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Interviewee: Fay Laro Alfred
(b. 5/7/15, Shedlische [alternate spelling, Siedice], Poland
d. November 19, 2003, Flint Michigan)

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Begin Tape 2, Side A

DR: This is a follow-up interview, a second interview with Mrs. Fay Laro Alfred, who lives in Michigan, but is in Charleston for the interview. We are at the College in the Audubon Room. Marlene, do you want to start just by asking some questions to pick up some of the details we missed the first time?

MA: Okay. Mother, I just wanted to put some dates and years on a few things so there may be some repetition. You were married in 1934 to Daddy.

FA: In August.

MA: In August, 1934. Stan was born in 1935. When Daddy graduated from dental school, you and Daddy lived in Detroit for two or three years.

FA: It wasn't that long. We were there about a year. I wasn't staying in Detroit.

MA: And then you and Daddy moved to Flint. Stan must have been a baby in Detroit.

FA: Stanley was born in Flint actually, but we went back to Detroit and Stanley was maybe nine months old when we left Detroit and went back to Flint.

MA: And then you bought the house on Lincoln Road? Lincoln?

FA: Well, actually I lived with my mother for a while.

MA: Oh, and then you found a house.

FA: And she found a housekeeper for me. You know, I wanted to get into this because this was interesting. I was very happy right there because I had someone taking care of the baby and I didn't have any problems. So one day a real estate man that mother knew real well, she said to him, "Mr. Wells, would you happen to have a house available?" He said, "Mrs. Laro, I have nothing for you." She said, "It's not for me. It's for my daughter." She was telling me to leave. It was time that I was on my own. I loved that. So then we moved to a little house on Mallery Street. My friends, whose husbands were in the service too, all lived around there, you know. That's all everybody could afford, but we didn't live there very long. Then we bought our house on Lincoln and then we had plenty of room and had a decorator come in and do it, the whole bit.

MA: You lived on Lincoln until Daddy went in the service?

FA: That's right.

MA: Which was 1943?

FA: Right.

MA: You sold your house.

FA: Yeah, sold my house and tried to sell all my furniture, but people just bought what was cheap.

MA: So, your good things you put in storage or Bebe's house?

FA: I was stuck with all my lovely things and I spread it out in the office. I put some in Clem's office—Clem was my husband—and some in my mother's house and some at the beach, at the cottage.

MA: At the cottage on Lobdell Lake?

FA: Right, at her cottage on Lobdell Lake, and I lived at my mother's again.

MA: Now Daddy built his office when you moved to Flint.

FA: That's right—he was in the throes of building it.

MA: So about 1935 or '36 he built the office.

FA: Um-hum.

MA: On Corunna Road, and he was there for sixty-five years?

FA: Well, he practiced there for—

MA: In that location, 2932 Corunna Road?

FA: Right. He built the first dental office or first office that—

MA: Clinic.

FA: Little clinic that was for professionals, either medical doctor—which we had a medical doctor and he was a dentist in that office—and that was the first [of] that kind of office because prior to that most of the professional people were either above a store or in a building or something like that. It was the first one that was just that.

MA: And he had a doctor in there and [a] hygienist?

FA: He had a doctor in there.

MA: That was Dr. Searle? Was he the doctor?

FA: No, Born.

MA: Dr. Born was in there first. Then you went in the service in 1943, Daddy went into the navy and he went to Great Lakes, Illinois, for his training and we all went with him. It was for a year.

FA: Actually, we didn't all go with him. You and Stanley stayed with my mother and I went with him. We found a house and then we went and brought you up there.

MA: So, we were in Great Lakes, Lake Forest, Illinois.

FA: I think one of the interesting things that happened with children in the service, they were taken all over, you know, to various places and they didn't know anybody because they were strangers and they [were] constantly being moved with their father who was moving. At that

time it was in November—it was Stan’s birthday—and we were walking down the street and looking and just window-shopping. Some man stopped and said, “My, you have beautiful hair!” to you. It was shiny and dark and natural and gorgeous.

MA: Natural?

FA: It’s true. And he said, “My, you have beautiful hair!” and you said to him, “And my mother’s is bleached.” Somebody asked you. And then another thing you told that man, “My brother’s birthday is coming up and we don’t know anybody to invite,” which was typical of children that were being taken around, you know, from base to base to base. Well anyway, we loved Lake Forest, but we didn’t stay there very long and then he was transferred to Camp Wallace in Texas.

MA: And we lived in Dickinson?

FA: We lived in Dickinson, which was twelve miles from Texas City where they had the big oil refineries. We lived on—we had a very nice place—we lived in a house that an entomologist had lived in before, so we didn’t have any bugs, I was told. But every night when we would come home, the big cockroaches—I don’t know what they called them—were lined up at the door. It was very frightening, but Clem told me that they didn’t go up, they just stayed low. So, when he had watch and he would be gone at night, the three of us would crawl into bed, and I mean you, Stanley, and I—and I was afraid of the bugs. I wasn’t going to step down and my God, they do go up.

MA: What did Daddy know?

FA: As I’ve said to him before, “What do *you* know?” Well anyway, that was that. It was a nice stay excepting the weather was very, very hot when we were there. It really got to me, but you and Stanley were doing fine. The neighbors were very nice to us, particularly one neighbor.

MA: Wasn’t there a monastery with a cross?

FA: Across from us was a beautiful—it was the home of a bishop. His offices were in Galveston, but that’s where he would come to stay and it was really lovely. He had peacocks out there and the whole bit.

MA: From Texas then Daddy was transferred to San Francisco.

FA: Yes.

MA: He drove back and we flew—

FA: Yes, I told him I wasn’t following him to any more army camps.

MA: Navy.

FA: Navy camps. So we drove back to Michigan and he went on to San Francisco, but he wasn't there very long when he called and said, "It is just beautiful out here and I'd like you and the children to come." So I decided that we would drive out there, but he didn't want me driving out there alone so he had me ask his mother and father, who went to California every year for the winter, to drive with us. Now, his father wasn't driving and he also couldn't hear too well and his mother sat in the back seat of the car with you and Stanley.

MA: Didn't you have problems with tires and—?

FA: —sat in the back seat constantly feeding you, both of you, that's what kept both of you happy.

MA: But didn't you have blowouts and have a hard time finding tires during the war?

FA: I was driving and his father insisted on sitting in the front and, of course, he couldn't hear and then we didn't have the radio connection like you do now. You'd go through mountains and there would be no radio or something like that. I had never seen mountains and I'm driving through these mountain passes and scared to death. We were on the road for eight days, but one place we had to stop because I made you eat oatmeal that morning and you didn't want to and you threw it up in the car. So, I tried to find a place to stop and finally stopped at some farmhouse—these were incidents that happened to a lot of navy wives traveling across country with children—and I wanted to ask her if I could bring you in and clean you up and she thought you might have some rare disease and she didn't want me to do that. Anyway, we got over that hump. Then near Oklahoma City, I had a flat tire. So somebody called and someone came out and changed to the spare, but then I didn't have a spare tire anymore. So I had to go to the office of—they had—what was that called? Well, anyway the army and navy—

MA: Food stamps and things?

FA: They already had [a] food ration office in Oklahoma City and I left you and Stan and the grandparents in the car and I went up there. They said they couldn't do anything about it and I said to them, "I'm sitting in this office until you close or you won't be able to close and I'm not leaving until I get authorization to get a tire." So I would have a spare tire. Finally, around three o'clock, she got desperate because they were ready to close pretty soon and she said to me, "Well, we'll give you a tire that is recapped, different surface." I said to her, no way that I was an officer's wife and I was on the way to the coast and I had two small children and two elderly people and I had to have a regular tire. So at four o'clock—I was there all day—at four o'clock—in the meantime I was worried because you were all in the car. Fortunately, Grandma had made all these cookies and stuff and you were all eating.

MA: We still had cookies from home, from Michigan?

FA: Yeah.

MA: I must have been quite fat when we finally got there.

FA: Well, anyway she [Grandma] kept you healthy, I can tell you that. She [the clerk] finally issued a paper that would give me a brand new tire and then I said to her, "And find a place where the tire is." You know I'm not about to go looking in a strange city. So she called somebody and they had the size and the tire and she told them that I was coming there and so that night we finally got the tire on and we were off again the next day. Now that must have been like the sixth day on the road. I can't remember exactly because I said to my father-in-law, "I'm going to put the four of you all on the train and you take the rest of the trip by train and I'll drive up by myself." I didn't think I would ever make it, so I didn't want to jeopardize everybody's life. "So I want to put y'all on a train and send you to Clem." Well, he wouldn't hear of it, so I had to continue driving. Every night at four o'clock I would stop and find a place to stay and it had to have nice bathrooms. You were very fussy about that. You had to check out the bathroom. Then we would go in and eat and then I would wash your clothes that you had on so the next morning you'd have nice clean clothes again. In those days, you didn't travel in blue jeans and things like that. Everybody was dressed up everyday, every morning, so that you always looked nice when we stopped and had to find a room. Interesting, wasn't it?

DR: That is interesting. Why didn't you think that you were going to make it?

FA: Because I was tired. It's twenty-six hundred miles to where we went and I was exhausted and worried. The night before we were to arrive in San Francisco—you know, the next day I was going to be in San Francisco and meet him at the St. Francis Hotel—I said to him [Clem], "Boy, I'll sure be glad to get there because it's been a long trip." He said he got his orders to ship out. But he had gone out and he was able to rent a duplex, not a duplex, yeah it was. It was an up-and-down townhouse in the Park Merced area. I guess it was called Park Merced, this whole conglomerate. He told me he bought Monterey furniture—I didn't know what that was—and furnished the whole place for five hundred dollars. He was lucky to find a place and only because he was in the medical end of the thing he was able to find a place and also get a telephone, which no one could have. He had bought furniture so we were all set. In the meantime, I had sent out—he said he thought he would be there a while—so I had sent out a lot of silver and dishes and stuff, but that went back. When it got to San Francisco, they sent it back to Michigan. He was there thirty days after we got there. In the meantime, I enrolled you in a school, and Stanley. How the two of you ever found your way back from school to the apartment—I must have been young and like young mothers, you know, just so sure everything was going to be okay—you both walked home through this maze of buildings and then got home. Anyway, we left because he was leaving. He was going to drive the car back to Michigan, couldn't get a car out during that time. In the meantime, he had had a little wreck in Los Angeles. One side of the car got smashed a bit, but we were in San Francisco and we had gone down to Los Angeles one weekend because friends of ours were stationed there, the Rosenthalls from New York. It was a hard time.

DR: What year is this?

FA: 19—

MA: It was after '43 because he went in '43-'44—it was probably '44 or '45.

FA: No, it was probably around the end of, yeah, '44.

DR: '44. Were you aware at that time what was going on in the European theatre?

FA: I was aware of it all because—

MA: Of what was happening to the Jewish people?

FA: Of course. My brother went into the service. He had passed—he was a graduate of the University of Michigan and he had entered law school there and decided he better go fight the cause. Before he left, he was doing some work for my father. My father had a business that was considered essential. He was in the scrap business and it was considered essential during the war. So he did not—my brother, even though he had been through the ROTC and he was in this terrible accident down South. He was doing some business for my Dad and he had driven down South.

MA: Mother though, what did that have to do with what was happening to the Jewish people in Europe?

FA: Well, he wanted to go. I'm telling you. So with all the things that happened to him—that he was part of an essential business and he had had this terrible accident. He had had some front teeth knocked out and he was really badly injured and—nothing would stop him. He just had to go, had to go fight the cause for the Jews.

MA: Was Bebe corresponding with her family in Europe? Did they tell her how bad the times were that they wanted to come to America?

FA: They couldn't come to America. She wasn't hearing from them because they were in concentration.

MA: They were already in concentration camps?

FA: Uh-hmm. Her mother and her sister and husband.

MA: And children.

FA: Children.

MA: Her mother's name was Tobie?

FA: Tobie. Herschenson.

MA: And her maiden name was?

FA: Silberman.

MA: S-I-L-B-E-R-M-A-N. So Bebe's mother, sister and husband and children were lost in the Holocaust.

FA: Bebe's mother, yes.

MA: And they lived in the town of Gorshkaw, Poland.

FA: We've forgot something here. I was telling about the day my brother left was in June of 1940. It was before—

MA: Daddy went in?

FA: No, it was before—he went in—yeah, he [brother] left first. It was before—

MA: Pearl Harbor?

FA: Pearl Harbor. What year was that? '40 or '41?

DR: '41, December 7th, 1941.

FA: Uh-hmm, well he left in June of 1941. He wasn't in this country more than six weeks and he was shipped to the Philippines. Did I tell you that before? He was shipped to the Philippines in August of that year. He went in June—things looked very bad and my father—we called him in the Philippines. My Dad would have done anything to bring him back and what he did say was they were fighting without ammunition, [using] sticks and stones and anything, but they didn't really have—they sent these wonderful young people there without anything to protect themselves. It was to stall the war there because they were fighting in Europe and they couldn't do too much to that front. So they—I don't know, there was a lot of—they didn't have a chance. I mean the Japanese had all kinds of spies and they did not have a chance.

DR: I want to pause for just a second. [Tape stopped.]

FA: Where are we?

DR: I had just asked you to pause for a second when you were saying that your mother's mother was lost in the—

FA: My grandmother.

DR: Your grandmother, your mother's mother, was lost in Europe.

FA: Now, my father had family there too. He had several brothers. They were in Shedlische and they—I don't know what happened. I inquired through the Red Cross during the war or after or something and they told me he was last seen in Paris boarding the train.

MA: One of the brothers.

FA: One of the brothers boarding a train with a group of refugees, so he must have been sent to a concentration camp. See, we never heard from them. They knew where we were, but we didn't know where they were. So they all got lost. Laro was their name.

DR: So how did you find out what you eventually did know? How did you learn what the fate [was] of all these family members?

FA: Well, we just never heard from them so we knew they were gone.

DR: But you don't know to this day. You don't know what camp they were in or any specifics of what happened to them?

FA: No, we don't know what camp they were in.

MA: We can find out. Now, today, you can find out.

DR: I don't know. Do you know that?

MA: Stanley—when we were discussing it the other day—said that in Israel now you can find out.

FA: Is that what he said?

MA: Uh-hmm. If you have their names and the town they lived in.

FA: Well, one of my mother's brothers wound up in Israel and one brother wound up in South America and he came here, that was Pinchas. He came here. Phil Pinchas they called him. He came here. He was supposed to teach in the medical school here, but by the time he got out of there they had filled the place and he didn't have a job.

MA: That was Phil Silberman?

FA: Phil Herschenson, my mother's brother. His name was Phil too. The other Phil was a cousin. And Phil died in New York. He worked in Flint for a while, then he went to New York and he got married in New York. That's probably why he was there that time when I saw Singer and I think I said somewhere—did I say in the other tape—what they said about Papa being at their house? Well, I can't remember ever telling you here. Such a story, life's stories.

DR: Well, it's so interesting. From the point of view of the bigger picture of American-Jewish history how really the majority of us, I would say, have this cataclysm that happened in the 1940s [when] we lost—

FA: My mother lost her family and then she lost her son—that was a most traumatic thing and not only that, that day that my father got notice that he was gone; my mother and I had gone to Detroit because my brother-in-law had come in from San Francisco. He was stationed there, my

sister's husband, and he was in the navy also. I guess my father called him. We were going to spend the night and my father called and told him that he had just heard that my brother was gone, but not to say anything to us, but to have us come home. And so he said, "There's no point in staying if you're going to leave early tomorrow. You might as well go home." Or something like that and my mother and I went home. And there he was all by himself with that horrible news, my dad—and he didn't want to live. My mother didn't either. They really didn't want to live anymore after that and so it was a very bad time.

DR: What exactly happened to your brother?

FA: Well, he was taken prisoner and he was at a prison camp in Mindenhou.

MA: In the Philippines.

FA: In the Philippines and he was working in the rice fields. Here he was, a graduate of the University of Michigan, an officer in the army, and they had them all working in the rice fields. They didn't let them sit around doing nothing, you know, and for that they got paid a dollar a day. Not there, but that money came through to my mother through his insurance or something, the many days that he was there. Everybody had a ten thousand-dollar insurance policy. Did I mention that before?

DR: Yeah, you did, and it came in twenty-six dollar increments.

FA: Yeah, every month. They begged them not to send it to the house, but that's the way the beneficiary had to receive it. They lived for forty years with that, twenty-seven dollars a month.

MA: Mother, so then finally they put them on a prisoner of war—

FA: What happened—that's right, the war, you know, as the Americans are getting into the Philippines—so they quickly put thousands of American soldiers—

MA: Their prisoners.

FA: —these prisoners on prison ships, but they didn't mark them prison ships. Of course the Americans knew those were prison ships because they knew they were fleeing. And the reason they were taking all of these American soldiers was, they were barter. You know, they could barter with them. They had all these soldiers. "I want this and I'll give you back some soldiers," or something like that. The American submarines torpedoed those ships and most of them were killed right there in the South China Sea.

MA: The Americans.

FA: Americans, after surviving all that three years. My mother was paid for nine hundred days, so that's how long he was there. After nine hundred days, then the Americans torpedoed them—that's it. Is there anything that could be worse?

MA: And he was lost at sea.

DR: Uh-hmm.

MA: And then you and Aunt Rose—

FA: Now the reason we knew that he had even gotten on a boat was because a friend of his that had gone to the University of Michigan with him was also a prisoner. And he came back because he was injured—he had lost a leg—and I saw him at a camp in Michigan. I went to see him. He told me that Jack had boarded the ship and they knew for sure that he was on that ship. See, they didn't take the ones that were crippled or injured; they just took the stronger ones. And my sister—she met a group of prisoners of war that came back, they landed in San Francisco see—and my sister and her husband were stationed in San Francisco at the time and she went through talking to all these prisoners. She met one that said that my brother had left on that ship. That's really how we knew, more than from the navy. Just declared dead, that's all. He just died. Twenty-four years old, he was gone. Everything to live for—it was awful.

DR: Yeah, and your parents' only son, that's very rough.

FA: That's right. So when my husband came home from the navy, he said that it was a big letdown for all of us because he came home and my brother didn't. He didn't feel like he was welcomed, you know, because we were all in mourning. You sort of resented that in anybody's coming home when you lost someone you loved that didn't come home. He just never got over that.

DR: Then on top of that, all the feeling about the family that you didn't even know what had happened.

FA: Didn't know what happened. That came through later, you know. Well my mother and dad went to Israel after that. They met family that knew more about families, you know. The whole thing was terrible. I was awakened one morning—did I tell you that?—I was told that I was an enemy alien.

DR: Because of your last name.

MA: Being different.

FA: My mother—when she came through, she told them—she didn't understand what they were saying. Most of them didn't—they asked her what was her name and she told them where she was going. She was going to Lenders and so my name on the thing was Lender and I straightened that thing out. You have to go way back.

DR: This may sound like an odd question, but after all of this tragedy which struck your family, did your parents sort of turn more toward their religion? Did they become more involved or less involved or—

FA: Well, my parents were very charitable to, you know, where it came to religion. It was not that my father—who was in business by this time, American business—wasn't so church-going or anything. He did go for certain holidays, and my mother of course, Friday nights she lit her candles and all of that. I don't think it changed their life any. I don't think so. She had to go mourn her son, that she had to do, but she mourned him every day of her life. Forty years she lived with that check. It's a terrible thing. And I remember somebody calling on my father and ask him to give—he heard that he was getting ten thousand dollars—would he give that to a charity, or give it to the temple? My father was getting twenty-seven dollars a month. He wasn't getting ten-thousand dollars.

DR: But they didn't lose their faith at that point or they remained—

FA: Well, they had been through one war already themselves, you know, 1915. War is—I don't know. When I think about it, they were very strong people. My mother was sad. She didn't want to live.

MA: They kept working and doing and—

FA: For a while there my father was drinking, not working. He had a big business and he was never sober. It was horrible.

MA: That was after Uncle Jack died?

FA: He just lost himself in that and my mother didn't care particularly, but they pulled themselves together finally. Then my sister's husband came back where my father had made room for his son; he now took the son-in-law in that thriving business. I mean they were very wealthy people. I don't know what to tell you. And then my husband came back and he went back—we still have our office and so we reopened the office.

MA: And you bought the house that we moved out of.

FA: Then a friend of mine called me one day, she knew I was looking for a house and she was Irish. She said to me, "Faygo"—that's what she always said—"Faygo, the house next door to me is going to be sold because the doctor there is going to Colorado." Now those houses never went on the market. Somebody bought them through some neighbor, some friend, or some relative. And so I called him up right away and I said to him, "I heard this house is being sold. When can I see it?" He said, "We're having dinner right now, come over right after." So I went over there and I took my mother who was a very smart woman, businesswoman, and she said to me, "I think you better buy it. It has everything you would want and if you start building you don't know what's going to happen." She said to me, "Just buy it." It was in the nicest area in the city and it was right next door to my friend that I had gone to high school with—Catherine Kelly Wright was her married name—and that's what I did. I said, "Well, fine we'll take it." My husband hadn't even seen it yet and I said, "We'll take it." I called him up and I said, "We just bought a house."

In the meantime, I didn't even give him a deposit; that's how naïve I was. And houses were scarce and especially where we bought. That same night Betty Winegarden called—they had come back from some place—and they said that they heard this house was for sale. He said, "No, a doctor and his wife and two children just bought the house." So she said to her husband, "I guess they're anti-Semitic." She didn't know that they sold it to somebody Jewish. That's the answer. See people don't even know and they just go to some conclusion. Do you know that? Well, anyway that was—so we'd park out in front of the house and just look at it until they moved out. We'd drive up there in the evening when he came home from work, Dad and I would just look at it, "That's our house." The thing my husband said, "That's too expensive." That was his answer to me when I told him what it was. See, we sold a house for half that much because before the war, things were cheap. After the war, everything went wild. So he said, "Thirty-thousand dollars. That house any place else would have sold for a quarter of a million." You know in St. Mary or—well, anyway, we bought that house.

MA: And that was—

FA: On Westwood Parkway and we loved it.

MA: 3101 Westwood Parkway and you lived there for how many years? Forty?

FA: Thirty-nine.

MA: Thirty-nine years until you moved into your apartment at Parkview Manor in Flint.

FA: Right. I'm sorry I sold it. You know, because living in a house is one thing. We had a beautiful garden and we were in a lovely area. You could walk around and the whole thing was different, but by the time we sold it Marlene was married and Stanley was married and then Stanley moved out of town and Marlene lived out of town. There wasn't any point to our keeping the house and all the goings on. So the size of our apartment was the same size that our house was, but at least, I mean, we don't have a lot of the shoveling of the snow and all of that. We just close the door and leave, which is what we did the other day. Anyhow that's it. You just start all over again. Marlene had gone to school in New Orleans and had met her husband there, her first husband.

Avram Kronsberg—and I got a call from her. I had said to her, "When you go to college—" You don't want me to go into that? That's so funny though. Jewish is Jewish. You know when you grow up where we did, where Marlene did particularly, she didn't know from the difference because her friends weren't all Jewish and she had some lovely friends. You know they would all go out together and everything. You want me to tell that part? I think it is fun. I said to her, "When you go to college Marlene, I just want you dating Jewish boys."

MA: You told me that?

FA: I sure did and I said to her, "It isn't that the other boys aren't as nice and some of them are nicer, but I just feel that it's better for you not to get involved." When she went through high school I even said that to her, I said to her, "You can go with other boys only three times. You

can go with a boy that isn't Jewish only three times." I want you to know it works. And then after that I said, "You go with somebody else." Because all her friends were lovely children and from lovely homes and so that's what she did. So I met one of the mothers of a boy that wasn't Jewish and she said to me, "Mrs. Alfred, you really are smart. My son tells me he can't go with Marlene anymore because he's not Jewish. He could only go three times." It's funny meeting a person at a coffee and having her say that to me. That was really funny. But she did, she went to—that's where she met her first husband. He's Jewish, she told me and, that's what counted.

DR: That was the positive, but why do you feel that way?

FA: About Jewish and non-Jewish?

DR: Yeah.

FA: I haven't anything to say about somebody that marries non-Jewish, that's their business. I just feel it doesn't make any difference to me what someone else does, but I was born living in a town where we were the only Jewish family and my mother had moved to the city. I guess it was inborn and she said to me, "Now you'll meet Jewish friends." She wanted me to marry somebody Jewish, which I did. So I did the same, being brought up like that, I figured there must be a good reason my mother did that. First of all, there aren't as many problems. The problems of arguing and all of that happens no matter what you marry, but if you have the same religion, you don't have to worry about that part. And your children aren't going to be mixed up afterwards. I have friends who have terrible times. They were growing up and even to this day I watch their children and they don't know where they're at. They're confused. They don't know what's better and I don't think it's healthy. I think it's nice having a family that they're the same on both sides, like we did. I loved Marlene's in-laws and the feelings were mutual. The same thing is true with Marlene married to Nathan now. I mean his children are, you know it's—

MA: It's a common—

FA: They have so much in common even if sometimes you don't like someone you still have that in common. Are you married to somebody Jewish?

DR: I am, but my sister is not.

FA: Well, that's her business.

DR: Right and, you know, I love her family as much as I love mine, but what I'm hearing it's not that, it's not a question of Jewish survival, that is the perpetuation of—

FA: Yes, it is.

DR: Okay, because, I mean, what you're suggesting here is that it's sort of practical. There are lots of practical reasons why.

FA: It's practical and it's survival. I mean the cousins are all Jewish in my family. My children all married Jewish children. My grandchildren all married Jewish children.

DR: That's very unusual.

FA: That's right and it's fun. They were all together in August and you never saw anything that was more fun than that group. We had forty people here. We brought them all into Flint.

MA: For your sixty-fifth anniversary.

FA: For my sixty-fifth anniversary.

DR: Wow.

FA: Mine and my husband's and incidentally, I also have a very wonderful husband. I want to say that because when he hears this, boy oh boy.

DR: Well, anyone who can be married for sixty-five years, it's saying something about the strength of the relationship.

FA: And you know in the navy, you saw wives coming to visit husbands and they would all say the same thing, "I don't have to worry about my husband." And I would just listen to them and then they would go back home and there was their husband out with somebody, some nurse or something. I don't care who, but I never trusted a man any further than I could see him. Including your father. And when he would get upset with me about something, I'd say, "Listen, if you can do better, go."

MA: In the meantime, you were telling us about how wonderful Daddy was.

FA: That's right, but I always said that to him, "If he wasn't happy and he could do better, go." In the meantime, he couldn't go. He was all tied up with money and you and Stanley, but that was really funny. "Where's he going to go?" he said. "Where's he going to go?"

DR: "Where am I going to go?" Yeah.

FA: I had a friend that he hated. I always said, "Well, you could go to her."

DR: A little bit wicked there. I wanted to ask you this, maybe this isn't appropriate, but you had talked about your dad sort of falling into a pattern of drinking after his son died. How did he recover from that?

FA: Well, my father was a very smart man. My father studied—his father wanted him to be a rabbi—but that wasn't for him, he said. Did you read that little book that, did Marlene give it to you?

DR: I haven't read it and I don't think I have a copy. I think I may have made—did we make a Xerox for the Archives?

MA: Uh-unh. [No.]

DR: No, I don't think so. I saw it. I held it in my hand at one point, but I don't think I have a copy.

MA: Anyway, Grandpa, how did he stop the pattern of drinking after Uncle Jack died?

FA: Well, for one thing, I wouldn't let him take the children in the car with him because I never knew whether he was sober or not and that hurt. And he had a business, he had a big business. He just had to pull himself together. It wasn't the first time in his life that he had to do that. You know, he had had a lot of things happen to him in struggling with business, making a living in a foreign country, and he wanted the family to be proud of—all those things were important to my dad.

MA: So he just stopped then?

FA: He stopped himself. He stopped himself, that's right. He just stopped.

DR: He just stopped.

FA: That's right and that's all there was to it. He wanted to enjoy what he had. Of course, my mother was so heartbroken; it took her time to rally. At first she was still in business with my father so she still went to work. Did I ever tell you about our time at the lake?

MA: I don't think so. These are some of the fun times right? In the summertime we would go two places, to visit my dad's parents who lived in South Haven, Michigan.

FA: They had a resort hotel.

MA: It was like the Catskills. There were like a hundred small Jewish resorts and my grandparents had one of them.

FA: I had never seen a Jewish resort until I saw that.

MA: We would go visit Bebe and Grandpa in South Haven or we would go to the cottage, which was eighteen miles from Flint in a little town called Linden, on Lobdell Lake, and Bebe and Grandpa Laro owned that. So we would go to the lake and take friends and you always had company come on the weekends and you made your famous chocolate cake.

FA: My father did business with a lot of people so he entertained at the lake, at the beach house, every weekend. Every weekend he had steaks and corn-on-the-cob and the usual.

MA: Mother was busy cooking all weekend. She loved being in the kitchen the whole time.

FA: I hated it. I used to come back from that beach in the fall, snow white and shaking from all the work I had to do. I had help in town, but they wouldn't go to the lake. It was a lot of work at the lake. So [I] finally found a woman that was working at other cottages and she could give me a couple of hours, so that was great. Somebody could come in and clean up at least. Marlene got very close to her and she said to her one morning, "My mother was married twice." Of course, that was a little gossip for her to take around to where she worked all over. She [Marlene] told me that she told her [cleaning woman] that and I said to her, "Married twice to the same man." We were married by the Justice of the Peace and then we were married by a rabbi so we had two. I was married twice, but this woman really got onto that. I was married twice.

DR: Were your in-laws still in the resort business?

MA: For many years. Early teens—they were some of the first. They've just written a book about the history of South Haven and it tells all about the resort. And Bebe and Grandpa's resort and the life there and how people came from Chicago and Cleveland and Indiana.

FA: St. Louis. They used to come with trunks, you know, and spend the summer.

MA: And the husbands would commute and they would come on the weekends.

DR: Like the Catskills.

MA: Exactly.

DR: But that was not where you went for vacation. You didn't go to the resort?

FA: Well, Marlene used to go.

DR: Every summer?

FA: She didn't stay there all summer. Drive up there and stay for a weekend or something like that.

MA: Or I would go with girlfriends and—

DR: But you didn't go—that wasn't your—you just went by yourself, Marlene?

FA: No, we would go.

MA: We'd go to visit Bebe and Grandpa, but I—Mother and Daddy would stay maybe the weekend—but when I was a teenager I liked to go there because there was the lake with the beautiful beach and all the kids and a lot of excitement.

FA: And Marlene was a beauty queen.

MA: That was the place to go.

FA: At the end of the year, they'd have a beauty contest of all the resorts and each resort would have a contestant. Unbeknownst to me or to my husband, my husband's sister decided to enter Marlene at that time. Of course Marlene was gung-ho for anything and I arrived on the weekend, on that Saturday or something, and she is in the beauty contest. I said to her, "How did this happen?" "Well, Aunt Lenna did it." See, she had put her in a beauty contest and she won. Now, they want to send her to Hollywood, they made an offer.

DR: Really?

FA: Well they did and people would point her out at the beach because—

[Tape paused due to original analog tape switching to side B.]

MA: And you know he did the sports news casting?

FA: Yeah.

MA: Our son—well let me finish this thing with the beauty queen stuff at South Haven. Anyway—

DR: This is Marlene's favorite story.

FA: Yeah, well, it hit the headlines, that did, but then when Marlene went to school at Newcombe, she wasn't in a play there. She wasn't in the play; her best friend had the lead in the play and she talked Marlene into coming down and doing something. Marlene said, "I don't act, I don't sing, you know I don't do any of those things." She said, "Well, then work on the sets, help work on the sets. We have a lot of fun so you come on down." So she went down and she enjoyed the camaraderie and everything going on with the play. They did this every spring and then scouts used to, you know, the scouts came from Hollywood and they made all the different colleges and they would attend these things, these plays. Well, they had one scene in the play and they needed a mob scene. So everybody working on sets and everything, I guess, were told to go out into the mob scene—so the scout picked Marlene. Now that was terrible because her best friend had the lead and Marlene, [who] didn't even want to be on the stage, was chosen. We had come down that weekend to visit her and I hear all these goings on, "That's her, that's her." because the second night, they gave her a line. As long as she was the one they picked, they gave her a line and then we took some gorgeous pictures of you down there. Was it there or back? I don't know. You have something in the paper. Don't you have a Tulane paper or something with all that goings on?

But she said to me she could go to Hollywood for her test. So she said—you know in those years, girls, nice girls, didn't do that.

MA: It was the end of a career.

DR: The end of your acting career.

MA: Hollywood.

FA: Marlene wasn't interested. Nice girls didn't do that and Marlene didn't wear lipstick until, I don't know, and she didn't put on stockings—she was in bobby socks for—she did what nice girls did.

DR: This is the '50s. We're talking about the '50s. The years of conformity, not like the '60s.

FA: Well, anyhow that was—

DR: When I interview Marlene, then I'll ask her what happened in the '60s.

MA: What was your era?

DR: Well, I was in high school in the '60s and so we were definitely counter-culture, but compared to the punk stuff today, it was tame. I mean we weren't piercing ourselves and spiking our hair or anything like that. We were just demonstrating against the war.

FA: And Stanley—Marlene had sent the—on a radio station program—what was that program that—the Quiz Kid?

MA: The Quiz Kid is another thing. I had sent Stanley's name in and they had a program and they called different names. And asked them questions and they would win prizes and Stan knew every score. He was really into sports. He's three years older and he played basketball in high school. He was a big jock and he knew everything about it, so I sent his name in and they called him on the phone.

FA: They gave you some notice. They called like a couple hours before and they say they're going to call him, be ready and—oh my God, such excitement! They called. Stan knew nothing about it. She had done this, see.

MA: I still do it. I put my children's names in, you know, in grocery stores when you put your name in to win a prize, hoping they'll pick their name. They never know when they'll be called. Anyway, they called him and he did answer the questions and he won. But he was the Quiz Kid—that was a different thing, Mom.

FA: Yeah, the Quiz Kid.

MA: You remember the Quiz Kid, the children all over the country? That was a big thing and you would win in your area and then in your state and then the national. He didn't go to the national, but he won locally and that was a big deal.

DR: The resort that you were spending time at was all Jewish, a hundred percent?

MA: Yes, and a lot of—I remember they used to have—some of the guests had been in concentration camps because I remember seeing the numbers on the arms.

End Side A, Tape 2
Begin Side B, Tape 2

FA: That's right. You got to see them all over because we used to go to a spa in Florida and I used to see them there. I had this very fancy friend from New Jersey and I talked her into going to this spa, which was a very small spa in Florida, and it wasn't the Golden Door or whatever; it wasn't that. You know, a spa right on the ocean, and I used to go down with about ten of my friends and we used to have a wonderful time there. We would spend a month or six weeks. So I talked this friend of mine, she was a new friend, to come along and she had gone to Europe to the spas and all over. We came out and we were waiting for a cab and there were a group of refugees ahead of us and they were talking Yiddish. And between them we overheard them saying they were going to this spa where we were going. She looked at me like, you know where am I taking her? Did you know that?

MA: Um-hmm.

FA: I said to her, "I didn't promise you a rose garden." But it was lovely. I wanted to tell you something else about—

MA: We're talking about the resort.

FA: Well, yeah the resort.

MA: The resort was a life unto itself. I mean that really was like the Catskills.

FA: Well, it must have been.

MA: My grandmother supervised the cooking and she was in the kitchen from—they served two hundred people in the dining room?

FA: Two or three.

MA: Two or three hundred people in the dining room and she was in the kitchen from early morning.

FA: Like four o'clock.

MA: Until after dinner at night.

DR: Cooking kosher?

MA: Kosher.

FA: They got many awards for the cleanliness of the kitchen.

MA: They had two kitchens back-to-back, two sets of everything.

FA: And fabulous meals and lots and lots—

MA: And canned goods, you know, for the next year, and pickles and fruits and—

FA: They did that. They canned themselves.

MA: And they had a wonderful Jewish bakery in South Haven and great smoked fish. The smoker was there.

FA: You know, when my father and mother first came to Flint, I mean they hadn't been in this country that long, but my brother was being bar mitzvahed and things were pretty poor. So what they did was, they didn't have a big bar mitzvah or anything, he got called up to the pulpit and they had my dad, I think they had wine or something and that was it. You know, when I think of the ones later on even like the one we had later on, but that's what they did. And do you know something? You never knew you were poor. I mean when I think about that, those were our happiest days probably because we were all well and we were all together. You know we didn't have all the things that happened afterwards.

Well, Marlene met her husband at school—that was a big wedding. She called up and she said to me, "Better save your money," because she was getting married in like six weeks or something. I said to her, "If I hadn't saved it by now, I sure couldn't start saving it now."

DR: And you went home to get married?

MA: In Flint.

FA: Easter Sunday.

DR: And the whole Kronsberg clan came up?

MA: Uh-hmm.

DR: Oh my.

MA: Well, it was a problem because they were in the retail business. And having never been in the retail business, I didn't realize that Easter Saturday was the biggest day of the year and that's when we wanted the wedding because all our friends would be off from school, you know, for the holiday and they would be able to come. So my father-in-law was not real happy about it and didn't know if he would be able to be there, but they did come.

DR: And you were at Newcombe. Did I hear that?

MA: I was at Sophie Newcombe in New Orleans.

DR: Sophie Newcombe, which is a girls school?

MA: Uh-hmm, and he went to Tulane.

DR: Tulane.

MA: And my brother went to the University of Michigan and met—well, he knew the girl he married was [a] friend of ours growing up, but they started dating at college. And she went to the U. of M. and he got married two years after I did.

DR: What was your impression moving south, that was probably your first time?

MA: It was. I went to school a week early for orientation and I remember everybody was running for office. So we would go to the auditorium and listen to the speeches and every girl who was running was from some tiny little town I'd never heard of, Bogalusa, and names I had never heard of. And they all—their father had like the big department store in the little town—and everybody was the salutatorian or valedictorian of their class. I thought, "My God, what am I doing at this school?" Then I realized the town graduation, you know, their graduating class, probably had fifty people. I don't know. I came from a high school—my graduation class was six hundred students. So to be a valedictorian of fifty was a little different from being a valedictorian of six hundred. I mean it was amazing.

Of course, we had the same problem with the roaches and the bugs and the whole thing and you know, we were pampered. I lived in a small dorm with a housemother who took care of us. In the dining room we had artichokes for the meal. I mean the whole thing was privileged, I guess. I met Elvis Presley. That was one of the highlights of my college career.

FA: She had her picture taken with him. She had that.

MA: He was in New Orleans filming *King Creole* and we knew somebody who knew him and we went up to his apartment and got to meet him and have a picture taken. Of course you know I idolized him, I was one of those '50s kids that—

FA: Who took you up there, your housemother?

MA: No, no, no, this friend, mutual friend.

DR: Did you have any feeling at that point, or later on reflecting back, about the difference between being Jewish in the North and Jewish in the South?

MA: No, because being Jewish in Flint, Michigan was not like being Jewish in New York City. You know—

FA: She only knew that she was Jewish and couldn't date, only three times.

MA: Right. We were pretty assimilated in Flint I would say.

FA: You were.

MA: Well, our family was and so you know we were Reform Jews.

DR: And living in a mixed neighborhood? Did I gather that?

MA: Mixed neighborhood, a good school.

FA: Very few Jewish people in our neighborhood. How many did you have there? Two? It wasn't too mixed.

MA: So, you know, there wasn't a big difference between the North and the South.

DR: So being in the middle of, again, a very mixed community in the South, was similar to what you knew in Flint.

MA: Right. Life in the South was different than life in the North, especially when I came to Charleston. I realized how different it was.

FA: Marlene wanted to know who was *society* in Flint.

MA: That's a good question.

FA: Charleston was into that.

DR: So when you got here you became curious about who would have—

FA: We were having dinner one night at our house and I had a friend over. She was from a very prominent family, one of the early settlers in Flint, a Jewish woman, and Marlene said to her, "Who are the society in Flint?" And she looked at her and she said, "Well, everybody thinks they are." Or something like that, which was a good answer—and she for sure, was. I mean we traveled in the same, they traveled in the same circles though, but in Charleston it was more obvious because the St. Cecilia, where you had to be born into it. And there were things that Marlene [was] quite aware of because when she came here she was involved in a lot of things that maybe some other Jewish people weren't because the in-laws were prominent. Ed [Kronsberg] was involved with many things civic. They were just very nice people and then when Marlene got married the second time, I had met Nathan. They decided—well, he had been calling on her and helping her and doing a lot of things for her. He was very nice and then she called—I said to her after she was divorced, "Marlene, if you ever get married again, just get married. I couldn't go through that again."

DR: "That" meaning the divorce or "that" meaning the big wedding?

FA: Both.

MA: She didn't want the big wedding.

FA: The trauma.

DR: Both, okay.

FA: With the wedding, the wedding was—the first wedding was for five hundred people.

MA: From here.

DR: Oh God, rent a train!

FA: We had to make alternate plans for that.

MA: We didn't realize a lot people wouldn't come. We didn't know.

FA: And then Ed paid for everybody that went, but anyhow—so when she married Nathan—

MA: We eloped.

FA: I didn't even know who she was getting married to. She just called me up and said she was getting married. I said, "Who are you marrying?" And then she said she was getting married like the next day and I thought—I felt so badly because I was trying to figure out how to get here and be here by noon the next day. I thought if I could get an early flight out of Flint, I don't know—anyway I really felt badly about not being here. I said that and she kept me to it, but I really felt badly.

MA: Well, we got married in Sumter, South Carolina, at his sister-in-law, Esther Addlestone's house.

DR: Marlene, jumping back, I'm very interested in your, this perception of society in Charleston. Who did you, when you first came to Charleston—I mean I know about St. Cecilia, that's the institution—but who would you say was in society here?

FA: Jewish society you mean?

DR: Well, there's Jewish society and then there's non-Jewish society, I mean.

MA: Well, it was very closed. I mean Charleston is a very closed society and families who had been here for generations, families who had been in the same house for generations. The children lived in the kitchen house and when the parents died then the eldest son moved into the big house. I mean it was just quite different. The Middletons, the Manigaults.

DR: So old plantation families is sort of what your concept of—

FA: Well, the Manigaults lived across the street and then some lived behind.

DR: You're talking about the Miles Brewton House?

MA: No, when Avram and I bought our first house we were in Ansonborough in 1961 and it was just being developed. The Historic Charleston Foundation had bought up a lot of the buildings and gutted them. The house we bought was a model house so it had been totally redone, at 44 Society Street, but most of the houses were just shells. And they were, you know, just three thousand dollars, five thousand dollars, and then you had to totally redo it. The Middletons lived next door to us and they were a family that went all the way back. And then Peter and Laundine—he was married to Laundine at the time—Manigault lived around the corner and so they were two of the pioneers in that neighborhood. They were there before we were and we were like the new young couple. They wanted young people to come in there so they were delighted and very welcoming and very friendly and it was very nice. I was involved in the Preservation Society and we were just involved in a lot of things in the community as young people.

DR: Were you aware of the hierarchy say, in the Jewish community?

MA: Yes, I was.

DR: The downtown Jews and the uptown Jews?

MA: Very few Jews lived in town, below Broad. We did and it was very unusual. Most of the young people didn't. People, I mean sometimes they thought you were trying, you know, to put on airs to do it. They weren't receptive to other Jewish people who did it.

DR: See Nathan, the Kronsbergs—

MA: Today it's different. Today it's different. A lot of people live in town. I mean it's fun to be in town. There's a lot going on. I mean if you're going to live in a community like Charleston, then take advantage of it. You can live in suburbs in any city of the U.S. and they all look alike and they're all the same. If you want to be a part of what's different about Charleston, you know, then live there and do it. I used to be a tour guide at the historic houses and I really was involved.

FA: And you were president of the [Gibbes] Art Museum.

MA: Well, the Women's Council.

DR: And you're on the board of the Gibbes now.

MA: Uh-hmm.

FA: You were on the board before.

MA: Well, I was the president of the Women's Council at the Gibbes.

DR: Um-hmm, but what I'm thinking is that the Kronsbergs—and I know there's really—

MA: [Inaudible] because of Ed and Hattie Kronsberg were very involved. He was also involved with the navy base and with the admirals there because they had a store up on Reynolds Avenue and they just—they didn't call it—he was president of the Chamber of Commerce, all these different organizations.

FA: Very civic minded.

MA: He was on the board of Roper [Hospital].

DR: And started a—I don't know if they would have called it a mall, but a shopping center.

MA: The first shopping center was on Rivers Avenue. It was Pinehaven Shopping Center.

DR: Uh-hmm, and they were, excuse me for this diversion, but the Kronsbergs were among the early families, do I remember correctly, at Emanu-El?

MA: Yeah, they were one of the founders of Emanu-El.

DR: So was that your affiliation or did you stay Reform?

MA: When Avram and I were first married we belonged to Emanu-El. Then he and I joined the temple when Rabbi Padoll was here. We liked him very much, so we joined at that time.

FA: I think Marlene has stayed abreast of all this anyway and Nathan is very civic minded, very. I mean this is his, that's his thing, very civic minded. And he's very—I think he's just a philanthropist.

DR: You don't need to tell us that he's a philanthropist.

FA: Well, I mean not only for the city, but I mean his temple and—

DR: Well, of course, Addlestone Hebrew Academy and the new Addlestone Library here at the College.

FA: No, but I'm talking about the temple. He's involved in the temple and he's involved in all the different temples. So Marlene started one and just kept right on going. I mean, well, our family at home did the same thing. I mean she knows that that's what you do and it's right.

DR: It's my impression—and I have a young student working on this subject now—that the Jewish families who moved here before World War II, sort of rode the wave of prosperity that brought this city back into the twentieth century. I mean Charleston was in terrible shape until

the build-up around the navy yard. And that prosperity, in turn you know, became this great source of largesse for the city. So maybe there was a shifting of the social barriers maybe after World War II because there was a new source of wealth, new families, who had the ability and the desire to do civic, become involved in the civic scene.

FA: I think that's very nice that they did.

MA: Also Spoleto, since Spoleto. I mean this new surge is from the beginning of Spoleto, which was what, 1977?

DR: Uh-hmm.

MA: You know the larger nationals came to Charleston and also international movement into Charleston.

FA: I never did get to tell you about our son Stan.

DR: Okay, let's go back to Stan—that was a long diversion into Charleston, but I was interested in what you said about this closed society.

FA: Well, he graduated with honors. Marlene did too. They were just, they studied and they were students, that's it, and he went on to the University of Michigan and entered medical school there. Then he made a change afterwards—but what I was going to tell you something about him, it slipped my mind.

MA: About Stanley marrying JoAnn, who was a daughter—

FA: He married the daughter of some friends of ours and very lovely. After they were married thirty-one years, she died of cancer, but he had three daughters. And then we have all these great-grandchildren. For our sixty-fifth anniversary, Marlene's Elliott and the rest of them, one of our granddaughters, Stanley's daughter, has twins, twin boys, and then another one has two children, a boy and a girl. And the daughter that lived here for a while, Erin, had three, a boy and two girls. And now we are expecting three more great-grandchildren, all at one time.

DR: Wow.

FA: Which is wonderful. Talk about being Jewish, all of them.

DR: You said that Stanley made a change, meaning he did not graduate from med. school?

FA: Oh sure he did. He graduated from, but he got sick and he had to stop going to school for a while. Then he went back to—he decided he'd like to go to Wayne Med. School, what is called Wayne, and that's where he graduated from.

MA: In Detroit.

FA: In Detroit, and graduated with honors. He's—what's the highest honor, national honor? I think it is called—AO, was it? It's the highest honor.

MA: In medical school?

FA: In medical school and very few people get that.

MA: You know who else just got it? It was George Sofis.

FA: He did? Well, that's it. Isn't that wonderful?

MA: So Stanley graduated and then he went in the service for two years and he was stationed in California.

FA: Well, that's right. He was stationed at Fort Ord—that was during the Vietnam War. He didn't know whether they'd be shipped out. He had a wife by that time and three children. Three darling children, but now they're all married and have these grandchildren.

DR: So what happened to him during the war?

FA: See when they went in after the war, they didn't have to stay until the end of the war. They just put in a couple of years and that was it. They had to give a certain amount of time.

DR: And he stayed at Fort Ord the whole time?

FA: The whole time fortunately. I couldn't believe it when he had to go, my God, I went through that once and here we are. Well, anyway, and then he went back. I thought they would stay in California. He took his Boards there, but they came back to Michigan. They practiced in Michigan for a while and then he worked with Art Ulene, Dr. Art Ulene, on TV work. He did TV work at home too.

DR: What is that?

FA: TV work done.

MA: On television.

DR: Doctor on television?

MA: Uh-hmm. *Doctor's Housecall*. You call in and you would have different doctors telling about different, what their specialties were.

FA: You could call in and if you had that problem—

MA: He loved that. He's wonderful with him.

FA: He is and then he did some that, he wrote programs for Art Ulene that's what he did. Art Ulene.

MA: You remember Art Ulene who was on television?

DR: Unh-umm.

MA: He was like Dr. Dean Oddell.

FA: You know what he's doing now Marlene? He's selling vitamins.

DR: Ulene is U-L-?

FA: E-N-E. I don't want you to mention him, just mention Stanley.

DR: Okay. Art Ulene.

FA: We don't need him in there.

DR: Okay, but he [is] also a TV doc?

FA: Yeah.

DR: I've never heard of this. I don't know where I've been. It just hasn't crossed [my path].

FA: Ulene you'll see now advertising vitamins. There was a time when doctors didn't even recommend them, that's what's funny.

MA: Then Stan practiced in Detroit, then he moved to Flint. He practiced in Flint for many years and then they moved back to Detroit.

FA: Well, she liked living in Detroit.

MA: A lot of friends at the University of Michigan lived there.

FA: But he liked practicing in Flint. He was a hometown boy, but he finally moved back to Detroit. He decided he would live in Detroit and practice in Flint. They had this beautiful home there.

MA: Then JoAnn took sick.

FA: Then she took sick and that was—he took her all over the country trying to save her. When they told her she only had six months to live, she still lived two and a half years and got to see two of her daughters married. And she got to see one baby. At that point, she couldn't even sit—they put him in her arms. She was a beautiful girl and that was it. She just went. She came home to die. She didn't die in a hospital. She was home. They used to wheel her out on their

back porch there. They had a deck that went around the house. They would take her outdoors because she loved her garden and her pool and everything. And she just loved being out there, so they used to wheel that bed out there so she could look at it all. She couldn't talk at the end because the last surgery they did on her, her brain—her head got pressured.

DR: So it was a sad time.

FA: It was a very sad time that we all had.

DR: She must be your contemporary Marlene?

FA: She was. She was a friend of hers.

MA: A friend of mine.

FA: She was in Marlene's bridal party and Marlene was in hers. And she was a beautiful girl. Anyway her parents were friends of ours. But then it was three years later that he married a girl very involved in the Federation.

MA: Well, she's involved in the Weizman institute [Simon Wiesenthal Center - Ed.].

FA: Weizman's.

MA: She's a fundraiser for the Weizman's institute in Los Angeles.

FA: She does a great job.

MA: They go to Israel a lot.

DR: Are they living out West?

MA: In L.A.

FA: That was a whole new thing for him so he gets to meet a lot of the scientists that come through and he's practicing medicine in Santa Monica. He's a dermatologist is what he is. And he's one great person.

DR: He sounds great. Tell me the names of his two wives so we have it on the record.

MA: JoAnn Nedelman.

DR: JoAnn Nedelman.

FA: Yeah, that's his first wife.

DR: And the second one is?

FA: Janis.

MA: Rabin.

FA: R-A-B-I-N.

MA: And the girls' names?

FA: And she has two children— [Telephone Ringing].

DR: I'll pause this. [Tape Stopped] It's not exactly a sidetrack. It's just you've had a long life and there is a lot to cover.

FA: The thing is that both Marlene and Stanley have been wonderful children. I'd like that on the thing. Is that still going?

DR: Yeah, yeah.

FA: Well, because here recently, when his [Stanley's] father was so sick, he kept flying in weekends. And it was Stanley that discovered what was wrong with him [Clement] and he was dying and it was Stanley that came up with the reason. Marlene was there; she was back and forth from Charleston to Flint at the end. Then she spent two weeks there with me because I wasn't well and all this was going on and he was in the hospital at Ann Arbor. We were either driving back and forth and we finally stayed there. If it hadn't been for both Marlene and Stanley, I don't think he would have come out of it and neither would I.

DR: Uh-hmm, but Stanley diagnosed the problem? Amazing.

FA: They missed one of the tests and whoever did it or whatever didn't read it. He was in three different hospitals for a month and at the end there, it was a Saturday night and I said to Stanley, "You think he's dying?" He looked like he was dying. He was so bad that day. And Stan didn't answer because he thought he was. So he said to me he's [Stanley] going to start from the beginning. He was going to read every one of these tests and read what they found. Something is missing. He called one of the hospitals where they had done the x-rays and they had done the certain thing that they were supposed to do, one of the tests. He read that and, "Oh my God," he said, "Here it is." "Here it is." So, the minute they came up with the answer— well, what it was they could treat it, but up until that point they didn't know what was wrong with him. He got worse and worse and worse and lost a lot of weight and he was just out of it. His blood was wrong. Everything was wrong.

DR: So what was the diagnosis?

FA: Well, it was a—

MA: Severe ulcerated colitis?

FA: Uh-hmm.

DR: And they can treat it?

FA: Yes, they can treat it, but—

DR: This is why the Jewish mother wants to have a doctor for a son. This is it.

FA: She's absolutely right.

DR: Absolutely. My son the doctor.

FA: That's right. But he really did save his life, no doubt about it.

MA: Classic story.

DR: Yeah. This must have been this summer right, because we—I met you last in May and this is since then.

MA: Right.

FA: This happened in July.

DR: I was unaware.

FA: The whole month of July I guess he was in one hospital or another. It was terrible. Anyhow, you can survive a lot of things. In the meantime, he retired and he got a lot of notoriety on that. The paper—we've got a tremendous write-up on him. I mean he worked for sixty—

MA: Five years, sixty-six years, I think Daddy practiced.

DR: Marlene, you should make a copy of the articles for our file here so we can keep that as well.

FA: You should see the papers on it. The newspaper pictures, they wanted to do a thing on TV on him too, but he didn't feel up to that.

DR: Mrs. Alfred, I was curious to ask you somewhat the same question I asked Marlene. Maybe this is my kind of particular interest because of the project I'm working on, but you've spent a lot of time now in Charleston and in Flint in the Jewish community. Do you see a difference between southern Jews and northern Jews?

FA: Well, the few that I knew here do well. I love dearly Dottie Dumas, for one. I was crazy about her. Every time I came here I would call immediately, then I would see her a lot and her husband.

MA: Did you notice a difference between the southern Jews?

FA: No, I saw them as friends.

MA: Do you think they were more hospitable or—

FA: She was very hospitable. I would say she was.

MA: Dottie, and Daisy Bogen.

FA: And Renee, her sister Renee.

DR: You knew Daisy Bogen?

FA: Yes.

DR: I've only heard stories about—

MA: And Evelyn Rubin.

FA: Well, Daisy Bogen was a friend of her mother-in-law's, that's how I knew her.

MA: And Evelyn Rubin.

FA: And Evelyn Rubin. They were southerners through, all of them, real southerners.

DR: So okay, what does that mean, "Real Southerners"? That's what I want to get at. What does it mean?

FA: First of all they speak differently. They do, and they do things differently. They're very conscious of manners and how you do things at home. They did a lot of things at home.

MA: Entertaining at home. They all entertain beautifully.

FA: They did.

MA: Very gracious and very hospitable.

FA: I'm meeting Renee today, that's Dottie's sister.

DR: I've met Renee. In fact, we interviewed, thank God, three of the four sisters together, Jeannie and Renee and Dottie, all together shortly before Dottie died. The only one I haven't interviewed is the one who lives in Bishopville.

FA: Oh she's darling, Estelle.

DR: I'll have to get up there.

FA: You'll love her.

DR: So, it's a question of sort of the southern manners and social style. I don't want to put words in your mouth.

MA: They always make you feel at home and they make you feel like you're special.

FA: I love the things that Dottie used to tell. Like somebody said to her, "I saw the *Plymouth Rock* movie three times and I didn't see one Shimel come off of the boat." That was Dottie's maiden name, Shimel. They didn't see one Shimel come off. She told me that—I thought that was funny—that was so typical southern, you know.

We didn't have that up North. Of course, the Jewish people in Flint particularly weren't two hundred and three hundred years from, you know, like they are here.

MA: Their roots weren't, they weren't in Flint that long. Flint was a much newer city.

FA: And you had different kinds of people that came in there. Although this lady that was at dinner at our house that night, I would say was like southern, wasn't she?

MA: You mean her family went back to the early days of Flint. Flint dates from what, 1860s?

FA: I don't know what, but she was, I mean they were from a wealthy family. She was—her father you know, he was also a philanthropist and he gave a lot of money to the hospital and all that. Her brother was a doctor in there and the daughters—

DR: The other thing that people have said to me about trying to maintain a Jewish life in the South is that, in a sense, you have to make more compromises. I mean people don't call them compromises. You have to adapt; there is more adaptation, partly maybe because Jews are such a minority here.

FA: Well, I think that Marlene has adapted to the southern way, all the way. Although, she still speaks Northern.

DR: Midwestern. There's a difference.

FA: Well, Midwestern.

DR: What do you mean by adapted to the southern way?

FA: Well, she's gracious, but she would have done that anywhere. She's very hospitable and I don't care what she puts on her table—a glass of water looks like wine. That's Marlene, she

grew up like that. We always had a cook or something and Marlene was always going to learn and she spent a lot of time in the kitchen with them. Where was I?

DR: These are black cooks or white cooks in Flint?

FA: Black.

DR: Black women who cooked in the house.

FA: I always had black women working for me.

DR: Well, that's a similarity.

FA: Well, and some of them were very good.

DR: Oh, you mentioned one.

MA: Mary.

DR: Mary, tell me some more about Mary.

MA: She worked for mother for many years. I still correspond with her.

DR: Okay. Mary was—

MA: Mays.

FA: Mary Mays, and I also had someone else working at the same time there. Her name was Brown, Margie Brown. She has since died. Margie was an exceptionally—she had come from the South and she had worked in a home where she cooked like that.

MA: Mother always had good cooks and I guess that's similar with the South. They always had somebody who did the cooking. We didn't have the big meal in the middle of the day like they did here, that is, the southern tradition.

FA: But we always had good cooks.

MA: And we didn't have rice with every meal. We always had potatoes with every meal; that was different. Here they have rice with every meal.

FA: We didn't have grits all the time.

DR: Did your cooks in Flint cook so-called Jewish food?

FA: They cooked anything I wanted.

MA: Mother, we didn't keep kosher.

DR: People distinguish though between Jewish and kosher. I mean some people say Jewish-style, but they still feel that their food, their cuisine, is a little different from whatever, the main[stream].

FA: Well, I made certain things at holiday time that are traditional. I did. I don't do that anymore because I don't cook.

MA: Made kreplach.

FA: I don't even do that anymore. I miss them because they are good and I miss a lot of things that I don't make anymore.

DR: What about Marlene, in your household? I think, correct me if I'm wrong, I think I remember Freddie Kronsberg saying that she had to become kosher.

MA: And Hattie Kronsberg became kosher too.

DR: Marrying into that family.

MA: Right, kept kosher.

DR: Uh-hmm. Did you make any efforts?

MA: I never kept kosher, no.

FA: Marlene didn't even know what—

MA: No, but I did live, Avram and I lived with Ed when Hattie was sick. And we lived with him in the country club in his house afterwards, so I lived in a house that was kosher and it remained kosher, but he had somebody who cooked for him, who just continued the cooking and the buying of the meat and everything. They used to buy it from Mrs. Lash, from Lash's Meat Market. Then I remember Piggly Wiggly started to get kosher chickens or something and that was a big advance when you could buy them somewhere else too. I remember Hattie always tried to, she would get that roast and try and make it tender. You know she would buy that kosher roast and she would marinate it in the wine and everything, trying to make it more like a standing rib roast. Some of the cuts, the steaks were so tough. I mean they were not tender at all. You could not get good steaks. Certain kosher meats are delicious. The veal chops were delicious, but certain things weren't.

FA: You had to cook them until they fell apart.

DR: My grandmother was famous for that. Yeah.

FA: Marlene did a dinner party there one night.

MA: Mother—

FA: You don't want to tell that.

DR: Censorship.

FA: When we turn it off we can tell.

DR: Okay, you can tell me later.

FA: Well, Marlene had quite an adjustment here when she first came down here.

DR: Is that true Marlene?

FA: Yeah, because Hattie was teaching her and Hattie was a good teacher. And Marlene liked it. Marlene adored her and it worked both ways.

MA: When I first came to Charleston, Hattie had a black Chevrolet convertible and she always had the top down. She drove down King Street and all of her friends had stores. Evelyn Rubin had the children's shop. Daisy Bogen had the dress shop.

FA: Lingerie.

MA: Elza and Dave Alterman had their shop—the Krawchecks. We drove down the street and she stopped at each shop and they would come out and she introduced me as we were driving down. It was like a parade, a one car parade, and she stopped and visited because you know, narrow King Street and one way, and introduced me to everybody. We drove down the street. It was so funny.

DR: And this is in the '50s now?

MA: I was married in 1959.

DR: '59, late '50s. I wish I had had a hidden camera. I really do. We could use that footage now, Marlene. We could really use that footage.

MA: [Inaudible] Pearlstine were another couple they were friendly with and for Rosh Hashanah we would go to one house and for Yom Kippur we would go to the Steinbergs'.

FA: Really?

MA: Evelyn and Ben Rubin lived up on Devereux and we went there for a holiday. You know, because the Kronsbergs was just Hattie and Ed and Avram and myself. Buddy was probably at school and their families were small. They weren't grandparents and so they got together for the different Jewish holidays and that's what we used to do.

DR: What was it, Marlene, that attracted you to Burt Padoll and, by the way, do you know that he was just here? I met him.

MA: He was here?

DR: Yeah, I interviewed him. It was wonderful.

MA: I guess he—I don't know. He was so modern and he was so, he introduced us to *Commentary Magazine* and just—his views were so left-wing.

DR: Yeah, no, he's the first one to say that; [he was too] radical for the time and place.

MA: Right, exactly. He gave wonderful sermons. They were really thought-provoking.

FA: Who is that Marlene?

MA: Burt Padoll was a young rabbi. He was at the temple when Avram and I changed from Emanu-El to KK Beth Elohim and we did it because Burt Padoll was there and we were so taken with him.

DR: And Marlene you'll remember this. He told me about some kind of an arts festival or arts program that he instituted, which he said really electrified the community. I mean it was something that really brought people out. You don't remember that? It was another one of his, you know, just complete departures from the traditional role.

MA: He was very controversial.

END OF TAPE