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COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON  
MSS. 1035-375**

Interviewee: Robert A. Moses (b March 9, 1921, Sumter, SC)  
His wife, Clara Gayness Moses, is also present

Place of Interview: Moses residence, Sumter, South Carolina

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Interviewers: Elizabeth Moses (Robert's daughter)  
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**Note:** comments and corrections by the interviewee and his daughter during editing and proofing are in brackets with their initials.

**BEGIN RECORDING**

DR: So Robert, you know the drill. We've done this together so many times, but can you just tell me your full name and when and where you were born?

RM: Number one, I don't remember anything from times gone by, so you're starting with a freshman. But anyway, I think I do know my name and when I was born. [Laughing.] It's Robert Altamont Moses and I was born on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1921.

DR: Was there anything unusual about the circumstances of your birth?

RM: None that I'm aware of. We were living on Salem Avenue at the time and I was the next to the last child born there. There were six children born there before we moved. You want me just to keep on elaborating?

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DR: Absolutely, but let me just stick in a quick question. Were you born at home?

RM: Don't know. I don't think so, although, I understand Richard, who was the next child born after we left Salem Avenue, I understand he was born at home, which surprised me because I thought all of us were born at Tuomey Hospital, which was in existence at the time. So I'm just not sure on that particular point. But apparently, Richard was born at home. I don't know why.

DR: So go on with what you were going to say.

RM: Okay. I was just going to kind of try to start at the beginning. My father was born in Sumter, Henry Phillips Moses, and my mother, Charlotte Virginia Emanuel, was born in St. Augustine, [EM: Florida], which kind of puzzles me because I thought that her father and mother were living in Georgetown at the time. I don't what the explanation is of her being born in Georgetown. I believe they had a common aunt that they were visiting in New York in about 1912, I think. They were married in New York on a whirlwind romance and marriage.

They came home and, I think, shortly thereafter, they rented a home on Salem Avenue, a frame house. Then shortly *thereafter*, they built home about two or three doors closer to Liberty Street. They were on the first block of South Salem Avenue on the east side. In that brick home, I think we stayed for about eleven years. I think their first six children were born there. That would have my son—my brother Henry Moses, and my sister Virginia Moses, and then my sister Ta [ed.: Octavia] Moses, and then myself, followed by the twins, Herbert and Vivian. At that point we moved to our home on 218 Church Street, where Richard was born.

At the time we left Salem Avenue—let me think here . . . the twins were about five *months* old when we left Salem Avenue, Ta was about five years old, and I was about two years old. Very unfortunately, when I was about six months old, Henry, the firstborn son, and his sister Virginia were seven and five years old, respectively, and they caught polio. Henry caught it first, and about a week later, Virginia caught it, and a week or ten days later, Henry died, and a week or ten days later, *she* died. So my mother and father lost their two firstborn children when I was about six months old. Since I was so young and since it was never mentioned to any degree among the family members, I never gave proper weight to what a tragedy my father and mother had suffered. Also, a quirk of nature, the next to be born were the twins, two children after the loss of the two.

Anyway, we moved to 218 Church Street, which was a fairly new home that had been built by a Mr. Harby. I am not sure if it was—I don't think it was Horace Harby. I can't remember which Harby it was. The family moved to California and I think they were prominent out there. He was a contractor and had built and was living in the home that my father bought.

EM: Was he Jewish?

RM: I don't—he would have had Jewish connections, I think, being a Harby, but I don't know. I was six months old when we moved there. You want me to wait a minute?

DR: No, no, not at all, not at all.

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RM: Anyway, we moved into Church Street at that time and Richard was born there in 1926 and I think he *was* born at home. We stayed in that house all of our growing up years. [RM: My mother stayed there a short while after.] . . . The children were all adult and all of them had been married except my brother Vivian who had been killed in action in the Korean War in 1950. 218 Church Street was a huge home. It had a full basement and a full attic and it had an attached, large, outdoor sleeping porch over an attached porte-cochère at the back of the house.

The basement was so large that it had room for—some servants lived down there at one time. There was also, at one time, a little place for developing and printing and enlarging pictures, and a large area where my mother had shelves for storing canned goods and preserves. There was a ping pong table, a pool table, a large thing like a wire partition thing about the size of a large steamer trunk that held about eight different types of the pecan trees, of which there were thirteen bearing pecan trees on the lot. It also had a large, completely equipped carpentry workroom for projects large and small, and all of my equipment for stringing tennis rackets. In addition, it was large enough that the children would hold magic shows down there.

Then the yard—the yard was huge. It went back almost half the depth of the city block. It had some outbuildings on it: a garage and a two-room—with toilet—servant's quarters and a huge, covered, cement-floored warehouse barn. It had horse stables. Then the less permanent attachments: we had a huge, completely enclosed, wire pigeon pen; and we had a chicken yard and chicken house. We had two grape arbors and apple trees and fig trees, and fenced-in areas for chickens or goats or rabbits or whatever, or garden areas. At times we did have horses, ponies, cows, and goats, among the larger animals.

I forgot to mention that we had a really well-built, quality, large playhouse that early on, Ta—the only girl living at that time, only daughter living at that time, and our only sister with the four boys—monopolized for her doll house. It was very complete with a small, miniature, working wood doll stove that was connected to the chimney and everything else. Later, when Ta no longer monopolized it and we got ahold of it, we used it for a chemistry laboratory and for an extensive model airplane building. Did I mention that my father built like a peanut-shaped fish pond, and the boys, we constructed a little wire turtle farm. We had a pen for snakes and a pen for Japanese dancing mice.

We had a lovely time in that home and, looking back on it, I would say that it was a near-perfect childhood. My father squeezed in a clay tennis court in the back yard, which, true enough, did not have the alleys you use for playing doubles. He also mounted a basketball goal on one of the pecan trees. So we had a very fine home and a very fine yard. There was a stile that permitted us to cross over the fence into the neighbor's yard to retrieve baseballs or anything else that went across the fence accidentally. We had a lot of friends and neighbors that frequently played in the yard.

I don't know how my father did it, but he seemed kind of always to be present or be with us frequently, and we usually had large, spacious cars. He would load them up with the children and we would go for an afternoon swim at Second Mill Pond or sometimes to the more swank—where you had to pay and it was a little bit more formal—Pocalla Springs. We would maybe go on a mourning dove shoot or go for a picnic to Poinsett State Park or just on outings.

Harby Moses lived next door to us—Perry and Sadie Moses' son. He had an older—I think his parents would have been older than my parents—and he had an older brother Perry and an older brother [RM: sister] Doris, who had long been gone because they were a good bit older

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than he was. So he was kind of the only child in the house when we were growing up. He would frequently come over to our yard and was a usual presence there. He told me in our later adult life, more than once, that the most frequent words that he remembered during his childhood were looking up at my father and saying, “Can I go, too, Mr. Henry?” meaning he wanted to join in, which he usually did with whatever trips we took.

EM: Daddy, can I ask a question? You mentioned the place to develop photos in the basement. Who in your family did that?

RM: Me. I was perhaps the only one. I later—we didn’t have a formal social clique at college, but I became the unofficial photographer for our little social group and actually worked in darkrooms while I was in college.

I was talking about my father . . . I was just thinking that I don’t know how in the world he spent all that time with us and we never considered ourselves affluent or wealthy. I well remember being taught how to mend clothes, how to re-sole shoes, and of course, this was not professional for real good shoes, but it certainly worked for children’s shoes and stuff. I remember having a shoe shine kit that I shined shoes for all the family. I well remember that my mother would re-sew store-bought clothes with—she’d re-sew the buttons and reinforce anything else before she entrusted them to our care. I well remember that, without hesitation, we wore underwear and clothing sent down from northern, wealthy cousins, which sometimes included baseball bats and gloves and balls.

So I don’t ever think we felt like my father had two dimes to rub together but, at the same time, he managed to put five of us through college. He took us on vacations. We would occasionally go to Florida. I remember some [laughing] funny things. We would hit before breakfast, maybe, an abandoned orchard grove, and he would stop and hoist us over the fence, hoping we would fill up on oranges. Or he would stop—they had wayside road stands where you could eat. The sign said, “All-you-can-drink orange juice,” for something like ten cents. So my daddy would stop there and line us all up before breakfast. Finally, the poor proprietor, in frustration, would start saying to us, “Don’t you want to try some grapefruit juice?” [Laughing.] Because we would be putting him out of business drinking orange juice.

In addition to that we had vacations at the mountains and vacations at the beach. In fact, one time, we owned homes in the mountains *and* at the beach. The family cottage at the beach, built in 1939, is still in the family, and today I own it. It’s a treasured possession by all the family.

I think it also didn’t come to me until decades after I became a father myself, that the realization finally began to sink in to me what a truly wonderful father we had had. In trying to think a little bit about it, I always wondered if perhaps the very tragic, heart-rending loss of those first two children embedded within him a strong desire to live life to its fullest with the rest of his children. I also need to apologize to my mother because somehow over the years, I seem to have acquired a good little bit more knowledge of my father’s lineage than I have of my mother’s. I know my mother’s lineage must be out there somewhere, but I never knew anything much about any siblings or nieces or nephews to any particular degree, although I do remember a little bit. But on my father’s side it seems there’s much more common knowledge, you might say, about that side of the family.

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Interrupting my own story and going back just a little bit to the Sumter Moses family, my great-grandfather, Montgomery, came to Sumter about 1832, and that was among the earliest times that Jewish people were here. My grandfather, Altamont Moses, was born here. I was trying to track it down, but I'm almost sure that I heard my uncle—who would not say something if it weren't true—that our family had lived in a home at 14 South Washington Street—which has now been razed—for about a hundred years. So the family's been here for a long, long time. We can—

EM: Let me interrupt again. So when you were growing up on Salem and then Church, what part of the family was at 14 South Washington?

RM: Okay, 14 South Washington Street remained occupied by family members for many, many years. It was occupied by—when I became conscious of it—it was occupied by my grandmother, who I think died in 1936, at age ninety-one. She did die in March of '36. She was living—I had been born in '21—she was living there along with my maiden aunt Kathy and my youngest aunt, Armida, my father's youngest sister and the last-born of their seven children—of his parents' seven children.

With Unc and Nettie and it was often a point of—not amusement, but just unique observation—that Unc had married Nettie very, very late in his life and brought her home to live in the home with his mother and two sisters. You can imagine a bride being put into that situation, where she had no home of her own, no kitchen of her own, little say-so in how the house was run and everything else. I believe I remember her mentioning that it was a tradition and a formula that they would go riding out in the buggy on regular occasions and would take naps after meals on regular occasions. Of course, my grandmother died; my aunt Kathy died; my aunt Armida married and moved away, and eventually, there was no one there but my uncle, Unc, and his wife, Nettie. They never had children. But she did finally, you might say, inherit the house and became the mistress of the house.

DR: What was your grandmother's name?

RM: My grandmother's name was Octavia—I believe it was Mary Octavia Cohen. She was the daughter of—the Cohen whose paper you just sent me.

DR: Eleanor Cohen S—no.

EM: Eleanor Seixas?

DR: *Oh!* Marx E. Cohen. Sorry.

RM: Marx E. Cohen was her father.

DR: Marx E. Cohen was married to Armida Harby—you correct me if I'm wrong on this. [Laughing.]

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RM: I don't know.

DR: He—

RM: I got it in here.

DR: He married—my understanding is that he married the eldest daughter or one of the older daughters of Isaac Harby. [EM: Correct.]

RM: I'm not sure.

EM: I have to look it up.

RM: But anyway, he was certainly the father of my grandmother.

DR: Marx E. Cohen, okay. And that's Marx E. Cohen, Jr., am I right?

RM: Yeah, right.

DR: Okay.

RM: I don't know where to pick back up. Maybe—

EM: I'd like to—could you fill out a little bit about how your parents met?

RM: I understand they met—I did mention it earlier—

EM: Well just that she was not from here—

RM: She—

EM: —and your father was an eligible bachelor. Isn't that right, that kind of thing?

RM: Yeah. My father was reddish-haired and, unlike me, was very, very people oriented and very, very outgoing. I say he possibly could have been classified as a mild flirt. . . . I came to understand later that he was a very eligible bachelor at the time he left Sumter. I don't know what took him to New York, but I know that he went to visit, I think, a sick aunt up there and that was where he met my mother.

There was some funny story—maybe that happened shortly after they were married, because they had a whirlwind romance; he married her up in New York. The family, of course, was deeply shocked by all of it. They said all the ladies in Sumter were weeping at the loss of the eligible bachelor. But I think there was something up there where he was observed crawling in

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through a second story window over a porch roof and I don't remember [laughing] what those circumstances were.

EM: I remember that story.

RM: It was a little over a year later, after their marriage, that their firstborn child was born.

EM: And they're cousins but we—

RM: They were cousins, as I understand it, yes. That's about all I know about their meeting and romance. They were not heavily, openly affectionate, but definitely affectionate all of our lives. There was very little rancor or argument among the parents. The most of that was that when punishment time came, we were always told by our mother, "You just wait till your father gets home," because he was assigned to pick up the hairbrush and do all the spanking.

DR: Do you know when each was born?

RM: Yes, I do. My father was born September the 27<sup>th</sup>, 1886, and my mother was born January the 15<sup>th</sup>, 1889. I mentioned that she was born in St. Augustine, but I thought the family was living in Georgetown at the time. They were married in New York City, June of 1912.  
Anything else y'all can think of to ques—

DR: Well, just before we move forward—and there's tons, and we'll move forward and back, so don't worry about that—let me just ask you a couple things that I never heard before.  
[Laughing.] What is a Japanese dancing mouse?

RM: They would stand up on their back legs and twirl around. They were black and white and they were just pet mice. They finally developed warts and we had to get rid of them. [Laughter.] But they were nice entertainment. That's what they do; they hop up on their back legs and twirl. Have you ever seen tumbler pigeons?

DR: [Laughing.]

RM: No? There's a pigeon that flies up in the air and cuts somersaults all the way down till he gets close to the ground. So there are a lot of animals that do strange things. [Laughing.]

DR: Are these mice something your folks would have bought for you in like a pet store?

RM: Were they some of my first pets?

DR: Yeah.

RM: Yes, they would have been. Of course, we also had guinea pigs. I don't think hamsters were very popular or known about in those days. But we had goldfish bowls—I don't think we

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ever had canaries—but we had goldfish in bowls in the house. I'm not sure those mice were ever inside the house. All my recollection of playing with them was underneath the back porch.

DR: I presume you had dogs and cats and—

RM: We always had—

DR: —the more usual [laughs]—

RM: If I didn't mention it, we always had dogs and cats. Ta recently wrote her memoirs and in that she said—I said recently; she started them in '05 and finished them in '08. I have a copy of them here if you'd like to read through it before you see her. But I think in that she mentions that she remembered Gyp and Jinx and Big Boy and Little Girl among the four dogs that we had. We had a horse named Nellie and a horse named Prince. I don't remember the names of the other—and we had cats named Tarzan and Jane, and when Tarzan had a litter, we had to rename him. [Laughter.] We had misidentified his sex. But we always had cats and dogs and we most always had a horse or a cow and the goats.

My father bought a very nice durable carriage that would hold about six children. When I became competent enough and Ta was able to harness the horse up to the carriage, we thoroughly enjoyed that carriage. We would take it out to swim at Second Mill and tie the horse up. I believe we would disconnect it from the buggy. We would also deliver Sunday paper routes sometimes in it or peddle.

We peddled, trying to make a little pocket money. We sometimes sold surplus cabbages or extra scuppernong grapes or pecans. We also had a store out front that we would sell penny candy from. I remember we also charged for the magic shows and we told anyone that caught on to the show, we would refund their nickel, or perhaps it was a penny. I'm sure we did that with great reluctance. We also had a cart that the goat could pull, a little wagon, but it wasn't too reliable because we never knew what direction we were going in. [Laughter.] But the horse and buggy we used a lot and it was a thoroughly enjoyable affair.

DR: So let me ask you also, you said Pocalla Springs was one of the places you went?

RM: Yes.

DR: Am I saying it correctly?

RM: Yes, it was a little more sophisticated, more of a man-made swimming place out [EM: Highway] 15, a little ways out of town. It had much more appliances in the water. It had—I wish I could remember the name of it—but it had sophisticated sliding boards, barrels mounted on a spindle that twirled when you tried to get on top of it, and long park-like swings over the water that you could get in and swing. It also had something—for the life of me, I can't remember. I don't remember if we called it the Blue Devil, or what it was. But underneath the two-story dressing house where you changed clothes and left them and put on your bathing suits, underneath that there was a machine with a round ring on it and a cable that went around it, a

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rope ca—a *rope* that went around it and extended out maybe, maybe thirty or fifty yards out into the water, just below the surface of the water. There was a diving tower out there and underneath the diving tower was another large, circular rim that the rope went around. So the rope was constantly spinning in the water, round and round, and the object was to catch on to the rope. If you didn't grab it hard, it would blister your hands quickly. So you caught on to it and immediately it jerked you forward. You would have to turn and duck your head down so that the water would scoot over your face, you know, like a boat plowing through the water, your head would. You'd have to remember to let go before you got to the diving tower [laughing], because you wouldn't want to crush into it. But you could ride the Blue Devil out and ride the Blue Devil back and it was quite a feature.

It was also out there that I took my Red Cross lifesaving courses, the part that you had to swim in open water. I remember that you got a chance to pick your partner and I picked as my partner, Estelle Levi, the oldest daughter of Wendell Levi. The reason I chose a female partner was, women have a much better buoyancy in the water because per cubic inch, their body is much lighter and more buoyant than a male partner. A good bit part of our Red Cross training was having to fight off a practicing drowning person and pull them in, successfully, into land. So I was able to do that with somebody that was easier to float along than if they'd been male. And I guess there would have been nothing wrong with my thinking that I'd rather have a female partner, anyway. [Laughter.]

EM: Pocalla Springs is still there today. They've got apartment condominiums built around it.

RM: But the water's filled in.

EM: Oh is it?

RM: Yeah, the water's been filled in. There's no more.

DR: They probably were worried about the liability. [Laughter.]

RM: Probably. It had a famous artesian well and everybody would—the parents would always force their children to go drink from it because it was supposed to have had good health properties. They had small cabins and picnic grounds at Pocalla Springs. It's well—it's pretty well known today. Most people know what you're talking about if you say—because as she says, it was bought over by a development and there're apartments there now. They may even call them Pocalla Springs Apartments.

EM: In my lifetime the springs were still there and they were just all grown over. There was nothing out there; it was just kind of overgrown.

RM: There was also a third less known and less used and smaller place called Sweetheart Lake that was also a place where we went swimming.

DR: Pocalla was a state park?

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RM: No, Pocalla Springs—no the state park was Poinsett.

DR: Right. So Poca—who—

RM: Pocalla Springs was private.

DR: Private.

RM: Yeah. It was private. It was like a public park to people that used it, but I'm sure it was a for-profit enterprise.

DR: That's P-E-C-A-L-L-A?

RM: P-O-C-A-L-L-A. Pocalla.

DR: P-O—Pocalla.

RM: Second Mill was similarly a for-profit business. There was an old grist mill at Second Mill and actually it got its name because there was another grist mill at what's now Swan Lake, called First Mill. The Bradford family—and I later roomed at college with a cousin of theirs—the Bradford family owned and ran Second Mill, but it was much less formal than the operation at Pocalla Springs.

DR: So I wanted also to ask you about your northern cousins but, before we do that, let me—you know, you've talked a lot about your father, but not a lot about your interaction with your mom.

RM: I think that's because Daddy was outgoing and athletic. Mother was the homemaker. By nature, her life was more sedentary. My mother was a fine woman, quite accomplished. She became a master judge in the flower shows. She did a lot of community aid with the Red Cross and similar groups during the war. She was probably active in a lot of other ways that I do not remember. Her mother was a Seixas and, of course, her father was an Emanuel. She was a lady and she ran a very smooth-operating family. We had three regular meals a day and all the meals were sit-down family affairs. Again, I don't know how we did it, but I guess it was very ordinary in those days for everybody to have servants. We would have two servants living in the basement or servants living in the servants' house in the back yard. We usually had a cook and a butler, or a yard man.

EM: Do you remember any of their names?

RM: The last—I think we had—the last one we had was Sarah and I think her last name was Powers. One of the yard men's names was Willie. We also had a young yard man—I don't know if he ever lived there or not—named Steve. Johnson, I think, was his last name. He became quite

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well educated; graduated from Morris College. I think he became a high school principal. I remember him coaching Ta in algebra at the house.

There was a well-known Sumter fellow, whose name I can't remember. He ran a thing called the Jet Wrecker Services. He specialized in razing buildings. He once told me that my mother had befriended him and helped coach him in arithmetic and stuff, and that at one Christmas, my mother and father had given him a bicycle and to him, that had been a more valuable present than if someone had given him a Cadillac today. We were talking years and years later after my mother and father were both dead. I had known him in business. He had a second-hand—he would salvage all these materials from the places he tore down—he had a huge second-hand operation over the bridge where you go out Guignard [Drive]. It was there for years and years. I think his name—was his name Gerard? Do you remember?

CM: I don't think it was Gerard.

RM: I don't know why I can't remember his name. I have trouble with a lot of memory stuff. But other than that I don't much remember our servants. I can go on record as saying that my family at Washington Street also always had servants. One of them was named Della. Maybe I didn't mention it, but I think we had a—I think when we first moved to Church Street, there was a nurse for the twins and I think her name may have been Stella. She would take the ch—she had, probably, complete charge of the twins during the day. She was very, very proud of them. When they got old enough, the story is that she taught both of them to salute, and that whenever she would take them out and strangers would come up to look at them or something, she would have both of them salute. I remember that the family dog would go with them and any time she stopped the carriage, the dog would just circle the carriage until she pushed it off again.

Life with identical twins was *most* interesting. There was some doubt that my mother could tell them apart, but I don't really understand how that could *possibly* be, because I was so utterly familiar with the twins that they were complete individuals to *me*. You know, anyone, any of us can today almost detect a close friend or relative at a great distance just by seeing their form and shape and their walking habit. Well, it was that way with me and the twins, but it was *not* so with the twins with the general public. They were *so* identical that there were innumerable stories about them taking advantage of that fact—about switching dates with girls unknown and not knowing about it and about one of them answering when the other one was called on by a schoolteacher, by the nurse chasing them to give each of them a dose of castor oil and accidentally giving two doses to one twin, and many, many similar stories.

The most outstanding one that I know of is—they were very, very popular throughout their life. They were identically dressed and they were forever together and shared and did everything. They were musical. They played in the high school band and they both played bugles and trumpets and would be taken someplace at some ceremony and maybe play taps or some song in echo—one playing in one position and one playing in the other. But what I was alluding to was being so popular, our house phone, which the number was 3-8-3—we didn't have a party line—it would ring and if anybody in the family but them said, "Hello," the answer would be, "Is twin there?" That was the way they were identified. It wouldn't make a piece of difference to their friend that was calling, because they wouldn't know which one they were talking to. [Laughter.] So *always*, over the phone, their friends would say, "Is twin there?"

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As a little humorous aside, just a little glimpse of childhood—we all would go to the Rex Theatre on Saturday to see Bob Steele and Tom Mix in cliffhanger movies. Every—maybe once a month or something, in order to generate interest and sell more seats, the manager of the theater would offer free entrance to any child that could get up on the stage and perform. Herbert and Vivian were very natural at that because they could stage a little boxing match or they could play a little short duet on their trumpets. And Harby, who I mentioned earlier, and me, were without any kind of talents at all. We couldn't sing. We couldn't do dances. We had—neither one of us could play a musical instrument. So we were constantly frustrated that there was no way for us to get in free to the Saturday movie. But one day I said to Harby, “You know, we could do a recitation.” And he said, “Yeah.” So we cooked it up and we got in the line at the movies the next time and told the manager we were going to do a recitation. So we followed the line and the other children got up and did their little bits and pieces and Harby and I mounted the stage. He looked at me and I looked at him and we said—

CM: Pork and—

RM: Hmm?

CM: Pork and—

RM: “Pork and beans and tomato soup, make your belly do the loop-de-loop.” That was it. [Laughter.] We scurried off the stage into the dark theater while everybody said, “*Boo!*” [Laughter.] But we got in free. [Laughing.]

DR: [Laughing.] Oh, my God. So Robert, what happened to Herbert when Vivian was killed?

RM: Herbert never mentioned it. He never to this day has voiced Vivian's name in my presence that I know of, voluntarily. I don't understand it or didn't question it. They were both—we had an uncle that was a major general in the marine corps, Emile Moses. He was commanding general of Parris Island during World War II. When the war broke out, Herbert and Vivian were completing, I think, their junior year at Clemson and they were in the ROTC. Had they graduated, they would have been eligible to be commissioned as second lieutenants. But with their situation of going into service and the influence of Uncle Emile, who was a major general, they entered the aviation cadet program in the marine corps. Both of them became marine, single-engine fighter pilots.

I guess it was—they would have completed training, probably, after the war was over. Neither one of them ever saw action in World War II. But they did finish the program. They both became marine pilots. They both qualified flying off and landing on aircraft carriers and they went through the regular marine training. Well, eventually, a few years after World War II, Herbert decided that he did not wish to stay in the marine corps. Again, I wasn't ever privy to any particular thing. He just simply—I knew that he got out.

Vivian stayed in and Vivian was killed flying off of a carrier in Korea in, I think, the fall of 1950. Shortly before going out to the west coast and going to Korea on the carrier—which he was flying an F4U Corsair at the time; that's a gull wing, single-engine fighter plane that the

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marine was using—he had visited the family. I had picked him up. He flew into Shaw Air Force Base and he had a lug of cherries for my mother that he'd brought from California. She was exceedingly fond of fruits and things. I drove him down to Pawleys [Island] to join the family that was down there. My father was dead. He had died in 1945.

Just a little small thing to show you that Vivian was a cautious person: the two of us were riding in the car and I was driving. Probably you're familiar with a driver, every now and then, kind of hanging his wrist over the top of the wheel? Well, I did that and Vivian, sitting next to me, simply reached over and picked up my hand and put it back on the wheel, on the steering wheel.

Anyway, shortly after that, he flew on out to the west coast, got on the carrier, flew to Korea. Before he was shot down, he had had to ditch his carrier—I mean his airplane—near the carrier, the previous day because the—by 1950 the armor that was on the F4U Corsairs, protecting their liquid-cooled engines, had been removed following the shutdown after World War II. So his engine had gotten damaged and he'd ditched and was picked up and taken aboard the carrier. He was scheduled to lead his flight out the next day on a sortie, connected with the fighting at Seoul. They told him he didn't need to go; he'd just been picked up out of the water the day before. He said no, he had a score to settle. He still wanted to fly. So he led his group out and they were strafing an armored column when, again, the plane he was flying—ground fire shot out the coolant in his engine. He was in a steep dive as you are when you are attacking and strafing ground. So he had plenty of speed to pull up high enough to bail out. His wing man, Harold Jacobs, from Kingstree, was following him because he knew Vivian was in trouble. The story we got was that, preparatory to bailing out, Vivian had slid the canopy back and probably unhooked his harness, preparatory to bailing out. Then he probably realized that if he was coming down in a parachute, he would have been behind enemy lines. So apparently, he elected at that point to try to find a safer place and make a belly landing in the airplane.

So again, Harold was on his wing and testified that he made a really good belly-up landing without wheels—wheels-up landing. But even at the best of events, the best one you could hope to make would be a severe contact with the ground and a very harsh landing. There were two conflicting reports: one, that Vivian had been thrown against the instrument panel and killed, and the other version was that he was thrown out, having undone his harness, and he landed face up in two or three inches of water and had drowned before he regained consciousness.

EM: Face down, you mean?

RM: Hmm?

EM: Face *down*?

RM: Yeah, had fallen—been thrown face down into two or three inches of water, because a helicopter did come in pretty quickly and recover him. But that's the only information we got. He was buried in Arlington where his uncle, our uncle, the major general, had been previously buried, following his death.

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DR: And Herbert would never talk about it?

RM: Herbert never, ever referred to it. Vivian was written up in the Clemson publication. His picture was on the front of it. He was the first marine pilot killed in the Korean War. He was unmarried and he was wearing a Hebrew dog tag at the time. Herbert married—I believe the girl was Methodist, and Herbert never became a practicing Jew, to my knowledge. I don't know what they did. I'm sure they were both wearing Hebrew dog tags during World War II. But both he and Ta chose to become Christians and practice Christianity, and I never knew the whys and wherefores of *any* of it.

While I'm on that subject, also, apparently, I was the only one of us that didn't know about my *mother*. We had a very secular religious life growing up, though we certainly went to temple. And I think both Ta and Herbert had gone to temple along with me and Richard. I was confirmed. We didn't know what bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah were in those days; we had confirmation. I was confirmed when I was twelve years old by Rabbi Shillman here at Temple Sinai.

My father and my uncle and my aunts all went to temple and I always felt like my mother was—most all of her circle of friends were Jewish. I feel sure that she participated in sisterhood services and things like that at the temple, but I cannot *factually* remember her going to services as I do remember going with my father. It kind of came as a surprise to me, long after my father had died, that my mother was Episcopalian. I had never known that although it seemingly had occurred without my consciousness or conscious awareness and that maybe both Ta and Herbert knew about it. But I had never known it. At home we always had a Christmas tree and hung up Christmas stockings but we also lit Chanukah candles with the special Chanukah candelabra. We did hang up Christmas stockings and so forth. I probably heard my father say to somebody that all the other children were getting presents and he couldn't see his children not celebrating it. Similarly, we hunted Easter eggs and got chocolate bunny rabbits and everything; carried Easter baskets at Eastertime—but it was completely secular—hunting hard-boiled eggs and things.

DR: So your mother's mother was Christian? Is that why sh—

RM: Was what?

DR: Your mother's mother was Episcopalian or—

RM: No, I don't think so. She was a Seixas. I never knew she was Episcopalian.

DR: Okay. So how—why do you say your mother—you mean she adopted, she became Episcopalian?

RM: Oh you mean what was the influence that caused her to become Episcopalian?

DR: Yeah.

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RM: I can only think—and it's certainly not corroborated and it's not factual—but I think that my mother was a young child when her father died of, maybe, tuberculosis. I think they were very fearful that my mother might get tuberculosis and I think she was sent to St. Augustine—where I now understand she had been born—and placed with some sisters, a nunnery, for safety. My only feeling is that that must have been the key that planted Christianity in her. But I can't really remember her openly practicing Judaism. There was never any Christianity in the home. I never saw her bring a Bible or say she was going to church or *anything* like that. Nor do I think she ever openly—was actively participating in Christianity during all of our growing-up years. So I would have assumed that her mother and father were both Jewish without a question. Why she became Episcopal, I don't know.

DR: Do you know when she converted?

RM: Oh, *when* it happened?

DR: Yeah, when.

RM: That may be something that may come out to [RM: with] Ta, or off the record, for your own and for our interest or information, you could ask Ta about it off the record, if she doesn't choose to talk about it.

DR: Right, right. So you think she was Episcopalian when your dad married her? Before he—

RM: No.

DR: No? Oh, so—

RM: No, I don't think so.

DR: —during her marriage? That's interesting.

RM: I don't have any way of knowing.

DR: Yeah.

EM: I remember when I was growing up, I don't actually remember her going to the Episcopalian church, but I remember going to her funeral at the church. But she's, of course, buried at the Jewish cemetery. I think I asked you—she didn't have any kind of *formal* conversion to Episcopalian, did she? I think she just started going to church there. [Note from Elizabeth Moses, 8/06/14: I feel sure that she was born into a Sephardic Jewish family. Her father, Maurice Emanuel died when she was six and her mother remarried a non-Jew. We don't know if he was Episcopalian, but he may have been the source of Christian influence. However, she still married a Jew and raised their children in the Jewish faith. My aunt Octavia Mahon, my

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uncle Richard, and my father agree that she was a practicing Episcopalian later in her life, after my grandfather died, although no one remembers an actual conversion.]

RM: Have no knowledge, whatsoever. Again, I think Ta would.

DR: Yeah. Isn't it your mom who made application for membership in the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution]—

RM: Yeah.

DR: —and was very involved in genealogy?

RM: Yes.

DR: So that's interesting, too, because, of course, the DAR is such a—

RM: She is—there are many notes in her handwriting in here.

DR: Okay. She was very interested in genealogy.

RM: Yeah. Yes, she was. And—

DR: Because you know—

RM: —her mother's buried in the Jewish cemetery, as well as she.

EM: Yeah, her family was Jewish.

RM: Hmm?

EM: She was Jewish. Her family, on both sides, was Jewish.

RM: Yeah.

DR: Hmm. It's a very Sumter thing [laughing]—

RM: Yeah, I agree with you.

DR: —that [laughing]—

RM: Well, I often tell people the Jews in Sumter were loved to death by the non-Jewish people. Also, there was such a small Jewish community, there wasn't a lot of opportunity for marriage within the faith. That's what happened to me. I never knew any Jewish girls to speak of, to date. I could probably only count five Jewish girls I ever dated in my life.

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DR: In terms of your family, though, what—can you describe a little bit about your relationship with your mom or how she—you know, what she looked like, what she—

RM: Yes. I probably didn't flesh her out well enough. She was, well—always carefully, cleanly dressed, and always strong, staunchly moral, and certainly all of that would have been rubbed off and put into us by her. She was a nice-looking woman. This is her picture here.

DR: Oh, yeah.

RM: She was a *really* good cook. She—

EM: *That's your mother?*

RM: Wait a minute, let me see? Yeah, that's my mother—

DR: [Laughing.]

RM: —and my father. I cooked at my mother's knee many times. I helped her make chocolate rolls, rolling up the cake part in a damp towel. She probably taught me how to make fudge and how to make buttermilk and whey and curd. I learned from her how to cure fish roe, which was a real nice delicacy that my mother—and I would help her—would cure the fish roe every fall and package it and send it away for money to people that were very anxious to have it. It was the color and consistency, and some think *taste*, of Octagon Soap. [Laughter.]

Later on, after my mother's death, or maybe during her lifetime, but when she was much older, I cured lots of fish roe myself for people in town that still loved it and wanted it. I remember one fellow brought me a whole plastic sack full of fish roe and asked me would I please cure it for him, and keep whatever I wanted, something like that.

EM: How about the haws? Wasn't that something that came from your family? Picking—

RM: Oh, yeah. My mother also made haw jelly, which was a Sumter specialty. I never heard or saw or tasted of it out of Sumter County. She taught me how to make haw jelly and so—

DR: Were the fish roe from shad?

RM: Was it—no, no, it was from mullet.

DR: *Mullet roe!*

RM: Mullet roe. and it had to be together. It was a large angel—I mean winged pair—and the skin couldn't be broken. I remember all the steps to this day. It was—

DR: What do you—describe how you make it.

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RM: It was salt—yeah. You got the fish roe and the person selling it to you would know that it had to be two big halves, hooked together. It looked like big bird wings or something, but it was nice thick roe. It had a vein running down it, where the membrane joined together on the inner side. You would take your thumb and run the blood out of the vein and it would go out at the end where they were joined together. They remained joined together for the entire process. The first thing we did was just wash them to be sure they were clean and lay them on a clean, dry, wide, pine shelf board. They had to be laid out in the open when the weather had gotten cool or cold and they had to be put in a screened enclosure, like a back porch, and they would be sprinkled with salt. That would be the first step.

About a day later they would have become slightly flattened on the rounded side that you had laid them down, and you would then turn them over and lay them down on the inside and sprinkle them with salt. After two or three days of that, you would then cover them with another wide, clean, pine shelf board. That would increase the pressure on them and caused them to flatten further.

About three or four days later, you would lay a couple of bricks, depending on how many—you might have five feet of boards covered with your roe and you would put a brick on top of the top board to increase the pressure on them. What was happening all that time, the moisture was being drawn out by the salt and the moisture was evaporating. The roe had probably decreased a third or a half its depth and had become like flattened cakes.

Eventually it dried out and became hard so that you could stand it on edge and tap it and you'd just hear it like it was a piece of wood. At that point it was safe to handle it. It was fully cured. It was mostly eaten kind of like you would treat caviar or salt herring or something like that—it was a very strong taste to it—but my favorite way of eating it was just to cut little chips off because you could shave pieces off, similar to doing a hard cheese, and we would eat it in grits in the morning. It did have an outer skin, the membrane that I had said wasn't broken. It was dry when it cured and you'd just peel that off and you could cut it into pieces. It was highly prized by people that had a taste for it, even though it was strong. It wasn't a fishy taste, but it was a—the nearest I could come to it would be maybe a caviar-type taste to it. It was very definitely a Sumter specialty and delicacy.

I also remember, in the days when money was very tight, storing eggs in a large container in water glass, which was a liquid [EM: sodium silicate]. You would simply drop your whole fresh eggs in it. It had the property of being able to seal off the egg from having any air come through, to keep the egg fresh. You'd simply retrieve the egg out of the water glass when you wanted to use it.

. . . . I also helped my mother box and ship pecans. I mentioned that we had the thirteen pecans trees in our yard and I miss them to this *day!* Because we loved pecans and we had that big wire bin in the basement that I told you about and we would segregate each different kind of pecan into its own bin so that my father could say, “Go get the Schleys,” or “Go get the”—one was called—what was it? Had to do something with the—a Money-maker. They all had names, which I've long since forgotten.

There was a prize tree. The best tree in the world, unfortunately, was in the front yard and its branches overhung the sidewalk and the lower part of the paving. It had huge, really tasty nuts with a fairly thin shell. I don't think you'd classify it as a paper shell. But anyway, if they would

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fall on the sidewalk or in the street, half of them falling would crack open and you'd have to eat it on the spot rather than put it in your bucket. But we would have to get up real early in the morning and go get those nuts, because passersby would pick up everything that was in the street or on the sidewalk. During the time that the nuts were ripe, all of us boys would get out there and gather up prize sticks very suitable for throwing high up in the trees to knock the loose nuts down. All the family would join in the picking—all the children anyway.

Similarly, the haws that were mentioned, it would take a good, full galvanized bucketful of haws to make haw jelly. The haws were no bigger than the small tip of your little finger, so it would take a powerful lot of haws to get enough to make haw jelly. In the early days the black people would peddle things on the street, come to houses, or you would ask them to bring you something, and that's the way my mother would get the haws.

But during my adulthood and my haw jelly-making days, we had to go pick our own haws. It was back-breaking work and many hands make for lighter work, so I would recruit all the children, frequently rousing them out of bed before school time and taking them out in the cool September morning to pick haws off the ground, help pick the haws. I knew where all the haw trees were out in the country. They just grew wild for us to pick.

EM: I have a question. I want to go back a little bit, when you were talking about the servants who lived with y'all, either in the basement or in the cabin. Obviously, they were provided with living quarters and I presume all of them were black?

RM: Yeah.

EM: Do you think they were paid on top of that?

RM: Oh, of course.

EM: Okay.

RM: Absolutely. I wanted myself to go back to that because I wanted to be sure and say that Marx E. Cohen, my mother's father [RM: my paternal grandmother's father], I think, was recorded having some sixty-five slaves or so. There was a black man in Sumter County who built gins and was noted for his high-quality gins and became quite affluent. He owned many, many black slaves. He was a black—a former slave himself. My family, of course, owned slaves because everybody in their position did.

But down to the family members that I came to know that were alive during my lifetime. Practically everybody in Sumer had servants. I just don't think there were hardly any of my knowledgeable circle of people who didn't have servants. I want to go on record as saying that certainly, that wasn't right. It wasn't fair. It was degrading to them. It was segregation. I grew up right in the bed of it. Blacks couldn't drink from our water fountains; they couldn't sit in our restaurants; they couldn't go to our theatres; they couldn't go places where—[laughing] I remember myself as a boy, walking down a road on Miami Beach, and I came to a little path going into a hotel and it said, "No Jews or dogs allowed." It might have also said, "No Jews, blacks, or dogs allowed." But anyway—

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EM: Yeah, you always told me the sign said, “No blacks, dogs, or Jews allowed,” that “Jews” was last.

RM: Well, I did remember reading that. Anyway, that was my normal growing-up situation and there was a *multitude* of blacks here. I think even today it’s fifty-fifty or more in favor of the blacks. In the county it may have been sixty [EM: percent] blacks and forty [EM: percent] whites. But anyhow, I wish to go on record as saying that none of my extended family, to my knowledge, *ever* exploited them, was discourteous to them, physically or mentally abused them, or in *any* way treated them other than as a friend, excepting of course, the situation that existed between the races.

I clearly remember my father finding our yard man drunk and urinating in the yard when we came in one evening. My father, of course, greatly upset, never took a hand to him or screamed or hollered or cursed him or anything. Although, of course, he was very—he chastised the man and was very—telling him in no plain terms what a terrible thing he was doing. But all I’m saying is, in all those years, to my knowledge, they were all treated in a humane manner and fashion, understanding of course that it was a highly undesirable situation from their viewpoint.

I would like to go ahead and illustrate that with a slight point. My uncle Herbert was a giant of a man. In those days the office was open on Saturdays until five o’clock and he worked on Saturday and died the following Tuesday. I think, over the weekend, or sometime, I remember, he was sick and had a fever and I went to his house, when perhaps he was the only person living there at the time. He had a temperature of about a hundred and two. He was fully dressed in suit, vest, coat, tie, and waiting for the doctor to come. On this particular instance between the Saturday before he died that he worked and he died on the Tuesday, he called me to come around to his house the day he died or I was there. He said, “Robert,” he said, “Sally”—and I don’t remember the names for sure. Sally and Martha both worked there, as you know. One was a cook and one was a maid, I guess. He referred to the one of them by name and said, “She has not been with me but maybe six months or so and she’s not in my will. Sally, the other one, *is* and I left her five hundred dollars. I want you to be sure that”—whatever the other one was—“also gets five hundred dollars.” That was why he called me in to talk to me. I think that’s just a little thing of the way he felt towards his servants.

There was a servant that Ta mentioned in her memoirs; Walter was his name. He lived, at one time, in the servant’s house in my uncle’s back yard and did not work for them. He did work for a lot of other people, but he lived there. I don’t know whether he—

EM: I remember that house.

RM: Hmm?

EM: I remember that house.

RM: I don’t remember whether he paid—money was paid—I mean paid money to live there. I doubt he did. He probably did work at the house in exchange for living there. But I did want to mention that about the servants. Were there any questions at the moment?

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DR: Well, you know, you mentioned Unc before in a couple of other contexts and I was going to ask you to go back and talk a little more about him because he really became the historian of your family.

RM: Unc came into prominence with *me* because my father died while I was away during World War II. My father had built such a successful business that Unc found it to his benefit to go into business with my father, to come there to work. Unc had been the secretary to the governor and had had some other government position for some number of years. He was well-respected. He was an eminent scholar and he was very much an intellectual, very much a public servant. He served innumerable terms on city council and rose to be mayor pro tem. He was public spirited and politically savvy, very interested in sports. . . . Baseball was his favorite sport. He also daily read the comics and got a kick out of that. He was well read and a student in every positive sense of the word.

Having said that, he married very late in life, never had children and was totally different from my father in his personality. He completely lacked his [RM: my] father's inherent propensity to instruct and teach and to communicate. My father had died and Unc was president of the company when I entered the business after World War II and . . . Unc—I was kind of drifting at sea in the office because Unc just allowed me to gain knowledge about the business through osmosis and hardly ever took me aside or taught me something or tried to instruct me, where my father had taught me a little bit of plumbing, a little bit of electricity, a little bit of carpentry. I had even attended insurance seminars over weekends with him on steam boiler or hail insurance. He was just a really nice, natural-born instructor and teacher. He had taught all of us a lot of sports and everything. So it was very difficult for me to go into the business without my father and just be, more or less, cast adrift there. It took me a long time to get over that.

But I loved my uncle, admired him, and have little criticism of him at *all*. He was very public spirited. He had a really fine sense of humor. He knew the geography of the county like the back of his hand, as did my father. He was just a scholar in every sense of the word. He authored a lot of papers and we were both in the Fortnightly Club, which it was a well-respected gentlemen's literary society. He was a lifetime Kiwanian and I'm sure he was president of the Kiwanis Club. I have absolutely no criticism of him at all. I'm constantly quoting him or mentioning him to my children and my wives because of his wits and stories and ability to remember history and so forth. I have any number of little tiny anecdotes to tell about him. He always had a lot of cats that he fed in the back yard. He also had pecan trees at Washington Street, similar to what we had at Church Street.

EM: This is a picture of the South Washington Street house.

RM: Yeah, that's the house where my family was for over a hundred years, I think. We were out walking in the yard one day and one of the trees, the pecan trees, as pecan trees will often do, produced a nut that was hardly worth eating because it was small and there wasn't much to it. But he was stomping with his foot on the ground and cracking them open. I said, "Unc, what are you doing?" And he said, "I'm cracking these all open for the birds to eat." I said, "Good gosh, you're feeding the birds on the ground with all these cats you got around?" He said, "Well, any

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bird that gets caught by a non-flying cat deserves what it gets.” [Laughter.] That was kind of a picture of his humor.

He also spoke to me—or reported an incident; he had a big double-car garage with great big old sagging doors, that he put the car in and closed the doors every night. He talked about starting to walk out of the garage one night and just glanced down and there was a huge cobweb between the floor and the jamb of the door. And just as he looked at it, a poor butterfly got caught in the cobweb. He said he reached down to try to free the butterfly, but his hand stopped before he got there. He said, “I said to myself, what am I, to be interfering with nature?” So he just left it.

He had a really good sense of humor. I walked into the living room—into the front door and into the living room, as I frequently did in the later years when he was up in years and living by himself, and I caught him grimacing at a picture. He was director [RM: a member of the board of directors] of the local coffin manufacturing company and he had been photographed as a director of the coffin company. He was scowling at the picture and I said, “That looks like a pretty good picture to me, Unc. What’s the matter with it?” He said, “Man, it makes me look ninety-five instead of eighty-eight.” [Laughing.]

DR: So Robert, what was the business?

RM The business was real estate and insurance. Real estate and insurance. I guess I could, at some point—I’m trying to think if there’s anything more I wanted to tell you about Unc—

DR: Well let me ask you, before we do that, was this the business your father was in for most of his—

RM: My father entered the business—and I have the contract at the time he entered—at a salary of a hundred and fifty dollars a month, I think. There was a man named Jones who was in partnership with somebody else and my father went to work for the partnership. He later bought the partnership out and took over the business. We were, for well over seventy years, at the same location on Main Street. . . .

I, unlike a lot of my friends who knew that they wanted to be a doctor or a lawyer or whatever, I never knew what I wanted to be. I would often tell struggling children or friends of theirs who didn’t know what they wanted to be that I was forty years old and still didn’t know what I wanted to be [laughs]. But anyway, because of a lack of that, I never sought a specialized education. After graduation and following the mandatory years in service, I entered my father’s business simply because—it hadn’t ever been talked about much or even mentioned or questioned or anything else—it just kind of was a known that I would go there, although it was never, ever mentioned or questioned or talked about or asked me, or anything else. That was how I entered the business.

DR: So the years that you were saying he seemed to be home a lot and was able to really participate in your childhood, *that was* the business at that time that was supporting the family?

RM: Yes, absolutely.

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DR: So he was a businessman. I mean—

RM: Yes, my father.

DR: Yeah, your father.

RM: He was a very successful businessman.

EM: And the name of the business?

RM: Was Henry P. Moses Company. My father, just to give you a glimpse at one or two little things, he was very temperate. We always had a locked cabinet in the house full of liquor. He and my mother never touched it, to speak of. I don't mean they were *obsessive* about it, but they just didn't drink. I followed in his footsteps. I've got a double-doored cabinet up there full of alcohol and, year in, year out [laughs], we never touch it. He said to me once, when he was worried, I guess, about my passing puberty and reaching teenage years, he said, "Look, you can get a highball and hold it in your hand *all* evening, and be just as big a fool as the next man." To me, that kind of is the way it turned out to be.

He also—I mentioned he was a flirt. I was walking downtown with him, holding his hand—might have been ten or eleven years old. A nice-looking, red-headed lady came walking down the street and they stopped and greeted each other quite warmly. During the course of the conversation, my father looked down at me and said, "Robert, this lady could have almost been your mother." I turned about six shades of crimson, ran around and grabbed his leg on the back. [Laughing.] I was so embarrassed. But he was very, very—unlike me—very people oriented and made friends easily. But unfortunately, I never had the pleasure of going into business with him.

As I say, when I was in high school and, I guess, summers from college, maybe, he would teach me the business. He would have me go away to a seminar with him on steam boiler insurance or hail insurance or other stuff, so that I had a pretty smattering.

As a matter of fact, I forgot to mention, the summer of my junior or senior year from college it was, I was sent to Atlanta for the summer to a huge insurance firm that was a brokerage house. In other words, they were the ones that—the business was sent down to people like my father who were agents. In the insurance business, the property and casualty insurance business, and life insurance business, agents represented numerous companies: The Hartford, Money, Prudential—I've forgotten the names of all the various insurance companies, but at any one time, we might have represented eleven companies.

This place that I went to went to work to was a friend of my father's who had the business that agents *reported* to. He just wanted me to go in there. The man's name was Quinn. His son was Langdon Quinn. I don't know if it was Langdon Quinn, Jr.; it might well have been. It was in a multi-story apartment [RM: office building] in Atlanta and I went to work there one summer. I guess that was—again, without saying—in preparation of me coming into the business. I would get lunch sometimes in the downstairs drugstore-located floor of the building in Atlanta. I took a break and went down there once and asked them for a chocolate shake because, even in those days, I was very chocolate oriented. Accidentally, they made the shake

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with whipping cream, I think, and he started to turn it out and he said, “Oh, my lord! Look what I’ve done.” I said, “That’s okay. I’ll have it just like it is.” Boy, did I have a stomachache. I ate the whole thing.

Reminds me of another little story. After I started growing up, I guess, and hit my teen ages, I had a couple of little jobs around town. One was at a Western Auto hardware store but I think the longest running one was with a small independent local grocery store, Cummings Grocery. It was long before the days of the supermarkets, when all the little hometown grocers were still strong and operating. I worked Saturday mornings there. I was paid a quarter and I would take Ta to the movies. It was ten cents each and we could buy popcorn with the nickel. So that’s what we would do on Saturday mornings. But the first quarter that I earned, my father built a little frame down in our downstairs workshop and hung it in my bedroom wall, and the maid stole it. That was my first quarter.

Anyhow, back to my work at the store, my first job was running a little peanut roasting machine that stood on a stand and you could roll it out on the sidewalk. I had to attend to the roasting peanuts and bag them and sell them. I was also in charge of the plug tobacco inside, which was sold.

After working there for a good little while, I got very accustomed with the glass jar—bins of cookies with the flip lids on them—that had all my favorite cookies in them and nobody bothered or minded if I sampled some of the goods. One day when I was hungry, I walked back to the meat counter and saw what I perceived in there to be some meatloaf in a dish or something. I went around back and asked the butcher or the meat market fellow—I guess by that time, I already had two fingers out—if I could have some. He said, “Sure.” I swallowed it and he said, “You know that’s the cat’s food don’t you?” [Laughter.] With that, I headed out back and lost everything I’d eaten for a week. [Laughter.]

In those days we had bicycle delivery of the groceries and the women would call in and say what they wanted. We’d fix the order and it’d be sent out on bicycles.

EM: Daddy, let me ask you a question. All of this that you’ve been talking about, just the everyday business and living, it doesn’t sound as if the fact that your family was Jewish was even a factor in anything.

RM: No it wasn’t. It wasn’t much. In my lifetime I probably encountered less than four open acts of antisemitism, and the ones I encountered weren’t life-changing or life-threatening, just notable. The very first one probably occurred—we walked to school; we walked everywhere in those days, and we only—we didn’t have shoes, probably, until we were about twelve years old. I remember going to school in the wintertime, and looking down, my feet would be red as could be. It was thought to be healthy and prevent colds, not to wear shoes. But anyhow, that was not what I set out to say. I was walking to school one day and there was a—I probably was third or fourth or fifth grade, something like that—and all schools have bullies who are repeating the grade for about the third time—and one of the big bullies just called me, “Jew boy.” That was about the first thing I ever remember.

DR: Did you say anything back?

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RM: I wasn't able to. In other words, I wasn't that brave and that much of a fighter. In fact, I rate myself as a very non-competitive person. I've often played games and tried to win, like tennis. I earned a letter in high school football. I played on the YMCA basket ball teams and I was on the first string in the swimming team. So I *competed*, but I just never felt an *urge* to compete. I never felt—I always wished I was a better boxer because I felt that I would have responded more aggressively to what I perceived as mild threats later on, or at least could stand up to them. But at that point in my life, I was just a little boy going to school and this was a big old bully, gorilla thing, so nothing doing. We weren't on the school grounds or anything.

I think the next thing that I remember was my sophomore year at The Citadel. Since the Sumter High School was organized on *semi*-military basis, we lined up in company formation before going into school, and they did have drills with rifles and stuff. I don't think we had any formal ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] standing, but we did have that smattering of military organization. It was all boys the year I graduated from high school. The next year they allowed the boys and girls to go to school together, but not while *I* was there. [Laughter.]

So anyhow, when I entered The Citadel, I had a little bit of a leg up from that military stuff. I could do what is called close-order drill, that is, I knew how to do right face, left face, about face, and I probably knew the manual of arms, order arms: right shoulder arms, left shoulder arms, parade rest, present arms, that kind of stuff. I probably knew all that, entering freshman at The Citadel. Most other boys, coming from just plain high school, didn't know that. On top of that, my father had gone to Clemson, although he'd never gone very long because his father died, I think, after his freshman year and I think that's as far as he got. But he was a tiny little bit of military-minded. Maybe he'd been briefly in military service. I don't know.

Adding a little something to Unc—interrupting myself—

DR: That's all right.

RM: Unc served in the Spanish-American War and there were some nice incidents he described of that. They never got to war, but he was called in and was enlisted and was in service. After the war the government sent out monetary pensions to all the veterans and Unc sent his back; said it was a privilege to serve his country; he wasn't taking money for it.

But he told some cute stories about that. One that I remember was that they had been hiking for days on end and finally came to a river where they were offered permission to go get in the water to clean off. He said, "We all looked liked hobos on down." [Laughter.] They were so dirty and bedraggled.

Anyway, when I entered The Citadel, I had that leg up, knowing that much military. The Citadel is known as being a very strict VMI/West Point-type institution. A lot of boys are made to fear going there because they are going to be abused and hazed and everything else. The truth of the matter is that your freshman year, you are introduced to military discipline, and they have a hard job of getting it across to you quite quickly. So there are what's known as freshman regulations, which, in a manner of speaking, are a fairly mild form of hazing. You have to sit on the forward four inches of your chair at mealtimes. You're sometimes required to square a meal by lifting up and feeding yourself like that. You have to address all upperclassmen as "Sir." You have to walk on the outer edge of the sidewalk at all times and be at attention. This is during

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freshmen regulation period. You can't look around or anything. You're given punishment tours and so on and so forth. You're required to recite things. I remember some of them—one or two of them. One of them was a freshman [RM: upperclassman] would ask you, "What is leather?" You would need to reply, "Sir, if the fresh skin of an animal, clean and divested of all hair, fat, and other extraneous matter, be immersed in a dilute solution of tannic acid, a chemical combination ensues. The gelatinous tissue of the skin is converted into a substance, insoluble and"—something else—"in water. That, Sir, is leather."

We had to repeat a whole bunch of them like that. Another one was, "How is the cow?" It's "Sir, she walks, she talks, she's a female . . . I don't remember that one. Another one was, "What time is it?" You would say, "Sir, according to the sidereal movement of the stars"—and so on and so forth—"I think, by my watch, it's"—so-and-so, and you'd give the time. What is leather is the only one I remember to a pretty good degree. [Laughter.]

Anyhow, I was starting out to say that I was made to shine as a freshman—oh, I forgot to say about the bullying and the hazing and so forth. To my way of knowledge and based on my own experience down there, a freshman going in can get into *just* as much trouble as he *wishes* to. Like all cases of bullying, the bully will pick somebody that responds to his way of liking when he's bullied. He cringes or responds or something. The person that appears to be indifferent about the bullying and to keep his nose clean and to behave himself, the bully soon loses interest in him and moves off to another one. So you can get into just as much trouble down at The Citadel as you want; you're told what to do, what the freshman regulations are. If you do it, by and large, there's not much to being hazed and the bad, terrible trauma of being a freshman.

One of the worst experiences I had was in the mess hall. They have guards at—everything is military and there're amanuensis guards at the doors when you go into the mess hall and leave it. You're seated at the table governed by an upperclassman. This one particular incident, one of the upperclassmen came to me and he said, "I want you to bring two settings of silverware by my room. You tuck it in your shirt and bring it to me afterwards." "Yes sir." So I dutifully got the silverware and put it in my shirt. Of course, he had flagged the people at the door to be on the lookout for me. When I started to go out the door, I was caught and searched and so, naturally, I was sent up for stealing silverware from the dining room. However, once the truth was out and I told them what happened, that was the end of that.

EM: So do you think that's because you were Jewish or that was just—

RM: Oh, no! That was just standard procedure, the way to treat freshmen. I mean that was just somebody doing a little bit of bullying. As I remember it—well, we were assigned punishment tours for infraction of regulations. A punishment tour was an hour walking back and forth across the quadrangle on a set path, in full uniform, with a rifle. You might get two tours, three tours, five tours, depending on how obstreperous a freshman you were. Well, during my freshman year, I had a nice friendship with a Jewish boy named Harry Rubin from Charleston. Harry and I loved to go out in boats. He taught me the fine tunes of rowing and sailing. During my freshman year we were out sailing one day. We missed the buoy mark in the channel and got stranded on a sandbar. We pushed and shoved, but the tide was going out, leaving us more and more stranded. So there was nothing in the heck to do but wait to get floated off. I was, naturally, late—well, we

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were both, naturally, late getting back to the barracks, and for that I received a punishment tour because it was like telling somebody you were late because you had a flat tire. “Yeah, that’s right. I know you did.” You know. That’s the way we were greeted when we told them we had run aground on a sandbar. That, to my knowledge, is the only time I had a punishment tour at The Citadel, was for that incident.

EM: Well, you started off, when we started talking—not to harp on it—but you said that you remembered in grade school the boy calling you “Jew boy.” You said there were about three or four other—

RM: I had forgotten to continue with that. As a result of my prowess and somewhat, perhaps, outstanding military performance or skill or whatever you want to call it, at the end of your freshman year, you’re eligible for receiving the rank of corporal, as sophomores, to train the incoming freshmen and so forth. The only rank you can hold as a sophomore is a private or corporal. I made a fairly high-ranking corporal my sophomore year, held back knowingly by my poor scholastic record. I was never a scholar. I just did not get motivated. If I got real interested in a subject, like maybe physics or—I don’t remember any other [laughing] subjects I got very interested in—but anyway, I did fairly well. But in other subjects—and I think the end of my freshman year I had made a D in something. You weren’t promoted [RM: in rank] unless you did well both militarily *and* scholastically. So anyway, I did get a fairly high-ranking corporal. That year, one of the upperclassmen who was fairly friendly—he wasn’t treating me badly or anything—he just said in effect—I don’t remember what his wor—“You know Robert, if you weren’t Jewish, you would have received a much higher ranking.” That’s what he said to me.

I seem to remember—I don’t know. I can’t really [inaudible]. The other one that I do remember occurred after I’d been in business two or three years and was living in the company’s apartment project at Orchard Place. There was a neighbor that adjoined the property—gosh, I all of a sudden can’t pull the name up—but I had known him more or less all my life because Orchard Place Apartments weren’t but two or three blocks from where I’d grown up. And it was a small town, so you knew practically everybody. So this neighbor, knowing that I was working at the company, knowing that I lived in Orchard Place, and she lived next door to it, called me at the office to make a complaint. I’ve totally forgotten what the complaint was about. The service alley going behind the apartments was actually what adjoined her yard, so that was a service alley that cars came and went and where the garbage was put. I don’t remember if she objected to somebody letting garbage come in her yard, if she objected to noise from the apartments that were close—I don’t remember *what* it was. Anyhow, I was failing to get her happy about it and she called me a “long-nosed Jew,” over the phone. I don’t remember if I hung up with her—I told her if she couldn’t talk like a lady, I wasn’t going to talk to her, and I think I hung the phone up. Which reminds me of a couple of more instances that would portray Unc’s personality.

At one time—because this was another dissatisfied customer—at one time, down at the office—and there was a counter at the front of the office that customers or clients would stop at the counter and pay their rent or ask to talk with an agent or whatever—there was a lady that I was having a terrible time satisfying. I again, *completely*, I have no idea what it was we were talking about. But I went to Unc, finally, in exasperation—she had left, about the third or fourth time I’d failed to sa—and told Unc my problems. He listened patiently and he said . . . “Tell her

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what the adjutant told the newspaper reporter.” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “Well, during the war, this newspaper reporter was real pushy. He kept pushing on the adjutant and pushing on the adjutant to tell him something about the maneuvers, something about the military.” . . . “Finally the adjutant couldn’t stand it any longer. [RM: So he sought advice from his general. After listening, the general said to the adjutant, “Tell him to go to hell.”] . . . . [Laughter.]

And another little incident—I mentioned that I was stringing tennis rackets. I think that that was foisted upon me by my father who could no longer afford to restring all the tennis rackets his children were playing with and constantly breaking. So during high school I learned how to string tennis rackets, which I not only did for the family, but did for money, because I would string them for the tennis players around town. I became fairly proficient at it, so much so, that I continued stringing them on and off during college and after college and after service. When I came back to go into business, I was still stringing some tennis rackets.

At that time, following the war, Chinese cadets had been sent to Shaw Air Force Base for military pilot training. The Chinese cadets were *crazy* about tennis. As everybody knows, they’re great tennis and ping pong players. Sometimes the only time they weren’t busy with the military was during inclement weather. When it would rain and stop something, they’d go play tennis. So in those days it was long before the days of nylon and other tennis strings that were impervious to wet weather. It was catgut and twisted silk and so forth.

I would conduct a good bit of my tennis-stringing business down at the office if people would bring their rackets in and I would go up to get their rackets. So one day several Chinese cadets came in with their rackets and I went up to talk with them to see about getting them restrung. They could get Tom Twist Junior for two dollars and a half or catgut for so and so and so, and I needed to know how tight they wanted the racket, the tension on it, and so on and so forth. Well, they didn’t know English and I sure as heck didn’t know Chinese. [Laughter.] So we were, as you imagine, trying to do charades and everything else. As they walked out the front door, Unc was at my shoulder and he said, “Robert, follow me.” And I said, “Oh, my Lord, what’s up?” In the back of the office, with a door between it and the office, was a little meeting room where we could conduct little private meetings and so on and so forth. We went all the way back in there and he closed the door. He says, “Listen. Just because a person speaks a foreign language, it doesn’t mean they’re deaf!” [Laughter.] You know how when you’re trying to be understood, you speak louder and louder. That’s what I’d been—of course, I shout now because now because I *am* deaf. [Laughter.] But in those days I wasn’t deaf and I was still shouting, trying to make the Chinese understand the tennis racket-stringing business.

DR: Robert, I have a question I really want to ask, but I’m thinking we should just stop for a minute and take a break and let you rest for a minute. I can’t believe that you’re able to speak *so* fluently.

RM: I surprise myself.

DR: You are *astounding*. Don’t you think?

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EM: Yeah. I'm still laughing because he said, "All I know is fifteen minutes-worth of material," and I said, "No, I think not." [Laughter.]

RM: I surprise myself because, I really confess, I didn't think I could go five minutes.

DR: Well, I want to just give you a break and I'm going to pau—

[Recording paused.]

DR: So do you want, Elizabeth, to ask your father about some of the other Unc stories you guys just talked about, since we were just talking about his hilarious comment about the Chinese cadets? [Laughing.]

EM: Yeah. Well, they weren't really stories, but it was the one about the short string.

RM: Oh, that was just when we—after the hundred years' occupancy of the Washington Street house, we went down there to clear it all out when Unc died. The utility services were still in his mother's name and Unc died at ninety-three. Anyhow, we said to ourselves after going through the house and all, that anything that couldn't be eaten was still there. We found one box marked, "string too short to use" [laughing], full of short pieces of string. We also found boxes of uncirculated—trunk full of uncirculated Confederate money and they were bound together with paper ties, folded papers made into string and things like that.

DR: Where did that money wind up?

RM: I divided it among the children. There were seven—Unc left seven heirs, and among agreement of everybody, we sold the remnant. Everybody took samples and then we had it appraised and sold the rest. The money was just divided. I don't know what the children did with it. Some of them framed it and—

EM: I have some.

RM: But they were each given about five different denominations. I have, somewhere, a record of it, but I couldn't find it, I'm sure.

EM: I have mine at home, framed. What was the other anecdote about him walking into like a store, like a used store or something and looking around and saying about how much stuff that—he'd never seen so much stuff he couldn't use or something? Wasn't that an Unc story?

RM: Mmm, I don't remember that.

EM: Or maybe it—it was some kind of store, maybe a ten-cent store or a resale store or something.

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RM: I don't remember that particular thing. One little nothing thing: I've told you he was politically oriented. He talked of an instance of walking away after a stump meeting with a friend. They'd both sat there and listened. He said the last speaker had really been a masterful orator—that's not the word. And he had just—everybody'd been hanging on their seats, listening to everything. As they walked away, Unc's friend turned to Unc and said, "My, wasn't that a *fantastic* speech?" Unc said, he turned to the guy and said, "Yeah? What did he say?" [Laughing.] Because he hadn't said anything, you know?

I had heard a little story once about some politician talking. He said, "Now, a lot of my friends have pecan trees and they hate the squirrels. And then I have a whole lot of friends, love animals and they love the squirrels. I want to tell you here today: I'm with my friends." [Laughter.]

EM: Didn't he also say about—or I always attribute this to him—that there's no such thing as—oh, what's the thing about unwanted advice?

RM: Oh. He was very chary with advice and he had a reputation of never giving unasked-for advice. I don't remember any particular thing he said about it, but he was quoted in one of the newspaper articles on his ninetieth birthday, when the fellow said—at the end of the interview, they asked Unc what advice would he give to the young people of today, something like that. Unc said, "Nobody wants advice. I don't give it." Something like that.

EM: The thing I always remember is he said, "There's nothing so much disliked as unasked-for advice," or something like that.

RM: Mm-hmm, yeah. Well, certainly that was the way he felt. On the other hand, he wasn't—you know, generally a lot of us are openly critical of different people and all. He was not that way. He had the same face for everybody.

EM: All right, one of my other stories—I'm going to make you tell two more stories. These are mine and then, Clara, whatever you remember—the one about your father waking you up at night and telling you to get your rifle.

RM: Yeah, okay. Well, we all slept on the sleeping porch. I've described the big sleeping porch. It was humongous and it was enclosed on three sides by screen wire that was covered with windows, so when the windows were open, the whole place was just like sleeping outdoors. We would sleep there year round and in the wintertime, Daddy would stand us all in front of the door leading from the upstairs hall onto the sleeping porch and he'd count three and open the door to a blast of cold air and we'd all race out there and dive into the beds. If there were any unused beds out there, we would drag the mattresses and put them over us, trying to get warm. We would all do what we called riding bicycles with our feet, trying to get warm. We slept out on the sleeping porch year round and sometimes in the soft summer months, we would hear the frogs croaking in the goldfish pond that I've already mentioned. We all would get up and run downstairs and grab what we called our frog sticks. We had a stick of wood and we'd drive the nails all through the

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end of it, sticking out in all different directions. We'd shine a light, see the frogs' eyes and whack them with that club with the exposed nails on the end of it so we'd be able to sleep.

But the night she's talking about, Unc came up—I mean Daddy came up and waked me up on the sleeping porch and he said, "Get your shotgun and come with me. That thief is at the chickens again." I said, "What?" I shook off the sleep and I said, "Okay." So I got up and the next sight is, Daddy and I are creeping . . . across the backyard towards the chicken fence. He has the flashlight and I got the shotgun. He shined it on the ground; he said, "Look, look, you see his footprints?" I didn't know what I saw, but I said, "Yeah." So anyhow, we approached and gently opened the wire gate to get inside the pen and then we get up close to the hen house and Daddy motions to me to get ready to shoot. He takes hold of the door, then he jerks the door open and I'm ready to shoot. And he said, "I'll be durned, that fox got away again!" All of that time I thought he told me to kill a man [laughing], because he called him a thief and said he wanted me to shoot him dead. [Laughter.]

DR: Ohhhh.

RM: He was talking about a fox.

DR: And you were prepared to do it.

RM: Huh?

DR: You were prepared to do it.

RM: I was prepared to do it. He said, "Do it." I wouldn't question him.

EM: Then my other story that I've made you tell often, but—about after you and Mama got married and you were out in Texas. Well, I would just love for you to talk a little bit about how you met Mama and y'all getting married. But then, of course, that was leading to my story about you buzzing Mama—

RM: Oh.

EM: —on the air force base.

RM: I was at Camp Hattiesburg [RM: Camp Van Dorn near Hattiesburg] in Mississippi and it was right above Baton Rouge. It was Christmastime and I was a first lieutenant in the infantry. I asked permission to go into town, to get off one weekend or something to go Christmas shopping for all the people back home. I had previously scrounged an ammunition box—it was like a small trunk—and packed it full of holly berries and wild things like that that I knew my mother would like to have and mailed it home for the holidays.

I was with a couple of buddies, I guess, and we were going into town to Baton Rouge, the capital of Louisiana, to do Christmas shopping. We went into the Heidelberg Hotel [EM: Now the Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center Hotel] for supper. Playing on a raised platform in the

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dining room was this dinner dance band from Kansas City [EM: Missouri] and it had a pianist, and the band director—I don't remember what instrument he played—and maybe two other instrumentalists, and Harriett, who was playing the violin. She was a beautiful young lady and there were plenty of—most of the time it was a lot of officers in there, you know, around anywhere, in uniform and all. It was right in the middle of the war. I think that night, they were playing “Mairzy Doats and dozy doats” and kids—I don't remember the words to it. You would.

CM: “Liddle lamz”—

RM: “Liddle lamzy divey”—

CM: —“A kiddley divey, too”—

RM: —“A kiddley divey too, wouldn't you?” something like that. [EM: Mairzy Doats, 1943 song by Drake, Hoffman, and Livingston.] Anyhow, I got taken with her beauty. I had spent all my life looking for a woman, I guess. That's what all men do. That's all they do. [Laughing.] I mean that's not all they do, but unbeknownst to women, *maybe* unbeknownst to women, a *normal* man, anytime from before he reaches puberty probably, females never get too far from his thinking, because I think that's nothing but nature. Man is imbued with this *horrible* urge to procreate and it gives him a fit. Our society normally dictates that it's *decades* after puberty before the man's allowed to get married and unleash this horrible urge [laughs], if you want to call it that.

Anyway, all my life I was interested in finding *the* one. I was just taken with Mother's—she was up there singing, playing the fiddle, had a nice figure, well-dressed, pretty hair. My mother, when I was getting ready to go off to war, warned me against ten-cent store girls. She said, “They know how to put on a little makeup and fix their hair up and they're going to be real cute, but you be really careful,” you know. [Laughing.] She was warning me about it.

I was just taken with her and so after we got through eating, my friend said, “Let's go.” I said, “You know, I think I'm going stick around a while.” So I waited until everything wound down and the evening ended. I went up to podium where all the orchestra was packing up their instruments and everything. By then, of course, I think she was aware of my interest in *her*. She walked over to where I was—she was standing up on the podium; I was down on the floor—and she walked over to where I was and *turned me off completely!* She said, “Hello, Lieutenant.” Like that, you know, or something. I don't remember how she said it, but it was a complete turn off to me temporarily, like a little slap or something.

I don't remember what was said, but I said something about seeing her or going out with [inaudible]. I don't remember anything about it, but we all went somewhere for refreshments and I tagged along with her. I probably went back to the rooming house where she was staying in Baton Rouge and got talking with her and told her I was in town for the weekend doing Christmas shopping. Maybe I said, “Would you come with me tomorrow morning and help me pick out things for some friends?” You know, just like that. She did. She went with me the next day.

That was simply the beginning of the courtship. It was very difficult for us to see each other because the little dinner dance band she was with was traveling. I was stationed there and

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went to other stations and all, so we mostly corresponded. I did go to see her once when she was in Hot Springs, Arkansas. By that time I had transferred from the infantry to start taking pilot training, and I was at El Reno, Oklahoma. Before that I had been at Camp Blanding. I don't know if I knew her—I didn't know her at Camp Blanding.

Meanwhile, she had been stationed in Columbia [EM: South Carolina] somewhere—I [don't] mean stationed; the band had played somewhere in Columbia. By then she knew of my family, knew Sumter and all, and she came over to Sumter to meet my family. Daddy met her and asked her if she'd like a dope. She was a big city girl from Kansas City and she was in Sumter. She'd never heard the expression "dope" and, somehow, in Sumter, that's what everybody called Coca-Cola. "Let's go get a dope."

EM: I've never heard that.

RM: But when my father asked her if she wanted a dope, she was really taken back. [Laughing] That was the *only* time before our marriage, I think, that she met my mother and father.

I don't remember exactly the years, but I was in El Reno. I had just barely entered pilot training when I went to see her in Hot Springs. I think I already fancied that I was in love with her and that I would like to marry her.

There was a big enmity between infantry officers and hot-shot air force pilots that we called fly boys. The big difference arising because infantry officers, as I indicated from my military career at The Citadel, were strict disciplinarian army people, trained to lead an infantry platoon of thirty-six men or a company of four platoons into battle, and responsible, at a minimum, for thirty-six men, if not four platoons of thirty-six men. That's what we were trained to do for four years and that's what I was doing in the infantry; I was training replacements.

The fly boy, the hot-shot fighter pilot, he didn't have nobody under him, nobody to worry about. All he did was fly the fighter plane, and he was glorified, rightly so, you know, for all the heroic episodes. Many of them were courting Mother, also. By comparison, I didn't shine too much, you know. I was a stick-in-the-mud infantry, straight hat, knew how to salute—they didn't even know how—and here were all these hot-shot fly boys.

But anyway, I wasn't making too much progress with her. We continued correspondence and so forth when she went to different places. But it wasn't until after I graduated from flying school, completed primary, went through basic training, went through advanced training, when my father had died and I had to come—no, that was after I got my wings—gone through advanced training and earned my wings. It wasn't until after that that I was sent to—where's the Cornhusker Hotel? In—a double-name town, like—it wasn't North Dakota was it? Good night!

EM: Cornhusker Hotel?

RM: Yeah, the Cornhusker Hotel. It's a big famous hotel in some big city—I was trying to think North Dakota, but I don't think I've ever been to North Dakota. [RM: The Cornhusker Hotel, Lincoln, Nebraska.]

CM: North Dakota is a state.

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RM: Huh?

CM: North Dakota is—

R: Yeah. I know, but I was trying to think where the city was located.

DR: [Inaudible.]

RM: Anyway, I was sent there for overseas prep. We were getting ready to be transferred overseas. Trying to think for sure where it was. Maybe that's not where it was. Anyhow, somewhere I went to see her and we got pretty serious. At that time the Catholic religion *required* all the children to be raised Catholic, so that was a *horrible* obstacle. There are many, many obstacles to marriage and you don't need anything additional to divide you. That was a very divisive thing that was a *given*. She had gone only—how many years had she gone? I don't think she'd gone but two years to college and her mother had pulled her out because Harriett had converted to Catholicism from a bunch of Protestant religions that the family haphazardly—I'm not trying to be derogatory—but she had not had any solid religious upbringing. They'd gone to a Baptist church, a Presbyterian church, a this church, a that church, and then her mother sent her to a school run by nuns. She became very enamored of the life that the nuns led, so much so that—she didn't know it at the time—her mother took her out of college for fear she was going to *be* a nun. Harriett did not know that at the time.

EM: No, I think Daddy, she dropped out of college to go with the band, and she—

RM: She did. That's what happened, but—

EM: You said her mother took her out of college.

RM: She told me later that that's why her mother *allowed* her to get out.

EM: Allowed her, right. Yeah, she asked her mother years later when—I think it was when Mama went back to college, and she suddenly realized—because she had a full music scholarship to college.

RM: Yeah, she did.

EM: She asked her mother, “Why did you allow me to drop out?” That was the first time her mother said, “We were afraid—”

RM: Yeah, she had perfect pitch and was a professional musician and had performed on the stage, playing the violin while dancing, at age four, I think. So she'd been a musician all of her life and she was a union member musician, the Kansas City musician's union.

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I guess I came back and talked to the rabbi and he fluffed me off, the rabbi that had confirmed me—just said something like, “What do you want me to say?” Because there was no rabbi in those days that would marry a non-Jewish person [EM: to a Jewish person]. They stuck their heads in the sand because they were throwing away the baby with the bath water. They were losing the one half of the marriage that would stay [with] Judaism, because I had many, many friends—Sue Lyon a good case—where they wouldn’t let her get married so she married out of the faith and none of the children were Jewish, you know.

Anyhow, he just said, “What do you want me to say?” So then the family said, “Well, why don’t you go talk to Mr. Henry Harby?” He was a well-respected senior man of Jewish heritage that had married a Catholic or somebody that wasn’t Jewish. [They] said, “Go talk to him and see what his take is—or I don’t remember what they told me. I don’t remember what he said. I went to talk to him. But the whole long shot of it is, we know the old saying that love is blind and everything else, so we got married.

We were married during the war. At that time I was going through advanced bombing and gunnery at Fort Worth, Texas, and being sent to Matagorda Island, off Corpus Christie for bombing and gunnery. I was at—what did I say the name of—

. . . .

EM: Corpus Christie?

RM: No, the one before that.

EM: Fort Worth.

RM: No.

DR: Matagorda?

RM: Did I say Fort Worth?

EM: Yeah.

DR: Mm-hmm.

RM: [Inaudible.]

EM: Well you were married in Victoria first—

RM: Huh?

EM: You were married first in Victoria—

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RM: Yeah, well I'm trying to think of the name of the—did I name the air base at Victoria?  
[RM: Foster Army Air Field, near Victoria, Texas]

DR: Mm-mm. [Negative.] You said Matagorda Island.

RM: Well, I was stationed at Victoria and assigned from there to Matagorda Island where we were flying the only tactical airplane I ever learned to fly, the P-40 Warhawk, made by Curtiss, that was the famous airplane used in the movie *Ten Seconds Over Tokyo*, that Doolittle led, the raid, the actual raid over Tokyo. It was P-40s. They had tigers painted across the face of them, across the mouth of them, because, supposedly, the Japanese had a fear of tigers. But anyhow, that was who Doolittle—the P-40 plane was the one that was the first raid over Japanese territory. [EM and RM: in the Doolittle raid B-35s were used, not P-40s.]

But that aside, I was at Matagorda Island taking that training when my father died, so they flew me to a commercial airline [terminal] and I caught a commercial airline to come home for the funeral. Harriett and I had already agreed to get married at that point and she was then in Fort Worth, Texas, playing with the orchestra. So I, again, said to Mother, I guess—and I don't know who else, whether Ta was in on it or I talked to Unc; I don't remember who I talked with—"What should I do?" None of them were going to come. I was—we would have been married in Texas. They said, "Go ahead and get married." So we were married by a justice of the peace in Fort Worth.

EM: I thought it was Victoria.

RM: Excuse me. Victoria, Texas—she was playing at Forth Worth. I was at Victoria. I picked her up at Forth Worth, brought her to Victoria, I guess, and we were married there. We were married on the tenth, I think, the day after my birthday [EM: in March]. And I think the same day, Phil Booth married Zelma Nach. They were from Sumter and her mother and father were out there. So they were there also, but they weren't married by the same justice of the peace as we were. I immediately left. We rented a room; I left there to go back to Matagorda Island to take the training that I had missed over again.

EM: Didn't y'all get married again in Sumter by a priest?

RM: After the war was over and we came to Sumter, we were married at St. Anne's [EM: Catholic Church.] Alice Bultman, the obstetrician's wife, Robert Bultman's wife, was whatever the Catholic Church requires to be—a person.

I then took all the necessary instructions to become Catholic, not because I ever once considered it, because by that time, I guess, we were having children and I knew they were going to be Catholic and I wanted to know what the whole thing was. I became very active in—they didn't call it the PTA; they called it the PTO—organization. [EM: Parent Teacher Organization.] The children went to Catholic kindergarten, went to Catholic school and all. Once I was so active that I was nominated for the president of the PTO! The priest who was sitting in the room stood up and said, "I'm sorry, he's not Catholic. He can't be the president." [Laughter.] So that ended that.

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Of course, now, Catholicism has backed off from that and that's not any longer required by the Catholic Church that you have to agree to let the children be Catholic. But it was at that day, and it was a horribly divisive thing within the family. I never once said one word about it. It was never, never openly debated, discussed, or harangued against or *anything*, because I had made the commitment and I honored it. Harriett was a member of the [Temple Sinai] sisterhood. She went with me to services all the time. I went to some high masses and participated with all the children's stuff. Some of you did not go to the Catholic school—maybe you didn't—and started pulling out and going to the public schools.

EM: No, I went for five years.

RM: Did that answer the question you asked me?

DR: Isn't—well, she was wanting you to tell the story about buzzing Harriett during the war.

RM: About what?

DR: Am I using the right word?

EM: Mm-hmm. About buzzing Mama. After y'all got married, the first house you lived in on the base and you buzzed her.

RM: Oh, oh. That was not on the base. That was in the little town of Sherman, Texas. And again, I stood out because I was ranked way above aviation cadets who were trying to go through and become pilots, and if they did, they would be commissioned second lieutenants. I had *already* become a first lieutenant in the infantry, so I did what you call transferred in-grade. I went through pilot training as a first lieutenant. Everywhere we went, I was put in charge of the cadets. That just meant being responsible for marching them to everywhere we went, all the classes, and having them stand to attention when the instructor came in, that kind of stuff. I was always in charge, as were other similarly—lieutenants that went through with me. There was just small handful of us. Most of them were civilian cadets.

As an aside, referring back to the enmity between infantry and the air force, when I was trying to decide whether I wanted to become a pilot or not, I think the instance that may have been the straw on the camel's back: we were out on a tactical maneuver and I was leading my men down a dirt road, had them properly lined up on either side and properly spaced, so one bomb wouldn't kill all of us. We were just out practicing in the Missouri foothills, somewhere—*Mississippi* foothills, or flatlands, much like South Carolina. Anyway, a little, tiny single-engine plane hopped over the line of trees and began dropping paper sacks full of flour on us, imitating bombs. Of course, when that happened, we all did what we were properly taught, rushed over and jumped in the muddy ditches on the side to escape the bombs and protect ourselves. I think I got to thinking then, "Maybe I'd rather be up there than down here [laughter] in the muddy ditch with flour all over me."

Anyway, I had been telling Herbert and Vivian, the twins, and my brother Richard, who—we had always played around with airplanes and I had made a whole bunch of models; I

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probably did more of it than any of them—but I said, “Don’t go in the air corps, it’s too dangerous,” you know, don’t do that. “Go in some other branch of service.” So when I decided that maybe I was going to transfer, I didn’t want to do it unless I could become a single-engine pilot. Because you could be a bombardier or a navigator or a co-pilot or a multi-engine pilot, and I didn’t want any of those. I only wanted to be a single-engine fighter pilot.

To even get into a crew, *any* of those, you had to go the aviation cadet center in San Antonio, Texas, to go through—not qualifying—aptitude training to see if you were suitable. They had a whole bunch of things they had us do. They had a bunch of pegs that were in one hole and you had to take them out and turn them over and put them in a different shaped hole and they timed you while you were doing it. Then they had you looking down a long tunnel, a covered tunnel. In the tunnel at the other end were two little sticks that you controlled with strings. You were told to line the sticks up so that they were even. That whole thing was to test your depth perception. Then there was another test where they set you in front of something like a phonograph record and they gave you a wand that was hooked up electrically and the end of the wand had a little metal contact on it and the record that was spinning around, spun off-center, like in an oval instead of just round and round. Imbedded in the record was another little metal contact point, about as big as a penny. The things turns around and round off center and you’ve got the wand with the little tip wired up electric to make con—and you were supposed to hold that on the penny while it goes around. So anyhow, they put up a whole bunch of stuff like that, physical exams and everything else. Also, the height limit for single-engine pilots at that time—because the cockpits were fairly small—was six feet, and I was pushing right at six feet tall.

So in those days, when I was at San Antonio and was writing home and all, I had a buddy back at Camp Van Dorn in Mississippi and I sent all my mail back there so it would be posted from Camp Van Dorn. I didn’t want anybody to know what I was trying to do unless I was going to do it or not. Finally, when it came through and I qualified for a single-engine fighter pilot, *then* I told the family what I was doing.

EM: Weren’t your brothers kind of mad at you because you had told all of them—

RM: Yeah, they just said I’d been preaching that all the time, you know, and didn’t practice the walk—didn’t walk the talk or something, walk the talk—I don’t know what the saying is. And they went in as single-engine pilots, also. Then the incident you’re talking about—the war ended before I could do a cotton-picking thing. I was at that—in Nebraska. That’s where it was, Nebraska. What are some big cities in Nebraska? That’s where the Cornhusker Hotel was. It’s—

DR: Yeah, that’s where the cornhuskers would be.

RM: But anyhow, I was sent there preparatory to going overseas. We were being lectured in last minute stuff and everything before going over as replacement pilots. The one lecture that sticks out in my mind more than any was a medical doctor talking to us. He had us up on a little—we were in a room, all the pilots, and we were up on little bleacher-type seats and he was down in front talking to us. He said, “Listen,” and he held up a roll of toilet paper. [Laughing.] This is kind of crude. He said, “You see this advertised all the time. How soft it is, how many sheets there are to a roll, what great stuff it is, what a pleasant fragr—they never advertise it as

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being puncture-proof.” [Laughing.] So he says, “Wash your hands men, after you go the bathroom.” [Laughing.]

So then he said—he started telling us what to do when we got shot down and a limb was broken or something and we were in deep pain. He said, “All of you have a morphine kit with you and I’m going to show you exactly how to inject yourself with morphine.” We’re all like this, you know. So he gets on his seat and he pulls up his trouser leg, rolls down his calf and he takes a marking pen, marks a circle on it, put a little dot right there on it. He takes out the vial, pops off the top of it, maybe swabbed it with alcohol, and swab this with alcohol, gets his syringes out, pushes it in, pushes all the air in, draws out the morphine. Man, does he have our attention! So then he gets like this and like that, you know. [Laughing.] We were about to fall off the edge of the chair. He said, “You damn fools, you think I’m going to inject myself with morphine every day I give this lecture?” [Laughter.] Those are two little things I remember from those days.

But back to what you talked about. When it was over we were dumbfounded and we were useless, and they had a whole bunch of extra pilots on hand. They hadn’t used us because they hadn’t lost as many pilots once we gained air superiority in Europe. So they had us doing junk stuff. We would ferry planes to be mothballed from one place to the next and so on and so forth. Somehow, I ended up in a little town in Sherman, Texas, and that was where Mother and I went to after we were married.

We were in a—housing was terrible. I mean you couldn’t get anything then. It was wartime and everybody nailed two boards together and had a garage apartment they would rent to people. We were renting from a spinster and she was terrible as a landlady. She met me in the hall one day when I inadvertently was heading to take a shower and didn’t have a top on. She screamed and ran down the hall. She chastised Mother because she’d made her promise to throw all the scraps over the fence to the chickens and Mother included eggshells or carrot tops or something, and she said her chickens didn’t eat that—gave Mother the devil. She made us dry her stainless steel sink every time we were in the kitchen because she said if we left the water on it, it would stain the stainless steel. I think her name was Hattie something and she—

You know, people—I’ve told all the children and told Clara how horrible it was to lose all the colloquialism it is that existed all over the United States. Before World War II came along and stirred everything up and mixed all the population together, you could go to these quaint little pockets and everything was different, unique, and it was a lot of fun. Well, we always called it Vienna sausage, but our spinster landlady called it VI-eena sausage, as I’ve heard other people say since then. Anyway, that was a mess living with her and we had to be very cautious.

I guess I was bored and we were flying AT-6 Texans, which was the advanced single-engine training plane. It wasn’t the hot shot that the P-40s were, but it was a fa—hot— It was—we’d started off with a P-19 primary trainer and then we’d gone to the BT-13 Vultee, made by Vultee [EM: Aircraft.] We called it a Vultee Vibrator. Then we graduated into this AT-10 Texan, which had retractable landing gear and was much hotter than the other two. That’s what I was flying at Sherman, Texas. Johnny Mahon had been a multi-engine pilot by that time, for quite some time and he was some six years or eight years, seven years, older than I was. When I went into pilot training he had given me his two cents-worth and said, “When the urge comes to buzz, be sure and buzz a *cloud*. Don’t ever be silly and do anything.”

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Well, it was a Saturday morning and I was out flying my AT-10 Texan and I spotted the little house where we lived with this woman. So I decided that I'd just go buzz Harriett. It being Saturday, one of the superior officers from the air force base at Sherman—I don't know if it was Sherman Air Force Base or had another name; I can't remember [RM: in the 1940s Perrin Air Force Base was located just north of Sherman, Texas]—was sleeping on his sleeping porch and I waked him up. He testified at the hearing that I disappeared below the trees. I don't think I got that low. But I really was going fast because I knew that I would need the speed, if anything happened, to get up.

So anyway, unbeknow—and Harriett wasn't home. [Laughing.] She didn't know a thing about it. So anyway, I didn't think anything either. I buzzed down and pulled up and did my thing, completed my training tour and went on back and flew. As soon as I landed, I noticed a little jeep came out and pulled up in front of me, and a great big sign tacked on to the back of the jeep said, "Follow me." So I said, "Oh my goodness." The jeep started pulling across the tarmac and going over to the parking area. By that time several people were walking out to meet the plane. They were sure from what he had told them that I had hit trees and foliage and everything, so they all started walking around the airplane to see what was caught in the wings. Well, there wasn't anything. I hadn't hit anything.

So I was grounded, court martialed, and everything. The next morning, we were due to go into the classroom and I was marching my group in and one of them had slipped in there earlier—and it was after Doolittle had led his bit—and it showed a thing—it showed a house and a tree and a female figure standing out waving on the ground and the plane diving down and it said, "Moses, Ten Seconds Over Sherman!" [Laughter.] They had written it on the blackboard to goad me.

Uncle Emile came to my rescue. He was a major general, as I've already mentioned, at—commanding officer in Beaufort at Parris Island. So he knew somebody in the air force, some officer. I don't know if the officer appeared in my behalf to testify or if he sent in a deposition. They assigned some little two-bit second lieutenant to defend me, who was very inept. He tried to round up character witnesses.

They would wash you out of the training if you . . . forgot what kind of test they call it, but an instructor would carry you up flying and try to, you know, like when you get your automobile driver's license. They would do the same thing to find fault with your driving and you'd get washed out of pilot training. Well, as soon as I committed that, they made me go take a test with somebody.

Anyway, the hearing came and, as I told you, I'd been put in charge of this unit all along, all my career there. So they put the fellow on the stand that was my superior and asked him, "Did Lieutenant Moses, was he in charge?" "Yes." "Did you allow him to have the responsibility of this platoon?" Yeah," and blah, blah, blah, blah. "Did you ever have any trouble with his unit?" His response was, "No more than with the rest of them." [Laughing.] So anyhow, I was scared to death that I was going to be kicked out, taken off flying status, and lose my wings. What happened was, I was fined a thousand bucks—which was like ten thousand now—taken off of pilot training for one month and restricted to the base for a month. That was my punishment, and it was really bad. I mean I was real ashamed.

During that time, Herbert happened to be coming around or something—came to see me while I was restricted to the base. They thought Herbert and I were twins [laughter], my friends

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did. Herbert's [RM: down] here and I'm up here [laughter], but anyway. But that was that episode. That's—

DR: What did Harriett say?

RM: I don't remember her saying anything. What could she say? I don't remember her reaction at all. I don't know whether—I don't think she filed for divorce or anything. [Laughter.] I don't remember her reaction.

DR: So what I'm understanding, Robert, is you never got into the war.

RM: Oh, I made it—I thought I made it plain enough. The war was over—

DR: Was over.

RM: —when I got my wings.

DR: Right.

RM: And they hadn't had the fatalities with the—the attrition of pilots had slowed up because we'd gained air—so there wasn't anything for me to do.

DR: Right.

RM: In another words, there was no point in me getting in the war when—*and*, to make it worse, my infantry friends that I had left, went over there and some of them got fired on and some of them killed by what they call friendly fire from our air force. So when I bumped into some of them in later years, after everything—they were fairly hostile toward me for leaving the infantry, going in the air force and then firing on them. Which wasn't really realistic, but—

DR: So I don't know if this is relevant, but one question I always am incredibly curious about is, from all the places you were in your training period, how much did you know about what was going on in Europe?

RM: Nothing more, I guess, than a civilian would—listened to the radio and read the papers. The upper military hierarchy didn't share any secrets with us. When I was in the infantry, I was put in charge of a whole troop train of soldiers. They weren't told where they were going; I wasn't either. I had sealed papers that I could open after I got on the train. The train headed out of the station—I might have been in Florida at the time—and then turned around and we went up to Fort George Meade in Maryland. That's where I left them and they went overseas. The whole time I was in the infantry, I was at what was called infantry replacement training centers. What we did, the civilian walked in the gates and when he walked out, he was a trained soldier, ready for combat. He was a replacement going over to take, you know, fill up places where people were killed, being assigned to units.

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DR: Was that where—

RM: But as far as answering, directly, your question, I don't exactly understand what you're asking me, but unless I had been a student and really tried to pinpoint things and follow things, I didn't do anything more than just have a general smattering of what was going on any more than—

DR: Were you aware that Hitler was waging a war against the Jews and wiping out the Jews of Europe?

RM: Yeah, I think so. I think everybody was. There wasn't anybody that wasn't.

DR: That's sort of where I'm—

RM: Hmm?

DR: That's one of the things that's kind of—

RM: Stick?

DR: —I won't say controversial, but there's a lot of discussion about who knew what when, and—

RM: No, I think everybody was well aware of it. They probably, through a reluctance or reasons not particularly known, wanted to play like they *didn't* know it, and wanted to shirk any responsibility or avoid any overt action that would bring trouble to them or expose them to risk. But I don't think there was anybody that didn't know what was going on. I don't know to what extent, but I think ever since Crystal Night [EM: Kristallnacht], wasn't it—

DR: Mm-hmm.

RM: —public knowledge?

RM: So—

DR: Well, yes, there were reports in the newspaper, but some people s—

RM: I was not in a position to do anything about it, you know, and I wasn't politically oriented to—and military people didn't get involved in politics.

Changing the subject completely, but adding another little vignette I had told Elizabeth and she said, "Great goodness, Daddy, I never heard that before." Not too long after the war, when I was in Sumter, we were told that some Sabras, native Israeli pilots, were coming over to talk to some of us that were pilots. One night I went to the meeting that they had at someone's

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home—I don't remember if it was the Addlesberg's or whose home it was—and they were trying to recruit us to fly for the Israeli Air Force and telling us what big salaries we'd get and what guarantees the family would get if we didn't make it back and that kind of stuff. I was never seriously interested, but I did go to the meeting at which they were recruiting American pilots to fly for Israel. But I was married and having children and so forth, so I didn't give it serious consideration.

DR: I guess one of the things that surprises me, from sort of an archival point of view, is how many South Carolinians were involved in trying to get refugees here and—you know, there was kind of an organization, mainly, I think, out of New York, the Joint Distribution Committee, but there were local branches.

RM: I did not realize it until long after the fact, but reading through some of my uncle's, Unc's, papers and things, there were refugees that he participated in that were brought to Sumter. There were funds paid to help the refugees. There was, early on, before the war, when I was still in high school, a refugee German girl named Hilde Ganache that came to stay with the Isaac Strauss family. Isaac Strauss was one of the town's leading attorneys. He and his wife—I think her name was Hattie—had no children but were quite affluent and they lived in my neighborhood and Hilde was just about the same age as we were. So she was a big novelty and lot of fun to go see and play and see who could count to twelve fastest, her in German and us in English, and that kind of stuff.

When I became an adult and tried to find out why she was sent back or didn't stay or wasn't here for long, Uncle Bub, as he was called—Isaac Strauss and his wife Hattie were older people and probably pretty set in their ways and I guess having a little teenager was disturbing. But anyway, I think they found it unsettling or something—intractable situation. I don't know what became of the girl, but she left.

Adding a little bit more—early on, many years before it was really written on the wall that Temple Sinai was dying, I tried to bring in refugees to Sumter. I talked to the mayor of Sumter, who was not Jewish. Told him what I wanted to do and talked to some other people, all of them said, “Yeah, that sounds fine to me.”

[RM: With another project I tried to attract Jews who might be interested in relocating.] I placed an ad in about five or six big-time northern newspapers, like in Chicago and New York, Pennsylvania. One or two of the newspapers turned down my ad because they said they didn't publish ads of that nature. The ad I came up with was captioned, “Savor the South,” and it plugged the ease and comfort of small-town southern living. Then not until we got to the closing of the ad, did I put in “Sumter's Temple Sinai—” or “Temple Sinai in Sumter, South Carolina, would welcome you with open arms,” or something. “If you have any interest, contact” blah, blah, blah. I put that ad in three or four or five northern newspapers. I think I got a total of about six responses and I think only two or three of them sounded serious and maybe only two or three of them were Jewish that wrote back. [RM: This project died on the vine.]

But anyway, absolutely nothing came of it [RM: the refugee project] and I was not supported at all by the temple. Everybody at the temple said, “You know, what good would that do to get one family?” Of course, it wasn't easy to have the program, because you had to guarantee them subsistence or an existence for six months and housing and employment and

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everything else. So in a manner of speaking, it never got off the ground. Of course, I said to everybody, "Look what Columbia's done. Look what Charleston's done. They all started with one family." And they would say, "How do you know they'll even belong to the temple if they come?" Well, you didn't. It was just a gamble.

DR: In this case, you are talking about Soviet—

RM: I wasn't particular.

DR: —refugees?

RM: I didn't know what I was talking about. Yeah, Russian—

DR: But you were looking for Jewish refugees?

RM: Yeah.

EM: I thought there were two different things. I thought earlier, like back maybe in the '70s or something, I thought there was serious talk about bringing over Russian Jews. And then what I feel like you're talking about was maybe not that long ago, maybe late 1990s, early 2000s—

RM: No.

EM: Well, there was so—

RM: Nothing that recent.

EM: Yeah, because it was when I was working for Dale—and that was late 1990s, early 2000s—you were talking about maybe not refugees, but you were trying to get Jews to retire down here.

RM: Yeah, well, that's a different thing. That was a different effort.

DR: Mm-hmm.

EM: Okay.

RM: Oh, excuse me. Right. I'm sorry. You are absolutely correct. I wasn't hunting refugees with those ads. I was hunting transfers. But I did try to—I'm trying to think—I believe that I did talk to the authorities about refugees and I did try to build up interest in the congregation; wasn't able to do so. But you are entirely correct. That advertising was not for refugees. It wouldn't make any sense. You don't hunt refugees in the cities up north. That was trying to get—

DR: For retirees.

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RM: —trying to get retirees to move to Sumter to bolster our congregation. You're right. I was wrong.

DR: So maybe, Robert, just to kind of round out the story about . . . marrying a Catholic and raising the kids as Catholics, could you describe, sort of, how that worked out in terms of what kids you had and what they've chosen, the paths they've chosen?

RM: I never of course, made any attempt to sabotage the agreement that I had. At the same time, I told you, Harriett joined the sisterhood, I'm sure was a co-president one year, and we participated in all the social events together at the temple. As such, the children were free to go to services with me. [EM: Natalie, b. 1948; Carol, b. 1950; Katherine, b. 1953; Laura, b. 1956; Elizabeth, b. 1964] Elizabeth came along after most of the rest of them were gone, so unlike her siblings, who may have been two or three here at the time, she was more or less by herself. So undoubtedly, she went to services with me more frequently than some of the others had done.

She would sit up in the choir loft. We held the world's record for the highest choir loft in the world. It's way up high. I'm just teasing but I don't know how it ever got to be that. But she would sit up there with Mrs. Louise Duffy, who was a wonderful, loyal organist. Elizabeth can tell you her own story about becoming attracted to the temple.

The other children—I think one of them remarked to me in the last decade, probably, that “It's too late for me. I'm already”—and she mentioned what religion she was. Another one wears a Hebrew symbol as a necklace pretty constantly. One of them said they were considering Judaism but she'd gotten turned off because all of her Jewish friends seemed to think they were better than everybody else. So that's three different examples of three of them that express open affinity with Judaism. Another one—all of them kind of were adrift for their own religious purposes and just kind of went with the flow when they married non-Jewish spouses. I think all four of the others probably have—very empathetic towards Judaism, if that's kind of answering your question.

DR: Mm-hmm.

RM: Within the family, there never arose any argument or divisiveness that I remember, except within my own spirit. I mean it was always a bitter pill to try to swallow, to see your children raised Catholic and forbidden to be Jewish. That was tough. I often wish there had been some other way to do it. Again, I just resolved that blind love, you know, just won't turn away, and that's what had caused it and that was how it was to be. So it was an acceptable, but not desirable, situation.

DR: Mm-hmm. Elizabeth, is that your explanation too, that you had more exposure because you were more of a single child after your four older sisters had left?

EM: Yeah, maybe. Of course, my joke is I don't know what my four older sisters were like because it was before my time. You know, I never really grew up with any of them. Today two of them are atheist, pretty openly—

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DR: But one of those atheists is a Unitarian, right? [Laughing.]

EM: Yeah, but—

RM: What'd you say?

EM: One of the atheists is a Unitarian. [Laughing.]

EM: Yeah.

RM: Yeah. Well that's what I was—can a Unitarian be an atheist?

DR: Well, it's a little like Jewish.

RM: Huh?

DR: It's a little like being Jewish—

RM: It's what?

DR: —in the sense that there's a very wide range of belief—

RM: Un-huh.

DR: —that's tolerated. Would you—wouldn't you say that's true?

RM: I don't—

EM: Yeah. I mean Laura clearly calls herself an atheist—

DR: Mm-hmm.

EM: —but she does go to the Unitarian Church. I said to her one time, “If you go to a place called a church, how—” But anyway, it's, you know, that's semantics. I say—would clearly agree with Daddy that all of us, culturally, identify *very* much with being Jewish. I know, certainly, when I was growing up—and again, would say this for all my sisters—we were always very quick to stand up and defend Judaism, you know, if any of our friends ever said anything or anything like that.

My whole life, growing up, all my friends knew my father was Jewish and, you know, went to—I had a funny thing after I converted [EM: to Judaism]. One of my friends who had known me my whole life, knew my father was Jewish—and I often would take friends with us to temple, just for kicks—you know, was really quite alarmed and tried to tell me I was going to hell and all that kind of stuff. I just thought it was really odd. I'm like, you know, my whole life

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you knew my father was Jewish and never—I don't really—I don't remember any comments or anything when I was growing up, other than just a general misunderstanding, both of Judaism *and* Catholicism. There's a lot of—

RM: I might—I didn't mean to interrupt—might just add that Harriett was not—you know, everybody's a righteous Catholic and I'm not trying to make disparaging remarks or anything—she was, in the early years, much more observant and regular in attending than she became, I guess, during the majority of our marriage. She would have always said she was Catholic, but she no longer went to masses and attended regularly and was what you would call observant. At the same time, as Elizabeth has said and as I've indicated, our . . . large circle of closest friends and associates, socially, were always Jewish people, and that was true with Harriett. Not that we didn't have other friends also, but we were always closely associated with Jewish people and she was very much at home at the temple, as is Clara.

DR: Robert, when you were growing up, were you involved at all in things like AZA or—

RM: They were—

DR: —SEFTY—

RM: —absolutely foreign and unknown to me. Morris [EM: Mazursky] was the first person I ever remember that mentioned the strange word “bar mitzvah,” and probably was the first person that ever mentioned the strange antonym or synonym, or whatever you call letters put together, of the ADF—L? Anti-Defamation League.

DR: ADL.

RM: ADL. I didn't know what that was or anything. So more strictly observant Jews were, a little bit earlier, into the more traditional strict Judaism than the laid-back Reform that a number of us at the temple practiced out during our lives. I was always—I say to myself, “I was always thoroughly accepting of being Jewish. Never any question about it at all. And I was a—again, not obsessive—but I was always regularly attending. Having said that, that was the beginning and end of it. I never—I have not yet—and I'm not proud of it—I have never read the Bible, I cannot repeat the Kaddish. I am totally lacking in scholarship, Jewish scholarship. I'm not proud of it; I'm simple telling you how it is.

DR: Do you think—something I've always wondered, especially about Sumter—you have this small group of families who are really first families. They came right at the beginning. They had this lineage that goes back, in some cases, to the first boat that came over, but certainly the American Revolution. Then you have—probably the majority of Temple Sinai were folks from the East European wave of the beginning of the twentieth century, who were a whole different kind of Jew, really, in a way. Did you—

RM: Yes.

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DR: Were you aware of a—

RM: Yeah, in the temple?

DR: Yeah, that there was a difference between—I'll say the—I don't know if you call them the "been heres" and the "come heres" or the old-timers and the newer families—

RM: I wasn't as aware of that, probably, as my elders were. I guess I was more aware in a dim manner, but aware that there were a little bit of different social groups within the temple. There were some Jewish people in there that wouldn't be at a party that we would go to, or if my family had friends over, they wouldn't be in that group, but that's about the beginning and end of it. . . . I didn't know that there was any enmity or open divisiveness or anything. I think, as time passed on and the numbers got fewer and the mix got more, that that kind of finally melted away and they more or less got all intertwined together.

But yes, I think there definitely was a feeling of us and them because of the ones that were already here and the later, come-lately people. I think there was a slight—but I would say it was more social than anything. I think, you know, differences cause divisiveness and when you get some of those that you're alluding to that spoke broken English or weren't refined and didn't have the benefit of a lot of—what do you call—civi—not civilized, but polishing, etiquette, you know, then they stuck out a little bit. Some of the other people might have felt awkward being around them, the other group that had more advantages and lacked those—probably been here longer and more Americanized. That kind of help the picture?

DR: Yeah. I think I remember, Robert, your once saying to me that the newcomers, I'll call them newcomers even though by now—

RM: I understand—come lately.

DR: —it's a hundred years, but people who came in that East European wave, became much more affluent than the old families.

RM: Much more affluent?

DR: Mm-hmm. They kind of—

RM: I don't think that I would have had that observation—

DR: No?

RM: —simply because I probably wasn't that observant. But there's a thing called motivation and hunger and it's just like the wave of Asians, the Vietnamese and—I can't think of one of the other nationalities—come over and work themselves to death; their whole family lives in two rooms; they send money back to the Old Country; they end up sending all the children to college,

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when the father never went to first grade. Because they're—and they took jobs that Americans wouldn't look at. It's just called motivation, ambition, willingness to do what's necessary to get up there. And so the ones that had it easy and didn't need to struggle just, kind of, might drift along, whereas the later ones coming in and needing to make their mark, worked a whole lot harder and pulled themselves up higher. I don't think—I don't ever remember having the feeling or making—or noting the observation one group versus the other, to that effect. It may have been someone else that told you that.

DR: Maybe so.

RM: I don't know.

DR: Maybe so.

RM: I just don't remember focusing on that.

EM: I just want to go back a minute to the family that—I very much think, looking back, I guess, especially after I converted to Judaism, that Mother and Daddy did a *fine* job of deciding what they were going to do before we were all born, because there was never any—I mean I never realized how unusual it was to grow up with one Jewish parent and one Catholic parent in a predominantly, very, you know, Bible Belt area. Actually, when I went off to college, which was a Methodist-affiliated college, almost got more anti-Catholicism there than anti-Judaism—you know, lack of understanding.

I didn't realize it until I was in high school and Daddy made some comment to me, what an *enormous* sacrifice it must have been to have to give up your children, because it was never an issue in our house. Funny things. In my, probably high school years, later years, it was an annual job, Daddy and I went out every year to get the Christmas tree and came home and decorated the Christmas tree. That was our job. So it was a very secular—

My sisters grew up mostly in the '60s and a lot of them have very strong anti-Catholic feelings, which I never really did. I went to Catholic school for five years; enjoyed it; thought it was a fine education; wanted to be a nun, which I think is a joke. I think everybody who grows up Catholic wants to be a nun or a priest. Just in later years, drifted away from it.

DR: What was the source of their anti-Catholic feeling?

EM: I think just—I mean a lot of it I see now, but the whole infallibility of the pope and the very strictness of it. They grew up, I guess, in the cultural revolution of the '60s and the whole thing that the pope was the final word and that the Catholic Church was so strict about so many things and unyielding. Maybe they had bad experiences at Catholic school, I don't know.

RM: I don't know that this belongs in this interview or not, but a somewhat similar situation occurred that affected my children, with us trying to strive very, very, very hard to eliminate the situation that I grew up in that I referred to in my earlier remarks about the blacks and the whites. I was very, very anxious never to pass on any of the ingrained discrimination that I suffered, on

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to the children. We did such a good job in that direction that my children became friends with African Americans much, much earlier than African Americans were acceptable by their [EM: the children's] peers. That resulted in social ostracism or—well, I guess that's the best way to put it—of my children by their peers, who didn't share their beliefs.

I took great sadness over that situation. I was still glad that I had done everything I could to avoid my children being prejudiced, but it hurt me very, very much to see them suffering social shunning, that they probably were not really as aware of as I was. But friends of mine who had children in the little cliques, in the upper things, those children wouldn't include my children when they had their little group meetings or parties or whatever. I would see over and over again that my children were shunned and I knew what it was.

EM: And again—

RM: But I was glad of what I did.

EM: —I never felt that growing up.

RM: Hmm?

EM: I never felt that growing up, so I think that might have been my older sisters, maybe. I do just remember, which I think is just simply the culture and the times, I did have close friends who were African American when I was growing up, but we never socialized outside of school. I never went to their house. They never came over here. We didn't go to the same parties. We would meet at the library or we were friends at school. We were very close friends and—

RM: I would never have encouraged close interracial socialization just because of who I am. You know I read recently a little thing about—and I shared it with Clara—it was an article I read, an in-depth article. It was quite interesting: *Why do Muslims hate America?* It was pretty clear, because it painted a picture—and I don't remember if it was Iran or Syria or where it was—that the government was an anarchy [sic] [EM: totalitarianism] that controlled the press, controlled the media, controlled everything that its people thought, did, or were allowed to do. A child born there, from day one being saturated with what the government wanted it to hear, [doorbell ringing] could never do anything but hate—that's the doorbell if you want to cut this off [doorbell ringing]—could never do anything but hate us.

DR: Okay.

**END RECORDING**