

Marion Arvedon Transcript

Claire Gerstein: Okay. This is Claire Gerstein speaking with Marion Arvedon.

Miriam Arvedon: It's Arvedon.

CG: Arvedon, okay. Say it the right way. And today is May 5th. Okay.

MA: All right.

CG: Thank you very much for being part of the project. I appreciate it.

MA: Well, I'm happy to oblige.

CG: We'll get to know you and your life.

MA: Okay.

CG: So, maybe we could start with your parents. I know that they both came from Poland.

MA: Yes. Well, I noticed on my father's citizenship papers that it said Vilna, Russia. They always told me that there were areas of Poland that were Russia, then they'd become Poland, and the boundaries would keep changing.

CG: Yes, it had to do with who won the war –

MA: Exactly.

CG: – at a given point.

MA: Right.

CG: And so Vilna was one of those areas that changed countries.

MA: And my mother was from (Vladimir?), which I guess was not very near Vilna, because they never met over there.

CG: What did they do when they were in Poland?

MA: Well, my father left the country when he was twelve. He probably went to the local yeshiva because his father was very, very religious. My mother didn't leave until she was sixteen, and she, her sister, and their parents lived on a large farm, which belonged to the patron. They called him the patron, and I guess that he was very kind to them, and he saw that they were comfortable; they had a small cottage. My grandfather drove the local taxi, which was a horse and wagon, and he would pick people up at the train stop. And things went very well while my mother was growing up, but then her father injured his back in an accident. He couldn't work, so things were pretty rough there, but the patron saw to it that they got what they needed.

CG: How kind.

MA: And also, I guess there was a young man who was in that family, and he took a shine to my mother. Her name was (Buna Lida?), which became Lillian, and I don't think her parents were happy about the situation. So, when the opportunity came for her to come to America, they took it. She came to this country when she was sixteen.

CG: Now, did she come with her family, or did she come by herself?

MA: She came alone with just a friend and, I think, a relative on the boat. We don't know the name of the boat. She left from Hamburg, Germany, and in order to get there, it was quite a struggle from where she was. I don't know how they made it. Maybe they had friends in different places, but they got there. She was so shy that I can't even imagine her being on a boat without her parents, but she left them and her sister in the old

country.

CG: That must have been so hard.

MA: And then a few years later, she brought them over, so they were all together.

CG: Around when was this that they came?

MA: Well, my mother came probably at the turn of the century. My father, if you don't mind my getting back to him, I think it's rather exciting.

CG: Sure.

MA: He came on the Patria. We know the name of the boat because my brother Arthur went to the repository in Waltham, and he got when my father came and the information about the boat. It was his application for citizenship papers. My father, as I said, was twelve, but he turned thirteen on the voyage. It was a very rough voyage, and everybody was seasick. And he wasn't. So, he did all the gofer work; he would bring them things, and he would see that they were comfortable. He came with a few cousins. I think he came with his father, but his brothers were already in this country.

CG: I see.

MA: So, while he was on the boat, they had a bar mitzvah for him.

CG: On the boat?

MA: Yes.

CG: Oh, how interesting.

MA: It couldn't have been too much fun, but I guess they had it anyway.

CG: They must have been a religious family to want to have it at the right moment.

MA: They really were. And of course, he was always very handy, and that was his job. He took care of his older brothers, and he took care of his father.

CG: When they were all here, you mean?

MA: Yes. Well, actually, they were older than he was, so they got him work when he first came over. It was in a cigar factory, and I guess he rolled cigars at the age of thirteen. I don't know if they'd permit it today, though.

CG: Probably not. But at that time, child labor was very common.

MA: Exactly. And of course, nobody ever looked for money from the government, the state, or anything. Everyone worked, and families took care of each other. There was no such thing as welfare or even the expectation of it.

CG: It was a very different time for immigrants.

MA: I imagine. Of course, they came into Ellis Island.

CG: Did both your mother and father come through Ellis Island?

MA: Yes. And when my mother came, she had to take a train to South Station. I don't know how she did it, because she didn't speak one word of English, but she must have been with this cousin or this friend or somebody, and she was supposed to meet her uncle, Ike, whom she had never seen. He had left the country so long before, but she had pictures of him, and he had seen her when she was a baby, and he lived, I think, in East Boston, and had a horse and wagon, and he was to meet her at the station. Well, she came there, and it wasn't very crowded, but she didn't know what to do. Who would she speak to? So, she saw this man, sort of wandering around, and she thought he looked a little bit like her father. So she went over to him and said, "Uncle?" And he said,

[inaudible]. Her name was [inaudible] in Hebrew. And she said, "Yes." He had her turn around three times so that he could look at her from every angle. And he just stood there in admiration because I guess she was quite beautiful. She had very long, wavy blonde hair down her back, and she was sixteen, and she was just a beautiful young woman. He was thrilled to meet her, and they just had a great reunion.

CG: It's remarkable that they found each other in the middle of the station.

MA: Well, you see, I'm sure that it wasn't crowded. It might have been at an odd time, but they found each other, and then he took her home with him and showed her to all the friends and relatives, and it was just delightful. So, she lived with him for a while, and then she went to another aunt who was her father's older sister, and stayed with her until she got acclimated. I guess she met my father maybe a year later, and they were married. That started the beginning of the family.

CG: Interesting journeys for both of them.

MA: Yeah, I think so. And it was really – you had to have a lot of courage, I would imagine. I don't know if I could leave this country today and go and live in another country.

CG: When they left, it wasn't as if they could pick up the phone and call home.

MA: But my mother used to say that she would sit by the window, and here she was a teenager, and she'd see all these couples promenading toward the forest and outside, dressed in their finery. She thought, " Oh, wouldn't she love to be able to do that?" So, she was looking for opportunity that did not exist there, and her work – she did have one job there. I don't know how long it was – for how long – but she worked in a leather store that sold leather and fabrics. I guess it was on the Russian border. So, she spoke fluent Russian, and she would try to get customers. When they saw this beautiful young woman, they would come in and maybe buy something. So, she enjoyed that work, and

that was where they started.

CG: Now, did they go through name changes when they arrived here?

MA: Oh, I'm so glad you brought that up. My father's name in the old country was (Elias Sewitz?). When he came here, he had to take the name Levine because his brothers had taken the name Levine. We don't know why.

CG: That was my next question – how they took it.

MA: But (Elias Sewitz?), that could have been Elliot or Elias. They shortened the names, so I became Marion Levine instead of Marion Elliot. And my mother's name over in Poland was (Greysdorf?), and it became Weinstein.

CG: Also not a very obvious change.

MA: Well, her uncle took the name, Weinstein.

CG: It was very common for people to change their names when they got here, but usually, as you said, it was a shortening of the name, not a totally new name.

MA: Well, we have no idea why they did what they did, but I often think maybe we have relatives somewhere by the name of (Grey?) or (Greysdorf?), and we don't even know them.

CG: It's possible.

MA: Or [inaudible]. So, you never know.

CG: I guess there's no way of tracing that down.

MA: Also, an interesting part of their lives, I think – my father had a very bad cough, and probably from the cigar factory, and they were told that they should live out where the air

was pure in the country. So, they moved out as newlyweds to North Reading.

CG: Which probably was very country-like at that point.

MA: Very country-like with no conveniences. My father had some cows, and I guess he became a part-time milkman, so that he delivered milk from North Reading to Malden by horse. And things were very hard in the winter. We heard stories about that.

CG: What sort of stories would you hear?

MA: Well, it was pretty tough to get back in storms. And then when my father got to Malden, he had relatives who had settled in Malden. He would have lived there too, but not until he could get out of North Reading, because they stayed there. It must have been for quite a while. I was born in Malden, but I already had two sisters who were living on the farm in North Reading, and I lived there until I was about two and a half, so that I had a little bit of a country upbringing. We had a couple of dogs, and it was always very lovely out there. But we did finally move back to Malden when I was about three, and that's where I lived for many, many years. I never moved out until after I was married.

CG: What allowed your father to be out of the country air and move to Malden?

MA: Well, he got better. He was better, so he was able to move back. And of course, I don't know all the things that he did because I was too young, but I remember that they told me that he went into a fruit business right in Malden. He had been in the milk business, then he was in the fruit business. Then he decided that he would sell bicycles. He got hold of some bicycles, repaired them, and had old and new bicycles. I think he started that in Malden. Then, when he built that up, he took it to the city of Boston. He called his business New England Cycle. Then he sold radios, so it became New England Cycle and Radio Company. And from that, some years later, he went into television. He always had his stores in Boston. I think he had one on the North Shore. At one time, he had four stores right in the city of Boston.

CG: Interesting.

MA: So, somebody may remember the name New England Cycle and Radio Company. When I was a little girl, I would go into his place at Washington Street. He had a lovely store there on two stories, and I would go up to the office, and he'd have boxes of reflectors around there for the back of the bike. And I would take them and play with them. That was a fun day for me. So, I remember that part of it.

CG: It was probably an unusual business at that time.

MA: Well, I don't think too many people were in it with the bicycles.

CG: When you think back in your early growing up, what other things do you remember?

MA: What other things?

CG: Yeah.

MA: Oh, I remember about the schools. The schools in Malden were very good, and I went to a few of them because we moved to a few different places. Should I mention the streets? Or isn't that important?

CG: You could mention them, probably. I think that you moved around is probably most important.

MA: Yes, I did. As a result, I went to a lot of schools involved in Malden, but they were all enjoyable. I remember one thing that's funny that wasn't funny at the time. When I was in about the fourth grade, I was a monitor of a water faucet, and we were told not to let the children linger at the faucet. I took my word very seriously, so I gave them all a few seconds, and then I'd say, "That's enough. Next." And I loved that feeling of power. And then, in June, I was in class. The teacher said, "I guess all the monitors are across the street in the drugstore, having ice cream." I said, "I'm a monitor." So, the teacher said,

“Marion, go right over.” I went over, and sure enough, the principal had about seven or eight of the children there, and we each got an ice cream cone for our labor.

CG: A good reward.

MA: Well, I have never done that type of work since. I don't like to monitor people. I think that was my one experience. Then we went on. Why am I talking about myself, though? I really wanted to talk more about my family, my parents.

CG: We can go back to them. What was your mother like?

MA: Well, I'll show you her picture. It's right behind you. She was shy. Very, very kind and very good to her relatives. We had a wonderful family life with my mother and father. My father really was a workaholic because he had four children to raise, and he was a hard worker. However, he was very religious, and he and his father were some of the founders of the Congregation Beth Israel in Malden, which was Orthodox at the time. They had an Orthodox service. And when I was a little girl, I would sit up in the balcony with the ladies, and we would look down. He really was very much into going to shul and being part of the minyan. In later years, we all lived in Newton. He and my mother had a home right in Newton, on Moffat Road. And I don't know – have you ever heard the name, Mr. Heckel?

CG: I haven't.

MA: Well, he was the shammash at Temple Reyim, and there was a time when he was quite ill. My father had joined Temple Reyim, and he was a member of other temples too, but he said he always felt badly that Temple Reyim didn't have a minyan all the time, so he used to come just about every day. When Mr. Heckel was ill, my father had the keys to Temple Reyim, and he would open up every morning and run the minyan. So, I thought that was quite wonderful what he did. CG: That was a real mitzvah.

MA: My mother was always very supportive of that; she had a wonderful home and was a fabulous cook. And really, I'd go into the kitchen, and I'd say, "Ma, can I help?" And she'd say, "Darling, you don't have to. You go do your thing." And as a result, I never learned how to cook. But she was fabulous. The two of them were very devoted to their children.

CG: It sounds like it was a very close family.

MA: Yes, it was. It really was.

CG: Was your mother involved in the shul as well?

MA: No, but she immediately became a life member of Mizrahi, and she and her sister, who was my Aunt Annie, both joined at the same time, and they used to go to meetings, and they were very involved with that, particularly my Aunt Annie (Myro?).

CG: Now I'm familiar with the name, but I don't know what Mizrahi – what the organization was?

MA: Well, it was the Orthodox Jewish women's organization, and very well known. And many women from Malden were members of that. There was a rabbi who was very, very renowned all over, Rabbi [Dov Ber] Boruchoff, and his daughter and his family were into Mizrahi too. And that rabbi was so very well known all over Boston, and he was also one of the founders. He and my grandfather and my father and some other people were founders of the congregation Beth Israel, and maybe that's why I've been a member of Temple Reyim now for just forty-six years, because I've always been conscious of an affiliation.

CG: You learned that from your parents.

MA: Right. And also, my husband was the same. We both had similar backgrounds as far as temple.

CG: So, he grew up in a religious home as well.

MA: Yes, he did, but he lived – he was born in Chelsea, and then he went on to Roxbury. That's where he lived when I met him.

CG: Before we get to your meeting of your husband, anything else that you want to mention about your growing up and your parents?

MA: Well, like I say, they were always supportive of anything we wanted to do. I loved to play tennis while I was growing up, and I always did that, and they thought it was good. They didn't quite understand it. I was given piano lessons. I really didn't want them. I had a friend who played the guitar, and her parents owned a school for guitar, but I was much too bashful. Didn't have the courage to ask my parents if I could learn the guitar. I could have been one of the first country singers because I liked to sing, too. Well, they encouraged me in singing, so I joined all the glee clubs. I loved singing, but I wasn't crazy about the piano. I did well, and we used to have recitals every June. I had a wonderful piano teacher. When we had the recitals, I didn't want anyone to come because I was a little nervous. So, I'd say, "Pa, please don't come, because I may forget what I'm playing. Don't come. I'll tell you about it." One year, I had a very good year. I think I took lessons for five or six years. We had to come down this long, winding stairway, then sit at the piano, get adjusted, and play. There might have been forty people who were listening in a private home. And when it was over, my father walked in, and I said, "Pa, where were you?" He said, "I was out on the porch listening to you. I didn't want you to see me."

CG: But he wanted to come and hear you.

MA: And then he told me, he said, "I spoke to a man, and I said, 'What do you think of that girl?' And the man said, 'Think?' He said, 'Not only can she play the piano, but she could be an actress. Did you see the way she came down those stairs?'" And my father was so proud. Then in later years, I thought, "Gee, why didn't I let them come and listen?"

But if I had it to do all over again, I'd have them right in the front row.

CG: I think all of us have things that we think back and wish we could have done them differently.

MA: True. That's true. And then there was Malden High School. It was a very good school. I don't know if I should put my frustrations down. Should I, or is that part of it?

CG: Sure.

MA: I happened to be a very good German student. In fact, I was first in the whole class, and every year, at graduation, there would be an award, the German prize; it could be a book or something. My sorority gave that prize to the first girl in the class. And then there was another, a fraternity, who gave it to the first boy. The first boy was behind me. I was number one.

CG: I see.

MA: I thought that would be nice to get the award at graduation, but my sorority didn't give it that year because of Hitler. So, I was too shy again to say, "Gee, I'm the one who's getting it, and I'm in the sorority. You can give it this year." As a result, I did not get it. And I always minded that too. That bothered me –

CG: Sure. It didn't seem fair.

MA: – that I didn't have any courage to sort of stick up for myself when it was worth a mention.

CG: So, maybe you had some of your mother's shyness, too.

MA: I think I did. You hit it. Yeah. I'm not shy anymore. But when I go to a reunion now, I'll say to a few of them, "I should have had the German prize," and they get a kick out of

it, because they know I should have. But I enjoyed the high school experience. I loved learning, and I loved to study, so I did, and that took care of my schooling in Malden.

CG: Before we go forward, do you remember anything about how the Depression affected your family, or did you hear anybody talk about that?

MA: You know, I did hear about it, but it didn't bother me particularly, because I had whatever I had before. We had a nice family life. I do know that there was a problem with the stock market. I had heard things said about that, and the fact that my father was invested in it quite heavily. But I didn't suffer any deprivation at all.

CG: So, the day-to-day living didn't change.

MA: Not at all. My mother was the same wonderful cook, and our family life was fine. So, it was okay.

CG: Yeah, I think for a number of families that seems to have been the pattern that the day-to-day life didn't change, but there was money invested, and that got lost or decreased.

MA: Yeah, they took big losses. I think that nobody in the family was extravagant. I had two older sisters and a younger brother, which I have. I have one older sister now. The eldest died some years ago, and so we were okay. In the summertime, my father used to rent a place at the seashore, and there were some years when I was young that he would send us to a place called (Cohen's Fern?) Inn at Onset, at the beginning of the Cape. We had wonderful times there. I was a little girl there, and I loved it. And then we went to the North Shore, and we finally wound up in Nantasket – Hull. After I was married, we had a place out there. And the boys, my sons, loved it out there. We went out every summer. But the Depression, I know it happened. I knew when it happened, but that was it.

CG: Do you know if that was the case with your husband's family as well?

MA: I think so. I don't think that his father was into the stock market at all, so they were doing fine. His father came over at about the age of six or seven. His father was Louis Arvedon, and he had state electrician's license number one when he was about eighteen. He had the number one license of the state. I think we have it somewhere, a copy of it. They told me that the father –

CG: Now, this is your husband's father.

MA: My husband's father. Louis Arvedon was Arthur Arvedon's father. He sold gas mantles. He would assemble them and sell them, and they used the gas fixtures in the homes. I guess, after that went out, he started in the electrical business. That was a pretty natural thing to go into, and he did very well in the electrical business. And that was started for his two sons. My husband worked there for many years.

CG: I see. Do you know other things about your husband's family and his growing up?

MA: Well, I know that he was born in Chelsea. He moved to Roxbury at a very early age, and that's where he went to school. He had a brother and two sisters, and they had a summer place in Winthrop, a very little cottage out there, but they enjoyed it tremendously. And Arthur's sister, Jessie Arvedon, was a very, very active person. She was the Sisterhood president at Kehillath Israel, and she was very much into the Women's League. She was a very unusual person. She died very young, and that family did not have longevity. They just didn't because none of them are left anymore. But we had nice times. My husband was devoted to his family, and we got along fine, all of us.

CG: I'm going to just flip the tape over.

MA: Okay.

[Recording paused.]

CG: This is Claire Gerstein speaking with Marion Arvedon. And this is side two of tape one.

MA: Well, I had to laugh because we were talking about my name. It's Miriam in Hebrew, and Marion is my name. When I went to the first grade, I found out my name was Marion because everyone called me (Memmi?), by my nickname, not Mimi, but (Memmi?).

CG: I see.

MA: So, they said, "Marion Levine." And I looked, and I was Marion Levine. It was a revelation to me. And then another thing that I remembered. I have a younger brother, Arthur. When we were growing up, I must have been about eleven, and I loved going to the movies. He begged me to take him, so I started to take him. One day, we walked out, and it had rained, and there was a large puddle, and he fell into it. He got up, and he was sort of crying, and he said, "Now you won't take me." And I looked at him, and he looked so upset that I took a handkerchief and wiped the back of his coat. It looked like leather. I don't know what it was. It was a beautiful coat. I wiped it, and it seemed to dry off. I said, "You're okay, Arthur, I can take you." And he was so happy. I'll never forget that look on his face. And do you know he remembers it today? I guess you don't forget those things because, usually, when you're older, you don't want to take your kid brother. But I enjoyed taking him to the movies because we always talked about them afterward. I think we saw something called The Cat Creeps, and it was about a hand coming out of the wall. [laughter] Well, we didn't sleep for about a week, but he still tells me about that movie. It made an impression.

CG: It's funny how some things just stick.

MA: He's always been a good brother. Of course, my sister Ethel has been a fabulous sister. She's older, and I always looked up to her. She has done a lot of work for the

Brandeis University Women's Committee, and I've been on the board of directors, and I do my little job, but she was the president of two chapters, one in New Hampshire and one right here in Boston, and still very active. We really enjoyed that experience very much. As a matter of fact, I'm asking people now to go to the luncheon on May 18th. [laughter] So you can see we both like working for Brandeis.

CG: I'll tell you before we – I know you've been an active volunteer in a number of ways. Before we get there, maybe we can talk about what you did after high school and then how you met your husband, when you met your husband.

MA: All right. Well, I went to BU, PAL [Boston University, Practical Arts and Letters] for two years.

CG: PAL?

MA: Practical Arts and Letters. That was almost like getting three years in two, because I had English and history and literature and really an awful lot of things that we were taught along with shorthand and typing, because that was the practical part of it. I enjoyed it very much. I had wanted to be a schoolteacher, but it was too difficult to get to any of the schools. From Malden, it was sort of in the middle of nowhere, and as it was, I had to get into Boston every day and commute. But that was fine, and when I started my second year, I met my husband at his birthday party. His sister had a friend who was my sister's sister-in-law. Figure that one out.

CG: I think you lost me.

MA: Yeah. They invited me to go to the party, and I was supposed to be with another person. When I met my husband, he was taking the coats, and he took my coat, and he had known my father because he had been selling him a TV or something. I don't remember what, but he said, "Oh, I know your father." We started to talk, and I liked him. I went home that night, and I thought, "Gee, he'll probably call me." And he didn't call me

for about two weeks. I guess he was getting up his courage. Then he called me, and we started to go out. And we went out for quite a long time. We had the war to reckon with, and he knew that he'd have to go into the service, too. But we did get married anyway, and we sort of waited to see what would happen, and sure enough, he went into the war.

CG: So, you got married. You did get married before the war?

MA: Just at the beginning, yeah. After we were married a few years, he volunteered for the Navy, and he went to Officer Candidate School. His training was in Ithaca, New York, so I came up there for a few visits. I would stay at Willard Straight Hall, which was where the guests stayed on the campus, and he was only there for about four months. I remembered once I came down – you had to take a boat at a certain point and sleep overnight for about three hours, and then you came to Old Point Comfort. It was very hard to get to Norfolk, Virginia, where he was based. I was on this boat with about five hundred sailors. I wasn't too keen on there, but they were very, very solicitous of me. When we got off – oh, and one of them said to me, “Oh, you're married to a ninety-day wonder.” That's what they call the naval officers then, because they usually went for three months. I said, “No, I'm married to a 120-day wonder,” and they were hysterical, because my husband had four months of training. They carried my suitcase, and they were really very nice, so I had nothing to worry about. I did make about, I think, two or three trips to Norfolk, Virginia.

CG: How long was he stationed there?

MA: About six months, maybe more, a little more. And then he went right overseas. He went to the Pacific Theater. I never knew why they called it a theater, because you never had any fun there. But he was in the Seventh Fleet. He was on an LST. He had asked for a battleship. When you asked for a battleship, you'd get an LST –

CG: An LST?

MA: Which was a small – it carried tanks and military men. At one time, he wrote me a letter, and he said, “We have fourteen hundred Japanese prisoners aboard.” There weren't that many Americans there. They had to guard them and everything. I don't know where they were taking them. I don't think you could write that. He said, “I'm walking around with my rifle” – whatever he had – “because some of them look a little belligerent.” Then I didn't get a letter from him for about three weeks, and I thought –

CG: You must have been worried.

MA: – “Gee, maybe somebody grabbed the gun.” But then I got the letter, and he was fine, and he very rarely took that many in troops. Usually, they took provisions and tanks. But that was quite an ordeal. We were separated, oh, for maybe almost two years that way. This was when we were –

CG: You were a young bride.

MA: That's right. And it was awfully hard to be separated like that. They never make anything of the wives of these people who have been in service. They don't do anything about that.

CG: But the effect is enormous.

MA: And that is enormous. Well, that was really a big sacrifice, I feel. I don't know. I feel that they should do something to honor the wives of veterans instead of letting them maybe march on Veterans Day or something like that. But it was my husband who did it. I was just the one who had to be lonesome and be separated.

CG: Well, that's a big “just.”

MA: That's the way it worked. And during the war, I used to go into work at his father's business, which was Arvedon Electric Supply at this time, and I would go in and work

there. Then in the summer, I would go with his family to Winthrop. Finally, he came home, and we lived in Malden for a while. Then we moved out to Day Street in Auburndale, where we became members of Temple Reyim forty-six years ago.

CG: How did you happen to move to Newton?

MA: It's interesting because we only had a cousin of mine who lived in Newton. It was one of my very favorite cousins, Ben (Myro?), and he and Louise lived in Newton, and I had heard that the schools were wonderful. My parents had sold the house in Malden in which we lived. It was a two-family, and they had gone to Brookline. So, we decided we'd go to Newton. Then I immediately met people, and I was having a child. It was the second child.

CG: You had the first child.

MA: The first one was in Maldon. That was David. The second one was Lloyd, and he was born in Boston, and we were living in Newton.

CG: Was David born during the war or after the war?

MA: He was born at the end of '46, so that was well after, and that was at the Malden hospital. In fact, David just was ready to start school in Malden, but he actually started – we moved in the middle of the year, and he started here in Newton at the Williams School. We had the house on Day Street for twenty-five years. Then my husband and I moved into the towers of Chestnut Hill, and I'm still here.

CG: Before we get you to the towers –

MA: I was ready to sign off. “The end.”

CG: Nope, not going to let you do that.

MA: By the way. [laughter]

CG: Right. Maybe we can fill in something about those twenty-five years.

MA: [laughter] Oh, boy. Year by year?

CG: Well, you can skip one or two.

MA: Yeah, well, let me see. As I say, I made a lot of friends.

CG: Through?

MA: I became a member of the West Newton Hadassah, and I think that's how I met a lot of people. I was an officer there. That group didn't last too long, because a lot of the people were moving. They were in a state of flux. I don't know. But we joined the other chapters, and I did that. I loved working with Hadassah and also with Brandeis, the Women's Committee. My kids went to school, and I was busy with them and their friends, and that's how I got to know a lot of women, because of the kids.

CG: Sure.

MA: What else did we do? My husband was working.

CG: He continued –?

MA: He continued in the family business, and then he went out on his own. He called it the David Lloyd Company, and he went into a large warehouse set up where he sold wholesale. And he also was a workaholic, but he used to like to take the boys on hikes and walks. He was a nature lover. He was a leader in the Boy Scouts. There were a lot of people who, even today, they'll meet me, and they'll say, "I remember your husband from the Boy Scouts in Roxbury." In the summers, we went out to Nantasket, and the boys went to the Newton schools right through the high school. In the summer, they would go

to a day camp. I never sent them to overnight camp. They didn't want to go away from home. We took a few vacations. My husband and I went to Israel twice. The first trip, we took our fifteen-year-old son, Lloyd. He doesn't remember too much about the trip except the fun parts. It was a wonderful trip. While we were there, we met our cousins, who had settled in Israel from South Africa. They came from Johannesburg, and they had founded a kibbutz called the Kibbutz Nahshon, and we're very much in touch with them. They're a wonderful family. Two brothers. They were on my mother's side. They were the (Scheftz?) family from South Africa, and the two brothers are on this kibbutz with their wives and their families, and we visited them. We had a hard time getting to meet them because whenever we tried to reach the kibbutz, they weren't there on this first trip that we made. Finally, I wrote them a letter. I was in Israel, and I wrote them a letter, and I said, "We're going home on a certain day. We're at this hotel. We'll be there for a farewell banquet. And if you don't come to see us there, chances are you'll never meet us." And they were there.

CG: So you got to see the family.

MA: They got that letter, and they got off that kibbutz, and they took us on a sightseeing tour the night before we left. It was wonderful meeting them. Now, as a result of that, some other relatives have been to see them. They've been to this country to visit us.

CG: You helped them connect them back to family.

MA: Oh, it was just great. And one of the (Scheftz?) brothers is making a family tree out there, so I gave him a lot of the information that I could. They're into wonderful work in Israel. Their story is a completely different story. You should get them on tape. So, that was a nice part of it. Then on our second trip to Israel, we did other things, where we also saw our cousins. And then my husband and I have been to London. We didn't do a lot of traveling because he was always too busy with his work, and he couldn't leave it because there was a time that he had nobody that he could leave. He was like a one-man

operation. So, now, of course, he can travel. He's been gone for thirteen years, and now I don't really travel much either, but I really ought to start. They say it's never too late.

CG: That's right.

MA: So maybe I'm ready now.

CG: I can tell you're going to start planning when I leave.

MA: [laughter] Not that fast.

CG: I see. You really had your hands full with the children, with your husband at work, working very hard.

MA: I tell you, it wasn't too bad, because they did have friends, and I had a wonderful lady who lived with us. She came from Ireland, worked for my parents while I was growing up, was part of the family, and stayed on with me. That was (Nelly?). She was crazy about the kids. Like I say, they had friends, and they kept very busy, but I was busy with organizations, so it worked out fine. In those days, we formed our little bridge club that's now been going for thirty-five years. I love the game of bridge. As a matter of fact, my youngest son, Lloyd, is a grand life master, which means over ten thousand master points, and he's very much into bridge. He teaches. He gives a seminar. I never thought it would be his livelihood, but it looks like it might turn out to be that.

CG: Interesting.

MA: He went to school and couldn't get a job as a teacher. There were no positions available when he got out. And my oldest son, David, is a Brandeis graduate. He also has a master's degree from Boston University. He decided that he liked working at the Boston Globe in the distribution center, so that's what he's doing. Has nothing to do with Brandeis or what he learned in Brandeis, but he's happy. So, he's doing that.

CG: Now, if I can go back for a minute. Where did your parents and your husband's parents fit in with your life, together with your husband?

MA: You mean individually? His set of parents and my –? See, my husband's mother died before we were married. Like I say, they died young.

CG: Did you know his father?

MA: I had the father-in-law, and I was with him in Winthrop. He was always very nice to us. Our parents met, but there was never anything else because the mother wasn't here, and his father was at work too, and my father was at work. So, we never really got together that much. If it were a bar mitzvah or something like that, we'd get together.

CG: Now you have two sisters and a brother. Did they live around Newton also?

MA: My sister Rose was in Newton, but she died years ago. She had a daughter by the name of Joyce. And Joyce is married. She was a Brandeis graduate in the first class. She went to Brandeis for three years. I shouldn't say graduate because she had one year to go, but she was living in Marshfield. She was married, and they were having a farm, and she couldn't leave the farm. There was no transportation for every day, and she was way up near the top of her class, so we were very disappointed when she didn't graduate. But my sister Rose died early. My sister Ethel lived in Manchester, New Hampshire, with her husband, and she was very active, like I mentioned before, in Brandeis. My brother worked with my father. Then, when that was at an end, my brother went into the automotive business, and he's in it in Waltham. His two sons are in it. He has a charming wife by the name of Connie, who has just been wonderful.

CG: So, in terms of the cousins having a chance to get to know each other –

MA: Not really.

CG: – sounds like you were in really different places.

MA: Yeah, the cousins don't know each other that well. My sister's daughter, Joyce, babysat for my son, David, when I was in Malden. She did babysitting for us. I guess she was going with her husband at the time. Now Joyce lives in Florida, and her sons live in Florida, so it's pretty far away. But I see a lot of my brother and sister-in-law, and my sister, Ethel, lives right in the next building. She's south, and I'm north, the same building.

CG: Oh, that makes it nice for you.

MA: It's lovely. In fact, what time is it? Oh, we have a few more minutes.

CG: I know that you have –

MA: I'm going with her this afternoon. She has something special.

CG: Yeah, I don't want to keep you.

MA: No, that's fine. If you have any more questions, I'll be happy to answer them. We have a little more time.

CG: Maybe you could talk a little bit more about how you got involved in your volunteer work.

MA: With Hadassah, I wanted to be involved because I had been in Young Judea as a young girl. I remember carrying the blue boxes and looking for contributions when I was maybe twelve, and I found that kind of hard. I never liked asking people for money like that. But then I joined Junior Hadassah. Then I was in Hadassah when I was married and living in Brookline for a little while, and I immediately was on the membership committee, and I enjoyed that very much. Then I became very active at Brandeis, and I've been doing that all this time. You'll always see my name. When they mentioned the board of directors, I'm right up there. I do book fund. I sell cards. If people have donations or

whatever, they buy cards from me. My sister, as I say, was the president, and now she's doing what they call "Art Adventure," where she plans a trip for the day. It used to be maybe a weekend, but we don't do that anymore. We're going to Tanglewood in August, and she's planning a lovely day. We take the bus right here from the mall, and it's the whole day at Tanglewood. Really, it's very nice. I was a little bit active in the temple Sisterhood. I remember one year I did boutiques for the luncheon. I always went to their parties and affairs because I've been a member for so long. Now, I'm very happy to be in my two bridge clubs. I love the game. I must take after my son. They always say, "Ask him, 'How did you ever get interested in bridge?'" And I pipe up, "I taught him." I taught him, because when he was about eight or nine, I'd be at the beach, on the porch with him, and I wanted to keep him quiet so we wouldn't disturb my parents, so I taught him how to play honeymoon bridge. So, I taught him.

CG: He got his roots.

MA: But I love the game, and I find that I keep very busy. I have nice friends, and we go out, and it's great.

CG: I'm going to just change the tape.

MA: Well, isn't that about all we –? [Recording paused.] – exactly what I'm going to say, though, but I'll say it.

CG: Okay, this is tape two.

MA: About the temple changing.

?

CG: Yes. Claire Gerstein interviewing Marion – I'm having so much trouble with your name. [laughter]

MA: Arvedon.

CG: Arvedon.

MA: Well, you may be having trouble because when my husband's father came over, the name was really Avedon, and in Boston, they put an R into it. "Oh, Arvedon." A-R. They didn't do it A-V because there were some Avedons who are related. Anybody who has the name Avedon or Arvedon –

CG: Is related.

MA: – is related. It's a name that has never really gone very far because it's from the old country. My husband always used to say they think there might have been a princess in the line, and they kept the name very much to themselves, the elite, or something. I never knew about that. So, we have the name clear now.

CG: Yes, I apologize for that.

MA: Levine would be easier.

CG: That I wouldn't have –

MA: One day, somebody asked me my name not too long ago, and I said, "Marion Levine." I went right back. Yeah, you do that sometimes.

CG: One of the things you had mentioned that you might like to talk about was how things were different as a member when you were younger and what it was like now at Reyim, so I thought maybe we could talk about that for a couple of minutes.

MA: Well, of course, things do change, but we find it hard to accept that. When you're a young married couple, it's really wonderful. We were in the temple, and we knew other young couples, and we had camaraderie there. And things changed over the years. Naturally, there's a change of rabbis. You have to expect that. We have a wonderful young rabbi, and he's terrific and good with young people. The older people, a lot of

them, are missing now. You don't have that many in the temple anymore, but we feel a little bit like outsiders because we don't really know many of the young people. It's almost as though you're looking in from outside. I don't feel as much a part of the temple anymore after all these years.

CG: That's sad.

MA: And I had thought maybe sometime they should have an evening or something where old members are the thing for the night. Just say we'd like to get to know you, and maybe you'll tell us about how things used to be.

CG: Oh, you mean to try to get the older members and the newer members talking to each other.

MA: Yeah, just to get to talk to each other. There are some young people I notice who go out of their way to speak to the older ones, and they show a lot of respect and all that. But there's something that I feel is missing, and I think maybe that's why some of the older people just drop by the wayside.

CG: Yeah, I think that your suggestion is a very good one.

MA: Not so much for the honors. "Oh, you've been a member for forty-five or six years." I don't need that, but just to be –

CG: To feel included and connected.

MA: – recognized, to feel connected. I don't know.

CG: Because certainly, after so many years of belonging, you shouldn't feel like an outsider. You should feel like the core on the inside.

MA: Yeah, well, we did have a few exceptions. There were some older people who were very well known and loved, but maybe they were very active, and it was different. I don't know. I just feel a difference. In fact, last year, I thought, "Gee, maybe it's time for me to drop out and be emeritus by now, just be an ex-member in good standing." But I do have that feeling, and it's almost a feeling of being lonesome too, because I see who's missing and who isn't with us anymore. I'm very conscious of that. Some of us get together after a service, and we'll say, "Gee, it isn't the way it used to be." But look, things do have to change, and I know that. Maybe I'm just not ready for the change.

CG: Also, when the temples played an important part in your life, you don't want to give that up.

MA: Well, I'm very reluctant to give it up. But of course, even if I'm not a member, I still would go to the dinner or whatever every year, as long as I could. But I do have that feeling, and I'm sorry, it's a lonesome feeling.

[Recording paused.]

CG: One of the other things you mentioned was what it was like to be part of the computer age, but not be computer literate.

MA: That's true. They say you have to join them. Really, you do have to join them if you want to be part of it. Now, I'm in a peculiar position, as are a lot of people in my generation, because I don't feel that we're going to buy computers. A few of my friends do have them. Now, I would love to know how to work one, but what's the point if you don't own one? Then again, I feel that the computer is tying people down and making them – it's like TV used to be. You just sit there, and you look at it. Well, the computer is like that too. People are really handicapped by having it too much. Then another thing about the computer age is the phoning. When you have to phone the doctor's office or any business, you never get a live person; you just get the recording. You have to sit

there while they play the music. The other day, I told someone, when they finally answered after five minutes, “I prefer Benny Goodman,” because the music was terrible. And I think, in a way, it defeats itself because many a time I’d just rather hang up than get through to whoever I’m calling anyway. Maybe people look – I don’t know if they looked at TV like that, but the computer age is really not convenient for me. I just feel very limited because I don’t know how to use a computer. I can’t make a phone call anymore and get through. I like things the way they were when they were simple. Now, nothing will stop the computer age. It’s rushing on. It’s right there with us, so we have to take it.

CG: The question becomes how to make peace with that change.

MA: That’s right. I know when we used to have calculators. Well, first, a calculator was very expensive. Then they [inaudible] it down. You really couldn’t buy one, because the next day, it would be a hundred dollars less. Finally, they had calculators that were nine dollars, seven dollars, and you could buy them for nothing. Well, I don’t know if the computers will ever be like that.

CG: They certainly have come down in price.

MA: They have.

CG: Very much so.

MA: Yeah, but then you have to learn how to use the thing. Now, the eight-year-old kids are teaching their grandparents how to use them. So, something isn’t equal here. It just doesn’t seem to be right. Maybe one day I’ll understand that they’re necessary. Look at all the fuss they made with the year 2000. They scared you out of your wits. “Everything will break down.” And then I saw on TV, there’s a family who’s putting in a food stock, and they have bunkers, and they’ve got everything prepared for the end of the world, practically. Now they say, “Don’t worry, everything will be fine.” So, I’m taking that course, and I’m not worrying. I’ll be very happy to see the year 2000, but I’d like to see peace in

the world with it. I really don't like – when I was young and growing up, we didn't have any of this. We could live the life of a child. We could be happy. We didn't have to worry about that man on the corner of the street. We could walk freely. It was a different type of living. I'm so sorry that the young people today don't have what we had then, because we were happy. That's how I feel about the computer age, and maybe someday I'll make my peace with it.

CG: How do you think your childhood shaped who you became? Who you are?

MA: Well, I know that it certainly did. My childhood was very important because I have about the same moral standards that I had then. The way I was brought up is the way I am now. I had wonderful parents. They set a fine example for integrity. They gave us a lot of love. Not the type of love that you might see today, with a lot of hugging and kissing, but we knew it was there because of what they did for us and the sacrifices to make the children happy. I think today, parents are maybe much – they're more demonstrative with their kids, and it doesn't always go for the good either. But we were brought up to be decent, honest, and we really loved our parents, and we honor them all the time. So, I think it was everything. My growing up was everything. The only thing that I've changed is that I lost my shyness, but life does that to you. You can't be shy through your life. You have to get tough at some point. And I'm still a softie, but I'm much better than I was.

CG: Maybe before we stop, I would ask, first of all, is there anything that we haven't talked about that you'd like to?

MA: No, but I'll probably think of it in about an hour.

CG: I'll be in touch with you. And if there's something you forgot, I can come back.

MA: Especially if I have time to prepare, but this is not prepared.

CG: You've done just fine. Done just fine. What words of wisdom would you want to share when you think about the future generations?

MA: Well, I think –

CG: Any advice for them?

MA: I don't have any words of wisdom. I think everything is personal experience and just go with the times, tolerate the times. I don't know if that makes any sense to you, but that's what I think people should do.

CG: People grow and change –

MA: Exactly.

CG: – as things change.

MA: Yeah, you have to change, not in your ideal [inaudible] moral code. I don't think you have to change that one little bit. I can't go along with a lot of things that are considered okay today.

CG: The basic values of who you are remain intact.

MA: Right. Exactly. That's the way it has to be. But I can understand others, why they do what they do. I'm tolerant. I'm easy on others, but not on myself. I don't know how much wisdom there is in that.

CG: I think there's a lot of wisdom in that.

MA: Well, thank you. Just see to it that I get the German prize.

CG: [laughter] I'll do my best.

MA: That was my one big disappointment. Well, you have to have a sense of humor, too.

CG: It helps a lot.

MA: That goes with the ages.

CG: It helps a lot. Right.

MA: It's been nice meeting you. I hope that this has helped for something or other. Maybe somebody who listens will say, "I bet she's a relative of mine." That would be very nice to make a connection that way. I was happy to do this. To bring up the past isn't that easy because there were a few times when I wanted to do a little sobbing, but I thought better of it.

CG: Well, sometimes remembering the past is bittersweet.

MA: That's true. It really is, and what you should have said and what you should have done. Part of what I would say is, please do the nice things that you think you should do, and don't hold off. That's my word of wisdom today.

CG: I want to thank you very much for sharing.

MA: Well, I'm happy I could do it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]