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ESTHER AND HERBERT TAYLOR
JEWISH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ATLANTA
AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE**

MEMOIRIST: MARILYN SHUBIN
INTERVIEWER: MARGERY DIAMOND
LOCATION: ATLANTA, GEORGIA
DATE: NOVEMBER 16, 1998
DECEMBER 3, 1998

<Begin Tape 1>

INTERVIEW BEGINS

DIAMOND: This is Margery Diamond interviewing Marilyn Shubin on November 16 for the Jewish Oral History Project of Atlanta, co-sponsored by American Jewish Committee, Atlanta Jewish Federation, and National Council of Jewish Women.

SHUBIN: My name is Marilyn Shubin. I live at 3208 Argonne Drive. Today is November 16.

DIAMOND: This is Margery Diamond interviewing Marilyn Shubin. We're at her house. Marilyn, I'd like you to begin anywhere you want to. I know you've been thinking about this. We've been trying to get together for a long time. Where would you like to begin?

SHUBIN: I have been thinking about it for a long time, but I haven't really determined where I would like to begin because, as I told you, I had some reluctance about doing this in the first place. What I really would like to do, because I'm not a native of Atlanta because I really came here in the early 1960s, so my history is not as rich and as long as some of the other people who are in the archives. It might be interesting, Margery, if you would sort of key in to the areas that you think are most appropriate and where the information that I can provide for you would make the most contribution to any of the folks who would be doing any history, let's say, from the 1960s on.

<Interview pauses, then resumes>

DIAMOND: We're back after a telephone break. I would also like to note the time that we're actually starting at four o'clock. That tells me about how long we have on the tape. I think that the fact that you were not born in Atlanta and yet you have lived here for a number of years,

made a life for yourself here in Atlanta for almost 40 years, brings you to this point as a person that we are interested in interviewing, and the story is important to Atlanta history. What is sometimes helpful is to start at the very beginning. Talk about your background, where you were born and how you grew up, because that's something that has been a part of the interview. Then your Atlanta period can be our next interview because that's going to take more than one, given the amount of material. That's why I tape usually. Let's talk about when you were born and go from there.

SHUBIN: Fine. We'll do that. I was born on May 18, 1927 in Philadelphia [Pennsylvania].

<Interview pauses, then resumes>

DIAMOND: We're back. One more phone call and now we're back.

SHUBIN: You now know something about me that I don't reveal to too many people. Just kidding. As a matter of fact, I like to tell people my birthday. I don't mind that at all. Age is, I don't know, age is just an attitude as far as I'm concerned. I'm very grateful, at this moment in time, I feel very young and very vigorous. I grew up in Philadelphia and had a very happy childhood.

DIAMOND: Tell me something about your family structure.

SHUBIN: We lived in a Jewish neighborhood. That was a very special kind of experience. You have to know Philadelphia to know that it is a city of neighborhoods. You have great affinity for your neighborhood and for the school that you went to and so forth. However, there were many neighborhoods and many Jewish neighborhoods. I don't know that there was anything unique about the neighborhood that I lived in. It was called Wynnefield. I would call it middleclass, although there was a great spectrum of people who lived there. I say to you it was a Jewish neighborhood, but I also mention to you that on our corner we had a very large Catholic church. How that got there and so forth, I'm really not sure. In any case, that did not affect us in any way.

DIAMOND: What made that a Jewish neighborhood?

SHUBIN: What made it a Jewish neighborhood was that everybody who lived in the neighborhood was Jewish. I used to say that there were 45,000 Jews in my neighborhood. That's true. I could touch those 45,000 Jews by just taking a walk in the neighborhood. The neighborhood had synagogues. The neighborhood had all kinds of Jewish merchants. The neighborhood had all Jewish professionals, meaning the doctor. Your doctor lived around the

corner, and he was right there. It was a very Jewish neighborhood. The only time that you had a sense of your immediate neighborhood changing was when we went to junior high. The junior high drew on a contiguous area and there were Italians in that neighborhood. When we went on to high school, the high school also drew on a larger area. In addition to the predominantly Italian ethnic group, we had a large concentration of blacks who also went to high school. That is significant then coming to Atlanta. Because from the time we went to high school, we had no blacks in the junior high, but in the high school, from the time I started high school, which was tenth grade, blacks were a part of my growing up. So, we were very comfortable with blacks as school chums, not as social chums after school, but as school chums. They were there in our classes. I was in an academic track and so were many, many blacks, so they were my friends. I have two brothers, one is older and one is younger. Also in our neighborhood, my mother had at one point two sisters who lived close by with their families. That was very nice, too, having family in the neighborhood as well. I'll just add one more thing about the neighborhood. That is, it was very stable and that our neighbors were our neighbors for many, many years, even though we did live in three different houses. We lived in each place for quite a long time. We really knew our neighbors. In many cases, the neighbors were like family as well. They were very close. The parents, particularly, were very close. The kids may not have all been the same ages so they might not have been as close, but the families were very close. That's the kind of background I had as far as my neighborhood. We walked to school with the same kids from the time that we were in kindergarten all through high school. We walked to school. I mean, that was it. We walked to school. We walked to junior high and we walked to high school. It didn't matter what the weather was, winter, summer, rain, or whatever, we'd walk to school. We knew the neighborhood. We knew our neighbors, and we knew the merchants, and we knew the professionals, so we were very comfortable. We took public transportation, which was available, and that's how we got around. Growing up that way, I really feel that Philadelphia was my home and everything about it. In those days, we, as I said, considered ourselves middleclass. I guess everybody had a great desire for higher education. One way or another we got our higher education. In most Jewish families, the most important persons for higher education, of course, were the men. There was never a question that my brothers would go to college, but there was a question about whether I would go to college. My father said to me, "If you want to go to college, you figure it out." Most young people today would, I'm sure, harbor some resentment to their parents if their father or mother said to them, "You figure it out." In any case, it didn't even

occur to me that there was anything wrong with my father saying to me, "You figure it out." The fact of the matter is that I didn't feel ill at ease at all about that, nor did I feel that my brothers were getting any preferential treatment. So, I figured it out. I got a scholarship to Drexel Institute of Technology. My choices were very limited. They were the only ones who offered me a scholarship, so that's where I went to school. Of course, I really didn't apply anywhere else because that's where the high school counselor said might be available. I tried and I got it. I went to college four years on this scholarship. Just as an aside, one of my brothers went to University of Pennsylvania. The other one went to Temple University. That's the way we did it then. We couldn't go away to school, but we went to school. We went and then we got our higher education. I went to work after I graduated from Drexel. I had majored in business with a concentration in retailing. I went to work for a department store called Lit Brothers¹ where I had spent nine months on a cooperative training program, which was unique to Drexel. When I graduated from college, I was part of a junior executive training program. I mention that because my husband Josh was also a member of that junior executive training program. That's how we both met. He had no intention of going into retailing. That was the furthest thing from his mind when he graduated from school. His first job didn't work out and he just fell into this opportunity. It was, I guess, fate for the two of us in any case. I mention the fact that we were both in retailing because that's what gave us the impetus to make a couple of moves as a family. Shortly after we were married, which was in 1951, Josh had an opportunity to leave Lit Brothers and go to the Higbee Company² in Cleveland, Ohio, as a buyer. Of course, I went with him. We moved to Cleveland in 1952. That was the end of our Philadelphia time in our lives. Cleveland was a wonderful town to live in. We lived there for ten years. Our children were both born there. To this day, our closest friends are still in Cleveland. We maintained those friendships. We see them. We share family *simchas*.³ It was a very important ten years in our lives. We became members of the Reform⁴ congregation there. The rabbi was Abba Hillel Silver⁵ followed

¹ Lit Brothers was a moderately-priced department store based in Philadelphia. Samuel and Jacob Lit opened the first store at North 8th and Market Streets in 1891. Lits positioned itself well as a more affordable alternate to competitors Strawbridge and Clothier, John Wanamaker, and Gimbel's. The Lit Brother Store building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and is located in the East Center City Commercial Historic District.

² Higbee's was a department store founded in 1860 in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1987, Higbee's was sold to the joint partnership of Dillard's department stores. The stores continued to operate under the Higbee name until 1992, when the chain was re-branded as Dillard's.

³ A Hebrew word with several meanings: literally, it means "gladness" or "joy." The concept of *simcha* is an important one in Jewish philosophy. It is a *mitzvah* to always be in a state of happiness, the better to serve G-d. It is also often used as a noun meaning "festive occasion."

⁴ A division within Judaism especially in North America and Western Europe. Historically it began in the

by his son Daniel, who were towers of leadership as far as the Reform movement is concerned. We were very involved in that congregation as a family. It made a great difference in our lives. In 1962, again, I refer back to retailing because that was what happened when you were in retailing. You went from one place to another as the proper opportunity became available. We had an opportunity to come to Atlanta. Josh was offered a job in what was then Davison-Paxon,⁶ which today is part of the Macy chain. In 1962, we moved here. I remember my friends and neighbors saying to me, "Where are you going?" I said, "We're moving to Atlanta." They said, "Georgia?" We said, "Yes, Georgia." Of course, they had no idea what was going on down here. Neither in fact did I. But Josh was very favorably impressed when he came to Atlanta with the opportunity and the city and so forth. It was only after we got here that we realized that we came to a place that was undergoing a real social change, and we were going to be part of that change, which was an eye opener and certainly an enlightening part of our maturing and growth. Much of what had happened here, as far as the struggle for equal rights in schools, integration and so forth, had already happened but there were still picket lines. I remember Josh, before I got here, in the interim period had participated in a picket line with a friend that he had made. That was all part of integrating us into the social milieu that we found here. In any case, Josh went to work, and I decided that I needed to become a part of the community and learn my way around. I was welcomed by the community, the Jewish community, that is, immediately. Somehow or other *Hadassah*⁷ found me on my doorstep waiting for the moving truck. I joined *Hadassah* and found that the women were very open and warm and made me the secretary of the chapter immediately. It was easy. It was an easy place to make friends. We felt that we had made a good move. I would say to you that although I say that Philadelphia is where I grew up

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.

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ *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* of Greater Atlanta (HGA), the metro Atlanta chapter, was founded in 1916.

and where I still have family, that Atlanta for us is really home. It's been good to me personally. It's been good to Josh in his career. He has had several different changes in his career. It's been good to our children, who are no longer children but adults, and themselves have had great success here. Now I'm going to take a breath. Can you stop it for a minute?

<Interview pauses, then resumes>

DIAMOND: We're back on line. I think what happens is that when you stop the tape and start it again that sometimes whatever we say off tape gets lost.

SHUBIN: That's fine.

DIAMOND: What I said off tape just now was I was so happy to hear the *Hadassah* episode because it also happened to me. There was a *Hadassah* lady at my door the day that I was unpacking. I had secretly gotten married, so *Hadassah* knew. I wondered if it still happens today, and you say probably not. Which leads me to another thought that you might like to address. If I'm wrong, tell me, and we'll go somewhere else. There have been many changes. I mean, in those days, *Hadassah* was at your door. Today it's not. In 40 years, you've witnessed quite a number of changes. What I may want to start with, and we can flip-flop back and forth from early years to present, but in comparing what a holiday was like for you in the home of your parents. Let's talk about that. Once we've done that, maybe compare it to what a holiday is like in the home of either your home today. I don't want to get too complicated, so let's leave it at that.

SHUBIN: That's good. I am happy to do that. I also want you to know that this is a perfect segue into a really important piece that I want to develop, which is my volunteer activities.

DIAMOND: Let's go there.

SHUBIN: No. We can stop for a second about the holiday piece, which is I think probably typical and my story is probably not unique. As I mentioned to you, not only in the neighborhood where I lived did my relatives live, but in Philadelphia my father had a large family, my mother had a large family. In addition to the ones who lived in the neighborhood, not only did I see them on a regular basis, but I also saw my other aunts and uncles on a regular basis, particularly on my father's side because my father's father, my grandfather, lived with us for 18 years. That was a whole other dimension to my growing up. He was, of course, the reason why all of his other children came to visit weekly. Every Sunday, our house was the meeting ground for the entire family. My mother was central both to her family and to my father's family. Our house was always the center of family functions. In addition, my mother

was the best cook in the family. For all those reasons, our house was really central to both sides of the family. Times have really changed, particularly once we left Philadelphia, we left the bosom of the family so to speak. After having family been so important, to move away from family, the way we dealt with that was to make lots of friends. Those friends really became our family. It was interesting that when my parents and when Josh's parents came to visit us, they were always impressed by the fact that we had so many friends who were like family. They appreciated those friends as much as we appreciated those friends because they realized that they were, in fact, a substitute for our family, particularly on holidays and so forth. Holidays are important to us. One way or another, whether we have family or not, they are celebrated with lots of people. Today, of course, going from then to now, we have our own family, our children, and our grandchildren. Interestingly enough, we have a nephew who moved here and married an Atlanta girl. That's another reason for one of my brothers and his family to visit us and so forth. Atlanta is now becoming a focal point for our family. Just as an aside, Josh has no family. He was an only child. The family is all on my side. To go back to the *Hadassah* story and the volunteer piece of my life, if I can point to one of the areas that really formed me as an individual, it was my association with the National Council of Jewish Women.⁸ I, and not to confuse the issue, when I mentioned *Hadassah* earlier, but I had become a member of the National Council of Jewish Women in Cleveland, which is, as I mentioned, our former home. So, when I came to Atlanta, although *Hadassah* sought me out, I sought out the National Council of Jewish Women. Immediately when I made that overture, they were totally responsive and involved me from the get-go. In addition to just involving me, they also gave me responsibilities of leadership. As I mentioned, I moved here in 1962, and in 1967, I was installed as the president of the local section. They really took a flier on a newcomer, so to speak. It was a wonderful opportunity for me. It has meant a great deal to me, which I will elaborate on, and to the family as well. This is really a natural progression here of really what I want to say and what my involvement is with the community. That is, as I furthered my interest in the National Council of Jewish Women, they were broadened as well to include the southeast region and then the national organization. In 1975 to 1979, I was a national vice president of the National Council of Jewish Women, which gave me an opportunity to travel all over the United States and to Israel for the first time. Actually, the trip to Israel was earlier with the National Council of

⁸ The National Council of Jewish Women is an organization of volunteers and advocates, founded in the 1890's, 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.

Jewish Women in 1972. Concurrently, or in the same time period, in 1970, which was after I finished my term as president, I went on to the national board of the National Council of Jewish Women. At the same time, in 1970, I went to work for the Atlanta Jewish Federation.⁹ I hope that's clear that there were some things happening at the same time in my life that I was able to address at the same time. However, as my responsibilities with the Federation increased, it became obvious that I had to make some kind of a choice as far as where I was going on a national basis with this organization and where I was going with my career. In 1979 when I took on the position of campaign director for the Atlanta Jewish Federation, I determined that I could no longer pursue the leadership activities with the national organization of the National Council of Jewish Women. The emphasis that I want to make is that it was because of my volunteer activities with the National Council of Women that I was considered for the position that I had at the Federation. The training that I had and the opportunities that I had to speak publicly and to lead workshops and develop all kinds of leadership activities for women were the reasons that I was looked upon favorably when I decided to re-enter the world of work in 1970. As I said, I was fortunate enough to have an enlightened boss, whose name is Mike Gettinger,¹⁰ who I am sure is mentioned on many other tapes. He really allowed me to do both - to lead a dual life so to speak, to be a volunteer on the one hand and to be a professional in the Jewish community on the other. That, as I say, is the background that gave me great satisfaction personally. I saw myself growing in both directions, meaning, in the volunteer community and in the professional community. Although it sometimes created a very delicate balancing act, I hoped that I was able to pull it off. From 1979 until 1994, I was totally involved with my professional life through the Federation. I went on to become the assistant director of the Federation. I spent a lot of time, in addition to fund raising and those responsibilities, with leadership development and human resource development. I had a very satisfying career. Along the way, I guess what I observed and what happened was several things. Atlanta was exploding, so to speak, as a Jewish concentration of population and the southeast became a real center of Jewish life. When we first got here, it was a very small Jewish community. One of my first jobs, in addition to being the Women's Division Director, was we created a program called Shalom Atlanta, which is a

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ Max C. (Mike) Gettinger (1911-2000) became the executive director of the Atlanta Jewish Federation in 1962, a post he kept until 1982.

welcome newcomer program. It was in response to the number of Jewish people who were moving to Atlanta. Basically, what was happening was kids were going to Emory [University] and graduating and falling in love with Atlanta and decided to make their lives here. Men were being transferred to Atlanta because Atlanta was a regional hub and their companies were transferring them here. They loved living here. Even when the company decided to move them again, they said, "No, I'm not going anywhere." Naturally, what happened was people who were living in other places who had children and grandchildren in Atlanta were retiring and moving to Atlanta to be with their family. For those reasons and all of the other reasons that Atlanta has boomed economically, the Jewish community followed. We saw many changes in the Federation, the need for services, the need to raise more money, and, of course, the whole question of raising dollars for Israel. I was sort of, I guess you could say, there when the growth was exponential, it just kept going. When I started with Federation, this is just humorous, I said that I came with the building and I left with the building because in 1970, the Federation moved to Peachtree Street next door to the Jewish Community Center.¹¹ In 1994, they moved to Spring Street. That was the year I retired. I came with the building and I left with the building and saw everything else in between. I saw the campaign grow dramatically. I saw the influx of Soviet newcomers to the community. I saw the growth of all the agencies. I saw the growth of all the synagogues and the community relations and everything that went with every trial that went with Israel from 1970 on. Although the reason why I was hired by the . . . this may be a little difficult for the transcriber or whoever is listening to this. The reason why I was hired by Mike Gettinger, who I mentioned before, is because as a volunteer with the National Council of Jewish Women, we had many connections with the Federation. Mike Gettinger knew me as a volunteer. I guess this is interesting for anybody who will use this tape. When in 1970 I decided to re-enter the world of work, I did what most people do and that is make . . . we didn't call it networking then, but make a list of all the people that you know who might be able to help you find a job. The first person at the top of my list was Mike Gettinger because I figured, well, he knows everybody. I might as well start with the Jewish community. I called him on the phone and said, "Mike, I just wanted to let you know that I am interested in going back to work and if you know of anybody who is interested, please let me know." His response was, "Well, how would you like to work for me?" I said, "Well, that's an interesting prospect." That was the end of my job

¹¹ Atlanta Jewish Community Center was officially founded in 1910, as the Jewish Educational Alliance. In the late 1940's it evolved into the Atlanta Jewish Community Center and moved to Peachtree Street. It stayed there until 1998, when the building was sold and the center moved to Dunwoody. In 2000, it was renamed the 'Marcus

search. I am indebted to him for giving me the opportunity to go back to work and having the confidence that I could do a job there, given the fact that all I really had to show for it was the educational background, a short period of time when I had worked after graduating from college, and the rest of it a volunteer background. I don't know that, I say this often, that if I went to apply for a job at the Federation today, they wouldn't hire me. But in 1970, they did.

DIAMOND: Look what they would have missed.

SHUBIN: I don't know about that. But for me, it was personally very, very gratifying. I really can't say enough about the leadership of the Federation in terms of allowing me to grow personally. I guess an interesting part of this is that if you would talk about women and the opportunities that women have had along the way, many people would say to you that women have been discriminated against and have, and I would say to you also, that it's a fact. It's absolutely a fact that women have been kept over the years from many jobs in many different sectors and have been discriminated against in their remuneration. I never was a victim, so to speak. Although I had to overcome a minimal pay scale when I first went to work, after a while I was able to be remunerated as an equal. I always felt pretty good about that because I felt that was very important because it meant something to me to be considered a professional and had nothing to do with the fact that I was a woman. I was a professional and I wanted to be treated as a professional, and I wanted to be paid as a professional. I made that very clear to anybody who would listen to me. Both volunteer leaders and professionals knew exactly how I felt about that. In my own case, I would say, I was treated fairly, always treated fairly. But many women were not. I always tried where I could to champion any cause as far as women were concerned. I still do that today.

DIAMOND: I'm going need to check the tape because what I hate is running out of tape while we're still talking. All right. It looks like we've got a little bit more time on the tape, maybe about ten more minutes.

SHUBIN: I would like to stop right now.

DIAMOND: You need a break?

SHUBIN: Yes.

DIAMOND: You can have one.

<End Tape 1, Side 1>

<Begin Tape 1, Side 2>

DIAMOND: This is Margery Diamond interviewing Marilyn Shubin on December 3, 1998 for the Jewish Oral History Project of Atlanta, co-sponsored by American Jewish Committee, Atlanta Jewish Federation, and National Council of Jewish Women. This is our second tape.

SHUBIN: This is Marilyn Shubin. I live at 3208 Argonne Drive, Northwest, Atlanta.

DIAMOND: I think with this microphone, we'll just sort of hand it back and forth. Hello. We can start with that. I listened to the tape this morning that we recorded, what, two weeks ago?

SHUBIN: Boring.

DIAMOND: No, no, no, no. It's delightful because you have a wonderful way of saying a lot in very few words. I think that has served you well throughout your life, but particularly with your work in community. I listened most carefully to the part at the end which was sort of my agenda for the second interview anyway because I felt like the first interview usually is a little uncomfortable for people. With the second interview, you can just sort of relax and let it flow a little bit better. You highlighted sort of an outline of your professional and personal volunteer life in the Jewish community for the last 40 years since you came to Atlanta. You hit the highlights, the headings of the outline. What I'd like to do today is to go and start at, I think the statement you made was you sent a letter telling Council of Jewish Women . . . or you made the contact with Council of Jewish Women in the very beginning when you first came to Atlanta.

SHUBIN: No. Remember, I said they met me at the door?

DIAMOND: *Hadassah* met you at the door.

SHUBIN: No, no, no. As a matter of fact . . .

DIAMOND: Your words. You can change it now. Certainly, you're free to do that.

SHUBIN: What did I say?

DIAMOND: You said *Hadassah* met you at the door. They sought you. But you sought Council because you had belonged to Council of Jewish Women in Cleveland. I would like you to start with the response to that and go from there in as much detail as you can possibly share with us. If it's different this time than last time, it's okay too.

SHUBIN: No, it's not different. Good, I'm glad that you refreshed me on that. I think the way it happened because, you know, we're talking ancient history here, Margery. What happened was that I, you're absolutely right, that I had had this very, very warm and welcoming experience in Cleveland for just several years before we moved to Atlanta. Because it was such a positive volunteer experience, I did contact the Council. If my memory serves me correctly, that on some occasion, which was simultaneous with that contact, I met Erma Goldwasser, the

wife of David Goldwasser, both very prominent Jewish Atlantans. Little did I know that they were prominent Jewish Atlantans. In any case, Erma at that point, was involved with NCJW. She called me after we had met on this personal level to become involved with what, at that time, was called the Golden Age Employment Service, one of the volunteer projects of the National Council of Jewish Women. That appealed to me. It appealed to me, just parenthetically say it appealed to me because one of the other things that I had done in Cleveland before I got here was to do some work in job development for the Jewish Family Agency in Cleveland. This was sort of a natural fit. I don't know if it was a coincidence or what, but that's just the way it happened. Erma invited me to participate in this project. I accepted and agreed and went down to the Council house at 793 Piedmont [Road] where I had the good fortune to meet Fanny Jacobson who, at that time, was the lay leader responsible for the Golden Age Employment Services. As a matter of fact, I guess Fanny was really the mother of the project and that she gave birth to the project. She conceived it and she really gave birth to it. She nurtured it into becoming a really full-fledged legitimate employment service which subsequently went on to become a B'nai B'rith¹² project and ultimately was taken over by the Senior Citizens Services in Atlanta. That's just a short history of what happened to the project. For me, it was my introduction to NCJW in Atlanta, and to Fanny who, as we say, took a shine to me, I guess because I was a willing learner. She became a mentor of sorts, at least in the employment service. I must say that our friendship has remained over the years. There I was, sort of launched into my volunteer work in Atlanta and in the Jewish community. I guess what really appealed to me about that project was that it put us in touch not only with the Jewish community but the general community, not only with potential employers but also with other social service agencies that had the same interests in helping individuals. That was really the beginning of my career. From there, I was then asked to do other leadership positions in NCJW. I did several vice presidencies, community service, and public affairs. Then I was asked to be the president of the section, and I was.

DIAMOND: Talk a little about the community service.

SHUBIN: The National Council of Jewish Women, which is my pet organization, I mean the organization which I think I indicated in the first tape as well, really gave me an opportunity to grow personally and professionally. The opportunities for growth were provided because the organization had a

¹² 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.

breadth and depth of interests. One of its major centers of interest is community service. There we were as a volunteer organization working in the community, meeting community needs, and investigating community needs, then developing projects to meet the needs, then spinning these projects off to larger agencies in the community, not necessarily Jewish agencies, who could then afford to maintain these projects as long as they were needed. Council never had the wherewithal. The idea was to develop pilot programs, short lived, which efficiently demonstrated whether in fact there was a need and how best could it be met. As an example, the Golden Age . . . I have to backtrack for one second. The whole question of services to senior citizens and services to the aged had always been an interest of NCJW nationally. Local communities fit themselves into the national picture where it was most appropriate for them. The first foray into services for the aged were the Golden Age Clubs which were traditionally afternoon social kinds of programs for retirees, to put it most simply. They became much more than that over the years as communities recognized the needs of senior citizens. From the Golden Age Clubs, we developed the Golden Age Employment Service. From the Golden Age Employment Service, as a matter of fact, we also developed an information and referral service and a nursing home advisory service. All of those services seemed to naturally grow one from another, all because of this interest in serving the senior population and then subsequently, of course, the aged population. We also had a great interest in services to children. One of the areas that we became involved with was the Head Start program. I want you to know, these things did not begin with me. I am mirroring for you what were the interests of that era and how organizations met those needs. One of the major interests at that time was services in the schools and the recognition that it was never too early to intervene and help kids. There were preschool programs, kindergarten programs, and programs for kids at the elementary level. Without going into too much detail, another interest at the same period of time was services for children who did not fit the mold. One area in particular that we were involved with was setting up a daycare program for children who were emotionally disturbed. That was done in conjunction with several community agencies. I'm trying to think. I'm fairly certain it was the North Avenue Presbyterian Church. If it wasn't North Avenue Presbyterian Church, it was one of the churches in that vicinity. That sort of gives you an idea of the breadth of interest. What appealed to me personally and also what was appealing to the other volunteers as well was the fact that here we were, volunteers, housewives, well-educated, who at the same time that we were leading our daily lives, so to speak, we were able to make contribution to the community, and we were out in the broader community as well as the Jewish

community. What that did, we felt, it demonstrated the basic value of Judaism, that we weren't separating ourselves from the community but that we were part of the community. It certainly was beneficial in both directions, that we had many, many contacts in social service agencies, in the other church community regardless of denomination, and within the Jewish community. There really weren't any doors that were closed to us when we were talking about issues that would work for the entire community. All of this feeds on itself because when it came time for us to fund raise for our projects, we weren't limited in who we could talk to. We could talk to anybody. We could talk to the entire community. Here we were, again, housewives with a lot of *chutzpa*,¹³ who had no hesitation going to anyone who was the president of a bank. Mills Lane¹⁴ was always there for us. The other presidents of the banks, large corporations, foundations, whatever. We were not hesitant at all about asking. We weren't asking for ourselves. We were asking for a project that would ultimately serve the entire community. When you talk about community service, we sort of ran the gamut. It was that broad interest of the national organization which translated into local section projects that appealed to me. That was the interest that I had. The other side of the coin, so to speak, which goes hand in hand with community service, is the public affairs department, which is what we called it then. In modern terms, it is what is referred to as advocacy, which is developing interest groups who will lobby for a particular issue and make sure that the public and governmental support is there to support the projects with adequate funding. These two areas, community service and public affairs, worked hand in hand. Basically, those were the two areas that gave me my broadest education in volunteer life, which I was able to draw upon when I turned professional. Let's stop here for a minute.

<Interview pauses, then resumes>

DIAMOND: We took a little breather after describing the local National Council of Jewish Women, a little bit about your involvement in it, and what was going on at the time. I know you were involved for a number of years and became the president of the Atlanta chapter. From that point, from that presidency, you were invited to participate on a national level. If you would talk

¹³ *Chutzpah* is the quality of audacity, for good or for bad. The Yiddish word derives from the Hebrew word *hutspâ* (חֲצִפָּה) 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.

¹⁴ Mills B. Lane began at Citizens Bank as a vice-president and director in 1891. In 1901, Lane became president of Citizens Bank. In 1906, Lane and his associates purchased Southern Bank of Georgia enabling them to merge the two banks as the new C&S Bank. The newly merged banks were officially named the Citizens and Southern Bank of Georgia. His son, Mills B. Lane, Jr. (1912-1989), served as president, vice-chairman and chairman between 1946 and 1973 and made C&S the South's largest bank as well as the most profitable of the 50 largest

about that for a while.

SHUBIN: In 1967, I was elected the president of the Atlanta section of the National Council of Jewish Women. I held that post for two years. While I was president, I was asked to serve on the national board of NCJW. That was considered pretty special to be asked to be a national board member while you were serving as president of a local section. I won't take it as any kind of special compliment for myself. What I really would like to think was that Atlanta section was really being recognized for its potential and also for the contributions and the creativity that it had demonstrated, and that I was the fortunate one to have been at the right place at the right time. It was very fortuitous for me, and it really launched me on a much broader horizon than I had any idea that I was in store for. In 1970, I started my first term as a national board member. Parenthetically, as I mentioned earlier, that was the year that I decided that I was going to re-enter the world of work. Here I was launched on a two-pronged career not knowing what I was getting into in either direction. Fortunately, I had two things going for me. I had an enlightened boss at the Federation. I also had a very supportive family at home. Those two things made a difference. What it did, it gave me the time and the freedom to do the kinds of things that I was being asked to do as a national board member. I was obligated to go to New York several times a year to attend the national board meetings. Shortly thereafter, I was elected to the executive committee, which also meant that I had more responsibility in terms of attending meetings. It was wonderful for me to have that opportunity. I was then involved with women from all over the country. Our interests, locally, as well included the overseas interests, but it became that much greater on the national level, the whole interest in Israel and our projects in Israel. This went hand in hand with what I was doing in my professional life, so it was really a very good fit, at least for me. I had the opportunity through my work the first time to go to Israel. I had an opportunity again to go back with my husband to Israel for his first trip in 1974. Over the years, I think now I'm working with my 23rd or 24th trip to Israel. I think it's obvious that Israel has become a big part of my psyche and a real interest for me and what happens to Jews wherever they live. What did it mean to me to be a national board member? What it meant was that I had opportunities to interact with people in every size community in the country. I don't know if I mentioned this earlier or not, but I . . . I think I did mention that I had a mentor from the NCJW.

DIAMOND: No.

SHUBIN: I didn't mention that? A field representative who was very instrumental in

providing opportunities for me. She had a willing subject, and she kept sending me around to all the *shtetls*¹⁵ in the south. I went to Oak Ridge [Tennessee], Knoxville [Tennessee], Nashville [Tennessee], Memphis [Tennessee], Charleston [South Carolina], Jacksonville [Florida], Oklahoma City [Oklahoma], Dallas [Texas], and New Orleans [Louisiana]. There I was. What was I doing? I was peddling the National Council of Jewish Women. Sometimes there were six people in somebody's dining room. There were other times when there were hundreds of people and I was making a speech. I was doing things that I had never dreamed that I could ever do. It was wonderful. It was really a wonderful experience for me. This field representative kept saying to me, "Next thing we're going to do is a workshop. The next thing we're going to do is a training program. Or the next thing we're going to do is a major fundraising event." I said, "Many of these things I've never done before." She says, "Don't worry about it. I'm going to help you and you're going to do it." And we did it. So, there I was, going to meetings, going to national convocations in Washington, and when major things were happening in the Jewish world. You know, you're right, Margery, there's something I have to mention here. It just occurred to me when I was trying to review some dates in my mind, about the kinds of opportunities that this organization provided for me. I mentioned the interest in aging. In 1971, there was a national White House Conference on Aging.¹⁶ I was appointed a delegate to the White House Conference on Aging. I remember the sessions that we had in Washington but also in Atlanta, feeding into the White House Conference. What I tried to . . . what I said before was how much excitement there was in having these opportunities which sort of came your way naturally because of the involvement. If, as an individual, you were interested in learning and growing, the opportunities were there for you. I guess it's just part of who I am that when the opportunities came along, I agreed to do them rather than finding an excuse not to do them. I have to say that looking back over the years, the only thing that I regret is the times when I said no instead of yes. I would say it was a lesson to my children and so forth that I encouraged them on the same basis, to take advantage of opportunities which comes your way even though it takes some doing to accommodate them. They do put some pressures on you, but you are very fortunate when those opportunities come your way. It's really too bad if you don't allow yourself

¹⁵ The Yiddish term for town, '*shtetl*' commonly refers to small towns or villages in pre-World War II Eastern and Central Europe with a significant Jewish presence that were primarily Yiddish speaking.

¹⁶ 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.

to take advantage of them. I guess maybe the only other . . . I have another aside that I wanted to make. I'll go on with this board and leadership position in the NCJW for just a minute. In 1975, I was elected a vice president. I served as vice president for four years. What it was, was more of the same only additional responsibilities like being the chairman of the National Resolutions Committee when the organization was a big deal. The resolutions were passed at every national convention, and we had a very prestigious committee that sat together to analyze the resolutions, which were really the bedrock of the organization. I was also given the opportunity to be the chairman of the resolutions committee. These are the kinds of things that were enormously helpful to me. I felt as though I was getting a graduate education without going through the formalities of going to school. Here I was able to juggle my life with my personal life and my professional life, then I had this other life which was the volunteer life. What happened was that in 1979 I took on a major responsibility at work and that really, in effect, ended my leadership career with NCJW because there was no way that I could do both. I don't regret it, that I didn't go on to larger responsibilities. I often think about what it would have been like if I had continued. In any case, the only other thing that I wanted to mention that was in this period is that again through my contacts with the National Council of Jewish Women, when President Carter¹⁷ put together the first Holocaust Memorial Commission, I was asked to be a member of that commission. That was a very, very special time in my life. Again, I realize that I was given the benefit of participating in a major step forward for the U.S. government. Again, I happened to be the person in the right place at the right time and had met several people who were very close to President Carter who were responsible for selecting the members of the commission. I remember clearly going to my first meeting, and Elie Wiesel¹⁸ was the chairman at the time. I was just blown away. I was totally overwhelmed by the people who were in the room, all of the major civil rights¹⁹ people, all of the religious leaders, and all of the members of the Holocaust survivor community. This past year, I am trying to . . . it was 1976 or 1978. I'm trying to think what year the commission was. In any case, this year, 1998,

¹⁷ James Earl "Jimmy" Carter Jr. (b. 1924) was the 39th President of the United States from 1977 to 1981. He was a Democrat.

¹⁸ Eliezer "Elie" Wiesel (1928-2016) was a Jewish writer, professor, political activist, Nobel Laureate, and Holocaust survivor. He was born in Sighet, Transylvania, which is now part of Romania.

¹⁹ The American Civil Rights Movement encompasses social movements in the United States whose goal was to end racial segregation and discrimination against black Americans and enforce constitutional voting rights to them. The movement was characterized by major campaigns of civil resistance. Between 1955 and 1968, acts of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience produced crisis situations between activists and government authorities. Noted legislative achievements during this phase of the Civil Rights Movement were passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Services Act of 1965, and the Fair

we participated in the fifth anniversary celebration of the opening of the Holocaust Museum.²⁰ That was another historic event, as far as I'm concerned. My family participated with me as well. Elie Wiesel was honored. It was a tremendously moving experience. That whole period when we were meeting with the commission, I was on the fundraising commission, committee, rather. Senator Frank Lautenberg²¹ was the chairman of that committee. Here I was a member of a committee where Frank Lautenberg was the chairman. It was pretty impressive. In any case, that was another opportunity that came my way really because of National Council of Jewish Women. I guess to sum up the whole question of what it's like being a leader in a national organization, I can't imagine what our lives would be like. It would have been very different because not only did I benefit from that experience, but my entire family benefited. I have very, very close friends all over the country who are friends of my husband, my children, and what have you all because of that experience. I guess because we were all doing the same things at the same time, all roused up about the same causes, and like-minded individuals. I guess birds of a feather kind of thing. In any case, it's something that I will always cherish.

DIAMOND: That sums up the volunteerism side of your life. Let's skip over to the professional side and the day you decided to go to work.

SHUBIN: Can we turn it off for just a minute?

DIAMOND: Sure.

<Interview pauses, then resumes>

SHUBIN: We're now switching to the professional life. Here I was in 1970 at a point in our lives when we had some personal changes. Josh wasn't sure what he wanted to do. The kids were in their early teens, sort of mid-teens. I had been doing all this intensive volunteer work. I said, "Maybe it's time for me to think about re-entering the world of work possibly for a couple of years and contributing to the household income." The kids were going to go to college. We didn't know if they were going to go to professional school after that or whatever. I was a full-bodied woman. Maybe I had something that I could contribute to. I decided to give it a whirl and see if I had some skills that somebody would pay me for. Margery, remind me, did I mention this in the last tape, because you said you listened this morning. Did I talk about my job

Housing Act of 1968.

²⁰ The Museum is the United States' official memorial to the Holocaust. It was dedicated in 1993 in Washington, D.C. It provides for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history.

²¹ Frank Raleigh Lautenberg (1924-2013) served as United States Senator of New Jersey as a member of the Democratic Party. Lautenberg was elected five terms as senator. He took office in 1982 and served three terms until retiring from the Senate in 2001.

search? I think I did.

DIAMOND: A sentence or two about how you started with a list and Mike Gettinger was at the top, and that was the end of the job search.

SHUBIN: Great. I thought I did. In any case, I started to work. <telephone rings> Stop that, Margery.

<Interview pauses, then resumes>

DIAMOND: Sorry for the interruption. Your decision to go to work and what that first experience was like. That's a big switch from volunteer to employee.

SHUBIN: You're right. It was very interesting, by the way, not only for me to make that switch but how I was perceived by my friends and associates and so forth as this lay leader making a switch to the world of work. Having to work with all of the people who had previously worked with me as a lay person and how were they going to relate to me as a professional. How was I going to relate to them as a professional? Was I going to be able to demonstrate a professional manner and keep personalities at a minimum and be even-handed, fair? It was a very fine line initially. I think I managed to hold the line. I don't think that over the years there were too many instances when that really got in the way. It was not a problem. I can only really relate to one unfortunate incident where I felt that a lay leader had gone beyond the line in terms of a relationship. Other than that . . . and that person to this day would not know that. Only I know it. I would say the best part about working was the personal relationships that were developed with individuals. The thing that makes me feel the best about the time that I did work is when people who came in contact with me over the years tell me that they learned something, that I helped them grow and that they felt a real sense of satisfaction from the things that they did. I felt that not only did I benefit from the work, not only did I contribute something personally, but that a host of people over the years because we had an opportunity to work together, that they felt as though they contributed something as well. That's the nourishment of the soul that you get when you work in a satisfying position. I went to work as the director of the Women's Division. At that time, the Women's Division was a little really nothing, although for me it was a full-time job. I had very, very little direction in terms of what I was responsible for doing. Somehow or other, I guess my boss realized that his style and my style really went together, because he really did not do a lot of supervision, although he was a social worker. One of the things that he never quite really respected me for was the fact that I wasn't a social worker. He never felt that I could understand certain aspects of personal/interpersonal relationships. I

would argue to this day that he and I don't agree on that, that I could certainly understand where many people were coming from, to use that overused expression, without being a social worker. That's not being condescending in any way to social workers. But I wasn't a social worker. There wasn't any way I was going to be a social worker; I was happy being who I was.

<End Tape 1, Side 2>

<Begin Tape 2, Side 1>

DIAMOND: Quick test. We're on the second tape, the first side of the second actual tape. This is Margery Diamond continuing an interview with Marilyn Shubin on December 3. The forerunner part of this tape is on Side B of the first tape. This is for the Jewish Oral History Project of Atlanta, co-sponsored by American Jewish Committee, Atlanta Jewish Federation, and National Council of Jewish Women.

SHUBIN: There I was in a new job with my characterization of myself being a program person and the basic responsibility for my job was to be a fundraiser. I had never characterized myself as a fundraiser, but if that was one of the major responsibilities, I guess I better learn about being a fundraiser. As I said, I had very little indoctrination, very little orientation. It was good because we had a very small office and doors were basically open. If there were questions that you had, you just asked. Whoever happened to be there, you tried to get the answer. I was a self-starter. I was motivated, and I wanted to succeed. I had a lot of things going for me because I knew the community and I didn't have to start from . . . I wasn't really starting from scratch. I was really starting with a leg up. There were certain things that I felt that were important for women. That, again, came from being a volunteer myself, so I thought that I understood the needs of women. It was now my challenge to direct their interests to the Federation and the Federation's program, not being in competition with the women's organizations but as an adjunct, and that this was a very important need in the community and this was another way of reaching other segments of the community and tapping into other interests. I think the best part about the job was the fact that I did have a lot of leeway and I did have a lot of latitude and I did have a boss who was open to ideas. There were many things that we had never done. It didn't necessarily mean that it was in my department per se, but if I saw a need and I went to a national meeting and went to the general assemblies of the National Council of Jewish Federation, and came back with all kinds of new ideas that other communities were doing and wanted to try them in Atlanta, there was nobody else to turn to to do them. I said, "If it's okay with you," the boss, meaning Mike Gettinger, "I'm going to do it." So we did. We did lots of new things, board

retreats and leadership training, which expanded my responsibilities, but were areas that I really enjoyed doing and which really benefited my department and the Federation as well because we were tapping into another side of women's interests and all of those . . . the more we could get them interested in the community and in their own, seeing themselves strive within the various projects, the more it rebounded to the benefit of Federation. Of course, everybody knows that if a woman is interested and turned on, her family is going to also feel a sense of satisfaction when they're involved as well. That's what we did. I was the Women's Division director for about six or seven years. Then I kept adding responsibilities to my job as Women's Division director. For instance, we had a program which we started for newcomers which was called Shalom Atlanta. Shalom Atlanta was not in existence. There was no department, per se, within the Federation, so it was given to me. I enjoyed that project very much, and the community benefited from that project very much.

DIAMOND: Can you say a little something about what that was? I think at the time it was very timely and important.

SHUBIN: It was. It was really early on. I think it was either the first year or the second year that I went to work. We realized that Atlanta was at the edge of becoming a major Jewish center of population in the United States. Here we were at Federation welcoming people every day, finding newcomers at our doorstep. Either they were there in person or they were on the telephone. I just want to say that in 1970 when I took the job, I came with the building, which is what I always say. I came with the building. I'll tell you later I left with the building, which was 24 years later when the new Selig Center²² came into being. Here we were, this new facility on Peachtree Street, new visibility, away from downtown, and finding these newcomers, as I said, at our doorstep. We started this project called Shalom Atlanta. I recall Shirley Brickman was the first chairperson, a wonderful chairperson. We did all kinds of good things. We, for one thing, became the center, the central address for newcomers, with information, monthly parties, free access to the Jewish Community Center for several months, free subscription to the then *Southern Israelite*, holiday parties for newcomers, telephone calls for newcomers, all kinds of ways in which to help people become part of Atlanta. As the years went by, it became more and more difficult because the community continued to grow. As it continued to grow, it became harder and harder to keep track of the newcomers. Not only that, we grew geographically, and that became more difficult. At the same time, other good things were happening that were very

²² The Selig Center is located at the corner of 18th Street and Spring Street in Midtown Atlanta. The building

helpful for newcomers. That was the whole burgeoning of new synagogues which came to the suburbs. That was a way for Jewish newcomers to channel their interests and their energy. The same thing happened with the Jewish women's organizations, *Hadassah* and ORT,²³ starting new chapters and so forth. Altogether we worked together. The Jewish Community Center made a contribution as well with their outreach with newcomers. We felt good about something that we had started which really grew. The reason why I mention all these projects was that the Federation started out in its new building at 1753 Peachtree with a very small staff. We continued to grow over the years. It's exciting to be in a community that's growing as opposed to a community like many communities in the north who were shrinking, either because of economics or aging or the shift from north to south, just the interests, growing regional economy in Atlanta and southern Florida and the sun belt. Each year we did a little better, the Women's Division campaign and Women's Division activities. We became very well respected for our educational thrusts. Women's Division to this day is considered the center for education in the Federation. We also did a program for campaign leadership that we called Unicoi, which was a retreat for women who were leaders in the campaign, which took place in North Georgia at the state park called Unicoi. That's where the name for the program came from. We also did several leadership development programs. That's when the Goldstein Program got started. We did senior leadership development and so forth. All these things, one thing led to another. In 1979, I was asked to take on the responsibility of being campaign director for Federation which, as I indicated before, was the reason why I could not continue with my volunteer responsibilities. That became a major full-time undertaking for me. It was a role of distinction at the time because there were just one or two other women in the United States who were with major Federations who held that post. I was sort of a groundbreaker or trailblazer as far as women were concerned. It was interesting because we met on a yearly basis as campaign directors. For a long time in major communities, there were just one or two of us who were women. We were holding up the rights of women and the talents of women at the same time that we were forging ahead with our fundraising. As I said, I would like to take credit for some of the growth of the campaign. Atlanta itself took care of that with the fact that we were a growing community. The agencies were growing at the same time and the community responded appropriately to the

houses the Breman Jewish Heritage Museum and the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta.

²³ 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).

needs. It was good. It was good. We kept increasing our campaigns, and I got some of the credit. I would say that the community deserves the credit, and the lay leadership deserves the credit for what the campaign has become.

DIAMOND: As Shalom Atlanta and Unicoi were part of Women's Division responsibility, could you talk about some of the highlights as campaign director with particular situations that arose?

SHUBIN: With the campaign director position, one of the central piece of what we did was to develop the leadership and the volunteers to go with it and provide them with the tools and the training that they needed to carry out their job. One of the major things that we were always involved with was worker training. Year after year, consistently, we gave a great deal of emphasis to training the leadership and the workers and developing what we call "the case," which everyone who is in fundraising calls "the case." This was a real challenge. This is what really appealed to me. I alluded to it earlier, but the other piece, I guess, that I'm really proud of is the fact that we developed a program that we called Senior Leadership Development, which took a small group of tried and true leaders and gave them the additional tools that they needed to take on any major responsibility in the community, whatever it happened to be. In other words, we identified a group of people who could be president or the chairman or the campaign director, either at the Federation or at any of the agencies, and had two two-year programs that I was responsible for, which took the individuals to Eastern Europe and to Israel and also provided programming throughout the year for these two groups. Incidentally, I will tell you that we were recognized by the Council of Jewish Federations Leadership Development Department with an award for this program. That was real recognition for Atlanta. I guess the other piece, but it's not unusual, what I'm talking about now is not unusual, but it was just the kinds of things that we were able to do. We had a very successful missions program, taking people to Israel in conjunction with the campaign and in conjunction with our leadership programs. We did several, what we called, Mega Missions where we were responsible for taking over several hundred people on several occasions. I was the lead staff person for those missions. It was a phenomenal experience. Again, it all had to do with Atlanta growing and new people coming to the community and giving them an opportunity not only to visit Israel with the Federation but also to then become involved in the campaign.

DIAMOND: I remember one in particular and that involved Solidarity Mission in 1991. That was very special for me.

SHUBIN: Really, you were on that?

DIAMOND: I was there.

SHUBIN: The Solidarity Mission was right before the Gulf War.²⁴ You're right, I was the lead staff on that one as well.

DIAMOND: I thought so.

SHUBIN: That mission . . . do you still have the T-shirt? It should have your name on it. That mission was really an interesting mission because you, Margery, were a hero. In the eyes of the Israelis, in particular, Atlanta was a group of heroes. The Israelis couldn't possibly understand what we were doing in Israel on the brink of war. As an aside, I would have to tell you that I don't think there was ever a time when I went to Israel when there really wasn't something, some under current, something happening internationally. Sometimes there were terrible things happening around the world where we had terrorist attacks at airports in Europe. The phone would go ringing off the hook with people calling to say, "My family doesn't want me to go. My family is afraid for me to go to Israel. What do you think?". It was always putting us on the spot. As a matter of fact, I always got a lot of pressure from Josh about, "You mean you're going to Israel? Terrible things are happening. It really doesn't seem like the place to be. You shouldn't go," so on and so forth. In any case, I went. Thank goodness we always came back safely and never had any problems. If you were a member of the Solidarity Mission, do you recall the last meeting that we had before we left. We were at the Jewish Community Center. Bobby Rinzler was the chairman. Do you recall this, Margery?

DIAMOND: I'm thinking that I do.

SHUBIN: Okay.

DIAMOND: I'm not clear.

SHUBIN: The thing that happened was we had recruited a lot of people. I don't remember exactly how many.

DIAMOND: I know. There were about 700 people that ended up taking part.

SHUBIN: Yes. We lost, I don't remember how many. It wasn't that large. It wasn't anywhere near . . . no, it wasn't anywhere near that number. As a matter of fact, we should go back and count the number of people on the T-shirt. In any case, the incident that I remember

²⁴ The Persian Gulf War, also called the Gulf War, (1990-1991) was an international conflict triggered by Iraq's invasion and occupation of neighboring Kuwait in the summer of 1990. The United States led a coalition of NATO allies and the Middle Eastern countries of Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Egypt in an air campaign that began in January 1991. A massive ground offense began in February, which expelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

that was really kind of funny at the time . . . I mean it was serious at the time, but funny. We had this meeting, the last meeting before we left. Everybody was sort of skittish about what to do and whether to go and so forth. Bobby Rinzler was the chairman. He got up at the meeting at the JCC [Jewish community center], the gym, I remember this. He was trying to assuage any fears. He said, "UJA [United Jewish Appeal]²⁵ assures us that everything is safe. There is no reason why we shouldn't go. They have been in contact with the [United States] State Department. The state department said that given when we are leaving and when we are planning on coming home, which was just a few days prior to what was supposed to be the start of the Gulf War. Everything is okay. The Israeli Embassy in Washington had been contacted, and they also said everything is okay, and Bobby sat down. Herb Kohn, K-O-H-N, who had been on many missions before, got up and asked the question. He said . . . or made a statement . . .

<Interview pauses, then resumes>

SHUBIN: Herb Kohn got up, and he made a statement. He said, "Here's what I want to know." He said, "I don't care what UJA has to say. I don't care what the state department has to say. I don't care what the Israeli Embassy has to say. What I want to know is what Marilyn Shubin has to say." That really got to me. I said, "Herb, all I can tell you is I'm going."

DIAMOND: I remember that now very clearly. I was trying to remember what in the world, but I remember that now. Was the mission originally a community some kind of mission?

SHUBIN: Yes.

DIAMOND: With a lot more people and many people dropped out.

SHUBIN: Yes.

DIAMOND: That's where I was coming from with that bigger number.

SHUBIN: Right. It turned out to be a wonderful mission. As I look back on it now, what I realize is that we really did put a lot of pressure on the Israelis because they were concerned about having us there under that threat. I think they really heaved a sigh of relief when we all left and when we got home safely because a few people did stay on for several more days. They were involved in the distribution of gas masks, etc., but at that point, we were home and home safely.

²⁵ The United Jewish Appeal (UJA) was a Jewish philanthropic umbrella organization that collected and distributed funds to Jewish organizations in their community and around the country. UJA existed from 1939 until it was folded into the United Jewish Communities, which was formed from the 1999 merger of United Jewish Appeal (UJA), Council of Jewish Federations and United Israel Appeal, Inc. After World War II, the Jewish Federations worked with the United Jewish Appeal (UJA), the United Palestine Appeal (UPA) and the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) to help resettle Jewish concentration camp survivors and helped refugees create new lives.

DIAMOND: That was certainly my most cool experience. I was wondering if that was something that was a highlight for you as well.

SHUBIN: As a matter of fact, I will give you another small insight about that. While I was there on the mission, I bought something at Sterns, the jewelry store, when we were getting ready to leave. As it turned out, the piece of jewelry needed to be repaired. The following summer, in June, I was back on another mission. I went into Sterns where I had bought the piece of jewelry. I said to the young woman, "I was here in January right before the war and bought this." She looked at me and she said, "Oh, you're one of the heroes from Atlanta." That was the kind of impression that we made on the Israelis when we were there. We all felt very good about being there and making that statement.

DIAMOND: We've covered the leadership development. We've covered the missions. I know you're feeling kind of close to finalizing or summarizing. You mentioned that you were one of two women to be involved in the position that you had. Could you talk a little bit about that experience of being who you are and having done what you've done as a woman, and any comments you want to make about that aspect of your life.

<Telephone rings>

SHUBIN: I don't know what's going on here today with the telephone. That's a good question, Margery. It was interesting. I'll just tell you this. When I was asked by Mr. Gettinger and by the lay leadership of the Federation to take on the job of campaign director, naturally I was flattered but I also felt that I could do the job. I wanted the job because it seemed to have the professional challenge that I was looking for and that I was ready for. But one of the things that I said to the lay leaders and to my boss was that "I will succeed if the men want me to succeed." I felt that that needed to be said because I had no doubts that I had the tools, the talent, and the determination to do the job, but I also needed to have the support that any other professional deserves from the lay people that they're going to be working with. I got that cooperation, and I think I did succeed on that basis, locally. As far as my colleagues around the country were concerned, as you said, I was one of two women. The other woman at the time was the director of the Washington, DC, Federation campaign. She and I had a lot in common when we met on a yearly basis, as I said, and at other meetings with our male colleagues. To the credit of our colleagues, we were certainly accepted as equals and we never felt condescended to in any way. I would have to say that I never felt discriminated or less than anybody else. I had a very good relationship with my professional peers. Later on, there were just a few more women who did come to the post, but not many in the early years in major communities. The smaller

communities were another story. The major communities were really what we were, not what counted, but what people were looking at as far as who the professionals were that headed our campaigns. The most important part was the fact that I got the support from the local community and that I succeeded here. I was in that job for ten years.

DIAMOND: Do you feel that you actually broke through the glass ceiling, or is there still such a thing in the field of Federation?

SHUBIN: No. Yes, I did. I think I did break through a glass ceiling. I don't think there's any question about that. As I say, women certainly have followed. Many women subsequently came into the field and are in the field now and are successful in the field. I guess really what happened is that there is a recognition that you're looking for the best person to do the job. Gender is not the issue.

DIAMOND: That's today. Isn't that wonderful?

SHUBIN: Yes. We finally got there, at least for the most part. But we're not there yet. We're not quite there yet. But we're getting there. I think that's enough for today, Margery.

DIAMOND: Okay. I will be touch with you.

INTERVIEW ENDS

<End Tape 2>