

Ruth Berkowitch Schneider Transcript

Susan Cooper: It's April 24th. I'm Susan Cooper. I'm with Temple Sinai, and I am interviewing Ruth Berkowitch, who was also a member of Temple Sinai, and we're sitting in her home in Westwood, Massachusetts. This is for the oral history project. Okay. Ruth, you said you spoke to Rose Davis, and she told you a little bit about the project.

Ruth Berkowitch: Yes.

SC: And that we're interviewing women whose lives have spanned the century, and we're trying to learn about them and learn about their history, and we're going to make a record of this. So, I was particularly thrilled when they assigned me to you, because you are ninety-three. Did I get that right?

RB: No, not quite.

SC: Not quite. Almost?

RB: I'm ninety-one.

SC: Ninety-one. Oh, well. What's a couple of years? I thought the older the better. We can start anywhere. I really want to know everything and anything about your life that you want to share. Maybe it would be easier for you to start with your childhood, and then we can work our way up to today. But if you want to start in the present, whatever is easier for you.

RB: As I explained to you, I thought it would be easier if I jotted down some of my recollections. I'll read them to you.

SC: Okay. Well, that'll be fine. Then maybe what I'll do is take some notes as you read, and we can come back to some of the points.

RB: All right. Shall I go ahead?

SC: Sure. Yep.

RB: Last evening, I received a call from Rose Davis, a member of Temple Sinai, asking if I would consent to be interviewed concerning my life's experiences. At first, I was reluctant, but then thought that this was something I could pass on to my grandchildren. When I got into bed that night, I couldn't fall asleep thinking about that call. So many thoughts came into my mind that I had to get them down because I thought I might forget them by morning. The following is the result. My introduction to life began February 15, 1908, the youngest of six sisters and three brothers. We lived in very cramped living quarters in a three-decker house in East Boston, where the tunnel toll booths are now located, and the house was owned by my father. My grandparents lived next door in a similar house. Several aunts and uncles lived close by, and we shared a long relationship, enhanced by a love of synagogue involvement and music. My brothers sang in the choir of my Zayde's shul. My earliest recollection is of sundown on Saturdays, when I would run next door to take part in the Havdalah service. My grandfather put me on the kitchen table and told me to hold tightly and as high as possible the special candle in its ornate container. He said that if I held it very high, I would marry a tall [inaudible]. My husband was five-feet-six. At age four, we moved up the ladder to Dorchester. My father had the house wired for electricity, but kept one gas burner, just in case. One of the first things that my parents bought was a piano. On warm summer nights, the family gathered to play the piano and join in singing show tunes and other selections. My sister Esther played the violin. My brother Is [Israel] the cornet, his fiancée the piano, and the rest of us sang while the neighbors applauded. I remember World War I when my sisters took me to the railroad station to wave to the troops as they were leaving to go off to

Europe. It was a very puzzling and emotional experience to a young child as people were crying and cheering as the trains went by. My kindergarten teacher was Miss Mansfield, the sister of the mayor of Boston, who I never forgot because of her kindness to a shy little girl. I can't forget beautiful Miss (Kavanagh?), my third-grade teacher, whose fiancé was killed in World War I, and how we cried when we heard about it. When I was in third grade, one incident stands out. Miss (Cahill?), the principal, allowed only the girls to come into the basement on rainy days; the boys had to remain outside until school began. One particularly rainy day, I was standing near the window when a boy, who was dripping wet, tapped at the window and begged me to open the door. I felt so sorry for him that I opened it, and of course, they all rushed in, screaming, even though I begged them to quiet down. Miss (Cahill?) ran into the basement and asked who opened the door, and all fingers pointed to me. With that, she came and slapped me across the face. At recess time, two hours later, she came into the room and apologized, but the harm was done. Two other teachers stand out in my memory: my seventh-grade teacher of science, who met with us when it was dark and pointed out the stars and constellations, and what a thrilling sight it was. I think of that when I look up at night and see the moon and an occasional airplane's lights. I continued on through the Boston schools, hoping to go on to college, but my father died, and my mother passed away two years later, so I had to think about supporting myself. A two-year business school was the answer. I took the civil service examinations and was placed in the Department of Public Health, the Wasserman Laboratory at Harvard Medical School, where I worked for one year, when the director, Dr. William A. Hinton, offered me a much higher position with opportunity for advancement at the Boston Dispensary. Dr. Hinton was the first Black full professor at Harvard Medical School. When I was about seventeen, my sister, Ethyl Silverman, who was singing in the Temple Israel choir, suggested that I join the choir. I auditioned for the choir master, Henry Gideon, an eminent musician and organist, and was admitted. Ethyl later became soprano soloist at Temple Sinai, where she continued until her retirement. I sang with the choir until Rabbi Levy's death. Shortly after, following a great deal of

disagreement, [inaudible] Temple Israel, and formed Temple Sinai with Rabbi Beryl Cohon as rabbi. During my ten years at Temple Israel, I was able to study voice with Mr. Gideon. At about age twenty-three, I joined the Council of Jewish Juniors, where I sang in their musicals and took charge of their music group, where young musicians perform. When Temple Shalom of Newton was in its infancy, I was asked to teach second and third graders in customs and ceremonies through music in the religious school, which I did for ten years. My husband, Martin Schneider, whom I married August 6, 1939, shared my love of music and temple involvement. When our first child, Alan, was five, he joined Temple Sinai so that he could begin religious instruction. Three years later, he was joined by his brother, Stephen. Both boys were bar mitzvahed there, and they continued on through confirmation. My younger son, Stephen, was a founding member of Temple Shir Tikva in Wayland, where he sang in the choir and acted as cantor until the temple could afford to hire one. When my children were in the upper grades of the Brookline schools, I was asked by a close friend, Dr. Morton Brown, Chief of Professional Services at Lemuel Shattuck Hospital, to work there as they needed a medical stenographer. I thought I could do it if I worked part-time, so I would be home when the children returned from school and also on Fridays, when I could stay home for the entire day. I remember Fridays when I rushed home from school, for my job was to polish the copper boiler and brass water pipes in the kitchen. I was greeted with a wonderful aroma of freshly baked challah, blended with gefilte fish and chicken soup. I can still see the picture of my mother dressing her lovely auburn hair after her bath. About seven years after working at Shattuck Hospital, Dr. Brown asked me to become head of the medical records department, which I declined, as it meant working full-time with much responsibility. In the meantime, I heard about an opening in the Brookline School Department for a secretary. I hadn't taken dictation for several years, but this was a challenge, and I thought I could do it. This position would enable me to be home when the children arrive from school, as well as on holidays and summer vacations. I took and passed the civil service exam and was placed in the Baker School, where I worked for one year. Then I

was assigned to a wonderful principal at Heath School, where I worked for – I think it was ten years – until I retired. In 1980, our family was shattered when our older son, Alan, was stricken with a massive coronary. He recovered, but was left in fragile health. We were devastated when, shortly after my husband died in a fatal automobile accident. Seven months later, my second son, Stephen, died of a massive coronary at age thirty-five. I thought that it was impossible for me to go on, but I had to summon enough strength and energy to help my twenty-eight-year-old daughter-in-law, Martha, with her terrible loss in any way possible. She returned to college and did her MSS degree while raising her two-and-a-half-year-old son, Eli. My son, Alan, who lived in California, came to see me in February 1990, and one month later, he passed away. He was forty-eight. I think he knew his days were numbered when he came to visit me. He left his wife, Phyllis, forty-three, son, Daniel, fifteen, and daughter, Dana, eleven. During this trying time, Ben Berkowitz, who, along with his late wife, Helen, were longtime friends, was a pillar of strength to me, offering advice and comfort. With his help and the moral support of lovely nieces and nephews, I was able to gather enough strength and energy to carry on. Ben and I were married a year and a half later and spent seven years together when he passed away. Before he died, we contemplated moving to a retirement community, which he had investigated. We signed up when construction began at Fox Hill Village in Westwood, and I moved there in 1990, one year following his death. I am able to continue my interest at Fox Hill. Some of the other Jewish people here and I have begun an annual observance of Hanukkah. Fox Hill purchased a beautiful menorah, which we display in the common area on a beautiful table covered with a lovely cloth, Hanukkah gelt, and [inaudible]. After the candles are lit, we adjourn to the club room, where latkes, applesauce, and other foods associated with the holiday are served. Hanukkah music is played by a professional pianist, and we all join in singing. This ritual is carried on each year by the residents of the Jewish faith and joined with keen interest by many of the residents of other faiths. Alan's widow, Phyllis, remarried in 1997. Daniel, Alan's son and my oldest grandchild, came from California to earn his undergraduate degree at

Brandeis, where he engaged in intramural athletics and achieved academic honors. He has now completed his law school education at the University of Miami. His sister Dana is a third-[year] student at Cal State, studying for her BS degree. She plans to go on further to earn her MSS. Stephen's widow, Martha, remarried in 1983, and they have a lovely daughter, Rachel. Eli, Stephen's son, is a sophomore at Vassar College, majoring in religion. Eli has been to Israel twice and planning to spend an entire semester there next year. Who knows? Perhaps he will become a rabbi. My Zayde would be thrilled. In addition, he is an accomplished musician on the bass violin and has played at Fox Hill to most enthusiastic audiences. Rachel is a freshman at Wayland High School, where she is extremely active and musical. [Telephone rings. Recording paused.] Did I say Rachel is a freshman at Wayland?

SC: You can start there.

RB: Rachel is a freshman at Wayland High School, where she is extremely active in musical and theatrical events and is an excellent student. She is also very active at Temple Shir Tikva. Ben's family, my extended family, keep in touch, and we share a warm relationship.

SC: Wow.

RB: Is that enough?

SC: No, it's not enough. But I don't know where to jump in. It was very moving to hear your whole story. I had looked over your interview, but I hadn't realized that both your sons had died, because there's nowhere to – it's probably one of the faults in the questionnaire. It asks the birth dates and death dates of everybody else, spouses and parents, but not children. I'm sure you're not the only one who's lost children.

RB: To have lost both of them.

SC: Both of them. Terrible.

RB: Terrible.

SC: And your first son died in what year?

RB: [inaudible].

SC: Stephen died first. Is that right? Alan had the coronary, and then Stephen died when?

RB: Alan had the coronary in December, I believe, the year before Stephen passed away. It was in 1980 that he had the coronary. I rushed out in the middle of the night to California, and we just recovered from that. The month after that happened, my oldest brother died. Stephen was fine. He didn't show any signs of any disturbance. He was away for the weekend with his wife and little boy. His in-laws lived in Greenfield. It was the Fourth of July weekend, and they came home early from their weekend because Stephen had an important case the following Monday morning, I guess it was. The evening before this – his office was in Cambridge, and someone was walking by where his office was, and heard a car motor going. When they looked inside, they saw him hunched over the wheel. It happened in a split second because he had turned the ignition on.

SC: How old was he?

RB: It was a massive coronary, but he went out immediately.

SC: He was how old at the time?

RB: He was thirty-five.

SC: How did you survive that death? That was the first one.

RB: All I could think of was Martha, my daughter-in-law. I just couldn't think about myself. Here she was with a two-and-a-half-year-old son. Her mother and father lived in Greenfield. She was rather new to Boston. She came to Boston to go to college. As I said, all I could think of was what's going to happen to Martha.

SC: So, that kept you going, and your grandson.

RB: Yes. So, I used to go out there two or three times a week so that she could get started. She did have an undergraduate degree, but she realized that it wasn't enough to earn her a living. She had to think of supporting her son. When she said to me, "Mom, I think I better get back to school," I said, "Yes, I think you better." I said, "You know you can count on me." I did what I could. And of course, he was in nursery school at the time. He continued to go on. Her parents were just wonderful to her, too. We all had rallied to her support. We had to. She's terrific. She has a little practice. About two years after Stephen died, she remarried. She married a man who was just absolutely wonderful and wonderful to me, remained so through all these years. So, I had a lot to be grateful for, too.

SC: Well, I imagine you were happy for her that she found someone.

RB: Oh, absolutely, because she started dating – oh, I don't think it was too long after Stephen died. I urged her to. We couldn't bring him back. She was a wonderful wife to him. She said, "But Mom, I'll be criticized for this." I said, "I don't care what people say. I want what's best for you." I said, "You've got to look ahead, and you've got to think about finding someone who'll be a father, a good father, for your son."

SC: And he was?

RB: And he was. He adores him, and so does Eli adore his father. He's the only father he's known, really. But he still talks about Stephen, wants to know all about him. Stephen was an Eagle Scout, and I saved his medals that he got, and all the paraphernalia. Eli is

[inaudible], and he'd come over. We always went over the things – he asked me about it. As a matter of fact, one day he said to me, “Grandma, did my daddy get a certificate?” It's quite important, very, very important to anyone who knows anything about scouting. Because Stephen received the highest award, he said, “Do you think I could have that?” And I said, “The only way I'll give it to you is if you show it to your mother first.” And I said, “I want you to always cherish this because it meant a great deal to your father.” And he has. We talked about it. Every so often, he'll ask me questions, even now.

SC: Well, it sounds like you and Martha have probably – you and Martha have probably done a good job keeping Stephen alive for Eli.

RB: Oh, yes.

SC: Does he look like his dad at all?

RB: No, he looks just like his mother.

SC: Looks like his mother.

RB: He looks just like his mother, but he has Stephen's depth.

SC: That's what's most important. So, within a few years, you had three terrible losses in your life.

RB: Did it what?

SC: Within just a few years, you had three terrible losses. That's more than most people imagine they could endure. Somehow, you're still going on.

RB: What's the alternative?

SC: Well, I think a lot of people, when they've been faced with even one tragedy – you've been faced with three – do give up.

RB: And I lost all my brothers and sisters in between.

SC: Yeah, I noticed that. You have one sister who's alive.

RB: I have one sister who's alive. She's ninety-six.

SC: Where does she live?

RB: She lives in New York.

SC: How is she doing?

RB: Not well. Not well at all. And she has a woman who is with her every day, and the woman has to go home at night. She's now really incapable of carrying on a conversation, because I called her up a short time ago, and she really didn't know what she was saying. I can't get to see her. I'm not traveling anymore. [inaudible] Danny's graduation. I hate to miss that.

SC: In California, you mean?

RB: He's graduating from the University of Miami Law School, and he's leaving the following day. He has a girlfriend. I was just talking with his mother in California, and she told me that they're talking about getting married.

[Telephone rings.]

SC: Whoops. We'll put this on stop.

[Recording paused.]

RB: [inaudible]

SC: You said your grandson may be getting married.

RB: Yes, he met Natalie. They were both going to the same school, and she's getting her undergraduate degree, and he's getting his law degree. And she comes from Seattle, Washington. He comes from Santa Ana, California. Her parents are giving them a trip to Thailand as a graduation gift.

SC: Wow.

RB: So, they're leaving Florida the day after graduation, and they're going to Seattle and leaving from Seattle for Thailand. Her parents, of course, will be at the graduation, as will my daughter-in-law and her husband. And Dana will be going for the weekend. Natalie's parents will go back to Seattle with them. Her parents also will go with Danny and Natalie; they're taking them to Thailand.

SC: Wow.

RB: Not bad.

SC: He made a good choice.

RB: The important thing is that they're both mature enough to get married. That's what I'm concerned about. Because she's a very sweet girl, and thank God she's Jewish.

SC: Every grandmother's worry.

RB: That's right. She's very quiet. They're talking about getting married.

SC: Have you met her yet?

RB: Yes, I met her because Danny wanted me to meet her. I think it was in February on one of their breaks. They came up from Florida just for the – [Recording paused.]

SC: Susan Cooper, interviewer. Ruth Berkowitch, narrator. Side two, tape one.

RB: Where were we?

SC: Well, you were telling me about Natalie and your grandson.

RB: Yeah, she's very quiet, but I could understand that. She didn't know me. It was the first time she was in Boston. I think she was quite overwhelmed. But she's a nice, nice girl. I think he weighs things over –

SC: Pretty carefully?

RB: – before he makes any decisions. At least, that's the way I see him.

SC: Well, if you don't mind, I'd like to go back to the beginning. Your story was really wonderful and gave me a very broad scope of your life, and I'd like to hear some more. Particularly, it's interesting to me that you were alive during the First World War and clearly remember some of the events. But first, tell me where your parents met. Did they meet in this country, or did they meet in Europe?

RB: Oh, they met in this country.

SC: They did?

RB: Yes, my mother was – I'm not quite sure. Some of my relatives said that she came when she was four years old, and some said when she was six years old.

SC: I see.

RB: She came from [inaudible]. She was one of seven, I think, seven children.

SC: You mentioned living next door to your Bubbe and Zayde. Was it her parents? Or was it your father?

RB: Her parents.

SC: It was her parents.

RB: Yes. She was a very quiet, very sweet woman. I never heard her raise her voice, never. She was just a wonderful woman. She had a hard life. They were simple-living people, and their whole life was wound around their children. My father – I'm not sure how old he was when he came. He came from Russia. Of course, Russia is near the border of Poland, so whether it was Poland there or Russia, I don't know. I don't think he really knew, because he was, as I said, twelve years old, and we never went into that part of the history of his family. I know that he had a brother who was a cantor, and he lived in the United States.

SC: So, he was not in touch with him.

RB: Yes, he was in touch with him. He lived in Maine with his family. I remember seeing him on one or two occasions, but I really don't know anything about him.

SC: Did you know your grandparents on your father's side?

RB: No.

SC: Did they die?

RB: The only one that I had met that, as I said, I was very small at the time, probably not more than four or five years old. So, I have no recollection of him. All I know is that he was a cantor. He had one child, as far as I remember, and a lovely wife. I do remember that. She was a very sweet lady.

SC: But your husband's parents –?

RB: My husband?

SC: No, sorry, I'm getting mixed up here. Your father's parents – did they die when you were young?

RB: They died when he was young.

SC: When he was young. I see.

RB: Yes.

SC: Okay. So then, who raised him?

RB: I think a sister.

SC: I see.

RB: I think it was either a – I think it was a sister who brought him to this country.

SC: Oh, so they died in Russia.

RB: Yes. Oh, yes.

SC: Okay, I missed that.

RB: I'm not sure about the year that my father came here. My father was two years older than my mother. He came here when he was twelve. You figure it out. [laughter]

SC: Your father was a tailor, you said.

RB: He was a tailor, yeah.

SC: Did he make any of your clothes?

RB: No.

SC: And your siblings?

RB: No, he didn't. He worked in Boston, and near – I'm trying to think where the shop was. It was not far from King's Chapel in the area –

SC: [inaudible]

RB: – around Tremont Street.

SC: Oh, I know where you mean. Downtown near Downtown Crossing.

RB: Yes.

SC: I see.

RB: Right in that, where the crossing is now.

SC: I'm trying to picture the area now. Now we have the tunnel that's connected East Boston. Was the tunnel there then?

RB: Yes, well, I mentioned that in what I was telling you. The house was right near the entrance of that tunnel where the toll booths are.

SC: When was the tunnel built? Callahan Tunnel?

RB: I don't remember. I think probably around 1930.

SC: So then how did you get from East Boston downtown? Wasn't the ocean there?

RB: Oh, well, we had moved long before –

SC: Oh, you did? So, you were in Dorchester at the time?

RB: Oh, yes. But my father didn't want to sell the house because he said someday they're going to put a tunnel here. It was amazing that –

SC: He knew.

RB: – he'd have that foresight.

SC: Yeah, so you had to go around the long way before the tunnel was built.

RB: Oh, sure.

SC: I guess.

RB: Well, I remember when the ferry – there was a ferry that connected – with a connection from East Boston to Boston.

SC: I see.

RB: You could go across on the ferry for one cent. [laughter] This is interesting. They stopped using the ferry, and on the last day of its use, my husband took the two boys on the ferry because he wanted them to have that experience.

SC: So, that was relatively recently.

RB: He said, "This is part of history."

SC: Was that in the 1950s? '40s?

RB: [inaudible] Yes. Probably the late '40s –

SC: Because I grew up –

RB: Or maybe early '50s.

SC: I grew up in this area, and I was born in '47. I always remember the tunnel being there. I don't remember a ferry.

RB: Well, one of my sisters would always take my father his lunch at noon time, and they'd take the ferry across. That was my sister Lil [Lillian] who did it. They'd take the ferry across because it was easy for them to walk up to where his shop was.

SC: So, you grew up in a family of nine.

RB: Nine children.

SC: And your father was a tailor. Was your family poor? Were they middle-class? How would you describe them?

RB: I would say middle class. They weren't poor. We never lacked for anything.

SC: Because nine children are a lot of mouths to feed.

RB: What?

SC: Nine children is a lot of mouths to feed.

RB: That's right.

SC: He must have done quite well.

RB: Well, my mother was a very good – well, shall I say? She lived within her means; both my parents did. We never lacked for anything. We were certainly not rich by any means. But I would say it was a good, secure middle-class home.

SC: Well, it sounds like it was a happy home. There was lots of music.

RB: Oh, yes. Very happy. The fact that we lived in cramped quarters didn't make any difference.

SC: Well, what was it like being the youngest of nine?

RB: Well, I don't think they ever spoiled me. That, I'm sure. But they gave me love and understanding. I had wonderful brothers and sisters. I don't recall my oldest brother very much because he was never around. He was a jeweler.

SC: Well, there were eighteen years' difference between him and you.

RB: That's right. That's right. The youngest of the three brothers was just a wonderful man. He turned into an extremely successful businessman. He owned the National Felt Company in Western Massachusetts, and he was just a great man.

SC: Were you close with your siblings as adults? Did they stay around this area?

RB: My sister, Ethyl, particularly. I was very close to her because after my mother died, Ethyl, Esther, and I were left. The house that we lived in was a three-family house, and my sister Mary lived on the second floor. We lived on the first floor. When my mother died – of course, my father had died two years previously. When my mother died, there were three girls left, and Mary wanted us to stay with her, live with her, until we could find a larger place. We did find a very [inaudible] – her husband found a lovely apartment, and we all moved there. Shortly after we moved there, Ethyl was married, and a few months later, Esther was married, so that left me with Mary. She had two daughters who were like my little sisters. In fact, both of them just called me. [laughter]

SC: Oh, that's who they were.

RB: I think it was about seven years. I lived with her for about six or seven years when Marty came into the picture. We were married about three years later.

SC: Where did you meet your husband?

RB: I met my husband at Nantasket Beach. My sister Ethyl, whom I mentioned previously, had a house in Nantasket, and she and her husband set aside a room for me. They wanted me to live with them after they were married. Wherever they lived, they always had a room put aside for me.

SC: Whereabouts on the Nantasket Beach were they?

RB: B Street.

SC: Because I have family who has owned a house for years on Revere Street. Do you know where that is? Corner of Revere and Samoset?

RB: Yes.

SC: You probably don't know them, because my grandparents would have been twenty years older than you. My father just passed away. He was eighty-five with the name of Lewis, L-E-W-I-S. My grandfather was Herbert. My grandmother was Tessie. My father was the oldest of the kids. He would have been that much younger than you that the generations were off a little bit, but the house is still in the family.

RB: Is that so?

SC: Yes.

RB: Well, Ethyl and Max didn't own the house. They rented it, but they went there several years. Anyway, it was on Nantasket Beach that I met Marty. Oh, his mother and father used to go down there. They stayed at a place that was opposite where Ethyl was. We were all sitting on the beach one day. Marty came along, and his mother introduced me. Shortly after that, his brother, Bernard, came along. Well, I had known Bernard since I was fourteen years old. They were living in Dorchester at the time. Then, they moved to

Brookline when Marty was only twelve years old. I never knew Marty. Well, anyway, it was Marty that I met on the beach. From what they told me afterward, I guess after the group broke up, Marty and Bernard were walking home, and they met a friend of Bernard's, and this friend asked him what he was doing that night. He said, "Oh, I don't know, but I think I'll call Ruth. She's staying with her sister, and perhaps she'll do something." So, Marty said, "Oh no, you're not calling her." He said, "I've already made a date with her." He hadn't.

SC: He hadn't?

RB: [laughter]

SC: He lied to his brother. If he hadn't told that lie, things might have been very different.

RB: And that night, I wasn't inclined to do anything, and the doorbell rang, and it was Marty. I was in the other room, but my brother-in-law answered the door, and then he came in the other room, and he said to me, "Marty Schneider is at the door. Are you planning to go out with him tonight?" I said, "No. I didn't know anything about it." So, he said, "Well, he's here." He said, "We'll have to ask him in." And that's how it all began.

SC: It's a nice story. And you married three years later.

RB: Pardon?

SC: You married three years later, did you say? That was a long courtship for those days, wasn't it?

RB: It was a long courtship, but that was during the Depression when men had trouble finding jobs. The economy was terrible, simply awful,

SC: Your husband was a structural engineer, did you say?

RB: Yes.

SC: Did I get that right?

RB: Structural draftsman.

SC: Structural draftsman. So, you met during the Depression.

RB: Most of my friends were schoolteachers, and they couldn't get married because if they did, they'd lose their jobs. It was a very tough time, the period between 1929 and 1939 and beyond. Really tough times. And of course, was it 1942 that the war broke out?

SC: '41, I think.

RB: '41, yeah. My husband was – we were living in Brighton at the time, and my husband was the first married man who was drafted.

SC: I was going to ask about that.

RB: At that point, you couldn't keep your job. You had to give up your job and make all arrangements for leaving. The night before Marty was to leave to go into the draft, a group of our friends came over to say goodbye. Two of them were doctors, and both of them said, "Marty, they'll never take you. You can't see, and you've got flat feet." Well, we joked about that, but it wasn't a joke to me. Well, the next morning, at five o'clock, said goodbye. I had made – we had made all arrangements about storing our furniture, and I sent all his clothes to the cleaners to be stored at the cleaners. He went off, and I went into my office. I had kept my job. At twelve o'clock, I was talking with Dr. Hinton, and the telephone rang. When I answered it, it was Marty, and he said, "They rejected me. I'm coming home."

SC: His friends were right.

RB: Well, Dr. Hinton could tell by the look on my face that something wonderful had happened. And he said to me, "Go. Fast." Oh, that night – oh, I called my sister Ethyl right away, and she said, "We've been invited to a dinner party tonight, and I want you kids to come with us." I said, "Marty doesn't have a suit." She said, "Don't worry about that. We'll take care of something." We have no dress clothes. We went over. Ethyl had picked out a suit of my brother-in-law's. It was too big for Marty, but he wore it just the same.

SC: At that point, I bet you didn't care.

RB: What?

SC: Well, you had your husband home. I bet it didn't matter.

RB: [inaudible]. We didn't care. Of course, the people that we were visiting were just delighted to have us come along. Then, he had to start looking for another job because he had given up his job.

SC: How long did it take him?

RB: Well, it didn't take him too long. Shortly after that, I became pregnant, and he thought it was about time that we started a family.

SC: Well, you mentioned that his clothes were in storage and the furniture was in storage. So, had you given up your apartment?

RB: No. Fortunately, they hadn't taken the things yet.

SC: Were you planning to give up your apartment, though?

RB: Oh, yes.

SC: Were you going to live with your sisters?

RB: That's right.

SC: I see.

RB: The landlord was very good about it.

SC: He let you stay.

RB: He allowed us to stay. We had a little apartment on Commonwealth Avenue in Allston. And when Alan was born, shortly after that, you couldn't get apartments. You simply couldn't. But I knew someone who lived in an apartment building in Cleveland Circle. She knew of someone who was moving, and it was through her that we got the apartment.

SC: Why were apartments so scarce?

RB: What?

SC: Why were they so scarce back then?

RB: Well, because of the economy, I suppose. I really don't remember what caused that, but you could not get an apartment.

SC: Well, I remember my mother saying that, too. Just a few years later, it was hard to get apartments, but the economy must have been good by then. Wasn't that during the war?

RB: Just started to pick up, yes. You see, soldiers were coming home at that time, too. No, no. Soldiers weren't coming home, no. Because the war was going on.

SC: Oh, this is the early '40s, before the war was over.

RB: But anyway, I don't recall exactly what caused the economy at that time, but I know that my husband was doing better. Really can't remember. I should remember, but I can't right now.

SC: It sounds like you were working for Dr. Hinton when you were pregnant with your first son. Is that right?

RB: Yes.

SC: Because you had mentioned wanting to talk about that job.

RB: Well, he didn't want me to leave. Every night, I'd come home. Marty would say, "You can't go back. You've had enough." And when I'd tell Dr. Hinton, he'd say, "Oh, well, if you're tired, go into the metabolism room and lie down. I don't care how much work you do." He said, "I just don't want you to leave." Finally, one day, I came in, and I said, "This is it. I can't come back anymore." I said, "You'll just have to do without."

SC: You were how pregnant at that point?

RB: Two or three months, something like that.

SC: So, you probably didn't feel very well.

RB: I was tired. It was my husband. He said, "You worked long enough. I don't want you to go anymore."

SC: You mentioned Dr. Hinton was a professor.

RB: He was professor of pathology.

SC: The first Black full professor at —?

RB: At Harvard Medical School.

SC: At Harvard Medical School? Wow. He must be a historical figure, then.

RB: I would say so, particularly in the Harvard community. I know he kept in touch with me after I left. At one time, they were giving a big party in his honor. He lived out in Canton. I was the only one of his employees who was invited. I remember when Marty and I walked in, we were out in the garden, and when he saw me, he rushed over and hugged me. He was so glad that I came.

SC: You worked for him for ten years, was it?

RB: I'm trying to think how many years it was. It was one year at Harvard Medical School. Yes. About eleven years in all.

SC: What did you do for him?

RB: I was a stenographer at Harvard Medical. And at the Boston Dispensary, I did some bookkeeping. I did some dictation.

SC: Those were the things you had been trained for.

RB: A lot of things. I lived in the laboratory, but I was in the office part of the laboratory. Then, when he was writing his book, after the book was finished, he had some of the doctors look at it. I remember Dr. (Skirball?) was one of them. I don't know if that name means anything to you, but Dr. (Skirball?) was an ophthalmologist and a very good one at the time. I remember he reviewed it, and then Dr. Hinton asked me if I would work on that, just on that. I said, "I don't know any – that's too technical for me, and I can't work on that." He said, "You can do it." Well, there was one room that wasn't used very much. He said, "Just sit in that room and work on it, and don't do anything else. I'll get someone to do what you were doing."

SC: So, you did.

RB: It was fun.

SC: Tell me a little bit about your religious life, because you mentioned that your family – you grew up Orthodox. Is that right?

RB: Yes.

SC: And more recently, you've been Reform. Tell me a little bit about that transition. I imagine most families grew up Orthodox back then.

RB: Oh, I think so. Yes.

SC: Religion must have been a big part of your family then.

RB: That's right. That was when I was very young, so I can't tell you too much about it, except that I know that when we went to the synagogue, my grandfather was always very active in the service. But as I said, I was awfully young, so I don't remember too much about it, except that it was so completely different from the reform service that I'm accustomed to now and have been, actually, most of my life. Oh, I do remember this: my introduction to Reform Judaism was through the choir at Temple –

SC: Israel?

RB: – Israel. And of course, it was so completely different from what I had remembered as a child.

[Recording paused.]

SC: This is tape two, side one. It's April 24th. I'm Susan Cooper, interviewer, and Ruth Berkowitch is my narrator. Go ahead. You were talking about the choir of Temple Israel. I grew up in Temple Israel when I was a little girl.

RB: Oh, is that right?

SC: Yes, yes.

RB: Well, many years ago, it was almost like a church.

SC: Yeah, I don't think you were – what years were you in the choir there?

RB: I started when I was about seventeen. I really can't remember right now. I sang there for about ten years.

SC: You did? And that must have been the old building on Commonwealth Avenue.

RB: Oh, it was. It was. I would rehearse up in the loft and there, of course – no, we sang up in the loft and rehearsed in the temple, in the meeting house, if I remember correctly.

SC: Now, who was it who heard you sing and suggested that you be in the choir? Didn't you say when you were reading your story that someone had heard you sing and suggested that you be part of the choir?

RB: Oh, my sister was singing in the choir at the time, and she suggested that I sing. She spoke with the choir master, Mr. Gideon, and I had an audition with him, and they took me.

SC: Did you know that you had such a beautiful singing voice?

RB: Well, we just took it for granted because everyone in my family sang.

SC: They were all musical.

RB: My uncles, my aunts, and I got pictures of us because whenever there was a family function – and it was a big family, a standard family – we'd all sing. I have one picture where it shows a couple of my uncles singing. They were on the stage, as a matter of fact, and their act consisted of singing.

SC: Were your sons musical?

RB: They both sang, but they didn't play instruments. They were never interested. I tried to get them interested, but they weren't, and I was quite disappointed about that, but I felt that if they wanted to sing, and this is what made them happy, they could do what they wished. They were both in the concert choir at Brookline High School, and they went on the trips that the groups took. Alan played the violin for a short time. I mean, he took violin lessons, but he was not interested.

SC: Now, is Alan Eli's father? I'm getting a little confused.

RB: No.

SC: Stephen is Eli's father.

RB: Stephen is Eli's father. Alan had Dana and Danny.

SC: So, Eli took after his uncle, though. He took up the violin. Didn't you tell me Eli plays the bass violin?

RB: He plays the bass violin. His mother doesn't play. I think she plays the piano. I know they have a piano at home. And Rachel plays the flute and the piano.

SC: So, the musical talent did get passed on.

RB: Rachel is not my blood relation.

SC: Right, that's true.

RB: She's Martha's child with her present husband. But she treats me like her own grandmother.

SC: Well, you are a grandmother to her. It's really wonderful that you've been able to stay as close to those families.

RB: Yeah, they were here Thursday, school vacation, and they could only stay for a short time, but they came over.

SC: Well, when you look back on your life, what experiences would you say shaped you the most? Any defining moments or defining experiences? There seem to have been a lot of them.

RB: It's difficult for me to pick them out. Well, my family life. I think that the nurturing that I got has helped me to be strong enough to live through what I had to live through in my later life. I just accepted it as something that happened, and I had to make the best of it. I don't think I could have endured if I hadn't that – I mean, if that strength hadn't been instilled in me as a child.

SC: And for the most part, it sounds like your siblings were around for you during those horrible years.

RB: What did you say?

SC: Your siblings, for the most part, were around during those years.

RB: Oh, absolutely, especially my sister, Ethyl. She and her husband. I mean, they both were so wonderful to me. As a matter of fact, the first house that Marty and I bought was a duplex. Shortly after we bought it, my sister Ethyl became ill, and her husband used to spend a lot of time with us. As I said, right after we bought the house, she was particularly in a bad way. He asked if he could have the other apartment in the house. I said, "Of course you can." So, we just asked the people who were living there to move, and they took the apartment. Ethyl lived for, I think, two or three years, and Max remained. While she was sick, while they were living there, they used to come into my

apartment for lunch every day. I would help with their meals at night. And then, after she died, he remained there. I can't remember quite how long it was, but it was at least ten years after she died. He would come in and have dinner with us a few times each week. And then I began to notice that he was becoming quite frail. He was about ninety years old at the time. When I'd go in there, very often I find him lying on the couch, and he looked poorly. So, I spoke with his daughter-in-law, and I said, "I'm really afraid for him being alone." And that was when she and her husband decided that he should come and live with them, because he really couldn't keep up the apartment any longer.

SC: How long did he live after that?

RB: Pardon me?

SC: How long did he live after that?

RB: Two years. He lived with them for one year, and then he went into the Hebrew Rehabilitation Center, and he was there, I think, for one year. But he was more like a brother to me than a brother-in-law. It's his children – or rather, his son, who has been like my own child.

SC: Your nephew?

RB: And his wife, the same way. They've just been – I can't tell you how wonderful.

SC: So, you have lots of loving family members around you.

RB: Yes, I do

SC: So, that's the silver lining in the cloud.

RB: I just don't know what I'd do if it weren't for them. Those two in particular. And then the nephew of my husband, whom I hadn't seen for, I don't know, how many years, called

me one day, about a year before I moved here. I didn't recognize his voice. I hadn't seen him since he was a little boy. Probably, I hadn't seen him – I don't think I've seen him since he was about six or seven years old. He called one day out of the blue, and he said, “Aunt Ruthie, this is Peter.” “Peter Who?” He said, “Peter Schneider.” I couldn't believe my ears. After we talked for a while, he said, “We want you to come out and see us.”

SC: Where was he living?

RB: He and his wife and children live in Needham. So, he gave me the directions for coming out there. Anyway, I drove up, and he was outside his house waiting for me. I got the shock of my life because I thought it was Stephen. He looked so much like my own son. When I got out of the car, he could see the shocked look on my face. He said, “I know just what you're thinking.” I said, “You look exactly like Stephen.” He said, “Yes, I'm told that.” He's a lawyer also. He said several times when he had come out of the courthouse, men have greeted him saying, “Hi, Steve.” That's how much they've been – some of them never knew that Stephen had passed away.

SC: So, you and his mother must look alike, and your sons look like him.

RB: Well, there's no blood relationship between me and Peter. It's between Peter and my husband.

SC: But I thought Peter was your nephew.

RB: He is, but he's Marty's nephew.

SC: Oh, Marty's nephew. I'm sorry. I was thinking –

RB: No, Marty's nephew. [Telephone rings. Recording paused.] This is my sister Ethyl's son. He's the one I told you –

SC: Well, I've been here an hour and a half, and the phone has rung three times, and they've all been relatives, so I can see how many people love you.

RB: Well, one of them was one of the residents here. One of them was my niece Annette, and that's my nephew Morris.

SC: So, for some reason, I thought that you were talking about Ethyl's son. I don't know why.

RB: That was Ethyl's son.

SC: That was Ethyl's son. No, no. But when you were talking about Peter, I was thinking that Peter was Ethyl's son.

RB: No, no.

SC: I don't know how I mixed that up.

RB: Peter is Marty's nephew.

SC: Well, that makes it even more strange that he looks so much like Stephen, isn't it, when there's no relationship at all?

RB: The relationship was between Peter and Marty, my husband.

SC: Right, right. But you said Peter looks just like your son, Stephen.

RB: Well, Stephen was Marty's son.

SC: Oh, okay.

RB: Stephen is my son.

SC: Oh, okay, but it's not you and your sister. You're sharper than me. I'm getting confused with all these relationships.

RB: Well, I have this big family.

SC: Okay, so then Stephen must have looked like his dad, and his dad and Peter's father were brothers.

RB: That's right. They looked a lot alike.

SC: Okay. Now I understand. Forgive me for being confused.

RB: It's all right. I can understand that.

SC: So, how many years ago was this that you reconnected with Peter?

RB: Not more than twelve years. They have been unbelievable to me. Mo and Sandy live in Framingham, and Peter and Kathy live in Needham, which is –

SC: Close.

RB: – only about – Peter tells me it only takes him about seven minutes to get over here. He and his wife – in an emergency – are there. They can get here quickly.

SC: Well, that's nice to know that.

RB: She's a pediatric nurse, and she insists that I call her when I have doctor's appointments. She goes with me. Just last Thursday, he went with me. I had to see the ophthalmologist. I'm going through a period with this eye.

SC: What's wrong?

RB: I had cataract surgery on both eyes. About a year ago, one morning, I woke up, and this eye is directed toward my nose.

SC: I can see.

RB: So that I'm getting – it's affected my vision, and that's why I have to close that eye very often because I see double.

SC: Have you been in good health other than that? Because you seem to be.

RB: Yes.

SC: Knock on wood. How do you get around? Because you certainly are very mobile.

RB: How do I –?

SC: Yeah. Are you able to –? I take it you're not driving anymore.

RB: No, I gave up my car. When I turned ninety, I felt that it was time to give it up. The traffic, such as it is now, was not conducive to driving, not for a woman of my age. I know I drove well, but I felt that my coordination wasn't the way it should be. Before I got into any trouble, I didn't want my family to be faced with anything like that, so I just gave it up [inaudible].

SC: Just a few years ago.

RB: It was not easy. I passed my car on to Eli.

SC: You did? Well, I'm sure he was happy to get it.

RB: Yeah. He takes that up to school with him.

SC: Well, you lived through two wars. Can you tell me a little bit about what that was like for you?

RB: What happened with this?

SC: I was just thinking that you lived through two wars, more than most people have.

RB: Actually, it's more than two. There are other lesser conflicts.

SC: Right. Two world wars, anyway.

RB: That's right.

SC: And your husband, fortunately, didn't have to go fight

RB: That's right. Marty was on the verge of it.

SC: Did any of your parents still have relatives in Europe? I mean, were you affected at all by the Holocaust? Was your family? Because your parents came here, but they –

RB: No.

SC: – weren't aware of having relatives.

RB: That was long before. My mother came in the 1870s, probably the latter part of the 1870s. My father probably came around sometime in the 1880s.

SC: And they did not leave family behind.

RB: I think my father did, but I'm not sure. I'm really not sure. I don't know very much about his family. As I said, he was only twelve years old when he came, and he never talked about it very much.

SC: Because they had died.

RB: He may have talked to my older brothers and sisters. They sort of sheltered me, too.

[Recording paused.]

SC: We missed about ten minutes. This is Susan Cooper, interviewer, Ruth Berkowitch, narrator. We'll have to just pick it up. But we missed about ten minutes because the pause button was accidentally pressed. Ruth had been talking about meeting her husband and marrying him, her second husband, that is. We will move on. I had asked her how long she has been a member of Temple Sinai.

RB: I think it was around 1950, not too long after the temple was founded.

SC: Now, had you joined Temple Israel before?

RB: No, no, because that was quite young at the time. I started to sing in the choir when I was at Temple Israel when I was seventeen, and I stayed there until I was about – maybe I was a little older than seventeen. It's hard for me to remember.

SC: Were your sons bar mitzvahed at Temple Sinai?

RB: Oh, sure. They were bar mitzvahed, and they were confirmed. I don't know if they still have confirmation there.

SC: They do.

RB: Confirmation was very important.

SC: Well, it still is. Both my children were confirmed there.

RB: Did they still have dancing classes for the boys?

SC: No, they don't have that anymore. No more dancing classes.

RB: Well, there were dancing classes, and Alan was supposed to have been dancing. Instead, he was changing the records [laughter], but they did have that. [inaudible] religious school. I mean, with social activities too.

SC: And were you living in Brookline at the time?

RB: Yes, we lived on Griggs Terrace.

SC: Oh, that's right around the corner from there. I live on Winthrop Road.

RB: What'd you say?

SC: I live on Winthrop Road, not too far.

RB: Oh, for Heaven's sake.

SC: So, did you live across from the park?

RB: Yes, we were on the Terrace.

SC: Is the Terrace –?

RB: See, the Terrace goes around one half of the park, and the road goes around the other half.

SC: Now, did you live in one of those townhouses? Those [inaudible] houses?

RB: No, we lived in – do you remember Griggs Terrace at all?

SC: Yeah, sure.

RB: Well, as you go into the Terrace on the right side –

SC: From –?

RB: Washington Street.

SC: Washington, okay.

RB: It's the right entrance. Just as you reach the park, there was a big white house. We lived in that house.

SC: I see. Now, you lived in that house with Martin, with your first husband?

RB: Yes.

SC: And where did you live with Ben?

RB: On the VFW Parkway, West Roxbury. That was the first house that Marty and I bought.

SC: That Marty and you bought? And you still owned that house?

RB: No, no, I've got a picture of it here.

SC: You lived with Marty on Griggs Terrace,

RB: On Griggs Terrace and the VFW Parkway.

SC: Oh, then you moved there. I see.

RB: Yeah.

SC: And then when you married Ben, did Ben move into that house?

RB: Yes.

SC: Because I noticed that you said you had lived in West Roxbury for about twenty-nine years. I'd love to see pictures.

RB: Hmm?

SC: I'd love to see some pictures if you have some pictures that are important to you, either of your family members, your house, or anything that you'd like to show me.

RB: Sure. After Stephen died, I was so angry. I was distraught as you could well understand.

SC: I can.

RB: One day, I went into the basement. We had a family room in the basement. I know I had to get rid of a lot of his clothes and things. When he got married, he left a lot of things. I came across all our family pictures. I don't know. I guess I was just, as I said, distraught. I took a lot of the pictures and tore them up. I couldn't stand looking at them. It just killed me. And of course, I regret that terribly, because I – fortunately, I kept some of them, and they probably were in a different spot, but that was the way that I just was able to – I don't know what it was, but I just felt that it was too – I couldn't stand looking at them.

SC: Well, I think that's a common reaction when you lose somebody you love in such a tragic way, that what comes out is the anger, and people want to destroy what's around them.

RB: It was. It was just plain anger.

SC: Sure, it's a normal reaction.

RB: So that I don't have an awful lot of the photographs. I mean, the snapshots. I did the same when Marty passed away, so that I don't have any real pictures of him. I found one the other day. I don't know. It's hard for me to explain, but I did it.

SC: No, I understand. Sounds like you and Marty had a very close relationship.

RB: Oh, yeah. And with his family, too. His mother always said to me, "You're not my daughter-in-law. You're my daughter."

SC: It's wonderful to feel that way.

RB: [inaudible]

SC: And he was killed in a car accident? Did you tell me?

RB: Hmm?

SC: He was killed in a car accident?

RB: We don't know whether he was killed or not. No, I shouldn't say that. That too was a story. We were taking care of Eli. As I said, he was two years old. I don't know – I've forgotten where Martha was at the time, but we were taking care of him. I was invited to play bridge, and Marty was supposed to drive Eli back to Wayland. So, Marty drove me out to where I was playing bridge in Newton. When I got out of the car, I checked the seat belt around Eli to make sure that he was well strapped in. Of course, in those days, the car seats for children – you just didn't use them. There was no such thing as car seats the way they [inaudible] today. So, I made sure that the strap was around him tight, and I went to play. Marty dropped me off to play bridge. Well, about an hour and a half later, I got a call from the Newton-Wellesley Hospital, telling me to come there as soon as possible. There had been an accident.

SC: How did they find you? You were at your friend's house.

RB: I know it. I don't know how they found me. Oh, I guess it was – Stephen and Martha knew what the plan was. I'm sure that was it. Because there'd be no other way. I never thought of that, but they did find me. My friends, with whom I was playing bridge, drove me out there. When I got to the hospital, I immediately went to the emergency room, and

Stephen was holding Eli, and I could see that he was bleeding from his forehead. When they assured me that he was all right, he just had a bump, that was it, I didn't even think of my husband. Then, when I saw that he was all right, I looked around. I said, "Where's Dad?" And that was when Stephen told me that he was gone. They don't know what happened, whether he was killed – well, he was killed, but whether he just went out of the picture, or whether it was the accident that caused his death. They couldn't tell because he was so badly hurt.

SC: And Eli was fine. You had checked his seat belt.

RB: Otherwise, we would have lost him. Terrible, just awful. That's why, to this day, Eli and I are so close because I spent so much time with him.

SC: Does Eli know that story about how you made sure he was buckled in?

RB: I don't know. I never talked about that to him. I felt that this is something that his mother could talk to him about. I would never [inaudible].

SC: Well, let's get a few pictures, if you don't mind, and bring them back, and you can describe them on the tape. [Recording paused.] Okay.

RB: That's Marty when he was growing up.

SC: Oh, wow.

RB: Probably was about sixteen in there.

SC: Sixteen? Gee, he looks a little older.

RB: Maybe he was older than that. Oh, he must have been older. Yeah. I don't know how old he was there. Probably twenty-one. Oh, this is when I was in – so, I was out of high school. I was at Boston Clerical School, and I went to Kennebunkport, Maine. A few of us

– my friends – waitressed. There I am. Right there.

SC: Let's see. So, this was about seventy years ago. We have four beautiful waitresses in a row. More than that. Well, then, there's a picture of you here, 1928.

RB: Yes.

SC: What a beautiful picture.

RB: That was taken up in Kennebunkport at the same time.

SC: So, you were twenty years old?

RB: Yes. It was while I was at business school. And she was my closest friend Helen (Appleton?), and she was Morton Brown's wife. Remember, I mentioned his name, Dr. Brown? And this is another friend of mine, Evelyn (Moskowitz?). They wouldn't take Jews up there. Dogs and Jews weren't allowed. My name was Ruth Gould. I was Ruth Goldberg, but I changed it to Gould. Evelyn was Evelyn (Moskowitz?), and she was Evelyn Morse.

SC: So, they took you? They didn't know you were Jewish.

RB: They didn't know we were Jewish. While I was up there, girls sing, and someone heard me sing, and they asked me if I would sing at the Episcopal Church up there on Sunday morning. So, I said I would. One Sunday morning, they picked me up. It was the most gorgeous church, set on a cliff overlooking – was it in Kennebunk? Kennebunkport. It was overlooking the ocean. It was just beautiful, and it was a gorgeous Sunday morning. I don't know if you've ever been to an Episcopal service, but they put this red rug out approaching this church, and the minister walks up that aisle, so to speak. The inside of the church was absolutely beautiful. Of course, this was a long time ago. I can't remember too much about it, but the choir was up in the loft. After the service was over,

the choir master asked me questions about where I had trained and so forth. I told him. And he knew Mr. Gideon, my teacher and choir director.

SC: So, you didn't pass yourself off as Christian.

RB: Oh, no. He knew I was Jewish.

SC: I see.

RB: But that was the only time I went. It was quite an experience. But these were all my girlfriends.

SC: Yeah, I see.

RB: Here I am. This is Helen (Appleton?). I forget their name. All I know is that she could never stop talking. And this was Evelyn (Moscowitz?).

SC: You must have had a good time up there.

RB: We had a wonderful time. We went up two years. This was a cousin of mine in a Pierce-Arrow Roadster. And these were some friends at the [inaudible] Inn. That's Evelyn Morse. She was beautiful. Evelyn (Moscowitz?). And these are our pictures taken up there. There I am.

SC: Oh, look at your long hair.

RB: Yes.

SC: Beautiful.

RB: That's Helen (Appleton?). There I am. And Evelyn Morse.

SC: This is that same summer?

RB: Yeah. This is [inaudible].

SC: Yeah, I see.

RB: This you would be interested in. There's my sister, Ethyl. There's my sister, Esther. I think this is a cousin of mine. There I am. That's my sister, Lil, and that's my niece, Jeannette. Jeannette is now eighty-four years old. We adored her. And there's Marty, and his dog. There's Marty in grammar school or primary school [inaudible].

SC: Do you have a picture of your whole family, your family of origin, the nine siblings?

RB: No, but I might have something. There's Marty and a girlfriend of his. There's Evelyn and [inaudible] friend of mine. All of my friends were very pretty, as you can see. This is my friend [inaudible], who'd I been [inaudible] more like sisters. She was twenty at the time. We both were. I think I was twenty-one. That's [inaudible].

SC: Wonderful.

RB: That's Billy [inaudible].

SC: I know who he is. He belongs to Temple Sinai. Is he still alive? I can't remember now. I think I heard him –

RB: I think so.

SC: I think I heard him sing recently.

RB: She died. Well, he had a gorgeous voice. We sang together.

SC: Oh, how nice. Do you ever sing anymore?

RB: Oh, I sang here. When I first came, we put on some shows, and I sang. Then I sang at the Hanukkah service. But that was it. They have a chorus here, and I sang there for a

while, and then I felt it's time I gave it up.

SC: Do you ever get to go to the temple?

RB: I haven't been there for about five years. Well, it's hard for me to get – I can't get there.

SC: Are you still a member?

RB: I sent in my resignation, but the rabbi wouldn't –

SC: They wouldn't take it? [laughter]

RB: But I hadn't gone for about four or five years. As I said, there was no way of my getting there. Right now, I really have curtailed my activity. Here I am.

SC: So, those were all around that year. You were about nineteen or twenty.

RB: Yes.

SC: That's a cute one. And that's you.

RB: Yes. Helen [inaudible]. You know Ben and Helen were members of the temple, too. Helen [inaudible] brother was married to this girl. I didn't know I had a picture of her. Oh, and he was – look at this. His Royal Highness. He was a head waiter. [inaudible] couple of the waiters. These were all the waitresses. They're all college girls. These are two of my closest friends. She's still living. Helen, I met when I was about fourteen years old. We were sophomores in high school, and we retained that friendship. She was just here last Saturday.

SC: Wow. Where does she live?

RB: She lives in Newton. My friend [inaudible] lives there. Here I am [inaudible]. She was another very close friend, Eleanor [inaudible], another friend of mine. She was a musician, also. Violinist. Oh, my kindergarten picture. I wondered where it was.

SC: Oh, and you mentioned your teacher.

RB: First grade. There I am. Right there.

SC: Right there?

RB: Yes.

SC: Isn't that cute?

RB: Here I am with my niece, Annette. She was the one who called me. There I am with my sister, Esther. And this is my brother. My brother, Is. This was a cousin of mine who was killed in the First World War. Wonderful young man. Here I am with my friend [inaudible].

SC: Wow. How old were you there?

RB: Probably about twenty-one. That's my sister [inaudible], Marty's sister. This is my nephew, who just called me. He was an adorable child. This is my niece, Lorraine, [inaudible] honeymoon. There's Marty and me when we met on the beach in Nantasket.

SC: Right, right.

RB: That was the first year. She was someone that I worked with, and she was so attached. I simply could not get rid of her. I am almost convinced now that she was a lesbian, although she had an [inaudible], but there was an attachment that was not – I didn't recognize it until Marty brought it to my attention. He said, "I think you'd better cut that relationship." I wasn't aware of anything, but he thought he thought – and this is an

uncle of Marty's and his wife. They were a handsome couple. I mentioned Dr. Brown. That's his son Paul [inaudible], quite a figure in the business – medicine. He's a doctor, also. This is my friend [inaudible] daughter. This is a nephew of mine, Calvin. This is Annette. She called me. My nephew, David. My niece, Lorraine.

SC: [inaudible] picture.

RB: She's still a beautiful girl. Lorraine just turned eighty. She'll probably call me. She'll be coming back from Florida. This is a nephew of mine who has passed away.

SC: Do you have pictures of your sons?

RB: Yes. [inaudible] We saw these. This is when I got married. I was married at Ethyl's house. This is Marty, my mother-in-law, and father-in-law. They were once the first Jewish families in Brookline.

SC: Really?

RB: And this is my sister, Lil. My sister-in-law [inaudible]. My sister Esther. She was three years older than I. Me, my sister Mary, my sister-in-law [inaudible]. She's the one who played the piano. My brother, Louis. Is. And my brother Morris.

SC: Okay, so that's the family.

RB: Yes. My sister-in-law and Marty's aunt and my brother-in-law. Here I am. My mother-in-law, father-in-law. That was taken on West [inaudible] Terrace.

SC: Really? Is that where they lived?

RB: Yes, where my sister Ethyl lived. I think I told you I was married at their house. [inaudible] Marty's brother.

SC: Looks a little like Marty.

RB: Yes. My sister-in-law. [inaudible] That's not a good picture of her. She was an attractive woman. My brother and sister-in-law. [inaudible] sister and her husband. My sister Mary. She's the one I lived with. I lived with both of them. This is us on our honeymoon.

SC: Where was that?

RB: [inaudible]

SC: When were these pictures taken?

RB: 1939. [inaudible] spot. We did a lot of traveling, and this is one of the places where [inaudible] –