

Irene Goldman Transcript

HELENE BAILEN: Today is Friday December 20th 1996. I'm Helene Bailen interviewing Irene Marks Goldman in her home at 274 Beacon Street, Boston, under the auspices of the Jewish Women's Archive Temple Israel Oral History Project in Boston, Massachusetts. Mrs. Goldman, can you tell me where you were born? Where you grew up?

IRENE GOLDMAN: I grew up in Boston, yeah, Boston, Mass.

HB: And do you remember anything about your mother?

IG: I certainly do. She was a beautiful woman and a wonderful person for me to go by.

HB: And what do you remember specifically about her?

IG: Well you finish what you were going to say about mother because he loved—. What dear?

CHARLES GOLDMAN: Your mother was born in Boston.

IG: Yeah.

CG: And, she was a member of the family of Harris Schwartz, who was a very substantial member of the Jewish community. And—

IG: Poor woman. She was a businesswoman. My father had a business. My parents were from New Bedford. And my mother worked in the business with my father. So I grew up with that kind of a woman. I mean she was a wonderful mother. But her business part of her was very important to her, too. Wouldn't you say that?

CG: [Unclear]

HB: Okay. When we begin again can you tell me about your mother?

IG: Well my mother was a wonderful person for me to go along with. She was a great influence in my life. My mother was a businesswoman. She was in my father's business.

HB: What was your father's business?

IG: It was retail in New Bedford. He wasn't in Boston. Although mother was active in Boston and—

CG: She was active in her father's business. He was in the liquor business in Boston before prohibition. He was one of the large liquor dealers in the city of Boston. And that was her grandfather. And her mother, who always was a businesswoman didn't stay home. And she worked in the business with her father—worked with Mrs. Goldman's grandfather. And it was started in the West End. As a matter of fact—

IG: My mother was born down on the West End.

CG: [Unclear] on the West End on Chambers Street recently and it was marked the Schwartz Building which was the home office of the liquor business [unclear]—

IG: My mother's family—

CG: [Unclear] importing and distribution before prohibition.

HB: So did your mother--? Your mother worked?

IG: My mother, my father had a retail store in New Bedford. Well, Mother worked in Boston. I mean, her family, my grandfather had a big business in Boston.

CG: Well your mother worked for your grandfather in the liquor business.

HB: And then—

CG: Her father had an Army/Navy store in New Bedford. He originally was in the liquor business in Boston until prohibition at Old Majestic Wine Company on Fairmont Street.

HB: Okay, thank you. Now I—

CG: Huh?

HB: We have to let Mrs. Goldman talk. Okay? Did you grow up in New Bedford?

IG: No. No my father's business was in New Bedford, and he never wanted me or my sister to grow up in New Bedford. So my mother moved to Boston to be where my father would want her to be.

CG: They lived in Brookline.

HB: And they did—

IG: And they lived in Brookline.

HB: So you grew up in Brookline.

IG: I grew up in Brookline.

HB: Now did your father commute then to New Bedford?

CG: He came weekends.

IG: Yeah.

CG: And sometimes during the week—

IG: They worked enough. Now my mother was a very, very smart lady and she—

HB: When you were young—

IG: She didn't want the children to be brought up in New Bedford so we moved to Boston. Daddy would be in New Bedford when he had to be and always be with us on the weekend. And, oh, and we had a home at the Cape.

CG: Oh yeah, in the summertime—

IG: In the summertime. And we all lived—

CG: They had a place at Mattapoiset.

IG: Yeah. We all lived together.

HB: And what was that like?

IG: What do you mean, as far as I was concerned?

HB: Yeah. What do you remember about that?

IG: My mother was such a beautiful woman and she was in my father's business because he wasn't well enough to go take care of the business all the time. So she was a business lady at that time. But mother came from---. I don't know whether you know the Schwartz family. It's an old Boston Jewish family. And mother was brought up in that environment.

HB: So did her parents—were they born here? Where did her parents come from?

IG: Grandma and Grandpa. They—

CG: Grandpa and Grandma came from Europe.

IG: Yeah. That's what I was—

HB: Do you know where in Europe?

IG: No, I don't. I mean if it's very important I can check on it.

HB: No that's all right.

IG: But I don't think it's that important, you know that they were—my grandparents were born in Europe. But my grandfather came over with nothing in his pocket. But he made a great success for himself financially in the city of Boston.

HB: In what did he make his success? What was his business?

CG: Who?

IG: Grandpa.

CG: The liquor business. He was in the liquor business before prohibition. I mean a big jobber. It's not a retail store.

IG: No.

HB: And your father—

IG: Well my father was in his business.

HB: In your grandfather's business?

IG: No. No, my—

CG: Her father had a retail store—

IG: A retail store in New Bedford. And when they moved in New Bedford my mother got very active in the business. Do we have a picture of mother?

CG: Of your mother? We have a picture of her with Dick.

IG: What dear?

[Recorder is turned off and then back on.]

IG: The mother—

CG: That's a picture of her mother with our son.

IG: This is Dick.

HB: Right. I know Dick.

IG: You know Dick.

HB: Yes.

IG: Well that's Dick. He's loves mother.

HB: She looks familiar to me. What was her name?

CG: Dora.

IG: Dora Marks, M-A-R-K-S. My mother's—my father's business was in New Bedford and mother went to New Bedford. But we all went together. They had a place at the Cape and we all lived together at the Cape.

HB: And that was during the summertime?

IG: Yeah, oh yeah.

HB: Do you have any special memories of the summertime in the Cape?

IG: Of the summertime in New Bedford and of the Cape?

CG: You used to go to Mattapoiset.

IG: That's what I said, the Cape, dear.

CG: Yeah. Mattapoiset, which is a short distance from New Bedford.

HB: I wanted to know what Mrs. Goldman remembered specifically. Do you remember anything special? You said you had a wonderful time there.

IG: It was wonderful because I loved being with my parents. I mean that isn't always the thing that you hear from. It's mostly the children move on and go on. Well, whatever--. But mother was very much in charge of my father's business. And I sort of took care of the home.

HB: Were you the only--? Do you have any siblings? Any--?

IG: Yeah. And I have a sister.

HB: And is she older or younger?

IG: Leona is younger. I don't know whether you know Leona Siskend. Do you know—

HB: No. And did you take care of her?

IG: Leona? No. She was already at Wellesley at that point, I think. She was—

HB: So she was older than you.

IG: No. Leona was—

HB: Younger.

IG: Younger. Yeah, yeah.

HB: And when you were on the Cape was your mother—were your mother and father there so everybody was all together?

IG: Yeah.

HB: Your mother wasn't working then?

IG: Mother was always in the store.

CG: No, no.

IG: No?

CG: No, no, not until your father got sick.

IG: He remembers better than I.

CG: Her father had a heart attack. And then her mother went—took care of the business.

IG: But Charlie, my mother's background was in business.

CG: Her mother's background was in business because she helped her father in the liquor business.

IG: Yeah, but, wasn't grandpa in the--. He was—

CG: Your grandfather was in the liquor business. And then when prohibition came he went—

[Recorder is turned off and then back on.]

IG: Goes way back to—

HB: Could you just repeat what you just said because the tape recorder wasn't working at that time—about your mother being comfortable.

IG: Charlie you tell her about mother.

HB: No, no. I want you to tell me. You said mother was very comfortable. But I want to hear it in your words.

IG: Well she was a businesswoman. She came from a very comfortable family. She did it because she wanted—because my father—she wanted to be—help my father in his business. She was-- . Do you have a picture—

HB: And was she successful in doing that?

IG: She did very well. I mean she wasn't out there for doing money for herself. She was doing it to help—

CG: She never was in business herself.

IG: Right. No, no. She was helping—

CG: She helped her father in the liquor business and she was one of the-- . Her father had four daughters and two sons.

IG: Well don't go into the whole family history. I don't think you want—

HB: Well can you tell me about your sisters and brothers?

CG: Her sisters—

HB: Well, one minute. Let-- . I'd like Mrs. Goldman—about your own siblings.

CG: She had only one sister.

IG: I've only one sister. And there's eight years difference between us?

CG: You mean...?

IG: In age, Leona and I.

CG: She's four years younger than you.

IG: She always seemed so much more--. But she went to Wellesley I think the year we graduated. I mean the year we got married. So we never lived our adult life together.

HB: Oh I see. So there was a large difference between you in age.

CG: Four years between—

IG: Was it four? But four years was a lot when you were growing up and your sister was on her own at Wellesley. She wasn't home all the time.

CG: Big difference between sixteen and twenty.

HB: And where were you at that time when she was in Wellesley.

CG: She stayed home. She was in high school and then she was just a lady of leisure.

HB: So the sister was older than you?

IG: No, younger.

CG: Four years younger.

IG: Yeah.

CG: And she never worked.

HB: Now when you were young did you go to Hebrew school or belong to a temple?

IG: My parents belonged to Temple Israel—not Temple Israel, Temple Ohabei Shalom.

HB: So they were reformed Jews.

IG: I would call them that.

HB: And did you go to any kind of religious school?

IG: No, I didn't go to—

CG: You went to Sunday school.

IG: Sunday school.

CG: And you went to—

HB: And were you confirmed?

CG: And went to that finishing school.

IG: He never will forget the finishing school.

CG: [Unclear]

HB: And what school was that? Was that where you wrote down here that you went to Mt. Ida.

IG: Mt. Ida, that's it.

CG: Mt. Ida.

IG: Yeah.

CG: It was a junior, junior college.

HB: And what did you study there? Do you remember?

IG: Oh I didn't do—

CG: Literature.

IG: Yeah, yeah.

HB: What was that?

IG: Literature.

HB: Literature.

IG: Yeah.

HB: Is there anything that is your favorite field in literature, your favorite area?

IG: Well Charles and I are very active--. You are—you are still--. No you're not as active as you used to be in the temple. And you—

CG: [Unclear] trustee.

IG: A trustee.

CG: And vice president of Temple Israel and head of their legal department.

IG: I worked along with him as a good wife. I mean I didn't go in for any thing on my own. I mean when I was married it was all Charles, if you know what I'm saying.

HB: Yes, I do. Can you talk a little more about that? In what way was it all Charles?

IG: Well first of all he was a very busy lawyer and spent a lot of time out of the home. So the home was my care. I mean he was most supportive. But, I mean, I didn't bother him when somebody did something wrong that day if you get the picture.

HB: So you were in charge then of the home?

IG: Oh yeah, yeah.

HB: And what types of things did you do in the home?

IG: As a matter of fact, very much so because my mother and my father had a business in New Bedford. And for the summer we would go and spend time—it was Mattapoiset. I remember that they had a very lovely home and I could be helpful to my mother so that she could take care of her end of the business.

HB: Now in your own home when you and Charles were first married, what were your responsibilities? What--? You said you were in charge of the home.

IG: Yes.

HB: What did you do?

IG: What did I do? I saw that this room had new curtains or whatever and everything in the furniture. I mean Charles--. I never would get anything without his wanting it also. But--. Well we did have a decorator—

CG: We always lived in a single family home until we moved to Boston when we first moved into an apartment. Before that when we first got married we lived on Coolidge Road in Newton Center. And then we moved to where we lived for about two or three years. Then we moved to 24 Bishop's Gate Road in Newton where we lived for forty

years.

HB: Now Mrs. Goldman, when your family was young--. How many children do you have?

CG: Two boys.

IG: Two boys. Yeah. And Dick—

CG: And John—

IG: John. Dick is very--. He's in Charles's law firm.

CG: Dick was born in 1936 and John was born in—

IG: And John lives in New York.

CG: In 1940.

HB: Okay. Now you were raising the children while your husband was working a lot. What responsibilities did--? What did you do with them? Do you remember?

IG: I just think I was a good mother.

HB: In what way?

CG: They went—

HB: Well I'd like Mrs. Goldman to—

IG: Well the boys didn't—

CG: They started going to preschool at age four.

HB: Now did you look into what schools they should go to? Did you make those decisions?

IG: Nothing—between Charles and me, nothing was done about the children without our giving in time and attention. And if there was advice that we needed from somebody I wasn't hesitant about going to them. I mean I didn't make it my-- I felt that I wanted other help. I mean, not help, but advice.

HB: And were you the one that initiated all this interest in their education and then you would bring it to Charles?

IG: I'd bring it to him because he was a very busy, successful lawyer. He had a lot of time to spend on his own. And there were a lot of things that I could take care of that he couldn't. I mean when he came home everything was done for the day and dinner was served.

HB: And who made dinner?

IG: Well we always had help in those days. It was easier to get help to-- Yeah. We always had good help, didn't we dear?

CG: Right after the day we were married we got help.

IG: Oh, well I wasn't going into that.

HB: Well, no. I wish you would, you know. Tell us about.

IG: No. When we were first married I was a young bride as everybody at my age—at that time in life—it was that age.

CG: She never worked.

IG: No, I never worked.

HB: But you worked in the home.

IG: And I saw—I was in charge of the home. But I never scrubbed the floors.

CG: We always had help.

IG: We always had help. It was a different era, you know. Today you couldn't have help the way I had.

HB: What kind of help did you have?

IG: I had---. Well, they were well trained, if I must say so myself.

CG: Had a what?

IG: It was—our help was well trained.

HB: Did you train them? Who trained them?

IG: My mother started me about—

CG: You took over your mother's maid when we got married.

HB: Did you say that? You say that.

CG: We always had a housekeeper.

IG: We took over my mother's housekeepers when we were first married. Is that--?

HB: Um-hmm. So that she knew about your life and the way you wanted things to be done.

IG: Very much. If my mother was here you'd be very impressed with her.

HB: And did you have other help beside this housekeeper?

CG: What?

IG: No. In those days one person was adequate.

CG: Oh no when our children were small—

IG: Oh when the children were small I had—

CG: We always had a nurse.

HB: Yeah. We called them a nurse. Maybe today they wouldn't call it a nurse.

CG: That's what they were. They used to come from the North Shore Children's Hospital. And they were Practical Nurses.

IG: He's talking about the help not the children.

CG: That we had in addition to the maid.

HB: What else did you do besides take care of the family? Did you have time to do anything else, you know, outside activities when you were a young married?

IG: Well there were courses. I was always interested in courses that were available at my age to-- . I mean I just didn't stay home and take care of the—

HB: What else did you do? What kinds of courses?

CG: She never worked—

IG: No. She's asking the kind of courses—

CG: Oh—

HB: Do you remember?

CG: Mostly literature.

IG: Yeah, mostly literature. Yeah. I think maybe I probably had to sell books—

HB: And what about when the children got older did you get involved in organizations and—

IG: I got involved in most of the ladies'—

CG: Jewish Child Welfare.

IG: Yeah. I was very interested in Jewish Child Welfare.

HB: And it says here that you also were interested in the Museum of Fine Arts.

IG: Yeah.

HB: Can you tell us what you did at the Museum of Fine Arts?

CG: And we're active in the Institute of Contemporary Art from its very beginning
on Boylston Street.

IG: Charles always, fortunately, became interested in something like that. So I wasn't just a woman in this sort of thing. We would do things together. Like tonight we've got to go-- I'm not talking about tonight, tonight. But we always do these things together. I mean he wouldn't—

CG: And Irene was very active in the Institute of Contemporary Art in the very beginning when it first got started on Boylston Street and very active with the—what do you call—docent. She was a docent.

HB: Oh can you tell me about being a docent?

IG: Well I don't know what I can tell you. If you—

HB: Where were you a docent?

CG: It used to...

HB: Let's let Irene answer.

CG: She used to lead groups at the Institute of Contemporary Art.

IG: Yeah, I'd rather he tell you.

CG: When they would open an exhibition.

IG: He's telling you what I would tell you. But I like it coming from Charles. I don't get it too often. So I might as well—

HB: Now when the children were young in your young family, did you celebrate any of the Jewish holidays?

CG: Always. We still do.

IG: No, but you--. I don't have to be--. That really should come from Charles because his background was much more religious than mine. My mother's family there were—

CG: We always celebrated the Jewish holidays.

HB But you told me before that you went to religious Sunday school.

IG: I went to Sunday school. They probably had to push me to go.

HB: You didn't enjoy it.

IG: Well you see we didn't have that kind of background. Maybe mother—they didn't—

CG: Her father—since her father was in business in New Bedford so that her social life was in Brookline. But her father---. So her father would come home on weekends—

IG: My mother was in—lived in New Bedford.

CG: Moved to New Bedford.

IG: Well she was with daddy—

CG: Eventually after Irene got married. And her sister went off to Wellesley. Her mother gave up her home in Brookline and moved to New Bedford and took an apartment there—

IG: And a summer home at the Cape.

CG: And they had a home at Mattapoiset where they would stay from about the first of May until the first of October.

HB: What do you remember about the--? Do you remember having Passover when you were a young girl?

CG: Oh sure.

HB: In your family.

IG: It was not---. Is that somebody at the door dear? Yeah. Or I'll go.

HB: Why don't you stay here. Do you remember having Passover in your family?

IG: Well mother came from a big family. There were seven children. And there was always something at one of the homes. It wasn't necessary. The Marks one, it could be

the Swartz one.

HB: And what did you—

IG: And my father was a religious man in his thinking. But he wasn't an active and--. See my parents--. When I got married my parents moved to New Bedford and my mother and father, particularly, never wanted us brought up in New Bedford.

HB: Right, you told me.

IG: Oh I told you that. But it was the Cape that—

HB: But I wanted to know if you remember any of the Jewish holidays with your family and how you celebrated them.

IG: I remember always having Jewish holidays. But we were from a big family. I don't know if you know the Swartz family. And so it was always at somebody else's home because mother was a working lady.

HB: I see. So you would go to an aunt or an uncle.

IG: We'd all go. I mean I wouldn't go to my aunt and uncle and leave my parents home. But it was Schwartz. Mother had a beautiful family. They were four sisters and six brothers. It was a big family.

HB: So what kinds of memories do you have of those gatherings together?

IG: Tell you I was at an age where I probably would prefer to be on a date at that time. [Laughter] And my parents—the Jewish mother's family—were—her family was active. It was--. Mother's family was very well known, the Swartz family in Boston. So my father was born in—at a—not born in Boston. So mother gave over a lot to Dad's thinking because Dad was—I think he had a little non-Jewish in him.

HB: Your father? In what way?

IG: Well he had a lot of non-Jewish friends and he seemed to be very happy with them. And mother, even though it was a very fine Jewish family, mother respected how Dad felt about...he didn't want to be pushed into that sort of thing. He wanted to do the way he thought for himself.

HB: Did he participate in any synagogue activities at Ohabei Shalom?

IG: Mother was active in Shalom but daddy never was. He--. No my father's business was in New Bedford. So he never wanted us children to be brought up in New Bedford. We used to have a home at the Cape and we'd be together. But he never wanted us to grow up in New Bedford. So daddy would commute.

HB: Now when you—when you got married what types of holiday—what holidays did you celebrate in your home?

IG: Well I—Charles was in charge of that because his background was a little more active than mine. So--. And it was more important to him because I didn't have as much of a background as he had. So—

CG: I had an Orthodox background and not a reformed Jewish background. She's a Reformed Jew background. Because of my background we became more religious and as a result of the change in the Jewish community in Rabbi Levi's day to Josh Liebman day Temple Israel became a more religious organization than it was during the days when Rabbi Levi—

IG: He could accept that.

CG: During Rabbi Levi's day the lecture hall on Sunday is when [unclear]

IG: We missed occasionally.

HB: Now to go back to your own youth. Do you remember your first love, your first boyfriend?

IG: Well I'll tell you, don't look at me now, but I had quite a few boyfriends.

HB: I'm sure you did.

IG: But I don't know. My mother was very smart. She didn't--. She saw that I wasn't going to stay with one boy. She wanted me to do the circuit. So—

HB: So what did she do?

IG: Mother did?

HB: What did she do in order to get you to see the circuit?

IG: She was influential.

HB: How did she do that?

IG: Well she had a very good marriage with my father. My father--. Well we won't go into that. So I think she could work with me on—and give me what I want—what she thought would be good for me. That's the—

HB: And did you feel that would be good for you?

IG: Well I'm sure I was young and I must have fussed a little bit. [Laughs] But mother was--. Well Charles can tell you that. She was such a beautiful woman and bright. My father had a business and she was right--. Not that she had to—

HB: So you had a lot of boyfriends.

IG: Yeah. I can't remember having to look for one.

HB: Did you have a special girlfriend?

IG: Who was the girl that I was so friendly with? It sounds silly to forget.

CG: [Unclear]

IG: Leona—

CG: Irma Gold [unclear].

IG: Well those were my cousins, dear.

HB: Were they your good friends, too?

IG: Yeah. Even today we're--. They don't live in this city. They live in—

CG: Estelle Ruben.

HB: And then how did you meet your husband?

CG: With John Slater with whom I was a partner and he had a home on the Cape. And I used to visit him on the Cape on weekends.

IG: And my parents were friendly with him, with his—the—

HB: Your parents were friendly with your husband's parents. No?

IG: No, not his parents. Mother and daddy were friendly with the Slaters, John and Teresa Slater.

CG: I was a partner with John Slater.

IG: He was a partner so he used to go down. They didn't have children so they were very fond of Charles. And he was like a son to them. So we used to go there because

Charles would want to go over there as well as my family, which he loved. I think he loved my mother—she was a beautiful woman and he—

HB: Do you remember anything about your marriage?

IG: Come on, Charlie. The marriage was for two.

HB: Well I'd like your answer. I want your viewpoint.

IG: I would say in one statement it was a good marriage.

HB: And what about the wedding? Do you remember planning your wedding?

IG: Oh yeah. We had a beautiful wedding. Mother did things beautifully.

CG: [Unclear]

HB: Where was your wedding.

IG: We got married at the Ritz.

CG: Ritz Carlton Hotel.

IG: And mother saw that everything was of the Ritz.

HB: And do you remembered who married you.

IG: Rabbi—

CG: Abrams.

IG: Abrams from Beacon Street because that's the temple that my parents belonged to.

HB: At Ohabei Shalom.

IG: Yeah. That was--. So he married us.

HB: Do you remember anything about the ceremony at all?

IG: No. I was too excited.[Laughter]

HB: Was it long or short? Did you stand under a chuppah?

IG: I don't think so.

HB: No chuppah.

IG: We didn't have--. I didn't stand under a chuppah.

CG: Yes we did.

IG: Did we?

CG: Yes we did.

IG: Well that was to please you because my parents—

CG: We were married at the Ritz Carlton Hotel and they had—

IG: Charles was—

CG: I was trustee—

IG: Trustee at Temple Israel and you were on the board of the Ritz.

CG: Yes.

IG: So, what Jewish girl shouldn't get married at the Ritz?

CG: I think the marriage was performed by Rabbi Abrams of Ohabei Shalom because that was her family's—

HB: Now do you remember your honeymoon? Can you tell us about your honeymoon?

IG: Well it took two to make a honeymoon.

HB: I know. But I'm asking you about your memories of it. Right.

CG: Do you remember what?

IG: Well I don't think I can answer that way because that is for two. And Charles is always the stronger man about what to do about things. And I've always, to this day...Why do you think my hair is white? I go along with a lot with his thinking because I consider him a very brilliant man. You can put that in the book. I don't think he heard so that's—

HB: What about your own—your thoughts. What do you remember about your honeymoon?

IG: Well that's a question I'll bet when you ask a lot of girls that they don't come out with—they remember everything. I don't. I--. Well weren't you sick just before?

CG: Yes, before we got married I had a...

IG: See? That's just--. And I forgot about that.

CG: I had a heart attack and we had to postpone the wedding about two weeks while I recovered.

IG: And my mother didn't take to that very well because she had everything planned for a certain time. And then he--. What did--? Well it doesn't--.

CG: I had a mild heart attack and we postponed the wedding two weeks.

IG: My mother got a little worried. Here's a man you're marrying with a heart attack.
[Telephone rings]

HB: Do you remember where you went on your honeymoon?

IG: It wasn't anything glamorous if I remember correctly because Charles was just getting over something. And so we did it very simply. And I always felt we shouldn't be too far from home because—

HB: Where was your first home, you and Charles, where did you go to live after you were married?

IG: In--. You know I think we've gone—lived in so few places. The first home that we had--. Let me ask him.

HB: Well let's talk about something else then.

IG: No. Where did we first live?

CG: Huh?

IG: Where did we first live?

[Pause]

IG: When I was first married I lived in the Sheraton Hotel, Bay State Road and from there we went—in Newton. Newton.

CG: And from there we moved to a single family house, 33 Coolidge Road in Newton.

IG: Well you don't want anything more, do you?

CG: We lived there for two years—lived there for two years. Then we moved to 45 Bishop's Gate Road in Newton Center where we lived for forty years.

BH: And so you raised your family—

IG: That's good to know for forty years to live—

CG: And from there we moved where we are here on 274 Beacon Street where we've been for over twenty years.

BH: Now—

IG: We're good tenants.

BH: Do you have any special memories of when your children were young?

CG: We didn't move around too much.

IG: Well I'll say this. No matter what we did for the children that was of importance we did together. I never had Charlie go to work, and come home and found that I did something drastic in their lifestyle. Isn't that so, Charlie? Whatever we did for the children we did—we thought things out together.

HB: What about your free time with the children? What did you do?

CG: Huh?

IG: What'd I do? Well number one they were boys. So Charles had more to say than he would ordinarily. If it were girls--. I mean I don't know whether that works out. But if you have a girl or--. So he was—we had just boys. And I thought Charles was a good husband and I had great respect for whatever he thought. So he had a great deal to say. And to this day I think Dick just adores his father. His mother is there, too. But he adores his father. Isn't that right, Charlie? Dick—

CG: The boys went to public school at the grammar school level. And then—

[Recorder is turned off and then back on]

HB: Did you read to them, you know, when they were young or do any kinds of things like that, you know, take them for lessons or—

IG: Yes.

HB: What exactly did you do?

IG: Well, didn't--. John took a lot of lessons.

CG: John what?

IG: Both of them took a lot of lessons.

CG: What, what, lessons, what kind of lessons?

IG: In their bringing up. Isn't that what you're referring to? In their bringing up. I was in charge.

CG: You were in charge of their bringing up.

HB: So what did you do?

IG: What do you mean what did I do? What did I do for them or what did I do—

HB: Yes, in bringing them up. You said you were in charge of bringing them up.

IG: Well I saw what I thought was good for them. I mean, maybe another woman wouldn't. But John went to Roxbury Latin and Dick went to Brown and Nichols. And I just didn't make--. I did work on that decision. I just didn't say, "Oh you go to that because it's a good school." But I mean—

CG: Dick, Dick, Dick, was an athlete. He became very active in athletic affairs. John was a student type.

IG: So we got that type of school for one of them and the other one for what we thought were right for them. We--. I think we took a lot of time with our children to see that they were brought up, what we thought was right for them and good for the world that they were going to live in.

HB: Now did you do anything to celebrate the holidays in your own home when the boys were young?

CG: We always...

IG: Well Charlie comes from a much more religious background than I. And so I think that we—

CG: Always observed the Jewish holidays.

IG: Always observed the Jewish holidays. I think—

CG: Always remember...

HB: What did you do?

IG: What do you mean what did I do?

HB: For the Jewish holidays. Did you make a dinner?

IG: We saw that we had a dinner. I always—

CG: We had Passover Seders.

IG: Yeah.

CG: We had Rosh Hashanah family dinners and we had Yom Kippur family dinners .

IG: And that wasn't my background. That was Charles's background but I lent towards—

HB: So was it difficult for you?

IG: No. I think I was--. I'm not smart now. But I was smart enough to know that--. I mean I used to go to Charles's home and his--. You had--. What were your parents? They were Orthodox.

CG: Who?

IG: Your parents.

CG: My parents were Orthodox.

IG: Yeah. And my parents were like we are today.

HB: Which is Reformed?

CG: The difference between Kehilleth Israel-type Jews were my parents and the Temple Ohabei Shalom and Temple Israel-Jews and her parents.

IG: My parents, my mother, was very active.

CG: And I leaned toward the Temple Israel group because of my association with John Slater.

IG: He was already active at Temple Israel at that time.

CG: I became a trustee of Temple Israel so that my family life was tied up at Temple Israel and more on the Reformed Jewish movement than with the Orthodox Jewish.

IG: Orthodox wasn't in it. We made a good decision to make both of us feel good.

HB: And that decision was to be Reformed?

IG: Yes.

HB: I see.

IG: Charles was on the border but—

CG: I was born—

IG: I'm not talking about Bangor, Maine. I'm down to the temple.

HB: Well can you tell me now about any of your interests and hobbies when you were young. What did you like to do?

IG: I liked to have a boy call up and take me out—

CG: You were very interested in art.

IG: Yeah.

HB: Where would you want him to take you?

CG: She was very active in the Institute of Contemporary Arts—

[Recorder is turned off and then back on.]

IG: I worry about that money going so fast. It's going—

HB: You said that you would like a boy to take you out. Where would you go when you went out? Where would you want to go?

IG: There was a whole group from Harvard that used to take me out. What's the--? I forget the name now. But the name doesn't mean anything to you.

CG: John...

IG: No. When I used to go out.

CG: Oh, you went out with Harvard boys.

IG: Yeah.

HB: And did you have, aside from going out, did you play a musical instrument?

IG: I was not a bad looking—

HB: I'm sure you were beautiful.

IG: No, I wasn't.

CG: She was a very social girl.

HB: Right. I can see that.

CG: With the Harvard undergraduates. We got married in 1934. So between 1927 and 1934 she was very active with the Harvard undergraduate student body.

HB: So you had a wonderful social life and a lot of fun.

IG: Yeah.

CG: She had a lot of dates.

IG: Yeah. I wasn't sitting home.

HB: Twiddling your fingers.

IG: Twiddling my fingers.

HB: Did you have any interests—

IG: I had a beautiful mother, which I think is important.

CG: I wish she was as pretty today as she was then.

IG: We're talking about mother.

CG: Oh, your mother was beautiful.

IG: Yep. My mother was beautiful. And my mother came from a lovely family and we were all brought up beautifully. So—

HB: And did you have any interests in music? Did you play an instrument, the piano or--
?

IG: Every Jewish girl at that stage of life played the—took piano lessons.

CG: Waiting to get married.

IG: Well I don't know about that.

CG: That was their profession.

IG: No, I wouldn't say that, dear.

HB: And did you enjoy playing the piano?

IG: I did—

CG: She never worked for money.

IG: We're talking about the piano. My mother was a piano player. I mean she was—

HB: And did she teach you?

IG: No mother wasn't a--. She was a beautiful player. I mean she was brought up that way. And mother was a beautiful pianist.

CG: Piano player. You weren't. All you did was take...

[end of side A]

CG: [Unclear]

IG: What a minute, Charlie, I'm talking. I mean it depends upon what kind of a man you marry, maybe there's a better word than just what kind of man. But I mean I think Charles has been very successful and—well he won't want me to go beyond that—lawyer in the city of Boston. And that's been more important to me, the kind of wife I am to him, maybe I haven't met all his demands. But I mean that's—

HB: What were some of the demands?

IG: I was bringing up young—bringing up children, two boys. And there was many times that it would be much easier if he were home to be part of what had to be done and said with the boys. But Charles has been a wonderful father. They adore their father. And we kid a lot that mother's been put on this earth to take good care of dad. So that gives you a little insight of our married life. But we've loved—

HB: So really behind the scenes you were the strong one, too. If he was working hard and he was out of the home a lot of the responsibilities and burdens and raising the

children fell on you on a day to day—

CG: But you know—when she got married I wasn't a young struggling lawyer. I was already in practice, fairly successful and a partner with the senior member of the Jewish Bar of Boston, John Slater started proxy law in the 1890s. And I was a partner in that day. So we never had the struggling years that young couples have because I already was established and doing fairly well when we got married.

IG: And leaving me home to take care of the children. [Laughs]

HB: And did you feel lonely?

IG: I can't say that I took to his--. I was very happy with the kind of reputation he had in the city of Boston. But I felt that we—I had to do double duty. Maybe that's putting it a little...because they adored Charlie and he was a wonderful father. But I had to do a lot of mother and father.

HB: In what way?

IG: Well because Charles would call at five o'clock and say, "You know I have to dinner with—I didn't realize with so and so tonight, a business one." Well I found that was a little hard for me to tell the children quite a few nights that daddy isn't going to be home tonight. I mean Charlie—he's a wonderful—was a wonderful father. Dick adores and--. I can't begin to tell you—

CG: Was and is.

IG: Was and is, yeah. John is in New York and lives a different life than John. So, but—

HB: What does John do in New York?

IG: In New York he's a lawyer, too.

CG: Hmm?

IG: John is a lawyer, too.

CG: Yeah. But John is mostly in real estate today.

HB: And why is his life different?

IG: Their lifestyle is different because his wife is a working lady.

CG: John graduated...

IG: I mean she's a typical girl that you could picture in New York that married and is happy but wants to have her own lifestyle, too.

HB: And what do you think about that?

IG: Well if it works out fine, that's fine. But I think there must have been time, as of my generation, I'd been more—. It would be more important for me to be home when my husband is going to be home. And to be home to be sure the children are cared for, a different feeling.

HB: Is there something that you wanted to do that you didn't get to do as far as a career or interests?

IG: No, I wasn't ever out for a career. I think I married...Charles was my interest in life. And I don't know whether you can see but he's very important to himself. And he's been very successful in his law practice and his career. And that's been very important to me.

HB: When you think back over your life what is a high point, you know, what do you remember?

IG: I remember I had a beautiful mother and she did everything that I thought a woman—a mother could do for a daughter. I think I—

HB: And do you feel that you've been a mother the way your mother was, the role model she set up?

IG: No, I don't think—

CG: What's that?

IG: I mean I think I always felt that I had a role model with you.

HB: With your husband?

IG: With my husband.

HB: What about your mother as a role model for you? She set up a pattern.

IG: My father had a business and my mother built up that business with my father. My mother came from a very—well, wealthy family—

CG: A wealthy background.

IG: Yeah, a background. Mother's background--. But Charles, he had to think of it as--. I mean I can't say you had to think—

CG: The father had a heart attack and her mother took over the business.

HB: Right.

IG: Oh this we're back--. But I mean Charles is--. You were always the leading man with your brothers and your father. Your father wasn't—

CG: Well, I uh...

IG: Is this all me or both of us?

HB: No. It's supposed to be all you.

IG: Really?

HB: Yep.

IG: Why? Because a marriage is for two.

CG: Jewish Women in America.

HB: Right. We just want to know about--. Marriage is for two. But we just want to know about your feelings about your life and your marriage.

IG: You mean my life as it started with the marriage?

HB: No, your whole life.

IG: Yeah.

HB: Can you think—

IG: I think I can because my mother was a beautiful woman. I've never been accused of being a beautiful woman and I don't expect. But mother was something to—

HB: How would you like to be remembered? You're remembering your mother as—

IG: I remembered my mother--. I remembered how I want to be remembered my being my mother's daughter. Does that make any sense to you? But she did it so beautifully and was such a role model that I didn't feel I was deprived of my mother. My mother was always home when we were home from school and that sort of thing.

HB: And were you home when your children came home from school?

IG: Well school was so different in those days. I mean there were much more activity after school. So I didn't have to rush home that they'd be home. Well you probably get the—

HB: What were you doing that you would've had to rush home?

IG: Well if I were—like my mother I'd be home because you should be home.

HB: But you weren't home.

IG: No.

HB: What were you doing?

IG: I always--. Well I was interested in different organizations.

CG: You were one of the active members of the Institute of Contemporary Art in its younger day. And you were very active in the women's division in establishing to docent operation for the Institute of Contemporary Art.

IG: Yeah, I—

HB: Can you tell me that?

IG: Well, Charles—he speaks so well for me.

HB: No, I want you to tell me.

IG: Well I'll just tell you the same thing.

HB: Right. Go ahead. When your boys were young and you were out you—were you at the Institute of Contemporary Art? Is that what activities you were doing when they were young?

CG: Well during the day when they were growing up we were members of the Belmont Country Club and she was a very good golfer. She used to play.

HB: Now I understand that you like to play golf. Can you tell me about your interest in golf? When did you get interested? Who taught you to play golf? Where did you play golf?

IG: Well, I think--. Charlie didn't when we were first married we played golf together, didn't we?

CG: Yeah we played golf.

IG: Yeah, yeah. Excuse me, I keep—

HB: That's okay. And would you play with women?

CG: Oh sure she was a champion golfer in her younger days.

IG: I was one of the better golfers.

HB: Where?

IG: At Belmont Country Club. But that's way in my past.

HB: What have you—

IG: I don't think that that's--. Well maybe you'd feel that it's some relationship to how I feel about what we're saying today. Right.

HB: What other interests did you do when you said you were out when the children were in school? You played golf.

IG: Yeah.

HB: You were at the Institute of Contemporary Art.

IG: That's right. Those were my two big interests because to take care of children or be responsible—feel responsible I had to give time to them as well as the--. And I was interested in these other things—

HB: Were there any other organizations that you were involved in?

IG: Well I would like to hear about them. But what I was interested in actively was what was my interests. I mean I'm interested in what a friend of mine if she is—has a certain something that she's interested in I'm interested because I'm interested in—I was interested in people and what they do not just sit home and take care of the babies.

HB: And what have been your interests in your later years when you had to stop--? Do you still play golf?

IG: Umm-hmm. I mean not like I used to.

HB: But you still play.

IG: Yeah. Wouldn't you say I still play golf, Charlie?

CG: What?

IG: I still play golf.

CG: Yeah we still play golf together.

IG: Well we do more--. I used to play with the girls. But, I mean, at Belmont they had a team. So I was—they thought I was good enough to play on the team. But as Charles grew older and he didn't--. He--. We wanted to play together.

HB: And what are your other interests now?

IG: I don't have the interests that I used to have.

HB: So what would be a normal day for you?

IG: Well I get to see if Charles is going to be home early. So that would be my first concern. Not what the ladies are doing. I mean—

HB: What Charles is doing.

IG: I want to be with him because, thank God, our marriage is such that we've done a lot together.

CG: In her younger day she made this tray. She was very, very—

HB: Can you tell me about this tray?

IG: Well I made it.

HB: How did you make it? Can you describe the tray for me?

IG: Well I can't describe it because the tray is this. I mean what it meets your eye, I don't know.

HB: What is this made out of?

CG: Tin.

IG: No, it's not tin. It's—

HB: Some form of a metal?

IG: Yeah, yeah.

HB: And then what did you do to the metal?

IG: I made this design.

CG: She did the whole thing.

IG: I did the whole thing.

HB: And how did you do it? Can you describe it because the machine can't see.

IG: Well I can't describe it because—

HB: Did you use a paintbrush?

IG: Yeah.

HB: Did you use a stencil or did you draw those with your own hand?

IG: I was guided. I mean I went to somebody who was—

CG: She took a tray painting class.

IG: Yeah. I took a class. And I was—learned an awful lot.

CG: And this was a plain—

HB: Now this tray has gold flowers painted on it with a black lacquered background.

IG: Right.

CG: This started out as plain tin. She did the whole thing.

IG: I did the whole thing.

HB: Do you remember the process you used?

IG: No I don't. No I don't. I'm just so glad that I can look at it.

HB: Did you do other things like that?

IG: Well that was--.

CG: Huh?

IG: Did I do anything--?

CG: Painting class.

IG: What dear? I was always in a painting class.

CG: That's right. She was very artistic.

HB: As a young girl did you--?

IG: Not when I was a young girl. I was out with the boys and—

HB: Having fun.

IG: Yeah.

HB: Well when did you develop this interest in art?

IG: Well somebody got me started in it. I—

CG: This was before we were married.

IG: What?

CG: You did this after we were married.

IG: Well but it was early years of marriage. I think—

CG: I think—I think when we first got married, I think we were very friendly with a group that was interested in art, the symphony and things like that.

IG: The symphony we always did on our own.

HB: So it was—

CG: The women would get together and do things in the art area.

IG: He can tell you this better than I because—

HB: Well I bet you could tell it to me, too.

CG: Things that we would do together when the men were available in the evening and on weekends. And I don't know if we had younger sons today. But I think in our day when we first got married—I was in my early thirties. But as young people we did more, I think, with art and music and science than the young people today who do more with golf because in our day—

IG: I think—

[Recorder is turned off and then back on.]

HB: Now what did you think he's wrong about?

IG: Because I think that the young people-- You take our children—

CG: They're more interested in golf and country club life.

IG: No.

HB: Well—

[Recorder is turned off and then back on.]

CG: More interested in business.

HB: Now I just wanted to change the subject a little to ask you, did the Depression years have any impact on you when you were growing up?

IG: Well, it's sort of interesting. See my mother—my father had a retail business in New York. And mother worked right with him. So she was--. I wasn't neglected because there was always good help in the house. But I saw my mother work with my father. So my father had a retail business in New Bedford. So—

HB: And did the Depression have any affect on this business?

IG: No, no, no.

HB: So you didn't feel any difference in your—

IG: No, no. Mother would always be off to be sure Dad takes time out for lunch or whatever. There was a different--. Charles is very active in a big law firm. Now I'm not part of that. I'm just glad that he's enjoying what he's doing, which he does. So my lifestyle was different. My mother used to go and help my father in the store.

HB: And what about during the Second World War, did that have any affect on your family life?

IG: I don't think so because my mother wasn't a--. I wasn't born when my mother was a child bride. My mother was—she was already helping my father in his business.

HB: You were already married during the Second World War. You got married in 1934?

IG: Yeah.

HB: Right.

IG: But I was—

HB: Did Charles have to go into the Army?

IG: No, you never went. You never went into the Army.

CG: Did I what?

IG: You never went into the Army when we were married.

CG: I was never in the Army.

IG: No.

HB: So you weren't really affected by—

IG: No. I was affected by hearing the feeling of a lot of my friends. But—

HB: Do you remember what that was like?

IG: I'm not interested. Why is this so important if I wasn't part of it?

HB: Well what did you feel?

IG: I was always a person--. If I had close--. I was always close to close friends and if their husband got lost in some part of the—I would be very involved because I'd be caring. I don't know whether that helps answer—

HB: Yes, it does. It does.

IG: But I mean I didn't--. Charles was a grown up man in the law office—a partner in a law office when I married him.

HB: Now how old were you when you got married?

IG: How old was I?

CG: How do you feel about what?

IG: No. Let's go onto something else.

HB: How old were you?

IG: How old was I when I got married?

CG: We were married in 1934. You were born in 1911. So you were twenty-three.

HB: And how old was Charles?

IG: He was—

CG: Dick is...

IG: No, you.

CG: Huh?

IG: You, Charles.

CG: I was—I was born in 1902 so I was thirty-two.

HB: And how did you feel about marrying an older man?

IG: Oh he was the man I wanted to marry. I was in love with him. I wasn't thinking whether he—

CG: I was not a struggling lawyer. We never had to struggle.

HB: Was it love at first sight?

CG: Hmm?

IG: It wasn't one of--. I met Charles he was visiting his—

CG: John Slater had a home in Wareham—

IG: Which was his partner.

CG: And I would visit him on weekends. Her folks—

IG: Were friendly with his—

CG: Had a home in Mattapoiset and they were very social friends of the Slaters. And she came over with her folks to visit the Slaters—

HB: And you took one look at him.

IG: No. He took that look at me.

HB: At you.

[Laughter]

CG: It was a weekend when I was visiting the Slaters.

IG: Yeah. That's how it happened.

CG: And she came over with a date.

IG: Oh yes. And my mother was so nervous because this date I brought over I was paying all the attention to Charles. And mother was—didn't know Charles. She saw him for the first time. And my mother she had a—she was a beautiful, wonderful woman. She kept pointing—

HB: To the other man?

IG: Yeah. [Laughs]

HB: Well what had you done? You were just so taken with Charles that you were ignoring your other beau?

CG: What I thought...

IG: Well maybe he can give you a better—

CG: When I met her she was staying at Mattapoiset because her father had a business in New Bedford. So when I got back to the office Mr. Slater said, “Why don’t you call Irene Marks?” I said, “I’m not going to go to New Bedford”. He said, “No. She lives in Brookline.” I said, “I thought she lived in New Bedford.” “No, no. Her father has a business in New Bedford and they’re on the Cape for the summer. But she lives in Brookline.” So I said, “Well after Labor Day I’ll give her a call.” And that’s how it started.

HB: And how long did you date? Do you remember?

CG: I was thirty-two and she was about twenty-seven.

HB: Twenty-three.

CG: Twenty-three.

HB: Yeah. Okay. Well is there anything else that you would like to add that I didn’t ask you that you’d like to talk about?

IG: About myself.

HB: About yourself.

IG: I'm not asking you your opinion of--. I don't mean it the way it sounds.

HB: Is there anything that you'd like to say about your life, about anything that I haven't asked you?

IG: Well the things that you would be asking me would be something...

HB: For you,

IG: Just personal, among—

HB: Right.

IG: Yeah.

HB: Is there any subject that we haven't covered? We talked about your marriage and your youth and your growing up and raising your family.

IG: I think that covers it.

HB: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

CG: You never worked. She always lived a very fine social life and background until you met me and got married.

IG: That's his—

HB: That's his picture. Now what's your picture?

CG: A very beautiful girl in those days.

HB: She's still beautiful.

IG: Well—

CG: Well I wouldn't say that.

HB: Well I would.

IG: You said something very nice. You just sit back and enjoy that because you won't get anything more.

HB: Now what's your viewpoint?

IG: Of what?

HB: You said that was his viewpoint of the life and marriage. What—

IG: Well if you say marriage, I think this has been a very good marriage. I mean Charles's background was a little different than mine and mine was a little different from his. But he used to go with--. You didn't know John Slater, did you?

HB: No.

IG: Well he was more—one of the younger ones of that group because John Slater used to love to have him at his home. So that's—

CG: That's when we were young.

IG: I don't think that's such a beautiful picture of me. I think I'm better looking than that.
[Laughter]

CG: I wish you looked like that now.

IG: Yeah. But you wouldn't look like the same. So you better [unclear].

HB: That's right. Okay. Well thank you very much.

IG: Well thank you very much. I hope we haven't—

[END OF INTERVIEW]