Amalie Rothschild Transcript

Jean Freedman: This is an interview with Amalie Rothschild. It's August 19th, 2001. We're in Baltimore, Maryland. And I'm Jean Freedman, recording this for the Jewish Women's Archives, Weaving Women's Words project.

Okay. I always start out my interviews the same way, and that's by asking the person to tell me your full name and when and where you were born.

Amalie Rothschild: My full name is Amalie Getta, G-e-t-t-a Rosenfeld Rothschild. And I was born in Baltimore on New Year's Day, 1916 -- January 1st, 1916, during a New Year's party at the family house.

JF: Well, that was quite a welcome in of the New Year, wasn't it?

AR: Yeah.

JF: Okay. Can you tell me something about your childhood and where you grew up?

AR: Well, I grew up in a lot of different places, but always in Baltimore. I was born in the city. I think it was on Whitelock Street, which was an old neighborhood at that time, mostly all Jewish. And I'm not sure of the progression of where we went from here to there, but at one point we lived on Lake Drive in the Riviera Apartments. And I know I was kindergarten age at that time.

And after kindergarten I was enrolled in Park School for, I think, one year. My father had his ups and downs in business, and I guess that year he could afford to send me to Park School. That didn't last very long. I think after the first grade I transferred to public school. Meanwhile, we moved from Lake Drive to the suburbs, to Clarks Lane.

JF: Where is that?

AR: Clarks Lane is off of Park Heights Avenue. And we had a big house there, an old concrete block house, three stories and about an acre of ground, which we enjoyed as children. And I had two brothers older than I was.

JF: Yes, that was my next question.

AR: Yes.

JF: If you could tell me about your family, your parents and your brothers.

AR: Yeah, well, my parents were married, I think, around 1907, I think -- I'm not sure -- or '6, 1906, perhaps. And their firstborn -- my father's name was Eugene I. -- for Isaac -- Rosenfeld. And my mother's name was Addye Goldsmith Rosenfeld.

JF: And were they born in Baltimore?

AR: They were both born in Baltimore, as were their parents.

JF: Really?

AR: Yes, yes. And then my oldest elder brother was born the next year after they were married. And after that there was a second son, so one brother was six years older -- one brother was three years older and the other was nine years older, I think, yeah.

JF: Oh, so you were the youngest of four?

AR: I was the youngest of the three, yes. Meanwhile, as I said, we moved to the suburbs. And at that time I was no longer going to Park School. I went to public school, which was School Number 59. It was an elementary school.

JF: What suburb was it?

AR: Park Heights, I guess you'd call it, yeah. I don't think it had an official name, but since then I think it's been called Park Heights.

JF: Was that unusual in those days for Jews to move to the suburbs?

AR: I don't know. Around the Lake Drive area, it was practically all Jewish at the time. And little by little, I think they began to move out. So we had Jewish neighbors on our street, on Clarks Lane. In fact, there were about four houses between Park Heights Avenue and where we lived, and they were all Jewish.

JF: So I guess wasn't that unusual.

AR: No, it was not that unusual.

JF: And your father, you said he had his ups and downs in business. What was his business?

AR: Well, he was into many things. First place, he was very adventuresome. He was the youngest of ten children.

JF: My word!

AR: He had seven sisters. And he was, I think, eighteen years old when he decided that he didn't want to stay around all of those women, and he left home and he joined the Navy.

JF: Oh, my word!

AR: And in those days, for a Jewish boy to join the Navy was very unusual. And he didn't think the name Rosenfeld was going to go over very well in the Navy, so he took the name of Clarence -- oh, gosh -- all of a sudden I have a blank.

JF: We can always come back to it.

AR: Yes, it'll come to me. And so he stayed in the Navy for two years when it was discovered that he had a heart murmur, which he never knew he had.

JF: They didn't discover it beforehand?

AR: Evidently not, no. And while he was in the Navy, he became an electrician's mate. He was very good at different kind -- you know, mechanical stuff. And he learned to be an electrician at that time. So when he came out of the Navy, he was then, I guess, I don't know -- I don't know how old he was -- twenty.

JF: What year was this, about?

AR: Well, he was in the Navy before 1900. I think the Spanish-American War was around that time, 1898, something like that. And he went into the electrical business here in Baltimore. And he was very ingenious. He could do all sorts of things.

The family sisters were married, and they all lived around Eutaw Place. And he strung a telephone system between the sisters' houses, over the roofs, so they had their own private little telephone system for the family.

JF: (Laughs) Oh, that's wonderful.

AR: Yeah. And then, let's see, I don't quite know how they met, but my mother met my father. And she was very young, she was about nineteen years old, I think. And she came home and told her mother that she met this wonderful man last night and -- or maybe she said "boy," I don't know. And she described him. And my grandmother say, "Ah, don't worry yourself about him. You may hear from him and you may not." And almost immediately, she did hear from him. And he started to court her. And he brought her violets. And violets were her favorite flower.

JF: Oh, how lovely.

AR: And I think they -- in six weeks they were engaged.

JF: Wow (Laughs).

AR: And then they married, and--

JF: Did he continue in the electrical business?

AR: I think he was in the electrical business when they were married, yes. And then later -- he was always interested in new things. And at that time someone had invented a hydroplane, which is a plane that landed on water. We have a photograph of him standing on the side of the hydroplane. He went for a demonstration. He was thinking about going into a dealership of this hydroplane, but it never happened. He didn't. And then eventually he got involved in automobiles. And he became an auto dealer.

JF: And that was a new thing then.

AR: Yeah, yeah. And one of the things -- speaking of being Jewish, this is the one thing that is indelible in my mind. And that was that my father had a Ford dealership, and at that time, Henry Ford published the Dearborn Independent. Have you heard of that?

JF: Yes.

AR: You know what that is. And he received a letter from Detroit asking how many of the Dearborn Independents he would accept for distribution. And my father contacted our rabbi and told him about this letter. And the rabbi said, "You tell him you won't accept any", which he did. And within twenty-four hours his dealership was cancelled. So that's my first memory of how it was to be Jewish. But that wasn't just Baltimore.

JF: Right. How old were you at the time?

AR: Well, see, I didn't know about all this. I was very young. I don't know, this is just hearsay from the family. My brother knew more about it than I did. But I've never forgotten it, that that's what happened.

JF: What did he do?

AR: Well, he got out of the Ford dealership, however I don't know. And I think he then became a Chevrolet dealer, I think. But he stayed in the automobile business, actually, from then on, in different ways. And the Depression came along and things were not great. And I don't remember what happened about the dealership. But later he started a repair business which was very successful. And he was mechanical, he knew what he was doing and he had the right kinds of mechanics. And he had a very good business. And that's really what he was doing until he died at a very young age. This heart condition caught up with him. He had angina, and he was forty-nine when he died. I was sixteen years old, just about to graduate from high school.

JF: That must have been quite a blow.

AR: So that was really terrible. And then there were my two older brothers. The one was only twenty-five years old, and he kind of inherited the business.

JF: What was his name?

AR: Eugene Jr., Eugene I. Rosenfeld, Jr. And the other one was Edwin Rosenfeld, who later changed his name to Rogers. And I can explain why. There's so many things that went on in between. We might be skipping back and forth.

JF: That's okay, I'll come back to it.

AR: After Randy and I were married, it was -- my older brother had grown up and left home, and was married, and lived, I think, in Washington. But the younger brother Eddie

and my mother were living together in an apartment. And it was, as I said, it was Depression days. And Eddie hadn't settled into any business or job or anything. And my mother wanted to go to Florida for the winter. And I had been married -- Randy and I were married in August. And in the fall, she said she'd like to go to Florida. So the two of them went to Florida. And he had to get a job in Florida. And what he knew was automobiles. So he got a job with a used car dealer or something in Florida, and he decided that Rosenfeld was not a very good name to be in the automobile business. So he temporarily took the name of Rogers. And then later, after he was married, his wife kind of liked the idea, Rogers sounded pretty good to her, so she talked him into changing it as a permanent thing, and that's what -- and he was always in the automobile business, and he decided, this is much better for his business. So it remained Rogers. So that's about being Jewish (Laughs).

JF: (Laughs) Was his wife, who wanted the name changed, was she Jewish as well?

AR: She was Jewish, but she was Jewish in a sense -- not much of a sense. She always called herself a Christian Scientist, but I don't think she ever went to church (Laughs). But anyhow, that was that. And Eddie and I, who were three years apart, became very close. And let's go on with -- where were we? I don't know.

JF: If I could ask you just to go back a bit. Do you remember living in the city at all? Do you have any memories of living in the city?

AR: Very, very little, at the apartment on Lake Drive. I remember it mostly from a group photograph of the kindergarten group that was taken right outside on Lake Drive. We have that photograph. But living there -- we had a cat and we lived on the sixth floor. I remember the cat used to go down on the elevator and go out and come back (Laughs).

JF: (Laughs) That was a very intelligent cat.

AR: Yes, it seems as though it was (Laughs), yeah. But as for, do I remember living there, actually I really don't.

JF: Okay. Well, then let's talk about your early memories in the suburbs. Can you tell me about the schools you went to? I remember you said you had one year at Park School.

AR: Yeah.

JF: What was that like?

AR: I was a bad girl. I did all kinds of devilish things.

JF: That sounds interesting.

AR: And I remember they used to have all this playground equipment. And one was called a jungle gym, and it went up and across and down. And I must -- I don't know what I did, but the teacher wanted me to come down off the jungle gym, and I wouldn't come down. I was up there (Laughs). And eventually, I guess I did, because I'm here now. I mean, I didn't stay.

JF: (Laughs).

AR: And I remember we each had a little garden patch, and I remember growing radishes when I was like in the first grade, or whatever it was. And I don't remember too much else about it, I really don't.

JF: Do you remember, were you sorry to leave there to go to public school or was it no big deal?

AR: I guess it wasn't, because I don't remember any trauma involved in it. But after I went to public school, that's where I stayed from then on. And I was at this first

elementary school. And then the family -- from Clarks Lane, we had -- my father had bad times. And this was this great big house. And they decided to rent the house and take a smaller place, an apartment. So we moved to Mount Washington in an apartment. And I then transferred from School 59 Elementary to the Mount Washington Elementary School. And I was there during the -- I think the fifth and sixth grades. And at that time I was showing promise of being pretty smart (Laughs). And I think I skipped a half grade there. And from there I went to the accelerated junior high school Number 49. Have you heard of Number 49?

JF: Yes, I think it's where my parents went, actually, because they went to an accelerated junior high.

AR: Yeah, yeah.

JF: The one where you did it in two years?

AR: That's right. We did junior high school and first year of high school in two years. And from there I went to Western High School into the second year. So by the time I skipped a half a grade, and plus the fact that my birthday being in January, I started in September, which put me half a year ahead of most of the other kids who weren't six yet. I must have been five and a half. So I gained a half year of being skipped, and a half year by starting early, and then a full year by going to 49, so that I ended up graduating from Western High in February. I was a mid-year. And I had just turned sixteen. So I was really fifteen all through my senior year.

JF: Wow.

AR: So I had just turned sixteen when I graduated.

JF: So you were ahead of yourself.

AR: And that was mid-year. And I knew I was going to art school. And that's another story.

JF: Please tell.

AR: When I was at Western, after your sophomore year, when you're going into your junior and senior year, you have to decide what your future is going to be. If you're going to go to college, you have to take certain required courses for college entrance. And I was given the choice at that time, I could go Goucher College or I could go to the Maryland Institute. You didn't apply all over the place. If you weren't a bad student, and you paid the tuition which was very little, you could go, if that's where you wanted to go. So I thought, well, I'm being offered a college education, I guess that's what I should do. So I signed up for the proper courses for college entrance. And one of those was English history. And on the first day in my -- was this the junior year I'm talking about -- I guess it was -- I went into the English history class, and I looked around at these walls. One wall was windows, and three walls were blackboards with tiny little writing all over it, and maps and all kinds of stuff. And I looked at that and I got terrified. And I turned around and never even sat down. I turned around and went to the office, and I said, "I've changed my mind, I want to take art major."

JF: Now, had you been interested in art before?

AR: Always!

JF: Always, okay. So this wasn't just to get out of English history.

AR: No, no. Because from the time I was six or seven years old, I was always drawing at home. So I went to Saturday art school from the age of six or seven, until I finished high school. So when this was determined that I was going to go the Maryland Institute, it was no surprise, it was just a change of heart, which is really what I wanted to do in the first place.

JF: But you thought you should go to Goucher?

AR: Yeah, I thought I should do that. And it turns out that I made the right decision in going directly to art school.

JF: What was it that got you interested in art? You said you were drawing from a very young age.

AR: Oh, I don't know. I just was -- I used to draw and color things and make funny little things. Do you remember pipe cleaners?

JF: Uh-huh.

AR: Well, I used to make little figures out of pipe cleaners, and make like party decorations and stuff like that. I was always doing stuff with my hands. And that's just what I loved to do. And my reading was not very diligent in high school. I read the minimum that I needed. And since then I've become a voracious reader. I was very late in development intellectually, because I was always doing things with my hands. And so when I went to art school -- this was in 1932.

JF: '32, wow.

AR: And times were tough. So my family decided what I was going to take was fashion illustration, which was a practical application of being an artist. It wasn't fine arts. And I didn't know anything about fine arts, and the family background was not oriented toward fine arts anyhow. I used to -- by going to art school, that was it. And the Baltimore Museum was new, and I think from school they may have taken us there once or twice. But I was never very impressed with old brown paintings (Laughs). So I took fashion illustration. And in two years I graduated from Maryland Institute.

JF: So that would make it '34.

AR: That was ‘34, and I had just turned eighteen.

JF: Wow.

AR: And here I was finished with my so-called formal education. And after that I did get -- I went to New York for five months, just doing some post-graduate work at Parsons, or the New York School of Fine and Applied Art. And after five months, my mother’s lawyer -- meanwhile, my father had died, you see, just prior to my graduation from high school.

JF: Oh, right.

AR: Right, in 1932. And my mother’s lawyer said, “Bring her back home. You really can’t afford to keep her in New York any longer. You better bring her back home and tell her to try to find a job,” which is what I did. I came home and I worked up a portfolio to take around to the department stores. And something good happened, but it turned out not to be very good. And that was, right after I was interviewed at the best store in town which was Hutzler’s, their artist was sick and they needed a substitute for a few days. And they called me in. And I thought, oh, there’s nothing to this at all. You know, I go in one day, and the next day I’m called in. Well, I was so nervous that I sort of botched up everything I did. And I couldn’t finish it and I took it home like homework. And I was scared stiff.

JF: What was a department store artist’s job?

AR: To do illustrations for the advertising.

JF: For advertising, okay.

AR: Nowadays they use mostly all photographs. But at that time they used artists. And so I did it for a few days. And of course, their artist got well and came back. But they never called me back (Laughs). So it was good and then it was bad. It was terrible. For

my first job to be at the best store in town was a mistake. I wasn't ready for it (Laughs).

JF: (Laughs) Right.

AR: So then I started to freelance at other stores for seasonal work, and finally did land a steady job at the then May Company I was their basement artist, not the upstairs artist, but their basement artist. But it was in the advertising department which was upstairs. And I only kept that job for about, I don't know, maybe about six months.

JF: Did you like it?

AR: Yes, I liked it. And I got more confident in what I was doing. And then I got fired (Laughs).

JF: What happened?

AR: They kept hinting to me that they didn't like the way I was drawing the faces on the models. They wanted it to look more like the upstairs artwork. And either I couldn't do it or I wouldn't do it. I wanted to do it my way. But eventually they decided my way wasn't going to suit them, and they gave me notice, same day, on a Saturday afternoon. I worked six days a week for eighteen dollars a week. And on Saturday afternoon, they said to go to the personnel office. And that's when they fired me -- on the spot, no notice, no nothing. That's it, terminated.

JF: How did you feel?

AR: Not very good. So then I continued to do freelance, which meant advertising agencies who did brochures and different things. And you know, I got better at it. But then -- Randy and I were going together from the time I was eighteen -- seventeen or eighteen.

JF: How did you meet?

AR: I'm not sure that we met. We both belonged to a country club, Suburban Club. And I guess we just talked around the swimming pool and so forth, and then he asked me out. And it so happened that he and his family lived on Clarks Lane in a newly built apartment building right across the street. So I sort of knew him. In fact, when I was going to art school, I would walk up to the corner to take a bus, and his father, who had a chauffeur and a car, would see me standing there. And he knew who I was, so he would stop and he'd say, "Can I give you a ride to school?" And I said, "Sure."

JF: (Laughs) Yes, I'd take a ride.

AR: So I got to know his father a little bit more than I knew him at the time.

JF: That's funny.

AR: And anyhow, so we started going together, and we went together for about two years before we became engaged. And he was going to law school. He was going to Penn Law School, so I would see him when he'd come home for holidays. And then he invited me to something up at Penn, some special event, and so it went. And ask me some more questions.

JF: Yes. I think I interrupted you, actually. You were talking about how after you left the May Company, you said you and Randy had been going together for some time.

AR: Yeah.

JF: And that's when I interrupted you.

AR: Oh. Well, I did these odd jobs for agencies and others stores when they needed seasonal help, like if they were running a lot of ads for Easter, they'd call in an extra artist, and so that's what I was doing. And Randy had -- he was at Penn Law School for about one or two years when his father said to him, "Come home and go to Maryland

Law School at night and work during the day." See, these were difficult times. And they didn't want to keep him in school full time. So that's what he did, he came back home. And so we saw more of each other.

JF: Where did he work during the day?

AR: At the Sun Life Insurance Company of America, which was a family established business. It was established by his father and his uncle and another person, Millard Deal -- Charles Deal.

JF: Now, Rothschild is an unusual name. Are they related to "the" Rothschilds?

AR: That's a favorite question.

JF: (Laughs) I'm sure.

AR: And Randy's brother used to give a wonderful answer. He would say, "Well, they're our poor relations."

JF: (Laughs).

AR: But no, we're not. We have no way to trace it back to that family. But it's not so unusual a name any longer. In fact, in the days that we were going together, there was one other Rothschild family in Baltimore who actually were not related to us, but it was just them and Randy's family. But now if you look in the phone book in Baltimore, there are quite a lot of Rothschilds. In fact, quite coincidently, Randy's name is Randolph Rothschild, Randolph Schamberg Rothschild. Schamberg was his mother's maiden name. And now in the phonebook there's another Randolph Rothschild. And we used to get some of their mail, and we called them up. And they're from out of town, we never heard of them before. And they'd have to come over here and pick up the mail that was delivered here by mistake when it was meant for them, not us. So there are other

Rothschilds now. So what were we talking about?

JF: Okay, well, you said Randy came back from Penn, and he started working at the Sun Life Insurance Company during the day, and he was going to law school at night, is that correct--

AR: Yes, yeah.

JF: -- at University of Maryland?

AR: Yes.

JF: Okay. And you were engaged at this point?

AR: And we were engaged or almost engaged, whatever. So he graduated from University of Maryland Law School, and he took the bar exam, and he flunked it! And his boss down at the Sun Life, who was the head of the legal department said, “Randolph, you have to stop courting Amalie until all hours of the night. If you’re engaged, get married now. And then you’re going to take a crash course and take the bar exam again in the fall.” So he said, “It’s okay by me” (Laughs). So when he heard about the bar exam, I think it was June or July -- July, I think. So we decided we would get married right away.

JF: What year is this?

AR: This was 1936. So we announced it to his parents, who were summering up in New Hampshire. And my mother was here in Baltimore. So we took my mother and we got in the car, and we drove up to New Hampshire where we would be married. And that was really funny too. He took with him a book of the marriage laws of the different states. And New Hampshire had a five-day waiting period between application for the license and the wedding -- the day that you could be married. So he had to come back and start

this law course, and we didn't have a lot of time to take a honeymoon or anything. So his father and his aunt and uncle were up there, his mother and his father, and my mother. So we went to, I think, a justice of the peace to try to have the five-day law waived. And his father told a fib, which he never told a fib in his life. And he said, "My son is being transferred to the Orient, and he has to make a boat in San Francisco within a week, and if you don't let them get married now, they're going to have to live in sin" (Laughs). And so the five-day waiver was given us, and we were married by a justice of the peace in New Hampshire.

JF: Oh, my word! Now you really did decide to get married right away. You didn't want a long white dress and a big party?

AR: Well, we were supposed to be married in the fall with a regular wedding, but this seemed to be out of the picture. And our rabbi happened to be up in Maine. We went to Maine for five days for a honeymoon from New Hampshire. And Rabbi Morris Lazaron was the rabbi of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation at the time. And he was up there, and we left a note for him to get in touch with us -- which he never did -- because we thought, well, we'll go to him at let him give us a Jewish blessing at least. But that never happened. So we were married by a justice of the peace, and it didn't seem to bother us in the least. But we thought it would be nice to have a Jewish ceremony. And later on, Morris Lieberman was rabbi at Baltimore Hebrew, and we'd asked him if he would perform a second ceremony for us, and he said, "Yes." But he was always away on our anniversary, which was in August. So finally, seventeen years after we were married, he was in town on August the 3rd, which was our anniversary, and he performed the ceremony. So that was our Jewish wedding, finally.

JF: I was married in August too, and it is difficult to find a rabbi around at that time (Laughs).

AR: Yeah.

JF: Okay. Now, you mentioned you were both members of Baltimore Hebrew, is that right?

AR: Well, I was confirmed at Har Sinai. That's where my family belonged. But his family was at Baltimore Hebrew.

JF: Can you tell me about -- did you have a Jewish education or what was it--

AR: Only at Har Sinai, and that was the first Reform congregation in Baltimore. And they were extremely Reform. The rabbi didn't wear a tallis or a hat. He just wore like a dark business suit of some sort. It was Rabbi Edward L. Israel. And he was very prominent, and we liked him very much. Everybody seemed to like him a lot. And I simply went to Sunday school -- forced to go to Sunday school. I didn't care for it at all.

JF: Why was that?

AR: I don't know. I just -- I don't know, I didn't find it very stimulating or interesting. But I did go through with the confirmation. And let's see, that was at age sixteen, I was confirmed, I think. And then after that I paid very little attention to the whole thing. Also, Hebrew was not required at Har Sinai. So I never studied Hebrew, and I never knew any Hebrew at all, but I could repeat the prayers. Having gone to temple so many, many, many times, you get used to the normal simple prayers, Shema Yisrael [Hear O Israel], and Baruch atah adonai [Blessed are you, Lord] and all those things. I never quite knew what they meant, but I could read it in translation. And that's as far as my practicing Judaism went. So I'm not apologetic about it, I'm just being honest about it. At home, we didn't observe much in the way of holidays. I remember we did have Chanukah candles, which we put on a desk too close to my mother's silk pongee curtains, and the (Laughs) curtains caught fire from Chanukah candles.

JF: That's terrible.

AR: That's one thing I do remember. No big damage was done, but it was kind of frightening.

JF: Yes, (Laughs) I would think so.

AR: And then when we had our children, they went to Baltimore Hebrew Sunday school. And we used to have a little bit of a white decorative Christmas tree about this big, because I thought they were cute. And the children said, "We can't have a Christmas tree anymore, that's not right." So we quit having the Christmas tree. And we had Chanukah at home. But I never had a seder, I never did anything like that. We went to family seders, but we didn't have one ourselves. And the girls -- well, the elder one was confirmed. But Adrien, the second one, decided she didn't go for any of that stuff, and she was not going to be confirmed. And we tried to talk her into it, but she was the kind of child that whatever she decided she was going to do, you couldn't talk her out of it. So she was not confirmed.

JF: Okay.

AR: And we've been token Jews, really, it's true.

JF: Token, that's an interesting phrase. How do you define a token Jew?

AR: Well, I would never deny being Jewish, I'm very proud of being Jewish. And I identify with Jewish people. And we're members of the synagogue, but we only go on the holy days, which is terrible. Most other people do too, because it's always so crowded.

JF: (Laughs) Right.

AR: And then the closest thing to knowing a lot more about Judaism was when the new Baltimore Hebrew building was built. The architect for that building became the architect

for our house that we're living in today. Randy's sister-in-law was on the building committee. And when she attended the first meeting to plan the new Baltimore Hebrew building, they interviewed this architect from New York, Percival Goodman, who was specializing in synagogue architecture. And they decided to have him, to employ him. And we were then looking for land. We were still living in an apartment. And we had then our second -- our second daughter was on the way, I think. And we were a little bit crowded, and we really wanted a house. So we contacted Percival Goodman and asked him would he like to do a residence while he's coming to Baltimore for the synagogue, he'd be here, would he like to do a residence. And he accepted immediately. And we were looking at this property. He came down within a week or two, and we looked at this property. He said, "It's perfect, just perfect." And it was ten acres, and we didn't want ten acres. But the people who owned it said, "Well, we won't sell you any less. If you want it, you start there, and you take it to the corner." So we thought, oh, well, we'll buy the ten acres and then we'll sell off half of it. Well, needless to say, fifty years later, we still own the ten acres.

JF: (Laughs) I didn't realize it was that much land. That is a lot of land.

AR: Yeah. And he came periodically to do the synagogue and our house. And he gave us absolutely a perfect house for our family. It was just wonderful.

JF: It is a marvelous house.

AR: Yeah. And this studio came twenty-five years later.

JF: Okay.

AR: So much for my being Jewish in Baltimore. Now, I have other -- when we lived in Mount Washington, I was then about twelve years old, I think. And the new Meadowbrook swimming pool was built in Mount Washington. And of course, we would have liked to go there. But very prominently displayed at the entrance to Meadowbrook

swimming pool it said "Gentiles Only." So that was kind of my first realization that being Jewish had some problems. But it didn't seem to bother us very much. I don't know, I don't remember being terribly upset about it. We just simply knew that we weren't welcome, so we didn't go.

JF: Were there other experiences of antisemitism that you remember in your youth?

AR: Actually, I've never remembered any in particular -- yes, when we were looking for land before we bought this land. We had an agent who took us -- she was going to take us to look at some property out a little beyond there. And when they found out who was coming to look at it, they said, no, they didn't want to show it to us. So that was another thing. And then when we looked at this land, the owner was sick in bed, but he wanted to see who was coming to look at his land. He knew that we were Jewish by the name. So he got out of his sick bed, and on the Sunday that we came to look at the land, he came. And I remember saying, "I'm going to put on my tweediest tweeds," which I did (Laughs). Anyhow, we passed mustard -- not mustard -- muster, and we bought the land, which we've never regretted, and it's been wonderful. And we do have Jewish neighbors now, and also non-Jewish neighbors. And one of our very closest friends is a couple, are non-Jewish, who live just across the road, and they're wonderful. And they have a place down at Bethany Beach, and they invite us there every summer to come to a few days, and we're really very close. And I have other non-Jewish friends. We eventually resigned from the Suburban Country Club, because we were not interested in the social life there. And we used to play tennis, but we quit playing tennis.

JF: What was the Suburban Club like? I've only--

AR: It was a club at that time mostly for all the old German Jewish families. Because at the time, that was antisemitic of itself, because a lot of people who applied who were not German Jews were not admitted. And so they built their own country club called the Woodholme Club. Now all of that has changed because all of the German Jews and the

others intermarried, and now we don't think about things like that.

JF: But when you were--

AR: When I was growing up, there was such awful epithets as kike and stuff like that. And my closest friend was not German Jewish, she was Jewish of Eastern European origin. And I said, "Don't you ever use that word again! I don't ever want to hear it again!" I said to my family, "Don't you ever use that word again." And from then on, the whole line just mellowed, we don't think about that anymore. And eventually the Suburban Club integrated, if you want to call it that. And now both clubs are prospering with mixed groups.

JF: But still Jewish?

AR: Predominantly Jewish, but it's not restricted to Jews. And it's just that they are mostly.

JF: Okay. I'd like to go back to the chronology, where we had you just married in, I guess that was 1936?

AR: Yes.

JF: Okay. So you're newly married, took a honeymoon in Maine, returned to Baltimore. Then what happened?

AR: Well, then Randy was working, and I was doing this freelance artwork. And jobs were hard to get because it was '36, it was the middle of the Depression, and there were not that many even freelance jobs around. And I had plenty of leisure time, and I started being, you know, a new Jewish housewife, whatever that meant. And I had friends, and they played bridge, and they went out to lunch and did all these dumb things. And I looked in the mirror one day and I said, "You know, who are you? I thought you were an

artist. You can't live like this. It's not you." And I heard about a fine arts painting class one day a week, and I joined that. And I knew nothing about fine arts, I only knew commercial art. And I took this painting class that whole winter. And I liked it very much, but I felt that what I was doing wasn't really very good. And the teacher was not a good teacher, because in order to show you how to paint, he would take up the brush and he'd paint on your canvas. And I felt I never did anything that was my own, because he always had his hand in it. And he said to me once, "You know, I never I could teach you anything because you had been to art school, so you thought you already knew it." Of course, the only thing I knew was how to draw. I learned -- I had a wonderful teacher, and I did know how to draw, and I did very well. And I won an award when we graduated. And so I just thought painting was picking up a brush instead of a pen and ink and drawing in color. It wasn't that at all. And it was many, many years of struggle on my own to find out that fine arts was an entirely different language. And it was more self-expressive, and it wasn't illustration, which is what I was doing before. And so it took a long time. And I used to -- I turned a little thirteen-foot pump house behind my mother's house on Clarks Lane and made it into a studio. And I used to go there and work. And there was a well-known artist in town, Herman Maril. And I used to take my work to him for criticism, and he would talk about it. And he once said to me, "You know, your hand was always ahead of your head." And I said, "I don't understand what that meant." He meant I could draw, but what was I drawing? What was I doing? It took a long time to find out what that meant. And it took a long time. And then I started to enter exhibitions at the Baltimore Museum. And I would get in and I would start winning awards. And then the Maryland Institute at that time, in fine arts, was very old-fashioned.

JF: In what way?

AR: They did not recognize abstract art. It had been -- it was being done ever since 1906 or whatever, but in the 1930s the Maryland Institute did not even recognize it or teach it or anything. So an artist in town decided to get together what he considered the

more advanced practicing artists in town, and open a small art school, which was on 25th Street next to the art theater -- art playhouse, movie theater. And we all taught there.

JF: And when did this start?

AR: That was in the '50s, I guess.

JF: That was in the '50s, okay.

AR: And I'd been painting for a while, and coming along, and was asked to teach there. And one of the students there was the wife of a college professor at Goucher College. And the teacher at Goucher College was retiring, and they were looking for someone else, and she recommended me. So I was interviewed by the head of the department at Goucher. I had no degree, mind you, just a diploma from the Maryland Institute at age eighteen, that was it. And he interviewed me. And he said, "Well, I've heard good things about your teaching. And we'll put you on for one term, on probation, see how it goes."

JF: What were you teaching at this point?

AR: Painting and drawing. So that was in 1963, and I stayed for eight years.

JF: How did you like teaching?

AR: I liked it very much, and I learned so much in teaching. But I was very nervous about it. When I was ready to begin in September, I spent the whole summer here going over the various courses that the kids had had, because I was not teaching a first-year art course, I was teaching a second-level art course.

JF: Difficult to come in in the middle.

AR: So I had to find out at least how much they knew that I didn't know. And so I learned as much as I could about what they were doing in their first year. And I had to

plan my own program. There was no guideline. And I got some books out from the library about teaching art, and figured out what to do, and planned a program. And it was successful, and I learned a lot that I didn't know before. And the first week of teaching (Laughs), something terrible happened. All the teachers had a post office box at Goucher. You go in and you see if there's any mail for you, and you take it. And after the first week I was handed a package addressed to A. Rothschild. And I opened it, and it was a used dictionary with no return address on it. And I thought, here I'm just starting to teach, don't I speak good English? What's the matter, since somebody sends me a dictionary. I brought it home. And Randy, who was so cheerful and pleasant, he said, "Well maybe it wasn't meant for you." I said, "Oh, yeah, sure, there's another A. Rothschild at Goucher." He said, "Well, how do you know? There might be." So (Laughs) the next day I went back and went to the post office. I said, "Is there anybody else on campus named A. Rothschild?" And they said, "Yes, Abby Rothschild, she's a freshman." I said, "Here" (Laughs).

JF: So it was meant for her.

AR: It was meant for her (Laughs). But I was so upset about it, you can imagine (Laughs).

JF: (Laughs) Oh, my word.

AR: Anyhow...

JF: So you stayed there for eight years.

AR: Yes. And they wanted -- and I was only doing part time, one course a semester. And they wanted me to teach full time, and I said no. I didn't want to teach full time, because prior to going to Goucher, for twelve years I was doing volunteer art therapy at the State Hospital, Springfield State Hospital, with mentally disturbed people.

JF: Can you tell me about that and how you got involved in that?

AR: Well, there was an art organization to which I belonged, and someone from the hospital came to a meeting and said, “We would like somebody to volunteer to come out here and give some art experience to the patients.” And a good friend of mine and I volunteered. And we didn’t know anything about that either. So I got books out of the library to see about different ways of teaching novices, beginners. And it turns out that we could never really teach art out there. It was a matter of -- it was a therapeutic situation. So we devised our own system. We took a record player, and we played classical music as a background. And we used the kindergarten method of painting, large newsprint pads and long bristle brushes and poster paint that we put in muffin tins. And we knew that what we had to do was to get them to put some mark on the paper, not to teach them how to draw or how to do a landscape or how to do anything. And these were all very sick patients in a locked ward. And they were brought in as a group. And we sat around with their pads up and the music playing, and we would talk to them. And we would say, “Just go ahead and pick up the brush, and these are your colors, and just pick up a color that you like and put anything you want on the page.” I said, “We’re not trying to make you artists, we’re not trying to teach you anything, but we’d like to see what it is that you feel inside that you would like to express.” And for the most part, they weren’t difficult to get started. And we would have a session for one hour of painting followed by staff psychologist who would come in. And then we would sit around, like in a circle, and look at what they had done. And a lot of these patients were not verbal. But when they had a painting that they had done, they would ask to tell us about it. And little by little, it brought out what kinds of things. And some of them were pretty terrifying thoughts that they had, and others were more benign. But that lasted -- we did that for twelve years. And I always remember one patient in particular who was catatonic. She would come in and she would sit there very rigid and would never want to pick up the brush, but she enjoyed listening to the music. It took a long time, many weekly sessions before one day she picked up the brush and she started to move her arms around. And

it turns out that she had been a musician with a symphony orchestra. And this method of getting her to open up and listen to the music and begin to paint helped her to heal.

JF: Wow, wow.

AR: So that was a wonderful experience. But I learned a lot about self-expressiveness. And at that time I had read a book about Matisse, who started every day in his studio by drawing without a plan, just sitting down and drawing for an hour. And I thought, I'd like to do that. And so I began in my studio to start the day by just drawing, as we call it, "automatic drawing," without a plan, without -- nothing in front, not a still life or anything, just pick up the pen and start to draw. And that, plus the experience at Springfield, brought what was inside of me out to the fore. Prior to that, I was doing more conventional landscapes and a lot of architectural paintings and things of that sort, but nothing was expressing my inner feelings or myself. And little by little I began to do that. My whole method of being an artist changed as a result of those two experiences.

JF: How did it change?

AR: I started doing more autobiographical forms.

JF: Can you give me an example?

AR: Well, yeah, as a matter of fact, after my eight years of teaching at Goucher, I had been drawing a great deal, so this book was published. It was sponsored by Goucher.

JF: And it says, Amalie Rothschild Drawings.

AR: And these are the kinds of drawings that I'm -- what I'm talking about. And this was written by Lincoln Johnson, who was then the head of the department, the person that hired me. These are all -- now, this is called "Silver Wedding." It's very humorous.

JF: And it's much more abstract.

AR: Yes, absolutely. And if you look at the figures, they're torsos without tops and bottoms. But if you look closely you can see (Laughs)--

JF: You can see the difference.

AR: -- the difference, yes, and with that little thing sticking out.

JF: They're almost like cartoon figures.

AR: Exactly, at least they are. And then these are other things. These are all free-form drawings without a model, without planning anything.

JF: Now, these are all black and white.

AR: Yeah, there's some color in here, you'll see it.

JF: What was this done with? Is this pen and ink?

AR: This was done with a pen. And I have a wonderful bamboo pen which I used. And it gave me a very expressive line, sometimes thick and sometimes thin.

JF: And this is quite abstract.

AR: Yes. And these are very spontaneous, and they're not gone over, they're not erased, you don't do it over and over. You do it, it's either there or it's not. And mostly, you know, I would just do dozens and dozens and dozens, and many of them were thrown away. But every now and again it made sense.

JF: Lots of figures of people.

AR: Yeah, mostly male and female.

JF: Why is that?

AR: Well, I guess my life with Randy was my whole life, almost -- that and my children.

JF: Because you said you had been doing a lot of landscapes and--

AR: Before that.

JF: -- before that, and then the sudden change to people.

AR: Yeah.

JF: That's a big change.

AR: A big change.

JF: Well, here's a tree.

AR: Yeah, a tree.

JF: Called "Matriarch."

AR: "Matriarch." It seemed to me like a mature, overgrown tree (Laughs).

JF: So these are much more about relationships.

AR: Exactly, see, you've hit it, you really have.

JF: This is "Clan" and this--

AR: Yeah.

JF: Is that right -- no -- or am I seeing that wrong? No -- what is that?

AR: What's it called?

JF: C-i-o-n.

AR: C-i-o-n. It's an offspring, see, like coming up through a rock.

JF: "Cion," of course, yeah, yes.

AR: Yes, yeah.

JF: Okay, again about relationships.

AR: Yes, that's right.

JF: And "Symbiosis," the two, again, the male and the female figure.

AR: Yeah, and being connected, dependent on each other. And then this is "Oracle." We traveled to Greece. And a lot of what I saw there came out in my drawings. And this is -- the Oracle is who knows it all, and it's also a landscape. It's a figure, but it's an overall -- overreaching figure.

JF: Right. And the figure seems to be in the foreground, the landscape is in the background.

AR: Well, the whole thing is both.

JF: Oh, I see, yes, it is.

AR: See, like, this would be the head, and these would be the outstretched arms. And the garments are like Greek drapery.

JF: Right. And here's "Daphne." Is that another Greek inspiration?

AR: Yes. That was Daphne, who fled from somebody, and turned into a tree or something.

JF: A tree, right.

AR: So a lot of it is -- and what's this called?

JF: Let's see, "Genetic Cycle"--

AR: Yeah.

JF: And alter--

AR: See, it's a tree that's blooming, and then the seeds go off into the future, so it's the whole thing, the whole cycle of growth.

JF: And this is "Alternation," which is--

AR: Male, female, all the way around. You see, a lot of it is very hard to explain. It's something that comes out. And since mostly it's not planned ahead of time, you read it afterwards to discover what it was you were thinking. You learn from what you've done.

JF: The emphasis on relationships is very strong.

AR: Yes, uh-huh. "Three Graces." And a lot of it is related to Greek mythology.

JF: It's "Reflection," the figures reflecting one another.

AR: That's right, yeah.

JF: "Skeleton."

AR: And I used different kinds of markers, as well as the bamboo pen. I used a reed stick to make these so that the ink came off the side of it and made these big splashes. But it always ended up to look figurative.

JF: Even though it's abstract, they do look like figures.

AR: Yes, yes. You still identify them as figures.

JF: And this is color. These -- is this--

AR: Watercolor.

JF: Watercolors.

AR: Yeah. This is called “Martyr.”

JF: Now that looks like a cross.

AR: It is, it’s religious, isn’t it?

JF: Yeah.

AR: But it’s not religious in my eye. It was just because of that form, and that seemed be a proper title for it, without being specific.

JF: “Venus and Apollo,” and “Pan.”

AR: This is Pan, who played the pipes. And this is owned by a musician.

JF: That makes sense.

AR: Uh-huh.

JF: And the “Nike.”

AR: It’s related to the Winged Victory. And then there are ”Families,” “Quartet,” so on and so forth.

JF: Now, these are drawings. Was the majority of what you were doing during this period painting?

AR: Well, I did these drawings, and sometimes they became subjects for paintings. But they are complete as drawings for themselves alone. And there's one more color thing in here. Oh, and then a lot of -- we started to travel a good bit, and this was my impressions of Venice -- but this is all out of my head, you know, not sketching while I was there, just a memory.

JF: That's a kind of a landscape or a seascape.

AR: Yes, it is, uh-huh.

JF: And there's some more -- are these watercolors again?

AR: This was an oil painting.

JF: That's oil.

AR: And this is a collage.

JF: So how many different media were you working with?

AR: (Sighs) Overall, I have worked in -- well, the beginning was pen and ink for advertising, and then oil painting. And I'll show you some very early -- very conventional paintings, where I painted from a model or went out and did landscapes. That's how I started out. And then I used oil paints for many, many years, and then acrylic paints became available. And I don't know if you know anything about the difference or not.

JF: Relatively little, so it's appreciated if you explain it.

AR: Well, acrylic is water-based paint. And when you use it, it dries much faster. And it's also not messy, and the cleanup is easy, and it doesn't have any odor. But oil painting, you use turpentine and linseed oil, and it makes a big old mess, and it takes a long time to dry and it smells terrible. So I switched over to acrylics. And also, my

artwork became more geometric.

JF: Why do you think that was?

AR: Well, I think that I have a mechanical bent that's hereditary. And one of the questions by another interviewer some time ago asked me, "If you hadn't been an artist, what do you think you would like to have done?" And I said, "I think I might have been an architect." And when I would go outside to do painting, I frequently did paintings of buildings and stuff.

JF: And you also worked in watercolor, is that correct?

AR: Yes, watercolor.

JF: Now, you mentioned you were teaching at the Maryland Institute, and you were teaching--

AR: Not the Maryland Institute, Goucher College.

JF: Oh, at Goucher College. But previous -- prior to that, you were teaching at the school--

AR: This little school, it was called the Metropolitan School of Art. And it lasted about four or five years, because ultimately the Maryland Institute woke up. And they had a new director, and they came up to date. And right now, it's considered one of the four best art schools in the United States.

JF: Really?

AR: Yes.

JF: Wow.

AR: Very good.

JF: Wow, so--

AR: And recently, I was asked to come down and do a critique of the senior students. So I've come the full circle, from a student to going down to be a critic.

JF: Right. You were also exhibiting work during this period, right?

AR: Oh, yes, I've been exhibiting since -- well, let's see, I think the first time I exhibited was around 1938 or '9.

JF: Tell me how that started, because that's an artist's dream, right--

AR: Oh, yeah.

JF: -- to have your art seen?

AR: Well, the Baltimore Museum of Art, in those days, had an annual All Maryland Art Exhibit. And we could submit two or three works. And they had an outside jury from another -- you know, from out of town. And they selected the show. And the first time that I submitted, I got in.

JF: What were you working on at this point? Were these oil?

AR: Little oil landscapes, yes. I remember when I got the notice, jumping up and down there with Randy and saying, "Randy, I am an artist after all, you know" (Laughs).

JF: And that was in '38.

AR: Yeah, it was about 1938. I think it was. And then I was always interested in abstract art, but I never understood it. And I was doing all these landscape-type things. And then the Phillips Collection in Washington, which is very well-known, had an annual

Christmas sales exhibition for Baltimore and Washington artists. And I used to submit to that. And Mr. Duncan Phillips bought one of my works.

JF: Wow, that's very impressive.

AR: So, you know, things were beginning to open up and happen. And meanwhile, I still wanted to be an abstract artist.

JF: The work that you exhibited at the Phillips Collection at that time, was that again one of the more conventional landscapes?

AR: Yes, it was a little city scene called "Slum Clearance." And a very well-known abstract artist was teaching at the Phillips every winter for about a six-week course. And that's what I wanted to do. I wanted to go to Washington and study with Carl Knaths, was his name. I think it's C- Carl, and K-n-a-t-h-s. So meanwhile, we'd been married-- well, we were married in '36, and this was in the early '40s. And I never became pregnant. After we were married about three years, we wanted to start a family, but nothing ever happened. And I went and had the usual tests and so forth and so did Randy, and they never could find any reason why not. So I signed up to go to Washington to take Carl Knaths' course -- bingo (snaps fingers) I got pregnant!

JF: (Laughs) And this was what year?

AR: Well, I got pregnant -- Amalie was born in 1945, so this must have been 1944, whatever it was. And so the baby was due in June, and the course wasn't until like February or March, whatever it was. And I was going to be out like that. And my mother, of course, said, "You can't go on the train every day to Washington in your condition. You've just got to not go." I said, "After all these years this is what I wanted to do and now you tell me I shouldn't go." So I listened to Mom, and I guess Randy listened too, and I didn't go. So that was going to be my introduction into abstract art. So from then on I had to sweat it out myself and find out more about it and read about it. And little by

little it dawned upon me and it developed. And now I am an abstract artist. And don't ask me how it happened except through experience.

JF: You were self-taught.

AR: And I was self-taught, yes. And I've become successful in my way. I've exhibited away from Baltimore. I've exhibited in Washington and Philadelphia and a little bit in New York -- not much. And then I had a show in Tel-Aviv.

JF: Wow. When was that?

AR: That was in 1990, whatever it was.

JF: Could you tell me more about these? I mean, you started off as a local Baltimore artist, and then you expanded to Washington and Philadelphia and New York, Tel-Aviv. You're becoming an international figure.

AR: Well, in a small way, yes.

JF: (Laughs) How did that happen?

AR: Well, the Tel-Aviv thing was very fortunate. A member of the family who lived in Washington -- she was an in-law member of the family, not my own -- had lived in Israel for a couple of years. And she became very, very close to an artist, Rachel Shavit-- see, this is what's happening with my illness, when I want to think of something, I can't.

JF: Oh, I have that problem too, so I (Laughs)--

AR: So I have a couple of names I have to fill in when it hits me.

JF: That's fine.

AR: So when Rachel was visiting Joan Benesch in Washington, my relative, she talked a lot about me, and brought her over here to see my studio and see my work. And Rachel was the head of the Israeli Artists Association. She said, "How would you like to have a show in Israel?" And I said, "You know, twist my arm!" So it was arranged that I would have it, and that's how I happened to have it.

JF: Did you go?

AR: I went. And the embassy had a big opening, you know, a red, white and blue opening celebration. And I've had reviews in the Jerusalem Post, which was an English newspaper, and Maarev, I think it's called, M-a-a-r-e-v, which was the Hebrew publication. So for the Hebrew publication I had to have someone here translate it.

JF: That's lovely.

AR: And they were both very good reviews.

JF: That's lovely. Where did you exhibit in New York?

AR: I have been in group shows in New York, no single one-person shows. A drawing -- there was a drawing shop there, and then the organization that I belonged to in Baltimore had an exchange show with a gallery in New York, and I was in that, which was a group show. And you know, nothing spectacular, like I can't brag about anything wonderful, but I've had a little bit of experience in New York, not too much.

JF: And do you find that most of your sales come about from exhibitions or from people -- from word of mouth?

AR: Both. I have -- a good deal are here in Baltimore. One of the best galleries in Baltimore is handling my work. And I've had three solo exhibitions there, and they've sold quite well. And he also sells in between. And the most recent is that he sold three

major pieces to the new Marriott Harbor Hotel here in Baltimore, great big things.

JF: Oh, how lovely, lovely.

AR: Yeah, yeah. And he also sells to other corporate collections aside from individual collectors.

JF: And what gallery is this?

AR: It's called the Gomez Gallery, in Baltimore.

JF: Okay. Now, we've talked a lot about your drawing and your painting, but we're sitting here surrounded by sculpture. And that's a pretty big sea change.

AR: Yeah.

JF: I mean, not too many people do both. How did that come about?

AR: I always liked sculpture and started collecting a little bit from some local friends who were sculptors. And then the Baltimore Museum formerly had evening classes for adults, and one of them was sculpture. And I thought, well, here's my chance, I'll take that evening class. So I went there. And we were taught different techniques, modeling and carving and so on, which I took, I think, for two winters I went there and did that. But I was -- still at the time I was teaching at Goucher, and I had children at home. And except for the sculpture I did at that class, I never did any sculpture on my own. But eventually it took over. I was interested, and I started doing things also. I didn't want to do the conventional media that was taught to me there. I didn't want to be a modeler or a carver.

JF: Why not?

AR: (Sighs) Well, carving takes so long, and I was a little impatient. So I felt it was better for me to assemble things and see what I'm doing while I'm making it. And so I started doing assemblages. To begin with, it was all kinds of strange things. We can go back in the living room later.

JF: What did you assemble, found objects, or...

AR: Found objects. And also, being surrounded by woods here, I started assembling little pieces of bark and making them into funny little figures, and then they were cast in bronze.

JF: And I think you said you take them to a foundry?

AR: Yes, a very good foundry in Pennsylvania. I ended up with them because they did -- these things that I did here, it's a burn-out process, they're not multiples, they're unique castings, because the original piece that I made is encased in this stuff and put in the furnace, and it's burned out on the inside of the mold. And if it doesn't turn out, you've lost your original.

JF: Aha. And the original is made of wood?

AR: Yes. And so there was a foundry here that did some pieces okay, but then they lost a couple of them, and they were terrible. So I found this place in Pennsylvania. And when I went there they said, "Oh, we've never done that. Send us a little sample that we can experiment with." And I sent them a little piece I made just for that purpose. And they did a perfect job. And they said, "Well, now that we understand it, we're ready to do it." So I started taking my work there and they've never lost a single piece. And that's what you see all around you.

JF: And are all of these things -- I can see some of them are made out of wood.

AR: Only the black ones are bronzed, and the others are assembled out of whatever. The green one is bronzed too.

JF: What makes it green?

AR: Oh, it's call a patina, yeah, different acids that they use to put the finish on it.

JF: And the multicolored one, is that wood?

AR: Oh, that's wood, uh-huh.

JF: And then the hand, what is that?

AR: The hand -- I haven't done much modeling, but that--

[CD NUMBER ONE/TWO ENDS. CD NUMBER TWO/TWO BEGINS.]

JF: This is disc number two, interview with Amalie Rothschild. It's August 19th, 2001. We're in Baltimore, Maryland. And I'm Jean Freedman, recording for the Jewish Women's Archive's Weaving Women's Words project. Okay. So we were talking about your sculpture. And you mentioned that you wanted to tell about showing it in New York.

AR: Yes, yes. There's a New York Sculptors Guild, and I became a member of that. It didn't mean you had to live in New York. And they had various shows, usually in the SoHo area. And so I exhibited two or three times there, my sculpture. And as I said, I had a short forays into New York, but they never got much beyond that.

JF: Are you doing primarily sculpture? Did you abandon painting and take up sculpture, or did you continue with both?

AR: I didn't abandon it immediately, but I can say now that I have practically -- what I have stopped doing is large, stretched canvas paintings. I'm not doing those big acrylic paintings anymore. The catalog I gave you shows you quite a selection of those. But

now I'm primarily doing sculpture, but when I paint, I'm painting smaller things of ink and watercolors. And that's what I'm doing mostly.

JF: And the sculpture -- we were talking about the different media you're working in. There's wood, there's cast bronze. And I think you said the hand is terracotta.

AR: Yeah. I had an idea -- I guess I have to show you what I'm talking about.

JF: This is a sculpture. It's a hand with a face.

AR: Yeah.

JF: Since unfortunately they -- I'm only recording this and can't take a photograph of this.

AR: I'll bring this over (Inaudible).

JF: It's a hand with a face in front of--

AR: This was a shell from the beach. And I had it cast in bronze. And I had it around here a very, very long time. And I never could relate to it and I didn't know what to do with it. And one day I picked it up, and as I picked it up, the spiral of the shell seemed to fit right in my hand. And I thought, now I think I have an idea, and that is to show the relationship between the hand and the shell. So how to do a hand, I had a rubber glove and I stuffed it with terracotta. And as it firmed up a little bit, and I took the glove off, then I could just move the fingers a little bit the way I wanted them until it got hard. And then I got this crazy idea to put a face on the back -- don't ask me why or how, but I did.

JF: I like it.

AR: So then after it was all finished -- this is now firm. This is terracotta. And I painted it white, and I painted the bronze white so that the two sort of go together. And it has a title

which I can't remember now. It's a good thing I didn't have ten kids, because (Laughs) I'm having a hard time remembering the names of my artwork.

JF: Well, you have so many.

AR: I know.

JF: (Laughs) How could you possibly remember all of these?

AR: Well, actually, I know all of them very well, but right now things elude me.

JF: And I see other materials. You told me that lovely story about the piece with the tuning fork.

AR: Yeah.

JF: And could you tell that again for the -- for posterity?

AR: Well, Randy's whole life has been -- in addition to his career in life insurance, was music. He's been on the board of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and the board of the Peabody Conservatory, and for forty years he was the director of the Chamber Music Society of Baltimore, which was a presenting organization. So in a sense he was like entrepreneur presenter.

JF: Impresario.

AR: Impresario, yes, that's what I meant to say, like a concert manager for the Chamber Music Society. They brought renowned groups of chamber music to Baltimore. And the concerts were usually held at the Baltimore Museum. And they had always one concert which used the faculty members of the Peabody Conservatory. And he was involved with that, and he was passionate about that organization. He was their angel as well. And so music has always been a big thing in our house. And he has in the house --

which I didn't show you but I will -- a small, professional-quality recording studio.

JF: Wow.

AR: And what he's done, which has never been done by anybody else that we know of, he started recording world premiers of American composers' work, mostly broadcast from concerts at the Library of Congress. And he has years and years of these works, many of which were never commercially produced, so that the Peabody here hopes one day to have that whole collection, because it's unique.

JF: Yes.

AR: And he's been recognized nationally for what he's done for music, for contemporary music. The Chamber Music Society frequently -- Randy commissioned new works by American composers for the Chamber Music Society and for the Baltimore Symphony, which he's still doing.

JF: Wow.

AR: Every couple of years there's a new work that's premiered here that he commissioned.

JF: Does he play?

AR: He did play piano. He attended the Peabody until he finished high school, which was studying classical music. And then he went off to college and he started to play jazz. And he was a pianist for their dance bands, and that's what he did. And he never went back to classical music. So he played popular music for years and years and years. Today, unfortunately, I can hardly get him to the piano. And when he does he says, "Oh, it doesn't sound right." I don't remember anything. But he always could play. When he was courting me, my mother had a Steinway baby grand piano. And he would

come to the house and he would sit down. And he'd start to play just from memory every popular piece that we knew -- that he knew -- that we all knew. He knew everything! And he never repeated. He could go from one thing to another, and he just would sit there by the hour and play. And I think my mother fell many love with him at the same time (Laughs).

JF: (Laughs) That sounds like a very winning technique.

AR: Yeah.

JF: I think it would win me too. So could you describe this piece that you have done, where it spells out his name and--

AR: Oh, I had a piece -- I had a very heavy thick piece of maple, laminated maple, which is part of a piano construction, that was given to me by our piano tuner. And it had a strange shape. And I also got all the piano pegs from him, the ones that he had to replace, a box of them. I said, "Don't throw them away, give them to me." I just got the idea of using these pegs into that heavy maple, which is -- that's how they're put in tight, and when it's tuned it stays in place. So I thought of using these pegs somehow or other. And as I said, I don't know where ideas come from, they're spontaneous. I got the idea of spelling out his name with the piano pegs, and using -- I was going to use piano wire, but I couldn't get the right tension on it so that you could pluck it. So I simply used black nylon. And it's a visual thing. And it spells out his name. And there's a tuning fork in the middle, which is as a symbolic form, and it's a nice shape. And it's a tribute to Randy Rothschild.

JF: And a tribute to the very harmonious--

AR: Combination. I mean, music and art have been the two things going on mostly in this household. And the two daughters have become artists, mostly. The elder one is a filmmaker and photographer.

JF: And what is her name?

AR: Amalie--

JF: Her name is also Amalie.

AR: R. Rothschild, same name, same initial, but a different middle name. Her middle name is Randolph, Amalie Randolph Rothschild.

JF: That's lovely.

AR: And the second daughter is Adrien Randolph Rothschild. A-d-r-i-e-n R. Rothschild.

JF: And what does she do? Is she also an artist?

AR: Oh, Adrien is an award-winning designer and maker of quilts. She does every single stitch by hand. And she did that for quite a number of years, and she's in the collection of the White House, the craft collection of the White House. She won awards almost every place she exhibits in. And she's been written up in all the quilt magazines and one thing and another. And she was invited to do a Christmas ornament for the White House Christmas tree, and all that sort of thing. And that's what she was doing. And it's very demanding and tedious work. And she's really an athlete besides. So now she's not doing quilts. She's an organic farmer or gardener, whichever you want to put it. And she and her husband live on twenty acres in Pennsylvania. And they're doing organic produce farming. And they do it mostly for themselves and people they want to give it to, but if they have an overproduction, they send it to market for sale. And she's an avid bicycle rider. And I think one day she rode 100 miles in one day--

JF: Oh, my word!

AR: -- for some kind of a fundraising event.

JF: (Laughs) Oh, that makes me tired just to think of it.

AR: (Laughs) Yeah.

JF: You mentioned while the disc was off that you wanted to talk about your marriage, and what a harmonious and close relationship it's been.

AR: Yeah. Well, the fact that I've been supportive of his music and he's been supportive of my art, always wanted me to do whatever I wanted to do with it, and since it's not a very lucrative kind of occupation, except when you're doing commercial art, but fine artists, there are very few of them who are actually self-supporting on just staying in their studios and making art. They usually have to do other things. Well, I was so lucky that I didn't have to go to work to support my habit, as I put it (Laughs), because Randy could always take care of that. And when I outgrew the studio in the house and I knew I had to have more space, we wondered about what to do. A lot of the artists go into Baltimore and rent big spaces. But I never wanted to be away from home, because I was always home when my children were little. They came home and a mom was always home. And I would be an artist most of the time. When they were home on vacation, I said, "I'm not an artist now, I'm a mom." And so that's the way it went all those years. Then they grew up and went off to college. And we attended concerts, all the Baltimore symphony concerts, and we used to go to all the musical events and one thing and another. And now we've quieted down, we're not doing much.

JF: How long have you lived in this house?

AR: Fifty years.

JF: And the studio that we're sitting in right now, you said this was built twenty-five years ago?

AR: Yes. And what I wanted to tell you and forgot about was, the architect of our house, who was the architect for the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, after he met us, used to come while we were still in the planning stages. He said, “I would like you to design the Ark screen for the new Baltimore Hebrew Congregation.” And as I told you, my Jewish background was sparse, going to Sunday school and not caring much about it. He directed me about what I needed to know. He said, “You read Exodus 26, it’s about the building of the temple and the Ark of the Covenant and all that, that’s the whole point, because this will house the Torah, and you should get your inspiration from the original.” So I did that. I got out my Old Testament, and I started to read, and started to get ideas and make little sketches and so on. And he would come from New York and we would talk about it. And he told me the form that it would take, that it would be a big horizontal construction on the altar with sliding doors. There’d be four doors -- two in the middle would slide open, and inside you would see the Torahs. And there was quite an array of Torahs that BHC owned. And so I got an idea, the idea was like a symphony, which is in four movements. So I designed this in four sections. The two in the middle were the interior of the temple, and the side ones were the giving of the Ten Commandments, which were exterior, like landscape things. And so I called it -- I gave it a title called “Forty Years, the Wandering in the Desert.” And it’s all about the implements of the original Ark, and about the exterior, which was the giving of the Ten Commandments, and -- I don’t know, it’s full of symbolism.

JF: Is it still there?

AR: It’s still there.

JF: That’s wonderful. This is at Baltimore Hebrew.

AR: Uh-huh.

JF: Okay. I’ll have to take a look sometime.

AR: And it was published in a book by Peter Blake on, I think, synagogue architecture, I think.

JF: Okay. I'd like to ask you a few more questions about your family. When we were talking about Randy, I think the last time we were talking about his career, he was just about ready to take this crash course for the bar. I take it he passed.

AR: Oh, yes, he passed (Laughs). He passed.

JF: (Laughs) So then what did he do?

AR: Well, see, we got married that summer, and we lived at home at my mother's, where I lived. And then in the fall, we took an apartment.

JF: And where was that?

AR: In Baltimore, on Park Heights Avenue.

JF: Okay.

AR: Yeah.

JF: In the city.

AR: In the city. And we lived in that apartment for fourteen years. After we started having a family, that is when we started looking for land to build the house. And my mother was an amateur pianist, a very good one. She had perfect pitch, which is unusual.

JF: Oh, wow, yes.

AR: And when Randy would be playing, if he'd make a mistake, she'd , "F sharp" (Laughs).

JF: (Laughs) And Randy was working where?

AR: At the Sun Life Insurance Company of America, in the legal department. And he ended up being their general counsel until he retired.

JF: So he stayed there.

AR: Oh, he stayed there, yeah.

JF: His entire career?

AR: Uh-huh.

JF: Wow. That's unusual.

AR: Well, the family built the business, you see.

JF: I see, okay. So there was the family connection to it.

AR: Yes.

JF: Okay. And I would like to hear more about your daughters. You told me that you got pregnant the first time--

AR: After nine years.

JF: -- after nine years. And this was in 1944.

AR: 19 -- she was born in June 1945.

JF: 1945, so an end of the war baby.

AR: Yeah. And this is also amusing. His parents and my mother and Randy and I went to the movies, a neighborhood movie that night. And my water broke when I sat down in

the movie theater (Laughs). And she became a filmmaker. And she always (Laughs) said, “That’s why I became a filmmaker, I was almost born at the movies” (Laughs).

JF: (Laughs) How did she get -- I mean, outside of this amazing entrance into the world, practically in a cinema, do you think -- how did she get interested in filmmaking?

AR: Oh, well, she attended the Rhode Island School of Design after she graduated from Park School. Both the girls went to Park School. In fact, Randy graduated from Park School, but I could only afford one year. Anyhow, she knew she wanted to pursue art also. So she went to the Rhode Island School of Design, and she majored in graphic design and photography. And when she -- they had a seniors honors program in Italy, in Rome. They have a Rome studio. And as soon as she enrolled there, she said, “I’m going to get in that honors program.” And she was a pretty good student. And they had to study Italian if they were planning to apply for that, which she did. And she applied for it, and she got it, and she spent her senior year in Rome.

JF: How lovely.

AR: And that winter at Christmastime, Adrien and Randy and I went over to visit. And we took a nice trip during the holidays to Sicily and so forth. And then that summer she worked -- when she finished Rhode Island School of Design, she was home for the summer. And she got a job with a local filmmaking company, I think they did commercials. And she took to it (snaps fingers) just like that! And she learned how to use their editing outfit, which was very complicated, and she was just like natural. And they offered her a pretty good salary for a kid if she would stay on and not go back to school. But the NYU in New York had started their Institute of Film and TV. And she applied for it, to go after she finished Rhode Island School Honors Program. And she was accepted in that. And when this company here in Baltimore enticed her to stay, she said, “Mom, imagine me being employed at like 125 dollars a week or something!” And I said, ”Listen, if you don’t go to New York now, you’re going to miss the boat.” I said,

"You stay here and you'll be stuck in Baltimore, and you will be sorry you ever did such a thing. You have this opportunity, take it." So she listened to me and she went to New York. And she went to NYU and got her masters degree in filmmaking. And that's how she did it. And then she got a job there. The Fillmore East was the rock theater. And she got a job there, working, doing photography for the light show. I don't know if you ever went to a rock concert.

JF: I've been to a rock concert, yeah.

AR: Well, they had a big light show behind, up on the screen, you know. So that's how she got into that. And she just recently had published a book called Live at the Fillmore East, A Photographic Memoir. She worked there for about three years in the late 1960s, and she took 20,000 photographs of the famous rock stars, which included John Lennon and all these famous -- I don't know, Jimi Hendrix. I can't remember them, but all the -- Janis Joplin, all the big names of that era. And she kept these photographs all these years until finally -- all of these were baby boomer years -- they were all hitting fifty. And she thought, if I'm ever going to do anything with those photographs, this is the time to do it. She got an agent, and the agent got her a dealer in New York, a photographic gallery. And she had an exhibition there of some of these 20,000 pictures. And from that, someone picked it up to publish a book. And the book was published about a year or so ago, and it's been, really, a best-seller to the baby boomer crowd. And she now has -- she has an exhibition now in Washington at the Govinda Gallery, which is a photographic gallery.

JF: Is she still in New York?

AR: She lives in Rome now. She fell in love with Italy, and she said, "I'm going to live in Rome," and that's where she lives.

JF: Oh, my word!

AR: So she's back and forth between Rome and New York, and home (Laughs).

JF: Wow.

AR: And so she's been very successful with that period. For the first time in her life, she said, "I can call my career lucrative, I'm now making money. Before now I never made any money, but now I do." Oh, and she made -- while she was at NYU, each student -- group of students made a film. And her film -- her script was selected to be one of those made with a crew. And it won an award in the student category in Washington. I forget what it was. So that was her first film, and it won an award.

JF: That's quite impressive.

AR: And then she started making documentary films, that's what she made. And she made all together, I think maybe about eight. But filmmaking is about the most expensive art form. And she said it took her two and three years to raise enough funds to make a film, and then you can make it in six months. And she didn't want to spend her life as a businesswoman, she wanted to do art, and so on. So her last film was such a success, it was a documentary called Painting The Town. It was about an artist in New York who did trompe l'oeil painting on the sides of buildings. And that won first prize at the San Francisco Film Festival, and it won not only first prize in Fine Arts, but as a whole category, it won the first prize and it premiered at Sundance and showed at New Directors/New Films of the Film Society of Lincoln Center and MoMA. And that was actually the last film that she made. But now she's working with a video camera. And she's engaged to a man from Florence, Italy. And he is a graphic designer and a publisher of art books and a painter and architect.

JF: Oh, wow.

AR: And for the first time in her life she's met her so-called equal, and something in common.

JF: Lovely.

AR: And she was married very young when she was working at the Fillmore. She married a fellow that was working there. And that lasted about six and a half years, but that was not the right thing.

JF: Any children?

AR: And she had been single until now, and she's now engaged. So eventually they will be married after they settle their living arrangements, because they live in two different cities.

JF: Yes, at least, if she's in New York and Baltimore sometimes.

AR: Yeah, and his business is in Florence and hers is in Rome, so they see each other on weekends. And he's been here three times, and he's marvelous. He's absolutely sensitive and kind and good and wonderful, serves her breakfast in bed (Laughs).

JF: Oh, lovely, lovely.

AR: Yeah.

JF: And the younger daughter, when was she born?

AR: The younger daughter was born in 1949.

JF: And tell me about her.

AR: Well, she's had quite a life. She could never decide what she wanted to do. When she finished high school, she went to the University of Chicago. I knew she was an artist from the start, because she used to do things at home, and I recognized that here was a very gifted kid. But she felt that I was an artist and her sister was an artist, and she said, "I'm going to be the intellectual" (Laughs). So she went to the University of Chicago.

She lasted there one year. She said as a freshman she wasn't even allowed to take any art courses. But when she -- she didn't finish school in Baltimore. She was having all kinds of emotional problems. So her last two years were not at Park School. She went away to boarding school. And as soon as she went away to boarding school she started doing artwork. As soon as she got out of this environment. But then she still decided, no, she would go to the University of Chicago. And after being there one year, she said she missed art very much, so she transferred to (Sighs) an art school in New York. What was it? Oh, no.

JF: Let's see, Parson's, Pratt?

AR: No -- I don't know. But she only lasted there -- oh, no, she transferred to the Rhode Island School of Design, where her sister had gone. And she only lasted there about one term, and Christmas came, and she left without even taking the exam. And it turns out that winters were very hard on her. And ultimately, later, it was discovered that she suffered from winter depression, which is called SAD, Seasonal Affective Disorder. And I hate to tell you all this, because this is so much. I won't--

JF: Just tell me what you want.

AR: Well, when she came home from Rhode Island School without taking the exam, she was going to be here in Baltimore. And all of her friends were away. And we were at Evergreen House, a part of Hopkins, and we met, through somebody we knew, a young man who was just passing through. This was thirty years ago. He had bangs and hair down to here, and he looked like pictures of Jesus. And he said he was a musician. So we said, "Well, our daughter is coming home from art school, how would you like to come out and meet her?" "Oh, I'd love it," he said. So he came out here, and he stayed until 2:00 a.m. And the next morning at breakfast she says, "I'm in love." Anyhow, he was all screwed up, he really was. And he was on his way to Maine in a car -- his parents had moved to Florida. They were college professors. And he was on his way to Maine in this

car that his parents gave him, leaving Florida and going to Maine without antifreeze. So he got the car up there and it froze up, and it was a total loss. Meanwhile, Adrien said, "I'm going up to Maine to be with Chuck." So we were beside ourselves. She was then nineteen years old. Anyhow, sure enough, she went up to Maine. And they stayed up there for a while, a few months. And they came back to Baltimore and said they wanted to shack up in Baltimore. And I said, "Look, we're a Baltimore family, we have reputations, we have family, we have friends. You can't do that. If you're really in love, then you might as well get married." "Oh, okay, we don't care" (Laughs). So he wasn't even twenty-one yet. He had to get permission from his mother who was still in Florida. His father had died in Florida and he never even went back. He was impossible. Anyhow, Rabbi Lieberman married them here in our living room. And we did the right thing, got an apartment for them. And he got a job with a used bookstore. And I don't want to go through the ins and the outs of that marriage. They were married for four years, and she finally said, "We're going to split." And I thought to myself, thank God, I was wondering how long it was going to last. And they were divorced. I was so thrilled that she was divorced. Meanwhile, she had not finished college. She'd had a job when they were first married, she worked in a photography shop here in town because she was a very good photographer. And then she decided to go back to college. So meanwhile, she went to Rhode Island -- what did I say? She went the University of Chicago, she went to Rhode Island School of Design, she went to Bennington, she went to Towson University, and finally, she ended up at Hopkins. At the age of twenty-nine she got a degree with honors in biology. Meanwhile, she had other lovers in between. She married two other times. She's now married to her fourth husband, and they're doing this organic gardening, and I think they're happy. And he's a wonderful, wonderful fellow.

JF: Do you have any grandchildren?

AR: No grandchildren, which is a disappointment.

JF: But the girls are both happy now?

AR: I think they're both happy at last! At last! I said, "I guess I can close my eyes now and I think the two of you seemed to be settled." Because up until this -- I was beside myself, that here these two girls were like dangling and wandering from this to that and the other thing. And I call them moral girls, even though in this day and age they've had one lover after another. But we accepted whoever they brought home. Bring them home. If you're going to be with them there, you can be with them here. We never wanted to drive them away. And I knew that if we objected and caused trouble they would leave us, and they never did. And we're very, very close.

JF: That's important.

AR: So I don't know what kind of a Jewish family that is.

JF: (Laughs) Well, one of the things that is impressive, and it certainly is a big topic now with a lot of women, is how to combine career and family. And you have combined a very successful career with being a very involved parent. And I was wondering, how did you do it?

AR: Well, I think I was lucky because with what I was doing I could do it right here, inasmuch as we built this studio so I could be at home. I never had to be someplace else. So that's how I did it.

JF: Okay.

AR: I guess that's easy to explain, but it's not easy for most artists who can't do that.

JF: It might be easy to explain, but I doubt it was easy to do.

AR: No, it wasn't. I used to suffer from psychosomatic problems, and I'd get shortness of breath. And my mother and Randy thought I had asthma. I said, "I don't have

anything wrong with me except frustration." "Well, you go to the doctor and you find out." The doctor was very wise. We were living in the apartment there, and I had a studio in the neighborhood. And Amalie was a baby. And I'd get so out of breath in the morning because I couldn't get to the studio. And the doctor said – oh, and I would eat lunch at home and then go. And my lunch would get stuck. I couldn't swallow. He said, "Why don't you take your lunch with you to the studio and eat it when you get there, and see if that doesn't help." So that did it. I had help at home, so she would take a nap in the afternoon and I would go off to the studio. And so that was the main thing at that time. Andy had already -- Andy is Amalie -- she had already started in nursery school or whatever it was. And so I had to cope with the little one at home which was driving me crazy.

JF: (Laughs) It's a lot of work.

AR: But eventually it all smoothed out.

JF: Okay. Well, I'd like to go from the very personal to the very impersonal, if you will. You have lived through some amazing times, through the Depression, World War II, the McCarthy era, the '60s. And I was wondering if you'd care to comment on how these national and international events affected you.

AR: Well, during World War II, I knew that I wanted to do something useful. So I took a Red Cross nurses' aid course, and I went to work at Sinai Hospital, the old Sinai Hospital, and was a nurses' aid, a volunteer. It was just once a week, but I did it for a number of years, until I became pregnant.

And at that time I was also volunteering at Levindale, the Hebrew home. And I was getting nauseated just doing what I was doing there. And I said, "Ooh, you know, I think I have to quit." And I didn't want to quit, but I felt I had to, so I stopped doing it at that time. And so that was my contribution. And Randy was drafted, because we had no

children -- I can't say he was drafted -- he was called up to the draft board. But he was suffering from allergies that were -- that he would sneeze incessantly, like for fifteen minutes, one after another. And they decided that that allergy was too serious for him to get in the army. So he was put on, what is it, 1-F, or whatever it was -- yeah. So he was not drafted. So then he went to work at Sinai Hospital. And he went and he made the solutions. In those days, they made in the hospital the glucose and saline solutions in a laboratory there. Nowadays they come in packets all ready from some manufacturer. They don't make them in the hospital. But then they did. And he went there every week, and he made them. He was in charge of that laboratory where they made the solutions. And so he did his share that way, and I did mine as a nurses' aid. So that's how we got through the war years. And there was gas rationing, so we bought bicycles, and we started using bikes and taking little trips by bicycle instead of by car. And we were pretty much untouched personally by the war. We didn't have any family that was lost. He had two older brothers who were both in World War I. But when World War II came, this is what happened. So I'd say we were, you know, just plain blessed. And of course, there was the Holocaust. Now, Randy's parents were both born in Germany. And they still had family in Germany. And Randy used to go very often in the summer, abroad. He'd been to Europe many times because of family connections. I had never been. And when the Holocaust came along, little by little, his family started to bring relatives out of Germany, and giving affidavits for visas. And all together, between his parents and his two brothers and himself, they brought 100 people out of Germany.

JF: Wow. So they didn't lose any family in Germany?

AR: I think there probably were losses, not close family that I can remember. Randy's mother's brother was one family they brought, Uncle Felix, and then there were cousins. Henry Eisner, who's a good friend of ours today, he actually was in a concentration camp along with his father, but it was just toward the end before -- what do you call it? Not emancipation, whatever it was.

JF: Liberation?

AR: Liberation, thank you, yes. And then there were other relatives that -- they got as far as Cuba. And we saw them in Cuba. And others went to South Africa. And we met them, they came over to visit once from Africa. And so it went. And Randy's aunt, his mother's sister, came over to visit, but that was earlier. She came to visit, and when World War I broke out, she was stuck here. She couldn't go back. So she lived here in Baltimore when Randy was young, with his mother for a long time. So Randy was fluent in German.

JF: Okay. How about other national, international events? Were you involved in any of the turmoils of the '60s or anything like that?

AR: No, I was teaching at Goucher during that time. But I tried to bring into the class some of the lingo that was going on at the time, and Marshall McLuhan, and the medium is the message, and all that kind of stuff. I didn't know too much about it all, but I didn't want to be out of it completely, so I tried to be a modern teacher and keep up with what the students knew. But the artwork did not reflect that, world affairs.

JF: Okay. Well, we've sort of gotten onto the topic of change, and that's one of the things that I like asking people, especially people who have lived in Baltimore all their lives, is how things here changed?

AR: Well, I guess we haven't talked about the neighborhoods.

JF: Yes, that's right.

AR: Well, along with not being able to go to Meadowbrook swimming pool, Roland Park, which was one of the earliest suburban -- urban, actually, neighborhoods which was restricted -- no Jews, no blacks, no something else -- no dogs, (Laughs) I don't know. So that we grew up knowing that we would never live in Roland Park. And it was just

something we accepted until the 1965 law in Congress, it was the Public Accommodations Law. As a matter of fact, I remember distinctly, there was a restaurant out in Towson area, and as soon as that Public Accommodations Law was passed, they became a private club. And we were invited to join this private dining club. And as soon as I got that invitation, I sent a contribution to the NAACP (Laughs).

JF: (Laughs) Good for you.

AR: And I have always supported the -- what is it -- the United Negro College Fund, Southern Law Poverty--

JF: Southern Poverty Law Center.

AR: -- Law Center, and all sorts of integrated activities. I've always been a supporter of it.

JF: Well, that must have been a huge change to see in Baltimore. Because when you were growing up, it was a very segregated city, wasn't it?

AR: Yeah. It's no longer like that, and now Jewish families live in Roland Park and wherever they want to live -- Guilford. Those were the elegant communities. And they're still elegant, and the Jews haven't spoiled them (Laughs).

JF: (Laughs) Imagine that.

AR: But now Park Heights Avenue has changed considerably from when we lived there. Now it's practically all Chasidic.

JF: Really?

AR: And every Saturday you go there and you see them with their tallises and their curls and these big fur hats, just like you see in Israel, walking up and down Park Heights

Avenue. And there are -- like a dozen small synagogues have sprouted up in that area, as well as nearby in Mount Washington.

JF: Well, that's interesting.

AR: And I think Baltimore is considered one of the largest areas of Chasidic Jews.

JF: That is interesting.

AR: I can't give you the specifics, but I think you'll find -- do you know -- what do you call that periphery that they put a wire around?

JF: Oh, yes. I know what you're talking about, but I don't know (Laughs) what it's called.

AR: Oh, that's something else that eludes me. But that's been established here. And so all of these people live within that range, which allows them to do certain things on the Sabbath that they couldn't do if they didn't live in that space -- I don't know, I forget what it is. Know it, but I don't know it. And it's not far from here.

JF: Interesting, interesting. How has being a woman changed? Or how have things for women changed in your lifetime?

AR: Well, you know, I've been asked that question as an artist, "How does it feel to be a woman artist? Have you felt discriminated against?" And I say, "Well, not that I'm aware of." I've been lucky, my art has prospered, and when I've applied to galleries I've frequently been accepted. And I've been on every committee imaginable, on Baltimore Art Committee. And I was on the board of the Baltimore Museum of Art, and on their acquisitions committee, and was on the artists committee, and was the president of the Artists Union, and always was a leader in all these various things when I was younger. And finally I got to the point of where I wasn't having enough time to do my own work, I was always on the telephone. And I started to say no to everything. And after a while I

became isolated, and I said, ”Oh, this won’t do either.” So then gradually I started saying yes again. I try to reach a happy medium of being involved in the city. And I was on the committee to select the art for around the harbor, the Inner-City Sculpture Committee, and all that sort of thing. And I’ve done that right along.

JF: How about now?

AR: Well, now I’m on the board of the Maryland Institute. And I try to keep that connection, and I go as often as I can to their meetings. And I’m on their academic affairs committee. This past year I haven’t been to all the meetings, and I hope to regain enough strength to get back and keep that contact, because I want to stay on top, and I want to know what’s going on, and I don’t want to be forgotten. And that can happen if you keep saying no, they’ll say, ”Ha, don’t bother to ask her.” I still want to be asked (Laughs) if I can refuse.

JF: I understand that, yes. We talked a lot about your career at teaching and the different media you’ve worked in. And we sort of left out the chronology around 1970.

AR: Around?

JF: 1970.

AR: ‘70.

JF: Or ‘68, when you stopped teaching at Goucher.

AR: Uh-huh.

JF: And so since then you’ve been primarily working on--

AR: On sculpture. And I did a lot of -- in the ‘70s, I did a lot of work with aluminum -- scrap aluminum and Plexiglas. I would haunt the scrap yards on the periphery of

Baltimore. And I knew a couple of people who owned those things. And one in particular, at a dinner party, said, ”Well, come on over and pick out whatever you want.” So I’d go over there and I’d pick up scraps and stuff. And he said, “The only thing I want is that you make me something with some of this stuff.” So I made him a sculpture, and so forth. And an example of that sort of thing is visible here. You see that red thing over there that’s -- you have to get up. Wait a minute. Can you come this far?

JF: Yeah.

AR: This is--

JF: Oh, yes.

AR: -- made out of aluminum. It’s scrap. I got it ten long -- they’re ten feet long, and I got those from the scrap yard. And out of that I made not only that, but up here is a photograph of a piece that I did that was installed at the Baltimore Museum in their courtyard in 1976, which was the 200th anniversary of the United States, and I call it “Happy Birthday Uncle Sam.” And it’s in the form of a clover leaf, made out of--

JF: It looks like sort of a gift ribbon.

AR: Like a gift ribbon, yeah. And that was made out of that scrap metal. And that’s the kind of thing I will do. And then this is another thing. But most of them are in the house, made out of Plexiglas and aluminum. And those were mostly three-dimensional solid pieces. And then I started to develop -- see those flat things hanging up?

JF: Yes, that looks like -- is that stained glass?

AR: Yeah, it’s Plexiglas. And then there’s one here, and I have others in the other room, and I have one in the living room which you may or may not have noticed, but I’ll point it out to you later. And one of those is in the Jewish Museum here in Baltimore. And it’s

called “Moses,” I think. It’s stripes of different colors -- I should call it “Joseph,” different colors -- but it’s in five strips, like the five books of Moses. And I have several other things. I have done artwork with Jewish content, and that’s part of it.

JF: Okay. And some things over here have gold leaf on them, right?

AR: Yeah.

JF: How do you do that?

AR: Well, it’s a an old Renaissance technique. I don’t do it in the official way, which is very complicated. But that’s put on. It comes in leaf form, and it’s very thin, and if you blow it, it will fluff off into the air. You use a varnish to coat the surface that you’re going to put it on. And you have to let it get dry, just so it’s just sticky. And just before it gets dry, you can apply the leaf. And then when the leaf and that gets completely dry, you go over it with a very, very soft brush, and the leaf just clings to it, and there it is.

JF: Okay.

AR: And after working with the Plexiglas and aluminum, I started using this, which is called particle board. It’s a very inexpensive, very common building material.

JF: Is it like plywood?

AR: Yes. And I started making these forms out of that and combining it in gold leaf. Which is sort of a paradox, this cheap, cheesy stuff, combined with the elegance of gold leaf. But I loved the way it looked, the two things together. And I did a whole series of those things. Some are in the other room, and they’re all over the place. And I worked with that for several years, so that was another medium.

JF: And I noticed the Star of David hanging over on the wall.

AR: Yeah. When Israel and -- what's his name, the -- Israel and Egypt shook hands, whatever his name was, I can't -- it begins with an A--

JF: Sadat.

AR: Sadat, okay. I had the idea of doing a Star of David with wings, like a peace symbol. And actually, I have it in the other room. It's a sculpture. And when you get disconnected, I can show you different things. And that was just -- that's made out of cardboard.

JF: Oh, really? I thought that was wood. Okay.

AR: No, that was just cardboard. It was sort of a model for the piece I was going to make.

JF: Okay. Well, we have talked a lot about the past. To bring us up to the present, you're still working, correct?

AR: Well, the present (Laughs) is a blank. Since last August I have done nothing new. And I'm still hoping to regain my health and get back in here and continue.

JF: You're currently battling cancer.

AR: Yes.

JF: And you look to me, great.

AR: (Laughs) Well, I went through six months of chemotherapy, and we thought everything was gone. And later, with further tests, it turns out that everything indeed was not gone. And so the last chemotherapy was last April. And I don't know why it's taken this long, but I've just started on a new kind of chemo, which is by mouth, oral. I've been taking these great big huge tablets. Today is my last dose of this stuff, and then I'll be off

of it for a week, and then I will see my doctor. And I think the next step is to add to that thalidomide, which you may have been recently reading about.

JF: Uh-huh.

AR: And so that will come after next week. And that will be another three weeks. So it's supposedly a six-week treatment.

JF: And that hopefully will get it all.

AR: Hopefully it will get it all. And so far I've been able to tolerate the first half of it, because they weren't sure how I'd take to it, but I've been lucky. The only side effects is that I'm terribly exhausted, I'm sleeping half the day. But I haven't had any of the undesirable side effects such as nausea and diarrhea, and whatever. So I've been lucky. And I still have a decent appetite. And the main thing the doctor said is to go ahead and gain weight, don't lose any weight. So I've been able to maintain my weight. My weight is now the same as it's been practically all my adult life. And I'm trying to eat hearty food and our daughter's organic vegetables and stuff, and ice cream before I go to bed (Laughs).

JF: Me too (Laughs).

AR: And finally I've been on an antidepressant for the first time ever. I was not really feeling great a few weeks back, and we decided to go on this. And I think I feel a lot better since I've been taking it. And I'm trying to keep up my -- well, through the six months of former -- I was not depressed at all. And I was always optimistic and felt there was a light at the end of the tunnel, and I'd just get out of there and start right back to where I was. I've been going to a fitness center for five years, and I was in such good shape, my arms and my legs and everything, well coordinated. And then shhhp! (claps hands), this happened. So my mental attitude now is better than it was a few weeks ago. And with this new stuff, I'm just, you know, going to go forward, I hope.

JF: Well, you have a formidable opponent, but you're going to win.

AR: I think I will, I think I will. Everybody doesn't, but I think I will. (Sighs) As I say, I'm not ready. I've got other things to do yet.

JF: You have a great deal to live for. And your husband is ninety-two, is that correct?

AR: Yeah. Unfortunately, he has had Parkinson's for sixteen or seventeen years. And now it has caused a certain amount of dementia, so he's not exactly a partner -- a mental partner anymore. And that's the hardest thing to live with. Physically, we could handle it all these years, but now this part is difficult. And so during the week he goes to a senior program, five days a week, because whereas he had all of his marvelous hobbies at home with his music and mineral collection -- mineral -- he works with microscopic minerals. He has several microscopes. And after he retired he was so happy because he could do all he wanted to do with the music and the minerals. He's a collector of stamps and coins. And he was always busy.

But now he can't cope with all these things. And so he's around the house like he doesn't know what to do with himself. So he's out five days where there's a program of activities. And thank goodness he's out of the house, because it's bad for him and it's bad for me when he's home.

JF: Right. Okay. Well, I've sort of gone through all of the questions I had in mind. So I wanted to ask you, is there anything that I didn't ask that I should have asked? Is there anything else that you'd like to share?

AR: I don't know. Every time I got an idea that popped up, I would remind you that I wanted to talk about that. But I think we touched on those too, didn't we?

JF: I think we did, yes.

AR: Yeah. And I know that I'm very good with tools, and that's hereditary through my father, because he was always interested in all kinds of, you know, mechanical things and new ideas. And I think that's where that comes from. And so the sculpture requires the use of all kinds of power tools.

JF: You showed me the saws and--

AR: Yeah. People would ask me, "How did you learn how to do that?" And I said, "Every machine comes with an instruction book" (Laughs).

JF: (Laughs) So you're self-taught, basically.

AR: Yeah.

JF: Okay. Anything else that you would like to share?

AR: Well, that we've done wonderful traveling.

JF: Would you like to talk about that?

AR: Mostly to the Mediterranean countries, and seeing ancient ruins. And since I didn't have any background in fine arts, a lot of it came after we started to travel, art history. And so I read a lot and I have every book you can think of, and quite an extensive library. And I'm in Who's Who in America and Who's Who in American Art. And so in a way I've made it, in a small way, I've made it, mostly on the local level.

JF: Well, you have a career doing something you love.

AR: Yeah.

JF: That sounds like success.

AR: I do.

JF: Okay.

AR: I can't think of anything. Of course, after you leave, I'll think of something. But--

JF: That's okay. I've got a telephone (Laughs).

AR: But I think we've covered quite a lot.

JF: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

AR: And I guess the only thing I don't want you to talk too much about is--

[END OF INTERVIEW]