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MEMOIRIST: MARILYN SHUBIN
INTERVIEWER: EMILY KATZ
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<Begin Video Tape 1>

INTERVIEW BEGINS

KATZ: This is Emily Katz. I'm here with Marilyn Shubin on April 22 at the Breman Museum in Atlanta. Thank you so much for participating in the Herbert Taylor Oral History collection of the Breman Museum. Let's get started. The first thing I'd like to ask you about is a little bit of family history, in particular some immigration history, if you don't mind talking a little bit about which of your forebears are the ones who came to America, where they came from, and where they settled.

SHUBIN: My mother and father were both born in the United States. My father's family was from Riga [Ukraine]. My mother's family was from Romania and probably Iași (pronounced Yash). I'm not quite sure because in those days they wanted to be Americans. They really weren't talking about the past. We all regret that we don't have a concrete history of what went before. In any case, there is not a whole lot that I can tell you about the immigration story except one little piece maybe. My maternal grandfather, I never knew. Nor did I know my maternal grandmother. They were deceased. The story is that they came to America, but the grandfather was not happy. He was a *melamed* [Hebrew].¹ He was a teacher. He just couldn't quite make it. So, he went back with his wife. I'm not sure who stayed. Part of the family came back. He went to Israel. He wanted to die in Israel and be buried on the Mount of Olives.² I never pursued that for all the times I went to Israel. Most families lost connections with the folks who had stayed in Europe and did not come to the United States. Early on, I would hear stories and know that

¹ A teacher of Hebrew language and traditions.

² The Mount of Olives is a mountain ridge east of and adjacent to Jerusalem's Old City. It is named for the olive groves that once covered its slopes. The mount has been used as a Jewish cemetery for over 3,000 years and holds approximately 150,000 graves.

money was being sent back and clothing was being sent back. When World War II³ started, then it was all gone. We just didn't hear from them. Basically, I'm very proud of the fact that where they came from and the fact that I'm really an American, a solid American, because both my mother and my father were born here. My paternal grandparents, I knew and knew well. I have some interesting stories about them because I have some memories of that. We lived in Philadelphia [Pennsylvania]. That was where we grew up. That's where the grandparents were. As a matter of fact, my paternal grandfather lived with us for 18 years after my grandmother died. That was interesting too. I remember the store that he had on South Street in Philadelphia, their neighbors, and the success stories of the Philadelphians who also had the same kind of background and succeeded in various businesses, etc. My father had one brother who was a dentist and one brother who was an attorney. Another brother went west to make his fortune in Oklahoma before it was a state. Those kinds of things. I remember this uncle who went to Oklahoma. He used to come to St. Louis [Missouri] to buy. That was where he bought for his store. Because he came as far as St. Louis, he would make the trek to Philadelphia to visit. He was a very large man. His name was Jake. Uncle Jake. He wore a white suit like Big Daddy in one of the Tennessee Williams . . . that's enough story about the family.

KATZ: Your grandparents settled in Philadelphia?

SHUBIN: Yes. No. Wait a minute. Yes, that's true. My mother may have been born in New York. I'm not sure. Yes, Philadelphia was home.

KATZ: I know you went to Cleveland [Ohio] after you got married.

SHUBIN: Right. Right after we were married, we moved to Cleveland. We met . . . do you want to know how I met my husband? We met in a department store in Philadelphia. We were both on a junior executive training program after college. That was my first job. It was his second job. The first job he had . . . I want to Drexel [Institute of Technology] in Philadelphia. He went to University of Florida in Gainesville. That's another story. We both met on this junior executive training program in Philadelphia. So, retailing was both our interests. Shortly after we were married, he took a job in Cleveland.

³ World War II (often abbreviated to WWII or WW2), also known as the Second World War, was a global war that lasted from 1939 to 1945, although related conflicts began earlier. It involved the vast majority of the world's countries—including all of the great powers—eventually forming two opposing military alliances: the Allies and the Axis. It was the most widespread war in history, and directly involved more than 100 million people from over 30 countries. Marked by mass deaths of civilians, including the Holocaust (in which approximately 6 million Jews were killed) and the strategic bombing of industrial and population centers (in which approximately one million were killed, and which included the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), it resulted in an estimated 50 million to 85 million fatalities. These made World War II the deadliest conflict in human history.

KATZ: You spent how long there?

SHUBIN: Ten years.

KATZ: You came to Atlanta in 1962.

SHUBIN: Right.

KATZ: I would love if you could talk for a few minutes what it felt like to come to Atlanta in 1962, having grown up in Philadelphia, having spent 10 years in Cleveland. What was it like coming to Atlanta in 1962?

SHUBIN: Well, step back. When we told friends in Cleveland that we were leaving, they were upset because Cleveland was a wonderful experience for us. They said, “Where are you going?” We said, “We’re going to Atlanta. We’re moving to Atlanta.” They said, “Georgia? Why would you want to go to Georgia?”

KATZ: Why did they . . . ?

SHUBIN: Because it was the South, maybe not as sophisticated. What was going on? They really didn’t know. It was foreign to them. It was pretty foreign to me too. I knew Florida, but I didn’t know Georgia. In any case, when we got here, it was a very pleasant experience, coming because everybody was very gracious. You know, Southern hospitality. They just couldn’t do enough for you to help you get settled. The people that Joshua was working with were very, very nice and helpful in finding a place to live and so forth. That part was very good. Then, as you became familiar with your surroundings, you saw the restrooms that had been segregated and were just opened up for everyone, so the signs were missing from the doors of the restrooms. There were picket lines on Peachtree [Street]. You saw that. There were ads in the *Southern Israelite* for cross-burnings at Stone Mountain and bring your own sheets for the Ku Klux Klan.⁴ It was there. It was right in front of your face. You heard about all the issues of school segregations and the courageous Ivan Allen,⁵ the mayor during that period. It was an eye opener. As I said earlier to you, growing up in the north and then the midwest, our experiences were very different. In elementary school I went to, I lived in a Jewish neighborhood. It was wonderful.

⁴ The Ku Klux Klan (or Knights of the Ku Klux Klan today) is a white supremacist, white nationalist, anti-immigration, anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic, anti-black secret society, whose methods included terrorism and murder. It was founded in the South in the 1860’s and then died out and come back several times, most notably in the 1920’s when membership soared again, and then again in the 1960’s during the civil rights era. When the Klan was re-founded in 1915 in Georgia, the event was marked by a cross burning on Stone Mountain. In the past it members dressed up in white robes and a pointed hat designed to hide their identity and to terrify. It is still in existence.

⁵ Ivan Allen, Jr. (1911-2003), was an American businessman who served two terms as the 52nd Mayor of Atlanta during the turbulent civil rights era of the 1960s.

There were 45,000 Jews in the neighborhood I grew up in in Philadelphia. Antisemitism was not an issue. When I went to junior high, the neighborhoods that fed into the school were a little different. There was a little more of a mix, but there was never an African-American presence. But when I went to high school, it was a totally different experience. Wilt Chamberlain⁶ was the star in the national basketball league, and he was a graduate of Overbrook High School, which is where I went to school. So, things were very different here.

KATZ: Where did you live when you first moved to Atlanta?

SHUBIN: It was very interesting. One of the colleagues at the store [Davison-Paxon]⁷ was helpful. I told you everybody was helpful to find a place to live. We found a house to rent. A professor who had gone overseas and was on leave from, I think he was at Georgia Tech [Georgia Institute of Technology]. We lived in northwest Atlanta. Our children went to Morris Brandon Elementary School, which was a very good public school and still is today. When it came time to look for a house that we'd like to buy, we looked and we looked. Every time the agent took us looking, she took us right by our house. I thought I don't want to go anywhere else. I want to stay here because it was very easy to go into town. It didn't take 10 minutes to go into town from our neighborhood. So, we've lived in our house, now, the house that we live in, over 50 years. We found a house and we moved around the corner from where we were. It was Morris Brandon and then it was Northside High school. Our kids went to public schools, although we lived right where all the superior private schools were in that neighborhood. We didn't know anything about private schools. Private schools were not an issue for us because we were the product of public schools. The same goes for Jewish day schools. The Hebrew Academy was here. It was an option but not really for us. I'll tell you a little story about that too. It was not an option for us only because it was not . . . we just believed in the public schools. Our personal experience was very good at the public schools. We were fortunate enough to move to the neighborhood, and this was a perfect public school. As a matter of fact, whenever the teacher would leave Morris Brandon and we would find out where they were going, they were going to Westminster or Lovett [School]. So, they were going right from that school to the private schools. This is just a little interesting aside. We had always belonged to a

⁶ Wilton Norman Chamberlain (1936-1999) was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was the star basketball player for the Overbrook Panthers and played for the for the Harlem Globetrotters from 1958-1959. He played center and is considered one of the greatest players in history.

⁷ Davison's first opened its doors in Atlanta in 1891 and had its origins in the Davison & Douglas company. In 1901, the store changed its name to Davison-Paxon-Stokes after the retirement of E. Lee Douglas from the business and the appointment of Frederic John Paxon as treasurer. In early 1927 the company dropped the "Stokes" to become Davison Paxon Co.

Reform⁸ congregation. So, when we moved here, we wanted to join the Reform congregation, but they did not have *bar mitzvah*⁹ at the time. My family background was Conservative,¹⁰ but Josh and I chose to join the Reform congregation in Philadelphia. The major Reform congregation in Cleveland was Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver.¹¹ That was a wonderful experience for us. When we came here, The Temple¹² did not have *bar mitzvah* at the time. That was because [Rabbi] Jacob Rothschild¹³ really did not believe in any. It was not necessarily all across the spectrum of the Reform congregation. To make a long story short, the AA, the Ahavath Achim,¹⁴ was right down the street from us. I said, “We’ll go down there and we’ll join.” So, I made an appointment with the executive director. I took the two kids and we drove down. He came in. He said to me, “How can I help you?” I said, “We just moved to Atlanta. We’d like to join the congregation.” He said, “Where did you come from?” I said, “We came from Cleveland.” [He said], “What congregation were you a member of?” I said, “Rabbi Rothschild, the Temple.” He looked at me and said, “You won’t be happy here.” The people from AA when

⁸ A division within Judaism especially in North America and Western Europe. Historically it began in the nineteenth century. In general, the Reform movement maintains that Judaism and Jewish traditions should be modernized and compatible with participation in Western culture. While the *Torah* remains the law, in Reform Judaism women are included (mixed seating, *bat mitzvah* and women rabbis), music is allowed in the services and most of the service is in English.

⁹ Hebrew for ‘son of commandment.’ A rite of passage for Jewish boys aged 13 years and one day. At that time, a Jewish boy is considered a responsible adult for most religious purposes. He is now duty bound to keep the commandments, he puts on *tefillin*, and may be counted to the *minyan* quorum for public worship. He celebrates the *bar mitzvah* by being called up to the reading of the *Torah* in the synagogue, usually on the next available Sabbath after his Hebrew birthday.

¹⁰ A form of Judaism that seeks to preserve Jewish tradition and ritual but has a more flexible approach to the interpretation of the law than Orthodox Judaism. It attempts to combine a positive attitude toward modern culture, while preserving a commitment to Jewish observance. They also observe gender equality (mixed seating, women rabbis and *bat mitzvahs*).

¹¹ Abba Hillel Silver (1893-1963) was born in Lithuania. He and his family immigrated to the America and settled in New York City. His father, grandfather, and great-father had all been rabbis. Silver attended Hebrew Union College and the University of Cincinnati, graduating in 1915. He was ordained as a reform rabbi. In 1927, he was awarded a Doctor of Divinity from Hebrew Union College. He was rabbi of the Temple-Tifereth Israel in Cleveland in 1917. When Silver died, his son Daniel succeed him as rabbi at the Temple.

¹² The Temple, or ‘Hebrew Benevolent Congregation,’ is Atlanta’s oldest Jewish congregation. The cornerstone was laid on the Temple on Garnett Street in 1875. The dedication was held in 1877 and the Temple was located there until 1902. The Temple’s next location on Pryor Street was dedicated in 1902. The Temple’s current location in Midtown on Peachtree Street was dedicated in 1931. The main sanctuary is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Reform congregation now totals approximately 1,500 families (2015).

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ Ahavath Achim was founded in 1887 in a small room on Gilmer Street. In 1901 they moved to a permanent building at the corner of Piedmont and Gilmer Street. In 1921, the congregation constructed a synagogue at building at the corner of Piedmont and Gilmer Street. In 1921, the congregation constructed a synagogue at Washington Street and Woodward Avenue. The final service in that building was held in 1958 to make way for construction of the Downtown Connector (the concurrent section of Interstate 75 and Interstate 85 through Atlanta). The synagogue moved to its current location on Peachtree Battle Avenue in 1958.

they hear that story, they're not happy, but that's exactly the way it went. "You won't be happy here." I picked up my kids. Took them, put them in the car, went home, called my mother in Philadelphia. I said, "Will you be unhappy if Lewis is not *bar mitzvahed*. She said, "Why?" I said, "Because . . .

KATZ: We can't find a temple.

SHUBIN: No, we can. I'm sure I could have found something else but the Temple, which is where we belonged, they don't have *bar mitzvah*. She said, "What do they have?" I said, "They have confirmation."¹⁵ She said, "Good. He'll stick around a little longer." Anyway, so I have a very modern mother and father. The Temple has been our home ever since.

KATZ: It's a good story.

SHUBIN: It's a very good story. I tell that story not because . . . but that was a sign of the times. That was just another piece of . . .

KATZ: What it was like.

SHUBIN: What it was like at that time.

KATZ: Following up on that, were there other Jews in the neighborhood then? Were you aware of other Jews living in your neighborhood?

SHUBIN: The neighborhood was not what I call particularly Jewish. As a matter of fact, that's another . . . I don't know how much of this trivia you want. That is another thing.

KATZ: It's history.

SHUBIN: Right. It's interesting what things go through your mind. We were in retailing. We didn't know that Atlanta was going to be the end for us as far as . . . I told you we rented this house first from the professor from Georgia Tech to find our way around. When it came time to buy a house, one of the things that went into our thinking was everyone was living then in the Margaret Mitchell area.¹⁶ The Margaret Mitchell area was . . . they called it the "Golden ghetto." I didn't make that up.

KATZ: Yes. That was known.

SHUBIN: Those kids who lived in Margaret Mitchell went to the Margaret Mitchell

¹⁵ Confirmation marks the culmination of a special year in the life of Jewish students between ages 16 and 18; a period of religious study beyond *bar or bat mitzvah*. 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.

¹⁶ Margaret Munnerlyn Mitchell (1900-1949) was an American novelist and journalist. Mitchell wrote only one novel, published during her lifetime, *Gone with the Wind*, for which she won the National Book Award for Most Distinguished Novel of 1936 and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1937. The Margaret Mitchell area is located in Midtown at 979 Crescent Avenue, a single-family residence in the fashionable section of residential Peachtree Street.

Elementary School. We said, and this is the decision that we made. We didn't want to live in Margaret Mitchell, not because we didn't want to live in a Jewish neighborhood but because if we were not happy in Atlanta and we wanted to sell our house, it may have been more difficult if we bought a house there if our universe for selling was in an old Jewish neighborhood. I don't know. That may have been not the case. I don't know.

KATZ: It seems far-sighted.

SHUBIN: We were very happy with the move that we made, obviously. We have been there for over 50 years. If I had to do it all over again and I was moving to Atlanta, I would pick the same house on the same street. Same everything.

KATZ: How many people can say that?

SHUBIN: I do want to tell you something interesting. We rented this house, which was, the neighborhood was Castlewood. We lived on this street, Rockingham [Drive]. This was the rental house, the first house. We were waiting for the moving van, and he got lost. We were staying at the Holiday Inn at the corner of expressway and Howell Mill [Road]. There was a Holiday Inn. It turned out we had to stay there for ten days until they found the moving van. Finally, we arranged when the moving van was going to come. I went to the house to be there. The children were with me. A light blue Cadillac drove up the street and parked in front of the driveway. A woman got out of the car. She said, "Marilyn?" I said, "Yes." She said, "My name is Ann Diamond, and I'm here from *Hadassah*."¹⁷

KATZ: The detail was great. I knew the *Hadassah* story was there.

SHUBIN: I sort of shook my head. I said, "What are you doing here? She said "We heard" . . . from Welcome Wagon or whatever. "We get names of people who move to the community. I'd like to welcome you and invite you to join *Hadassah*. I said, "There is no way that I can say no to you." The story continues. The next week, *Hadassah* invited me to a meeting of the chapter that they thought would be the closest to me. So, I went to the meeting. I was happy to meet people. We didn't know anybody. I sat down at the meeting. It was a meeting. They were short a few officers. By the time I got out of the meeting, I was the treasurer! I had a wonderful experience and met very nice people. Because I had been a member of [National] Council [of Jewish Women],¹⁸ I was contacted and went that direction.

¹⁷ *Hadassah*, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, is a volunteer organization founded in 1912 by Henrietta Szold, with more than 300,000 members and supporters worldwide. It supports health care and medical research, education and youth programs in Israel, and advocacy, education, and leadership development in the United States. *Hadassah* Greater Atlanta (HGA), the metro Atlanta chapter of *Hadassah*, was founded in 1916.

¹⁸ The National Council of Jewish Women is an organization of volunteers and advocates, founded in the 1890's,

KATZ: Lets talk about Council next. I was wondering if you could tell me, if you could think back to your first few years in Council even before you became president. What projects, especially community service projects, you were involved. Social service projects. What drew you to them. Anything you want to talk about in that regard. What you guys were doing. That sort of thing.

SHUBIN: The first experience I had was a very good experience. Because it was a move, Council was advised that I was moving. That's what we always did when you move from one city to another. One of the Council members happened to be Erma Goldwasser. Her name is in your files because David Goldwasser . . . in Jeremy's [Katz] files . . . know that he is past president of the [Atlanta Jewish] Federation,¹⁹ which was not the Federation at that time. It was still the United Jewish Appeal and the Jewish Welfare Fund and the Community Council. Or whatever. Anyway, that is how the merger came about early on, but it was separate at the time. I lost my train of thought for a second.

KATZ: Erma Goldwasser.

SHUBIN: Yes. So, Erma Goldwasser, I don't know what her job was at the time. She called me and said, "We know that you are here. We're happy to have you here. We'd like you to get involved, etc." I said, "That would be fine and I'm interested." She suggested that the Golden Age Employment Service was something that I might be interested in. I guess how we got to that was that was one of things that I had done in Cleveland as a volunteer, was work through the Jewish Family Service in connection with a project with NCJW, putting senior citizens to work and finding employers who would be open to hiring senior citizens. That was sort of a transition kind of thing. She said, "The Golden Age Employment Service." I said, "That sounds fine." I must say, that was really fortuitous because someone else who is in the archives here is Fanny Jacobson. Fanny Jacobson was really the, I guess she was the originator of this whole concept. In any case, she took me under her wing. She was really a mentor before we really talked about mentoring, she was a mentor. She really took me under her wing. I loved doing that work. It opened up a whole understanding of what the community was about, and it gave me an opportunity to widen my horizons around that job. It also broadened my understanding of what a

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.

¹⁹ The Atlanta Jewish Federation was formally incorporated in 1967 and is the result of the merger of the Atlanta Federation for Jewish Social Service founded in 1905 as the Federation of Jewish Charities; the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Federation founded in 1936 as the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Fund; and the Atlanta Jewish Community Council founded in 1945. The organization was renamed the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta in 1997

volunteer organization can do in the way of community service. That was a real bonus, personally, for me. As an aside, the aspect of Council that I dwelled upon was the fact that it was a growth opportunity for women and that we were exposed and given educational opportunities that didn't seem to be available in other places if you had a social conscience and wanted to be involved in your community and you wanted to broaden your horizons with the general community and the Jewish community and try and make that partnership.

KATZ: May I ask if you can remember what a typical afternoon of volunteering at the Golden Age Employment Service would have entailed for you. What kinds of things did you do?

SHUBIN: Yes. You were involved with creating opportunities. In other words, finding employers who were willing to hire senior citizens.

KATZ: Calling?

SHUBIN: Calling, writing letters, and following up. I can visualize the office. I can see it. Recruiting other volunteers to work in it and just being an advocate for senior citizens.

KATZ: Did you interview?

SHUBIN: Yes, we did, but we had a professional who was doing that.

KATZ: The screening.

SHUBIN: Yes, and the actual placements. The whole concept of NCJW, the philosophy, is to find an area that needed attention that was not being done in either the private or the public sector. It was also an awareness-raising opportunity. We were doing both the actual placements and the consciousness raising about senior citizens that grew out of, by the way, a Golden Age Club. That came as a result of the club. Once we had the club, then we realized that there were aspects of aging that we could get involved in. When I said the philosophy of NCJW was to do pilot programs and find a local agency. If the project had validity and it needed to be expanded, that took it way beyond what we were prepared to do or could do, financially. So, we needed to find an appropriate . . .

KATZ: A city agency or something like that.

SHUBIN: Right. And that's what happened. B'nai B'rith²⁰ got involved. The Senior Citizen Services of Atlanta got involved.

KATZ: Was that a smooth process or was it something that took many years?

²⁰ B'nai B'rith International (Hebrew: 'Children of the Covenant') is the oldest Jewish service organization in the world. B'nai B'rith states that it is committed to the security and continuity of the Jewish people and the State of Israel and combating antisemitism and bigotry. Its mission is to unite persons of the Jewish faith and to enhance Jewish identity through strengthening Jewish family life, to provide broad-based services for the benefit of senior citizens, and to facilitate advocacy and action on behalf of Jews throughout the world.

SHUBIN: In this case, it didn't take all that long. It was not a smooth process, but it worked. In other words, that was the philosophy. We knew we weren't in these areas forever. For a long time. We weren't equipped to do that. It was one piece. That was really the beginning for me. It gave me the interest to pursue the organization and to get more deeply involved. Again, it gave me opportunities to learn and go to meetings. I ended up going to the White House Conference on Aging²¹ in 1971, I think it was. That was all a result of that interest. You asked about community service. It was two parts. It was public affairs and community service and how the two of them went together. You saw a need. You did something hands on and you advocated on the legislative side if that's what it needed at whatever level. If it was the city, county, state, or national. That was the whole philosophy. That's what got us all excited.

KATZ: That's how agencies worked and advocated.

SHUBIN: As I said, it expanded your horizons and gave you opportunities that you never had before. If you had the *chutzpa*²² or had the energy and nerve, you did it.

KATZ: In terms of expanded horizons, I love that phrase, thinking about this. When you were doing, for example, the Golden Age Employment Service, were you coming across people from all walks of life, coming into the office. What was that like being face to face with people?

SHUBIN: That part I really can't give you that because was being done by other people.

KATZ: So you really didn't come face to face with . . .

SHUBIN: I didn't. Not with the individuals. No.

KATZ: I was wondering, again, if you could tell me a little bit about WICS, Women in Community Service, in those years. How you were involved with that and your impressions of that?

SHUBIN: My impression . . . I was the president and it was all going on. Again, my predecessor Frances Bunzl²³ was involved more than I was. As the president, I did not have

²¹ The White House Conference on Aging is a once-a-decade conference sponsored by the Executive Office of the President of the United States which makes policy recommendations to the president and Congress regarding the aged. The first of its kind, the goals of the conference are to promote the dignity, health and economic security of older Americans. It has been claimed that it is perhaps the best-known White House Conference.

²² *Chutzpah* is the quality of audacity, for good or for bad. The Yiddish word derives from the Hebrew word *hutsâ* (חֲטָאָה) meaning "insolence," "cheek" or "audacity." The modern English usage of the word has taken on a broader meaning—particularly in business parlance—as courage or confidence

²³ Frances Bertha Hamburger Bunzl (b.1920) was originally from Wiesbaden, Germany but immigrated with her family to the United States at the beginning of World War II and eventually settled in Georgia. Frances was active in Atlanta's Jewish community, serving on the National Council of Jewish Women and the Temple Sisterhood. Her testimony is available from the Breman archive.

direct contact with <unintelligible> but it was a national connection from the national organization. The national organization encouraged communities and regions to get involved with WICS. And, it was a very, very important program for the national organization and for the local sections where they did get involved. There was actual contact, recruiting the young women to go into the service. We were very positive and very, I think, successful in that regard. It gave us a lot of interaction with the African-American community. There were a lot of young women who chose that route, and it was very helpful for them in changing their lives. I have a friend now and a colleague from those days from New Jersey. When we have our conversations, she always talks about WICS.

KATZ: Wow. Still.

SHUBIN: Yes. It was a coalition, and NCJW was one of the major pieces of the coalition. It was very important. I don't want to expand any more than what I've already said.

KATZ: As to the coalitions, do you remember what it was like . . . meetings with the other organizations where . . .?

SHUBIN: The National . . .

KATZ: United Church Women. National Council of Catholic Women.

SHUBIN: And the United Negro . . .

KATZ: Now I'm blanking, of course. United Conference of Negro Woman.

SHUBIN: Right. Again, they had conferences. We always participated. We participated at the section level but also at the national level. That was very important. The muckety mucks, so to speak, in the organization, the national president, and national vice presidents would be assigned, and they would go to all of these national meetings. That was a very positive activity for all of the organizations. What it did, it gave people an opportunity to sit down with leaders. All the faith leaders and the African-Americans, the whites, the religious . . . those conversations didn't really take place ordinarily.

KATZ: Right.

SHUBIN: This gave them an opportunity to really work together. It was very positive. I think it had a lasting effect.

KATZ: In Atlanta too?

SHUBIN: No. Not as much. It would be a regional conference. I would say the most impact would have been at the national level where they could really make a difference. At the local level, you were recruiting. You were getting people into the programs. They actually had

individual interaction. Being a volunteer for WICS program, I would hope that you would talk to Frances about that.

KATZ: Yes. For sure.

SHUBIN: I'd like to be present, by the way.

KATZ: I would love that. That would be great. Did you ever socialize outside of this context with women from other organizations that were part of this coalition? Do you ever get together with women from . . .

SHUBIN: No. Meetings on a specific topic.

KATZ: Meetings specific but not necessarily . . .

SHUBIN: Not socially.

KATZ: Parties?

SHUBIN: No. I didn't.

KATZ: I was going to ask next about interaction between Council volunteers and the populations you serve, but it doesn't sound like a ton of face to face, at least with Golden Age Employment Service. But were there other times that you came face to face with . . . ?

SHUBIN: There were a couple of other areas. One was the schools, the programs in the schools. I guess that was HIPPY [Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters]. That's what it was called.

KATZ: The beginning of Head Start, basically.

SHUBIN: Right. It was that program that was a real recruitment tool for volunteers. They loved that. They loved going into the schools where they really felt that they were making a difference. They would go into communities that they were not familiar with. That was very positive. At the same time, we tried to do a . . . and we were actually successful. Again, I would have to go back. Going into the schools and helping with kids who were emotionally disturbed. That program was also very successful. At least we were doing things that volunteer organizations were not doing. The Junior League was very prominent in those areas as well.

KATZ: Did you work together with Junior League?

SHUBIN: Yes, we did. That was always an important piece of what we did, was trying to have partnerships with other organizations that were doing the same kinds of things . . . that were interested in doing the same kinds of things.

KATZ: Do you remember ever if there were times that you didn't see eye to eye at an organizational level with some of the other women's organizations? I don't know. I'm

genuinely asking if there were ever tensions or other things like that in coordinating or what the goals were? Anything?

SHUBIN: There may have been tensions as far as recruiting for members and that kind of thing, but where you had a project or had direction that was appealing to women, whatever level they were coming from, you could get cooperation. Volunteering was a little easier in those days. Things have changed for volunteer organizations. The whole, women going back to work and so forth. We talk about that a lot, as a matter of fact. I talk about it today with my daughter and daughter-in-law and grandchildren about how we spend our time. Is it difficult to get volunteers. All the time I spend here at the Federation . . . but in those days, we were not working, so volunteering was a really big part of our lives because it did so many things for us. It gave us an opportunity to continue to keep our skills sharp. We were always on a learning curve. We were socializing with people who like doing the same kinds of things we did. If we were able, we went to regional, national meetings and overseas to Israel, etc. It was stimulating. We did all kinds of things together because we enjoyed each other's company. We would have all kinds of study groups. It was this combination. It was public affairs and community service. The education and advocacy part was in the public affairs, so the two of them together, it was a great combination.

KATZ: So, people enjoyed each other?

SHUBIN: Yes. The question was, what do we do because we all raised kids. We all had families. How do we manage our time? We got babysitters. We managed to be at home. Now, the women are saying, I ask, "Why are you having problems with the volunteering?" Well, parents seem to be very, very involved with their children. That's where they are spending their time at the PTA.

KATZ: I'm with the PTA, actually.

SHUBIN: I don't know what they're doing, but I get what they're doing. But that's the point. We say, "How different was our life? Where did we find the time and how did we manage?" We all raised kids. I didn't go back to work, so to speak, until the kids were 14 and 15. How did I manage all those years to be a volunteer? Well, we did it. But we weren't working.

KATZ: Right. Not being paid.

SHUBIN: That was the whole point. I have a Bachelor's Degree. That's all I got. I got my graduate work with the National Council of Jewish Women.

KATZ: One thing specific thing I want to ask you about, which you may or may not

remember. My interest was piqued as I was going through the Bulletins. This was when, I think, you were president. There was a very heated public affair. It was under the rubric of public affairs. It was a meeting in December, 1968. It was about the public schools and about public education. A number of community advocates were there, the head of Big Brothers Big Sisters, the head of the Vine City Foundation, people from the Urban Lab and Education. The Bulletin report from January said: We wish more people had been there. It got very heated just talking about the relationship, as I understood, between middle class voluntary organizations and Council and then the communities where the African-American children in the schools, the community advocates. I haven't been able to find a transcript from the meeting, but I wonder if you remember that meeting, by any chance.

SHUBIN: I don't remember the meeting, but I think part of what was going on was the climate at the time, that here were these nice white genteel ladies. They were being viewed as do-gooders. I think there was some resentment on the part of the recipients, the schools on their approach, and why did we need outsiders to help us do this. So, we were phased out. I think there was resentment at the time. I think we also understood the dynamics and why there were these feelings. I don't remember the heated meeting.

KATZ: I think it was civil, but . . .

SHUBIN: What I'm trying to say to you, I think the underlying tensions were because of the whole question of the schools, how to help, how to get the best help for the kids. Its complicated. It continues to be complicated. We can see it in different ways.

KATZ: Absolutely. Do you remember at the time talking as a leader of Council or among the leadership even among the general members, how did it feel to be the pushback? How did that feel to you? Do you remember feeling frustrated?

SHUBIN: Frustrated, I think. A lot of the women who were volunteers and who enjoyed what they were doing, felt as though they were sort of eased out and could not understand why. They really couldn't understand. There wasn't resentment. I don't think there was resentment because we had very good relationships with the principals, the schools, and the black leadership at the time. I think it was just something that had to happen.

KATZ: Right.

SHUBIN: I think it is just what happens in communities trying to work through their issues.

KATZ: Yes. That makes sense. Did you, as a Jewish organization or as a Jewish person, did any of that ever come into play in these communal tensions between the populations that

were being served? Do you remember that ever coming into play?

SHUBIN: It may have but not that it was anything that consequential. Look, that was part of what we were trying to do. We were trying to pave the way to better relationships and however you could do it. If it didn't quite work one way, you tried to find another. We didn't give up. We certainly didn't give up.

KATZ: For a change, which leads me to my next question. Its about change within the Atlanta section. What would you say were the biggest changes within the Atlanta section itself in these years in terms of how it worked or felt? The culture of the section, if you could talk about that a little bit.

SHUBIN: We enjoyed a very fine reputation because the organization had been around for a long time, always in the vanguard. Its nice to be in the vanguard when you see positive change. In that sense, it was good. We were growing. We had, as I said, the recognition. We were able to fundraise in the general community, which was very important. And, we were always called upon to be a part of whatever meetings were going on locally. The city was open to us and called upon us. The state level as well. We enjoyed a very good reputation.

KATZ: And that was steady through that whole time?

SHUBIN: Yes, it was. Because there were courageous women throughout that were available. But the Civil Rights Era²⁴ was a difficult one. It really was. Martin Luther King [Jr.]²⁵ when he got the [Nobel] Peace Prize,²⁶ the city was not that happy. You know that story.

²⁴ The American Civil Rights Era generally encompasses events beginning with the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision in 1954 and ending with the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which was a follow up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

²⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) is best known for his role as a leader in the Civil Rights Movement and the advancement of civil rights using nonviolent civil disobedience based on his Christian beliefs. A Baptist minister, King became a civil rights activist early in his career. He led the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott and helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957, serving as its first president. With the SCLC, King led an unsuccessful struggle against segregation in Albany, Georgia, in 1962, and organized nonviolent protests in Birmingham, Alabama, that attracted national attention following television news coverage of the brutal police response. King also helped to organize the 1963 March on Washington, where he delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. On October 14, 1964, King received the Nobel Peace Prize for combating racial inequality through nonviolence. In 1965, he and the SCLC helped to organize the Selma to Montgomery marches and the following year, he took the movement north to Chicago to work on segregated housing. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. His death was followed by riots in many United States' cities. King was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day was established as a holiday in numerous cities and states beginning in 1971, and as a United States federal holiday in 1986.

²⁶ After Martin Luther King, Jr. won the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, an interracial celebratory dinner planned in Atlanta was almost cancelled due to opposition in the still segregated city. According to former Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young, J. Paul Austin, the chairman and CEO of Coca-Cola, and then Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen summoned key business leaders to a meeting. Austin and told them, "It is embarrassing for Coca-Cola to be located in a city that refuses to honor its Nobel Prize winner. We are an international business. The Coca-Cola Company does not need Atlanta. You all need to decide whether Atlanta needs the Coca-Cola Company."

KATZ: Were there differences that you remember feeling generationally within Council between older women, maybe Southern born, and the younger.

SHUBIN: That's always an issue and it's probably true today. People need to realize that there are certain times in their life when they are able to do certain things. I always said to people, "You're not marrying this organization." You give us the time when you can. If you don't continue to grow, feel yourself growing in this, then move onto something else, but there were lots of opportunities here. That was the other thing that we tried . . . it's a leadership thing. Its always cultivating leaders, and we had good leadership. That was good. People who knew they were rising in the ranks and could have these exceptional opportunities they couldn't get elsewhere. I'm not saying they couldn't get it at ORT²⁷ and *Hadassah*.

KATZ: So, you never remember feeling that as a transplant from the north odd within this context . . . Atlanta was changing already very rapidly but this sort of older cohort of Southern Jewish women who were old leadership. Was there ever any . . .

SHUBIN: We were always newcomers. If you were here 10 years, you were a newcomer. If you were here 20 years, you were a newcomer. I used to kid. I would say I'm still on probation. When do I get out? I'm still on probation!

KATZ: When do you become a Southerner?

SHUBIN: People used to say to me, "You're from someplace. You're not from here."

KATZ: I remember reading the other interview that you traveled around the South quite a lot in your work for Council. Do you remember feeling differences between the Atlanta section and some of the others? How did that play out?

SHUBIN: Yes. Definitely. That was very special for me because . . . I mentioned Fanny Jacobson as being a mentor on the local scene, but within the National Council of Jewish Women, we had a regional organization. We had field people from the national office who were responsible for the regions. There was one woman in particular who then also was a mentor to me. So, I was lucky. She used to say to me when I was vice president and then president, "You're going to do this." I would say, "I don't know how to do that." She would say, "You're going to do it, and I'm going to help you." That became my motto when I came to work

Following the meeting, every ticket to the dinner was sold. Among them was Rabbi Jacob Rothschild of the Temple.

²⁷ ORT (Association for the Promotion of Skilled Trades) is a non-profit global Jewish organization that promotes education and training in communities worldwide. It was founded at the end of the eighteenth century in 1880 in Saint Petersburg, Russia. Active in over 100 countries, today, ORT is the world's largest Jewish education and vocational training NGO (Non-Governmental Organization).

professionally. “You’re going to do this, and I’m going to help you.”

KATZ: It worked.

SHUBIN: It worked. I used to kid her. Then she started sending me out into the field. She sent me to Oakridge [Tennessee], Greenville [South Carolina], Tulsa [Oklahoma], New Orleans [Louisiana], Savannah [Georgia], Charleston [South Carolina], and everywhere. I said to her, “When am I going to reach the big time?” When am I going to get out of these little towns and get into the big towns?

KATZ: International

SHUBIN: Yes. That was so enlightening for me because then I got to see how a little tiny community like Oakridge functioned, then how a small community like Greenville functioned, and how did those Jewish women come together? What did it mean to them?

KATZ: Did it feel different in Oakridge or Birmingham [Alabama] than it did in Atlanta?

SHUBIN: It did, but we had this common interest. We were all doing the same kind of thing. I will tell you something that was interesting because it brought it all back for me. We had a section in Selma, Alabama, and we had a national convention in New York. The year was right in the mid-1960s. The women from Selma were not sure how they were going to be received by the women in the North, so to speak. They were lovely women. They couldn’t have been nicer. They all had a long history in Selma. That was their home, their families, etc. settled there. So, they were a little reluctant to come to New York to a national convention because of the issues of the day. They were really courageous in what they did because they weren’t sure how they could face – they couldn’t explain to the Northerners the actions, the things that were happening in their communities that were not sitting well with the liberals, so to speak. That was very telling. We were all very touched by that. We tried to help them understand that we felt for them and understood. They lived there. They were there day to day. That was what was going on. Hopefully things were going to change and get better.

KATZ: That’s a great anecdote. Do you think that the Atlanta section was seen as more liberal when you went to these little towns? Did you ever get, “Oh, Atlanta. They do things differently in Atlanta.”

SHUBIN: Yes, “You could do this in Atlanta.” No. We would say, no, we have those issues as well just maybe on a different level. They were very, very appreciative of the help that they got as well. In the smaller communities, they were not necessarily as strong. *Hadassah* was always there. *Hadassah* had the Israel component, which was so important. We also, NCJW.

<End Video Tape 1>

<Begin Video Tape 2>

KATZ: This is Emily Katz. I'm here with Marilyn Shubin on April 22 at the Breman Museum in Atlanta. Thank you so much, Marilyn, for being here and for participating in the Taylor Oral History collection at the Breman Museum.

SHUBIN: You're very welcome.

KATZ: Its coming to the conclusion. One of my last questions is about the relationship between Council and other Jewish women's organizations in Atlanta in the years we are talking about, the 1960s and early 1970s. I don't know if you remember some of the different organizations, but I was wondering if you could say a few words about the relationships, if there were any tensions or what you can say about that.

SHUBIN: Personally, I had been a member of *Hadassah* and ORT and Sisterhood, etc. My personal philosophy was that I couldn't be something for . . . I had a limited amount of time, and if I really wanted to make a difference, then I was going to select the organization where I could devote the time and it would be advantageous to them and advantageous to me at the same time. I'm a nominal member of the other organizations, and I told everybody that, that my emphasis . . . if you identify me as a woman who is a member of a volunteer organization, its National Council of Jewish Women. So, were there tensions? I would say yes but really no. Always, everybody wanted everybody to at least be a member of the organization if you had any interest in their pursuits. My personal philosophy was always to try to engage as many organizations around as issue as you possibly could. The more education that each of us had about each other, what they did, and the respect for their programs, helped the community. That is a philosophy that I carry with me to this day. I really believe in that because I think the power of women, in general, and the more we know about each other, the more we learn, the more we grow, and the more we can work together cooperatively. I just believe that.

KATZ: Did you ever feel any residual divisions between the German Jewish women who had been around Atlanta for years and years and the more recent descendants of the Eastern European immigration, within these women's organizations? Did any of that stuff still . . .

SHUBIN: Not really. I think it was gone by the 1960s. I mean, you were aware of it. I think people talked about it more because they would talk about the past, so to speak. When they would say things like, "when I was growing up, we all had our own whatever."

Intermarriage was then a Conservative marrying a Reform. It was insular, I guess, but not what

you talk about interfaith marriages. They were working through it, but it was there. There was no question. It depends. It was generational. If you were talking about the old time classical Reform or German extraction, that was . . .

KATZ: But for your generation of women . . .

SHUBIN: No. If it was there, Emily, we wanted to overcome it. We were working to overcome that.

KATZ: I want to ask you what you feel was most challenging about your involvement with Council at the time, and the flip side, what you felt was most satisfying at the time about being involved with them.

SHUBIN: They really go together. In other words, why do you join an organization in the first place? What are you looking for, what can you contribute, and what can you get in return? Again, my philosophy was, I don't know that I ever necessarily articulated it, but it was the way I led my life. In other words, if I really wanted to be a part of something, I really wanted to be a part of it. I wanted to learn, and I wanted to give back. For me, it was two sides. I call that selfish. In other words, I had to feel that I was growing, but I also felt that I needed to contribute at the same time. As far as satisfying is concerned, I mentioned to you earlier, I really felt that NCJW was my graduate school. If there was an organization that could draft me, they could. After I had my really intense involvement with the organization, what really kept me going, as far as the NCJW was concerned, was the friendships that I had made with women throughout the United States and overseas as well. That was a huge benefit to me, personally, and to my family. To give you an incident, the woman who was president of the National Council of Jewish Women when I was vice president, died this past December at 102. We've been friends from the 1960s until 102. Why do we spend the winters in California? Because of this friend. She was from Salt Lake City [Utah]. That was a long way from Atlanta, but we managed this friendship. It really was a connection. Our children are friends. Its just amazing. I have those friendships all over the country from this. Talk about broadening your horizons, it did it for me, but it did it for my entire family. It gave them interests by example, and they took it up in their own fashion. Those kinds of satisfactions, you don't get everywhere. There are life-changing friendships. These people contributed so much to your life.

KATZ: I want to ask about the ways in which, if you could think about the ways in which the Atlanta section was in the vanguard. Was ahead of the curve. You used the word vanguard

earlier, sort of pioneers, and the ways in which you felt the Atlanta section had lagged behind, if you there were ways in which . . . thinking again at the time if you could put yourself back, ways in which you felt like okay, we're right up front, or ways in which you wished you could have pushed the section along a little bit more. If that makes sense.

SHUBIN: As we said earlier, we didn't discover America. When I talk about going back to my roots . . . in other words, what was inspirational about NCJW and why it came into being in the first place and the kinds of programs we did for . . . we were involved in the integration of immigrants and sex trafficking. So, the things that we were involved with at the turn of the century, we are still talking about a century later. Its part of an evolution. For what we knew and what we were dealing with at the time, I think we were very visionary. Again, going back to those troubled times, if you remember the Model Cities Program?²⁸

KATZ: You were involved.

SHUBIN: Yes. We were involved in that, but it didn't work. It really didn't work. It worked to a point. These were sort of experimental times. The national government was involved. You were spending money, and you weren't seeing progress that you would have liked to have seen.

KATZ: That was Council . . .

SHUBIN: No, but you were a part of it.

KATZ: You aren't faulting Council.

SHUBIN: No, not at all. That is what was going on. You were a part of it. Some of it worked. Some of it didn't. As I said, the whole business with, "How do you bring outsiders in to education? Do they have the experience? Who do you want to be volunteers?" And every

²⁸ On November 3, 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson (1963–69), signed into law the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act. As a centerpiece to his Great Society Program, the act planned to relieve urban blight, poverty, and hardship in America's inner cities. Central to the act was the Model Cities Program, which made sweeping changes to urban planning, development, and restoration, and marshaled federal, state, and local resources to combat physical, social, and economic decline faced by city residents. Previous slum clearance programs bulldozed old neighborhoods and displaced residents, interstate construction bisected entire communities, and landlords charged high rents and ignored property. Model Cities incorporated modern building technology that made large-scale home construction efficient. Civil rights leaders embraced Model Cities since it prohibited housing discrimination. In 1969, President Richard M. Nixon's (1969–74) New Federalism called for the consolidation of HUD and many of its programs. On August 22, 1974, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) initiative replaced Model Cities.

community is different. The things we did in Cleveland and what I got involved with were different . . . one of the things important to me was working in mental health agencies and the residential homes. All the different communities were involved with different things. Basically, what you were saying was that there is a role for the volunteer. That has definitely evolved all over . . . The industry became aware of the need to encourage their people to become volunteers.

KATZ: So, there never was a time that the Atlanta section there was a project when someone suggested we can't go that far.

SHUBIN: No. I have to tell you, though, that . . . the National Council of Jewish Women had a set of resolutions, and the resolutions could be contentious. I remember then we were talking about water quality. So, it was the environmental issues we were talking about then. Everybody would say, "What are we worried about? That's not an issue." But, at the national level, you go back to the resolutions and see the direction that the organization was going. That was what was always challenging for the women. If they got involved beyond the local level, although they were involved when they went to a national convention, they had to vote on these national resolutions. So, yes, we were always involved in the contentious issues, and you would have members of your section who were not happy that you were going in that direction. That's the same thing today. We're all involved in immigration, fair trade, guns, safety.

KATZ: The more things change, the more it stays the same.

SHUBIN: Right. It keeps going. I've enjoyed this conversation.

KATZ: Thank you so much. I've run out of questions for today. Thank you so much for speaking with me and sharing your memories. It's been wonderful.

SHUBIN: You're very welcome. Well, I've enjoyed it.

INTERVIEW ENDS

<End Video Tape 2>