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Interviewees: Flossie Ginsberg Arnold (b. March 19, 1907, Charleston, SC;
d. September 1, 1996, Columbia, SC)
Norman Arnold, Flossie's son (b.1929, Charleston, SC)

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Begin Tape, Side A

FA: —[inaudible] brother who [inaudible]. [Inaudible.]

DR: The one in the middle?

FA: Yeah. One [ed.: sounds like "son"] and Lila [ed.: pronounced ["Lilla"]] died young. There's my sister Edna. She was very small, got good marks. And here's me, the oldest one.

DR: So you were the oldest in the family?

FA: Yes, oldest. And then came Edna, one year apart. And then came Lila. Bernice was the baby. [Ed.: sounds like "The bird, bird", Bernice.

DR: Bernice?

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FA: Uh-huh. You know, [ed.: sounds like “Berneek”]. Bernice. She’s the baby. B-E-R-N-I-C-E.

DR: Okay. And this is the brother that you lost. What was his name?

....

FA: Isadore. [Ed.: sounds like “Only one to be”] fancy, but everybody called him Izzy. [Laughs.]

DR: And who is this?

FA: And this is my sister, Lila. She is, yeah. I’m the oldest. Look, there’s Edna, and there’s Lila, and this is Bernice. I’ve got her other picture here, too.

DR: Would you tell me your parents’ names?

FA: Her name was Pauline, and he’s Isaac, I-S-A-A-C, Isaac Ginsberg, G-I-N-S-B-E-R-G. In fact, I’ve got everything on the wall. There’s my mother and father in Hendersonville, North Carolina, where they’d go for vacation. This is when they got pretty well off, you see?. They could ride horses from Europe. . . . I couldn’t believe my mother got on a horse! [Laughter.] I said, “Mama, you weren’t scared to get on them?” “*No*, what’s to be scared?” [Laughing.]

DR: When was that picture taken?

FA: I think I’ve got it written on the back—I *think*. I don’t know.

NA: Probably in the ’30s.

DR: In the ’30s?

NA: Wouldn’t you—Mama, that would be about 1935 or something like that.

FA: Yeah, Mama died, and she was pretty young, too. She was very up to date though, very up to date. She wanted to speak well and she used to tell us—when they’d come home from a party or from a dinner, “What did I say wrong?” and “How do you pronounce that word? I didn’t know how to pronounce it.” She was very forward in learning. She didn’t want to be a foreigner.

NA: A greenhorn.

DR: A greenhorn? [Inaudible.]

NA: [Inaudible.]

FA: Yeah, that’s right.

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NA: This picture was 1942, I was wrong.

DR: 1942. And do you know when this one was? Before your brother died.

FA: Let's look on the back of it. I thought I had something.

DR: Original.

FA: *Original?*

DR: Yeah.

FA: I don't know.

DR: Could you take a guess [inaudible]?

NA: That would have to be in the 1950s.

DR: In the '50s. . . . Could we go back to the beginning—when your parents first came here?

FA: When they first came to America?

DR: To America.

FA: Well, my mother and father had—my mother had a sister who was living in Charleston. Her sister's husband had a—what do you call a . . . men's clothes.

KR: Bluestein's?

FA: Bluestein's. Hyman Bluestein. But I don't want to talk much about that, he wasn't very nice. [Laughter.] He was the one—don't come to him for any big donation. He said, "Don't come back, I haven't taken in the first nickel." That was his statement.

NA: Mama, go back beyond that, if you will, to when Grandpa Ginsberg left Russia and went to South Africa so he could get enough money to marry your mother.

FA: Yes, right. [Inaudible.] He knows it.

NA: My grandfather had told me this story. It's a wonderful story. Her mother's father—her family was a prominent family in this shtetl, as they [inaudible].

FA: Oh, yeah.

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NA: Her father was a rabbi.

FA: And they put the new synagogue up like it should be, you know. I mean, go ask what Mr. Ginsberg thinks of my [inaudible].

NA: My grandfather came from a poorer family, and didn't have the status they did, so he left Russia, went to South America, worked in the diamond mines—

DR: South America or South Africa?

NA: —South *Africa*—worked in the diamond mines for a couple of years to save enough money so he could go back and be a person of means, so he could marry my grandmother, which he did. Then, as soon as they got married, they left for America. And you can—

FA: Yeah. My father came here first, though, but she came right after, as soon as he found a place to stay. For a while, they stayed with my aunt Bluestein, but she wasn't satisfied staying with family. She wanted to be, you know, have her own little place. They opened up in a very poor section of Charleston, and they sold groceries and—

NA: That was called Little Mexico, [inaudible], wasn't it, Mama? What was the street name?

FA: Hanover Street, H-A-N-O-V-E-R.

....

FA: I tell you, my sister Edna could really elaborate on this—Edna, the one next to me. She writes books on it.

DR: She does?

FA: She has written books on it.

NA: Well, not published.

FA: She was one year younger than I.

NA: Edna's memory is a little better.

FA: Milton Banov [inaudible], her father-in-law had a very high-type men's store on King and Spring. [Ed.: sound like "Her father said"], "If you buy from Banov's, you buy from a good place." He was well known and liked. We were always taught that you have to watch what you do and who you go with. Don't go with just anybody.

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KR: How long did you live on Hanover Street?

FA: Hanover and Sheppard.

KR: How long did you live there?

FA: Well, I thought I had a little picture there. I don't know.

KR: You lived there when you went to Courtenay School?

FA: Hmm?

NA: Did you live on Hanover Street when you went to Courtenay School?

FA: Cooking school?

KR: Courtenay.

FA: Oh, Courtenay, yeah, mm-hmm, yeah. That's the first school I went to, was Courtenay.

KR: Do you remember the cemetery that used to be on Hanover Street?

FA: Yeah. [Inaudible.] On Hanover Street?

NA: Cemetery, Mama, was there a cemetery there where you lived?

FA: Yeah . . . people there, that grew up in Charleston, they go back and they look over the Battery where the water is—you know, the water?—and they take pictures. And you like to go around and see The Citadel.

NA: Mama, let me ask you something. When you lived on Hanover and Sheppard Street, Grandpa had a little grocery store.

FA: Yeah.

NA: And you all worked in the grocery store.

FA: Oh, yeah.

NA: But you were little children.

FA: I had to go down and open the store before I went to school. I was the oldest; I had the

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responsibility. And then my mother dressed the children to go to school, the same school. But I had to go down to open the store.

NA: How did you get to school? Did you walk to school?

FA: Yeah, most of the time. Other than that, I think—I don't remember. My father finally [inaudible]; we walked through the mall, I remember—mall, M-A-L-L. It was a *beautiful* city.

DR: That's Wragg Mall, is that right?

NA: No, no.

KR: There was another mall down in that area, off of Columbus Street—the mall she's talking about.

FA: Yeah. [Inaudible.]

KR: Wragg Mall is close to where I live, [inaudible] Street.

....

DR: So your family came over by ship—

FA: Yeah.

DR: —around 1908? Would that be right? You were very little—a year old or—

FA: Uh-huh, I think so.

NA: Yes, she was a year old when they came to America, and the other children came along after that.

DR: Right.

FA: They used to get a black man with a horse and buggy to take us certain places that we had to go. He'd come by and—that's the way it was. But when we went to King Street, [inaudible] my father like we were in high society [laughter], [inaudible].

KR: When you moved off of Hanover Street, you moved to King Street?

FA: Yeah, King Street. King and Spring, I think [inaudible]. Anyhow, and in back of a—upstairs, over a drugstore. We used to have to go through the back alley [inaudible].

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NA: That wasn't very long, because then they moved to Meeting Street.

FA: Yeah.

NA: That's when my gr—

FA: I'll think of a million things [inaudible] books that I have on it.

DR: So you went from Hanover to King to Meeting?

NA: That was when—

FA: Yeah. Then we went to Ashley Avenue. That was really—

NA: My grandfather built a home—

FA: They didn't think they would let—they wouldn't want Jewish people there on Ashley Avenue, because there weren't many there.

KR: Or any.

DR: Were there a lot of—

FA: There was another Jewish family on that street, and he said, "You know you get there [inaudible] your Christian neighbors say something nice about you."

NA: Who was that, Mama? Was that a Livingstain? Livingstain? Was that Livingstain or Berlinsk—I don't know.

KR: Leo Livingstain.

NA: Leo Livingstain. I think he was already there.

FA: Yeah, his family was there first. We'd go through the back, and my mother's friends used to show her apartment [inaudible].

KR: Leo's wife, was it Bertha?

....

FA: Theresa.

NA: Wow, Mama, that's terrific.

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DR: That's great. [Laughs.]

FA: Well, they were society. They were much ahead of us. They came on King Street before we did. If they accepted you, you were accepted society. [Laughing.]

KR: Did you know Leo Livingstain's father, Harris Livingstain?

FA: Yeah. Oh, yeah. One of his daughters was a schoolteacher—Gussie Livingstain.

KR: That's right.

FA: Yeah, a very smart person, and very nice. She was particularly smart. [Inaudible] with us—*any* Jewish person. You must have a nice name because they won't let you stay here, and you deserve this. But try to be the best you can, try, [inaudible] even though you're Jewish, you've got to tell them the nicest things. [Inaudible.] It was very interesting to see it. I have some old books about it.

DR: Maybe we can look at them later.

FA: Yeah, it's interesting. You know.

DR: When you were living in Little Mexico, were there a lot of Jewish families in Little Mexico?

FA: In Mexico?

DR: Little Mexico?

FA: Hanover Street.

DR: On Hanover Street. Was that a center of the Jewish community?

FA: Not too many. That's upper King Street. When you got down past The Citadel, I mean, there's a big—what's that—

NA: Parade ground.

FA: A bank.

NA: [Ed.: sounds like "Aiken Place."]

FA: Yeah, [inaudible] The Citadel.

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NA: [Inaudible.]

DR: Marion Square?

FA: King and—

NA: Calhoun

FA: —Calhoun, that's right. We used to—"You know the Ginsbergs? Well, all right, you can come in." It was all status and my father was very strong on that. He says, "Don't do anything unusual, because they know you're Jewish and everybody will be thought less of, and we don't want that. We want [inaudible]. Let them know you're good people."

DR: Mr. Arnold, why did they call it Little Mexico?

NA: It was just a black neighborhood that was very—it was kind of a wild neighborhood.

KR: It had nothing to do with Mexico.

FA: When they had the grocery store, my mother used to have a black girl, a teacher, to come in after she finished teaching, to teach her. They'd go upstairs and read to her and do that to improve her. "Tell me whatever I say wrong. Don't let me say it; tell me about it. I want it to be right."

NA: They tried very hard to assimilate the American—

KR: When your father had the grocery store on Hanover Street—

FA: And Sheppard, yeah.

KR: —and Sheppard, y'all moved—

FA: And there was a Christian family on the other corner, and couldn't make a dollar.

KR: Who did your father sell the store to? Do you remember? Did he sell the store?

FA: Yes.

KR: Who did he sell it to? Do you remember?

FA: No, I don't remember. . . . [Inaudible] on account of the girls. It was in a bad section. It wasn't noted as anything worthwhile, and he wanted us to keep going forward. He worked hard for that. "Your name is the best thing you can have. You can lose your money." I remember him—he was very strong on that. "You can lose your money, you can lose your health, but you can't lose

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your name. You've got a good name." A lot of people said, "Do you know Ginsberg?" I had an uncle, my father's brother, Gus Ginsberg, and he stayed in the grocery store all the time. He was sort of backward, I mean, as far as English and learning and all that. He was satisfied, and he didn't push like my father to try to get [inaudible].

DR: Let me ask you something about what you said before. Your mother employed a young black woman to teach her English?

FA: Yeah. I don't know.

DR: Do you remember anything about her? Her name or how old she was?

FA: Uh-uhh. I don't think [inaudible] a black woman. I don't think so. I think she was a poor white woman who needed the money, and she came in at night, and taught us whatever we had to know.

DR: Where did your mother find her?

FA: Well, my mother found her talking in the grocery store, and she said, "She's educated," see? I thought I had a picture or something about her.

....

FA: My mother never wanted to forget her mother and father. She—the family meant a lot to us, and the family—this is Europe. This is her mother. This is my mother and her mother.

DR: Oh, fabulous.

FA: [Inaudible.]

DR: Okay. Do you know your mother's mother's name?

FA: I was named after her. [Inaudible], it's [inaudible].

NA: [Inaudible.]

FA: They didn't follow through. If they couldn't speak English and couldn't go forward, they didn't introduce them to many people.

DR: So this was taken in the home country, in Russia—is that right?

FA: Yeah.

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DR: Do you know where it was in Russia?

NA: Vettibes, Geberina. Vettibes is the region, and Geberina was the shtetl that they lived in.

FA: Geberina, yes. That's a little location like, you know.

DR: Mr. Arnold, could I get you to write that down for me? You'll make a better stab at it than I will. [Laughs.]

NA: [Inaudible.]

DR: So this picture may have been taken—

....

NA: Vettibes is a particular region.

DR: This picture, perhaps, was taken—

FA: [Ed.: sounds like "It was taken in Europe"], that's right.

DR: —maybe in 1900s, but well before you were born?

FA: Oh, yeah. [Inaudible.]

DR: Mrs. Arnold's mother is a grown woman.

FA: Beautiful picture. That's my mother, and her mother. That's the story. We kept this.

DR: Did you have any contact with the people in the Old Country? Letters?

FA: No, never.

DR: Never?

FA: In fact, we wanted to be so Americanized and so up to date. They couldn't speak English, and we couldn't [inaudible]'Jewish very well.

KR: Your mother's mother—your grandmother—never came to this country?

FA: Uh-uhh, no.

NA: They spoke Yiddish in the home to some extent, but they tried to stay away from speaking

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Yiddish so that they could speak English better.

....

DR: Do you know what your mother's last name was? Maiden name?

FA: She told me, and I thought [inaudible] Pauline. [Inaudible.]

NA: I think it's in the papers, which I have.

FA: My father's name was Isaac, his first name. As soon as they came to America, they dropped their family name, because they were told, "Nobody understands Russian and Jewish. You have to learn to speak English, so everybody will understand you." That's right. We were proud of it. We weren't hiding from it, but they didn't understand us; that's the only trouble. Then [inaudible] all spoke English. My mother spoke English and my father, he went to all the meetings. He became a—what was that big organization they asked him to join? The Masons, M-A-S-O-N.

DR: He became a Mason right away?

FA: Oh, yeah.

DR: When he went to South Africa to work in the diamond mines, do you know what he actually did, what his work was? Was it physically picking diamonds out of the mine?

FA: We used to ask him things like that. "What do you need to know about it? You're in America. Stay and be happy. There's nothing like America. America's a nice place, the *best*. Just tell them you live in America."

DR: Did they come through Ellis Island, through New York?

FA: Uh-huh.

DR: They came through New York? Why did they come to Charleston?

FA: Why? Because my mother had a sister—

DR: The Blusteins.

FA: —who came over. Then later [inaudible]. [Inaudible]—this man in Charleston, he was a miser, like, and he was older, but he had a lot of money. So they [ed.: sounds like "said"] Hyman, Hyman Bluestein, [ed.: sounds like "from"] the corner of King and Radcliffe, I think—

NA?: That's right.

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FA: —and he says—and she was a beautiful woman. He said, “But you’ve got to learn how to speak English, because he wouldn’t go with you anywhere without English. They don’t speak Jewish over there and they don’t speak Russian. You’ve got to speak English.” So my mother had a [inaudible] school, a black school in back of where we lived, near the grocery store. She used to come at night, for my mother, when they closed the store and she used to teach her English, perfect English. Read, write, everything. My mother was very proud of that, that she could—you know, she was in America now. [Inaudible.]

DR: She was a teacher in this black school?

FA: Mm-hmm.

NA: A black woman.

DR: Well, your mother said she thought better of that, and thought she was a white woman, not a black woman.

FA: What is that?

DR: The woman who taught your mother English.

FA: A black woman, I think.

DR: You think she was a black—

FA: There was a black school right in back of us, and she came and taught my mother.

NA: The reason they moved out of Hyman Bluestein’s house—when they first came here they didn’t have any resources, so they moved in with them.

FA: Oh, he had that store for a long time. In fact, in Charleston there’s one now, a Bluestein’s [inaudible]—

DR: There’s a Bluestein’s in Charleston.

NA: That’s a different family, different one.

DR: Different family?

NA: The only member of that Bluestein is [inaudible].

....

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NA: There were two brothers [inaudible] sons of that family, Meyer and Leon. [Inaudible.]

....

NA: There were two sons and a daughter.

FA: My father was very [inaudible].

NA: The reason they moved out of there as quickly as they did after a couple of months, as soon as they could get some mo—this was a very bad environment. Hyman Bluestein, according to my grandfather, was what today would be an abuser, a wife and child abuser. He used to chain his children to the radiator. Besides being a miser, he was an abusive person, and so my grandfather didn't want to be in that environment. He moved out. That's why he would not liked to have gone to Hanover, but that was all they could afford at that time, was a place there. That was that.

DR: But he left as soon as he could.

NA: Exactly. Of course, the Society, the Jewish Benevolent Society, used to help these people, to give a little money. That's how he got enough money to start a little store there, because first he had a pushcart and such. But the Hebrew Benevolent Society—Sam Banov and [inaudible] who had been there for ten years, or something, before.

FA: They started organizations and they said, "What is it for? Is it for the synagogue or is it to teach children how to speak Jewish or whatever?" "No, this is an English—an American one. Better for you to know, than not to know," or something like that. [Inaudible.]

NA: [Inaudible.]

FA: Yeah.

DR: Do you know why your mother's sister came here? In other words, your mother came because she was coming to her sister.

FA: Yes, my mother was here.

DR: Why did—

NA: Mrs. Bluestein.

DR: —Mrs. Bluestein—I don't have her first name—

FA: [Ed.: sounds like "Yeah, there was a Bluestein"]—

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NA: [Inaudible] in Charleston—

DR: Yeah, why to Charleston, instead of staying in New York or going [inaudible].

FA: Yeah, the whole family. Everybody came there.

NA: I don't know think anybody knows that.

KR: Well, Charleston was the largest Jewish community in the country then.

DR: Not in 1900. No, no, no.

KR: No, no, you're right, but it was a very popular place for Jews to come.

DR: In some cases—for example, Mr. Yaschik's family—they came because there were other Kaluszyners, people from their region. There's always a reason. It could have been a business opportunity, other family, or just landsmen.

NA: There may have been some of that. We don't know of anybody else who was of that same region or area. But, as you say, the Kaluszyners and the—

KR: Well, the Blusteins came from that section—not from the Kaluszyn region, but from the same region as [ed.: sounds like “you're talking”].

NA: Yeah, right.

FA: He was a bachelor, an old bachelor, and the ones who came up before, the Jewish women, they heard that he's a bachelor and he's stingy and he's not nice.

KR: When you were growing up, who were some of the Jewish merchants who had stores on King Street?

FA: Oh, God, let me s—it's so many. Let me see—on King Street. Oh, they had furniture stores, mostly retail furniture stores.

NA: I don't know, [inaudible].

FA: [Inaudible] tell you. You go there and you see their children there now. They don't want to leave Charleston; they love it. “Leave Charleston? No. What for?”

KR: Do you love Charleston?

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FA: [Ed.: sounds like “Didn’t”] I? Yeah. My sister married a northerner, a fellow from up north, and my mother said, “If you don’t like it, you’ll come back right here to Charleston.”

KR: That’s Bernice.

FA: Yeah, Bernice.

DR: Did the family bring anything from the Old Country, anything like a candelabra or an old trunk?

NA: Samovar.

FA: Oh, yeah. I got the candelabra. [Inaudible.]

NA: Yeah, and a samovar.

DR: Who has the samovar?

[Inaudible.]

DR: I don’t need to see it right now, because afterwards I’m going to ask you—actually, I’m going to ask you if I can take pictures of some things Who has the samovar?

FA: What?

DR: Where is the samovar?

FA: [Inaudible] the seminar?

DR: Samovar, the big kettle that they made tea in.

FA: Oh. I don’t know who has that. One of the children or grandchildren, I don’t know.

DR: You think it’s still in the family?

NA: Probably is. [Inaudible.] Some people were more concerned about those things than others, and my mother was not one that—she just wanted a memento [inaudible].

DR: Do you know if they brought anything else that would have lasted, besides the candelabra and the samovar? Maybe a religious object—a tallit or a family bible?

NA: I don’t know.

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. . . . [Break in recording.]

KR: In your class at Memminger—

FA: What?

KR: —at Memminger High School, who were some of the people in Charleston in your class? You remember?

FA: Not offhand. [Inaudible.] My sister, Edna, would know all those things. In fact, she writes up all about the family—Edna.

DR: I will definitely talk to her. And if you have a family tree, that's an enormous help because then you can see—

KR: You were not at Memminger with my mother, were you? Eva Robinson?

FA: Oh, yeah.

KR: She was at Memminger the same time as you?

FA: Eva Robinson. Yeah, I think so.

KR: Well, it would have been Eva Karesh.

FA: Eva Karesh.

KR: And then when she married, Eva Robinson.

FA: Yeah.

KR: She might have been [inaudible].

NA: How old would your mother be?

KR: My mother was born in 1898. [Inaudible.]

. . . .

DR: Can you tell me a little about each of your brothers and sisters?

FA: Well, I only have the one brother. [Inaudible.]

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DR: How did he die?

FA: How did he die?

DR: Is that the brother you said was deceased?

FA: What?

DR: Your brother died shortly after that picture?

FA: Yeah, he died. . . . What's his name? [Inaudible]—Isadore.

DR: Isadore. When did he die?

FA: When did he die? He had something wrong with his chest, and he died from, like, pneumonia or something like that.

KR: In the 1970s.

NA: Cancer.

DR: But everyone else, all the other sisters and brothers, are still living?

FA: Yeah, everybody else is. We're very close. We're a very close family. When the holidays came, the Jewish holidays or any holidays we celebrated, we all met as one—we set the table for the whole family. You had to invite everybody.

KR: Who was the ball-buster in the family?

FA: Ball-buster. [Laughs.]

KR: Who was that?

FA: Well, my mother thought I was.

DR: [Laughs.] What is [inaudible]? What is [inaudible]?

NA: [Inaudible.]

FA: And my father. My father was very bright. He was very bright. In fact, when I met Ben I said, "Well, my father has to like you." I was in Florida and my hus—Ben Arnold had a drugstore. What's the name of the little town?

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NA: [Inaudible] Lake Worth.

FA: Yeah, Lake Worth. And he said, "I want you to give birth in Charleston, where the family is." [Inaudible] family.

NA: I'll give you a quick background, [inaudible] my mother. The story was my father had left New York.

FA: Yeah.

NA: He was also born in [inaudible]—

FA: [Inaudible] Russia.

NA: No.

FA: Not Russia, no.

NA: —in the Austria-Hungary area—

FA: Yeah.

NA: —between Austria and Hungary. His family came to New York, and they lived on the East Side and so forth. There were a lot of children. He left New York when he was about seventeen. He went to Florida. They were having a land boom there. Anyway, he settled in Lake Worth, Florida. He did various odd jobs and so forth and so on. He used to work on a ferry that went back and forth between West Palm—

FA: You talked about your father being in the drugstore [ed.: sounds like "in Lake Worth"]—

NA: I'm coming to that.

FA: Oh.

NA: He worked on the ferry, selling cigars, candy, and so forth. The ferry went between West Palm and Palm Beach. He had various and sundry jobs until he—this was a cow town. It was like the Wild West in those days. It was cattle country. People used to wear guns and ride horses.

FA: They didn't let Jews come to Lake Worth.

NA: Yeah, they did, Mama, but it wasn't accepted. There weren't any [inaudible]—

FA: [Inaudible.] No, no.

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NA: But, anyway, he apprenticed himself. A druggist there allowed him to apprentice himself to him and, after a couple of years, he got his license as a pharmacist. . . . Later, the old man who owned the drugstore died and they sold the store to my father.

FA: He was so proud of his grandsons, and he wanted them to know what background they all came from. You've got nothing to be ashamed of, everybody respects you, and you got to do the right thing for [inaudible].

KR: Let me ask you this question. Remember when you used to go to Brith Sholom and you used to sit upstairs—

FA: Yeah.

KR: —[inaudible]? And [ed.: sounds like “the boys”] sat downstairs?

FA: Yeah, [inaudible]—yeah.

KR: Who were some of your girlfriends? Do you remember?

FA: Oh, golly, who were some of my friends? Let me see. The ones who—their fathers had the stores on King Street.

KR: The Sokols?

FA: Livingstains, and some of them had a s— My sister Edna Ginsberg, Edna Banov, she married to a [inaudible] family—Banov. But she knows [inaudible] those things.

KR: Who were some of the boyfriends that you had before you met Ben?

NA: Mendelsohn.

FA: Mendelsohn. Yeah, Harry Mendelsohn. My father always questioned him, you know: “Do you do good in school? What are you going to study? What are you going to do for a living?” You know.

NA: Anyway, [inaudible]—

DR: I want to go back to—

NA: I'm sorry. So he apprenticed himself and became a druggist, and eventually the old man who owned the store sold him the drugstore. He owned the drugstore for a while and then he opened another drugstore in—the first one was in Lake Worth—he opened another one in West Palm

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Beach.

FA: Yeah.

NA: He used to go home every summer to visit his parents in New York. And the way you went home in those days was on a steamship line called the Clyde Line. The Clyde Line used to stop in Savannah and Charleston and Norfolk and so forth. Anyway, when the ship stopped in Charleston, my father got off. He was a cigar smoker, and he went downtown looking around to buy some cigars. He saw I. Ginsberg—cigar, candy, and notions and so [inaudible]. My mother was working in the store; she was the cash register girl.

FA: Yeah.

NA: They met, and they followed up with their meeting after a couple of trips back and forth. My grandfather took my father to shul to make sure that he could lein a Torah—do a Torah reading and so forth, and checked him out in that respect. Then in 1928 they got married. Of course, my father's business was in Florida, so they went to Florida, but that was a real wilderness. Charleston was very cultured and very Yi—had a lot of Jewishness, and so—

FA: [Inaudible.] They thought that the higher-class Jews belonged to the German Jews, and you didn't go to their synagogue.

NA: At any rate, they moved and went to Florida. My mother got pregnant and she wanted to have her child back in Charleston. So they came back to Charleston to have me. At that time my grandfather made my father a proposition: "If you'll come in business with me, I need help." My father was a good businessman. My grandfather was a good fellow—hail fellow, well met—and a good personality and everything, but he was not a great businessman. My father gave one of his drugstores in Florida to a brother and sold the other one, so he had some resources to come in the business with my grandfather. He bought an interest in the business, and they moved back to Charleston—

FA: [Inaudible.]

NA: —in 1930.

DR: So you were born in 19—

NA: '29.

DR: —'29. Oh boy, a propitious year. [Inaudible.]

NA: Yeah, Not only that, I was born in *October* 1929.

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DR: Oh, my God. [Laughs.] We're talking about the stock market crash, the month that Norman was born.

FA: *Oh, my Lord.* Yeah, that's my father.

NA: Actually—

FA: “Our hard-earned money,” he said, “was thrown down the drain,” and “How could I have done that?” You know. He really took it all on himself, you know, he gambled, he gambled. [Ed.: sounds like “He didn't like gamblers.”]

NA: [Inaudible], my grandfather did. He opened up places in Jacksonville and he opened a place in Tampa and so forth, and—

FA: [Inaudible] Grandpa.

KR: No, but do you remember—how did your father happened to become a contractor?

FA: A contract?

KR: Yeah, wasn't your father a contractor at one time?

NA: No.

FA: No, but he [ed.: sounds like “may have believed he did make it”].

KR: [Inaudible.]

NA: Hmm?

KR: He [inaudible] property. He didn't?

NA: No.

FA: Uh-uhh.

KR: I thought he—

NA: No, he was strictly a merchant. As my father got in the business they became distributors. But up until that time, he was—

FA: He became a Mason. He joined any organization where fine people were; where you met nice people. . . .

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DR: So, just to go back one step—they joined Brith Sholom.

FA: Yeah.

DR: You said that the Russian Jews couldn't join with the Germans? Were the Germans at Beth Elohim at that point?

NA: Yes.

FA: Uh-huh.

NA: Beth Elohim, as you know—I don't have to tell you—but it was Sephardic, and then it became East European and it was mostly Deutscher Jews. As it evolved into a Reform synagogue—originally it was Orthodox. But the real Orthodox of the community, the only Orthodox of the community was the St. Philip Street—Brith Sholom.

KR: Brith Sholom, right.

NA: Brith Sholom. They had the cheder downtown, which you know, which I went to. Then my grandfather, he would go to the synagogue—her father, Isaac. When he was president of the synagogue, that's when they built the education building next door, which supplemented for the cheder which was around the corner.

KR: Right.

NA: Of course, later that was—the Kaluszyners had another synagogue uptown.

KR: Right, [inaudible] also on St. Philip Street.

NA: Also on St. Philip Street.

DR: That was Brith Sholom?

KR: No, Brith Sholom was near the corner of St. Philip and Calhoun Street. The other Orthodox synagogue [ed.: Beth Israel] was on St. Philip Street between Radcliffe and Morris streets. That was called the Little Shul. The one that Mrs. Arnold is talking about is—

FA: That's when I married Ben Arnold. He had a drugstore in—what was the name of that little town in Florida?

NA: Lake Worth.

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FA: Lake Worth. Papa says, "There's no synagogue there. There's no synagogue and no Jewish people. How will you bring up your children? They wouldn't know [inaudible] religion," see? "I think we ought to go back to Charleston, where he can be brought up like his faith is."

NA: It was not a business move, it was a sociological, a family move. Because my father was a fairly learned fellow. His family was very Orthodox. His mother wore a sheitl, and all this kind of thing. He was much more knowledgeable in Hebrew than he was in English. My father had all this learning to do when he left home, because at home all they insisted on you doing is studying the Torah. So he was amenable to that.

DR: He wanted to be [inaudible] community.

FA: We were proud [inaudible]. We weren't ashamed that we were Jewish people [ed.: sounds like "at that time"]. But there was a lot of Christian people and you went to school and they said, "Oh, you're a Jew girl? My family doesn't like me to play with Jews," you know. So, we didn't hang around with them too much. They let you know that you were beneath them.

NA: Her family was very close, and very turned in on themselves. They were good community people, but they were very tight-knit.

FA: It's a history, all right.

DR: So you went first to the Courtenay School?

FA: Yeah.

DR: That was the first school you went to?

FA: Courtenay School.

DR: And that was an elementary?

FA: Yeah, elementary.

DR: After that where did you go?

FA: Well, there's the high school.

DR: Memminger.

FA: Memminger, yeah. Let me see. . . .

NA: Memminger was a girls' school.

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DR: Yeah.

FA: Uh-huh. Not many girls went to college, you know. You had to—

NA: [Inaudible.]

FA: —make a living, and you got a good education if you went to high school.

DR: Do you have, for example, your high school diploma or your . . . marriage certificate?

NA: [Ed.: sounds like “I tell you what”], I’ve got the ketubah, I think.

....

DR: Any, for example, a wedding dress or any of the clothes from that era?

FA: Uh-uhh. [Inaudible] my sister Edna in Charleston. She saved everything—Edna.

DR: Where did you get your wedding dress from?

FA: I don’t know.

NA: I don’t know either.

DR: [Laughs.] Can’t ask Norman.

FA: A wedding dress. I think somebody just loaned it to her and she had to give it right back, you know, [inaudible] a present. [Inaudible.] It was all the very religious Jewish—these people lived on St. Philip Street. That’s the way it was.

DR: Did you belong to any Jew—

End Side A
Begin Side B

DR: —the Sabbath, could you describe a typical Sabbath?

FA: Yeah. They’d tell you’re supposed to close the store, but as we got older, *we* were older, then my father needed more money to send us to college or high school or something. He said, “It’s not a sin.” You could go and study and do what you want to do. We didn’t drive or ride on the Sabbath. You had to walk; you were *supposed* to walk, [inaudible]. But we gradually got out of the [inaudible].[Inaudible] according to some of the Christian people: “Why—other people don’t do

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that?" "Well, you're Jewish, and you do the right thing [inaudible] religion," you know. "But if you can't do it, God will excuse you."

NA: Very few families closed on the Sabbath in the '30s and '40s. By the '40s everybody was staying open, except maybe Solomon, and a couple of—and Rabinowitz, and a few others.

FA: Yeah. Charleston [inaudible].

NA: But the Sabbath had very, you know, [ed.: sounds like "I would think"], the meals, going to shul and all of that was kept; that was all very tightly observed.

DR: The big issue then was whether to keep the store open, obviously.

NA: It [inaudible] an issue. It became a style.

DR: The important thing, in terms of keeping the store open, was being able to compete with the—

NA: It just happened. That's the way it was. Everybody did, pretty much, yeah.

DR: Well, Saturday is the big shopping day.

NA: Yeah, well, they didn't have to justify it. It was just what they—you did what you had to do. It was kind of—

FA: [Inaudible] did the right thing—[ed.: sounds like "Edna"]. You know, do well in school and your name was on the list that you were—they all wanted to be with you. They didn't hold anything, you know, against you.

NA: They believed in study and observing the rituals. As a matter of fact, Mama, didn't you go to the mikvah with my grandmother? Didn't Pauline [inaudible]—she went to the mikvah regularly?

FA: Mikvah, [inaudible].

NA: At the old Hebrew school, they had a mikvah downstairs.

FA: Yeah, that's right.

NA: They observed all the things that they could that didn't stop them from making a living and educating their children and all these good things. As far as the observance—

FA: We can be proud—they made you feel you ought to be proud of Jews. "Don't feel that you have to be glad that they associate with *you*." [Inaudible] that in your mind. . . . "Do well in school

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and don't hold back. They ought to be happy to be with you." They held their heads high. I never felt, growing up, that I was inferior to them, you know.

DR: Excuse me, Mr. Arnold, would you explain what a mikvah is?

NA: Mikvah is a ritual bath where the women go before and after the menstrual period. Also, it is used if you had a conversion or a—

FA: And they believed in giving to charity. It didn't have to be Jewish; it could be [ed.: sounds like "English"]. We had an uncle, Uncle Hyman Bluestein—you remember?—they didn't accept him *anywhere*. . . . He said, "I never made the first penny yet, so don't ask me for any money." We had nothing to do with him. My aunt cried many times and came up and lived with us. She had a bad life. She was ashamed.

DR: I guess divorce was not a possibility at that time?

FA: Oh, no—very few.

[Inaudible.]

FA: They always said, "We did it for the children."

[Inaudible.]

FA: If they come from divorced children [parents], nobody will marry them.

[Inaudible.]

KR: They lived on Radcliffe Street?

[Inaudible.]

KR: Did the Bluesteins live on Radcliffe Street?

FA: Bluestein, yeah.

KR: And a few doors from them lived the Bielskys?

FA: Bielsky? Yeah.

KR: Did they live right near the Bluesteins?

FA: Yeah. . . . I know the name well.

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KR: You remember when Mamie Karesh lived on Radcliffe Street?

FA: Mm-hmm.

KR: You remember Mamie Karesh?

FA: Oh, yeah.

NA: Mamie Karesh was your grandmother, right?

KR: No, Karl Karesh's mother, my [ed.: sounds like "aunt"].

NA: Oh, okay.

FA: She used to cook for people and all.

KR: She was a caterer.

FA: Uh-huh. Yeah.

KR: Do you remember when her husband had the fish store on King Street?

FA: Uh-huh.

KR: Did you ever have fish there?

FA: Yeah, everything.

NA: Who was the butcher? What was the butcher's n—

KR: Zalkin.

DR: A kosher butcher?

KR: Yes.

DR: Where was Zalkin?

KR: On King Street.

NA: Right on King Street. There were a number of stores. The Mazos had a delicatessen. I don't think there are any of them left in Charleston.

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KR: Building's still there.

FA: Your name was everything, they all felt. If you had a good name and you did well for everybody, you give charity, they thought you were—and you did well. They didn't like Hyman Bluestein because he was too stingy.

NA: Let's forget that now, Mama. Let's move on.

DR: There was a ritual bath associated with the synagogue?

KR: Still in use, still in use.

DR: Is it part of the synagogue?

KR: Yes. It's still in use today.

DR: It's still in use. And the kosher butcher—do you know when either of those organizations, either of those facilities started? That was always there since you were there?

KR: Oh yes, it's always part of the Orthodox religion.

FA: [Inaudible.]

DR: Are there any Zalkins left?

KR: Yes.

NA: Yeah. I don't know there're any in Charleston.

KR: Oh, sure.

NA: Yeah?

KR: Lillie Zalkin married Hyman Bebergal. She's still there.

NA: Okay. All right. But one of the Zalkin sons is—

KR: Oh yes, he lives up in—

NA: —North Carolina.

KR: —North Carolina, someplace.

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KR: [Inaudible.]

DR: Okay. Your son—Norman described how you met your husband. Do you remember the first time you saw him?

FA: Yeah. He got off the ship . . . he'd left Florida on a vacation and the ship embarked in Charleston. We already had a very good name, and we were on the corner of Meeting and—

NA: Pinckney.

FA: —Pinckney, that's right. He saw the name on the window—I. Ginsberg, Incorporated. He said—he came in the store. I used to stay in the store to help my father after school. I took care of the register. So he [inaudible]. Of course, our competitor, Doscher, A. F. Doscher—and there's another one.

NA: Geer Drug.

FA: Yeah. He came in and he said, "Where can I meet some nice Jewish girls? I want to stay over tonight. I'd like to meet somebody." I didn't even want to bother with him. I said, "I don't know anybody; you have to go and look for yourself." It's just a whole different story, you know.

DR: But he did manage to have a date with you?

FA: He told my mother—he wanted to meet my mother and father right away. He liked, I think, the fact that I could work and understand business a little bit. He wanted to marry [inaudible], and he wanted to get out of Florida. He said, "I'm going to come back and ask your mother and father can you meet me, to go with me." She said my father doesn't let me meet with anybody unless he talks to them first. That's true.

DR: He sounds like a very decisive man.

NA: They went out on a date and my mother wasn't sure she liked him. When she came back from the date, one of her—Edna, one of her sisters said, "Boy, he's a sharp fellow," or something like that. That changed her mind. She became—am I telling it right?

FA: Yeah, you know it well.

DR: Do you remember where you went on the first date?

....

FA: Across the street from us on Meeting Street, Meeting and Pinckney—no, on *Hasell* Street,

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Hasell Street, a small—they had a—I don't know where [inaudible].

DR: Maybe a café or—

FA: I don't know. It was very smooth, very nice. My father said, "Are you married to any Christian people—the people in your family? Would they mind if you married a Jewish [inaudible]? You know, we're Jewish." He wanted him to know that we are Jewish, and unless you can take it—in other words, it's hard to be a Jew all the time.

DR: So you moved back to Charleston with your husband, Ben, had your first child, and the Depression began, a very difficult economic time. How did the Depression, that period of real poverty, affect your family's business?

FA: I don't know.

NA: They were not terribly affected by it, because their business was a—

FA: They were well off. They'd made money already.

NA: They were dealing with local merchants who—

FA: [Inaudible.]

NA: —everybody in Charleston had enough business. They just couldn't get loans and they couldn't expand.

FA: There was a big difference between Orthodox and Reform.

NA: It [inaudible] amount to anything.

DR: There was a big difference between Orthodox and Reform?

FA: Reform, yes. If you go to our shul—that means if you go to our synagogue—they called it a shul.

NA: The Depression was not severe in our [inaudible]—

FA: [Inaudible] apartment—Chicco—what's his name?

DR: Chicco.

FA: Chicco, yeah.

DR: The apartment building.

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KR: He was across the street from [inaudible]. Was it a liquor store?

NA: No, he was in the tobacco business.

KR: Tobacco business, that's right, yeah, tobacco business.

FA: [Ed.: sounds like "I always, after school"], [inaudible], and my mother [inaudible]—we helped my father [inaudible] call on the customers. We stayed—I did, particularly.

NA: My mother stayed in the store and worked. Edna, who was the next one along, got a job at city hall. She had already learned how to type and all those kind of things, and she got a job as a secretary in city hall. I used to go to Craft School, which was not far from our home on Ashley Avenue. Then from Craft School I would walk to the store on Meeting Street and did a little work—

FA: I can see the sign in the window now, I. Ginsberg, Incorporated—wholesale cigars, candy, everything, you know.

NA: Notions.

FA: Candy. I did the buying, a lot of the buying. I was the one.

NA: She was a very good businesswoman.

DR: Are there any parts of the old store left—a cash register, a display cabinet, any of the inventory?

NA: Price lists. I've got the price lists.

FA: Edna Banov would know [inaudible].

NA: [Inaudible.] And there's a painting done by Halsey. Did I ever show you that, Klyde?

KR: No.

NA: Halsey did a painting of the I. Ginsberg store because it was on the national register, and it tells the whole story of the family right in that picture.

FA: And on the corner—

DR: Now, you have it?

FA: [Ed.: sounds like "Yes, I think"]—what was the big wholesale drug [inaudible]?

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NA: There was Chicco, there was Geer Drug, and there was Doscher. Doscher was the one that was right directly across the street.

DR: Was Doscher Jewish?

NA: No.

DR: None of those were Jewish.

KR: No.

FA: Yeah, it's quite a story.

DR: I wanted to just move along a little bit in your life story. How many children did you have?

FA: I only had one. I never had another.

DR: Only one?

FA: One—Norman. He came nine months after I was married.

NA: She had a tubal pregnancy that almost did her in, years later.

DR: Once you settled in Charleston, you stayed there.

FA: Yeah.

DR: You lived there until you moved to Columbia.

FA: Mm-hmm.

NA: Yeah.

DR: And where in Charleston did you live?

FA: Ashley Avenue.

NA: My grandfather built a home on Ashley Avenue when he finally got his business going, after my father had moved.

FA: Then, with Christians, we were worried that they wouldn't like us being there. They knew we were Jews and they weren't so happy about Jews [inaudible].

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NA: You know who was living next door? Poulnot.

FA: And it lowered the name of Ashley Avenue.

NA: Charles Poulnot was our neighbor next door. See, in those days, it was a very different thing. Jews were [ed.: sounds like “all”] downtown.

FA: They accepted us so well. All they did was come and talk to my father and my mother, and they said, “We’re so happy you could get in here—come in here,” and all that, and “happy to see you and we want you to be here.” [Ed.: sounds like “I had it beautifully.”]

KR: Growing up, who was your best girlfriend?

FA: Who was my best girlfriend. I can’t remember right now. Let me see. I don’t know who was my best girlfriend.

NA: I don’t know either, Mama. I never heard that.

DR: So the young married family moved, basically, next door to your grandfather? You built a house and moved in.

[Inaudible.]

NA: No, no, we [inaudible] two houses. We lived in—

DR: [Inaudible] house.

NA: Yeah.

FA: No, it wasn’t strictly Jewish. There were Christians next to us and on the corner were Poulnots that had Kerrison’s department store. My father went to him and he said, “If you do not desire us to be here, we can sell it and we can go somewhere else.” He said, “Mr. Ginsberg, you’re welcome to come. We’re happy to have people like you.” From then on—if the Kerrisons accepted us, everybody accepted us. “We’re happy you came.”

DR: How long did you live in the same house with your parents?

FA: [Inaudible.]

NA: Ten, eleven years.

DR: So that would be up to, almost, the war?

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NA: Late '30s. They moved there in 1929, I think, '29 or '30. About '39 or '40—then we moved to Columbia.

DR: Then you moved to Columbia?

FA: Right.

DR: So you went to elementary school in Charleston, and by the time you moved to Columbia, you wouldn't have been quite ready for high school.

NA: No. The business dictated a lot of that. My grandfather and my father had wholesale tobacco and drug stores around the state. They had one in Charleston—the original one in Charleston—Columbia, had a place in Beaufort, had a place in Greenville, Spartanburg. My mother use to go—they would open a store—

FA: [Inaudible] across the street from us was Chicco.

NA: They opened a store in Fairfax, South Carolina, for instance, which was a railhead. In those days, as the railroad moved along, workers were a good source of customers. So my mother went to Fairfax, South Carolina . . . and she stayed there about six months, a year, before she was married, and she ran that place. Eventually, the railhead moved on, and it went to some place in Savannah, whatever. But when repeal of Prohibition occurred in '37—

FA: [Inaudible] home on Ashley Avenue [inaudible], my father left to *all* the neighbors around there—

NA: They heard that, Mama. Let me just finish this [inaudible] and we'll get back to that. They had distribution around the state, [inaudible] tobacco place, so when repeal of Prohibition came along—in South Carolina it was '37 or '38—they opened a whiskey distribution place because we had the distribution network set up, and that was in Columbia. You could only have one location in those days, and that was in Columbia. So my father, he ran that. He used to commute; he'd go back ro—and commuting in those days was not like it is today on the Interstate. It would take four and a half, five hours to drive to Charleston from Columbia. Eventually, we moved to Columbia so he could do that business. All those other branches were closed [ed.: sounds like “though”].

Then, right towards the end of World War II, my grandfather's only son wanted to take a more prominent role in the business and so forth, so my grandfather and my father split up. My grandfather's family—son-in-law and son, Max Levine and Izzy [ed.: sounds like “so forth”]—took the tobacco business, and my father took the liquor business, and they each ran their businesses from that point.

DR: Up until then it was called I. Ginsberg?

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NA: It was called I. Ginsberg, and then it was called Ginsberg-Arnold. The liquor business was called Arnold-Ginsberg, or Ginsberg-Arnold, and then when they split it was *still* called I. Ginsberg, except in Columbia, they called themselves Columbia Cigar and Tobacco. They didn't carry the I. Ginsberg name around the state. As they went around the state—

FA: [Ed.: sounds like “Dad didn't want to come to Columbia.”]

NA: —Beaufort Drug; they called themselves Beaufort Tobacco and Drug, [inaudible].

DR: And your grandfather and father were capitalizing on the profits from their—they weren't borrowing money to expand in this way.

NA: Well, they did. C&S Bank was pretty helpful to them. They did, they used to borrow some money, but in those days you didn't have a Federal Reserve-type situation. They could write a check in Columbia to a supplier in Charleston or something; the check would take two or three days to clear, and they would live on that money, on that float. The business would go on the float. They had to get the deposits in immediately so they could meet their outstanding checks.

You did it by the seat of your pants in those days; you didn't do it like you—there were no computers and there was no rapid money transfer, et cetera. If you built up a good enough—like my mother was saying—if you built up a good enough reputation of paying your bills on time and so forth, you could get a little bit of a line of credit—not much, but enough to—my grandfather was the exclusive distributor for Roi-Tan cigarettes—*cigars*. It was a big thing, for a while.

FA: When we lived on Ashley Avenue, we were well respected by all Christians. We questioned my father about it; we said, “Papa, do they know we're Jewish?” He said, “Yes, I went and I told them [inaudible], “I'm thinking of buying”—

NA: I think my mother is focusing on that more than my grandfather did. My grandfather was busy in the Jewish community and in the business community, and he really wasn't involved—my mother remembers some of that a little bit more emphatically than it really—

DR: There was, probably, at that point, a real anxiety about making this move into what might have been regarded as a Christian neighborhood?

NA: Yes.

DR: This is just a silly question—I just want to change the subject for a minute. Do you remember your first car, the first automobile your family owned?

FA: I know I was so proud of it. Let me see. I don't remember, though.

DR: Would you have had a car by the time Norman was born?

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NA: Yeah. My father and my mother used to travel back and forth [inaudible]—

FA: My mother learned how to drive a car—and her sister. In those days—she said, “If you can drive, I can drive, too.” She wanted to do everything he did.

DR: That’s amazing.

KR: Do you remember Furchgott department store?

....

FA: Yeah, Furchgott. I remember.

KR: Did you go shop there?

FA: Yeah, Furchgott—yeah, Kerrison’s and—

NA: Where was Furchgott?

KR: [Inaudible] on King, [ed.: sounds like “near Kerrison’s”].

FA: —and Furchgott.

NA: I am amazed, I don’t remember [inaudible].

KR: They were a very large department store, wasn’t it?

FA: Yeah, very. They were across the street from us, [inaudible] the corner of Meeting and Pinckney, [inaudible] the wholesale—Geer Drug Company and Chicco. They were proud. They made themselves that way. They felt that we improved it.

NA: Louis Shimel moved down the street from where my grandfather had built. Louis Shimel—

FA: [Inaudible.]

NA: —was an outstanding attorney and his family—his daughters were friends with the younger daughters in the family—

FA: Bernice.

NA: Bernice and Jenny. Then Berlinsky moved onto Ashley Avenue, I think.

KR: Much later.

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NA: Much later, yeah, that was much later.

DR: Is the old house still standing?

NA: Yeah. They sold the house to Leo Livingstain when my grandfather moved to Columbia—my grandfather moved to Columbia later, in the '40s—and they sold the house to Leo Livingstain, who has since sold it to a young attorney in Charleston. I went by there one time [ed.: sounds like “with this”].

DR: Do you have photographs of the time you were living there?

NA: Yeah, yeah.

DR: Did anyone take a photograph at your wedding?

FA: No, I think—[inaudible] did we get married, Norman?

NA: They came to Columbia to get married. They really could not afford a big wedding at that time. They came to Columbia, and Rabbi Karesh here in Columbia married them.

FA: He was an older rabbi that had been here for years and years.

NA: Fifty years.

FA: That's what worried us. We couldn't afford to have a big wedding, and if you had one relative you have to have them all. It was a little bit hard on us to do that. We didn't want to hurt them, you know, insult anybody. We were lucky, and my father said, “Look, you'll try it, [inaudible], so you'll get a divorce.” He was very broadminded. You don't have to stay with—

NA: They were a very close family and very protective of each other.

FA: If he's not what you want, you can divorce him; you'll get a divorce, and you can get somebody you deserve.

DR: He still wasn't sure this man was [inaudible].

FA: [Inaudible.]

NA: [Inaudible] that was the trouble. He took him to shul—

FA: He didn't [inaudible]—

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NA: —let him do his—lein a portion from the Torah and all, but he wasn't sure this was—because they had never met each other's parents.

FA: The years go by so fast, you don't realize—

KR: When you think back now, what is your best memory of Charleston?

FA: What's my best memory of Charleston? Charleston was a city of all nice people. I couldn't live in Columbia. I compared. I wouldn't want to live in Columbia. I like only Charleston. Charleston has everything to offer, and the synagogue was so nice; the people there were nice; they were educated. They were just my type of people, and my mother was happy with it. I had a good childhood.

DR: Did you meet your husband's family before you were married? Did you meet the Arnolds from New York?

FA: Lakewood. Lakewood, New Jersey.

DR: He was in—oh, they were in Lakewood?

NA: They'd moved to Lakewood by that time.

DR: Did you go up and meet his mother and his father?

FA: Yeah, we took the car. I think Norman was a—

NA: No, before you were married, Mama.

FA: Hmm?

NA: —*before* you got married.

FA: Oh. Yeah, I think I did, that's right. He had a brother who had a gasoline station. The first thing my mother-in-law said, "Is she a Jewish girl?" [Laughs.] "Who is she?"

DR: So, what's new? [Laughter.]

KR: Did your father and Ben's father get together?

FA: Hmm?

KR: Did your father and Ben's father—did they discuss it?

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NA: No, not before.

FA: No. "You should only live and be well." That's all they tell you. "If you're not happy, come back to us. Come back home. You don't have to stay married. You don't have to be married."

NA: She went up to New York to meet his parents, but as far as the families getting together, that never happened till after they were married. They had no means to do that.

FA: We had those wholesale whiskey people across the street from us. We went in the whiskey business then.

. . . .

DR: After you moved to Columbia, the Second World War broke out—is that right? You were here by then.

NA: Right.

DR: Did any of the people in your family—did they become soldiers in the war?

FA: Did they do what in the war?

DR: Did they fight; did they join the army? Your brother, for example, would have been, probably—would he have been—

NA: No, he was—I don't think Izzy was in the army, no.

FA: [Inaudible.]

KR: She had a nephew who [inaudible]—her nephew.

NA: My cousin, my first cousin was killed in the air force—that was in Korea, that was Korea.

KR: That's right.

NA: But I don't think there was anybody in the a—Izzy, I think, was the only one that was eligible, and I think—I don't think he was in the service.

FA: [Inaudible.]

NA: I just don't remember.

DR: Were any of you aware of what was happening in Europe—

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FA: In Europe?

DR: —during the rise of Hitler?

NA: Well, let me say this. My father was the only one who was really keyed in on that kind of thing. He was very—

FA: Norman, you were in the navy. There's a picture of you, right there.

NA: That's a different time, though.

DR: A later era.

NA: My father was very concerned about and very involved in Zionism. During World War II, as far as the knowledge of the Holocaust and so forth, there wasn't that much that *I* know of.

KR: Yeah, it was very well known in the Jewish community.

NA: It was?

KR: Yeah, [inaudible], it was very well known.

DR: People knew what was happening?

NA: I don't—

KR: Well, you would have been—you wouldn't even have been in high school yet.

NA: Oh no, I was a kid. I'm not talking about me, but as far as conversations with people—

DR: Do you remember, for example, the family sitting around listening to the radio, listening to war news or—

NA: I don't. We were kids and we were not involved. I think that my father felt—and I've said this before about his feelings—that they didn't do enough in America, after, but that was *after* the fact. Maybe it happened during the time, too, and I just didn't know about it.

DR: I don't think people knew, for example, how uncooperative Franklin Roosevelt was towards Jewish immigration until after the war. Because I have a friend whose mother named him Franklin—these were very concerned Jewish people—because he was born in the late '40s. She didn't know until later that Roosevelt had shut the door.

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NA: I didn't know of it as personal knowledge, but I don't remember anybody talking about it until after the war, what a shandeh it was that they turned away ships and this kind of—but I didn't know how knowledgeable—I do not know, *did* not know how much they knew of it. Klyde says they did, but I did not know that.

DR: One thing I'm curious about—it sounds like your family lost touch with their family in Russia, that there was no communication. But in some cases there might have been, in which case there would have been concern that these people in Europe were in jeopardy.

NA: I don't think there was anybody left there that was—

FA: Well, during the war, Norman, [inaudible]. There's a picture of you there.

NA: Mama, that's a different war.

FA: What?

NA: A different time.

FA: Oh.

NA: I don't think there was any communication that I know of. My father had no family there. My maternal side of the family, I just don't know. I never heard of any family there. I think my grandfather and my grandmother were the last ones to leave, except for maybe their parents if they were still alive. That, I just don't know. They were so busy trying to build a life and raise children and so forth, that really the past was past. They really didn't have the same interests that we do. There was not much back there, is my impression. They were pretty bad, back there. They were glad not to be there.

DR: Absolutely.

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END OF TAPE