Shirley: This is Shirley Brickman. Today is Monday, June 25, 1985. This morning I'm conducting a practice interview with Martha Ringel in her home on Old Ivy Road. Our project is the [Jewish] Women of Achievement sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women and the American Jewish Committee. Martha, can you go back to a summer you recall in your childhood . . . choose a favorite summer at any age . . . what did you do that was special in the pages of your memory?

Martha: I would say the best memories I have were the summers I went off to camp starting at age ten. My sister and I were brought up as twins, so we did everything at the same time although she was over a year older than I. We went . . . the first two years away at camp she was 11 and I was 10 and we went to a Quaker camp in the Poconos. I was born in Pittsburgh [Pennsylvania] and raised in Pittsburgh. Until I remarried, I lived in Pittsburgh for the first marriage through the age of 39. My summers at camp . . . I guess I had five years at summer

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1 This interview was originally made when Martha was married to Herbert Ringel. After her divorce from John Spear, she married Herbert A. Ringel and moved to Atlanta. After Herbert’s death in 1990, she married Joseph Heyman. Joseph Heyman died in 2001. Martha returned to Pittsburgh, where she died in 2010 at age 89.

2 Quakers, or Friends, are an international family of diverse Christian religious organizations. They are theologically diverse. They started in England in the 1940s by George Fox, who was convinced that it was possible to have a direct experience of Christ without clergy. He admonished his followers that they should tremble at the word of God, so they became derisively called the ‘Quakers.’

3 The Poconos Mountains is a region located in northeastern Pennsylvania in the United States. It is about 2,400 miles in area and is in the uplands of the Allegheny Plateau overlooking the Delaware Valley to the east. It is a popular vacation area.
camp. I loved camp because I was an athletic, outdoorsy gal and played a lot of tennis, did horseback riding, did a lot of swimming and diving. The only thing I didn't like about camp was the overnights. I didn't like sleeping outside under the stars because there were too many animals around.

Shirley: Were all the camps you attended overnight camps? Were there any day camps you went to?

Martha: No, I don't remember any day camps. Actually, the very first camp I went to was a Girl Scout camp where I went for two weeks. That was the first summer. We had straw mattresses. I remember hitting my face . . . scraping my face on the bottom of the pool when I dived into the pool. That was traumatic.

Shirley: Do you keep up with any of the friends that you had way back during those camping years? Any of them from Pittsburgh? Have they corresponded with you?

Martha: Not really. I don't remember keeping up with any of the camp friends from Girl Scout or Quaker camp. One girl from Quaker camp I met when I got to college. She was a good friend at camp. She was not . . . this was not a Jewish camp. I think we were the only Jewish girls there. This gal came from New Jersey. I ran into her the first week of college. We were real close friends at camp when I was 10 or 11. The other camp was a Jewish camp in Maine . . . Tapawingo [sp]. One of those friends I see periodically. I had visited her in Baltimore [Maryland]. She still lives in Baltimore and I saw her several different times recently. We met half way between Baltimore and Washington [D.C.]. My daughter lives in Washington, so, I have renewed my friendship with her after 40 years.

Shirley: What are some of the memories of your home life?

Martha: My father [Eugene B. Strassburger Sr.] was a very community-minded successful lawyer. He was very involved with the Temple [Rodef Shalom] mainly. He was president of the Temple. There was a lot of involvement in the Temple activities because of my father's position. My mother [Constance Block Strassburger] was very involved in volunteer work. I remember vividly . . . one of the earliest memories I have was mother's work with foster homes. She was very busy with that for a number of years. I think it was through [National] Council of Jewish Women. She was active with [National] Council [of Jewish Women]. That's how I got

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4 Founded in 1856. It was founded as an Orthodox congregation but in 1863 they changed to Reform Judaism.
5 An organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals in advocacy and philanthropy inspired by Jewish values. They strive to improve the quality of life for women, children and families.
interested in Council. She also . . . after the foster home care work . . . she was head of service to foreign born with the Council when all the many German refugees came in the 1930's. [In those foundational] years of my life, I was very interested in mother's work. She formed a German club with the refugees called the Friendship Club which still exists to this day. Now, this goes back to the mid-1930's. Of course, that was a very big thing in Pittsburgh. There were a lot of German refugees coming in including three families that my father brought in. That was probably the most influential thing in my life because I got involved in community work very young. In spite of that, my sister grew up with the same influences and never has gotten involved in community. It’s hard to understand why one child is impressed by that sort of thing and another one is not.

Shirley: Was there just one other child? Two sisters in all?

Martha: No, I have one sister and one brother. My brother was the oldest, I was the youngest. My sister and I were brought up as twins. We looked a great deal alike and still do and we're only 15 months apart. One of the strong memories I have is at one point in my life and maybe at age 14 . . . I remember saying to myself, “We are not alike.” In spite of the fact that my parents treated us alike and thought we were alike and compared us too much, I said to myself, “I know Joan and I are not alike in spite of what they think.” I recognized that quite young and I recognized that I needed to get away from her. When it came time to college, I applied to the college she was at but I recognized that I needed not to go with her. I chose the college that my mother went to. I don't remember looking into colleges thoroughly. I remember choosing either my sister's or my mother's college. I picked a third one as sort of a fall back. I didn't get into the third one which was Smith [College, Northampton, Massachusetts] but I got into Wellesley [College—Wellesley, Massachusetts]. I guess partly because my mother had gone there.

Shirley: Were they supportive of that decision? Were your parents backing you or would they have been happier to have you together?

Martha: Mother was delighted that I was going to her school because she was very fond of her college years. She really loved and lived her college memories vividly. She hung onto those. I also remember going to my grandmother's every Friday night was a big thing. It was not Shabbat [Sabbath] . . . that it was Friday night . . . it was just because that was the night that

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6 This is officially the National Coordinating Committee for Aid to Refugees and Emigrants Coming from Germany. It later became the National Refugee Service.

7 A social support group for German-Jewish refugees that was formed in the early 1930’s.
everybody decided to get together. We never had Shabbat candles. We were non-observing in the home in spite of the fact that my father was president of the congregation for about 17 years. When I moved to Atlanta, [Rabbi Jacob] Jack Rothschild was the only person I knew. He had come from Pittsburgh and was the Assistant Rabbi when I was in college. I had even dated him. I remember how shocked he was when I told him, after I moved here, that we had never even observed Shabbat at home. We had a non-observant [home], but my parents went to Temple every Sunday morning. We had Sunday morning services. We did not have Friday night services. It was an ultra-Reform congregation. My parents were both brought up in Reform Judaism. Both of them had German grandparents living in their home, so they were fluent in German. My mother majored in German in college. My father's father was German born, so he was fluent in German.

Shirley: Do you speak German?
Martha: No, not a word.
Shirley: Do you understand?
Martha: No.
Shirley: They spoke it in the home?
Martha: They spoke it only when they didn't want us to know what they were talking about . . . very infrequently. Then quite early . . . in high school . . . my brother, who was three years older than I, took German, so they couldn't speak German to hide from us. There was no German spoken at home really. We had a German cook when I was very little. She spoke no English and mother did speak German to her all the time but I never learned any.

Shirley: That was mainly instructions, I guess.
Martha: Right. It was when I was very young. Until I was about six we had the German cook, so I don't remember any of that German. We had a Swedish nursemaid. I remember a song still . . . exactly the way she taught it. I learned it by rote and phonetically and I can still sing that little song by the Swedish maid.

Shirley: Did you ever sing that song to your children?
Martha: Yes, but it didn't mean anything to them.
Shirley: You have a lot of childhood memories that you seem to share that have to do with

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8 Rabbi Jacob Rothschild was rabbi of the city’s oldest Reform congregation, the Temple, in Atlanta, Georgia from 1946 until his death in 1973 from a heart attack. He forged close relationships with the city’s Christian clergy and distinguished himself as a charismatic spokesperson for civil rights.

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close family.

Martha: I didn't have a lot of family. My mother came from Kansas City [Kansas], so, she had no family of hers around. We never saw her parents. I never saw my grandparents because they were both gone before I was born. My brother, I think, saw one or the other of mother's parents. But I never knew mother's parents. Her brother . . . my mother had one brother . . . he came to Pittsburgh with his wife and adopted daughter when I was quite young. I remember him . . . I think I might have been six or seven when he came to Pittsburgh. He lived in California . . . first he lived in Kansas and then he lived in California, so we never really saw him.

Shirley: How long were your parents in Pittsburgh? Were they both born in Pittsburgh? Was your father born there?

Martha: Yes, my father was second-generation Pittsburgh . . . third-generation Pittsburgh. My father's mother was second-generation Pittsburgh. She was a Morganstern. My father was a late child. He was one of three boys. His one brother never married. He was very close to his great nieces and nephews . . . or nieces and nephews. He loved his nieces and nephews. He took me on a trip to New York once in his car to go to the Metropolitan Opera. He picked us up at camp, my sister and me, one summer to take us to New York to meet my parents coming in on the SS Île de France. I remember that vividly. I think that was a lot of excitement to me. I don't know why but it was very exciting and I was 10 or 11. I had my first migraine. I can remember this. It's funny how you do remember certain things. I can remember getting sick, I threw up on the dock waiting for the ship.

Shirley: I bet you felt better after that.

Martha: That's what migraines do sometimes. I didn't know what was wrong with me. I felt faint, I was having a problem . . . I don't know . . . it was probably pre-puberty kind of a thing.

Shirley: Then you felt very close to him. Did this relationship go on in later years?

Martha: Yes, but there was not . . . in a sense . . . closeness because first of all, my family was very undemonstrative, which I guess was typical German. There was a sense that he really cared for us because every time he went away . . . which was often . . . he went to Mexico and on cruises and things . . . he always brought us something. It was always very exciting to see what Uncle Will was going to bring. He brought a little turquoise and silver Indian jewelry, I

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9 A French ocean liner, the first major ocean liner built after the end of World War I. Decorated in the Art Deco style it was considered the most beautifully decorated ship afloat. It started service in 1928 and was scrapped in 1960.
remember. That kind of thing . . . bangle bracelets . . . for little girls. He had a lot of art sense. He was an architect. He was an avocational artist and quite talented.

Shirley: Is he the one who mainly exposed you to different types of culture or would that have been your parents?

Martha: He did expose us to some culture. My mother was very interested in opera. Mother was a singer. She was so interested in singing that she adored opera. She never went out on a Saturday afternoon. She always curled up in her bedroom or sitting room and listened to the Metropolitan [Opera] every Saturday afternoon. It was kind of verboten [German: forbidden] to even go near the room during the opera season. Mother was curled up listening to opera. She would come out of there [saying], “Wasn't that gorgeous.”

Shirley: Was your home, Martha, a very structured type of home . . . disciplined? Who determined the discipline, mom or dad?

Martha: Mother . . . 100 percent. My father didn't know beans about what was going on at home. He was very involved with his work and his community work. He talked a great deal about his work.

Shirley: What did he do?

Martha: He was a lawyer. He was an awesome lawyer. He was highly respected. He was a Harvard Law School graduate. He had chances several times to become a judge but he did not accept [it] because he wanted to save the practice for my brother. He did save the practice for my brother who took over the firm and lived in the shadow of my father all his life. My father lived to be 91-1/2 [years old] and practiced law until six weeks before he died. He was very controlling . . . very quietly, elegantly, sophisticated . . . in a non-feeling, almost . . . insensitive sort of way. He never really related to his daughters or his wife.

Shirley: To his son maybe?

Martha: Yes, more to his son but not really. Not really sensitive to his son.

Shirley: If you did something . . .

Martha: He dominated my brother in a quiet way. My brother never revolted about it, he just lived in the shadow of my father in his work.

Shirley: If you did something that you were very proud of then where did the compliment come from, mom or dad?

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10 That is, an activity outside of one’s regular work or profession, usually for a hobby or personal enjoyment.
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Martha:  Mom, always.

Shirley:  . . . the encouragement for anything you were doing?

Martha:  Mother . . . I don't remember my father being warm. He championed the underdog. That was my sister who was the middle child. He really championed her. He gave her the lift she needed. Interestingly . . . you'd think two sisters have the same environment. They don't. I remember this vividly . . . that I was mother's pet. I was “her baby” she used to say. I was her model for my sister. I was younger . . . I was kind of the guilty angel because I knew I wasn't so great. I kept saying to myself, “She championed me too much.” I needed not to be the example to my older sister.

Shirley:  Did you feel like you had to set the pace for everything?

Martha:  No, I was a little “Miss Me Too.” Anytime JoAnn asked for a privilege, I always said, “Me too.” They teased me about being little “Miss Me Too.”

Shirley:  You mentioned that, although you came from a Jewish family, you didn't celebrate Shabbat. What about the Jewish holidays?

Martha:  We did not celebrate Hanukkah¹¹ in the sense that we gave presents. We did not. We didn't celebrate Christmas. I never quite understood because it was never adequately explained to me except that we were Jewish and we didn't celebrate Christmas. But on Christmas day we went to see a cousin of my father's . . . every Christmas . . . because they had a tree and my parents, for some reason or another, decided we'd see that tree. We were arm's length. We never really enjoyed it. We went to call on these cousins with their children. I have just recently renewed a friendship with that woman who I hadn't seen in 50 years. She and her husband live in Hartford [Connecticut] and in the winter in Lauderdale [and] Boca [Raton, Florida]. I have renewed my friendship with her. We never really were friends and I don't know why. We just called on them Christmas. I never saw her in between. She was six years younger than I . . . something like that. She had an older brother and a younger sister but we were never friendly. I don't know why.

Shirley:  Was there any emphasis on Jewish education at all while you were growing up? You mentioned that you went to Sunday school.

¹¹ Hebrew for ‘dedication.’ An eight-day festival of lights usually falling around Christmas on the Christian calendar. Hanukkah celebrates the victory of the Maccabees in 165 BCE over the Seleucid rules of Palestine, who had desecrated the Temple. The Maccabees wanted to re-dedicate the Temple altar to Jewish worship by rekindling the menorah but could only find one small jar of ritually pure olive oil. This oil continued to burn miraculously for eight days, enabling them to prepare new oil. The menorah with its eight branches commemorates this miracle.
Martha: We went to Sunday school and I was confirmed.\textsuperscript{12} Not really any emphasis. We had poor Sunday school teachers. There was a lot of cutting up in Sunday school. There was never anything very serious about it. I began to go to Temple with my parents of my own volition when I was about 14 or 15. I was awe struck by Dr. [Solomon B.] Freehof,\textsuperscript{13} who my father had hired. He had, as president of the Temple, gone with a board member to Chicago and was running around interviewing new rabbis when our rabbi went to Temple Emanu-El in New York [City]. . . Dr. [Samuel H.] Goldenson. Dr. Freehof was brought to Pittsburgh in 1935, I think. I was impressed with him. He was at our house a lot and had dinner at our house. He was almost one of the family [during] all my years growing up because of the fact that my father and me were very close. My father did his legal work as well and [was] his advisor over the years. I began to go to Temple with my parents on Sunday morning. Dr. Freehof's services were very philosophical and never totally religious. They were like main events of the year which he was philosophical about and books of Shakespeare. He always had a series and it was always fascinating to me. He did have a more spiritual service on Saturday mornings and my mother went Saturday mornings. My father never did.

Shirley: She went alone?

Martha: Yes. She did a lot of things alone. She was a loner. She was lonely. This is a strong memory. She had trouble finding friends in Pittsburgh when she married. She had had a college education and there weren't very many women in my father's crowd that he grew up with that had gone to college. My mother was very much an intellect. She never really found compatible women. Her husband wasn't too compatible. He was very self-oriented. He played bridge. He was a fine bridge player. He played bridge every single Saturday afternoon and Sunday afternoon of the world. He was an absent father. He really wasn't around for his . . . in the summer time he played golf with my brother. They did a lot of father-son golf tournaments. He never . . . my sister and I never played golf. We took it up once.

Shirley: What did you do?

Martha: We played tennis. My sister and I were together all of the time. Consequently, I didn't

\textsuperscript{12} A coming of age ritual that originated in the Reform movement which scorned the idea that at 13 years of age a child was an adult. They replaced bar and bat mitzvah with a confirmation ceremony at about age 16 to 18. In some Conservative synagogues the confirmation concept has been adopted as a way to continue and child’s Jewish education and involvement for a few more years.

\textsuperscript{13} Rabbi to Temple Rodef Shalom in Pittsburgh from 1934 to 1966. He died at age 97, a nationally revered Reform rabbi.

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grow up with a lot of close friends.

**Shirley:** That's what I was going to ask you next . . . because you had her for a friend.

**Martha:** Yes, we had one friend who died recently . . . I'd say three or four years ago. She moved away from Pittsburgh shortly after she married and lived in Philadelphia [Pennsylvania]. We never kept up with each other, my sister or I. I don't know why I never kept up with her.

**Shirley:** Would you think that your high school life was something that you recall with pleasure or was it just a time of your life to get through?

**Martha:** It was pleasurable because I was very busy socially. We had a home that was . . . my parents built it when I was ten. It was a little more extravagant than everybody else's which separated us. It was not lavish in the sense that it was garish . . . was elegant, it was formal. It was not like anybody else's home and it made me . . . it separated us. But we had an electric player piano in the huge living room and every weekend all the boys and girls came to our house. We had a wonderful time in high school in that sense. We had a country club life. We went to the club every single weekend in the summer. In the winter we did a lot of ice skating and sledding. So, we had a lot of social life and it was always Jewish . . . always Jewish.

**Shirley:** All of your friends.

**Martha:** Yes, we had a high school sorority. There were lots of young ladies in our high school sorority which was a national sorority. “S O P,” we were called. Do you remember S O Ps?

**Shirley:** What does it stand for?

**Martha:** Sigma Omega Pi. It was a Jewish social sorority that was national. We had chapters around the country. For some reason or other my sister and I never went to annual national sorority meetings. It was usually held in Washington, as I recall. We had one in Pittsburgh once and it was kind of a fun thing. I remember our social life was very busy. One of the reasons I didn't have a lot of high school girl friends was because I had boyfriends. That cuts out girls. I grew up not being a girlfriend girl. We had boyfriends. You went steady with one or another. My sister and I were very popular. It takes something away from your growing up years when you have boys around all the time.

**Shirley:** Can you think of anyone . . . you mentioned one of the rabbis . . . but can you think of anyone that maybe influenced your early years while you were growing up . . . before you were

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14 This high school sorority is no longer in existence.
married? Someone who made an impact on your life?

**Martha:** I would say probably Dr. Freehof was the main influence on my life. Strangely, my first husband had grandparents in Chicago [Illinois]. His grandmother was President of the Sisterhood under Dr. Freehof. He used to go visit his grandparents in the summer in Chicago. He grew up under the influence of Dr. Freehof in Chicago. His father died when he was a little boy, so Dr. Freehof was an influence in his life, too. He was ten years older than I . . . my first husband . . . so when I was growing up, Dr. Freehof was an influence on me in Pittsburgh. So, both of us had an attachment to Freehof. When I was first married we were in Washington [D.C.] during the war years [1941-1945], so we were gone for four and a half years. Right out of college I married.

**Shirley:** Did you meet your husband [Robert L. Spear] in college?

**Martha:** No, I did not. I met him in Pittsburgh. He was a Harvard graduate. I met him at home. I went to Wellesley . . . married the home town boy. I had dated so much in high school and college [and] for some reason or other this man attracted me because he was a man of the world, ten years older. He had worked in New York City. After he graduated from Harvard, he worked for his family's company . . . they had an installment furniture business in Pittsburgh and New York. They had something like six stores in New York and one in Pittsburgh. When I met him, he had just been transferred back to Pittsburgh which was his home . . . where his father and his uncles grew up. They were in the same German-Jewish community that my father grew up in. In those days, they were separated totally.

**Shirley:** Then how did it happen that he was in Pittsburgh and had stores in New York . . .

**Martha:** . . . during the war. He came back to Pittsburgh in 1937 to work in Pittsburgh [at] Spear & Company. I met him at the country club around the pool one afternoon. He started to call me. That was the summer right before I went off to college. I was 17 years old and he was 28. I started to date him right before I went away to college and continued to date him [during] my four years [at college]. While I was away I was dating everybody all week. Every weekend at college I had a different date. There were boys from Harvard and Harvard Law School and Harvard Medical School and MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts]. One of the advantages of going to an all-girls school is the boys don't know who you're dating. The boys don't know each other. If you're in a co-ed school, it's a different

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15 Spear & Company was in high-end home furnishings.
story. You start dating one boy and nobody calls you except that one boy.

**Shirley:** That's true.

**Martha:** There's a big advantage to that.

**Shirley:** College life . . . was it what you thought it would be?

**Martha:** I had a difficult time in college because my high school years I never studied. We didn't have to . . . I didn't have to do much to get by in high school. We didn't have exams. I got into college being in the upper seventh of my class. I took attainment tests but I didn't take college boards. In those days, they didn't require them. I got to college and I almost had a breakdown because it was so tough for me. I had a difficult time. I think we maybe have to stop the tape so I can get my . . .

<tape is interrupted, then resumes>

**Shirley:** Did you ever experience . . . any antisemitism during your youth?

**Martha:** Almost none. I remember one incident where a Jewish girl called me some kind of a name . . . I'm not sure I even remember what it was . . . and got angry at me. She was kind of a kook. I didn't put too much credence to it. I don't remember really anything other than that. I've experienced some antisemitism in my adult life and more recently have had some very interesting antisemitic experiences. I guess I don't look so Jewish and sometimes things happen in front of me because they don't know I'm Jewish. I really think antisemitism is very close to the surface. You don't have to scratch hard to find it.

**Shirley:** Comments that were made in your presence?

**Martha:** Yes. As an example . . . talking about colleges with a debutante woman . . . I should say that my step-daughter was a debutante against my wishes. I didn't want her to accept the invitation but my second husband . . . wanted it. My step-daughter chose to be a debutante.\(^\text{16}\) I had to be involved with the group for a year. The very first meeting I was asked to be a co-hostess. Cleaning up after the meeting with this woman in her lovely home, we were talking about our daughters and what colleges to go to. After discussion, I suggested Goucher [College in Maryland]. In one breath she said, “I wouldn't think of sending my daughter to Goucher. There are too many Jews there. My other daughter goes to [H.] Sophie Newcomb [Memorial College—New Orleans, Louisiana.].”\(^\text{17}\) There are so many Jews there that it has ruined the social

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\(^{16}\) A debutante is a young woman of upper-class background who is presented to society, usually at a formal ball.

\(^{17}\) H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College is part of Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana.
Shirley: Did you feel obligated to comment?

Martha: I didn't say a word because I figured I had a whole year to go with this crowd. I got home and was very guilty that I didn't say anything. So I called Charles Wittenstein, who was head of AJC [American Jewish Committee] at the time. I said, “This is what I did. Should I call the woman and take her to lunch so she isn't embarrassed when she finds out I’m Jewish?” He said, “No, as long as you didn't do anything right then and there, it's her problem.” I said, “She'll be embarrassed.” He said, “That's okay. That's her problem.” I ran into the woman a number of times afterwards when the year was up and she never knew me. I don't know why but I finally went up to her after the fourth introduction to her and I said, “Don't you remember me?” She said, “Yes, weren't we in the debutante group together?” Well, that was when . . . I don't know if it's interesting to go into all the antisemitic experiences but for the last two or three years I've had several. I think I expose myself to it because I come out and say things that are provocative sometimes.

Shirley: In what social groups . . . in what arenas are you doing . . . ?

Martha: One of the recent experiences was with a Wellesley alumni group when I was in Washington [D.C.] with a Wellesley tour of Washington. The woman and man that . . . I was staying with in somebody else's house. We were talking about the Bitburg incident which had not yet come about. They said, “The Jews are different kind of people. They bring trouble in the world . . . if they would just let the Palestinians have their property back. They're forever creating problems” . . . and something else about [how the Jews] are slaughtering people and just because there was a Holocaust against them does not make it right for them to perform a Holocaust on the Arabs. I had already told this couple that I was Jewish before their comments. They knew I was Jewish. Then the woman turned to me and said, “Martha, you know they're different. They live in separate places. They don't even mix with other people. They don't even intermarry ever.” I said, “Marilyn, don't you know that they were ghettoized for centuries. Don't you know that the Holocaust . . . ?” I finally said to them . . . I was so emotional . . . I got so upset that I said to them, “If you don't mind, I’d like to change the subject.” Later on that night,

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18 The ‘Bitburg incident’ was a controversy that arose during the Ronald Reagan administration. Reagan proposed to visit the Kolmshohe Cemetery in Bitburg, where American soldiers were buried, as part of his itinerary for the 40th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day. When it was discovered that SS soldiers were also buried there, the whole incident blew up in the public realm. Ultimately, Reagan visited the cemetery although he added a visit to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp to his itinerary.
the man came to me. He didn't apologize, but he said, “I'm sorry we got into such a heavy
discussion so early.” This was the first day in Washington.

Shirley: Did the children . . . you mentioned you had two children . . . where are they living?
What do they do?

Martha: My daughter is living in Washington and has an 11-1/2-year-old daughter. My
daughter is a psychologist. She tests children with learning disabilities and she's in business for
herself. She did work at a center in Washington. She has a huge practice. She has been very
successful [and] self-supporting. She's divorced and has been divorced for about three years.
She was married 13 years. My son is in Middletown, Connecticut. He's the younger [child]. He
is 35; my daughter is 39. He is in what I call a third world occupation: he teaches macrobiotics,
which is a theory of life and health and eating. Macrobiotics means eating in tune with nature. It
is concerned with prevention and health foods and vegetarian . . . totally vegetarian . . . no dairy,
no meat, no chicken, no cheese.

Shirley: Fish?

Martha: Fish occasionally. He has two little boys. They are very healthy and everybody
wonders where they get their protein. People don't realize protein comes from vegetables, too.
They eat a lot of soy products. My son started a tofu\textsuperscript{19} factory from scratch. He built the factory
in Connecticut . . . a very small factory but he's doing very well. He's about to open a resort . . . a
retreat for macrobiotics on Long Island [New York] at Southampton. I'm very excited. I'm going
up next week to the opening of his new resort.

Shirley: Do they come here often or do you mainly take trips there?

Martha: Mainly I go up there. My son and his wife and the two little ones came down to see
me for the first time last December. They stayed for about four days and it was just great. They
don't like Atlanta. They don't like the South. They were really raised in Pittsburgh. My son was
12 and my daughter 15 when I moved them to Atlanta. They still have ties in Pittsburgh, of
course, and no ties here but me.

Shirley: That gives you an opportunity to go visit.

Martha: I go visit them and it's nice.

Shirley: Do you find anything in their home or in the way that they live and teach their
children and set values for their children anything like what you grew up with . . . what you

\textsuperscript{19} Also called ‘bean curd.’ It is a food made by coagulating soy milk and pressing into soft white blocks.

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learned as a child?

**Martha:** Yes . . . I think in the sense of one of the strong values that I think has been passed down to my children is a sense of [non-materialism]. My mother used to have an expression that was awesome because not many people really had the value. She didn't like people who put “their money on their backs” . . . was her expression. I think my children have come by that and gotten that message through me. It's true that . . .

**Shirley:** Did you give that advice to your children?

**Martha:** Yes, yes. I think the other thing was that I never . . . my children . . . as children do . . . they always used to say, “So-and-so is allowed to do that.” That was a value that I always knew I didn't want them to [have]. I always used to say, “I don't care what other people do. I have my sense. I don't care if your friends are allowed to stay out until 11 o'clock. You come in at 10 [o'clock].” That kind of thing. There was another one that I felt I impressed my children with but I don't know for sure if they're still . . . is a sense of never always being right. I don't know where I got this, but I always prided myself in that when my children used to say . . . I can remember when my daughter said to me once, “Why are you always right?” When she found out I was right once about something she said that to me. She had kept a dress that I didn't like and I told her I didn't like it. She said, “I’m going to keep it because I like it.” I said, “You're entitled.” That's when she first started to shop alone. I said, “That's fine. If you like it, you keep it.” Then a couple of weeks later, she was tearful. She said, “I don't like it. I wish I hadn't kept it. Why are you always right?” I said, “I want you to understand I never question of being right. It was a question of my tastes and yours.” That was something . . . a sense . . . I think that they got from me. This incidentally was one of the areas that my husband and I . . . husband number two . . . differed strongly on. [One] the sense of money being everything was one thing that I differed with him so strongly on and, two, the sense of always being right. He was a figure of authority. He had a sense that he was always right . . . that he could never be wrong. I just couldn't believe that anybody could always consider himself right all the time but he did. I couldn't tolerate it any longer. This was a sense that he had to dictate to his children and everybody around him. In fact, he used to say to me, “People pay me for my advice and you argue with me. Why is that?” I said, “I didn't know we were arguing, I thought we were discussing.”

**Shirley:** He was discussing maybe clients and you were a part of the family. Interesting.

**Martha:** Very strange.
Martha: Definitely.

Shirley: What are your hobbies, Martha? You showed me some interesting things when we came in . . . you look like you're a real collector. What do you like to do in your spare time?

Martha: I think one of my . . . I collect people. My children have inherited that. I call my daughter a “friends junkie.” She has made a million friends in Washington [D.C.]. She's more . . . both of my children are sort of friends junkies. I guess a lot of people say I'm sort of that way. But I do love people. I think it's partly because I didn't have a sense of people when I was growing up. I'm sort of catching up for lost time.

<End Tape 1, Side 1>

Shirley: We were talking about your hobbies and your beautiful pieces of collection that you have over here. Tell me a little bit about what you enjoy doing most and how did you get into these different collections.

Martha: I just pick up boxes and little things when I'm away that I like to have. I can remember where I bought every little thing that I keep and it reminds me of my trip. My first husband collected antiques. He knew a lot about antiques. We collected together . . . he taught me a lot. I've always found it an interesting hobby. We wanted to talk about things I have done?

Shirley: What gives you satisfaction and a feeling of accomplishment?

Martha: I would say the community work that I have done is the most satisfying experiences that I have had. Some years ago a group of about seven of us started a women's counseling center. We had offices in the State employment office. We took turns manning the office. We had hourly interviews scheduled with women who needed to turn their lives around. We advised them where they could get vocational training. A lot of them didn't know any of these things about the public high school . . . community schools at night. Most of these poor women didn't know what they wanted to do with their lives. That was a very interesting project. We even had CETA [Comprehensive Employment and Training Act] workers at times. Then we had, I got involved with an EOA [Equal Opportunity Advisor] center over in the black neighborhood. I did a study on what they wanted and needed over there. My study was instrumental in getting model cities money. Then we developed . . . before that I helped develop an Urban Training

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20 Public Law 93-203 was enacted in 1973. It mandated the training of people for jobs in public service. It was for low income and the long-term unemployed. Full-time jobs were provided for 12 to 24 months in public agencies or private not-for-profit organizations. The intent was to give them a marketable skill that would allow them to move to an unsubsidized job.

21 Another federally-subsidized program designed to foster equal opportunity for minorities.
Corps,\textsuperscript{22} where we set up courses for people to take to do certain jobs around the community. The courses they took would train them. They owed six months work after taking the training. That was a very interesting project. Then I did a project with [National Jewish Women’s] Council . . . a day care survey. We surveyed various kinds of day care and found out most of it was pretty bad. We founded . . . I was in charge of a project that founded the day care center at Grady Hospital. Wonderfully interesting [and] rewarding project where I coordinated the architect with the contractor and the administration at Grady. [We] took over the basement at the nurses’ home. We got the playground donated by the Montag family in memory of their mother. We got the carpeting donated. I just tooted all over town getting donations from the Jewish community. It is a viable day care center today. I was down last week to see it. They are going great guns. Georgia Easter Seal Society\textsuperscript{23} is now running it. They have private as well as public services in the sense that some of the children in the day care are from the Grady card carrying population, some are the children of personnel at Grady and some from working parents in the downtown area. It's already . . . they’ve taken over another floor in that building, so it is very much an ongoing day care. My projects in the community have always been involved in the community wide but often through [National] Council of Jewish Women. I'm very involved with American Jewish Committee\textsuperscript{24} now. I was in charge of the Arab influence committee. My interest in the American Jewish Committee goes back very far. When I first came back to Pittsburgh after the war years when we lived in Washington . . . 4-1/2 years later we came back to live in Pittsburgh . . . I got involved in the American Jewish Committee and [National] Council of Jewish Women in Pittsburgh, way back then. That's 40 some years ago. I've remained active in both of them. I've always been Jewish oriented. My family life and my community life was always oriented in the Jewish world. Even though I went to public high school, I didn't have very many gentile friends at all. It was all centered around a Jewish city club in Pittsburgh that is very old and a country club that was also very old. I grew up in the country club atmosphere of playing tennis and swimming every day of the summer when I wasn't away at camp. Luxurious.

**Shirley:** It sounds wonderful. I'd like to do that today. Do you have any plans, Martha, to change your life in any way or to set new goals or different priorities now that you've had time to

\textsuperscript{22} Non-profit organization that provides high school education to young adults ages 18-25.

\textsuperscript{23} Non-profit charitable organization that assists children and adults with autism and other disabilities and special needs through a network of more than 550 service sites in the United States, Canada, Australia and Puerto Rico.

\textsuperscript{24} The American Jewish Committee (AJC) was founded in 1906 to safeguard the welfare and security of Jews worldwide. It is one of the oldest Jewish advocacy organization in the United States.
evaluate your volunteer work [and] your family life?

**Martha:** I need some kind of a project now. I think I need to find something more specific to do. I'm still piddling around in the AJC projects . . . this being one, of course, the oral history [project]. I'm on the board of AJC and I take it seriously. I'm very concerned about antisemitism. I think AJC is one of the outstanding fighters of antisemitism. It's frightening because I think the world is still quite full of antisemitism. I need . . . one of the reasons . . . I need a project is that I have lost a lot of friends to death and moving away. I've had to make new friends. I have no family in town here . . . makes it difficult at times . . . the various holidays when everybody is with their family and being single is a whole different world. I think we haven't looked at that problem. We need . . . I really feel . . . I wish I could have a brainstorm about what could be done for single older people whose lives are really not over but don't know what to do with their lives.

**Shirley:** Active people who want to remain involved.

**Martha:** Right. They are a resource that's being wasted. I'm one of them. I don't know what I could be doing. I could be counseling myself but I don't know where to go. There are plenty of things to do. But I have found that some of the things I have volunteered for, nobody calls me for.

**Shirley:** Like what?

**Martha:** Like Meals on Wheels.²⁵

**Shirley:** I think that I could answer a few of those needs for you today because from all the information that we've gathered you are an active, vibrant, concerned, caring individual. I can see after today's interview why you were chosen one of the Women of Achievement. With all of the projects you've been involved in and the needs you say you're looking for, I think we can pass this information on to some others. I thank you very, very much for sharing your information with us.

**Martha:** Thank you.

<End Tape 1, Side 2>

**INTERVIEW ENDS**

²⁵ A program that delivers meals to individuals at home who are unable to purchase or prepare their own meals.

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