Gladys J. Field Narrator

Rhoda G. Lewin Interviewer

January 29, 1978

Gladys Field -GF Rhoda Lewin -RL

RL: What was your family name?

GF: Jacobs. My grandfather, whose name was Samuel Jacobs, came from I don't know where, someplace in Germany, and came across the United States. I don't know how, but it was reported at one time at the Women's Club early in the 1900s that he came with a pack on his back of jewelry. This enraged one of his daughters so much that she resigned from the Minneapolis Women's Club in protest of anything that low for her father to have done. But I think it was basically true because, after all, they didn't come by plane, they had to come either by train or, I don't know if they came by covered wagons to Minnesota. Anyway, they came in 1880. In my mother's family, they were "newcomers," because they came before that. My mother was born in Minneapolis in 1874, and her sister was also born in Minneapolis in 1872. But she had other sisters and brothers who were born in other places across the United States. And I know a little more about the Pflaum family, because my mother talked a good deal more than my father did, I think. My father remembered his immigrant experience and gave us marvelous toys because he didn't have toys. And then he'd tell us about what he'd had when he was growing up. He was born in Oil City, Pennsylvania, and that was on their trek across the United States. He didn't have a sled, so we had the most beautiful sleds. He used to slide down hills, you know, on a board, or something. And we had the most beautiful blocks. I've never forgotten the blocks that we had, because he didn't have toys, and that was so important to him. He had a very marked aesthetic sense. My mother was very practical and my father was very dreamy.

RL: What did your father do?

GF: All the Jacobses were in the jewelry business, you know, there's a Jacobs Jewelry Store [S. Jacobs, on Nicollet Mall, in downtown Minneapolis]. And it had a peculiar pattern. The daughters inherited the business, not the sons.

RL: Why was that?

GF: I guess my grandfather liked his daughters better than he did his sons. Anyway, that's

the way it worked out. So the sons each went into a business of their own. And my father had an installment jewelry store on Hennepin Avenue right next to the Gopher Theatre before there was a Gopher Theatre there. And when there was Gopher Theatre there. And the Pflaums, that grandfather was apprenticed in Germany to a cigar maker and he made terrible cigars all across the United States. They sold for five cents. You know, everything about me is very middle-middle class. I tell that to my son—one of my sons, not Hal [Harold Field, Jr.]—and he says, "Mom, you've got tastes that no middle class person has." That comes, I think, from the aesthetic side of my family.

RL: Can you tell me something about the cigar business, before we leave that subject. Nobody's mentioned it before.

GF: Oh, yes. Well, they lived in St. Anthony. I'll tell you how they got here. My grandmother came when she was eighteen years old, and I suppose my grandfather was a little bit older, and the were married in what is now a slum in New York, and it couldn't have been much more then. My grandmother thought, when she came to the United States, and she was the only one in her family—it was a big family—that came to the United States, evidently she was the most venturesome of all the rest of them. She thought the streets of New York were going to be paved with gold. She went to work in a button factory. She married my grandfather, they moved to Charleston, and evidently they made cigars there, it wasn't very successful, so they moved on. And they kept moving on, across the United States. At one point, my grandmother was carrying the present baby, and a man came in—they sold cigars, too, of course—came in to buy a cigar, and he had smallpox, and my grandmother was well aware of it, and then her baby then had smallpox. I always remembered that. One of my mother's brothers had a very pockmarked face because of this experience. So they must have come like that all across the United States. Well, by the time they got to St. Paul—there was no Minneapolis—by the time they got to St. Paul, they were a very bedraggled lot, because they must have been doing this for many years.

RL: How many children did they have?

GF: Seven. There were five at that time. No, there were four at that time. One was born in Chicago, that was in the last place, and then they went to St. Paul because my mother heard about an aunt that was there. They caller her "Aunt Marx." That was her last name, but nobody knows presently what her first name was. She must have been so delighted to see this bedraggled group that she gave them money and told them to got to St. Anthony, and live there! So they did. And that was the end of if, of their relationship with that aunt. They lived in a German community. There was no Jewish community. Everybody spoke German in this little community. I know this from long afterwards, because the butcher on Franklin and Hennepin, where we lived when I was a child—I lived on Fremont and Franklin—but anyway, I'd go up to the meat market and one day he asked me what my name was, and I told him, and somehow he said, "I knew your grandmother." He was a German butcher, and he said "I knew your grandmother, I used to sell here meat in St. Anthony."

RL: Now was this a German Jewish community?

GF: No, they were just a German community, where the language was German. But there were so few Jewish people there. They had a terrible time getting together the ten families to start the Temple [Temple Israel]. So there couldn't have been anymore than . . . Well, I don't know how many people there were, because this is all hearsay as far as I'm concerned.

RL: Did they have a big cigar factory there?

GF: Yes, yes, they had a big cigar factory.

RL: And they settled in St. Anthony.

GF: Yes. They were very frugal people. They lived very simply, and they saved their money very carefully, and they brought property. They had quite a lot of property in St. Anthony, which they still have today. I have a cousin in Minneapolis, and they're our Pflaum relatives, who inherited that. The men inherited the property and the cigar factory, and the girls—there were four girls and three sons, the three sons were the eldest—and the daughters each got money. The two who were not married got a great deal more than the two who were married. To them it was a great deal of money—today it wouldn't amount to much of anything—but that was the way it was divided up. Then they moved to, I think, Sixteenth and Park. I remember that house, because I was born in something that must have been converted to an apartment in the back at Sixteenth and Park. It was a big, old-fashioned, brown house. Park Avenue was very social in those days, but they were never very social, but they lived as people did in that area.

RL: You lived there with your parents.

GF: Yes, I lived with my parents, but it was only about a half, well, I was only, it was not distance at all to go and see my grandmother, who lived in the house in front of us. And then before my brother was born—I must have been three years old, we moved to—I don't know what the name of the street was—something, Thirtieth and something, which was quite far out in those days, into an apartment. Then, just before my brother was born, we moved to the house I lived in all the time until I was married, which was 2016 Fremont South. That's where I grew up.

RL: Your father, then, continued in the jewelry business. What ever happened to the cigar business? Did it become a real factory, with lots of employees?

GF: Sure. Sure. Because at the time I was married, they served those cigars at my wedding, and I know that people said they weren't very good cigars. It never entered my head that cigars were "good" or "bad," at that time.

RL: What was the brand name of the cigars?

GF: "G. Pflaum and Sons."

RL: That's what they called the cigars?

GF: And their slogan was "As good as a dollar weed." Something was "as good as a dollar." Maybe a whole box of them!

RL: And when did the family leave the cigar business?

GF: Well, they died. My grandfather died when I was a year old. Both grandfathers died when I was a year old. My grandmother, I believe, lived in that house on Sixteenth and Park with her unmarried daughters until she died there, too. And the unmarried ones—they moved to Douglas and Fremont. But that was after we lived on Fremont. There was a big settlement in that area.

RL: Why did so many of them remain unmarried. Do you know? Do you have any ideas about that?

GF: I think there were many more women to be married than there were men available, for one thing. Yes, there were a lot of unmarried women.

RL: And of course there wasn't intermarriage, or was there?

GF: No, not any that I knew of. I know very little. I came from a very little, narrow, inbred group.

RL: The Germans really closed together?

GF: No, it was family. It wasn't where you came from, as much as family, that you just . . . We lived very simply. My father worked very hard. He worked, I remember, from eight o'clock in the morning until six o'clock at night. And people didn't go out as we all go out nowadays, in the evening. Everybody had dinner with their own children at home, and that was that.

RL: And that was six days a week.

GF: Yes, six days a week. I remember we had a car. I think I was about twelve by the time we had a car. My father was a very good mechanic, and my father and my brother used to spend a great deal of time doing all things to that car, oiling it and all that kind of thing. And every Sunday we took my grandmother, my one living grandmother—that was my Jacob's grandmother—out. She came for dinner, and we did something with her. It was a colossal bore, as far as I was concerned, but now I wish I'd listened, because what they talked about was cooking, and now I go to all kinds of cooking classes, and I wish I'd listened to them.

But at the time I thought this was just the biggest bore in the world.

RL: Yes, that's exactly what we do every Sunday. Things haven't changed so much. My mother and my mother-in-law.

GF: Yes, yes. And when I think about it, I think, "What else could my mother have talked to my grandmother about?" But it's too bad they never talked about their immigrant experience. None of them ever talked about it! I told you this on the phone, I think. My theory is that they were eager to be Americans. You know there's a book on Making it in America, by Jacob Riis. When I read that I could identify with that very much because that was the way I remembered all the people who had come before. They all spoke English, of course, but they spoke German when they were dying, which was very interesting. My mother died in Golden Hills hospital. She was senile when she died in the hospital up there. And when I came they said, "Your mother was speaking Jewish." And I said, "If she was speaking Jewish it was the first time in her life. She was speaking High German." And that was that. Her sister did the same thing, because one of my sons was there, and he said, "What does 'liebe-something' mean?" And I said, "That means 'dear, love'."

RL: Did they talk German at home, too?

GF: As children. No. Not otherwise.

RL: But it came back. You said you thought you had some ideas about why they came.

GF: I had a feeling they came because they wanted to be first class somewhere, because they wanted to be like everybody else. Evidently in Germany they had just gotten all kinds of freedoms, but Jews didn't get all kinds of freedoms. And so I think they came for that reason, because everything in their lives afterwards seemed to be this "spreading out" to be an American. And I don't think this was peculiar just to them, because as I grew up and went to public school, I had lots of Gentile friends, and they never spoke their basic language at home, either. And they were not particularly proud of their grandparents if they had an accent. And everybody's grandparents had an acct of some sort.

RL: What did they do, to get rid of their "German-ness" and their "Jewishness," and become "Americans?"

GF: They were very proud of their cooking, and they were very proud of their housekeeping, which are German traits. They were indoctrinated with that. They were very busy, they spent all their lives cleaning and cooking. And got to be very large people as a result of it!

RL: And so they stopped speaking German, and . . .

GF: They always had to speak German to their mother. I talked to . . . you know the book . .

. I forgot what book it was . . . Oh, it was the book that Rabbi [Albert] Gordon wrote [Jews in Transition], I took that article that Rabbi Gordon wrote about German Jews, and I read it to my mother and to my aunt, to the one that was two years older, and they confirmed everything that was in it. I have it marked in the book, I'll get it for you, about what they said when I said, "Now did you go to this dancing class?" Yes, they went to it. I said, "What about keeping kosher?" Well, my grandmother's ideas of keeping kosher was not what anybody else would consider keeping kosher, either. But she was very firm about what she believed in doing.

RL: What did she do?

GF: Well, they didn't wash the dishes together, as far as I know. You know, separate dishes, and all that kind of thing. And they didn't . . . their diet was not the same diet that a kosher diet is, but they didn't eat any pork. And they did fast on holidays. My mother was the only one of her generation who did all these things, and of course my grandmother and grandfather did them. I guess that's it. But the men who went out in the world had to eat as everybody else did. And when I read that to them in the book, they said, "Yes, Papa and the boys would eat bacon, but Mama and the girls didn't eat bacon."

RL: Yes, this was Rabbi Gordon's book, Jews in Transition?

GF: Yes. The article about German Jews. (She means "chapter," rather than "article.") And then the club. There was some kind of club that German Jews belonged to, but of course this was much later . . . No, it wasn't, this was when they were growing up . . .

RL: Where were you educated, where did you go to school?

GF: I went to Douglas School, and to West High School, and the University of Minnesota, part time. Just a little. I didn't go there very long. I was sick and went to an Eastern boarding school, and when I came back I went to the University of Minnesota, after that.

RL: Did you graduate?

GF: No

RL: Where your friends going to college, too, or was this unusual?

GF: Oh, no. It wasn't a bit unusual. My friends . . . my mother was worried about the fact that I went with . . . all my life that I had so many friends . . . you know, just people . . . that I wasn't particularly interested in the Jewish world, the Jewish crowd. And in her world, they had been very segregated. Well, that segregation they put themselves into, I think. It made it a little easier. But she kept telling me that I was going to suffer from this, and that they would . . . that all my friends would leave me at a certain point. And they did.

RL: When was that?

GF: When I went to the University, everybody I had ever been very close to was Kappa Kappa Gamma. I had gone to a camp a few years before that, and I hadn't realized it, but everybody who went to the camp was invited to have Kappa dates (during sorority "rush" week), and I was not invited to have them. But yet it had nothing to do with my friendships, you know, I was acceptable into all the activities of the camp. But this was a big deal.

RL: When you got to college, then, they . . .

GF: Uh-huh. And they did. They just . . . They were very nice to me, but there was nothing they could do about it. And it had a terrible effect on me, a terrible effect on me, because it's pretty bad to have your mother wrong, and have your whole life pattern considered wrong. It's very unsettling to you, at that time.

RL: Yes. What year was that?

GF: When I went to the University of Minnesota? Well, I was seventeen years old, and I was born in 1903, so it was 1920. Now, I say I've had all kinds of anti-Semitic experiences, and all the people I talk to now say I'm making them up, that they didn't have them at all. But I think I'm more sensitive to it then they were. Or I don't know . . . But I've had all kinds of anti-Semitic experiences. When I was a child, we used to play neighborhood games in the dark, in dusk, in the evening, early evening.

RL: What did you play?

GF: Run Sheep Run, and . . . Oh, all kinds of games . . . There were children of maybe a four or five year span in their ages, and it was a lovely thing. But there was something about it . . . I smelled of onions, and I thought that I smelled of onions because I was Jewish, and that nobody else used onions to cook with. I didn't realize that everybody used onions to cook with, because it was never explained to me—but I got very belligerent. I was a very belligerent child! And I remember once, I had a brother who was three years younger, and I remember beating up a big boy because I was so angry about something he said. I don't know what he did to my brother, not to me. I don't know if it was anti-Semitic or not, I just beat him up, because I was angry. And that was that.

RL: Why do you suppose you were so conscious of it as a little girl?

GF: I think I heard so much about it.

RL: From your parents? Your family? Could you tell some of the other experiences you had that you felt were anti-Semitic? You've been very involved all your life . . .

GF: Oh, very involved, in all kinds of political things. I'm very grateful for it, because all

the things I've . . . everything I was involved with got to be the thing to do—but many, many years later. But this is much later. You can ask me about that some other time, or I'll be glad to do it now, if it fits in. Does it?

RL: Well just go ahead, and talk . . .

GF: When Watergate came along, someone called me and said, "Gladys, you should be very proud." And I said, "Why?" And they said, "In 1952 you worked against Nixon for Helen Gahagan Douglas." And I said, "Yes, I am." I didn't realize what the date was. And I also worked for FEPC with another friend of mine from League of Women Voters, and I still am.

RL: Which [League of Women Voters] unit do you belong to?

GF: I belong to a unit in St. Paul, because I lived in St. Paul after I was married. And I was on the State Board of the League of Women Voters. But I gave it up after my husband had his first heart attack, because I just couldn't be involved like that. But anyway, two of us came to a League meeting, and it was the time of FEPC, which was about that same time, wasn't it?

RL: The late 1940s, yes.

GF: Well, anyway, we had tried to get it on the agenda, and we couldn't get it on the agenda. Then I sat down next to her, and she said, "You want to work for it here?" And I said, "How can we do that?" And she said, "We can get it on if we try, as an un-addressed item." So I said, "Yes, but I don't want to make a speech." So she said, "I'll do the talking, but let's do it together." So she went up to the microphone and talked, and I remember the Board sat up on the platform, and when she got through someone said, "We couldn't do that in . . . what's the place Hormel meat comes from? Austin. "We couldn't do that in Austin." She was from Austin. "They wouldn't approve of that in Austin." And I said, "How can you not be for it in Austin?" And then we fussed around about it all morning, and it was voted, and voted down. So I was very angry and I went home. I have a temper, a terrible temper. and I went home, and I was working in my garden in the afternoon. I didn't stay for lunch, and I didn't go back in the afternoon. And about three o'clock, Edith Meighan called me and she said, "You'll be glad to know what happened this afternoon. Your—our—item passed." She said they voted to reconsider, and evidently it was the fact that I said, "How can you be against it?" We had reporters there, and I didn't want them to go to the newspaper and say that we voted against FEPC. Then, many years later—this was in the 1950s—many years later, I went to the University of Minnesota for something, and I realized that I was across the hall from a League of Women Voters office. It hadn't been there before. I went in and looked . . . I picked up . . . They had all kinds of things on the wall, and one of the things on the wall was, "We Point With Pride," and I read what they pointed in pride to, and in the 1950s they pointed to the fact that they were one of the first organizations for FEPC!

RL: And that was yours. Now let's backtrack and talk about earlier times. What year were you married?

GF: 1926.

RL: And so you had been to the University. Were you working?

GF: Yes, I worked in Dayton's. I was a "flyer." It was an interesting thing they had. They took girls who had been at the University or had graduated from the University and who were interested in working in a department store, and they gave them what they called a course to find out what they were best at. SO they sent . . . There were about twenty of us, I think. The reason . . . I'm not clear about this . . . But I think the reason I got to be on this was because at that time I was going with Harold, whom I later married, and he did style shows for Dayton's, and I think he recommended that they take me, and so that's how I got to be in this program. Anyway, every day you would go to a different place where they needed extra help. It was a very difficult thing, because you never got used to where you worked. It was always said that Dayton's didn't hire Jews, but they hired me.

RL: Were there other Jewish people working there?

GF: I don't remember. I'm just not focused in on that, whether there were other Jews.

RL: What did you study at the University?

GF: Oh, I just went there for freshman year. But I had a very interesting experience when I was in New York. I got very . . . I was outside of New York and I used to go into New York, and I got very interested in a store on 57th Street. I would go there just as if I were pulled there, and in this store, in the windows, were the strangest kind of art I'd ever seen. All I'd heard about was Currier and Ives prints, and I didn't like them, and I didn't know why. I thought it was something about me that made me not like them. But when I saw the Kandinskys, I went absolutely out of my head! I never got up the courage to go in and ask how much they were, or anything about them, but I would just stand there, and I'd always to there, just pulled like a magnet to it. And I went to all kinds of theatre, too. There was a wonderful system at that time in New York. The people, kids, would come in from college, boys, or whoever they were, and they'd rush to Gray's Drugstore . . . You know that store? Well, Gray's Drugstore sold tickets that came back from the box office. You bought your ticket at half price, then you raced over to the theatre. And there weren't that many theatres in the 1920s. And I saw the most marvelous things that were being done in American drama, because that was the year they were being done. And a few years after that.

RL: When you were at the University, and all your friends joined Kappa Kappa Gamma, did you join any organizations?

GF: There were no Jewish sororities, you know. And I always got sick. But I think a lot of my getting sick had something to do with that. I'm not sure, but I think so.

RL: How long were you in school in the East?

GF: I went for two different years, to two different schools. I flunked my boards for Wellesley, my college boards for Wellesley. But I came from a high school that didn't prepare you for them And my family—if you didn't go to Wellesley, you didn't go to college. So they didn't know what to do with me, and that was what they did with me. All my older cousins had gone to . . . Well, one cousin had gone to Wellesley, and one went to Cornell. There were seven children in my mother's family and five in my father's family. That meant twelve families, and they all had children. So you talk about the number of people I went with, my whole world were these people.

RL: And you say you were very close and all your social life were with family. Did you get together often? Did you have picnics, did you visit each other? What kind of socializing?

GF: Well, I just played with the children in my class at school, and that was that. But my mother had a bridge club, and she was also busy with the . . . I think earlier it had been a sewing club and then it got to be a bridge club. The people in that were her relatives and her friends, but her friends I called "aunt," too. We called them all "aunt," so it was hard for me to distinguish between the ones that were really my aunts, and the ones that weren't. And they all lived within walking distance of each other.

RL: How did you meet your husband?

GF: Well, when I got older, I used to go to TAA, Temple [Israel] Alumni Association things, with the St. Paul Jewish Temple.

RL: Oh, there was a group?

GF: Between the two cities. I've been trying to think how we got together. It must have been by streetcar. They had little events, and our Temple had little events. I went to Sunday School, of course. So there was a crowd that was just like my little crowd. It wasn't very large, there were very few people in it. We had a little boy-and-girl club, too, in Minneapolis. I've forgotten the name of it, but I'll think of it after a while. Of Jewish children. I realized I was more comfortable going into a Jewish group, and so we formed our own little group. Now there was a much stronger Jewish group in Minneapolis who were about three years older than I was, and they stayed together, always. They stayed together all their lives! My husband was part of that group, because he was five and one-half years older than I was. And I had known his brother, I started to tell you, from this Temple Alumni Association thing. There was also a fraternity and a sorority, a Jewish fraternity and sorority, social sorority and social fraternity. The fraternity had branches. You had to come from the right kind of people. You could be an idiot, but you had to come from

the right kind of people.

RL: But you were part of this Hai Resh group?

GF: Well, the Hai Resh was for boys, and the Sigma—I'm getting so I can't think.

RL: This didn't have anything to do with Scroll and Key, did it? That was on campus.

GF: No, we were younger than that. That's how I got to know all of these people, because you'd go to their dances and there were, you know, it was a mixed group of mixed ages.

RL: And this was still . . .?

GF: Sigma Theta Pi was the name of the girl's group! And it was in a lot of cities in the United States, so was Hai Resh. It made a way of knowing people, just as later sororities and fraternities did. And that was a time when my husband was at the University. It compensated to him for not having a fraternity, because they rented a room in Dinkytown and they met there, because they had to have a place to go.

RL: And this was an inter-city thing? This was both Minneapolis and St. Paul young people belonging to it?

GF: Yes. Yes.

RL: Is your husband . . . Is that Field-Schlick, in St. Paul?

GF: No, no.

RL: No connection. But you said you put on style shows for Dayton's.

GF: Yes, he did. He was in the theatre business.

RL: And they were in the State Theatre.

GF: Yes, his father was in the theatre business. And yes, they had the State Theatre in Minneapolis, and he had quite a lot of contact with Dayton's, over these style shows.

RL: Do you have any ideas, did you think about it at the time, as to why there was so much anti-Semitism?

GF: I think it was a built-in thing. The people had been indoctrinated with it. I know, I remember, that the little girl across the street told me that she prayed for me. And I said, "Why did you pray for me?" And she said, "Because I wanted you to go to heaven." She was Catholic. These things, they don't sound like anything now, but they were quite

astonishing things to me. Besides, the fact that I was always hearing about I should get down to going with the kind of people I was going to spend my life with.

RL: Yes, I think that's a common experience. So then you met your husband through this joint group between the two cities.

GF: Yes, but I think I had always known about him, though, because they lived at Cottagewood in the summer. A great many families lived at Cottagewood in the summer. My grandmother even lived at Cottagewood in the summer. She had quite a big house at Cottagewood, though this was before I can remember. And then my aunt, the aunt that was my mother's oldest sister, live there, and she had no children, and so I used to go out. She used to have all her nieces and nephews come out to spend time with her. And they had a little built-in group, too, the Kaufmans and the Zimmers and the—her name was Leah Levy—and Harold's family lived there, too. And then they had a little social summer group, and that's how I knew him. Once I went to a Hai Resh convention in Milwaukee—I was about eighteen then . . . yes, I was exactly eighteen then—and people were assigned to cars, and we had an "older man" assigned to our car. He was so aggravated that he was assigned to our car that he sat with his back to me. I later married him!

RL: [Laughter] "Older man." He was twenty-three and you were only eighteen. So then you were married and you moved to St. Paul?

GF: Well, we couldn't decide where we wanted to live, because our friends were both in Minneapolis and St. Paul. But he felt that he would like to be identified with St. Paul, because he had grown up there, and he wanted to live there. So we lived on Otis Avenue, which is just almost at the river, where Minneapolis and St. Paul... by the Lake Street bridge. He was working in Minneapolis at that time, but he also worked in St. Paul, because they had theatres in St. Paul We had friends in both cities, and we went to the same house in Cottagewood, because by that time his family were, they weren't dead, but they died very soon after that. We used to go out when we were first married and say at their house and later on I ran the house for Harold's brothers. We lived there, too, at that time.

RL: You said you came from big families. How many sisters and brothers did you have?

GF: Only one. I had a brother who was older, but he died at birth. And I have a brother who is three years younger. And Harold had two brothers.

RL: So then when you say there were so many cousins, it was because you had so many aunts and uncles. The Germans didn't have big families as a rule. The Eastern Europeans did. I find families of eleven and twelve and 7 and 8.

GF: Oh, no. There were much smaller families in the next generation. I think in the next generation there were about two in each family.

RL: That would be your generation.

GF: Yes.

RL: So when you married, you quit your job at Dayton's?

GF: I gave up my job when I was married. I started to tell you what happened to me after that training program. Some of the people on the training program got to be buyers, assistant buyers, and they were starting a circulating library. A friend of mine was in the circulating library but she—I guess she got married, come to think of it—but anyway, I was one of the first people who ran the circulating library. It was an interesting experience because I could buy anything I wanted to and I was responsible to no one, until one fine day... I didn't know what to buy, either, you know, so I took the New York Book Review and put in anything I could get, and then I put in whatever they had in the book department at Dayton's, too, that I wanted. They sent the books for me. And so it was quite interesting. There was only one other circulating library in Minneapolis. And so I did that until I was married. But one fine day, the supervisor or floorwalker, or whatever he was, a lot of departments came into the circulating library and he said, "I understand you have some pornographic books." I said, "I do?" And he reeled off the names of what he wanted to see, and he took them, and he never brought them back, but he read them. Someone told me it was Joan von Blon's . . . Later, many years later, told me that man, his name was Skinner, was Joan von Blon's stepfather, who took the books to read. James Joyce, and the whole lot.

RL: Yes, I was going to ask you, which books were they? Ulysses?

GF: Yes, and all kinds of things.

RL: Do you remember what else?

GF: No, I don't. Just all kinds of things. Nobody had ever considered them pornographic when they asked me for them.

RL: And you had been circulating them. To backtrack for a minute, you said you had your ideas about why people came to the United States.

GF: Why the German Jews. I don't know anything about why the non-German Jews came.

RL: That was when you said that they came . . .

GF: They came because they wanted full citizenship, they wanted to be Americans. There was a time . . . I forgot . . . I have a little lapse there . . . There was a time when my Pflaum family lived on Western Avenue, too. They must have come from . . . Do you know where Western Avenue is? I haven't been able to find it.

RL: Yes, it's right off Glenwood Avenue, off Seventh Street there, sort of where the Kemp's ice cream plant is, in that area.

GF: Yes, that's where they lived when came from St. Anthony. Then they went to Park Avenue after that. There was evidently a Jewish settlement there, because my mother's friends a while later moved to the same area she lived in. But she used to talk about—they'd get together and I'd love to listen to them—to talk about what they had done when they were children. And they talked about the streetcars that were horse drawn. And they talked about—they were in a little group, too—their families' children.

RL: So then you really feel you had a close-knit group.

GF: I had a cocoon around me. And added to that were people who had come from Germany, who were friends. Yes, it was an inbred group, you know, because they married each other, too. So there was all this crossing over in families. And that was why there were so many maiden ladies, because there wasn't enough crossing over to be done. And lots of these men, the boys, as they grew up in my mother's generation, went outside Minneapolis and came back with girls from other places.

RL: Who were also of German descent?

GF: Yes. Yes, yes.

RL: The boys did go to college, and most of the girls did, too?

GF: Well, now, we're in a different generation. Those boys didn't go to college. This is my mother's generation, they didn't go to college. But the next generation did.

RL: Now did a lot of them go into professions? Or was there a strong pressure for them to go into the family business?

GF: I don't think there was such a strong pressure, as it was the thing to do. And I think there was very little else to do. There were a few lawyers. Now the Weils, you know the Weil family, they lived across the street from us, and they were very good friends.

RL: On Park Avenue?

GF: No. On Park Avenue we were with my grandparents. This was my mother and father lived on Fremont Avenue, and some Weils lived across the street and some Weils lived nearby. And the gave us those "gray hairs." They were in the saloon business and that wasn't considered disreputable in those days.

RL: Who else was in the saloon business?

GF: I don't know. I was trying to think of the lawyers that I knew as a child. That's how I got to the Weils. Jonas Weil was a lawyer, and Simon Meyers, who was in Rabbi Gordon's book, who was president of the Temple, was a lawyer. I think Jonas Weil might have been a fairly good lawyer. I don't think Simon Meyers was, none of them were outstanding, but maybe there weren't outstanding lawyers. I don't know.

RL: There was quite a Jewish community, wasn't there, living around you on Fremont?

GF: On the block I lived in? On the block I lived in, we lived on one side of the street, and the Weils lived across the street, and then later on the Kronicks came. Bruce Kronick and I were born on the same day and we always called each other "twin." We went all through school together. But those were the only Jewish families on Fremont in that block. Later on the Josephs lived a block up, but that's after I was married.

RL: I see. They came in, then, in the late 1920s.

GF: I think. Or maybe I just wasn't aware of them. I don't know. And then, about a block above that Harriet Levinsohn lived. And then a block above that, the Rubins lived. They came much later, too. They came from Des Moines, Iowa, to go into the theatre business with my husband's father.

RL: Then you lived in St. Paul for how many years?

GF: Almost all our married life. Twenty-eight years

RL: Let's see, then. You were in St. Paul during the Depression . . .

GF: Before the Depression. I want to tell you about St. Paul. You asked me this on the phone. This is just more of what I think, not fact. St. Paul had very elegant Jews, and they had been there a whole generation before Jews came to Minneapolis at all, because there wasn't any Minneapolis to come to. And I think it was because they were established that they did the things they did. They had entirely different businesses than the Jews went into in Minneapolis. They were fur traders. The Rose family were fur traders. They bought the furs and they knew all about furs, and it was a real science. They knew all about furs. And there were in the department store business. That's the Golden Rule. They were very successful. They was a very successful Jewish upper strata in St. Paul, and they wouldn't have anything to do with the Jews in Minneapolis and what we considered upper strata. We were all very middle class, though, and they were all very elegant. But that's because they came earlier and were established earlier and had greater opportunities. And I believe that this carries that the pattern of the later newcomer not being socially acceptable only because he was foreign. And I think this carries over into why they treated the Russian Jew as something less than they were. The same thing. They did work with them, though. I can remember my two "Jacobs" aunts talked about Dr. Seham. Do you know Dr. Seham? It was very interesting that they had a social service agency to take care of East European Jews when they were having such a hard time, and they'd take the children and do all kinds of things with them. And Max Seham was one of them. But yet when he came to see their grandson, he didn't remember them.

RL: Where did they have this little agency?

GF: It must have been somewhere in North Minneapolis. Or maybe they took them from North Minneapolis to someplace else. I don't know.

RL: Was is sort of like a kindergarten, or a little school?

GF: I think it was kind of a play group. I'm not sure what it was. But anyway, they were very familiar with the names of a lot of interesting people they had known as children.

RL: Did they set this up themselves, or was it through some organization?

GF: It must have been through the Sisterhood, probably, or I don't know what organization it was. But is was something, that there was an organization and that they did that. There were certainly Jewish doctors, always. But I don't know if I'd know any German Jewish doctors. I just know other doctors. There was another South Minneapolis area where people from some other part of Europe came, from Romania, and that was south of Lake Street.

RL: That was the community that the Kanters and the Josephs came from.

GF: I didn't know that.

RL: Yes, as they prospered, they moved up into the Fremont area and joined the Reform Temple. Now, you were going to talk about the Depression. What effect would you say it had on you and on the community. Did it seem to have any effect on you?

GF: Well, I was very fortunate not to have it have too much effect on me. I didn't know anyone . . . Of course, Jimmy Kaye—do you know Jimmy Kaye?

RL: No, that's St. Paul.

GF: No, that's Minneapolis. The name was Kantorowicz originally. He has, now, the Chrysler agency. Well, Jimmy, always, whenever when we get together, he goes back to . . . Why, I remember this white suit that he wore all during the Depression, summer and winter, because he really felt it. I remember the Bank Holiday.

RL: What do you remember about it?

GF: I was going to Ivey's for lunch. Ivey's is where we always met for lunch, and I was

going to Ivey's for lunch and I was going to cash a check when I got there and when I got there I couldn't cash a check. And they knew me, of course, and some of my friends paid for my lunch, I guess. But it was kind of an unsettling experience. I remember we were going to Excelsior Springs for a couple of weeks with some friends of ours, the Cardozos from St. Paul. They had just built a new . . . They were just beginning to build a new store and I remember my husband thought it was terrible timing to be building a store then, and they were going to have trouble. But they didn't have too much trouble.

RL: This was in the early 1930s?

GF: No, this was the day of the Crash. We got in the car to go to Excelsior Springs, and none of us realized what was really happening. And there were stories, true stories about a friend of ours who lived in New York. He was from Minneapolis, I don't want to mention his name, he lived in New York and the day before his father had given him \$100,000 because he had sold his business, and he lost every nickel of it. Put it in the stock market that day. But that didn't seem to faze him very much. He came out of it all right. The stock market was a wild thing. Everybody was investing in stocks and getting rich quick, and my husband's father had just sold his business, and for a very brief time we had a lot of money on paper, but we never had any benefit from it, because part of the deal was the stock should not be sold. And besides that, when my husband finally sold some of the stock, when his father was in California for the winter, he sold some of his stock, and his father called him and said, "Are you trying to break me? I have to pay six percent tax on that. Buy it back again." So they bought it back.

RL: Those were the days, when you complained about six percent! Can you remember where you went when you were dating? What some of the social places were, the restaurants, night clubs?

GF: Well, we always went to Child's at night. No matter where you'd been, you went to Child's and had cereal. Child's was down on lower Hennepin Avenue. It was an all night restaurant, like a fast food place. And everybody, all the young people, went there.

RL: And what did you eat?

GF: Cereal.

RL: What kind of cereal?

GF: Well, corn flakes, whatever it was. And whether you wanted it or not, you couldn't go home until you'd gone to Child's. And as we got older, we all went to The Shack, in St. Paul. The Shack in St. Paul was down in the "red light district" under the Hill. I never knew quite where it was. They had delicious fried chicken, so if you had a date in St. Paul or near St. Paul, you ended up there. You ate in your car; you didn't go in. Somebody went in and ordered for a whole group. We did a lot of double dating. And by that time people had cars.

RL: You went to movies? And plays?

GF: Of course. We went to the Orpheum a lot. The Orpheum was vaudeville. You know the Orpheum Theatre today? It was vaudeville, and then they had a movie, and the movie was very inconsequential. But that was a big date, because that was expensive. I think that must have been fifty cents, and the movie was, I don't know, I've forgotten how much it was, ten cents, wasn't it? Or twenty-five cents. Something like that.

RL: Something like that, yes. Because in the late 1940s, it was thirty-five cents.

GF: Oh, boy. [Laughter] That's a long time later. We also went to dances. I remember once we went to Kronicks'. We had a New Years Eve party in Kronicks' basement, I think, the whole place. Evidently they cleared it out, and we went there and danced. This was when I was a late teenager. That was fun.

RL: And you would hire an orchestra?

GF: I don't remember the details. I just remembered that what I wanted to do always, of course, was to go with the older crowd, you know, these people who were three to five years older than I was. Because then all the people from my little group, if they got invited to go with the older crowd, they lorded it over all the rest of us. So that was your aim in life, was not to got with boys your own age. So once I got to go with the older crowd, and I went to St. Paul to the Bayers' house, and they told dirty jokes, and I didn't understand what they were talking about! You know, I was very unsophisticated. I just marvel at how I could have been that unsophisticated and knew absolutely nothing, yet I read a great deal. I wonder what I did with what I was reading! I guess you skim over what you don't know. I guess it isn't there.

RL: Yes, and you interpret it in the light of your own experience.

GF: Yes. Well, I went anyway, and I thought, "This is ridiculous. This is what I always wanted to do, this is the great thing to do, and I wish I were in the Kronicks' basement, dancing." [Laughter]

RL: Marvelous! Now let's move on to some of the other things you did in the community. You were on the State Board of the League of Women Voters. What year was that?

GF: This was much later. Well, about 1936, I think, I started with the League of Women Voters.

RL: When were your children born?

GF: My children were born between 1927 and 1929, 1931. Three boys, all boys. John was

born in 1930, Hal was born in 1927, and Martin was born in, well, I was twenty-nine when Martin was born.

RL: And you had help in the house?

GF: Oh, yes. I can never remember a time—I thought I grew up in a very, very underprivileged home, because everybody in my mother's and father's families were much more comfortable economically than we were—and yet, I never remember a time when we didn't have a maid and a laundress. But when I read . . . who was it that wrote *Room of Her Own?* I don't remember. I've got it right here . . . [Field is referring to Virginia Woolf, who wrote *A Room of One's Own.*] Well, anyway, she talked about her life in England and how many servants she had had, and she, too, had the same attitude that she was very poor. But there were so many things that those people had to do, you know. They had to wash in a washing machine and they had to iron by hand. They didn't have anything, any of the things that we have today that makes us able to get along with any live-in help.

RL: Yes, and you usually had girls who came in from the country?

GF: That's right. They came in from Hopkins and Excelsior. That was the country in those days. [Laughter]

[Brief tape interruption]

RL: And when did you become involved with the art world, with the Walker Art Center?

GF: Oh, much, much later. After Martin Friedman came. There was a time that there was a great furor going on—now this is *very* much later—Sam Hunter came to the Minneapolis Art Institute, and he came from the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and he came, and they told him, "Now, do you know, you can never be . . ." Do you know this story? "You can never be the director of this museum, because we can't have a Jew as the director of this museum." And he was young and hungry and he took the job. And then Dick Davis got into some kind of . . . who was then acting director . . . who was the director, got into some kind of a "cloud," and was discharged from the Minneapolis Art Institute, and at that time Sam Hunter was his next in command, and so Sam Hunter got to be acting director. And we were all very interested, because he was Jewish, in helping him, because we thought this was a great step up for Jews in this community. By this time, I think I must have lived in Minneapolis—no, maybe I didn't—I don't know where I lived—I didn't move to Minneapolis until 1955, so I think this was before that.

RL: Now this was the Art Institute?

GF: Yes, the Art Institute. And so . . . I lost my train of thought . . . Oh, so we all worked for him. I came back from Florida once to do a benefit for the first Rose Fete that they had the Minneapolis Art Institute. I wasn't particularly interested, because it wasn't the kind of

art that really grabbed me, but I wanted to help him. I liked him very much, and I thought it was a great opportunity for him. And I came back to work on that. And then they didn't take him, of course. I was very upset about it. Sam Maslon at that time was on the Minneapolis Art Institute Board. He was greatly criticized because he didn't take a stand, and he said that he thought he could work better from the inside than from the outside for it.

And I always get angry, so I was really angry. And finally, I must have talked so much to anybody who would listen to me about how unpleasant this was, that they called me from the Minneapolis Art Institute and asked me if I might come over, that they wanted me to come to a board meeting and they wanted to explain that happened to Sam Hunter. And I said, "I know what happened to Sam Hunter. Would you please tell your Board what happened to Sam Hunter!" And that was the end of that conversation.

And then I went to . . . I was a member of the Walker [Walker Art Center]. I was always a *member* of the Art Institute, and I think I kept on being a member, but I didn't have any more affiliation with working for anything. I'd had it. Then I went to a dinner at Walker. My husband, you know, was also on the Walker Board, but this was before he was on the Walker Board. And we sat at the table with the director's wife, of Walker. I know her name so well, too. This is all my senility, I can't think of anything. It begins with an "A." Anyway, we talked at great length about this, but we never used the word "anti-Semitism." But we were talking about anti-Semitism as cold as could be, and I remember saying to her, "Well, this is a special situation which will probably never come up again, but it is a very unfortunate thing, because it gets involved in larger things, this Sam Hunter not being asked to be the director." And he was a very capable man. They told me . . . people used to say to me, "Oh, it's not on account of Sam. His wife has a raucous voice." And I thought, "Big deal." I thought that was what they were going to tell me when I got to that Board meeting! But I never went, so that was all right.

Anyway, she looked at me in a very strange way, and she said . . . she didn't say anything, but I thought there was something strange in her face when I said that this was something that wouldn't come up again, because it already had come up. See, this man was going to the Guggenheim Museum, and his next-in-command was Martin Friedman, who was a young man who had just come to Walker, and because he was Jewish and because he was such a nice young man—he was like one of our children—we used to ask him to come out and all kind of things, because we liked him. But he was very interesting, and it was a stimulating experience for us, and I guess they didn't know a lot of people in Minneapolis, so they were very glad to come out and bring their children to swim, and all that kind of thing. So I've been involved with Walker ever since. Then he asked Harold to be on his Board after that, a little while after he had been there, I don't know how long after he had become the director, a vacancy came up, and Harold filled the vacancy for one year, and then he was elected to the Board. Then he died before he quite finished his term. And then there were about two or three years that went by.

[Tape interruption]

GF: People say to me, they ask me, "The Jews, why do they only go with themselves? Why do they all live in the same area? Why do they stay together?" And I always say that I think it's because it's easier on them. And I'm quite sure it is, because once I went to a meeting in St. Paul of some big Jewish group, and there was a lecture. A black man, who was the big, big black man of my earlier years—oh, he's a very fine writer—anyway, spoke, and I went to hear it, and it was a Jewish group sponsoring it. So was there, and somebody asked me about a trip I had just been on. And I said, well, there were all Jews there, it was a Jewish hotel, and I thought I'd never go to a Jewish hotel. The reason I went was because I had a son who had very bad asthma, and I had to go somewhere, and it was one of those hotels in the mountains of Vermont, and everybody was Jewish. So I was sounding off about it, and all of a sudden I turned around, and I saw in back of me two people who were part of St. Paul's top society, and I thought, here I am sounding off as if I were in a tight little group. And then I realized how comfortable you are and how you can say almost anything that comes into your head (when you're in a Jewish group), and when you're in a mixed group, you're very careful what you say, because you don't want to say the wrong thing! Just as "they" must be very careful what they say in your presence, too. So I understand this living in a group and being comfortable in your own world.

RL: Do you think, though, that a lot of non-Jews are exhibiting the same sensitivity that you did?

GF: Maybe they're not exhibiting the same sensitivity, but they wonder very much why Jews keep themselves to much to themselves, and why they aren't active in a lot of organizations. A great many of my friends have tried very hard and have done very good work in their communities, and they think that they should be working in their communities. Now, of course, it's easier, too, it's easier to work in your neighborhood, to belong to a neighborhood group. There was a time of McCarthy, of Joe McCarthy, when I was working in my neighborhood. It was my first experience with the League of Women Voters, and finally I heard Joe McCarthy talk, and I couldn't stand it any longer, and I sounded off about that, too. And this very nice woman who knew of McCarthy, who lived on the corner by my house in St. Paul, she said, "You sound just like my husband," she said. "He tells me all the same things you're saying." But it never altered anybody's friendship, really. It never got to that. I learned a little bit about being more politic about how you talk to people. The League taught me that you never should meet anybody head on over an issue, that you meet them over things you agree with, and then you get gradually into the things you don't agree with, and that you get much farther convincing them, if you're ever going to convince them at all, if you don't meet the issue head on. Which I thought was a very good thing to have gotten out of the League of Women Voters. There was no prejudice in the League of Women Voters that I ever knew about. It was a very open, very interesting organization. I had grown up in a Republican family. It made a Democrat out of me. I remember I was, at the time that Eugene McCarthy first went to the . . . Did he to right to the . . . He didn't go right to the . . . He went to the House of Representatives, yes. It was a League principle that every new legislator should be interviewed and that should be sent to

Washington, so if they ever wanted to know anything, they could get the background of the person who had won the election. They couldn't find another Democrat to go see Eugene McCarthy, so they asked me if I'd go. I said yes, I'd be glad to, but I didn't know how to interview anyone. I'd never done it. So they said, well, they'd try to tell me. They told be the basic things that I should read back to him—what I had gotten out of what he had said—and ask him if it was all right to use it, this material. And that was that. So I had a very interesting experience of knowing Gene McCarthy when he was very young. And I worked for him, always.

RL: You were involved in politics, too.

GF: Not really. Well, I was involved in it as the League of Women Voters, but of course the League of Women Voters were not political, so in order to endorse anybody or do anything, I had to get off the League Board to do it. The only time this ever came up was once Hal put my name in for—who was the black man from St. Paul? There was a big ad, a whole page ad in the paper, and I saw my name on it, and I nearly went out of my head, because I knew I couldn't . . . I was, you know, doing a terrible thing to the League of Women Voters by sponsoring somebody, although I was all for him, and wanted to sponsor him. I was just as glad to get off the Board. I thought it was just as important to sponsor the man. So I called Hal, and he said, oh, he'd put my name on because they were looking for names, and he didn't know I'd card. And I said, "Well, you got me in a terrible jam." So I was never really political in that sense. And yet my husband and I used to argue like mad about politics at the table, because our children used to remember all this bickering that went on about Roosevelt. And then, many years later, one of the boys said to his father, the youngest, it was, said, "Tell me about Roosevelt." And he turned to me and he said, "Don't you say a word." [Laughter] And so my husband told him about Roosevelt. And I said to him, "That isn't the way you felt about it at the time."

RL: He was a Republican, your husband.

GF: But I had been a Republican, too, because my father was a Republican, and I hadn't, until I got thinking about the issues, which I learned from the League, then I got to be an ardent Democrat. And I did a lot of benefits for . . . Well, I did candidates' meetings, for the League of Women Voters, and in that way I was involved in politics. But I was still not involved as a Democrat, and everybody knew I was a Democrat.

RL: Yes, I think by and large, percentage-wise, Leaguers are Democrats.

GF: No, they're not. Well, maybe they are today. I don't know.

RL: There are more Democrats than Republicans.

GF: Well, in my day there were more Republicans. They wouldn't have asked me to go see Eugene McCarthy otherwise. They couldn't find one single person who had any training to

go. So that was that. I also worked for Jewish organizations at the same time. I worked for . . . My husband was very interested—we did a lot of things together—he was the president of the Temple in St. Paul, and worked a great deal for the new Temple that was built in St. Paul.

RL: Mount Zion?

GF: Yes, Mt. Zion. My husband died before it was completed, he died before . . . when they were planning it. He resigned at that time.

RL: Why did he resign?

GF: Only because he couldn't . . . After he had his heart attack, he couldn't be involved in all this thing about the Temple, because it was too explosive.

RL: You mean they were arguing about the plans and the . . .

GF: Yes, they were arguing about the plans and raising money. He did a lot of money raising, and we moved to Minneapolis at that time because we couldn't live in the house we lived in in St. Paul. It had too many stairs. So we moved to Lake Minnetonka, moved away from it all. Then I'd worked with that, I'd worked with the Council of Jewish Women, I was asked at one time to be president of the Council of Jewish Women, but I refused because I had no training for it, and I said let me do something else, let me work up to it. It was Ruth Brin's mother [Irma Firestone] who called me, I remember, and she was so angry because I wouldn't take it. And she said they were . . . that was . . . I was very young at the time and I said, "I don't know anything about it, and I can't do anything I don't know anything about. I can do it, but I can't be the head of it." So I did work for various groups, but that was that.

RL: Council was basically a German Jewish organization to begin with, wasn't it?

GF: No . . . Yes . . . Yes, probably. Because I remember I had belonged to it in St. Paul ever since I was married and when I came to Minneapolis I changed my membership, and then I read in the Bulletin that they had a new member by my name. So I called them and said, "I want to tell you that I have belonged to the Council of Jewish Women for twenty-eight years, I'm not a new member." And they said, "In Minneapolis, you're a new member." My mother belonged to it and worked for it.

RL: Were you active in any other organizations?

GF: Jewish organizations? What else was there?

RL: Hadassah?

GF: No!

RL: You say that emphatically. How did you feel about the Zionist movement?

GF: I didn't know anything about it, but it was just not a group that people in my world worked for. But they did work for the Council of Jewish Women, and they worked for the Sisterhood. And of course, when I came to Minneapolis, then when the Brandeis thing started [Brandeis University Women's Auxiliary]. I was very involved in that, too.

RL: What year did that start?

GF: I don't know. I'm very confused about when it was. But I always thought that was a very interesting project. I was very interested in that. I didn't do any great things for it, but I've always been a part of it.

RL: Now, if you were planning the Rose Fete at the Art Institute, you must have been . . . Were you active in the Friends of the Institute?

GF: No. You see, I had a lot of theatrical experience that I got from my husband, because I used to tag along on a lot of the things he did. I don't really have any particular ability, but, so then whenever anybody had anything they wanted done, they'd ask me if I'd help with it. I've done a lot of things and they've always been pretty controversial. You know, like, "You can't do that," and "It won't work," and all that kind of thing, but it did work, always. Well, not always. But it did work.

RL: So you organized the first Rose Fete?

GF: No, I didn't organize it. I came back . . . I didn't organize it. They were going to have it and I came back to work on it. I was the one who said, "Why don't we have art?" They've always, they carried on the same project, through the whole . . . through every Rose Fete, but they gave me a hard time about it. I don't know if it was *selling* art, or what it was, but it was something that was concerned with an art project, whatever it was. I've mostly not been the head of things. I mostly just worked for things.

RL: I think sometimes you feel a more solid sense of accomplishment that way, when you've done a project.

GF: If it's something I like to do, and if it's something I've been picked to do, for some reason. My theory is that I've been asked to do a lot of things as a Jew in Minneapolis, and I've had this argument with Dorothy Levy, who was my good friend from when I was in politics, you know, and she's been asked to do a lot of things just because she's Dorothy Levy, and I said that I've always carried the weight of Jews on my back, and I hope I do a good job for them.

RL: Oh, you mean you've been asked by the non-Jewish community?

GF: Yes. And I know I started to work on what's called Center Opera. And I was head of a group called Center—I don't remember that one, either—at the Walker. It was a lay group for Walker, and I was vice president of it, I think, and so that came into . . . this Center Opera was part of this group's activity. I hadn't thought of it. Bucky Weil thought of it, and worked, and Martin really started it. I worked on it. And Harold worked on it with me. I've stayed religiously on it ever since then. I always . . . but I sat down with Alice Smith . . . I was the one who found Alice Smith. They were trying to find a president who had a lot of prestige, and I had met Alice Smith a few years before that. We were coming out of a movie, and I had gone to school with Justin Smith, who was a Walker, I had gone to school with him at Douglas School, you know, we knew each other for a long time, when he was in first grade, I guess. He introduced us to his wife, the new wife. And about that time they were looking for a new president, and so I said, "Why don't you ask Alice Smith? She's a financial pro." They said, "Oh, she wouldn't do it." I said, "Yes, she would. She's just retired from something for the Minneapolis Symphony, and she's looking for something to do, I know." Well, they asked her, and she was delighted.

So then we began to raise money for it [Center Opera], and the first year we raised a lot of Jewish money. She called me before we got this thing on the road, and she called me and asked me if I would come over, and we could think about how to raise money. So I took all my Jewish address books and I went over there, and I said to her, "Now, Alice, I'm going to think of a whole lot of people that I think will help us, and you think of a lot of people in your world who'll help you, and then let's get some Catholic to tell us who's going to help, who's going to get into the Catholic group," because that's my theory of how you work, in a city. It isn't everybody's idea, but it does work that way. She said, "I don't know any Catholics." And I didn't either, in Minneapolis. I knew a lot of Catholics in St. Paul. So we raised a lot of money, and an awful lot of people said to me afterward, "How come there's so many Jewish names on this list?" And I said, "Well, they were the people I knew that would help us." It's petered out; we don't have that following anymore. But this was an argument that I had, and I said Alice picked me because she knew I would be an entree to them. And oh, I asked Alice at that time if she knew any black people, that we should get black people, too, interested, because they liked singing. None of us could think of who to have. Today I could do it. Today I know who to ask.

RL: Who would you ask?

GF: I'd ask Harry Davis. Or Marvin Trammel, who's the school superintendent. My experience is much greater now than it was at that time.

RL: Or you could ask Cecil Newman [publisher of *The Minneapolis Spokesman*]. That's interesting, that the Catholics didn't get a chance to give, because nobody knew any of them! [Laughter] Were you involved with the United Fund, or with the Federation [Minneapolis Federation for Jewish Service]?

GF: Oh, I worked for them, the United Fund, and I worked for the Federation, too. I always was the one who was organizing the meeting, or something, and figuring out how to have the speaker, how the speaker should do it, and how everybody should do everything. I was always doing the mechanics of it. I enjoy that. I like all those things. They're just kind of, you know, some break for me. Just recently, last year, I did a benefit for Amnesty International, and Hal said to me afterwards, "You didn't realize how old you were until you got into this, did you, Mom?" Because it really took a lot out of me, and it didn't used to take anything out of me at all. I used to do it, and the great thing was that I liked it.

RL: You sound, I think, really satisfied with the contribution you've made and the life you've led.

GF: I've led such an interesting life. And I've always been around. I didn't have anything to contribute, really, because I'm really not highly educated or anything else. But I've always just been there at the particular time when something important was happening, which has made my life very interesting. I feel as if I can move either way. I can move down to people who have not had as much experience as I had, who are much less sophisticated, very easily. And I can move up fairly easily, too. It makes . . . it helps when you are working on things to have this contact. I go to places and everybody says, "Hello, Gladys," to me. I couldn't tell you what their names are. Partly it's because I'm getting senile and losing my ability to know people's names. I never did know it very well, it was always a weakness.

RL: It's not old age. Some people just don't. And think of how many thousands and thousands of names you'd have to remember.

GF: Yes, I know their faces and most of them I always know how I know them, but I just don't know what their names are. It's been interesting. About one of my interesting experiences . . . When I was first widowed, you know, I didn't know what to do with myself. Some people were very kind to me that I hadn't known very well before, and I remember that Gordon Locksley [a Minneapolis art dealer] asked me once to go to the Minneapolis Art Institute for a dinner and no one that I knew had ever gone with him. I thought, "This is going to be a great thing. Everybody is going to be talking their heads off after they see me out with Gordon Locksley!" Well, it was one of the most interesting experiences of my life, that relationship with him, because he was a fascinating person. But I've had a lot of very interesting experiences with a lot of very interesting people. I always marvel at why they're bothering about me, but they do, and I'm very grateful.

RL: You've been an art collector, too. When did you start?

GF: I started when I was very, very young.

RL: When you were looking at those Kandinskys in the window, you didn't go in?

GF: I didn't know they were Kandinskys, either. I knew it was a . . . it was something about

non-objective art . . . and it was on a little placard in the window. And then I began to collect when I was very young, and I didn't have any background for why I collected, and I just had some kind of communication between me and art. I made a lot of mistakes, of course. I guess everybody does. After my husband died, Martin said to me, "Why don't you go over to the University and take a course at the University in the history of art, modern art?" He said, "You know, it probably would be good for you to have something that you have to do. My mother-in-law did it, and she got so much out of it. I think you'd enjoy it tremendously." And I did. It was a lifesaver for me. I called Sidney Simon to ask him if I could audit his course, and he said yes, he'd be glad to have me. I think he sort of knew Harold, and knew me, too, from going to the Walker a lot. And there were 150 people in the class and people who couldn't get in, but I was there and I wasn't even paying for it! It was a tremendously interesting experience for me. After I did that—I went three times a week, I think—you know, it's not anything you just do casually. After I did that, I had a better basis for collecting.

And yet I always took things, most of them, I'd take them to somebody at Walker and ask them what they thought about it. They are very careful about how they recommend things to you, because they can't sponsor an artist, you know. But Dean Swanson helped me, I remember taking something to him, and Jan van der Marck helped me. I bought a . . . found a . . . when I was . . . this is one of my favorite stories. I knew about Jackson Pollack, and I had read a lot about him . . . I always had read art magazines, and all that kind of thing, even before it . . . long before I took this course. Anyway, one day—we'd had quite a bad time in the Depression, and money was an important thing—but I had an aunt who gave me some stock, I just had it, and that was the only stock we had, and it didn't pay dividends, just nothing, so one day I said to my husband, "Would you feel terrible if I took that stock and sold it? I want to buy a Jackson Pollock." And he said, "No, it's your stock. You go do what you want with it."

So I was going to New York anyway, and I went to New York and I went to the Janis gallery, and I said to Mr. Janis, "I'd like to see a Jackson Pollock." And he said, "Why?" And I said, "I just grew up to it." This is 1950-something, and he said, "You're three years too late." And I said, "You don't have anything?" "Oh, yes," he said, "I have some things, but he's not painting any more." This was a period of time when he wasn't painting. So he showed me this painting, and I thought it was just spectacular, and I called my husband because I knew where he was working that day in New York, and I called him and asked him if he would come over and look at it. So he came over. Well, he was a very conservative man, and he was pretty horrified that I was going to spend \$2,500, because I had been buying things for \$200 and thinking that was terribly expensive. So he said, "Let's think about it." He understood it much better than I did. The name of it was "Rhythms," and he was very musical, and he understood the painting much better than I did. And we walked down the street and he said, "You know, we're not the kind of people who sell stock to buy art." And I said, "Don't you want me to buy it?" And he said, "No." So I didn't buy it. The next time I saw it, it was in the Museum of Modern Art, and it was worth \$30,000, I think. And now it must be worth hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars. I made just as

bad a mistake that same day. You must know something about art, don't you?

RL: A little.

GF: That same day I saw a Franz Kline. Mr. Janis brought it out and said, "How would you like this?" And I looked at it, and I had seen a painting by that same man when I went to see Philip Johnson's home. This was when my middle boy was in college, in the School of Architecture, and Philip Johnson was a critic at Yale. He had arranged for John to go and look at his house, and so I had gone. So I knew it was good, but I was scared of it, so I didn't buy it, and that was just as bad. That was \$1,500, and Harold would have accepted that, but the \$2,500 really just killed him. So he made up his mind that he would, after that, the next time I said I wanted to buy something he was going to let me buy it. Well, so nothing ever happened for a long, long time, until they had a show at Walker of Gottliebs, and I said then, "I think I'll spend that money now." Now I'd like to do it. So then, I didn't want to but it myself, because I wanted someone to tell me—they had an exhibit at Walker—which was better than some other one. I couldn't find Martin Friedman when I was trying to make up my mind about it—it was a big opening, and Martin was busy. And so I asked van der Marck to help me, and he picked out the one that I bought. I don't know if I would have bought a different one if someone else had told me, but anyway, that's turned out to be very successful, too. Of course, the good art that you have, that turns out to be good, you don't want to sell, anyway. So that's the trouble with the whole thing. It's a good thing to do, but you can't ever bear to separate yourself from the things that you buy. I don't have anything important here, except that's an Oldenburg back there.

RL: Do you have any other favorite stories that you'd like to tell?

GF: Oh, I've got millions of them.

RL: When you were little, where you were growing up, or your family?

GF: What would be the subject? Say, I had coffee, and I bet it's all boiled away by now. My mother used to talk about her relatives in Germany. She never went back to see them, but my grandmother went every year to Germany after they must have had a certain kind of economic security. This was when I was a small child, because every year my grandmother would come back and bring me a great big doll, about this big, with blond hair and blue eyes. And I had to name her Hannah, because that was my grandmother's name. I always played with electronic trains instead, with my brother, because I couldn't stand these dolls! This bothered me no end! When my grandchild, my first little girl grandchild, was born, I gave her a blond doll, because there wasn't anything else but a blond doll, and she wouldn't pay any attention to it. But I understood why, and later found her a dark-haired doll; she did like that.

What I started to tell you was that my grandmother kept up her contact with her family in Germany. Her name was Gusty Rothschild; she was Gusty Pflaum. She went to Germany

all the time, and she met all the relatives of the Pflaum family, as well as her own, so they were very interested, because these people all had the same names as the children of my mother's family. Our Dora was their Dorothy, and our Ella was Eleanor. Wasn't that interesting? They had gotten to be so German, much more so that the generation in the United States. The one my mother talked the most about and my aunt took the greatest pride in, at the time of the first World War got to be a plastic surgeon. Plastic surgery was brand new at the time, and he did it because of his experiences in the war. And I always thought she was making all this up, about how great her family was, but then when I got to be a little bit older, I would meet people who had studied in Germany, and I'd ask them if they knew Dr. Conhaim, and they said, of course, everybody knows Dr. Conhaim. And there really was a Dr. Conhaim, and he really was the one that all plastic surgeons of the next generation went to study with. Because they all went to Germany to study medicine in those days. But then, when the Holocaust came along, that family sent this awful specimen of humanity. He had been in a concentration camp, he was very thin and gaunt, but he was so German that you could have killed him! Everything in Germany was just so wonderful! And they had a terrible time finding him a job, and he wouldn't have a job where he had to sweep. You know, he wouldn't do that. I don't know what happened to him . . . it was a . . . he was kind of around our necks for a long time, during that time. And he was anything but somebody who you would enjoy! We were sorry for him, and we did the best we could for him. I guess eventually he must have gotten integrated in the economy somehow. But he came with a what do you call these things . . .? A family tree. And it was very interesting. I lost it unfortunately, but it was very interesting, because that's where I got the names, the names that were similar to the names of my grandmother's children.

RL: That's a shame. If it ever turns up, it would be something nice to have.

GF: It got lost when we moved out of our house in St. Paul. I was very upset at that time, and I wasn't doing anything much about moving out.

RL: That was a tremendous journey for them to take, back to Germany every year.

GF: Yes, and they went by ship, of course, because there weren't planes in those days. I'd also like to talk about assimilation. Not intermarriage particularly, but assimilation. In this small group of German Jews, there was a great deal of assimilation. I started . . . I told you this on the phone . . . they got to be Christian Scientists, for one reason or another. Now there was a family, the Deutsch family, in Minneapolis. There are descendants of those people living in Minneapolis today. Maxine Goldenberg is one of them.

RL: Harold Deutsch of the University. Was he one of them?

GF: No, I don't think so. His name was Henry Deutsch, and he was a . . . whatever they call the man that conducts the services . . . a leader of some sort. And his daughter was one of my good friends when I was growing up and we went to school together. She's not Jewish at all any more. I have cousins, any number of cousins, who fancy themselves as being

anything but Jewish. All kinds of cousins. And that's where they've all gone. They're all gentiles now.

RL: Some of them became Christian Scientists?

GF: Well, that isn't popular anymore, they got out of that. They became Unitarians. The Pflaums are all—I'm the only Pflaum that's Jewish—I have a brother who's much more comfortable with gentiles than he is with Jews. He likes to play golf with them and he likes to be with them, and wherever he goes he associates with them. To me, they're very middle class people and I don't want to be with people that are so unthinking.

RL: Why do you suppose this happened?

GF: I don't know. I don't know. I had one cousin whose father had come from that Romanian settlement that we were talking about earlier, and the father wouldn't accept his wife in his house, and he's completely gentile.

RL: Was it a gentile wife?

GF: Yes. I have a cousin who's Leo Pflaum, I told you about him, didn't I? They belong to this church, this very social church, in downtown Minneapolis.

RL: St. Mark's?

GF: I think so. I think the community thinks of him as a Jew, but he thinks of himself as a gentile. And Maurice Adelsheim, also my first cousin once removed—he's a different generation—he thinks he's some kind of gentile. He belongs to a church and he doesn't even think it's funny! Once he came to my husband's office to ask—that was when he lived in Minneapolis—to ask if Harold would let them park for their church, which was across the street from the theatre, let them park there on Sunday. Harold came home and he said to me, "The Deacon came to see me." And I said, "Who?" He said, "The Deacon." And I said, "Who's the Deacon?" And he said, "Your cousin, Maury Adelsheim." He told me what Maury had asked him and I said did he laugh, and Harold said no. And I said how could he be so ridiculous? Because they have a marvelous sense of humor, the Jacobs part of my family had a sense of humor, but it didn't seem to light on Maury very hard. So they've all gone over to being gentiles, or very close to being gentiles. And probably it's because we changed our name, but I decided at that time that I was going to be more Jewish than I had ever been in my life, and I was always going to be. The reason we changed our name was because we couldn't get a hotel. We'd write to New York, and say please make a reservation for me, and they'd write back and say I'm very sorry, we're full.

RL: What was your name?

GF: Finkelstein.

RL: When did you change it?

GF: 1936. Part of Harold's family changed their name when they came to the United States, but his father hadn't, and he always said he was sorry they hadn't, and that was the name they changed to. It came home to me in 1936 very hard, because we looked for some reservations somewhere and they were busy, they were all booked, filled up. My brother-in-law wrote and signed his name Leonard Finchley, and he got in. And Harold came home and he said, "I've got enough of this." This was the *height* of anti-Semitism, in 1936. He said, "I've had enough of this. I don't want to be condemned before people have seen me."

And at one time in New York when my children were in college, we were at the Madison Hotel, and I said to the man at the desk, "I'd like to come back at Thanksgiving, but I'd like to come back and have an apartment—I understand you have apartments—because I have one boy who's on a very strict diet, and I could fix some food for him that he could eat." And he said, "We're all full up." They weren't full up for the reason we were Jewish. They were really full for Thanksgiving, I'm sure. But he said, "I know a very nice hotel, the Drake Hotel, and you go over there and make reservation for yourself." And I said, "Won't you please call him?" And he said, "No, I want you to go over there." And so I went. And it was no trouble at all. So this was going on all over the United States. And we thought it would be a terrible handicap for our children if they ever got to be doing something to have a name that was that condemned. And of course it was a hard thing for my husband to do. I couldn't even get a maid! After we changed our name, the All-Service Agency, I said to the woman, "You know me, but I have a different name now." And she said, "I'm so glad you changed it. I couldn't get anyone to come and see you. I had a terrible time getting anybody to come over and see you!"

RL: Even the maids didn't want to work for somebody Jewish!

GF: Yes. They didn't want to do the dishwashing, and the different kinds of food, you know. They always asked me about that.

RL: You certainly didn't keep kosher.

GF: No, no, no, no.

RL: Could you give me the names of your cousins, just sort of run through them so if I wanted to know I could draw a sort of network of who is related to whom?

GF: I can write it for you, if you like.

RL: Oh, I would like that, if it wouldn't be too difficult.

GF: I was a big part of the little world I lived in. And it was a great number of people, and

some of them were very interesting. Some of them had a marvelous sense of humor, and they were all quite active in the community. My mother wasn't as active as most of her sisters-in-law were. And I don't believe my father was active at all, except I remember him carrying the Torah, and later my husband carried the Torah, I thought, you know, this is how we're going back again, at the New Year's service. So anyway, we were very dedicated to being Jewish, and I was very comfortable with that. And I got to feeling that being Jewish and standing up for who you were was a good thing, for me, as a person. Jews in Minnesota Historical Society