

**Slovie Kissin-Marver**  
**Narrator**

**Rhoda Lewin**  
**Interviewer**

**November 7 and 10, 1986**  
**The Marvers' apartment**  
**Saint Paul, Minnesota**

Rhoda Lewin - RL  
Slovie Kissin-Marver - SM  
Bernard S. Marver - BM

**RL:** This is Rhoda Lewin on November 7, 1986. And I am in the apartment on Youngman Avenue in Saint Paul of Bernard and Slovie Marver, Slovie Kissin-Marver, interviewing Mrs. Marver.

Alright. Your name is Slovie Kissin-Marver. Where did you get a name like Slovie? [Chuckles]

**SM:** Ah . . . I was . . .

**RL:** It's a very unusual name.

**SM:** Yes. I was told that my father's mother's name was Slovie.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** And the name does mean honor. The meaning of the name.

**RL:** Is that in . . . in Hebrew, in Yiddish?

**SM:** Well, I don't know whether that is a Hebrew translation or what it is. It's 'Slava'.

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** It's pronounced 'Slava'. And I suppose it was Anglicized to Slovie.

**RL:** I see. Okay. And you were born and grew up in Saint Paul

**SM:** Saint Paul. Yes.

**RL:** And when were you born?

**SM:** In 1905, April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**RL:** 1905.

**SM:** 1905.

**RL:** What did your parents do? What was your father's profession?

**SM:** Well, my father was an ordained rabbi.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And he was ordained in London, England.

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** And my mother came to this country when she was . . . she came from Russia. And she was about fifteen years old. I should judge. And she went to school here.

**RL:** At . . .

**SM:** She went to night school and she tried to get all the education she could. And then she worked as a saleslady at . . . I don't recall. It was a Taylor Department Store in Kansas City, Missouri; her people lived in Missouri. And my grandmother had an inn there with her, with my mother's brother.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** And . . . I think it was in Excelsior Springs, Missouri, which at the time was a resort part of the country. I don't know whether it is today or not. It was. And it was a kosher type of inn.

**RL:** It was like a . . .

**SM:** A hotel.

**RL:** A hotel.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** That people came from all over the country.

**SM:** Yes. Yes, and stayed.

**RL:** And it was a Jewish clientele.

**SM:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**RL:** How did she meet her husband? Your father?

**SM:** That I don't know. Papa was a guest rabbi.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** At a congregation in Kansas City. And Rabbi [Albert G.] Minda of Minneapolis [at Temple Israel], his brother, at the time, was the Rabbi in Kansas City. And he invited my father to speak. And evidently Mamma went to hear him. I don't know. I never . . . I'm sorry I didn't get the particulars of their original meeting. But evidently that is where they met.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm. And what brought them then . . .? They were married soon after that? Do you . . .? What year were they . . .?

**SM:** I don't think they . . . I don't know. That possibly was in 1903.

**RL:** Mmmm. And what brought them to Saint Paul?

**SM:** My father had married before.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** And . . . they had never mentioned it to any of the family. I didn't discover this until my father died. We learned that he had been married before. And so my father did not want a pulpit because of that. He felt that a divorced man should not have a pulpit. And so he chose to come to Saint Paul. He thought it would be a good place to open a Hebrew school. And so he opened this Hebrew English school in Saint Paul and it was a private school.

**RL:** And the name of it was . . .?

**SM:** And it was Reverend Kissin's Parochial School.

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** And he had, I would say, about thirty students. And they were all boys at the time. Because girls didn't go to any religious school. It was . . .

**RL:** Mmmm. Now this was a day school, a full time school?

**SM:** No. No it wasn't a . . .

**RL:** It was like the Talmud Torah, it was for after school.

**SM:** It was like a . . . yes.

**RL:** And Sunday mornings, I suppose.

**SM:** I suppose.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And my mother was one of his teachers.

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** They were married.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And then I guess I must have come along. I was born in Saint Paul.

**RL:** Then your mother must have had a very good Jewish education of her own.

**SM:** My mother did. My mother's father was a *melamed* [teacher].

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** And a man who studied constantly. My mother's mother was an only child. Hence, they lived with the grandparents.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And my mother was one of five children. And because of them being cared for by the grandparents who were well able to care for them, evidently, he was . . . my grandfather was able to pursue his studies and do teaching of Hebrew. I know that that's how that came about.

**RL:** That's interesting. You don't really know any of the details then about how these people must have felt. They were probably so proud that their daughter was marrying a rabbi.

**SM:** Oh, yes.

**RL:** But there was that . . . that flaw, the fact that he was divorced. And they never talked about that?

**SM:** Oh, this?

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** I'm . . . I'm speaking now about my mother's family.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** But no, nobody ever spoke about that.

**RL:** Oh. Okay.

**SM:** No. This is apart from . . . I'm just going back to some of my mother's background.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Telling you how my mother happened to be well trained in Hebrew.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And I imagine all the rest of her family.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** No. That was the reason I brought my mother's family into it.

**RL:** Oh, I see. Okay.

**SM:** Telling you what my mother's background was.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And how she happened to be so well versed in Hebrew.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm. Yes. But then you said that . . .

**SM:** But my father, yes.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** My father would not assume a pulpit.

**RL:** He had been married before.

**SM:** He had been.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And he was a very ethical man. And this was part of his ethics, I guess.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm. That was a different era. So then they . . . they came to Saint Paul and he had this school.

**SM:** He still . . . he still performed marriages.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm. Yes, as a rabbi.

**SM:** As a rabbi.

**RL:** He could legally do that. Yes.

**SM:** And also did eulogies. And he did other things that . . . other than just being a rabbi of a temple or a *shul*, for example.

**RL:** Yes. Was he reform?

**SM:** A reformed. And in England the reformed is not as the reformed . . . there weren't as liberal.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** The reformed in England were conservative and they still are. And they're swinging more toward not only the conservative but toward orthodoxy. They're introducing more orthodoxy into the religion.

**RL:** Now when you say he was reform but very conservative, then you are saying that they had a great deal of Hebrew in the service?

**SM:** Oh, yes.

**RL:** And they, of course, kept *kashrut* [kosher].

**SM:** Oh, yes. Yes.

**RL:** And . . .

**SM:** Yes, they kept some of the fundamental religious . . .

**RL:** Yes. And of course did not work on the Sabbath?

**SM:** No.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** However, I remember my father smoked on the Sabbath, which . . . and he did . . . there was liberalism introduced into it that probably wouldn't have been sanctioned . . . not probably, but truthfully.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Would never have been sanctioned in our country, in America.

**RL:** I see. This was in England. But he continued these things, this kind of religious observance when he came to Saint Paul.

**SM:** Oh, yes.

**RL:** Yes. Okay, now how long did he have the school?

**SM:** Evidently, not very long. Because he was approached by some people in Saint Paul, and they were forming a Talmud Torah for the Sons of Jacob, I believe.

**BM:** Yes, Sons of Jacob or another.

**SM:** Or was it Mount Zion Temple? Now I don't quite . . .

**BM:** Yes.

**SM:** I don't know the details of that. But they approached him and asked whether he would be principal.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** Of a religious school in Saint Paul. And so it appealed to him. He wouldn't quite that much responsibility as he had with his own.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** So he became principal of the Capitol City Hebrew Free School.

**RL:** Yes. Now this . . .

**SM:** And he was one . . . he was the first one, I believe.

**RL:** Yes. This was a real compliment that his first . . . his own school must have been a very well run . . .

**SM:** Oh, yes.

**RL:** A recognized institution if the community would come to him and ask him to . . .

**SM:** Oh, yes.

**RL:** Be the first director of the new Capitol City school. Yes.

**SM:** He was a well-organized man and a beautiful speaker.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** A wonderful orator. He had . . . I know that when I . . . in later years, when I went out of town and wrote letters to him, he would make corrections on my letters. And I was always very [chuckles] I had to be very particular. I had to use the dictionary always when I wrote to him. [Chuckles]

**RL:** So then did he stay with that school? Your mother no longer taught for him.

**SM:** Ah, no.

**RL:** Because now she was . . .

**SM:** No, she didn't.

**RL:** Home with the . . .

**SM:** Yes, with the children.

**RL:** Yes. How many of you were there? Children?

**SM:** She gave birth to six children and one passed away when she was about, I would say, a year and a half.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** And then Duluth wanted him. So I guess they offered him more salary, and after thinking about it for quite a while . . . I think at the time they had about three children in our family.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** We moved to Duluth.

**RL:** About how old were you then?

**SM:** The first . . .

**BM:** Six or seven.



**SM:** I must have been about six years old, seven years old. And I have a lot of memories of Duluth. And I remember Papa being on the Welfare Board there.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** And he engaged himself in community things, too, and I know that he did a lot of speaking. I remember Papa sitting up at night; sometimes if I would awaken I'd see the light on in his room. He was writing speeches.

**BM:** Don't forget about the [unclear].

**SM:** He was quite an orator.

**RL:** And what job was he . . . ?

**SM:** He was also principal of the Hebrew School there.

**RL:** In Duluth?

**SM:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**RL:** You said you had a lot of memories of Duluth. Is there anything else you remember?

**SM:** Well, there are little personal things; I remember things with the family. I was the eldest, don't forget.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And I remember going out to Chester Park with two or three other children. I remember one time when I jumped over some stones in the creek, Chester Creek in Duluth. And I slipped and fell and my clothes were all wet and I was afraid I would be scolded when I came home. I mean there are little trivia that I recall. And so I took off my outer clothes and I hung them on twigs. And we were kind of late getting home. I remember that one good scolding. But I was always inquisitive and looking for things.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And that was one of [chuckles] my experiences.

**RL:** Now you lived in Duluth for what, two years then?

**SM:** We must have. And Saint Paul wanted him back.

**RL:** And then you came back to Saint Paul. Yes.

**SM:** And I don't know then . . . I'm skipping a lot but . . . my father's health . . . my father was a frail man.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** And so . . . and he was always schooling. He was always going to the University.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** He was interested in botany and horticulture. And I have a letter in my collection here telling you about him going on to higher horticulture. He bought land out at White Bear Lake. And he was going to experiment with . . . there was a Dr. Smith [sp?] at the University of Minnesota who was in the Plant Pathology Department. And Papa was going to experiment with him, on this five acre tract that he bought, with grafting trees. And growing things that didn't grow in cold climate.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** So he had [unclear] walnuts. He had peach trees. He had pear trees. And I can recall that. I was just a youngster.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And I remember that because of . . . and here is where the religion comes in, too. Because Jewish people do not eat the first fruits of these trees, I can remember that Papa gave them away, and we couldn't eat them. And I was . . . and we children felt just terrible about it, to think that we couldn't have some of the peaches, and the pears, and the apples that they were growing.

**BM:** Grafted.

**RL:** He would do this at the beginning of each season?

**SM:** He did that . . . no. He . . .

**RL:** Or just the first year that the trees bloomed . . . or produced fruit.

**SM:** You have to do that . . .

**RL:** At the beginning of each year when they bore the fruit?

**SM:** No. Seven years.

**RL:** Seven years.

**SM:** You couldn't use the fruit for seven years. Is that right?

**BM:** No. No. The first years they can't eat the fruit.

**SM:** I may not have this . . . I may not be too accurate but I . . .

**RL:** Well, I . . .

**SM:** I may not be accurate in that.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** I thought it was seven years. Maybe I'm wrong.

**RL:** Where did he take the fruit? Did he give it to . . .?

**SM:** I think he gave it away.

**RL:** Just to some charity or . . .

**SM:** To neighbors or . . .

**RL:** To neighbors, okay. And so . . .

**SM:** But he . . . what he did is, while he was learning himself, we children were learning.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And we learned to like planting and seeing things grow and working with the ground. And I remember that we planted our own gardens. We planted our own vegetable gardens. And I was just a little girl. And Papa gave us a certain amount of money to plant each row and hoe them. And then it was up to us to sell the things that we planted. And so he bought . . . Papa bought us a little wagon, I remember, and we would put the things in the wagon. And don't forget that this was at White Bear Lake that this land was. It was at Mahtomedi.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And so there were a lot of wealthy people who would come for the summer, come to their summer cottages. And so we thought that that . . . Papa thought that would be a good place to bring those things and sell it to these people around the lake. And then with the monies, he said, we would save the monies and buy our first piano.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** And he would add whatever we didn't . . . well, of course we couldn't accumulate money enough for a piano. And so we learned . . . we had a little business training there besides learning how things grew, and learning that we had to work to earn money.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** So there . . . Papa was wonderful with knowing how to raise children.

**RL:** Now you were the oldest child then.

**SM:** I was the oldest.

**RL:** So you must have been about what, ten years old?

**SM:** Yes, I was ten, or . . .

**RL:** And then you had . . .

**SM:** Maybe ten or twelve.

**RL:** Younger . . .

**SM:** I had . . . all the rest, of course, were . . . my sister was fourteen months younger. My brother was two and a half years younger.

**RL:** Could you tell me their names?

**SM:** Yes. My sister's name was Leah, and Alfred is my brother. And Joe, Sternie . . .

**BM:** And Sarah.

**SM:** And Sarah.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And Leah has since passed away.

**RL:** Yes.

**BM:** But Joe passed away first.

**SM:** And Joe, my brother, passed away. And my brother was a graduate of forestry at the University of Minnesota. And had his master's and he was on the honorary society there, he was elected to the honorary society. And because I had . . . my father's nephew was head of plant pathology at the University of Minnesota with Dr. [E.C.] Stakman. And he thought that my brother should go on to get his Ph.D.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And so this is the growing process still going on.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** His like for growing things and studying plants. And he thought that he should go to the University of Hawaii.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** And learn about sugar plant diseases and the growth of sugar plants.

**RL:** Oh. You mean like sugar cane?

**SM:** Sugar cane.

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** And so Joey did go to Hawaii. He got in the University there. And he worked on . . . they did experimentation with plants on farms.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And he contracted a disease. They thought he had influenza. And at that time it was sub-acute . . . what was it? Cardio . . . a cardiac condition. And so he was familiar with all . . .

**BM:** It was like leukemia.

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** And they immediately flew him back to the States, and flew him back to Rochester.

**RL:** Yes.

**BM:** [Unclear].

**SM:** Rochester, Minnesota. And . . .

**RL:** The Mayo Clinic.

**SM:** The Mayo Clinic. And then they brought him home to my parents and he passed away at twenty-six.

**RL:** Oh, that's . . . that was a loss.

**SM:** And so that was the first loss. And then I mentioned before that my sister passed away about six years ago.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And she was a cancer patient.

**RL:** So then your father . . . gardening was his hobby in the farm out at Mahtomedi.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** And he was, at that time then, running . . . was he back at the Capitol Hebrew School?

**BM:** No.

**SM:** No. He had . . . he had left it.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** He had left it because . . .

**RL:** When he went to Duluth.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** And then he came back . . .

**SM:** And he came back and he . . . I should have . . . I think I've skipped there. He came back because Saint Paul wanted him back again.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And then while he was there, and this drains a person's strength when you're a teacher and as particular . . . particularly a teacher of all boys.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** [Chuckles] And so his . . . he was not too strong. And he wasn't too strong a man to start with.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** But while he was out at White Bear Lake, he became involved in working for the elderly.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** And the Jewish Home was just starting at that time, and they had a little place on Wilkin Street. [The Jewish Home for the Aged at that time was at 75 Wilkin Street in Saint Paul.]

**RL:** That was . . .

**SM:** I think it later became the Little Sisters of the Poor.

**RL:** Yes. That's over on the old West Side of Saint Paul.

**SM:** I don't know just where the location was, but . . .

**BM:** Yes. It's just off of West Seventh Street.

**SM:** Wilkin Street, I don't know where . . .

**RL:** That's right. Yes.

**SM:** Yes. And then Papa lectured for the Home. They were trying to collect funds.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** And so he would go out and we would take care of the little gardens. And he still kept up his study of botany and horticulture.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** At the University.

**RL:** Now . . .

**SM:** And I didn't mention my cousin. Did I mention Dr. Moses Levine? He was known all over the world.

**RL:** No, you didn't. If you want to talk about it, go ahead. We can interpolate here. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Can you?

**RL:** Oh, yes. [Chuckles] I'll take you back to the garden in a minute.

**SM:** Ah, well he was the one . . . yes.

**RL:** [Chuckles] But tell me about Dr. Levine.

**SM:** I meant to mention Dr. Levine. Dr. Levine was recognized all over the world. The United States Government sent him to . . . he went to Rome, he went to Israel. I don't know where else. I have some letters . . .

**RL:** Well now, was he the one who worked with Dr. [unclear] here?

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** Yes. Okay.

**SM:** He was my father's nephew.

**RL:** Yes. And he was a horticulturalist. Is that a specialist in, what, plant pathology?

**SM:** Yes. Oh, yes. Wheat rust was his . . .

**RL:** Wheat rust.

**SM:** Wheat rust was his specialty. And . . .

**RL:** Well, now then when you were working those garden plots out at Mahtomedi, were you living out there? Or did you . . .?

**SM:** Well, we had a house that [unclear].

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** We did have. Yes. Papa bought a plot of ground and we bought a home there.

**RL:** Oh, you lived out there.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** Okay. Because I was going to ask how you got back and forth.

**SM:** I wrote about that.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** No, we had a . . . yes. I'm sorry, I didn't mention that to you. I wrote about Slingerlands Place, which it was. It was the home of people who lived there by the name of Slingerland.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And Papa bought adjoining property.

**RL:** I should interpolate here that Mrs. Marver has written the story of her mother and father called . . .

**SM:** I think I wrote about it.



**RL:** “Mamma and Papa’s Legacy.” And she has also written an autobiographical sketch. And those copies will both be available with this tape.

**SM:** And with it.

**RL:** Oh, here is an essay called “Slingerlands Place.”

**SM:** That that’s the place that we lived. And I wrote, yes. I was so entranced with little specifics, and so I thought I’d write it in a shorter form from what . . .

[Buzzer rings]

**SM:** . . . from what the legacy was. “Slingerlands Place” deals with the woman who lived there. They were socialite people. And the house was a beautiful home. But it was neglected.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** Because these people hadn’t lived there for about three years. They were socialites at East Shore Park, White Bear Lake. And the woman had committed suicide.

[Background conversation between Bernard Marver and another man, then the sounds of a door shutting.]

**SM:** And her husband was a [unclear]. And the house, presumably, by the people, the townsfolk, was haunted. So when my father and mother went looking for a place to live, this place was available.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** And it was cheap. It was hard to . . . they couldn’t sell it.

**RL:** So did they buy it then or get rid of it?

**SM:** And I wrote about it.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Sure they did.

**RL:** Okay. And so that’s where you lived.

**SM:** They didn’t make much, in those days, if you were connected with any public job.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And this was working for the public when you were running a Hebrew School. So they didn't have much money.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And they made it into a garden again.

**RL:** And . . .

**SM:** It was a beautiful . . . and our gardens, yes, so and then he bought adjacent land, which was cheap at the time.

**RL:** Yes. And I bet your mother did a lot of canning and a lot of preserving.

**SM:** I tell about that in . . . in this article.

**RL:** Okay.

**SM:** And I tell about us going out into the woods on maiden ground.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** And we had hoes with us, and gunny sacks and baskets, and trudged through the woods. There were snakes, garter snakes. And we used to pick wild raspberries and strawberries. Today land is so uprooted, and it's not what it used to be. And they have pulled . . . they pulled down trees. And anyway, I tell about picking the hazelnuts and drying them, and picking the berries, and how Mamma used to make preserves and label all the bottles. I remember seeing them in the basement.

**RL:** And did you have to help? [Chuckles]

**SM:** Yes, we did have to help.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And I learned to do things and help in the house. And so when I was about fourteen years old, I took a course in canning. And I don't know who gave the course, but I took a course in canning. I remember a girl by the name of Arnola Galick [sp?] at the time. And Arnola Galick was enrolled in that. Have you ever known her?

**RL:** No.

**SM:** Her father . . . her grandfather was Judge Galick in Saint Paul.

**RL:** Ah, in Saint Paul. Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And Arnola's mother was not Jewish. She was a very interesting girl. And not . . . she was shy, terribly shy. And I guess her folks thought that taking these little courses that were given now and then would bring her out with other people.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** So Arnola and I were chosen as the best canners at the end of the year. And we had a booth out at the State Fair.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** And we showed people how to do cold pack canning. It was just starting. Where you put the bottles into the wash boilers.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And I was the spokesman, and Arnola did . . . we both did, we both did the work, but I was the spokesman. At the time, I was only about fourteen years old.

**RL:** And . . .

**SM:** And I . . . my background in the first place was really helping Mamma can and liking that. And my Mamma never would let me cook as such. She wanted to do all the cooking. But she always let me make the desserts. [Chuckles]

**RL:** What did you make for dessert?

**SM:** I don't remember. Everything I could get ahold of in recipes. [Chuckles]

**RL:** Pies and cakes and . . .

**SM:** Oh, yes.

**RL:** And you don't remember where that class was? Whether it might have been at the Y or at the . . .

**SM:** Might have been. I can't recall.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** I can't recall at all. It was one of these little special classes that are offered by . . .

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Maybe peoples' churches offered classes in different things.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm. Could be. And so now your father had become a health care administrator, as it were, because he was the first director of that new little Jewish Home for the Aged.

**SM:** He wasn't the first, but he was one of them.

**RL:** Yes, that the Saint Paul Jewish community was establishing.

**SM:** Yes. And . . . yes.

**RL:** Which is now evolved into the Sholom Home, which is on Midway Parkway in Saint Paul.

**SM:** That's right.

**RL:** Yes. Then he only did that for what, two years?

**SM:** For *years*.

**RL:** Didn't you go back to Duluth though?

**SM:** We went back somewhere in between there, and I don't know. The second time we left Duluth . . . did I say I was ten?

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** I know I was ten. I had my tenth birthday.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And I remember that my mother was pregnant with my baby sister.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** She's a little more than ten years younger than I am.

**RL:** Yes. Yes, and . . . but now that was the first time you were in Duluth?

**SM:** That was the second time we were in Duluth.

**RL:** That was the second. Oh. The second time, okay.

**SM:** Yes. They kept vying for Papa.

**RL:** Yes. So then when you came back to Saint Paul when you were ten. Then you stayed in Saint Paul.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** And that was when he became the administrator of the Jewish Home for the Aged.

**SM:** Yes. That's right. But before him there were . . . I don't know. At the time he was at White Bear . . .

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** Mmmm . . . no, see, I'm very vague there. I don't know.

**RL:** Yes. Well, now . . . that must have been a big commute.

**SM:** Oh, Papa used to go by . . .

**RL:** Horse and wagon?

**SM:** No.

**RL:** Or did they have the streetcar out there already?

**SM:** No, they had a streetcar.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** They had a streetcar. That was the Mahtomedi Streetcar that would go from Seventh Street.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And I remember that it went past [unclear] Grocery, which at that time was a great big . . .

**BM:** That's where I used to see them almost every other day.

**SM:** Standing on the corner.

**BM:** [Unclear] had a corner store right there.

**SM:** And going by streetcar. And the streetcar would take Papa to about four or five blocks from . . . maybe further, from where we lived. And so I remember when we used to meet him at the streetcar and we used to carry lamps. Those lanterns.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** Gasoline lanterns. Not gasoline, they were . . .

**RL:** Because they didn't have paved streets and streetlights.

**SM:** What were they?

**RL:** Kerosene?

**SM:** Kerosene lamps. Gasoline would explode us, wouldn't they?

**RL:** [Chuckles] Yes. Yes. Kerosene.

**SM:** Yes. We used to carry . . . and I remember swinging the . . . and I was always afraid of the dark.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** Always. I still don't like . . .

**RL:** But you . . . you children would know when the streetcar was going to come with your father.

**SM:** Mmmm-hmmm. Oh, we had the schedule.

**RL:** And so you'd walk over there with your lanterns.

**SM:** And we'd go and we'd walk there. Yes.

**RL:** To meet him.

**SM:** I wrote about that, too.

**RL:** Yes. And this was summer and Minnesota winter.

**SM:** Yes. And Papa would go out to North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin. He went way up into Canada for the Home. It was the Jewish Home of the Northwest.

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** At the time.

**RL:** Oh, and so patients came from . . .?

**SM:** When they first started . . .

**RL:** Residents came from all those areas, too?

**SM:** Oh, yes.

**RL:** Oh, and so

**SM:** They had people from the Dakotas. But their main reason was to get funds for an elderly home because there was none in the Northwest.

**RL:** Yes. And this was . . . well, there were other homes, but there was not another Jewish home.

**SM:** No.

**RL:** That would provide a Jewish environment.

**SM:** No. Kosher. Kosher.

**RL:** And kosher food. And in those days you did not have the state or the county picking up part of the cost.

**SM:** Oh, no.

**RL:** It had to be paid by the community or by the residents.

**SM:** Well, for a long time after, they would not accept, because they did not feel that they were collecting good money and enough to build and enough to operate a good home in later years.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And they didn't feel that they wanted to expose any of their funds . . . the amount of funds that were available to them to the community, which you have to do in case you're a beneficiary.

**RL:** Yes, of either . . .

**SM:** And they didn't want to do that.

**RL:** Yes. A beneficiary, you mean of . . . agency of the United . . .

**SM:** Of the Community Chest and . . . yes.

**RL:** And Community Chest, which is now the United Way.

**SM:** That's right. And so for a long time they held out.

**RL:** Yes. I see. Yes.

**SM:** And they invested wisely.

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** Is this on now?

**RL:** Yes. Your father was doing that. He had a . . .

[Background conversation with Bernard Marver can be heard]

**SM:** My father was doing that. My father still remained on the board.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And then in what year did Papa become superintendent?

**BM:** Superintendent? 1934.

**SM:** I had it here.

**RL:** Superintendent of . . .

**BM:** [Unclear].

**SM:** Of their . . . they could not get a superintendent for the home.

**RL:** Hmmm. Well now, until this . . .

**SM:** They had . . . oh, I'm skipping again now.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** The Daughters of Abraham, who were a strong force in first starting the home and collecting money, so now we come to women in the community.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And who in those years were even . . . should have been recognized, because they collected pennies and nickels and dimes and went . . . had different affairs to raise money in those days. And they opened . . . they bought a little property on Saint Albans, I think it was, and Grand Avenue. And it was an old house, and they renovated it, and I think it held twenty beds. And they took patients into that home. Oh, not patients . . .

**RL:** Renters.

**SM:** I would say to people that belonged in nursing homes.

**RL:** Yes.



**SM:** They did used to refer to them as patients, and that was not pleasing to my father. My father felt that it was a home, it was their home. And the name 'residence' should be applied, and not patients, and not nursing home people.

**RL:** Yes. Now this was a second institution or it was the same one that he was affiliated with?

**SM:** It was sort of an arm of it.

**RL:** An arm of it. Yes.

**SM:** It wasn't . . . it . . . they were the same women.

**RL:** But they opened up at another location.

**SM:** But they opened . . . yes.

**RL:** And was he the administrator, you said?

**SM:** No, he wasn't the administrator there.

**RL:** Oh. Okay.

**SM:** He was the administrator after they opened the new home. He was there when they laid the cornerstone of the new home. And that's on Midway Parkway.

**RL:** Ah. And then he went on to be administrator of that.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** I see.

**SM:** And he was there for nine years. And my mother was the matron. At that time they had a matron of the home.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** They always worked together, my father and mother.

**RL:** And she was active in the community, too, in addition . . .?

**SM:** Mamma was not as . . .

**RL:** And working in addition to having all you children?

**SM:** No. She wasn't as active in the community. No. She didn't have time to be.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Although she was a member of Hadassah, she was a member of the Council.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** Such as most families, most mothers are or were.

**RL:** Because what I'm looking at is the remarkable career you have had in community activities in both the Jewish community and in the general community. And I think you came by that . . .

**SM:** I think it rubbed off on me.

**RL:** . . . very honestly.

**SM:** It rubbed off on me, it really did.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And I think Papa's being such a good speaker, I find that everybody in our family are very fluent.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And that probably is because he paid so much attention to our bringing up . . .

**RL:** Editing your letters and . . .

**SM:** Yes, and editing our letters.

**RL:** And I would imagine . . .

**SM:** And in general, I'll tell you something about . . . that was very unusual, I guess. Because when I related this to other people, they said they had never heard of this before. When we had our meals, and sat around the table, we could not speak. My father wouldn't allow us to talk at the table.

**RL:** Why was . . . ?

**SM:** When we were eating, we were eating. And we should have respect.

**RL:** Did he talk?

**SM:** No.

**RL:** No, nobody spoke?

**SM:** No. And if we would laugh or if we did talk, and you know children sometimes look at one another when they're youngsters and they start to laugh. And we would do that. We'd look at one another and we'd start to laugh. And Papa would send us away from the table. We'd have to go to our room.

**RL:** And not have your dinner?

**SM:** No, we wouldn't have our dinner. So anyway, at the end of our meal, we would each have to recite a prayer. And I still remember that little prayer, thanking the Lord for our food. And it was in Hebrew.

**RL:** And then . . .

**SM:** And then that wasn't all of it. We had to be excused from the table by my mother and father.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** Mamma and Papa, am I excused from the table?

**BM:** Oh, I remember that.

**SM:** And they would excuse us from the table. Not until then could we leave it. It wasn't like today; you grab a sandwich and run.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And I . . . I really wonder. They must have been the most patient people, but that's the kind of attention they gave [unclear] to the children. And the little prayer remains in my memory. I'll never forget it, because I had to . . . I think until the time that perhaps I was fourteen years old or thirteen years old, that went on.

**RL:** But you . . . you did get to talk to your father and mother at other times.

**SM:** Oh, mercy. Goodness, yes.

**RL:** When you walked home with him from the streetcar and everything.

**SM:** Oh, yes.

**RL:** But mealtime was for mealtime.

**SM:** Mealtime was for eating. No. No, there wasn't any . . .

**RL:** Yes. And then did you all go sit down in the . . .?

**SM:** We went on the porch. We had a porch swing.

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** And we used to sing. My mother had the most beautiful voice. And my father . . . and they used to sing old songs. And I remember we had a swing. Mamma used to get into the hammock and we used to sit on the porch swing and swing, the children. Sometimes we'd play that that was a streetcar. And somebody would stand up on the big porch swing and pump and call off streets. And then I remember one time Papa taught us about the stars. And Mamma taught us the little poem *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*. And Papa pointed out the different planets, the different stars to us. And that's how I learned to tell . . . Papa was quite an outdoor man, he just loved the outdoors.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And we learned that. Also we....

[Recording interruption]

[Tape 1 Side B]

**SM:** ...with Mechanic Arts High School.

**RL:** Every one of you attended Mechanic Arts High School then.

**SM:** And in those days, you met in the study hall, in the auditorium. And when roll call, when they called the roll, our last name was Kissin. So everybody, yes, everybody would laugh. You'd hear them . . . it . . . every day it was repeated: Sternie Kissin, Slovie Kissin, Alfred Kissin. And you know how cruel kids can be sometimes. Well, that happened to us.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** And a lot of times in school I remember that because my name was Slovie, they called me Czechoslovakia and called me all kinds of nicknames in school, in high school.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm. And so then you graduated high school about . . .

**SM:** 1922 and a half.

**RL:** Yes. And then did you get a job?

**SM:** I never worked [unclear].

**RL:** When did you and Bernie get married?

**SM:** In 1924.

**RL:** In 1924.

**SM:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**RL:** And what had you done then between high school and when you and Bernie were married?

**SM:** I studied . . . I didn't . . . I started school.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** But I . . . oh, I probably attended very little. Maybe one semester.

**RL:** At the University of Minnesota?

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** Yes. And . . .

**SM:** And that was all.

**RL:** What did you study at the University? Who did you study with?

**SM:** With Dr. Phalen at the time.

**RL:** Dr. Anna Phalen?

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Did you know Dr. Anna Phalen?

**RL:** Oh, yes. Yes. Then you must have been studying writing?

**SM:** Yes. I was studying . . . I was interested in writing, I was interested in English. And I was interested in Latin because Papa had taught Latin.

**RL:** Oh, in addition to Hebrew.

**SM:** And I took four years of Latin in high school.

**RL:** Ah. In high school, okay.

**SM:** Not at the U, but I was interested in Latin. And Papa was always . . . Papa thought that . . . I think . . . I wanted to go on the stage.

**RL:** Had you . . . ?

**SM:** I had been in all . . .

**RL:** Had you performed in dramatic productions?

**SM:** Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Everything I could get into.

**RL:** And how did your family react to that, your wanting to go on the stage?

**SM:** They didn't like it. My aunt had a sister in law who had been on the stage. And she was . . . she married my aunt's brother in law and they were both a team on the [unclear] circuit.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** And she was a beautiful dancer and singer. And he was a comedian and a dancer.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** Helen and Abe Friedland. And they . . . and Helen . . . And I took dancing lessons when I was a youngster, I took from Marie [unclear], when she first came here. And she thought that I had possibilities. And I sang. And I spoke . . .

**RL:** What kind of dancing was this?

**SM:** I took acrobatic dancing from her and I started ballet but I was a little bit large for [unclear].

**RL:** Yes, what . . . what school did she teach at?

**SM:** She didn't teach at any school, she had her private school, and it was on . . . it was up above a drugstore or bank, I remember. And we used to go . . . I remember climbing up a long, a lot of stairs, and Marie [unclear] knew me up until . . . when was it? Oh, I would say ten years . . . no, more than ten years ago. Maybe fifteen years ago, twenty years ago, I had a chance to work with her. After she retired from giving her own private dancing lessons, she taught at Central High School in the capacity of teaching dancing to the youngsters who were taking part in those musicals that they give in the high schools.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** Like *Oklahoma!* And *High Button Shoes*.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And so my son Joe, who is very talented, and had the lead in every one of them in high school and college, took lessons from her.

**RL:** Oh, I see.

**SM:** And so she had remembered me. But she taught him only for the dancing, the acrobatic dancing that he had to do in some of the things. But we wanted him to take ballet, because he's very graceful.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And he *is* handsome. He's the one that . . . did I tell you he's the one that went to Hollywood?

**RL:** No.

**SM:** Oh. He trained with . . . he trained with Maidie Metzger [sp?] for years.

**RL:** Oh, she was the drama coach.

**SM:** No, no.

**RL:** Wasn't she?

**SM:** She was a singing.

**RL:** Singing coach. Okay.

**SM:** She was a vocal. And he had a beautiful voice. That's how come he had . . . he was Woody in *Oklahoma!* In *High Button Shoes* he had the lead, and I don't know. Every single musical they gave at Central.

**RL:** Yes, but now we're . . .

**SM:** From the time he was a sophomore.

**RL:** We're getting ahead of ourselves.

**SM:** Oh. And [unclear].

**RL:** We haven't even gotten you married yet. [Chuckles]

**SM:** Oh, alright. [Chuckles]

**RL:** Go back a ways.

**SM:** Alright.

**RL:** You were hoping to go on the stage. Did this handsome young Bernard come along and take you away from that? That dream you had?

**SM:** He took me away from everything.

**RL:** Tell me about it.

**SM:** My father and mother were planning on sending me to New York.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** At the time, my uncle was in New York. My aunt and uncle; the one who was an author.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And he was head of Talmudical Lore at Stephen S. Wise's Seminary in New York.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And [unclear] had come here to visit. That was my father's sister. And she said, "By all means, have Slovie come to New York and go to school there." And that's what my family were planning for me.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm. And then what happened?

**SM:** And then my father got an idea that maybe he would go in business. And leave . . .

**RL:** What kind of business?

**SM:** Well, listen to this. It was just . . . the cash and carry stores were just coming into being.

**RL:** You mean general merchandise like . . .

**SM:** Cash and carry. They used to be charge and deliver.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** In groceries and different things.

**RL:** Ah. I see.

**SM:** Or peddlers used to come. Well, anyway. And Papa, at the time . . . I think there was a man by the name of Zeff [sp?], Mr. Zeff. His son lives in Saint Paul or Minneapolis.



**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And his son was a forester with Joey, too. Do you ever remember a Zeff boy?

**RL:** I'm thinking . . .

**SM:** Who graduated from the agricultural campus?

**RL:** A Leonard Zeff . . . very possibly. Yes. I'll have to look it up.

**SM:** Anyways, Zeffs and Kleins [sp?]. The Klein markets.

**RL:** Mmmm. Okay.

**SM:** Alright. So Papa knew the man real well. And they got together and Papa said, "I will rent a store and buy carload lots of groceries." So Papa had a bent, too, for business.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And probably inherited that from his parents. And so he bought a store. And he bought a store that had been run by Dr. Meyers [sp?] and his family on Edmund and Farrington in Saint Paul.

**RL:** And this was a little corner store?

**SM:** And it was called Frogtown.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm. Yes.

**SM:** And then I was a senior in high school at that time, I guess. And Papa thought all these . . . the Zeff Grocery, the Klein Grocery's; they located in different places so that they would not be in competition.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And they would sell . . . they would make up their price list, what they were going to sell, the different merchandise. And they could undersell anybody because Papa bought in train carload lots.

**RL:** I see.

**SM:** And I remember this store had a terrific basement for a warehouse. And we had stacks and stacks of cartons, boxes of canned goods, and I don't think they handled any fresh vegetables of any kind. Flour and sugar in hundred pound sacks. Well, anyway, Papa . . . here Papa had this big family of children, and he thought it would be well if after school we all worked in the store,

and worked as a family. So we put hundred-pound sacks of sugar into five-pound sacks and ten-pound sacks.

**RL:** Oh, yes.

**SM:** And that's how . . . that's the business training that I got when I was growing up. And Sternie worked behind the counter. She was about this big. She couldn't even see above a counter. Doing things. So we were . . . all of us worked in the store after school.

**RL:** Did you like working in the store?

**SM:** And Papa made a lot of money. More money than he had ever made being a rabbi. And so he was able to purchase properties. He bought about four properties at the time, or five properties. And he bought a great big store on University and Farrington. And it was Levinson's Grocery [sp?] and it was a well-established . . . it had been there for years. And Papa bought the building. It was a big brick building. And he went in there. And between the time . . . oh, I did . . . I never did go there . . . When Papa sold the store . . . no, I'm getting ahead of my story again. My father used to make out . . . and Sternie brought this. [Rustling paper noises] Sternie was telling these cousins of ours from Houston. When my father made out a flyer with the prices, you would almost think it was a literary thing the way he separated the herbs and the spices and the sugar.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** But he had great big flyers, and we had boys distribute the flyers for blocks and blocks around. And people would come with wagons and load their little red wagons. And I remember that. Well, it so happened that Bernie's father . . . Also, that was the way of advertising in those days. Bernie's father had clothing stores downtown in Saint Paul.

**RL:** Now . . .

**SM:** He didn't have one clothing store, he had about three.

**RL:** Now at that time his name was Bernstein.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** It was Bernstein.

**RL:** And what was the name of the clothing stores that his father had? Do you remember?

**SM:** Bernie? Bernie?

**RL:** Oh, we can check that with him later.

**SM:** Anyway, and he had clothing stores out of town, too.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** And they were very . . . they were wealthy. I don't know. He had made a lot of money. When he first came here he was a peddler, his father.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** Anyway, and they lived high off the hog. Too high.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** You probably will . . . do you know Esther Gross in Minneapolis?

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** They own the Gross Brothers . . .

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm. Yes.

**SM:** Sam Gross.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Died.

**RL:** Yes. And she was . . .

**SM:** Esther is his sister.

**RL:** Oh, I see. And of course this was before the Depression. This was . . .

**SM:** This was . . .

**RL:** A period of real prosperity.

**SM:** A little bit. Yes.

**RL:** In the 1920s.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** It seemed as though everything was growing and would just keep on growing.

**SM:** Yes. It was. It was.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** The Depression came after, shortly after, after we were married.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Or . . . it was coming along during the time.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Anyway, Bernie was overseeing a group of boys that were delivering. He had the car and he took . . . he brought boys into Frogtown to deliver. And he knew my father because he had seen . . . my father taught him.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** When he went . . . or Papa was principal of that Hebrew Free School.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** So Bernie knew him. And he stopped into our store, and I had just come home from school. And I was doing something in the store. And he came in to get warmed up.

**RL:** Ah ha. And there you were.

**SM:** And there I was.

**RL:** How old were you then?

**SM:** I was a senior in high school. And then I was practicing for the *Mikado*, I had . . . I was one of the three little maids from school in the *Mikado*. My sister was one of them and I was one. And so he came to see the *Mikado* at Mechanic Arts. He went to Central [High School]. And another young man that was . . . I guess he was puppy love for me. [unclear – sounds like Aba] Abramovsky had a beautiful voice. And he had a trained voice. And [Aba] was not in this. [Aba] had already graduated from high school. But the two . . . I don't know what they . . . they clashed. Because Bernie wanted . . . Bernie came to see me and he wanted to take me home, and [Aba] wanted to take me home. I well remember that.

**RL:** They didn't clash physically?

**SM:** And Bernie had a car.

**RL:** Oh . . .

**SM:** And [Aba] would have taken me on the streetcar.

**RL:** Oh, dear.

**SM:** So I went home with Bernie. [Chuckles] But after that, he invited me to . . . I forgot what the name of the . . . some organization dance. Men's Jewish organization dance. And I went with . . . I didn't want to go with him. I didn't like him.

**RL:** Oh. But you did go with him?

**SM:** But my father and mother said go. Because I was . . . I was not very popular. I was very shy.

**RL:** Mmmm. Now that was contradiction; to be very shy and to want to go on stage.

**SM:** Yes. I was shy when it came to . . . to men.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm. And your parents said . . .

**SM:** Go ahead.

**RL:** [Chuckles]

**SM:** Yes. And Mamma said, "You go." She said, "You accept that invitation," and my father, too. They said, "After all, you know, he's Jewish, too, after all." And we who had lived in a neighborhood where there were no Jews. Dinkytown.

**RL:** Wasn't that . . .? Wasn't that unusual?

**SM:** There were . . . no, not Dinkytown.

**RL:** Ah, Frogtown.

**SM:** Frogtown.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** They were all . . . almost all Polish and German Catholic.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** It was just like a little ghetto.

**RL:** Yes. How did you . . .? Did you live there just because the store was there or how did you happen to be living there? Do you know?

**SM:** We lived there because the store was there.

**RL:** Oh, I see. Okay.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And there was a house attached to the store.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** The Meyers . . . do you remember Dr. Tom Meyers [sp]?

**RL:** Mmmm, no, I don't.

**SM:** Well, that was before your time.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Dr. Meyers and then his sister taught at Mechanic Arts High School.

**RL:** And they lived in that neighborhood, too?

**SM:** No, they had the store.

**RL:** Oh, they had the store.

**SM:** They owned the store. My father knew them.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And they wanted to go out of business, but it was an entirely different type of store.

**RL:** Yes. If you . . . to get to that, to get away from your courtship for just a minute. Do you remember what hours the store was open? What kind of schedule you kept when you and Sternie worked in the store?

**SM:** It was open early . . . early, and it was open every night.

**RL:** And you don't remember anymore what time? You just know . . . was it open on Saturdays and Sundays, too?

**SM:** It was open on Saturdays.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** In a non-Jewish neighborhood.

**SM:** Not Sunday.

**RL:** How did your father cope with that as a Jew of very . . . a very educated Jew, and a man who had taught in Hebrew Schools, Free Schools?

**SM:** Well, I told you he was very liberal.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** When people cannot . . . when I tell some of the Jewish people that I know, today, or I have known through the years, they don't believe me.

**RL:** And so . . .

**SM:** They say, "Your father was a rabbi." Well, my father *was* a rabbi. He was a reform . . .

**RL:** But he was not an orthodox rabbi. He was reformed.

**SM:** No, he was not.

**RL:** He was of Sephardic descent.

**SM:** He was liberal.

**RL:** Yes, and very liberal.

**SM:** And so . . . and they can't understand how I was ever brought up in that kind of a . . . a strict orthodoxy and the way I'm thinking now and talking.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** But it's not so at all.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** That's what Sternie tried to explain to my . . . this cousin of ours that was here from Houston. And she, too, has been raised in the same atmosphere that we . . .

**RL:** Yes. And so then the store would be open on Saturday and it would be closed on Sunday.

**SM:** And my father smoked on Saturday.

**RL:** Yes. That was unusual, too.

**SM:** He smoked his pipe.

**RL:** So they told you, “Go out with this young man.”

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** And so you did.

**SM:** And when we went to this dance, [unclear] or something, I don’t know what the organization was.

**RL:** Not [unclear].

**SM:** [Unclear] I think was . . . was there a [unclear] club?

**RL:** Club? Oh, yes.

**SM:** [Chuckles] Well, that’s the club, I guess.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And I remember we had to have programs.

**RL:** Oh, yes.

**SM:** And so your man who was taking you would get the dances.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And so Bernie lined up the dances and [Aba] of course wanted a couple dances.

**RL:** And they would sign their names on the program.

**SM:** Yes. I have a program from my high school, for the prom.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** Junior-Senior Prom, and the names.

**RL:** That’s a treasure. [Chuckles]



**SM:** And so, anyway, when Bernie . . . the reason I'm telling you about this program, Bernie danced with me, and he had the other dances filled. But all of a sudden, he got terribly warm and he wanted to walk me around the block.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** So we walked. And when we came back, [Aba] came up to Bernie and he said, "Where were you? I was looking for Slovie. It was my dance."

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** So Bernie kept doing that type of thing and discouraging, like taking me home from the *Mikado* and then taking me home . . . and then not letting him dance with me.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And I disliked him for that terribly. But afterwards, he kept calling me. And [Aba] stopped calling me. And [Aba] went away to Northwestern.

**RL:** University.

**SM:** To go to school. Then when he came back on vacation, and I was already engaged to Bernie, he asked me to come down there and go to school. And I almost . . . but my folks wouldn't let me. They said, "Heavens, no. Nice girls don't do that." Go away like that. My father was very strict.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** He said, "No, nice girls don't do that. You're not going down there because you have a boyfriend there." So anyway, we went together for two years. And I was just taking classes is all.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Because I knew I was going to get married. And I wanted a family.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** So we married December 28, 1924. And John was born November 1925.

**RL:** Ah ha.

**SM:** So after John was born, I waited until . . . oh, he was about . . . and I kept reading all the time, I read everything I could get my hands on. But he wasn't very old, and I started to go to school.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** And ever since then, up until the time that . . . every chance I had, I have taken . . . I have taken everything I could possibly get my hands on that I would like. I didn't take chemistry; I didn't take things that I didn't like, or math. But I took every other kind of a course.

**RL:** Oh, I can see from your resume here you have attended . . .

**SM:** And so . . . oh. Oh, yes.

**RL:** Carleton [College].

**SM:** Not Carleton. No, I never went to Carleton.

**RL:** And Macalester rather. Macalester [College] and Saint Catherine's [College of Saint Catherine].

**SM:** Sioux Falls, when we lived in Sioux Falls.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** With Augustana [College].

**RL:** Now tell me about that. You were married and you had the one baby. And then did you have live-in help, is that how you could attend classes?

**SM:** You know, then you could get a girl who went to school.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And all you had to give her was two and three dollars a week.

**RL:** Yes. And board and room?

**SM:** Mmmm-hmmm. So that's how I managed. And I had some wonderful girls that were just like family.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm. When did you . . .? Did you travel with Bernie when he started managing the stores in small towns?

**SM:** I had to live with him.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** I had to live there.

**RL:** Okay.

**SM:** I couldn't live . . .

**RL:** He would not just go out to supervise the store, you would move . . .?

**SM:** He managed the store.

**RL:** Yes. Okay.

**SM:** They would move us . . . they'd pay the moving. We'd move from one town to the other about every year.

**RL:** Now was this still his family business or had he gone to work for someone else?

**SM:** No, it was K & K, Kutcher's [sp?]. They had a chain of stores in South Dakota.

**RL:** I see.

**SM:** And in part of Minnesota, too. I think they had a store in Pipestone. And . . .

**RL:** And these were men's clothing stores?

**SM:** No, general stores.

**RL:** General stores.

**SM:** Everything. Groceries, clothing.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** Even those great big blocks of salt that the cows lick for . . . [chuckles] Everything under the sun.

**RL:** What communities did you live in? Do you remember?

**SM:** Yes. Surely. I lived in Beresford, South Dakota. I lived in Canton, South Dakota. I lived in Menno, Freeman, Salem, Parker . . . no, Bernie lived in Parker alone. That was his first. And I stayed in Sioux Falls because he wanted to see how it would work out. Where else? And then I was teaching in Menno, South Dakota, Salem, first, and then Menno. And I got a job unaccredited. At the time they were hard up for teachers. And so I went into the Menno school. No, I went into the Salem school first. And I taught at a Catholic School, because I taught speech and I did their plays, and the nuns wouldn't . . . couldn't appear on the stage, you know.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** Or do anything with dramatics in those days. So I was the only layperson in the school. And Father Webber [sp?] was our priest of the parish. And Bernie played all the [unclear] for the *Messiah* at Christmastime on . . . at every little town we lived in. And he taught. Besides, we couldn't make enough money for what they paid managers of general stores. The Jewish men who owned the stores were the ones that made money hand over fist.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** Even in the Depression days.

**RL:** Yes. Now Bernie played the violin? Yes. And . . .

**SM:** Bernie . . . Bernie played with the Symphony. Did I tell you? Bernie plays first violin.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And then he played with the Center Symphony, he played with the Chamber Music in Saint Paul, that group. And I, we were both on the board of the chamber. Did I have that on . . .?

**RL:** No. No.

**SM:** It doesn't make a difference. Yes, and Bernie had belonged to the musician's union for sixty years.

**RL:** Which . . . you mean he played with the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra?

**SM:** No, he played with the symphony here, the Saint Paul Symphony.

**RL:** Ah. Oh, the Saint Paul Symphony.

**SM:** We had Saint Paul Symphony.

**RL:** Okay.

**SM:** And then we had the Center Symphony.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Well, Bernie played with them all the time.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And Bernie studied with some of the foremost teachers.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** A Straka, Emil Straka's father. Who is one of the finest teachers in this part of the country.

**RL:** Yes. [Unclear] name.

**SM:** And also Waldo . . . oh, what was his name? Another man who we had the opportunity to meet again in Menno. He had been a divorced man from Saint Paul and a drunkard. He ruined himself. He was one of the finest instructors in the country. I forgot what his name was now. Anyway, he wandered around the country. He had fallen off the stage of the Minneapolis Auditorium.

**RL:** Oh, dear.

**SM:** In a drunk stupor. Do you . . .? You don't remember that. That was before your time.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And then he became a gutter drunkard. And he wandered through the country. Where did we meet him? In Menno, South Dakota. And he was married to a Mennonite girl that was about twenty years old, and he was a man of about sixty.

**RL:** Was that a Mennonite community?

**SM:** There was a colony right outside of Menno.

**RL:** I see. Ah ha.

**SM:** A real strict colony where they . . . they have big bosses. They aren't allowed to have any . . . just monies for candy when they come into town with the boss.

**RL:** Yes. Yes.

**SM:** My brother wrote his thesis on that, on the Mennonites.

**RL:** Interesting.

**SM:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**RL:** So then, here you were [unclear].

**SM:** And I taught there.

**RL:** Yes. Well now, this was about what year?

**SM:** This . . . I don't know. Some of the papers I have given dates of . . .

**RL:** Okay.

**SM:** His father moved . . . let's see. Bernie had been working for his father.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm. Yes.

**SM:** Did I tell you that?

**RL:** Yes, you had said that he had originally been working, yes, for his father.

**SM:** When we were first married. His father told my father that as long as his father was well off like that, Bernie didn't have to worry, and he shouldn't worry. Because my father was concerned.

**RL:** Oh, yes.

**SM:** We were young and Papa thought I was way too young to get married.

**RL:** How old were you?

**SM:** I was twenty. I was going to be twenty. I was nineteen in April and I was married in December.

**RL:** December, yes. And Bernie was . . .?

**SM:** And Bernie was twenty-one.

**RL:** Ah. Yes.

**SM:** And so . . .

**RL:** And so then did he have a falling out with his father or just decide to . . .?

**SM:** No. They spent money hand over fist and they were going bankrupt.

**RL:** Oh, I see. And so then he got a job with . . .

**SM:** And they had a great big home. And two maids in their home. Well, you know how some of these Jewish people lived after they . . .

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And they were people who . . . and they still do. They're people who worship money.

**RL:** Yes, and I think that was . . .

**SM:** You know, there are a lot of our . . . *He* worked hard.

**RL:** There was a great deal of that, particularly in the 1920s.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** But I . . . I was used to a different . . .

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Money . . . I never knew whether we had money or we didn't have money or . . . And many times, I imagine, when my father taught or was principal, he didn't have money.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** My mother had to scrimp and save, and sew.

**RL:** Yes. And you did all the gardening and the canning.

**SM:** Yes. See, Mamma had to do all of those things where his mother didn't.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** She didn't do any housework . . . I never saw her scrub a floor; I never saw her wash a dish.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And so when we were married about . . . oh, John was just a baby. His father could no longer keep him in the store.

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** And his father said, "I'll find . . . we'll find a small store for you somewhere." So they went to Faribault.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And all kinds of things that . . . I shouldn't be telling you this, but I . . . I am still embittered over a period of sixty-some years. All the things that he couldn't sell in his store in the city went to Faribault. And so we had this little start. And we rented a place. And I had never lived like that in my life. We rented a place that was over a family's home. It was three little rooms upstairs. And I remember there was a little hall. We went up the back way and we went up the stairs. I had to keep my chifferobe as you came in, we barely had enough place to squeeze through to get into our kitchen. And I had a hot plate to cook on.

And John was a baby, and we didn't know anybody there. Bernie was trying to open this little store that was next to a hotel, I think, in Faribault. And I used to go down, I used to take the baby in the [unclear] and I used to go down every day, and I think we were about ten blocks from the store. And I used to put the baby in the back of the store in the [unclear]. And he used to just sit in the [unclear] and I used to help Bernie in the store. And I didn't know anything about . . . What did I know about men's clothing?

**RL:** And how long did you stay in Faribault then?

**SM:** Not very long. But we . . . we did meet . . .

**RL:** Less than a year.

**SM:** No, it was about two years, I think.

**RL:** Two years.

**SM:** We met the most wonderful people. John was teething while we were there, and he went into convulsions. And we were all alone there. We didn't have anybody. And we called a Mrs. Schochet, Ray Schochet [sp?]. She just died recently. You probably know of the Schochet family.

**RL:** Oh, yes. I know Frank. Well then, because there was a Jewish community in Faribault.

**SM:** Just the Himmelsteins [sp?] and the Schochets.

**RL:** And that was it.

**SM:** And I didn't know it. Yes.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** I met the Himmelsteins. Ethel Himmelstein.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And you knew her sisters in Minneapolis, the Sussmans.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Anyway, Ray Schochet was a . . . we never knew her, we never saw her before. Bernie called her. She came over to our house. And she was just like a mother. She took John to the hospital, and he had convulsions from the teething. I know first she put him in a . . . I remember putting him in the sink, filling the sink with water, and she put him in the sink.

**RL:** Warm water.



**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Anyway, and I was . . . I was so young and inexperienced. What did I know?

**RL:** Yes, you were what, twenty-one, twenty-two?

**SM:** Just a kid. Yes. So then we . . . we lost everything we had there. We had just a few things left, so we went to Canton, South Dakota. Bernie found a place there. Somebody said South Dakota is a good place to go for business, and this was a good town.

**RL:** And so then he became the manager of the store there?

**SM:** No, he didn't yet.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** It was our . . . it was still little merchandise that we had left.

**RL:** Oh, okay, from your own store.

**SM:** That we moved there. We had gone broke in Faribault.

**RL:** Yes. Instead of coming back, instead of coming back to Saint Paul.

**SM:** I *wouldn't*. I was so prideful.

**RL:** Oh . . .

**SM:** Stupid. Stupidity, I felt all my girlfriends are going to school and some of them are married and they married rich fellows. And although money hadn't that much value, but I would . . . How would I have to live? I had nothing. And my parents used to send us gifts. They didn't want us to think that they were keeping us, but on birthdays or different occasions, holidays, they'd send gifts and packages. And Mamma would bake things and send them through the mail. Anyway, in Canton, we were only there a short while. And it was Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur, and we went into Sioux Falls for the holidays.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** And we met some people there, the Silvertons [sp?]. And they were so wonderful to us. They invited us to stay in their home. People were much closer in those days, and especially Jewish people helping Jewish people.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And so we stayed with them. And while we were there, we . . . we hadn't quite started . . . we had . . . we got our store in order, but we didn't look around enough to see if everything was alright in the store. And the radiators had not been connected. And this was a great big store building, an old, old shack of a building. It was a brick building, and we lived in the back. There was a great big storeroom in the back. And I took all my furniture and I divided it into rooms, like the kitchen part, and the living, and the dining room, and I lived in back of the store. It was a cold day that Yom Kippur or Rosh Hashanah, I don't remember. They started to heat the building. It had two stories of apartments over us.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** All the steam from that boiler and that heating plant went up into our store and over all our furniture.

**RL:** Oh, no.

**SM:** And we got a call—because we had left our number with somebody—that our place was on fire. And Canton was an all Norwegian and Swedish community, and we were Jews.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** That's the only time I ever felt any anti-Semitism. So the Jews had a fire. But they didn't. The steam of the water . . . it formed water and it was coming out of the front of the door and running down. And our plate glass windows in the front of the store were cracking from the steam. And when I saw it . . . we went right back in a big hurry.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** I think it was in the middle of the night or . . . When I saw it, I had hysterics. And woolen underwear that we used to sell shrank up to about this big, woolen size.

**RL:** Oh. [Chuckles]

**SM:** About this size. Everything was ruined. And we had no insurance.

**RL:** Mmmm!

**SM:** No nothing.

**RL:** Your stock was ruined and your furniture, your personal belongings from home. What . . . what did you do then?

**SM:** Then this man that was so wonderful to us, Mr. Silverton, Ada Silverton, she was a surgical nurse in the McKennan Hospital. She had the most interesting background. I have a book that she sent me about two years ago. She was raised in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, on a big ranch.

And she was a member of one of the Jewish families that settled there. And they lived so primitively. Had you ever written about that?

**RL:** Read about it, yes. Yes.

**SM:** Well, I have the book of Ada's family, and pictures of her family, and they were really the leaders. The Torah was in their home.

And when this happened to us, we gave our furniture to be refinished. We didn't have any money. And what . . . what little we could scrape together—I think Papa then sent us a check—we paid down to the man who was going to refinish everything and fix everything up. Well, anyway, we didn't get quite enough money together, and he wouldn't give us back our furniture. But this Mr. Silverton had a big jewelry store in Sioux Falls. And he said to Bernie, "You come in, I'll make a job for you. I don't need anybody. I've got enough men." And he taught Bernie how to . . . I don't know, do some work on watches, repair watches.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** So the little bit that we earned, and we lived with him, for I don't know how long. And that's where Bernie went out to try to get a job somewhere, and K & K stores were hiring managers in different towns. And they hired him for Parker, South Dakota. And I stayed on with John and—he was [named] Marver then—with him, at Ada Silverton's house. [Transcriber's note: Slovie's first son was named Marver Bernstein, which they later changed to John Lyle Marver when the family changed their surname from Bernstein to Marver.] And we didn't pay them one cent. They were so wonderful. Well, I've made up for it through the years with her children, and they stayed with me when they came to go to the university here. Anyway, what was I going to say?

**RL:** You were talking about Bernard going out with K & K, the . . .

**SM:** Oh, yes. Then he was there for just a trial, just to get accustomed to their way of doing business. And he was working with another manager, showing him just how they conduct their business. Anyway, from there we went to Beresford, and I went then.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And we were fortunate in that we were able to rent the downstairs of a lovely home there at the edge of town. Somebody whose estate had just been closed, and I think she was living upstairs or had her furniture upstairs. And we had the whole downstairs, so it was a nice place. Then from Beresford we moved to Salem. In Salem, we were fortunate in that we were able to get into a beautiful home. The nicest home in Salem. And the woman who owned the home was a Mrs. Orth. Her son was a concert pianist and he went all over the country playing. And they had a baby grand piano; they had some lovely things that she could not take upstairs in the home, so she left them downstairs. And so we had enough furniture to furnish that home with our . . . we finally did get our furniture back. We had . . . Joe Silverton sued this man and did get our furniture.

[Recording interruption]

[Tape 2 Side A]

**SM:** ...know Jewish poor people.

**RL:** We have to get past what they call the [unclear] on this . . . the tape.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** So now these were wealthy people who were renting out their . . . part of their homes.

**SM:** Oh, yes. Oh, the ones in the small towns?

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Oh, yes. These were people who had raised their family and who were very wealthy. They weren't . . . they weren't [unclear], they were non-Jews.

**RL:** Now they were renting out their homes why? To a young couple like you.

**SM:** I don't think they . . . I don't think Mrs. Orth intended to rent out her home.

**RL:** Yes. But she did let you rent it.

**SM:** But she let . . . yes. And I don't know. Somehow I got in with the school system.

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** And I met the woman who was superintendent of schools in the county. And she organized . . . it was then the Sodakwoteans [sp?], which is South Dakota Women Teachers Organizations. And I was a charter member.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** And so she said in order for me to get into the education system in South Dakota, she wanted me to go to Lake Andes as a delegate. I have a picture of . . . in my pictures of me and all these old looking schoolteachers, about fifty of them. [Chuckles]

**RL:** And what did you do with little John while you were doing this? [Chuckles]

**SM:** I had a girl.

**RL:** Ah ha.

**SM:** I had a wonderful girl. Yes.

**RL:** Okay. Then by now you were doing better financially?

**SM:** No. I had a farm girl. In the small towns, we had wonderful girls.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Girls would come in to go to high school.

**RL:** Ah, and they needed a place to live.

**SM:** And they'd live with us and they could cook.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And one of them that I had even turned back my bedding at night.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** She was so wonderful. And I think we only paid about three dollars a week.

**RL:** I remember that in Mitchell, South Dakota. But then you had come a distance already, if you could pay three dollars a week.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** And . . .

**SM:** Yes, but I was being paid.

**RL:** Oh, for teaching. That's right. Do you remember what you earned teaching?

**SM:** No.

**RL:** No, you don't. Okay.

**SM:** I wish I could. It was a drop in the bucket.

**RL:** Oh, I'm sure. And especially in [unclear].

**SM:** Because when I looked up some of the clippings, and I see that a lunch at a luncheon was twenty-five and thirty-five cents . . .

**RL:** Yes. Ah, let's back up a minute. When did you change your name from Bernstein to Marver?

**SM:** Oh, we didn't change our name until we came back to the city after we'd been in South Dakota. And John was then about fourteen . . . no. No, he was about twelve years old.

**RL:** Okay. Because you . . . you said a few minutes ago that by now he was John Marver. But that was when he was in the teens. When were your other two sons born?

**SM:** Oh. I had . . . when I was teaching in Salem, it was Salem or Menno. I taught in the Catholic School in Salem. You couldn't teach if you were pregnant.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And you had to notify them. And so I had to notify them immediately. So I was gardening and doing all kinds of things. Reading and playing the piano. I had a baby grand piano.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Well, that was at . . . that was in Menno that I had the baby grand piano. Well, anyway . . . oh, dear.

**RL:** Well, what year was he born then? That would help locate it.

**SM:** No. None of the living ones were born then. I had to go into Sioux Falls. I was supposed to have . . . I think I told you about this story.

**RL:** Yes, you didn't tell me on the tape. A little insight into medical care. And . . . yes.

**SM:** Oh.

**RL:** Would you . . . would you be willing to tell that story?

**SM:** Yes. Silvertons were wonderful to us again.

**RL:** You were . . .?

**SM:** I was in my ninth month. I had been coming into Sioux Falls to see a Dr. Stern who was a specialist, an OB specialist then. And Dr. Stern wanted to do a caesarean.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Because he said, "And I'll do it now, because I'm waiting to go to Europe. My family is wanting to vacation with me, and we have our trip all planned." And he said, "I'll do a caesarean because you're past nine months." And I wouldn't do it. I was young and foolish, I guess. I was afraid.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And I said, “No.” I said, “I’ll have this baby naturally.” And it . . . John was nine years old.

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** And I said, “No, I’ll have this baby naturally. I don’t want . . . I had him, and I didn’t have any problems when he was born.” So Dr. Stern turned me over to another doctor, Dr. Billingsley in Sioux Falls. And I went . . . and Ada Silverton took me in. I stayed with her for a month. I was in my tenth month.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** And Ada used to walk me. And she was so wonderful to me. And I went into the same hospital where she was surgical nurse. And in the meantime, another doctor, who was a friend of Dr. Stern’s and head of medicine at Vermillion . . . Do you know where Vermillion University is?

**RL:** Oh, yes. Yes.

**SM:** Well, anyway, this Dr. Perkins said that if he were in town at the time that I would deliver, that he would handle the case, because it would be interesting to him. He wanted to handle my case. So into the tenth month, I began to labor, and Ada took me to the hospital and called Bernie. I was in labor, and in and out of the delivery room about three or four times. I labored for four days that time. Three or four days. And I remember they used . . . every time, because I used to ask a lot of questions then, too. And they used wooden stethoscopes, they used every kind of stethoscope they could get ahold of, because sometimes they thought they heard a child and then again they didn’t think they . . . but the baby evidently was living. And they did an episiotomy, I told you.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And they mangled the baby’s head.

**RL:** Oh, [unclear]. Yes.

**SM:** And so . . .

**RL:** Because they used forceps to . . .

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And almost killed me. And that’s when I had uremic poisoning. And I had phlebitis. And they didn’t think I’d live. And I told you how the nuns broke it to me when I awakened.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And they were so wonderful to me.

**RL:** Yes. But if you would tell that again now.

**SM:** About them standing around my bed?

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Yes. And they looked . . . they were all . . . I thought they were angels, because in those days nuns that were nurses dressed in white. Their habits were all white.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And some of them were so pretty. Beautiful women.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And all I did was turn my head and look at one of them and she said . . . I think it was Mother Superior, and she said, "Mrs. Bernstein, you were brave. You're a brave woman, like the daughters of Israel."

**RL:** And I think you also said when you were talking about this the other day that you were so close to death . . .

**SM:** I was.

**RL:** You felt that you . . .

**SM:** That if I ever . . . I promised, I said . . . I made a promise. I said, "If I ever live through this, I am going to do everything I can to help other people."

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** Bernie, what were the stores? What were the names of the stores that your father . . .? Do you remember? The men's stores that your father had? Clothing stores.

**BM:** Yes. Saint Paul Clothing Store. He had one on Madison [unclear] Mankato. He had about six stores.

**RL:** And he called them the Saint Paul Clothing Stores?

**SM:** Did he call them all . . .?

**BM:** Saint Paul Clothing [unclear] yes, I think . . . Ely, Minnesota.



**SM:** I knew he had . . . they had a lot of stores.

**RL:** Outside the Saint Paul area.

**BM:** About half a dozen of them.

**RL:** Yes.

**BM:** He had his brothers running them for him. Three of them. Let's see. Meyer [sp?] ran Mankato. And . . . who else did it? Meyer and Sidney [sp?].

**SM:** He had other help, too, didn't he, Bernie? A lot of other help.

**BM:** Well, he had . . . naturally, he had helpers.

**SM:** And Bernie ran . . . and Bernie was at the store with him, at the big store in Saint Paul.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm. Yes.

**SM:** And ever since, all the time that Bernie went to high school, ever since he was a little boy, he worked in the store.

**BM:** I should have been taking violin lessons.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**BM:** If he'd have let me.

**SM:** His father wouldn't let him have a violin.

**BM:** If they'd have bought me a violin when I wanted it, I was five years old. I used to cry every time we passed Simonsen's [sp?] store.

**SM:** [Unclear].

**BM:** I wanted that violin in the window. They wouldn't buy it for me. It was for my [unclear] learning, you know. But I may have been a [unclear], who knows? And been able to . . .

**SM:** He loved old music.

**BM:** . . . to support the whole gang of them!

**SM:** [Chuckles]

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** Bernie loves music. He's . . . and he really . . .

**BM:** So my uncle Henry gave me an old ten dollar violin for my bar mitzvah.

**SM:** [Chuckles]

**BM:** And I started taking lessons then. And *then* I started practicing every day for maybe three, four hours, you know. But it didn't help, you know. It made me a symphony man, maybe, but not a virtuoso. [Unclear].

**SM:** [Chuckles]

**BM:** [Unclear] parents can do for you.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** Bernie, that . . . you don't . . .

**BM:** And the more I practiced, the more I was mad at my folks.

**SM:** [Chuckles]

**BM:** Oh, ay-yai-yai.

**SM:** They did so much for the daughters in the family.

**BM:** Yes.

**SM:** To dress them properly and have . . . in their home they had musicals and teas. When we were . . . almost starving.

**RL:** Yes. People . . .

**SM:** You probably have come in contact with that.

**RL:** They always . . . they always think they're doing what's right.

**SM:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**RL:** I think we're going to have to break for lunch, but before we do, could you . . .?

**SM:** Ooh, it's one! It's almost one!

**RL:** Yes. Would you mind telling me though, about when you changed your name?

**SM:** Oh, how . . .

**BM:** Well, it was our name.

**RL:** Marver?

**BM:** Marver was the name in the old country.

**RL:** Oh, I didn't know that.

[Rustling noises]

**SM:** Marver was their original name.

**BM:** But when they came on the . . .

**SM:** That salad . . .

**BM:** When they came at Ellis Island . . .

**RL:** Yes.

**BM:** And then they met the relatives. That's a [unclear] name; you better use another name, because you'll never get along with the Jews with this name, with Marver. So . . .

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** Was that from the party tray, Bernie?

**BM:** Yes.

**SM:** Oh. It's cabbage and potato salad, I . . .

**BM:** So that's the way it was until we changed it ourselves in 1941. Because we had the Marvers in Chicago, for heaven sakes.

**SM:** Their family in this country were Marvers. That's their family name.

**RL:** And only your father's group, part of the family called themselves Bernstein.

**BM:** Yes, [unclear] you know, the [unclear] was a [unclear] of the Sons of Jacob in 1881.

**RL:** Now was this a Marver then or a Bernstein?

**SM:** Bernstein.

**BM:** They came over.

**RL:** This was a Bernstein.

**SM:** No, my father is the one that told us to change. Because we didn't change until we had our sons.

**RL:** All three of them?

**BM:** No, two of them.

**RL:** Two of them.

**SM:** Two of them. And we . . .

**RL:** So that was about what? 1940?

**BM:** 1940.

**SM:** And Bernie . . . Bernie had gone back to study in accounting. Not until . . . not until we had our family.

**RL:** Ah ha.

**SM:** And my father said, "With the name Bernstein, you'll never make a go of it." He said, "Why don't you change it back to your name of your family? So your sons can carry the name of your . . . the original name of your family." And so we were the first ones that went to court. And John was how old then, Dad?

**BM:** Sixteen.

**SM:** And kids at sixteen are pretty bold. And you met John.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** John said, "I don't want my middle name." I said, "Let's have it Lyle. Lyle Marver. That's a nice sounding name." He said, "No. I like John. I like the name of John." The judge said, "Do you people approve of that?" And I said, "Well, if he would be happy with it, give him the name he wants." He said, "Well, I want to be called John, and I'll use the name of Lyle in my middle name."

**BM:** So the judge says, "John Lyle. Now it's your name."

**SM:** John Lyle.

**RL:** But his name has been John?

**SM:** Ever since.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Since he was sixteen. But I keep calling him Marv and Marver, I can't help it. That was his first name. Marver Bernstein.

**BM:** I call him Marv anyway.

**RL:** Oh, I see. Okay.

**SM:** He was named that when he was born.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** And he was named [unclear] Marver Lyle.

**RL:** Okay. And certainly couldn't be Marver Marver.

**SM:** No! [Chuckles]

**RL:** [Chuckles]

**BM:** [Unclear].

**SM:** But Marver Bernstein, who is a first cousin of Bernie's . . .

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** He never changed his name and he became president of Brandeis [University].

**RL:** Now here you were, coming back to Saint Paul. And, you know, it's very common to . . .

**SM:** You know why I came back to Saint Paul?

**RL:** No.

**SM:** Because after I had lost that child, we went back. And Bernie was still with K & K. And he finished his contracted year there.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And I said, "We'd better go back home." And my parents said, too, "You'd better come back. John is ready to be bar mitzvahed. And you'd better come back where there's some Jewish people."

**BM:** [Unclear].

**SM:** We immediately had him put in Hebrew School. He didn't like it here *at all*. He said the Jewish people that . . . the boys that were in school, they talked sing-songy, and they talked different, and they acted different. He so disliked it.

**RL:** He really didn't like Saint Paul.

**SM:** No. *No*.

**RL:** After living in small towns in South Dakota.

**SM:** With small town people. But . . .

**RL:** Yes. I . . .

**SM:** Bernie, you didn't . . . that doesn't look very appetizing!

**RL:** Oh, that's okay.

**SM:** He put it away. John and he put away the cheeses and the . . . Where's the party rye?

**RL:** But . . .

**SM:** Oh, the tray from Lund's is so . . .

**RL:** But I was going to ask you though, because we know that there was a great deal of anti-Semitism in Minneapolis. And there was much less in Saint Paul. And so it's interesting to hear you say that Bernie's family was saying that as an accountant you weren't going to make it, be successful, if your name is Bernstein.

**SM:** That was my father.

**RL:** Oh, that was your father who said that. Okay. Why did your father feel that way? Do you know?

**SM:** I never knew. I never knew.

**RL:** It's the sort of thing that you would expect to hear in Minneapolis but not in Saint Paul.

**SM:** No, I never knew why. But maybe Papa thought that because it had been the family name.

**RL:** Yes.

**BM:** Yes, there was [unclear].

**SM:** That they should . . . I think there was anti-Semitism, too.

**RL:** In Saint Paul?

**SM:** I don't think my father came in contact with it so much.

**BM:** Yes. Because the first contact I had . . .

**SM:** Honey, where's the bread basket?

**BM:** . . . in 1941, was in Minneapolis.

[Rustling noises]

**RL:** Ah.

**BM:** With the Weismans. The . . .

**RL:** Candy and tobacco?

**BM:** No, no, no. The Banner Bag Company.

**RL:** Oh, Banner Bag. Okay.

**SM:** Bernie was their accountant.

**BM:** Yes. He had a daughter by the name of . . . what was the name? I forgot her name, I'm think it's . . .

**RL:** I'm thinking Adele. I'm not sure.

**SM:** She probably knows.

**BM:** Yes.

**RL:** Adele?

**SM:** Her husband was a druggist.

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** And he died.

**BM:** Her husband was a druggist and he died young.

**RL:** Yes. Now you say the first . . . did you say the first contact or the first contract? I mean, did you set up your own office and do the bookkeeping for businesses?

**BM:** I did my work at home.

**SM:** We had our own. He had his own office . . . oh. Then you did your work at home.

**BM:** I did my work at home for two years.

**RL:** Yes.

**BM:** Then I opened my office in the Hamm Building.

**RL:** I see.

**SM:** Do you know how long he had to go to school?

**BM:** Six years.

**SM:** He had to work during the day.

**BM:** Oh, sure.

**RL:** You went to night school.

**SM:** He had to do almost menial labor besides selling at the U.S. Mail Order in downtown Saint Paul.

**BM:** Weinbergs [sp?].

**RL:** Weinbergs.

**SM:** And we had to move into an apartment building, into a little apartment that his cousin Sam Jacobs owned, on Ashland Avenue. Sam Jacobs gave us half the rent if we would be caretakers. I had to wash . . . scrub the halls, vacuum.

**BM:** Oh, we had a life.

**RL:** Now this was . . .

**SM:** And I was already . . .

**BM:** [Unclear].

**RL:** Now this is what . . . this was during what period? This was through the . . .



**BM:** Well, that was through 1937 . . . 1937 and 1938.

**RL:** That's the period that we commonly refer to as the depths of the Depression.

**SM:** Oh, yes. And so when Bernie was taking down papers and down in the basement, cleaning up things in the basement, he would do this after he came home from his job down at Feinbergs [sp?] U.S. Mail Order.

**RL:** Yes. Now where did he go to night school? He didn't go to the university?

**BM:** [In the background] University of Minnesota [unclear] Saint Thomas College.

**SM:** No. I'm starting to tell you.

**RL:** Okay.

**SM:** He was looking through papers . . . did I tell you about that?

**RL:** No.

**SM:** And he found a catalogue. And in the catalogue he noticed that it said schools for . . . correspondence schools for electrical work.

**BM:** Accounting.

**SM:** And he brought it upstairs, and I said to him, "Bernie, you don't know anything about electrical work." And then he said, "Well, I . . ." I said, "Were you ever good in math in school or do you think accounting?"

**BM:** Well, I took up bookkeeping, naturally.

**SM:** Bookkeeping. So he said, "Yes, I liked that." And we looked through the catalogues. We found a correspondence school for accounting, and Bernie took that accounting course. He scraped together enough money to get that course. And he took that until he was through with it. And then . . .

**BM:** That was a year and a half with that.

**SM:** Then he enrolled in Saint Thomas College.

**BM:** I went on to Saint Thomas College.

**SM:** Night classes. And he went there for six years, and he graduated from Saint Thomas.

**BM:** Well then, of course, the professor was at the university, too.

**SM:** Took a special interest in . . .

**BM:** So I had to go over there for a couple of years, too, you know.

**RL:** Oh. Yes.

**SM:** And then that's when I became pregnant with Bobby, when we lived in that apartment. And I had to stay in bed for six months. And then my parents said, it was summertime and they said, "You go out to the cottage." And they had a beautiful cottage, which they later fixed so that it was a winter home, too. And they said, "You go out there." Well, I went out there. My sister came from Saint Louis to be with me. And I regained health so that I could get up and get around.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And I was even picking raspberries on that land.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Right before I had Bobby. But I had been in bed for six months.

**RL:** Yes. That's wonderful. When you talk about picking raspberries or about farming, you just . . . you light up. You obviously loved that time of your life when you were farming and . . .

**SM:** Oh, I loved . . . Oh . . . oh, yes. Anytime when I . . . when I was a little girl.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And Papa, too. Papa took . . . you know, I told you my father . . . where is that letter? I had a letter from Papa where he tells about taking advanced horticulture.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** At the University.

**RL:** Yes, obviously, that was a talent and an interest that had been in your family, your father's family for generations.

**SM:** Oh, yes. Yes.

**RL:** You said he was a grain trader back in Latvia.

**SM:** His folks were.

**RL:** Yes, his parents.

**SM:** Had a grain brokerage.

**RL:** Yes. Grain brokerage.

**SM:** Yes. Look at . . . do you know this man?

**RL:** [Unclear] Okay. When Bernie graduated from Saint Thomas College . . .

**SM:** Yes, when he graduated from Saint Thomas, I sat down with the telephone and I called and got thirty people that said that they would have him do their tax work. On the telephone! Without them seeing either one of us or knowing who we were. I just told them we were tax consultants. And I got over thirty people for him. And most of them stayed with him all through the years when he was able to open up his own office, move from our house. And I used to do the little detail work for him at home. And then, when he was able to, he moved downtown in the Bremer Arcade. And he had a client there who was in the wholesale jewelry business.

**BM:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And he gave him a little corner of his office. And that's how he first went downtown. And then later on, he moved to the Hamm Building. And while he was in his own practice, and he kept getting clients right along, big companies and people from out of town, too. So while Bernie was there, his professor at . . . the man that was head of the accounting department at . . . what was his name, Bernie?

**BM:** Sevenic. Roman Sevenick [sp?].

**SM:** Oh, yes. Roman Sevenic at Saint Thomas. The men who were ready for . . . to sit for their CPA had to have a year, is it, in training, in practical?

**BM:** Three years training.

**SM:** Oh, practical. That was Bernie's help.

**RL:** Oh. So you took in these . . . it was like an internship.

**SM:** And he trained them. Yes.

**RL:** Ah ha.

**SM:** And he trained twenty-six boys that went out and became . . . They correspond. I think one of them still sends us Christmas cards.

**BM:** Well . . .

**SM:** And they went out and . . .

**BM:** They went out for big jobs then.

**SM:** One of them . . . oh, one of them went out, one of them became . . . he went with the Minnesota Mining . . .

**BM:** And General Mills. He became the accountant for General Mills.

**SM:** And General Mills, the head accountant at General Mills.

**RL:** You weren't training your own competition.

**SM:** [Chuckles] No.

**BM:** No . . .

**RL:** These were people who went into corporate . . .

**SM:** No, they went out into . . . and went out of town and . . .

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** So . . . and all . . . look at all that went before.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Some people just have things handed them.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

[Recording interruption]

**RL:** You're going to tell me about going into business.

**SM:** Yes. You know, Bernie had a client on the campus in Dinkytown, next to the Varsity Theater. You probably just know exactly where that is.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And next to this men's store was a ladies' store, and it was managed by two . . . not . . . it wasn't at first. At first it was managed by an old couple who rented from these people, and they were there for years. And then two young men took over the ladies' store, and they were sons of a man that owned the whole block almost . . .

**BM:** Up near the theater.

**SM:** On West . . . on East . . . What is it? Fourth Street?

**BM:** Yes. [Unclear].

**RL:** That's Fourth Street Southeast.

**SM:** In Dinkytown.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Anyway, we contacted the . . . I'll tell you when we contacted this man that owned the building. This client of Bernie's, who ran the men's store, took sick. And he was ailing and ailing and Bernie had been taking care of his books and his account for a long time.

**BM:** Twenty years.

**SM:** And it was a very lucrative business. Only he sold cheap merchandise. He would buy ties in New York by the gross and he'd bring them back and they all had . . . were defective. So he had, in the back of a store, he had crayons. And he would fill in with the crayons where the . . . and sold ties that he had bought for probably three cents a tie. Well, that was the kind of business that was. And this man made oodles of money.

**RL:** And how did you get involved? [Chuckles]

**SM:** And when he said he was going to sell, my son Joe was on campus at the time. And Joey didn't take studies to heart very much. He was a playboy. He belonged to a fraternity, which was a wrong move we made in the first place. He belonged to the Phi Eps [Phi Epsilon Pi]. And I was a Phi Eps mother. I had plenty of arguments with them. Anyway, Joey would . . . his grades fell, and because Bernie was so well known at Saint Thomas, he'd seesaw between Saint Thomas and between the University of Minnesota. I said, "This can't go on. Let's . . . let's buy the store. Let's you and I buy the store, and have Joey run it. And have other college kids working in it with him." I said, "Maybe . . . maybe we can keep him and maybe he'd feel that responsibility."

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Anyway, we bought the store. And I wasn't going to carry that kind of merchandise that that man carried and I didn't know from beans about men's clothing. So just the little bit that I had . . . you know, when we had the store in Faribault.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** So I said, "Joey, I'll run it with you." So I went over there every single day. I went over to the store. And little by little I got rid of all of his . . . this man's merchandise. And I called up different sales representatives from better merchandise, like Damon sweaters, Damon ties.

**RL:** Oh, yes.

**SM:** Haggar pants. And all name brands. And I carried beautiful sweaters, Damon sweaters. And everything that men's clothing called for. Well, anyway, in about three months after I was in business, Maidie Metzger [sp?], who was Joey's voice teacher, said to Joey one day, "Steve Lawrence is coming to Minneapolis. And I want him to hear you sing."

So she invited me to go with them for lunch. I went with them. Steve Lawrence heard Joey sing. He said to Joey, "You don't belong here. You go to Hollywood. I'll have my agent arrange things for you." Well, he said that in front of Maidie Metzger. And Maidie Metzger knew him real well, because she had been in Washington with the Washington Military Band, is it? Or something, I don't know what it was. But anyway, he had been a guest performer many times with them. And so she got to know him, and she got to know his wife. And so all of a sudden Joey makes up his mind, he's going to do that. He's going to Hollywood. He left me, and he did go to Hollywood.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** When he got to Hollywood . . . I'm straying a little bit now, too, because I have to. When he got to Hollywood, the agent was out of town. And Joey had to get a job. So Joey got a job on Wilshire Boulevard selling women's shoes to real fine customers who would come in, people who had a lot of money. A girl comes in one day, and she had about twelve pair of shoes to be dyed, and this was in her trousseau.

**BM:** [Unclear].

**SM:** And Joey liked the looks of her. She was a beautiful girl, little Jewish girl. And Joey asked her out to coffee. He asked her if she'd come back and have coffee with him. He never got the colors of the shoes just right. He'd always, on purpose, see that they weren't just the right tint.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** So she kept coming back and coming back. And they kept going out to coffee until she broke her . . . she was going to Montreal to be married. And marrying an older, very wealthy man, and she was about . . . how old was [unclear] then?

**BM:** About twenty.

**SM:** And a very loose type of girl.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** And so Joey never . . . never found the agent. The agent was . . . when he got back, he was busy, and he was . . . Joey was running out of funds. So Joey came back home. In the meantime, I was running the business. I had hired boys from the campus. I can't fit pants. Can't take them in the dressing room and fit pants. [Chuckles]

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And so I had about three or four fellows and I had a girl in the store. And I had some of the . . . I had all the athletes. I had all of the top doctors and their wives at the University Hospital. I had the . . . what was his name? Dr. Gold . . . What was that doctor that was a famous cancer doctor, and she bought so much from me?

**BM:** You . . . you can remember. I can't.

**SM:** I don't remember, Bernie. Anyway, he got in some problems.

**BM:** Darn, I can't . . .

**SM:** He got into some problems in Minneapolis. It starts with 'L'. I don't know. Anyway, he . . . another doctor I had that was married to a part-Negro girl from . . . who was . . . her father was a famous doctor down South. They had three little children, and he was from Scotland. They all used to confide in me. And I was . . . I got the name of the store mom.

**RL:** Oh. [Chuckles]

**SM:** And I was selling . . . Carl [unclear] used to come in and he . . . I sold him all of his shirts. I used to order all of his sweaters for him, his ties. Different young men would come in when they were going out to be interviewed when they were seniors and going to go out on job interviews. And I would . . . they would leave it to me to sell them their shirts and ties. I would pick out their shirts and ties that they were to wear and their blazers.

**RL:** Now this was in the 1940s?

**SM:** Oh, dear. I don't have Bernie to refer to dates now.

**RL:** Oh. Okay. Okay. But it was when your son . . . when Joey was about twenty.

**SM:** I was there. No, Joey was more . . . yes, he was.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** That's right. He was about twenty.

**RL:** And he was born . . .

**SM:** And he was born when I was thirty-eight years old.

**RL:** Okay.

**SM:** That . . . you figure for me.

**RL:** So then that puts us into the . . . about 1950s.

**SM:** I'm a bad mathematician.

**RL:** Okay. What was the name of the store?

**SM:** The Varsity Togs.

**RL:** Oh, you were at the Varsity Togs.

**SM:** And I advertised consistently in the [*Minnesota*] *Daily*.

**RL:** Oh, yes.

**SM:** And I made up my own ads and I had them . . . I had pictures of different students that would come in, or doctors buying and me showing them. And I did call myself the store mom. Do you remember that?

**RL:** That was . . . how long were you there? How many years?

**SM:** Five years.

**RL:** Five years.

**SM:** Shandlings [sp?] were our . . . I started to tell you the man that owned the store.

**RL:** Oh. Okay.

**SM:** And I had reason to tell you of that.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** When our lease was up after five years, well I was beginning to have trouble with my back from working so hard. I wouldn't . . . I wouldn't leave the store at noon to go to lunch because I was . . . well, that's the way I do everything.

**RL:** Yes. I've noticed that.

**SM:** If I do anything, I do it thoroughly. Well, anyway . . . Bernie, what years were we in business?

**BM:** From 1965 to 1970.

**RL:** 1965 to 1970. Oh, okay. Yes.

**SM:** Oh, is that from Margaret?



**BM:** Yes.

**SM:** Here's another writer.

**BM:** This stuff you can dump.

**SM:** Hmmm.

**RL:** And so you were in business then from 1955 to 1960.

**SM:** Yes. And when I wanted to get a new lease, Mr. Shandling wouldn't give it to me. And we had fixed that store up. We had fixed up the dressing rooms. We had made a real lovely shop out of it. I used to decorate the window myself. I used to bring furniture from the house and put it in the window, lamps. And my . . . I had a little love seat I put in there. At Christmastime I had a beautiful window. Anyway, he said, no, he would not renew our lease.

**RL:** Mmmm.

**SM:** And so . . .

**BM:** You know why.

**SM:** I went out of business. And I had made a lot of money. Because I sold . . . I bought everything. I used to go down to the . . . that big merchandise building.

**RL:** Oh, yes.

**SM:** When the men would come in with their showings of Damons and Van Heusen shirts and all the different . . . And with Campus Togs, Mr. Thomas, he owns . . . what store is this he owned?

**RL:** And then what was there, Al Anderson or something like that. There was another men's clothing store there in Dinkytown, too.

**SM:** Oh, on the campus. That's right.

**RL:** There in Dinkytown, too.

**SM:** He was my competitor.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Anyway, I would spend a whole day Sunday buying from Campus Togs, and Damon, and the different . . . the different salesmen that would have their showings. And I would buy . . . Bernie used to say I used to buy like crazy, and say, "You're buying way too much."

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** And my store was so stocked, there wasn't room for anything. And . . . because it wasn't that big a shop. Anyway, I used to sell everything I'd buy. Sometimes I'd even be short. And anyway, that's where we got our good start where we were able to invest in different things. And I invested.

**RL:** And so when you had to close up that store, you didn't look for another location then?

**SM:** I wasn't well. Oh, I had to into the hospital.

**RL:** Oh, okay.

**SM:** And I had a tumor on my back.

**RL:** Oh. Oh, you were having a back problem. Okay.

**SM:** I had . . . that's when I had the most serious surgery I think I could have ever had.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** That was . . . I had a tumor on my spine. And they were still looking for another about . . . how many years ago? About four years ago. I went out and Dr. French came down to the hospital. He's retired, but he came down to see me.

**RL:** And . . . but you're . . . you're okay?

**SM:** You've heard of Dr. French.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** He was national head surgeon, neurological surgeon.

**RL:** Oh, okay. Yes, that's right. Do you want to look at that first?

[Recording interruption]

**RL:** Let's go back now a little bit. Back to the 1940s . . .

**SM:** See, [unclear]. And he read . . . I was sick when we had our . . . and he read my report.

**RL:** Okay. Yes. Now we're talking about some of the things you did in the community like you were one of the founders of the Minnesota United Nations Association.

**SM:** No, I wasn't of the . . . no. I said I initiated the Mother's March on Polio.

**RL:** Okay.

**SM:** I was not any founder of the United Nation . . . but I was president.

**RL:** Oh, but you were at one time the president of it.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** Okay. And . . .

**SM:** And I worked for years. I was membership chairman, I was chairman for UN Day; I was UNESCO chairwoman for the county.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** When we sold stamps for Korean children and bought . . . I don't know. I have letters thanking me for all the things that they bought with the monies for schoolchildren who had no schools. They had to sit outdoors and draw in the sand with twigs. And we sent paper and pencils and books and . . . with the stamps. And we went way overboard. And then the children that collected money for UNESCO at Halloween time.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** But all these things that I did, there was always a bitter pill to swallow with it. There was always politics that entered in that soured me so terribly. With UNESCO, the head of UNESCO drives in the countrywide, came to Saint Paul and met with me.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** He told me that the monies that children collect at Halloween time.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** That it didn't make any difference whether they collected it or not.

**RL:** Oh, dear.

**SM:** Because it didn't make that much difference. I said, "Well, what good is it then to . . . for people, all these volunteers that are working, the women that are helping with the drives?"

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** He said, "Well, it teaches the children some sort of responsibility in giving to charity of some kind." I said, "Well, if it does that, but why make so much to-do about it?" And then the UNESCO that we did, the getting the pencils and the . . . He said, "That isn't so much, selling the

stamps.” We sold *so* many stamps. We’d sell books and books of stamps, and worked so hard. And he . . . that was my bitter pill. After we worked so hard.

**RL:** Yes. Yes.

**SM:** And he coming here and telling me that the government is what . . . our national government is what is really providing the funds for it and doing . . . So all that we do, we’re just . . . nothing. I mean, he made me feel that way.

**RL:** And you were looking at it as an educational thing for the children, and as a group contribution.

**SM:** I thought it was wonderful. I thought of it in many different ways.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** And Eleanor Roosevelt used to come . . . she came to . . .

**SM:** She came here while I was . . . she was here in the state a couple times before. I don’t know what, I suppose with a Democratic thing, Democrat things with the government. Because he was . . . she was his right arm.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** Anyway . . . and his legs and his eyes and his ears. She had to go places that he couldn’t go to, and bring him back all sorts of news that he couldn’t gather otherwise.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And goings on in the country. Anyway . . .

**RL:** And did you do a lot of traveling around the state in that . . .?

**SM:** Yes. I traveled a lot. And I traveled to New York, and I traveled to Washington, because I was on Eleanor Roosevelt’s commission.

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** Human interest. Human . . .

**RL:** Human rights.

**SM:** Rights.

[Recording interruption]

[Tape 2 Side B]

**RL:** This is a letter from [unclear].

**SM:** What is it on?

**RL:** To you on the United Nations Rally on April 20, 1954, when Eleanor Roosevelt was coming to speak. And that's when you introduced her, I think, wasn't it?

**SM:** That's one of the times.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** Could you talk a little bit about what she was like and what kind of person she was? Because you . . . you went out [unclear] with her.

**SM:** I wrote something about . . . it's in the basket here.

**RL:** Okay.

**SM:** It's in here. My introduction to her. And then I wrote something for their community center. I told you about that, didn't I?

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And I told . . . I summed it up. Where is that? I summed it....

[Recording interruption]

**RL:** How many times then did Eleanor Roosevelt come while you were working with the . . .?

**SM:** Four times.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** One time, the first time I met her, I took the place of the president. She was disillusioned about something, I don't remember, prior to going to the meeting at the auditorium. And she was a person who was . . . very temperamental. And she refused to come down to the auditorium.

**RL:** Oh, my.

**SM:** And so when I write about this little writing that you just read about my first meeting with Eleanor Roosevelt, I did first meet her backstage in the Saint Paul Auditorium in a small room. And I became acquainted with her while I was sitting there, because she was very easy to talk to. And just as simple as could be. She . . . I thought I was talking to my next door neighbor. And I was a little bit nervous because of knowing the great person that she was, and she said to me, "Don't be afraid of those people." She said, "Franklin once told me they'll not do anything to you."

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** "They're your friends, and they came to hear you, and don't be afraid." She said, "Don't be nervous." I remember she said that to me. And I was, I was trying to cover up I was nervous, and evidently I appeared nervous. But that was my first meeting with her. Then at another time she came for the United Nations again, and she came to speak about her trip to Russia at the time. She had just returned from Russia. And she was going through the country for the United Nations. I don't remember whether it was after the time that . . . was it Gorbachev that . . .? Who was it that founded the [unclear], Stalin?

**RL:** Oh, Khrushchev.

**SM:** Khrushchev.

**RL:** Nikita Khrushchev.

**SM:** I don't know whether it was during that time . . . I can't quite recall. But I introduced her at that time. And that time I was more . . . I wasn't at all nervous.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Because I had already known her and I wasn't . . .

**RL:** She taught you a lesson.

**SM:** She did. And then another time she came for a membership drive, a national membership drive for the American Association. And at that time, the American Association was moving its quarters from Washington, D.C., to New York, to be in the same building, in the UN building.

**RL:** That was the American Association for the United Nations?

**SM:** For the United Nations.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And the American Association for the United Nations is broken up into state divisions. Each state has its own . . . like we had the Minnesota United Nations. Wisconsin would be the Wisconsin United Nations. And each one had their own officers. And each president . . . we were

all elected to our offices. Each president would serve on the board of governors of the American Association of the United Nations.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** Who was represented in the general assembly of countries in the United Nations.

**RL:** Each president of . . .

**SM:** Of every state in the union, of the American Association.

**RL:** Oh, so then you were . . .

**SM:** So that I was on the national board of governors, which brought me into New York to meetings.

**RL:** Ah ha.

**SM:** And in New York, in the meetings, we were allowed, if we were a guest of another person in the New York UN, in the national UN, we could eat in the dining room. Otherwise . . . and I did. I was given that opportunity, too. And I thought it was wonderful, because I saw people of all nations, people in their native costumes. Then when I sat in the general assembly I heard all that was going on in the meetings.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And it was a great builder of an individual. It built . . . I think it gave me a deep understanding of what was going on. That was....

[Recording interruption]

**RL:** You were starting to tell me about . . .

**SM:** I think that the United Nations now is represented by too many people, too many countries, lesser countries that really don't understand . . . I don't care if they do send their most educated and their most knowledgeable people to our country; their wants are so different from what we would sanction.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And they have a vote on everything, and they're so small and they just came into being. It's a different kind of an organization and it has lost . . . it, for me, it's lost most of its power.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And the people that are represented look at things in, I don't know, a different light entirely from what we did years ago.

**RL:** It's a different focus.

**SM:** So I feel . . . I feel so differently toward the organization. And as much time and effort as . . . and I did put a lot of time into it. I used to go over to Minneapolis, the Minneapolis office every single day. And our membership grew so much that we had to hire a secretary. And I had a secretary. I had a woman from Minneapolis who was excellent in organizational work who helped me a lot. Mrs. Brecker [sp?]. Did you ever hear of her?

**RL:** Oh, you don't remember her first name?

**SM:** I wish I did. I always called her by only her first name. And I can't remember. But . . .

**RL:** We'll look it up.

**SM:** It was so long ago.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm. How did you get over there every day? You said before you didn't drive.

**SM:** I went by bus.

**RL:** From Saint Paul over to this Minneapolis office. Where was . . .? Do you remember where the Minneapolis office was?

**SM:** In the Metropolitan building.

**RL:** Oh, yes.

**SM:** And I remember I was so afraid . . . its elevator, it had one of these open elevators.

**RL:** Oh, yes. And it had the central courtyard.

**SM:** Yes. Like a cathedral architecture.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Open, way up.

**RL:** Yes, it was all open.

**SM:** And I went almost every day because . . . they said I was an excellent leader, but I don't know if I was. Because a lot of things I wasn't . . . I delegated things, but I wasn't able to . . . they didn't do things well enough, and I always found myself winding up with taking over what I had delegated.



**RL:** You said that earlier. You said that . . .

**SM:** Oh, did I say that earlier?

**RL:** No, no. What you were . . .

**SM:** Everybody does.

**RL:** What you were saying was that it's very difficult to put together a committee and to work with a committee, because the only way to *know* that it's been done and done correctly is to do it yourself. I think you were . . .

**SM:** But you can't, if you're in . . . if your organization is so large, you can't possibly extend yourself that much. How can you?

**RL:** Yes. Yes.

**SM:** But at the same time, if you do want a job well done, it does fall back in your lap. And you have to do it regardless of how much strength it costs.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And how many hours you have to put into it.

**RL:** Yes. Was that a one-year presidency?

**SM:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**RL:** That you did that.

**SM:** But I was working with the UN all the time for years. I worked in different capacities. I was state chairman for membership, and I was state chairman for a lot of things that had to do with the UN.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And, oh, another time that I introduced Eleanor Roosevelt.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** When she came for membership. I don't know whether I had told you this before. Did I tell you about the press conference?

**RL:** No.

**SM:** I had never done a press conference before. And to monitor a thing like that, I . . . I didn't know anything, and I didn't have anybody tell me what to do. And so when Eleanor Roosevelt came, she addressed the membership, too, the board and those of the members. I sent out letters . . .

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** . . . for them to attend. And then we went down into the Leamington Hotel Auditorium, and here were all these children from different high schools around the state with their little papers. And taking notes on what she was to say. They were going to question Mrs. Roosevelt. And here were men from the newspapers around the state who had come in to get the news for their papers.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** Well, and I was the . . . well, I don't know what you'd call it. She would ask . . . they would ask questions, and then I would repeat the question and then give it to her. And she . . . at one time she said to me . . . the men were asking and a couple women from newspapers around the state. She said to me, "Mrs. Marver, please don't call on them." She said, "Call on the youngsters. I'm more interested in them. They'll get the news. They'll get it all." She said, "I don't have to give it to them." She was very interested in children, in the youth.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And so I did as she said. But I had nobody to tell me . . . no press man to tell me what to do or how to do it. I think she corrected me a couple times in something I was doing, but it was a lesson for me, it wasn't anything that . . . I didn't feel hurt by it. I felt that I was learning.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** But I was very daring. I would go ahead and do things. [Chuckles]

**RL:** Yes. One of the stories you told me before we started the interview, if you don't mind leaving Eleanor Roosevelt now and the United Nations . . .

**SM:** Well, I was still . . . I still . . .

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** But I'll tell you, another time I introduced her in Rochester.

**RL:** Oh. Okay. Oh. Rochester, Minnesota.

**SM:** Minnesota.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** We went to Rochester and she had a meeting. This . . . I don't remember what this was for, it was for the UN.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** But I don't remember specifically what she came here for. But it took place, the meeting took place in the auditorium in Rochester.

**RL:** The old auditorium.

**SM:** And I think it was their largest high school auditorium.

**RL:** Yes. Yes, they've just built a new convention center.

**SM:** That's what I think it was. Yes.

**RL:** But this was the old one.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And I recall introducing her there, because of my position.

**RL:** Mmmm. And did you drive down to Rochester together?

**SM:** Yes. Yes.

**RL:** The two of you?

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** What did you talk about? You and Eleanor Roosevelt, driving the eighty miles to Rochester together.

**SM:** Well, she always . . . she spoke of her family and asked me about different things that I was doing. And I don't know. Other than that, we talked about the United Nations, because she was so wholly enveloped . . .

**RL:** Yes. You were . . . you were two mothers and two wives who were involved in the UN.

**SM:** And she had a secretary with her, too, though.

**RL:** And you were talking about the unusual . . . [unclear].

**SM:** That's right. And she had . . . several times when she came here, she had a beautiful young girl with her that was her secretary. And I met Tommy, her secretary that had been with her for years and years, [Malvina] Thompson. I met her when I went to a regional meeting in Chicago. And I met her at the hotel and I stayed at the Blackstone where she stayed.

**RL:** Oh. Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And Mrs. Brecker was with me at that time and my secretary. And Eleanor Roosevelt asked us to have breakfast with her and Tommy, which we did. And then she took us over to . . . or we went over to the Roosevelt University. And it's mostly blacks there.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And that was right near the hotel.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And we went all through, and she explained things to us there. Which she was, of course, her husband was so interested in the Roosevelt University.

**RL:** Oh, yes.

**SM:** I don't know whether they gave funds. Evidently . . . I don't know. I wouldn't say. I don't know. But most of their students were black.

**RL:** Yes. Now this was the period during which York Langton was involved in . . .

**SM:** York Langton was all the time involved in it.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And York Langton was national membership chairman for the American Association.

**RL:** Okay.

**SM:** And I went with York a couple times to New York.

**RL:** You talked about some other things you did in the community, too. You talked about how you organized . . .

**SM:** The March of Dimes.

**RL:** . . . the first Mother's March on Polio.

**SM:** I did.

**RL:** And if you could tell us about that again now that I have the tape recorder on?

**SM:** Well . . .

**RL:** How you went out and got the money, and who did it, and . . .

**SM:** Yes, when my middle boy, when Bobby was about eleven years old, his pediatrician, we called him to the house. And he said, "I think . . ." The polio . . . polio epidemic at that time was great. It was terrible. It was affecting so many.

**RL:** I know we had one here in the Twin Cities in the summer of 1946.

**SM:** Well, maybe you . . .

**RL:** And I think we had another one in . . .

**SM:** Maybe you pinpointed the . . . I don't know the date.

**RL:** Yes. Later.

**SM:** The date, I think, is on this statuette that I have there. I don't know if it is or not. It should have been. That I was presented with on the seventh year that I did the Mother's March.

**RL:** Okay. "March of Dimes Achievement Award presented to Mrs. Bernard S. Marver for Outstanding Services Chairman of the Mother's March on Polio, 1953, 1954, 1955."

**SM:** Yes. Well, I did it for seven years.

**RL:** I see.

**SM:** And it doesn't . . . oh, it does give the date.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Well, anyway, when the pediatrician came to our house. He said that he thought that Bobby had polio. And naturally, I was very frightened.

**RL:** Oh, yes.

**SM:** He evidently didn't have polio. He had the flu or something that was . . . and I became very interested. And I said, "I wonder . . .?" He said, "I'm not going to quarantine, because," he said, "we're not sure. It doesn't . . . it doesn't look like it, but I think he has symptoms."

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Anyway, I became interested. And as days went on, Bobby was alright. And so the March of Dimes was all over the country then, the March of Dimes.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Mother's March was being done in a lot of the big cities, but it wasn't in Saint Paul. Minneapolis had a Mother's March.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** And so I said, "We ought to have a Mother's March on Polio in Saint Paul." And I called the headquarters and they agreed with me, but they had no funds to organize it or anything, or do anything about it. And so I started to make plans for organizing a Mother's March. And I thought, well, I had been in politics. And I knew about the wards and the precincts and getting them organized, and the caucuses. And I thought, why can't I do it on a plan like that and get women interested, and do calling? And so I got a few friends, a few neighbors together, and we called, and we mapped out the whole county. We got maps. We mapped out the whole county and divided the county into precincts. And we were calling. We called for days. And we got together about five thousand women in the whole county the first time. Oh, maybe it was four thousand. Don't forget, I did this for seven years straight running. And the first year . . . I don't know. We wound up with seventy . . . one of the times we wound up with seventy-five thousand dollars. We took in enormous sums of money. But I knew a little bit about publicizing it. And Amy Birdsall [sp?] . . .

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** Amy Birdsall was so wonderful in publicizing and helping me with it. And several other people, several other contacts I had. Anyway, I thought, now, what am I going to do with monies? And how am I going to do this so that fingers are not pointed at anybody?

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** You're dealing with money, and a lot of it.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** I called the chief of police in Saint Paul and I asked . . . and I told them just what was being planned. He said he would be glad to help all he could in taking the money. Oh, first I called the fire department, because I wanted the fire barns.

**RL:** Ah. As collection points.

**SM:** To deposit . . . depositories for money.

**RL:** I see. Yes.

**SM:** So that the women would not be doing anything with the monies. That they would take them right . . . And two women would go. Not one woman, two women would go together.

**RL:** Now this was a . . . you did this all in what, one day?

**SM:** No, over a period, say, of two weeks planning.

**RL:** No.

**SM:** Oh, calling the . . .

**RL:** But I mean when the women actually went out and did the collection.

**SM:** Oh, that's one night. One night.

**RL:** One night.

**SM:** The lights were turned on. No, but what I'm going to tell you is, when the women collected the money, they would go to the fire barns with the money.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And the fire barns had big sacks and they would put all the monies in sacks and tie them up. The police department would take over after the monies were all collected later on at night, and they would take the monies to the American National Bank.

**RL:** In downtown Saint Paul.

**SM:** And I had made plans at the American . . . and when I say, "I," I do mean myself. I had made plans with the president of the American National Bank to have the money counted there, in their counting machines. Because they had . . . they separated the money and wrapped it and everything by machines.

**RL:** Oh, yes.

**SM:** Anyway, and Bernie and I were there until sometimes three in the morning, until they had all the money counted. And I remember one time, toward the last, we left even at that time of the morning. And this fellow who was one of the bank workers in the bank, and we always thought that he sent us home for a reason. Because we weren't through counting, and it was still . . . it was about three in the morning and we couldn't stay up. We couldn't . . . it was too much for us. So we went home. Anyway, you know, I don't think . . . I don't think a cent went out of that, that wasn't worked hard for, that everybody hadn't worked for.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** I don't know whether to tell this or not. After working for about a year on it, we used to have meetings. I had regular monthly meetings with my workers after I got the group together.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And we would report on how many each one had for collecting. And we would report different things. I wanted to serve . . . and we would meet with the March of Dimes, too, the committee.

**RL:** Ah.

**SM:** There was a man who was in charge of the March of Dimes in Saint Paul, whose name I shall not mention, who used to serve liquor, and used to have women who were socially known in Saint Paul that never worked on these things.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** They were just . . . window dressing.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And their names were mentioned in publicity all the time. These poor little housewives that I had, some of them with great big families, some of them came from the poor districts in the city, from the ghetto, the West Side ghetto. And they worked so hard and they were so wonderful. And I got to know them real well. I was . . . I almost had a quarrel with this man, because I said, "Why can't we just serve coffee and cookies or something like that?" Because they would be just as pleased as having liquor and for the people that he had at . . . they're not . . . they don't drink liquor and they don't come for things like that.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** But he continued to do that. And that was one thing that I was sour on. That was money that was . . . that was supposed to go to the March of Dimes.

**RL:** Oh. He wasn't donating it.

**SM:** And when . . . well, he said he was. He said he got it donated.

**RL:** Hmmm.

**SM:** Well, anyway, when Basil O'Connor, who was national president of [the National Foundation for] Infantile Paralysis.

**RL:** Yes.



**SM:** When he came here, they had the March of Dimes officers, and I was one of them then, had a big dinner in the auditorium of one of our biggest hotels in Saint Paul. They had a whole floor of rooms reserved for them. They paid for all the services. They had butlers, they had valets, they had . . . and they brought a woman who was a president . . . no. She was an actress, and she had had polio years back, but she could walk as good as I could then, and you. And I went up to her suite one day. She used Canadian crutches [forearm crutches] when she was out and seen on the street and out of her hotel room. But when I came to her hotel room to have a visit with her and a little conference with her, she walked without crutches and she was not crippled at all. And this was another thing that embittered me.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And I never was asked to go to any conventions.

**RL:** Hmmm. Yes.

**SM:** And I was working so hard. But I didn't care to go to any conventions. I wanted to go to one place before I left the drive, and that was Warm Springs, Georgia.

**RL:** Oh, yes.

**SM:** I think I told you that. Did I?

**RL:** No. No, you hadn't mentioned that.

**SM:** That was the Little White House of the South.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Where President Roosevelt did so much good for so many people around the world.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And he, himself, having been such a tragic polio victim.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And there I saw polio as I never saw a disease in my life. I saw people brought in from all over the world in iron lungs. And I saw what I wanted to see with my own eyes, that I was working for.

**RL:** Yes. And that made it all worthwhile.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Yes. But there were a lot of . . . there was so much money—that there are in all fund drives—that was not channeled the way it should have been. And I learned something that I never would have known as just a man that wasn't involved in or a woman that wasn't involved with anything, and so closely related to these things.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** I learned all these things. And I don't know whether it was . . . whether it was for my good or whether it didn't do me any good. Whether it didn't do me any good or whether it did; whether I understand human nature better. I don't whether I can call it a plus or a minus. In a . . . after a long life.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Because now, at eighty-one, I'm able to tell those things and tell what my feelings were.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm. But you can look back on the things you accomplished.

**SM:** I can look back on those things.

**RL:** And the good that was done.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** And it's also a commentary on how our lives and our cities have changed, because you're talking about the early 1950s and the late 1940s when you would go out, house to house, in the evening.

**SM:** Yes.

**RL:** Collecting that money, on foot, walking to the fire station to turn it in.

**SM:** And all the monies!

**RL:** And you couldn't do that today.

**SM:** Well, you know what I resent today? And I think we've made it . . . we've made this kind of a world for ourselves. Professionalism is what is so outstanding today. And if you are not a professional person, you don't count anymore.

**RL:** You mean professional fundraisers or professional anything?

**SM:** I don't think . . . fundraisings, fund raisers, administrators, unless you have one degree after the other after your name, there is not . . . Good hearts and people that are bright people, that haven't had opportunities . . . And I've gone to college a lot. I have more than degrees.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** From all that I have learned, because I have never stopped going to school.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And I have studied just what I wanted to go into.

**RL:** I've noticed that on your resume.

**SM:** Oh, yes, and because I've always had a hunger to learn. But I . . . and I don't . . . well, that's one thing. I don't like a staid kind of a program for people who are working for degrees. I think they should work for some . . . the things that they like. They should study, I mean, the things that they like and that they are vitally interested in. Rather than having a set pattern of something that you must take in order to get a degree. And I've always felt that way.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** It's so much lost time and it's so much lost monies if you don't have the monies to spend.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And then I think it's just terrible, after a person works and works, and then they have a board that passes . . . if you're going for your Ph.D.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And they can ruin it for you good if they have it against you, if they don't . . .

**RL:** Oh, dear.

**SM:** If your personality . . .

**RL:** Do you speak from personal experience?

**SM:** I never worked for a Ph.D. but I know people who did who were blackballed. Because maybe a professor who was questioning them didn't quite . . . his personality didn't quite mesh with yours. You didn't like him, you didn't like his looks. And I know people have had to go to I don't know how many years to get their Ph.D. to avoid that group of judges.

**RL:** Interesting.

**SM:** Did you ever hear that?

**RL:** Yes, I have. I . . .

**SM:** Well, and that . . . those are the things that now bother me. And I look . . . and I shouldn't be bothered with them. I should dismiss them. I shouldn't even think of them. [Chuckles]  
Because who am I doing any good to?

**RL:** Well, I think you've done a great deal of good. And I think we're going to have to wind this up for now, anyway. I have . . .

**SM:** I didn't tell you my radio program. I worked for Care.

**RL:** I know. I know. Would you like to talk about that then for a few minutes?

**SM:** I will for a few minutes.

**RL:** There are a number of things on your list here that we haven't talked about.

**SM:** Well, whatever you want to pick out. What you think is interesting.

**RL:** We'll have to get together another time.

**SM:** What other thing?

**RL:** But just tell me about the radio program.

**SM:** Well, I was first asked whether I would be on the Care Board [Sp?] in Saint Paul here, through our . . . and I don't remember which organization it was that was interested in that. Was it when I was president of Inter-Club Council? I think Inter-Club Council. That we took Care on as a project. That's what it was.

**RL:** Mmmm. Okay.

**SM:** And yes. And I took it upon myself to be one of the volunteers in the department store that collected funds for care packages.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** It was one of our biggest department stores at the time. And one day a little man came in and he was a survivor of someplace in Europe. I don't remember. I think it was Greek. And he wanted a package to be sent to a relative that had nothing at all, that was all . . . was it Greek at the time, was it Greece at the time that was so bombed out and . . .? Yes, I think it was. Salonika?

**RL:** Yes. Yes, they had a great many war orphans.

**SM:** Because I remember . . . it was Greek. Yes. And he . . . he could hardly speak English and he was such a humble little man. And he rushed in just as I was closing the booth. And so I kept open for him and he asked me if I speak . . . Oh, yes. He asked me if I speak Greek. I said, "No, I

don't speak Greek." Or if I speak Portuguese. I said no. And finally he got me to understand he wanted a ten dollar package to be sent. So I . . . I took all . . . the address and everything. And then he picked up some pamphlets that we throw away. Mostly people pick them up, you know, and they go past in the department store, and they'll throw them away. And he clung to that little piece of paper, as though it was the most valuable document. And he said to me in his broken English, can he have it. "Can I have that?" And so I even wrote a piece about it at one time, about how valuable that little piece of paper was to him.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And then I thought while I was on this committee, we should have a program on the air, and it would help promote sale of packages.

**RL:** Oh, yes.

**SM:** And so Irma Firestone, at the time, who was on the same committee that I was, and I showed you that picture of Irma.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And a man who came here from New York for Care. And I went to Larry Benson at WMIN.

**RL:** Radio. Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And Larry said he would give public time.

**RL:** Oh.

**SM:** He would give service for that. So every week I would write scripts. And I . . . I contacted people and Irma helped me and two other people that were on the . . . that committee. We helped get people who were in touch with people in Greece.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And people who visited from here, from churches, and who saw them in Greece, receive these packages.

**RL:** Ah ha.

**SM:** And they told stories about the little orphans and about . . . and I interviewed many of the men who were ministers and people who came into the city from other cities.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And told about the different orphanages and the orphans and the care that's being given. And all the monies that go from Care and how they . . . how they're handling it. And I had that program for two years or three years, I don't recall. I used to go down every week. And we . . . our program would go on the air. I had a picture of me on the air with a . . . and I had somebody that broadcast with me. There were two of us so that there wouldn't be one monotonous voice.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And we would interchange with questioning.

**RL:** Yes. Stu [Stuart] Lindman was on that program.

**SM:** And Stu Lindman, he wasn't on the program. He introduced our program.

**RL:** Oh. Oh, he introduced the program.

**SM:** Yes. Stu Lindeman introduced our program, and Stu Lindman is still working with Channel Eleven in Minneapolis.

**RL:** One more thing I think you mentioned that maybe we should just run through before we call this a long afternoon.

**SM:** A session. [Chuckles]

**RL:** And get together again some other time. You talked about being on the board of directors of the Saint Paul YWCA.

**SM:** Yes. Oh, yes.

**RL:** And that created somewhat of a stir in the Jewish community.

**SM:** Yes, it did.

**RL:** Yes. Could you talk about that?

**SM:** It created quite a stir.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Especially in our temple.

**RL:** Ah. That's Temple of Aaron. No. Mount Zion.

**SM:** No, Mount Zion.

**RL:** Mount Zion. That's right.

**SM:** And I had taught Sunday School at Mount Zion for years. I was approached to . . . I had literature here from YWCA telling me how much they had learned from having a Jewish person on the board. But prior to my being on the board, I . . . I met with such criticism, I told it to a few people. And I met with such criticism that I thought, I should go to the Rabbi—Rabbi [Gunther] Plaut at the time. And I thought, I'll go to Rabbi Plaut and I'll ask him what he thinks of it. He said, "Slovie, I think that is great." He said, "I think that's just wonderful." Because they were an organization that . . . the YWCA, its name was Christian—YWCA, Young Women's Christian [Association]. But they were all-inclusive. And he said, "I think that you can give them a lot more than these people realize."

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** And so I was a member of the board. And when they opened their meetings, they always opened with a prayer. And different church members said a prayer that they recited in their church. And when it came my turn, I gave a prayer that I wanted to give. And I told them a lot about the Jewish religion. And so I . . .

**RL:** So you were a spokesperson.

**SM:** Yes, I was. But . . . and I had Rabbi Plaut's permission, which I felt was not called for, really and truly, it shouldn't have been. But in order to smooth feathers . . . but I don't think I ever did. And I think if today if you mentioned that I was on, and I doubt whether there are many people around that remember. But if there are, they would say that I did more for non-Jewish organizations, because I also taught in a Catholic School, and I also worked with the Knights of Columbus, because I did their summer programs for their playgrounds. I did skits and I did all kinds of things to keep their children busy, and I was paid for it. That was a paid job.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And I also was in politics.

**RL:** We will have to talk again about your political activities and about your career as a playwright.

**SM:** [Chuckles]

**RL:** Which we also have to talk about [unclear].

**SM:** Well, that isn't very . . . that . . . I'm not a playwright.

**RL:** Oh, but you did a lot of theater . . .

**SM:** I did write a big play for the Festival of Nations.

**RL:** Ah ha.

**SM:** And I have a copy of it here somewhere.

**RL:** And that was at the Saint Paul Auditorium, wasn't that?

**SM:** That was in the Auditorium.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** Yes. And they even had a man come to produce it from New York.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** And I was very hurt about that, too, because after I had written it and everything, it was out of my hands completely. But I imagine that that is what happens to people.

**RL:** Oh, playwrights have always suffered that way.

**SM:** And I couldn't . . . and they could . . . Yes, and I didn't realize it because I had never done anything like that before.

**RL:** You're smiling while you're saying it though. [Chuckles]

**SM:** [Chuckles] Well, today I can. But at the time I think it was quite a heartache.

**RL:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**SM:** I think it hurt me terribly. It was the first time I had ever done anything big like that.

**RL:** Yes.

**SM:** I had written a lot of skits and I had written a lot of plays for different organizations, but never anything that was that big.

**RL:** But I think it's . . . it's a mother watching her child being . . .

**SM:** Oh, that's a wonderful way . . .

**RL:** [Chuckles]

[End of recording]