. He is—works at Gordon Brothers.

RR: He does. Okay.

BF: Yeah. I've said that before.

RR: Yeah.

BF: Yeah. My daughter went to Smith College. She also spent her junior year in France. She went to Newton High School also. Then she went to BU Graduate School of Speech Therapy. Became a speech therapist. But gave that up after a while.

She wasn't--. I guess that she was tired after a few years of just spending all her time with children because most of her work was with children. And she had her own little children, too. And my--. Let's see now. My—oh what is that called that my daughter-in-law went to. You know, you'll have to forgive me at my age people get very forgetful.

RR: Well, actually, as you can see, you've told me things and I'm not remembering everything you tell. So it's not—

BF: My son-in-law went to Bowdoin. He was a fraternity brother of my son and that's how we met my daughter. Then he went—he went down South, too, after they got married. They decided to give their first year of their married life to voter registration down South. And they did that. And—

RR: Do you know where or do you remember where, in what state?

BF: Mississippi.

RR: In Mississippi.

BF: And then he came back. And he hadn't yet done anything from graduating college. So--. Because he graduated the same year, I guess, my daughter did. And he figured out that the best way that he could work for them was to become a lawyer. And so he went to law school. That's what made him go to law school.

RR: Where did he go to law school?

BF: BU Law School. And, let's see, my grandchildren--. My daughter's oldest child, Nina, she went to Drew College.

RR: In New Jersey.

BF: Yeah. She, of course, went to Newton South High School by then. She went to Drew College. And then she was out in California for close to three years. And—

RR: In school or--?

BF: No, working. And then decided she wanted to go to graduate school and decided she'd come back to Boston nearer the family.

She went to BU School of Social Work. Worked as a social worker and did very well. But social workers don't really get paid a decent salary nowadays. She found that she couldn't really live on what she was earning and was getting tired of putting in a lot of, tremendous amount of work. She worked well overtime because she'd get involved with everything. Her field was working with the homeless. So she decided to go back to graduate school.

And she's now in Simmons School of—what they call now Library Information. Once they used to have Library Science, but now Library Information. And she's going at her own pace because she's working at the same time. And she's working in the Harvard Graduate School of Business Library.

Her brother went to Washington University in St. Louis. And he's in the computer field. And he does very well in that. And he's in his firm that he works for. He just became a senior consultant, which is very good.

RR: Is he—he's in Boston.

BF: No.

RR: He's here.

BF: He's here. He lives in Gloucester year round. He has a little house in Gloucester. He's hardly ever around here because they sell him as a consultant.

He may work several months in Providence, which he has. He may work--. Several months now he's working several months in Marlborough. He's worked in--. They've sent him to Belgium. They sent him to Singapore. They sent him to England. So you never know where he's going to be.

And as for my son's children, the oldest one—goodness I—forget the names of their colleges. And I know them so well. If you'd give me a page and a minute, I'd now.

RR: Okay.

BF: He has an excellent job. He works for a man in the real estate business, commercial real estate. And he runs several apartment buildings, an enormous number of them. I think it's something like close to thirty.

RR: Here in—

BF: In Austin where he works. His brother, the next one, is a business consultant. And he went to Wharton School of Business in graduate work. First he worked a couple of years—or a year, I think it was only. And then he working for Bane Company now in Boston. And my granddaughter—the youngest of my grandchildren—my son's daughter--. God forgive me. I'm going crazy because that I forgot one, you see—the others are coming back to me. She went to Amherst. She graduated Amherst—

RR: Amherst College?

BF: Amherst College in Amherst. And then she went to work for Time/Warner magazines. You know, they have all these sports magazines. She went to work for—I think the name is "Snow Country", is the name of it there. And very quickly was

promoted to an assistant editor of the magazine.

And did—and she got a letter from the president of Time/Warner telling her that he hopes she knows that she's the youngest assistant editor they've ever had. And the fastest advancing employee they've ever had. And now she's at Harvard Business School. And I think that takes care of the family. Except for the two boys. I forgot their colleges.

RR: Let me see. How do you think your life would have been different if you had been born a man?

BF: Well, I don't feel—I feel I'm an intelligent person but not outstanding. But I always felt all my life that I hadn't reached my full capacity. Maybe if I was a man and was in the position of supporting a family or something I might have accomplished more in life. That's the only thing I can say.

I love being a woman. I do. I'm for woman's lib. But I like a man's attention. I really do like if they open a car door for me or help me on with my coat. I'm from that generation, maybe, I don't know. So I feel that if I had been of the opposite sex and hadn't enjoyed that, maybe I would've reached more of a potential.

Maybe I don't have the potential to reach. But maybe I could've. I always felt when I was younger that I was missing something in my life for not reaching. But don't you think a lot of people feel that way that they don't reach their full potential?

RR: Yeah, yeah. I mean--. But also you probably would have been supported by society in different ways. You would have been supported—

BF: Maybe so. But I do know that once--.

Oh something I forgot to tell you. That once my children grew up, I felt I had to go to work. I had to do something. And I did. What I did was I had been a volunteer for a

program called the Preschool Vision Screening. I forgot about that in my volunteer work. That was one I loved, too. I seemed to have loved things that had to deal with children. And so at about that time--.

So I started volunteer work when I felt I had to go back to work. And it wasn't so much--. When my children were grown up enough, it wasn't so much earning the money. At that point in our life we didn't need any money. So I started with the volunteer work.

And then I thought, "I really have got to do something that's really a job, that gives me a feeling of doing something, you know, that--." So I went back to secretarial school. And that was when I became a cosmetologist. That's what they called it, not a cosmetician, a cosmetologist supposedly. I put that word with quotes. And I became friendly with the head of the Preschool Vision Screening program.

RR: This was—about what year was that?

BF: Oh I don't know. It was so many years ago my kids were still in high school.

RR: So probably fifties or--?

BF: Um-hmm. Anyway, we became friends--. I don't know. One knack I do have is of making friends with the people I deal with and my boss and I became good friends.

And we were out one day and she said to me, "Gee, Bernice ," she said, "I'm in really a pickle. My wonderful secretary just left me and we're right in the midst of trying to gather volunteers and more volunteers and everything."

And I said, "You know I'm just going to secretarial school." And I said, "I'm not a full-fledged secretary. But if you want me to, I'll come in and give you whatever help I can until you find a secretary."

So I was there for several years. And that's what happened. I got more and more into it and became her assistant. And I loved doing it. And that's how I started to work.

And then when my mother became very ill, I said I couldn't stay because my mother needed me practically every day. There was some other little small crisis, you know. And she lived in Cambridge. And my mother was calling me at work. And I said, "It's really not fair. Almost every day I'm leaving work to run to my mother's and taking a couple of hours each day. So I'm going to leave." She said, "Well I understand. But--." I only worked part-time, incidentally.

My husband was very smart. He said to me, "Bernice, you know if you go to work you're going to cost me more money in taxes. But that's all right." He said, "If you wanted to go out and spend money having a good time, you could. If you feel this is your fulfillment, go to work." He said, "But I want to tell you one thing. Don't work five days a week." He said, "You'll lose your friends that you have. All the people that you go out to lunch with or you play bridge with or you do this and that. You won't see them at all. You'll gradually not have all these friends. You take one day to yourself. Work part-time." He said, "I don't care how much you work. Work one day, work two days, but save yourself a day." Which was very, very smart. And so I worked only three days a week.

But I left and Ann, my boss, said, "You know—." After my mother died, she said, "You know, Bernice, you can come back to work for me now." I said, "No, Ann, I can't because you have a woman that you've trained. She's worked for you two years. I'm not coming back. And the woman that's had a good job with you, you've put time training and you tell me she's very good. I don't think that's right either."

She said, "You're right. But I wanted to give you the opportunity because, she said, we had such a good relationship working." And so I never worked anymore. And so I only worked those few years.

RR: When did your mother die?

BF: I'll tell you I always forget the year. I'll tell you. She died twenty years ago.

RR: So, 1977.

BF: Nineteen seventy-six, probably.

RR: Seventy-six.

BF: No, yeah—

RR: She was pretty old then.

BF: She was—she died at eighty-three. She died. So I would say 1975 or '76.

RR: Did she—had she moved to Cambridge for a reason?

BF: Well, yeah. She moved because they had been in a very bad automobile accident, she and my father on their way to Florida. And I—

RR: Had they been living in Florida part of the year?

BF: Part of the year because of my mother's health. My mother stayed there. My father came--. At first she stayed there without my father. But then my father would go and come. They were going to Florida and they were in this terrible auto accident. And I—and they lived with me for about a year, year and a half.

And my mother was a very smart woman. We lived there and got sort of used to having the folks in the house. And I said to my mother and father one day, "You know I think we're going to remodel a little bit and make, you know, you can have this room with the bathroom and so forth and so on." And that's the way it was.

And then all of a sudden my mother came to me—actually I think Phil was there at the time. "You know what the heck are we doing? That's not healthy," she said, "For us to live together." She said, "That's a crazy thing. We may get along very well. But it's not good for children and parents to live together."

So she had—we had to start looking for a place and they had just built that apartment building near MIT over the river. And she was one of the first tenants and they loved it there. And that's how they happened to move to Cambridge.

RR: Let me see.

BF: We should be getting through soon. It's quarter past one.

RR: Yeah.

BF: No. I'm all right, but—

RR: Let me see. I just want to be sure that I covered. Well could you say--. You've talked a lot about the happiness of your life in the sense of fulfillment in your life. Were there certain tragedies in your life that you—or challenges that you--?

BF: Well I wouldn't call it tragedies. I would say that when Judy was very young and very asthmatic we rushed—before she was two years old we rushed her three times to the hospital when we—. You know they didn't have the medications in those days when we didn't know if we'd even make it to the hospital. And then she had her Crohn's Disease. As I told you it was then called ileitis, which she had very badly when she was fifteen years old. And she was the only one that the doctors knew of at that time who perforated twice internally and lived through it. And I would say—

RR: That was when she was very young.

BF: She was fifteen. And it was a very hard time. But on the other hand, I don't consider that any tragedy. She came through it. She handles it very well. Handled it well then except when the rabbi came to see her because she didn't know that rabbis do that routinely, and she thought she must be dying because the rabbi came to see her. It was very tough for a fifteen-year old. But she doesn't even like me to talk about those days because they don't mean anything to her. She was—

RR: She's completely recovered.

BF: Oh, no, no. She's almost recovered from the Crohn's. I mean she just handles it well. And she handles her asthma very well, also.

But when she was born she had what was called a spastic stomach. And I guess that's connected with the whole thingy. We used to have to feed her one once every twenty minutes. And half the time her spastic stomach would cause her to spit up and it would hit the ceiling. You know it comes out like a fountain.

But anyway, she hates me to talk about any of these things. She always says, "Think of me as a person, not a sick person, because I'm not a sick person." And she isn't, she absolutely isn't. She's a fine, bright, wonderful young woman.

But I think because of what she went through as a child she's particularly warm and sympathetic to people. I mean anything, she just--. People come to talk to her and tell her their troubles. She's very empathetic with people.

RR: It also sounds like you and your husband were very—

BF: My husband was definitely a people person. He loved people. He was--.

For instance, those of our friends who had been widowed, let us say, he—we never would go to a movie—decide to go to a movie without his saying, "Who are we calling

this time amongst our friends who are women living alone?" And not many men, I think, would like to do this. But he didn't care how many women he took out at one time, you know. He just loved people. He loved everybody. You had to do a terrible thing, a terrible thing for him not to like you.

RR: Are there other—are there any disappointments that you can think of in your life at this point?

BF: I can't think of any because any disappointment was not all that important with how much we had. Phil and I always felt that we had so much and so much happiness, and wonderful children, and wonderful friends and wonderful relationships. We always--. Let me say we were always aware of how fortunate we were. And so we—I can't think of any because maybe the kind of a disappointment that might have been a real disappointment didn't seem such a disappointment to us, you know. If I sound as though I'm bragging all the time. I feel terrible. But you're bringing it all out.

RR: I don't think it's bragging, you know. It's good detail about your life and you're just being honest about your life.

BF: I've had a wonderful life, wonderful. No matter what should happen to me now, I can't complain. I'd be a very ungrateful individual.

RR: Do you have any other kind of hobbies?

BF: I really don't have many hobbies. Oh, needlepoint was a hobby. You see I've got wall-to-wall needlepoint through my house although my mother did my dining room chairs. But, otherwise I really do have wall-to-wall needlepoint.

RR: And that's something you've been doing for most of your life?

BF: No. I didn't do it until later in life. I didn't start. But once I started I went at it like a factory. And all my friends and my kids have needlepoint. But I never did it until quite late in life. Walking. I like to walk. I walk every day two miles. I won't say every single day. But I would say I average at least five days a week.

RR: You just walk around here or--?

BF: I walk around here. And if it's not good weather I walk in the hallway here. That's what I was doing when you called.

RR: I was very impressed by that. Did you ever have any pets or--?

BF: Well, we—we're not big pet people. But I did have a dog once, a little dog. And it was fine. I took it because my mother had it and she didn't want it anymore. And then it ran off and I felt badly.

But then when Judy came home from the hospital when she was fifteen she had always wanted a dog. And so we bought—got this little English Terrier. And it was a baby. It was about six weeks old. I figured, you know, that would be a comfort to her. But she pushed the dog away from her. She didn't want it.

She was thrilled to get the dog. But you see she had had surgery and I guess she still had dressing on the surgery and the little dog evidently smelled it, you know. And she didn't want it anymore.

And at this time when Judy wasn't well I was internally very emotional. But I tried not to show it outwardly. And so I took that inner emotion out on this little dog. All of a sudden it became my other child. And I was carrying it around with me all the time.

See I was--. I didn't want Judy to see I was so worried. And I was relating to this dog, you know. It was tiny. And it was only about so big when it was little.

And I remember every morning I came down in my robe. It was one of these old quilted robes and it had a big pocket on the side. And every morning I'd put that dog in my pocket with it's little—cute little head sticking out. And I'm not that kind of a person. I'm really not. And when I'd go to the market I'd put that—it sounds so ridiculous. I'd put that little dog in a basket and carry it over my arm to the market with me.

Then the dog wasn't well. I saw it wasn't well. And I took it to the vet's. And the vet called up and said--. Oh I'd given it shots. He said, "You know this dog has died. This dog should never have been taken from its mother at that age. The person that sold you that dog had no right."

Well all of a sudden that was an outlet for all my emotions. You would have thought I lost my husband and my children and my mother. I cried so hard I cried--. I called Phil at work, believe it or not, to tell him. What did he care about this little dog? You know he liked it but—

RR: How long had you had it--?

BF: Not very long. Maybe, maybe three or four weeks. And I called him at the office and I started to tell him and I got hysterical over the phone. You won't believe it. I mean a grown woman.

He said, "Darling you've got to stop crying. I know you loved the dog. But, you know, it couldn't be helped. The dog wouldn't have been much good if it was taken from its mother too soon." "A lot you know."

Anyway, of course, I got over it quickly. But I remember that. And afterwards I was so ashamed of myself, you know. But I want to tell you that after that happened I was much better off, much better off. I had taken my crying, my emotions and got rid of them. Is this all on tape?

RR: Yeah. Do you have any other things you might want to—

BF: Nothing in particular, no. Really there haven't been, you know--. Well, yes, there was one thing in life. My brother had a big accident. And my—the older of my two brothers and that was a very hard time during that. But it wasn't a disappointment. He recovered.

RR: What kind of accident? Was it an automobile accident?

BF: [unclear]

RR: Oh dear.

BF: Very bad at the time. So that was a tough thing.

RR: But he's—

[END OF INTERVIEW]