Ruth: This is Side 1, Tape 1, of a 90-minute tape for Women of Achievement Oral History Project. I am Ruth Zuckerman interviewing Alene Fox Uhry at her home [at] 3780 Paces Ferry Road, Northwest, Atlanta, Georgia. The date is November 22, 1985.

Alene Fox Uhry was born September 2, 1909, in Atlanta, to Lena Guthman Fox and Alfred Fox. Alene went through Atlanta public schools and Wellesley College [Wellesley, Massachusetts], graduating in 1930. [In] 1931, [Alene] married Ralph Uhry. They had two children, Ann and Alfred; both married. Alene has seven grandchildren. She has always worked as volunteer and staff in the social service field. She was also always interested in the arts. She serves on several boards, such as Honorary Board Member of Child Services and Family Counseling Center; the United Way Agency, on the Advocacy Committee; a board member of the High Museum; the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra; Atlanta College of Art; and the American Jewish Committee.

Alene, I’m going to make it easy by having us start at the very beginning with your parents, where they came from and how they came to settle in Atlanta; when you were born; and recollections of your childhood, your home life, your parents, your grandparents, and your siblings. We’ll take it from there.
Alene: My parents came from different places. My mother was born in Atlanta on Forsyth Street near the Rich’s store.¹ She was born in 1878. That was really not a very long time after the ‘War Between the States,’² as we call it here.

Ruth: What was her name?

Alene Her name was Lena Guthman. She was the last of, I think, seven children. Her mother died when she was a baby. She was brought up in this big family by an aunt and older sisters. She went through the Atlanta public school [system]. Later she was fortunate enough to go to college, which was very unusual in Atlanta in those days. She went to Peabody Normal School [Nashville, Tennessee].³ After that, she was a school teacher. She never got over being one. She taught in the Atlanta public schools for about ten years. She had friends all her life . . . students she had taught . . . Mayor [William B.] Hartsfield,⁴ who was one that she was very proud of. My father, on the other hand, was born in La Porte, Indiana, which is near Chicago [Illinois]. He grew up in a town near Chicago called Streator, Illinois. He had relatives in Chattanooga [Tennessee]. As a very young man, he went to work for his relatives in Chattanooga for a while. He then came to Atlanta and set up a furniture manufacturing company.

Ruth: When was that?

Alene: I was born in 1909. I think this was about 1907. He started Fox Manufacturing Company, which later moved to Rome, Georgia. I was born in 1909. I’m one of those horrid only children. I don’t know whether . . . I presume that I was very spoiled. I don’t know. I went through the public schools of Atlanta. When I was little, we lived in a house very near the [Atlanta-Fulton County] Stadium.⁵ The Jewish people that we knew all lived in that area around

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¹ Rich’s was a department store retail chain, headquartered in Atlanta that operated in the southern United States from 1867 until 2005. Many of the former Rich’s stores today form the core of Macy’s Central, an Atlanta-based division of Macy’s, Inc., which formerly operated as Federated Department Stores, Inc.

² The American Civil War, also known as the ‘War Between the States,’ or simply the ‘Civil War,’ was fought from 1861 to 1865, after Southern slave states declared their secession and formed the Confederate States of America. After four years of combat that left over 600,000 soldiers dead, and destroyed much of the South’s infrastructure. The Confederacy collapsed, slavery was abolished, and the difficult Reconstruction process of restoring national unity and granting civil rights to freed slaves began.

³ Peabody Normal School was founded in 1875 to train teachers. After 1909 it became ‘George Peabody College for Teachers.’ It moved to its present location in 1914 and became part of Vanderbilt University in 1979.

⁴ William B. Hartsfield, Sr. (1890-1971), served as the 49th and 51st Mayor of Atlanta. His tenure extended from 1937 to 1941 and again from 1942 to 1962, making him the longest-serving mayor of his native Atlanta. It was under his direction that Atlanta became a world-class city with the image of the “City Too Busy to Hate.”

⁵ Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium was built in 1966 on the site of the cleared Washington-Rawson neighborhood, which had been a wealthy area and home to much of Atlanta’s Jewish community. The stadium was demolished in 2013.
the [Georgia State] Capitol, and on Washington Street, and on . . . all those places around the Stadium. We knew all of our neighbors, Christian and Jewish alike. It was really a small town. We moved from that area when I was nine years old. We moved to the section of Ponce de Leon Avenue and . . . I forget the new name of the street. In those days it was Boulevard. It’s probably got another name by now. We lived in this area in several different places. Apartments were rather new to us in Atlanta then. We had an apartment. I graduated from Girls’ High School.\(^6\) We only had 11 grades of school in those days. I always am sure that they must have taught fractions in the twelfth grade, because I never learned. Nevertheless, I went from public school in Atlanta to Wellesley College. I graduated from there in 1930. [I] returned home for an extremely short three-month business career at the new Davison’s-Macy’s store in Atlanta in the personnel department.

**Ruth:** Is that what you majored in at Wellesley?

**Alene:** I majored in psychology at Wellesley. In those days, they didn’t require MA’s [Master of Arts] and all the rest for hiring people in personnel jobs. That didn’t last because in November, just after I’d started to work, I became engaged. I was married in March 1931. Shall I tell you any more about my childhood before we go on?

**Ruth:** What are your earliest memories of your home life, your parents, your grandparents, and any anecdotes you can tell me about growing up in Atlanta?

**Alene:** I never knew my maternal grandparents. They had both died. I didn’t tell you that all my forebears on all sides came from southern Germany. My paternal grandmother was born in Louisville, Kentucky. Her maiden name was ‘Moises,’ which is the same as ‘Moses.’\(^7\) Her family were Alsatians. My grandfather, Herman Fox, was born in Germany. They both died when I was quite young. I really have no recollections. I don’t know whether I remember what they look like, or just know from the pictures.

**Ruth:** Do you have any relatives in Atlanta?

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\(^6\) Girls’ High School was one of seven schools that formed the original Atlanta public school system. It opened in 1872, and was the only public school in the area exclusively for girls. It was a superb school academically. In 1947, Atlanta high schools became co-educational and Girls’ High was renamed ‘Roosevelt High School.’

\(^7\) This is an area bordering France and Germany that has been in constant contention, belonging to one or the other at various times. It is populated by both French and German people. It was seized from France during World War II by the Germans and after the war returned to France.
Alene: Loads of relatives I grew up with. My father had two sisters and a brother, both living here. My mother had two sisters living here . . . two sisters and a brother in Savannah [Georgia] with their families. I think I remember at the time I had nine or ten first cousins, who were substitute brothers and sisters for me. My family was very close-knit on both sides.

My mother, I guess by the religion of the day, thought of herself as being observant. However, this was during the years following the [Leo] Frank⁸ case. It seems to me as I look back . . . I never realized it then . . . a lot of Jews in Atlanta, particularly in the Reform⁹ congregation of the Temple¹⁰ to which we belong, went out of their way to be like everybody else. You always proudly said you were Jewish, but not too Jewish.

Ruth: Homogenized . . .

Alene: . . . you were like everybody else. Somehow or another, when I went North and met Jewish people, with my southern accent I was never . . . or with non-Jews . . . I was never picked out as being Jewish. The concept, as you know, was dark, very curly hair, a hook nose, and dressed in a different way, they thought. The Southern Jews didn’t seem to fit into all of that. I can remember growing up . . . many conversations in my family about the Frank case. I think he was lynched in 1915. When I was growing up, it was quite a few years after that. That subject is the one I remember that always dominated the conversation because our family was friends with that family. Leo Frank worked in the pencil factory that was owned by my uncle, Sig[mond] Montag. That was what I grew up knowing about as far as being Jewish and growing up in Atlanta.

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⁸ Leo Frank (1884-1915) was a Jewish factory superintendent in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1913, he was accused of raping and murdering one of his employees, a 13-year-old girl named Mary Phagan, whose body was found on the premises of the National Pencil Company. Frank was arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced to death for her murder. The trial was the catalyst for a great outburst of antisemitism led by the populist Tom Watson and the center of powerful class and political interests. Frank was sent to Milledgeville State Penitentiary to await his execution. Governor John M. Slaton, believing there had been a miscarriage of justice, commuted Frank’s sentence to life. This enraged a group of men who styled themselves the “Knights of Mary Phagan.” They drove to the prison, kidnapped Frank from his cell and drove him to Marietta, Georgia where they lynched him. Many years later, the true murderer was revealed to be a black man named Jim Conley, who had lied in the trial, pinning it on Frank instead. Frank was pardoned (although they stopped short of exonerating him) on March 11, 1986.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ The Temple on Peachtree Street in Midtown Atlanta is the city’s oldest synagogue, dedicated in 1877. The main sanctuary, constructed in 1931, is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Reform congregation now totals 1500 families (2014).
I went to the Sunday school at the Temple. I have absolutely no feelings about any religion that was spread there. My mother went to services every Saturday morning. She dragged me with her, but it never meant anything to me. I think, in those days, we were trying so hard to be like everybody else. Remember, I’m interpreting it now. I didn’t think of it at the time. I’m sure that we missed a lot of the families that I have met since who have regular Friday night dinners and big seders,\(^{11}\) and all the rest.

< Interruption in tape, interview resumes >

**Ruth:** How did you meet your husband [Ralph Uhry]?

**Alene:** My husband moved here from Beaumont, Texas. He was working in a furniture store in Beaumont, Texas. My family bought that store along with others for a chain of retail furniture companies. Ralph moved to Atlanta. I guess he was 22 or 23. I was 17. We only knew each other vaguely, because he lived out of Atlanta. For a while he lived in various parts of the South. I didn’t see much of him until my last year in college.

**Ruth:** Tell us about your memories of getting married, the celebration, your first home, your first early experiences being married, and whether you worked.

**Alene:** First of all, let me tell you that my husband’s family came from Louisiana. His father was born near Strasbourg in Alsace [Germany/ France]. His mother was born in a little town near New Orleans [Louisiana] called Plaquemine . . . P-L-A-Q-U-E-M-I-N-E . . . which means ‘persimmon’ in [Cajun] French.\(^{12}\) I’d been back to the homestead 50 years ago. It might interest you to know that last weekend, my daughter, my son who lives in New York, and my sister-in-law, went down to New Orleans and went to visit in Plaquemine. That’s another story. Anyway, [my husband] grew up in a small community. His mother had gone to a convent [school]. There were not enough Jewish people. There is a Jewish section of a cemetery there which we visited. He grew up without any formal early Jewish education. However, when they moved to Plaquemine, he was confirmed and went . . . practically the same kind of background that I came from. We were married in 1932, the [Great] Depression years.\(^{13}\) We were so young and so

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\(^{11}\) **Seder** is the Hebrew for ‘order’ and is the ritual meal eaten at home on the first and second nights of Passover. The family meal is accompanied by the retelling of the story of the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt.

\(^{12}\) Cajun French (commonly called ‘Louisiana Regional French’ and historically known as ‘Colonial’ or ‘Plantation Society French’) is a variety of the French language spoken primarily in Louisiana, specifically in the southern and southwestern parts of the state.

\(^{13}\) The Great Depression was a severe worldwide economic depression in the decade preceding World War II. The time of the Great Depression varied across nations, but in most countries it started in about 1929 and lasted until the late 1930’s or early 1940’s. It was the longest, most widespread, and deepest depression of the twentieth century.
carefree, that didn’t seem to bother us. Nobody had anything. When I think now about the elaborate parties, dinners and clothes, it was a very simple, but fun, life. We didn’t have sense enough to worry about it. My husband had to go around to the different stores. I used to go with him. That’s why my career was terminated.

Ruth: What sort of stores were they? Did you mention that?

Alene: They were furniture stores. I did take about a year of graduate work in those early years out at Emory [University–Atlanta, Georgia] in psychological testing, which I later used. However, after we’d been married three years, my daughter was born here in Atlanta. My mother kept saying . . . I forgot what generation she was, because her mother was not born in Atlanta, but her mother lived here and her grandparents lived here.

Ruth: What was your daughter’s name?

Alene: Ann Abrams. She’s married with a family. She lives next door. My son, Alfred, was born three years later. He now lives in New York with his wife and four daughters. I’m going up there next week to visit them. That’s the extent . . . I have seven grandchildren.

Ruth: That’s wonderful.

Alene: I was a grandmother when I was 45 years old. I’ve had the very special privilege of being young enough to really enjoy doing things with them. They still flatter me to the extent that I continue to do them. I now have a grandson 30 years old, who is the oldest. My youngest granddaughter in New York is 16. That’s a nice range of children.

Atlanta, in the days we married, as I said, life was . . . at least it was simple for us and my friends. In the evening, a big thing to do was to play bridge\textsuperscript{14} with another couple, but never invite them for dinner. They just came over in the evening. Saturday night was a big night to go to the movies for 50 cents and get an ice cream soda for 15 [cents]. Those years, in retrospect, seem absolutely wonderful to me. For one thing, we didn’t worry about money. We didn’t have any to worry about. We were so nonchalant, that our daughter was born in 1934. She was always in the smallest class at school, because most people put off having children in those Depression years. That tells you about those days.

\textsuperscript{14} Bridge is a trick-taking card game using a standard 52-card deck. It is played by four players in two competing partnerships, with partners sitting opposite each other around a table. Millions of people play bridge worldwide in clubs, tournaments, online and with friends at home, making it one of the world’s most popular card games.
Ruth: That’s wonderful. What were your aspirations for your children? What if any problems did you have? What satisfactions did you derive from your children?

Alene: I don’t know that I could pin down the goals I had for my children. Their generation, here in Atlanta, really were more like my generation. We still had the same ideas of social behavior. We had the same dreams that a girl gets married and has a family. That’s the main part of her life. I could see, certainly, the drastic changes that came about when my children were parents of teenagers. Teenagers were never easy to deal with. I remember when my husband used to come home at night, he would say, “Do we have a crisis or a situation?” The old thing . . . “Everybody else is going to climb Stone Mountain and everybody else is going swimming and so forth.” Atlanta was still like a small town, as far as we were concerned. My children’s friends were my friend’s children, more or less. Today, my grandchildren have the great opportunity of knowing people all over the city. They’re not those old . . . I call them . . . ‘cliquey’ groups in Atlanta today. I find Atlanta today a wonderful, marvelous place to live in. A lot of my friends do not. I love all the advantages, and realize now what we missed growing up, because it was quite a provincial city. It was completely . . . we had ‘Hard Shell Baptists’ as teachers. I remember in Girls’ High School, a lot of my friends there, Christian people, were not allowed to dance or use lipstick. It was that kind of a situation that pushed friends together who had the same style of life, the same goals, and all the rest. I can see now why those little groups formed the way they did.

<End Tape 1, Side 1, 01>

<Begin Tape 1, Side 1, 02>

Ruth: Did your children marry Jewish people?

Alene: Yes. My daughter [Ann] married Edward Abrams, whose parents also belong to the Temple. My son-in-law had a background. He came from the North. That part was different, but more or less the same. My son, however, married a girl whose mother was one-quarter Jewish. Her father had been a very prominent doctor in New York. He was half-Jewish. Her father is Episcopalian. We thought that would present a problem, but has not. My daughter-in-law and her family are members of my family. They feel the same way about all of us. Just not

15 ‘Hard Shell Baptists’ are strict, conservative Baptists whose practices include a cappella singing, family integrated worship, and foot washing. Hard Shell Baptists arose in opposition to Baptist participation in mission boards, Bible tract societies, and temperance societies.
me, but my daughter and my daughter’s children. We have a mixture there. My grandchildren in New York call themselves Jewish. However, they have had no formal Jewish education or training [or] education at all, like the ones here who have gone to Reform temples. Their friends are both Jewish and Christian. My son [Alfred] is a playwright and a lyricist.16 His friends appear to be mostly Jewish, I think for that reason. They go with a group in New York where I never hear religion discussed very much. I never know if people are Jewish or not Jewish. My grandchildren here in Atlanta have gone with many groups. I, and members of my family and my children, have always had friends in the Christian community . . . good friends.

Ruth: You had told me that you were on the boards of several organizations doing voluntary work in various areas. How did you become involved in these various interests? At what stage in your life here in Atlanta did you become involved?

Alene: My mother was a president of the [National] Council of Jewish Women17 here at the time I was in high school. I grew up knowing all about that . . . not all about it but more than I wanted to know at that time. My father [Alfred Fox] always felt so grateful to Atlanta for what it did for him that he was very active in Jewish and civic groups.

Ruth: This was your father?

Alene: Just at the time he died, he was vice-president of the Temple. The Temple had just moved into its present location. He was one of the leaders of that building campaign.

Ruth: That was the Temple on Peachtree?

Alene: Yes. Rabbi [David] Marx18 and his family were our next-door neighbors for years.

You wanted to know how I got involved?

Ruth: Yes.

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16 Alfred Uhry is an award-winning playwright, screenwriter, and member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers. He is one of very few writers to receive an Academy Award, Tony Award (2) and the Pulitzer Prize for dramatic writing. Uhry’s early work for the stage was as a lyricist and librettist for a number of musicals. Driving Miss Daisy (1987) is the first in what is known as his ‘Atlanta Trilogy’ of plays and earned him the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. He adapted the play for the 1989 film which was awarded the Academy Award for Writing Adapted Screenplay. The second of the trilogy, The Last Night of Ballyhoo (1996), received the Tony Award for Best Play when produced on Broadway. The third was a 1998 musical called Parade. The libretto earned him a Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical.

17 The National Council of Jewish Women is an organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into advocacy and philanthropy inspired by Jewish values. They strive to improve the quality of life for women, children and families.

18 Rabbi David Marx was a long-time rabbi at the Temple in Atlanta. He led the move toward Reform Judaism practices. He served as rabbi from 1895 to 1946. When he retired, Rabbi Jacob Rothschild took the pulpit that Rabbi Marx had held for more than half a century.
Alene: I think I copied, more or less, what my mother and father had done. I always felt an obligation, which I don’t remember anybody teaching me, that when you lived in a community, there were certain things you give back to the community. As I mentioned, I took work at Emory [University] in psychological testing. I volunteered at . . . it was then called . . . Family Welfare Society, which is now a United Way[^19] agency . . . Child Services and Family Counseling Center. This was in the 1940’s. My children were born in the 1930’s. I didn’t do much work then. I worked in the [National] Council of Jewish Women. I remember in those days also working in the . . . I think they called it ‘Jewish Federated Charities.’ I did not spend a lot of time doing that sort of work at that period. However, in the 1940’s, I worked as a volunteer. I went every day down to Family Welfare Society where I gave the Binet tests[^20] and performance tests of various kinds. I really was working. The only difference between me and the others was I didn’t get any money. Later, they put me on that board. At the present time, I’m an honorary member of that board. My husband . . . you were looking at the paintings . . . he did quite a few of those. He was in the furniture business, but that was his avocation . . . you’ll see them . . .

Ruth: . . . they’re wonderful . . .

Alene: . . . all over the house. People asked him why he didn’t give up business and just paint. He always said he’d gotten used to eating and he wanted to continue. He was interested in all the . . . he taught me what I know about music, painting and the rest. We had very little in those days of that sort of thing in Atlanta. We went to Chicago to the furniture mart. I used to go with him when the children were older. That was when I learned to love symphony concerts, art museums, and all the rest.

My father, in the old days, was an amateur singer in all kind of . . . not after I knew him, but before he was married. He loved music. He was one of the first guarantors of the Metropolitan Opera[^21] when they started coming to Atlanta. He loved the theater. When I was

[^19]: United Way is a national system of volunteers, contributors and local charities helping people in their own communities.
[^20]: The Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale is a cognitive ability and intelligence test that is used to diagnose developmental or intellectual deficiencies in young children. It is a modified version of the Binet-Simon Intelligence scale which was created by the French psychologist Alfred Binet and his student Theodore Simon.
[^21]: Founded in 1880, the Metropolitan Opera, commonly referred to as the ‘Met’ is a company based in New York City, at the Metropolitan Opera House at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. It presents about 27 different operas each year in a season which lasts from late September through May. Outside of New York the Met has been known to audiences in large measure through its many years of live radio broadcasts dating back to 1910. Currently,
quite young . . . the first time I went to New York, I was nine or ten years old. Because of my father’s love for the theater, we went. I saw lots of shows before I was ten years old, I guess. The traveling shows that used to come here, we went to every one of them. We had a little company here in Atlanta that we supported. It was natural for me to be interested in the art museum\textsuperscript{22} and the [Atlanta] Symphony. I still am on those boards.

**Ruth:** Are you active in the art museum today? How do you feel about the progress the Museum and the cultural aspects of Atlanta have progressed up to this point?

**Alene:** After my husband died, we tried to think of some way to memorialize him. We did that by establishing a print collection at the Museum in 1955. It was a little tiny museum then, but that seemed to be what they needed at the time. My activity in the Museum is limited to going to all the events, and still keeping up. I do not choose the prints that go in the room, but I always am interested. They call me when they buy, or are looking at some. I participate in that. However, I’ve turned most of that over to my daughter who lives next door. She is an art historian. She got her PhD. at Emory [University] years after she was married. She is the one who does that for me. As far as the other organizations are concerned, I do what most board members can do. There are two functions: try to support them materially, and also I take great pleasure in being able to help as board members can to introduce people around and familiarize them with what’s going on.

**Ruth:** You’re a wonderful subject. You don’t have to be prompted at all. Let’s see. Where can we take it from there? You’ve been so explicit that . . .

**Alene:** . . . I think we’ve got it.

**Ruth:** . . . no, not really. We can go into what your feelings are about Israel. Do you have anything to say on that subject?

**Alene:** When I was growing up, I think I was one of many from Dr. Marx’s congregation who thought of the word ‘Zionist’ like some kind of a criminal. That was a bad word. Nobody wanted, in those days, to be a Zionist in the little group around the Temple that I knew.

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\textsuperscript{22} The High Museum of Art in Atlanta is the leading art museum in the Southeastern United States. Located on Peachtree Street in Midtown, the High is a division of the Woodruff Arts Center. It was founded in 1905 as the Atlanta Art Association and renamed after the High family donated their house as an exhibit space in 1926. In 1983, a new 135,000-square-foot building designed by Richard Meier opened to house the Museum. In 2002, three new buildings designed by Renzo Piano more than doubled the Museum’s size.

the annual Met broadcast season typically begins the first week of December and offers 20 live Saturday matinée performances through May. (2015)
However, when Israel became a state . . . and before Israel . . . I never had that feeling. We were very active, my mother and I, in helping the people who came from Germany in the 1930’s and 1940’s. We did a lot of work with that sort of thing. I had never formed any views of Israel, but my friends and family seemed all to be members of that [American] Council for Judaism,23 which I happen to think now is terrible. I have been to Israel twice, ten years apart. I’m a great enthusiast for Israel, not only because I’m Jewish, but it is such a wonderful historical experience to go there. I’m active in American Jewish Committee24 affairs. I’m very interested in what goes on in the Jewish community. However, I don’t participate a great deal outwardly.

Ruth: You had mentioned that your family was close to Leo Frank, and that he had worked for your uncle. What were your feelings at the time? Do you remember what the experiences were and how you felt about the situation?

Alene: At the time, in 1913, I was four years old. I don’t think I had any feelings about that. When he was finally lynched, I was six years old. The only thing I had feelings about was how upset everybody around me was. The only memories I really have in those days was that my mother used to wait every afternoon for my father to come home. I’d see him walk up the street waving a newspaper. It had a big black headline on it. That spelled doom for me, because I knew that was all they were going to talk about . . . was what was in that paper. I have no real recollections of that. However, when I was in grammar school, my best friend who lived next door was the daughter of a judge. They were Christians. We thought they were good friends. One day, this lady came over to see my mother. She said, “I have to ask you a question. I know it’s not true now. I’m positive it’s not true, but somebody told me you were Jewish.” My mother said, “Of course I’m Jewish.” This lady said, “I don’t believe it. You’re too nice to be Jewish.” I grew up in that kind of a thing.

Ruth: Could you tell us anything about what might have been the most important influences in your life?

Alene: That’s a hard one. I think there were a lot of them.

Ruth: We have plenty of tape and plenty of time.

23 The American Council for Judaism (ACJ) is an organization of American Jews committed to the proposition that Jews are not a nationality but merely a religious group, adhering to the original stated principles of Reform Judaism. The ACJ was founded in June 1942 by a group of Reform rabbis who opposed the direction of their movement, including the issue of Zionism.

24 The American Jewish Committee (AJC) was founded in 1906 to safeguard the welfare and security of Jews worldwide. It is one of the oldest Jewish advocacy organizations in the United States.
Alene: I had a couple of teachers in high school who had a great effect on me. I don’t know. I’m sure my supportive family did, but I really can’t think of any one thing. One thing that did surprise me was when I got to college. I could see that there were a lot of attractive and vivacious people my age who were interested in learning something. Here in Atlanta in those days, it was generally said, “Girls shouldn’t be too smart. Make a fellow feel like he knows more than you do.” That kind of thing. Here I get into an atmosphere where there are serious students. My mother was always a serious student, but I couldn’t understand it. I thought that was kind of foolish. I’m sure that those four years, knowing the people, students, and the professors I had, did have an effect on me.

Ruth: How do you feel about the future of our Jewish community in Atlanta, and about the future of Israel? Do you have anything to tell us about that?

Alene: From what I can see, I like what’s going on in the Jewish community in Atlanta. Many Jewish communities have now come together which were distinctly separated in my day. Most of the people, I guess, in Atlanta were new enough Americans to cling onto what they knew at home. They were in these little groups that we talked about before. I see a difference now. I see a big difference in the Jewish community in Atlanta.

Ruth: In what way?

Alene: I think that we know what’s going on in other congregations. We meet people. We all work on similar things together. My first time I knew different Jewish people in Atlanta, were the days when I worked on Jewish Welfare Fund,²⁵ soon after I was married. That was an eye-opener to me. There were so many people like me, born in Atlanta, that I had never known before. We had a lot in common. I think today members of different congregations visit together in the temples and synagogues. I think the Holocaust²⁶ brought a lot of communities together. I sure think it did.

Ruth: Do you feel that you have transmitted your values to your children? What are they? What would they be?

²⁵ The Jewish Welfare Fund was one of the preceding organizations of the current Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta. Its function was to fundraise for the Jewish community centrally and disperse it throughout the Jewish community (locally, nationally and internationally) rather than each Jewish institution trying to raise money individually.

²⁶ The systematic, government-sponsored attempt by the Germans to annihilate the Jews of Europe between 1939 and 1945, which resulted in the deaths of nearly 6,000,000 Jews.
Alene: As far as values are concerned, I think I never really stopped to answer that question. As I said before, my children grew up in an era when it was easy to follow what my parents had taught me, as far as things that were right and wrong, moral and immoral. I think they get it by osmosis, as far as I can see.

Ruth: What, at this point in time, are you involved with or interested in doing? What are your activities today?

Alene: I enjoy very much working on a committee at Child Services and Family Counseling Center. It’s an advocacy committee.

Ruth: What does that mean?

Alene: To be an advocate is like being . . . it comes from the word that means ‘lawyer’ because you’re working for someone else’s benefit. For example, we have advocated for the busses in Atlanta to stop in front of Perry Homes\(^{27}\) where a great many black poor people live. Formerly, they had to walk two or three blocks in the rain with groceries, and all of that. While counseling one-to-one is very helpful and always will be, when you can advocate for something that can be done for groups, I think it’s very beneficial.

Now I’m very involved with this committee’s preparation of lobbying, when the [Georgia] General Assembly opens in January, for some new laws regarding foster children and adoptions. There are things that can be done in a community by law, or by opening doors. If you know somebody at the power company . . . it’s what happened . . . to get a bus to stop somewhere, is very simple. It changes the lives of these people. If you can get more money or foster parents, you have a better chance of bringing up better children, and all the rest. I’m interested in that project. The other things, when you’re on a board of . . . I’m also on the board of the Atlanta College of Art [Atlanta, Georgia]. I don’t think I make a lot of contributions to these organizations other than helping them raise money, except that we do have a hand . . . I do feel we have a tiny little part in policy making for these groups.

Ruth: Have you made any policy recently to enhance the [Atlanta] College of Art’s growth?

Alene: We’ve just gotten a new president who takes office, I think, this January 1. They have just gotten more space in the [Woodruff] Arts Center\(^{28}\) since the [High] Museum moved out into

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\(^{27}\) Perry Homes was a public housing project in Atlanta built in 1959. The buildings were destroyed by a tornado in 1975 and were replaced in 1976-1977. In 1999, the public housing units were torn down and mixed income communities were built in its place.

\(^{28}\) The Woodruff Arts Center is a visual and performing arts center located in Atlanta, Georgia. Opened in 1968, the
the other building. They now have a sign on Peachtree [Street]. They never had that before. It says ‘Atlanta College of Art’ right on Peachtree Street. I think that’s a big thing to do. There are a lot of things always to do.

**Ruth:** We’re getting a little close to ending the first side of the tape. We have just a few seconds left. Tell me what your feelings and observations are about the new High Museum.

**Alene:** I think the new High Museum is wonderful. The building is beautiful. They are getting marvelous shows, which is one of the main objects. We couldn’t get a show like King Tut[ankhamun] because we didn’t have space, nor the security. Nobody these days, I don’t care how much money they have, can buy many old masters. You can bring the old masters in traveling shows to Atlanta. That’s happening. I think this organization that used to be said was an elitist organization, is far from that today. I think if you go in there on any weekend and see the people in throngs in the museum with baby carriages and all the rest, you get the feeling it’s really a civic . . .

<interview pauses then resumes>

**Ruth:** We are going back now to a part that we didn’t cover before in the area of your being a volunteer staff worker.

**Alene:** The only time I was ever on a staff of a social agency was when I worked for the Community Council,[30] beginning in 1963. I wrote their newsletter for about ten years, until the organization closed. The Community Council was a planning organization chiefly financed by United Way. It considered the social problems in the city . . . not only those connected with United Way agencies, but everything that was in the city. I hate the word ‘challenging,’ but in those days, we said that’s what this organization was. It was a wonderful experience for me.

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29 Exhibitions of artifacts from the tomb of Tutankhamun, popularly known as ‘King Tut,’ have appeared in museums across around the world including the High Museum in Atlanta. Tutankhamun was an Egyptian pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty (ca. 1332 BC-1323 BC in conventional chronology), during the period of Egyptian history known as the New Kingdom. The 1922 discovery of Tutankhamun’s nearly intact tomb received worldwide press coverage. If Tutankhamun is the world’s best known pharaoh, it is largely because his tomb is among the best preserved, and his image and associated artifacts the most-exhibited.

30 The Community Council, originally known as the ‘Council of Social Agencies,’ began in 1939 as an agency to coordinate all community services such as welfare, health, education and civic clubs. Over time the Community Council began to conceive, plans and start new agencies and task forces to meet community needs. It is made of up volunteers and professionals.
When I say I was on the staff, I was really more or less like a graduated volunteer. I made very little salary. The director, Duane Beck [sp], had a feeling that volunteers weren’t properly respected by the staff. People that did a lot of volunteer work for him, work that would have been considered volunteer in other groups, he insisted on a minimum-type payment so the staff respected them as an equal. That was a marvelous learning experience for me. I really learned what went on in the City of Atlanta. Although I had lived here all those many years, I only knew one little segment of this city. I met people from Perry Homes to the Piedmont Driving Club. It was absolutely a wonderful experience. I hated it when this organization had no money and had to close.

Ruth: Alene, could you tell us about your children, about your daughter Ann and your son Alfred? What they are doing at the present?

Alene: My daughter Ann went two years to Sarah Lawrence College [Bronxville, New York]. After two years, she married Eddie [Edward] Abrams. She was 19 years old at the time. She told me she would always go back to school, but I never quite believed it. After her third child entered school, Ann went to Georgia State [University—Atlanta, Georgia] to complete her BA [Bachelor of Arts degree]. She then went on to get her Master’s [degree]. After that, she taught at Clayton Junior College [Morrow, Georgia] for a while, and then went to Emory [University—Atlanta, Georgia] where she got her doctorate. She’s had a wonderful time since then. She taught for about five years at Spelman College [Atlanta, Georgia] in the Art Department. I neglected to say her degree was in art history. She was offered a post-doctoral fellowship at the Smithsonian, which she accepted. Since then she has opened a little office on Maple Drive. She evaluates pieces of art for the Museum from time to time, or from individuals. She got into this through a lawyer who she didn’t know. He was told to call her. He had an estate to settle and in the estate were quite a lot of paintings. Her three children are grown now and she is pursuing her work.

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31 The Piedmont Driving Club is a private social club in Atlanta with a reputation as one of the most prestigious private clubs in the South. Founded in 1887 as the ‘Gentlemen’s Driving Club,’ the name reflected the interest of the members to ‘drive’ their horse and carriages on the club grounds.

32 The Smithsonian Institution is a group of museums and research centers administered by the United States government established in 1846. Termed the “nation’s attic” for its eclectic holdings of millions of items, the Institution’s Washington, DC nucleus of museums, research centers, and zoo, many of them historical or architectural landmarks, is the largest such complex in the world.
Ruth: Thank you. This concludes the first side of the tape. We’ll continue on Side 2 with Ann Uhry [Abrams], and then go on to your son’s career, their children, and what they’re doing.

<End Tape 1, Side 1, 02>
<Begin Tape 1, Side 2>

Ruth: This is Side 2 of a 90-minute tape for the Women of Achievement Oral History Project. I am Ruth Zuckerman interviewing Alene Fox Uhry at her home, 3780 Paces Ferry Road, Atlanta, Georgia. The date is November 22, 1985. We are continuing with her daughter, Ann Uhry Abrams.

Alene: Ann has three children. Two sons: Allen, who graduated from Columbia University [New York, New York], and got his MB [Master of Business Administration] at Emory University; and Andy who graduated from [University of] Notre Dame [Notre Dame, Indiana], the third generation Abrams family who went to Notre Dame. Both boys are in business with their father. Her daughter, Lori, graduated from Eckerd College [St. Petersburg, Florida]. She is back in Atlanta now. She is a travel agent. I’m fortunate to have those three right here in Atlanta.

Ruth: Which business would that be, and which travel agent would that be?

Alene: A.R. Abrams is the business. The correct title is ‘Abrams Industries.’ Lori is associated with Universal Travel.

Ruth: Tell us about Ann’s book that she wrote for the Smithsonian Institute. Has she written any other books on art?

Alene: The book that’s just been published by the Smithsonian is called The Valiant Hero: Benjamin West and Grand-Style History Paintings. This is the first book she’s written. Another book that she wrote with a colleague at the Smithsonian has gone to press now.33 It concerns the Statue of Liberty’s34 birthday. She and her Smithsonian colleague will curate several shows connected with the book and the birthday of the Statue of Liberty.

Ruth: Now let’s go on to your son who is a playwright in New York.

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33 Ann Uhry Abrams and Anne Cannon Palumbo wrote an article for the book, Liberty.
34 The Statue of Liberty stands at the entrance of New York Harbor. It was designed by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, a French sculptor, was built by Gustave Eiffel and was a gift to the United States of the people of France. It was dedicated on October 28, 1886. The statue is an icon of freedom and of the United States, and was a welcoming sight to immigrants arriving from abroad. The sonnet, “The New Colossus” is inscribed on a plaque in the pedestal of the Status, was written by Emma Lazarus, a Jewish woman.
Alene: My son, Alfred, graduated from Brown University [Providence, Rhode Island]. At Brown University, he met the girl he married, Joanna Kellogg. He also met his business partner, Robert Waldman. Alfred was a lyricist at college. Bob was the musician. They did several college shows together that were produced there. They both went on to New York [City] and have done various things in the theatrical field. *The Robber Bridegroom*[^35] was on Broadway, as was *Little Johnny Jones*[^36] He’s had several things at the Kennedy Center[^37] [Washington, D.C.] and at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion[^38] in Los Angeles [California]. He has written some television scripts. He started out doing commercials. That is his business. His wife is a teacher. ‘Jolly,’ as we call her, teaches young children. She first was an art teacher. Now she’s using things in art to help slow learners in other ways.

Ruth: Please tell us now about the children [of Alfred and Jolly].

Alene: They have four daughters. Emily, who just graduated two years ago from Brown University, worked at [Channel] 13, the public television station in New York. She is now in San Francisco [California] pursuing a career. Elizabeth graduated last year from a college in Geneva, New York. She is taking a pre-pre-med course now at Columbia University. She also is working as a waitress on the side. Kate is a sophomore at Beloit College in [Beloit] Wisconsin. Nell is in high school in New York.

Ruth: Thank you very much. Are there any sides or additions you would like to add at this point that you didn’t think about previously? I’ll shut off the tape for a while.

<interview pauses, then resumes>

Ruth: You were telling me off the cuff about your husband’s talents. I think it would be interesting to put them down, about your husband’s painting and his interest in the arts, and your father’s involvement with music as an amateur musician. Let’s expound on that a little bit.

[^35]: *The Robber Bridegroom* is a musical with a book and lyrics by Alfred Uhry and music by Robert Waldman. The story is based on the 1942 novella by Eudora Welty of the same name, with a Robin Hood-like hero. It ran on Broadway in 1975 and again in 1976.

[^36]: *Little Johnny Jones* was a 1904 musical written by George M. Cohan. The inspiration for the play came when he read newspaper stories about Tod Sloan, a famous American jockey who went to London in 1903 to ride in the English Derby. *Little Johnny Jones* was adapted for film as well as stage performances. A revival of the play adapted by Alfred Uhry was performed in the early 1980’s.

[^37]: The Kennedy Center is a living memorial to President John F. Kennedy to fulfill his vision of presenting the greatest performers and performances from across America and around the world, nurturing new works and young artists, and serving the nation as a leader in arts education.

[^38]: The Dorothy Chandler Pavilion is one of the halls in the Los Angeles Music Center which is one of the three largest performing arts centers in the United States. The Pavilion has 3,197 seats spread over four tiers, with chandeliers, wide curving stairways and rich décor.
Alene: I don’t think my father ever thought of himself, nor was he, as an amateur musician. He loved it. He loved to sing in groups. I used to tell my cousin that he sang better than [Enrico] Caruso. She always would argue with me about that. Perhaps she was right. As far as my husband is concerned, he always had a pencil in his hand. He was making sketches on napkins and in lecture halls, and everywhere else. His father had him take music lessons all his life, as he did his other children, because he loved music and was an amateur musician. Ralph never had any art courses, ever. When we were married, however, there was this little school at the present site of the [High] Museum and the [Woodruff] Arts Center. There were two teachers there: Ben Shue [sp] and Bob Rogers [sp]. My husband went at night to the sketch classes, every Monday night. He was the only man in the group. In those days, ‘he-men’ in Atlanta, Georgia didn’t fool with painting. That never bothered him in the least. He was a good athlete. He didn’t care what was said about him. He enjoyed the work. Shortly after we were married, he asked me if I cared if he bought an etching press. We had a two-room apartment. I envisioned an etching press like a typewriter. I’d never seen one. Lo and behold, this great big frame with metal pieces, grease cloths, and all this paraphernalia was put in our tiny little bedroom. That’s the first I ever learned about etchings.

He always had a hobby connected with art. He belonged to the camera club and was an avid photographer. He sketched everywhere we went. I have sketch books of things he did, and photographs. He never really began to paint until the 1940’s when he was ill a lot of the time. He was self-taught except for a few visiting painters who came to the then High Museum, which was certainly small in those days. Dong Kingman, who’s now a recognized painter, was one of the men that started him off. I have a painting in my house that Dong Kingman did. In the corner it says, “Sketched with Ralph.” Ralph sketched the same place. When he saw Kingman’s he tore his up, but his was good. He spent all his spare time, Sundays, evenings and afternoons, painting. He loved it. Watercolors were quick. He enjoyed doing them, but when he finished with them, he was finished. He didn’t care about saving them. I have fished many out of the garbage can and

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39 Enrico Caruso (1873-1921) was an Italian operatic tenor. He sang to great acclaim at the major opera houses of Europe and the Americas, appearing in a wide variety of roles from the Italian and French repertoires. Caruso also made approximately 290 commercially released recordings from 1902 to 1920.

40 A ‘he-man’ is a strong, tough, virile man.

41 Dong Kingman (1911-2000) was a Chinese-American artist and one of America’s leading watercolor masters known for his urban and landscape paintings, as well as graphic design work in the film industry. He won widespread critical acclaim and his works are included in public and private collections worldwide, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Brooklyn Museum; and Art Institute, Chicago.
given them to my friends. He would go over for a Sunday afternoon, sit in the yard and sketch a house. Today, many of my friends have his paintings in their homes. He was strictly an amateur. He put a few things in shows at the Museum... Southern artist shows. He never sold a painting, so he maintained his amateur standing.

Ruth: Does your daughter paint at all?

Alene: She did when her father was alive. Later, she wouldn’t paint anymore. She said she realized she wasn’t good enough. I think that’s... she got into art history in that way, probably.

Ruth: I don’t think we mentioned the date of your husband’s death.

Alene: My husband died just before his fifty-first birthday in 1955.

Ruth: Was there anything else you would care to talk about at this point, that you can think of?

Alene: I think I’ve said it all.

Ruth: I think you failed to mention the college that your granddaughter Elizabeth went to is Hobart College?

Alene: She went to Hobart and William Smith [Colleges] which is a small, very good liberal arts college.

Ruth: Where is that?


Ruth: Does she intend to continue with an arts...

Alene: ... she is the one who is now in a pre-pre-med course at Columbia.

Ruth: Would you care to tell what her observations are on pre-pre-med? Whether or not she intends to pursue this?

Alene: She has always said she wanted to be a doctor. She told me the last time we discussed it that she still would like to be a doctor. She also wants to marry and have children. Even though some women manage that, she doesn’t know whether she can. This course she’s taking at the present time is for two reasons, I think. One, to see if she can do well enough to apply to medical school. The other is to give her time to think over her options.

Ruth: Your grandson who is attending Brown, what does he intend to do?

Alene: I don’t have anybody attending Brown. My granddaughter graduated from Brown two years ago. I have one grandchild in college, Kate, who is at Beloit [College].

Ruth: What is she going to be?
Alene: She doesn’t know at this time.
Ruth: Thank you very much.
<interview pauses, then resumes>
Ruth: I failed to ask you if you and your husband did any great amount of traveling.
Alene: We didn’t travel very far in those days for two reasons. First of all, there was the [Great] Depression. Then came the [World War II] years when nobody went abroad. Then my husband wasn’t well for some years. We mainly traveled in this country, out West. We took several cruises into the Caribbean [Sea]. We didn’t travel as widely as we would have liked to.
However, when I was growing up, my father and mother were very interested in seeing the whole United States. We took a lot of trips in those days out West, and up the St. Lawrence River . . . in all parts of the country. Since my husband’s death, I have been fortunate enough to have a lot of interesting trips. I have been to Europe a number of times. I was in the Orient only once on a wonderful trip. I have spent two weeks at a time in London [England] I have done the same in Nice [France]. The other trips have been, more or less, five days here and five days there, but I’ve gotten a good bird’s eye view of those places.
Ruth: When you travel to these various places, what is of primary interest? What do you prefer to see and to visit primarily?
Alene: I’m more interested in people, I think, than places. I much prefer to be in a small town where you can get to know a few people besides the people who wait on you in hotels and restaurants. That’s why I like to be in a place for a longer time. I’m interested particularly in southern France, which is my favorite spot. I hope to go back this coming year to the museums in that area, and the beautiful scenery that those artists painted. I love the theater in London. I love London. I’m sure the language helps a lot, although they do speak a different language from the one I speak. We can manage . . . I can manage to understand. I’m interested in the way people live, what they’re thinking, and what they do, as well as the sights.
Ruth: Thank you again. Here at this point we call it quits.

<End Tape 1, Side 2>
<Begin Tape 2, Side 1, 01>

Ruth: This is Tape 2, Side 1, of Alene Fox Uhry, a more in-depth continuation of Tape 1, more detail, more remembrances, taped at her home March 24, 1986. This is Ruth Zuckerman, interviewer. I think we’ll start, Alene, with your mother . . . about teaching conditions back then,
what sort of students she had, for instance what sort of student Mayor [William] Hartsfield was, and your grandfather being German. We’ll take it from there.

**Alene:** As I said in the other tape, my mother taught school in Atlanta for 10 years after she graduated from college. She taught in an elementary school called the ‘Crew Street School.’ It was in the vicinity of the Stadium. It was a public school where children of all . . . it was in a good neighborhood. She more or less had children whose parents were interested in their education.

**Ruth:** Was that a mixed neighborhood?

**Alene:** I don’t think it was that mixed. I think it might have been slightly, but it was in the vicinity of a good neighborhood. She taught many people who later became prominent citizens. She was always delighted about that. Many of them kept up with her, as did Mayor Hartsfield, whom she called ‘Willie.’ She taught him in either the fifth or the sixth grade. [She] didn’t remember a lot about what kind of student he was, so assumed that he must have been an average student. She did remember that she liked him very much. She had a lot of pleasure. I believe he was in one of the classes that she taught for two years. She moved up one year with one group of children. Those were the ones that she mostly remembered. One of the students in her class later was Dr. [Charles] Glenville Giddings, whose father was our family doctor. After he died, my mother felt very strange about going to his son, whom she had taught at school. She said, “How can I go to Glenville, when I taught him when [he] was a little boy?” She finally did. He treated her just like a relative. She had many nice contacts from her school days. As I said on the other tape, she never got over being a teacher. Is there anything more?

One thing I do want to say. Remember that the Atlanta schools in those days, really the public schools, had not been here that long. I read in the paper just the other day that they opened the public schools after the ‘War Between the States.’ She started teaching at the turn of the [twentieth] century. We’d only had schools, I guess, about 25 years here, public school. She also used to tell me a lot of stories about the way the conditions were in the school. It was supposed to be a very good school. She said there was a bucket of water in the back of the room with a dipper. When the children were thirsty, they went [to] the back of the room and drank water. They all drank from the same dipper. They didn’t seem to have any more problems with disease, so she said, as we did when we were doing everything to clean . . . when I was growing
up, it was a fad to boil everything, sterilize it, and all of that. That tells a little bit about what kind of a place Atlanta was.

**Ruth:** The building itself, the school itself?

**Alene:** I really don’t know much about the building itself. I never saw it. I think it was still quite . . . that part of town quickly went down after the First World War.

**Ruth:** It wasn’t the little red school house or that sort of . . .

**Alene:** . . . no, they had regular classrooms. As I say, the children who went there later went to college, many of them, and became prominent citizens in the community.

**Ruth:** Were they graded classrooms?

**Alene:** Yes. I had a teacher in high school named Katherine Parker. My mother had taught her. She had also taught the mothers and aunts of a lot of people that I knew. They were always coming up to her on the street. I guess there weren’t that many schools, or that many people in town. That was the first 10 years of her life after she graduated from college.

**Ruth:** Tell us about your grandfather.

**Alene:** I never knew, as I said before, my maternal grandparents. My paternal grandmother died when I was six years old. I do remember my paternal grandfather, Herman Fox. I loved him. He died when I was 11 years old. He used to read to me and play games with me. The one thing that stands out in my mind is that he spoke with a decided German accent. During those years, we didn’t like Germany. In school, everybody used to stamp on the Kaiser [German: Emperor] and call Germans ‘Krauts.’

All that sort of thing. I remember how I hated myself. I used to come home from school with some friends. I felt so bad, because I really didn’t want them to hear my grandfather talk. I realized then that something was bad about being ashamed of my grandfather, who I loved. That is a little bit about things I’ve read about first generation Americans and how they felt towards their families.

**Ruth:** Why did your grandparents leave Germany?

**Alene:** My grandparents on all sides came from Germany. My mother’s mother was born in Germany. She came to this country when she was two years old. They left for several reasons. They said they left because of [Otto von] Bismarck and the feeling toward Jews. But they

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42 ‘Kraut’ is a German word used from 1918 onwards as a derogatory term for a German, particularly a German soldier during World War I and World War II. Its earlier meaning in English was as a synonym for ‘sauerkraut,’ a traditional German and central European food.

43 Otto Eduard Leopold, Prince of Bismarck, Duke of Lauenburg, (1815-1898), known as ‘Otto von Bismarck,’ was
mostly said to avoid the military. I never worked that out exactly right. I do know that from
what they say that boys were conscripted. They never could be officers in the army.

Ruth: Because they were Jewish?

Alene: Because they were Jewish, but they were . . .

Ruth: What year was that?

Alene: My maternal ancestors came in the 1840’s . . . 1845 . . . 1850, around in there, to
Philadelphia [Pennsylvania], and moved South. They lived in Atlanta at first. They had relatives
who had come here. Then they went to Newnan [Georgia]. My mother always said they moved
because the schools were better. They had schools in Newnan. My maternal grandmother went
to a school called LaGrange Female College44 [LaGrange, Georgia]. I have a certificate from
that institution.

Ruth: That was your maternal grandmother?

Alene: Yes. Before the Civil War, they returned to Philadelphia. Why, I do not know. My
mother’s oldest brothers and sisters, three or four of them, were born in Philadelphia, and they
came to Atlanta. I don’t know what year. My mother was born in 1877. She was the youngest
of the family. She was born here.

Ruth: What about your paternal grandparents?

Alene: I think I told you on the other tape that my father’s mother was born in Louisville,
Kentucky. We went into the Alsace part. I know that my maternal ancestors came from
southern Germany. I’m not clear on what part of Germany my paternal ancestors came from.

Ruth: Let’s get back to your parents. What area did you live in as you were growing up?
You claim that it was around the Stadium. Can you elaborate a little bit, and why you moved
from there?

Alene: Atlanta is a strange city. People seem to move in groups. I guess they do everywhere.
Where I lived until I was nine years old was definitely a Jewish area in town. We had Christian
neighbors, I don’t mean that. But almost all of our friends lived right around within six square

a conservative Prussian statesman who dominated German and European affairs from the 1860’s until 1890.
44 LaGrange College was founded in 1831 as a women’s academy affiliated with the United Methodist Church. It is
the oldest private college in Georgia. In 1851, the college moved its present location in the city of LaGrange. The
name changed to ‘LaGrange Female College’ in 1851, then to ‘LaGrange College’ in 1934. The school officially
became co-ed in 1953.
blocks of where I lived. I think I told you that my earliest memories actually are of living in a little house on Pulliam Street,\(^45\) which is now I think a black section. I’m not sure. It . . .

**Ruth:** . . . on William Street?

**Alene:** . . . Pulliam . . . P-U-L-I-A-M.

**Ruth:** Is that still in existence?

**Alene:** I think the expressway cut through that. I don’t know. I sometimes almost have a wreck on the expressway trying to find the house. My cousins have told me that they can see the house where I grew up from the freeway. I’m not sure about it. There are three houses that look alike to me, and I can’t tell which. I was born on Washington Street at Georgia Avenue, which is right across from the Stadium, or right at the Howard Johnson [Hotel], I think. Right in that area.

**Ruth:** It was nice back then?

**Alene:** Yes. I didn’t live in an elaborate house. It was a cottage. You wanted to know why we moved? I don’t know. All of a sudden everybody . . . after the war, apartments were built.

There were apartments on the south side. I had friends who lived in apartments, maybe with six units or eight units. Those kinds of apartments were built in a newer area, toward Druid Hills,\(^46\) but not quite as far as Briarcliff Road. It was around Boulevard and Monroe Drive, those places. Just before my tenth birthday, we moved to that area . . . then later moved to the Druid Hills area, I guess you would call it.

**Ruth:** How did you find public schools? Did you encounter any racial bigotry?

**Alene:** Not really in school. I think I might have told you before, when I was in grammar school I remember hearing somebody sing a song about ‘little Mary Phagan.’\(^47\) I didn’t really understand the whole thing at that time, but I knew it was something that hurt my feelings. I didn’t know exactly why. I never really encountered any prejudice as far as teachers, friends, and that kind of thing. I told you one incident in the last tape. As far as the schools were concerned, I think they were excellent schools. Girls’ High School that I went to was a college preparatory school . . . public . . . it only had 11 grades. When I got to Wellesley [College], I felt

\(^{45}\) Pulliam Street runs parallel to I-75/I-85 in Downtown Atlanta in what was formerly a residential neighborhood in the vicinity of the old Atlanta Stadium (near the current Turner Field). The area was the center of much of Atlanta’s Jewish community from the late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century, and was home to many Jewish families, and civic and business leaders. Several synagogues were located in the neighborhood.

\(^{46}\) Druid Hills is now an affluent neighborhood in Atlanta.

\(^{47}\) Thirteen-year-old Mary Phagan worked in the National Pencil Factory in Atlanta in 1913. She was found murdered in the basement of the factory at around 3 a.m., on April 27, 1913. Her murder led to the conviction and lynching of Leo Frank by a mob in 1915 in Marietta, Georgia. Frank was later pardoned.
equally prepared. I felt that I’d had as good an education as those who had gone to fancy prep schools.

**Ruth:** Do you remember the song, “Little Mary Phagan”?48

**Alene:** I can’t sing it, but I vaguely remember it. It’s quoted in some recent articles in the newspaper.

**Ruth:** We’ll get back to the William Frank case and how you feel about his exoneration . . .

**Alene:** . . . Leo Frank.

**Ruth:** . . . Leo Frank . . . what did I say?

**Alene:** William.

**Ruth:** At any rate, if you could recite the song?

**Alene:** I really can’t. I just know it was something [like] . . . “Little Mary Phagan went to work one day . . .” I don’t really remember it. I guess I didn’t want to.

**Ruth:** Tell us about your first job.

**Alene:** I had many volunteer jobs while I was still in college, when I came home in the summer. I used to drive a worker around from what was then called the Family Welfare Society.49 My first job was when I graduated from college in 1930, in the Depression years. After majoring in psychology, I applied to Davison’s50 which was affiliated with Macy’s51 [and] had recently opened in Atlanta. They were doing all kinds of new things, including having a personnel squad. I applied for that job and got it. I made $10 a week. I remember my father said to me, “It’s a good thing you went to college. Just think what you’d make if you hadn’t gone to college.” My hours were 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. It really was equivalent to other

48 “Little Mary Phagan” was written by American country musician Fiddlin’ John Carson (1868-1949). He wrote this song in 1915 and performed it on the steps of the Georgia State Capitol. Ten years later it was recorded by his singer-guitarist daughter Rosa Lee Carson (1911-1992). The song is also known as “The Ballad of Mary Phagan,” and there are variations on the words. The inflammatory song was reflective of the mood of the times that lead to the lynching of Leo Frank.

49 The Social Welfare Society was initially called the ‘Associated Charities of Atlanta,’ but changed its name to ‘Family Welfare Society’ in 1924. It is now incorporated into Families First, a family service agency whose stated purpose is to improve child well-being and family self-sufficiency.

50 Davison’s of Atlanta was a department store chain and an Atlanta shopping institution. 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. Davison-Paxon-Stokes sold out to R.H. Macy & Co. in 1925. By 1927, R.H. Macy built the Peachtree Street store that still stands today. That same year the company dropped the ‘Stokes’ to become Davison Paxon Co. Davison’s took the Macy’s name in 1986.

51 Macy’s, originally R. H. Macy & Co., is a chain of department stores owned by American multinational corporation Macy’s, Inc. As of January 2014, it operates 850 department stores locations in the continental United States, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Guam, with a prominent Herald Square flagship location in New York City.
salaries that people made who worked all day. They might have made $15 a week, or something like that. We went for instruction for the first hour or two. Then they would put us in different departments for a week. I remember working in the infants’ department and the dress department. I really didn’t like selling very much. The end of my career came when I was put in the notions department. They were taking inventory. We had to count the spools of thread, and the needles and pins. I thought, “I really didn’t go to college to be doing this.” I’m afraid that that was the end of my retail career.

Ruth: Tell us about your first cousins . . . who live in . . .

Alene: . . . I still have three first cousins. The oldest one is Helen Ferst . . . F-E-R-S-T. She is the daughter of my mother’s sister.\(^{52}\) Her name was ‘Montag’ before she married. She is about 93 or 94 years old. [She] is in comparatively good health and has a keen mind. She doesn’t go out a lot anymore. She stays to herself pretty much. She is the oldest. She was almost like an aunt to me, because she was so much older. I was a flower girl in her wedding . . . I do remember that . . . when I was six years old.

My other first cousin here is Richard Guthman,\(^{53}\) whose father was my mother’s brother. He lives here in Atlanta and is just about two-and-a-half years older than I am. We have always gone with the same circle of friends and have been close to each other.

My third living cousin is Helen Gortatowsky.\(^{54}\) Her mother and my mother were sisters. They were the nearest in age, and the closest ones. Helen is four years younger than I am. I guess I was closer to her than any of the others. We used to play together all the time. It’s really nice now. She and I can remember things together that I can’t talk about to anybody else. One of the things I remember is that my mother used to always . . . it’s a wonder I even like her. I told her that. My mother used to make me always give up to her. She used to say, “You’re four years older than she is. Now give her the doll” or “Give her this.” An incident that later amused us, but certainly didn’t then, [was] that my mother always made her birthday cake. It was always an angel food cake.\(^{55}\) One year, we were taking the cake to her. My mother was

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\(^{52}\) Helen Montag Ferst was the daughter of Clementine “Clemmie” Guthman, who was the sister of Alene’s mother Lena, and Sigmond “Sig” Montag.

\(^{53}\) Richard Guthman was the son of Aaron Guthman, who was the brother of Alene’s mother, Lena.

\(^{54}\) Helen Bauer Gortatowsky was the daughter of Ida Guthman, who was the sister of Alene’s mother Lena, and William Bauer.

\(^{55}\) ‘Angel food cake,’ or ‘angel cake,’ is a type of sponge cake which originated in the United States that first became popular in the late nineteenth century. It is so named because of its airy lightness that was said to be the ‘food of the angels.’
driving the car. I was holding the cake. When I got out of the car, I dropped the cake on the street.

Ruth: Was that accidental?
Alene: It has a Freudian tinge to it, don’t you think?
Ruth: Subconsciously. Helen, is she an artist?
Alene: No. You’re thinking of her sister-in-law, Harriet.
Ruth: Harriet and Helen . . .
Alene: . . . Helen has been married twice. Her name before she married was Bauer . . . B-A-U-E-R.
Ruth: These relatives are all living in Atlanta?
Alene: Yes.
Ruth: That must be nice. Is there anything else you care to say about your first cousins?
Alene: No. I might get sued.
Ruth: We won’t pursue it.

Ruth: Tell me about your father’s life in Plaquemine, Louisiana.
Alene: My husband’s life?
Ruth: Your husband’s, yes. I’ve never heard of Plaquemine before, but . . .
Alene: . . . no, nobody else has. I think I described it a little bit in the last tape.
Ruth: How they got to Plaquemine, did we discuss that?
Alene: I think we did. His father came from Alsace when he was a man of 21. I don’t know whether I told you this or not, but we have a letter that he wrote. Not a letter, it’s like a little part of a diary that he wrote in later years about his trip on the train from New York to New Orleans [Louisiana], where his relatives lived. He wrote that he saw two things on that trip that he had never seen before in his life. One was a cotton field. The other was a black man.
Ruth: There were no blacks in Plaquemine?
Alene: He came from Alsace. He had never been to Plaquemine. He was on his way there. There were plenty of them in Plaquemine . . . plenty of ‘servants,’ as they were called.
Ruth: What was his reaction?

Alene: He just described it in a beautiful European-looking handwriting. He was an amateur musician . . . I think I said that before. He and his brothers ran some retail men’s stores through the state of Louisiana. That’s how he got to Plaquemine.

Ruth: Are they still in existence, these stores?

Alene: No.

Ruth: Let’s move up a little bit. Tell me about when *Gone with the Wind* came to Atlanta.

Alene: *Gone with the Wind* came to Atlanta in 1939. The book had come out in 1936. I remember I used to go to a lending library at Sears Roebuck right on Ponce De Leon Avenue. That building is still standing. They had a good lending library. The woman who ran it was named Ruth Carter. I remember that because she would always call me when new books came in. One hot summer day, she told me that they were going to have a tea for an Atlanta woman who had written a novel about the Civil War, and would my mother and I come to this tea on the next afternoon? That was about the last thing I thought would be interesting . . . an Atlanta woman’s book about the Civil War. Because of my friendship with the librarian, we went to the tea. There was Margaret Mitchell, a dowdy-looking woman. The book cost $3.00. I remember that. That was high, because most books were $2.00 and $2.50. I felt that I had to buy a book. I’m sorry to tell you that I bought the book, she autographed it, and I lent it to somebody. I do not have it. That’s the bad part of the story. I took the book home. This was about two or three weeks before publication. It was this big thick book, I thought about the Civil War. I really didn’t want to read it. I put it on my night table. I hadn’t heard a word about it, except at this tea. I remember that my husband was in Chicago at the furniture market. This was in the summer. My son was born in December. That’s why I hadn’t gone to Chicago. One night I picked up that book. I never went to sleep the whole night. I read the whole thing. The next day . . . this was before I’d ever heard of *Gone with the Wind*. Within two weeks, everybody was talking about the book.

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56 The epic film, *Gone with the Wind*, premiered in Atlanta in 1939. The film was adapted from Margaret Mitchell’s Pulitzer-winning 1936 novel of the same name set against the backdrop of the Civil War and Reconstruction era in the American South. It tells the story of Scarlett O’Hara, the strong-willed daughter of a Georgia plantation owner. The leading roles are portrayed by Vivien Leigh (Scarlett), Clark Gable (Rhett Butler), Leslie Howard (Ashley Wilkes), and Olivia de Havilland (Melanie Hamilton).

57 An American chain of department stores founded by Richard Sears and Alvah Roebuck in 1886. It began as a mail order catalog company and opened retail locations in 1925. It was bought by Kmart in 2005. Sears was the largest retailer in the United States until October 1989 when it was surpassed by Walmart.
When the opening was coming, of course we were all very excited about it. It was the biggest event I could ever remember in Atlanta.\(^{58}\) I was young and stage-struck. I was born in 1909. I was 30. We went to the ball the night before at the [Municipal] Auditorium,\(^ {59}\) which is the armory where in the book Scarlett wore her widow’s black dress and danced with Rhett Butler.\(^ {60}\) Sure enough, Vivien Leigh\(^ {61}\) was there in her black dress and she danced with Rhett Butler. Clark Gable\(^ {62}\) was here. All the leads were here. We gawked at them and looked at them. People were talking for weeks about what they were going to wear to the ball. Tickets, of course, were at a premium. I don’t remember how we got tickets. The people were standing outside watching everybody go in. It was a big event. The movie started the next night. I did not go that night. I think we went a couple of nights later to see the movie. It was exciting and wonderful, we thought. Later, when I’ve seen it on television, it just doesn’t seem like the same thing that I saw all those years ago.

**Ruth:** Did the movie meet with your expectation? Did you find it better than the book, that it

\(^{58}\) The premier of the epic film, *Gone with the Wind*, featured several days of excitement, glamour, and events in Atlanta from December 13 to December 16, 1939. Many of stars of the film were in Atlanta for the debut including Clark Gable (Rhett Butler) and Vivien Leigh (Scarlett O’Hara), as well as *Gone with the Wind* author Margaret Mitchell, and producer, David O. Selznick. On Friday night, December 15, 1939, spotlights swept the sky. An enormous crowd gathered for the opening at the Loew’s Grand Theater (Peachtree Street at Pryor Street) numbering 300,000 people according to the *Atlanta Constitution*. A photo gallery from the 1939 premier can be found here: [http://www.ajc.com/gallery/news/photos/gwtw-75th-anniversary/](http://www.ajc.com/gallery/news/photos/gwtw-75th-anniversary/).

\(^{59}\) Atlanta Municipal Auditorium, originally known as the ‘Auditorium and Armory’ is located at Gilmer and Courtland Streets in downtown Atlanta. The structure was dedicated in a pre-inaugural visit from President William Howard Taft in 1909 during which he was served a possum dinner. The dining hall in which this event took place was named in his honor. Concerts, theater productions, operas, balls, and sports events were held there, as well as the Gone with the Wind Ball, held in conjunction with the 1939 premiere of the film. The building was sold in 1979 to Georgia State University.

\(^{60}\) In *Gone with the Wind*, Scarlett O’Hara’s is widowed when her husband, Charles Hamilton, dies while serving in the Confederate Army. While mourning, she dresses in black and certainly should not attend a party. Scarlett bucks tradition and attends a charity bazaar in Atlanta with Melanie. There, Scarlett is the object of disapproval by the women who represent proper Atlanta society, all of them properly dressed in white. The gentlemen are invited to offer bids for ladies to dance with them to raise money for the Confederate war effort. Rhett Butler, a rogue who was expelled from West Point and rejected by his family, makes an inordinately large bid for Scarlett. To the shock of the crowd, wearing her scandalous black dress, she agrees to dance with him. Later, after many adventure, they are married.

\(^{61}\) Vivian Mary Hartley, known professionally as ‘Vivien Leigh’ (1913-1967), was an English stage and film actress. She is perhaps best known for her roles as Scarlett O’Hara in *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and Blanche DuBois in the film version of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951). Despite her fame as a screen actress, Leigh was primarily a stage actress.

\(^{62}\) Clark Gable (1901-1960) was an American film actor. He landed his first leading Hollywood role in 1932 and became a leading man in more than 60 motion pictures over the next three decades. Gable was best known for his role as Rhett Butler in *Gone with the Wind* (1939). Other films include: *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935), *It Happened One Night* (1934), *Manhattan Melodrama* (1934), *San Francisco* (1936), *Saratoga* (1937) *Boom Town* (1940), *The Hucksters* (1947) *Homecoming* (1948), and *The Misfits* (1961).
did the book justice?

**Alene:** I don’t remember analyzing it. I was just thrilled with the whole thing.

**Ruth:** It was very exciting.

**Alene:** I remember. My mother’s . . . I might have it here . . . my mother saved for me a lot of the newspapers of the time. I remember the big headlines that said, “Clark Gable Drives Down Peachtree.” There were parades.

**Ruth:** Let’s get on to your son’s wife’s mother, who was one-quarter Jewish, and her grandfather who was a prominent doctor. Tell us a little about that.

**Alene:** My daughter-in-law’s mother and I are very close friends, although they live in Connecticut and I live here. We visit each other. We grew up . . . really and truly it’s amazing . . . in different parts of the country in superficially different backgrounds as far as religion and location were concerned. I’ve learned that we had the same kind of background. We’d read the same books. She went to Vassar [College—Poughkeepsie, New York]. She’s a little bit younger than I am. We’ve just gotten along so well. It makes me look at the whole thing in a marriage . . . maybe this is just a marvelous, unusual intermarriage. I don’t know. It’s certainly set the tone. I feel that my son and his wife really came from the same background.

**Ruth:** Her grandfather, you say that he was a prominent doctor?

**Alene:** Not my grandfather. Her grandfather.

**Ruth:** Who was he?

**Alene:** He was a Dr. Mosenthal in New York City. I believe he was an urologist. There is today, I’m told, a certain test that is named after him. I never knew him. I knew Jolly’s grandmother, but I never knew him. He had died. I’m sorry I didn’t know him.

**Ruth:** He was in New York, is that right?

**Alene:** Yes.

**Ruth:** Tell us about your son’s career as a playwright.

**Alene:** I don’t know why any person . . . I do know why he chose it. He always loved it, but it’s an up and down thing. He loves it today. He’s had enough successes to make it all worthwhile. I always tell him, the smartest thing he ever did was to marry the girl he did. She’s as interested in it as he is. She encourages and enjoys and the whole thing.

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63 Dr. Herman Otto Mosenthal (1878-1954) was an American physician. The Mosenthal test to evaluate renal concentrating ability was named after him.
Ruth: Does she collaborate with him?

Alene: No. She’s in another field. She has interests of her own. She makes pottery in the summer. She’s an excellent artist.

Ruth: What’s her name?

Alene: Her name was Joanna Kellogg. She’s known to everybody as ‘Jolly’ . . . J-O-L-L-Y. She is a teacher. It’s interesting. In our family we’ve had a lot of teachers. My mother was a teacher. My daughter is a teacher now at Georgia State [University—Atlanta, Georgia]. Jolly is a teacher now. For a time, Alfred taught Shakespeare at a girl’s private school, I think two days a week. We seem to have a family of teachers. Jolly teaches in an elementary school. It’s a private school in New York. She started out teaching art to young children. Since then, she’s taken courses at Columbia. She’s gotten her MA, and at the moment is working toward her PhD. She uses art in helping slow learners. I couldn’t go into all the details if I wanted to, because I don’t understand it all. She is very excited about it and interested in it and has had some successes.

Ruth: That would be interesting to pursue if you knew how it was utilized. Let’s get on to your missing the religious aspects of the seders and Jewish observances, and what you’ve done about it.

Alene: My mother was an observant Jew, as far as going to services were concerned. She went every Saturday, as I think I said in the last tape. My father grew up in the little town of Streator, Illinois, where there was no opportunity for Jewish education. He said his parents often went to Chicago for the [high] holy days but he didn’t. When he came to Atlanta, he had a lot of civic interests. The year he died he was a vice-president of the Temple. I feel that his interest in the Temple was more of a civic kind of a thing. He was always known to be a Jew and, for his means, a very generous one. As far as an observant Jew, I don’t think so. He went to Temple and enjoyed the social part of it, talking to the people, and so forth. We were always neighbors of Dr. [David] Marx. I don’t remember imbibing any feelings for . . . it’s just not in my memory if they ever had a seder supper. They must have, but I don’t know about it. We didn’t. Occasionally, we’d be invited out for a seder. My mother, when I was little, used to tell me

$^{64}$ William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was an English poet, playwright, and actor, widely regarded as the greater writer in the English language. He wrote 38 plays, 154 sonnets and other verses. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.
about all the symbols. In fact, she used to put them all on a little table: the lamb bone, the parsley, and the salt water. I never had the community kind of *seder* that we have now. The reason we have it is, I guess, because of my grandchildren. My daughter and son-in-law, with two other couples, started having *seders* together . . . at least 15 years ago when the children . . . maybe longer than that. These three families, they used to be about . . . I used to go, and my mother went to some. We used to have all those generations.

**Ruth:** That was here in Atlanta?

**Alene:** Here in Atlanta. We still do this. We take turns. One has it one year and one has it the next. We all bring part of the supper. We’re fortunate to have the Alfred Messers [sp] in the group. He conducts the service as his father did at home. We have a wonderful time with it. The children, my grandchildren and their contemporaries, enjoy it so much that they all try to come home for the occasion. It makes me see what I missed.

**Ruth:** Tell us about Rabbi Marx.

**Alene:** There isn’t much to tell. I have a divided opinion, because he was a close friend. He used to take me to Sunday school every Sunday, because we were neighbors. In two different locations we lived next door to each other. If you notice, he was called ‘Dr. Marx’, not ‘Rabbi Marx.’ I never heard anybody call him . . . I did . . . I used to hear him referred to in the community as ‘Rabbi Marx.’ All of us called him ‘Dr. Marx.’ I don’t think he was a doctor until later in his life when he was given an honorary degree. I can’t explain why he was called ‘Dr.,’ but the rabbi in Savannah is the same. He was called ‘Dr. Solomon.’ This came about, I always think, as a result of the Frank case years when Jews went out of their way to be like everybody else. That’s my explanation. It may be entirely wrong.

Reform Judaism in my day was so Reform that it was hardly recognizable. Even when I go to the Temple today, it is so completely different from what it used to be. When I was growing up, Dr. Marx never would have a *bar mitzvah*65 in the Temple. When my daughter was in Sunday school, a close friend’s parents wanted this boy to have a *bar mitzvah*. Dr. Marx

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65 *Bar mitzvah* (Hebrew for ‘son of commandment’) is 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.
wouldn’t do it. They joined the other temple that year. The child had his bar mitzvah at another
temple.

**Ruth:** What reason was that?

**Alene:** I don’t know. He thought confirmation\(^{66}\) was enough. I remember Dr. Marx mainly . . .
. He was a very brilliant man. I think he served this Jewish community . . . at the time of the
Frank case, he was an excellent representative. I want to make that clear. I don’t want
everything I say to be negative, because that is a fact. He was referred to always, except by the
rednecks,\(^{67}\) as a brilliant, upright, wonderful person. He really was an asset in the Christian
community. As far as the Jewish community was concerned, it was the only kind of Judaism I
knew anything about. It wasn’t very appealing to me.

**Ruth:** Is he still living?\(^{68}\)

**Alene:** No.

**Ruth:** Let’s go on to the opera scene here in Atlanta.

**Alene:** The Metropolitan [Opera] started coming to Atlanta when I was, I think, an infant.
They stopped it during the First World War and the Second World War. My father, who loved
music so much, was one . . . of the original guarantors. He and my mother had season tickets
and used to go every night. My mother started taking me to matinees. I remember hearing
[Enrico] Caruso . . . sing *Martha*,\(^{69}\) in a matinee, when I was nine years old. I think I remember
more hearing about it than actually the performance. I was subjected to the opera. It was a big
social event . . . all written up in the paper like the small town that it was, with who wore what,
who was there, and all the exclusive parties afterwards at the various exclusive clubs, to which
Jews were not invited.

**Ruth:** Tell us a little bit about the club scene in Atlanta.

\(^{66}\) 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.

\(^{67}\) A derogatory slang term referring to poor, uneducated white farmers deemed to be insufficiently liberal, especially
from the Southern United States. Southern whites have reclaimed the world using it with pride and defiance as a
self-identifier. Similar to ‘cracker’ and ‘hillbilly.’

\(^{68}\) Rabbi Marx died in 1962.

\(^{69}\) *Martha, oder Der Markt zu Richmond (Martha, or The Market at Richmond)* is a romantic comic opera in four
acts by Friedrich von Flotow set to a German libretto by Friedrich Wilhelm Riese and based on a story by Jules-
Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges.
**Alene**: I’m ashamed to say that when I was growing up, it just seemed normal to me. I didn’t begin to realize what a horrible thing it was until I was pretty advanced in years. I now see it for what I think it is. It really is, as the American Jewish Committee says, the ‘last bastion.’ I don’t think that anything that excludes groups can be very good. I think people should be judged on an individual merit. It really is a very sore spot with me when public institutions, even college clubs, symphony boards, or anything like that . . . our symphony board doesn’t meet there anymore . . . meet at a club to which all the members of the board are not always welcome. I’d feel the same if the Standard Club\(^\text{70}\) would have it. I think the years of exclusive clubs . . . seems to me it will disappear before too long.

**Ruth**: You don’t think the Standard Club is exclusive?

**Alene**: No. I think it’s wrong to have city-wide . . . I think it would be wrong to have a United Way meeting at the Standard Club. I don’t belong to the Standard Club now. I don’t know its position on taking everybody. I think they tell me it is open now, but nobody joins except Jews. They’re more than social clubs. I think that the Capital City Club\(^\text{71}\) and the Piedmont Driving Club\(^\text{72}\) are places where big business deals are made . . . where all kinds of things that are not social take place.

**Ruth**: We had mentioned in our last talk about some very exclusive parties to [which] Jews were not permitted, and when a change came about when black singers . . .

**Alene**: I was talking about the opera week. It was a big, big social . . . I think quite a few people went to these social affairs, and in between just went to the opera until the next party. The first night of the opera, I think they used to have a party at the Capital City Club. Not being there, I wouldn’t know for sure what went on. I read in the paper in those days that all the singers who were in the opera were there. It was a very gala, festive occasion. Rudolf Bing

\(^{70}\) The Standard Club is a Jewish social club that started as the Concordia Association in 1867 in Downtown Atlanta. In 1905, it was reorganized as the ‘Standard Club’ and moved into the former mansion of William C. Sanders near where Turner Field is now located. In the late 1920’s the club moved to Ponce de Leon Avenue in Midtown Atlanta. Later, the club moved to what is now the Lenox Park business park and was located there until 1983. In the 1980’s, the club moved to its present location in Johns Creek in Atlanta’s northern suburbs.

\(^{71}\) The Capital City Club is a private social club founded in Atlanta in 1883. It is among the oldest social organizations in the South.

\(^{72}\) The Piedmont Driving Club is a private social club in Atlanta with a reputation as one of the most prestigious private clubs in the South. Founded in 1887 originally as the ‘Gentlemen’s Driving Club,’ the name reflected the interest of the members to "drive" their horse and carriages on the club grounds.
became manager of the Metropolitan Opera. The first season he came to Atlanta, Aida was the opening opera with Leontyne Price. Mr. Bing let it be known that if all the cast was not invited to the party after the opera, nobody would come. It just so happened that when opera week rolled around that year, the Capital City Club was closed for renovation.

**Ruth:** Which year was that?

**Alene:** I’m not sure. It’s been quite a while.

**Ruth:** Not that long ago?

**Alene:** No.

**Ruth:** Did they, after all, permit her to sing?

**Alene:** They were permitting her to sing.

**Ruth:** At the Capital City Club?

**Alene:** No. The Capital City Club was closed. They didn’t have any parties.

**Ruth:** At what point in time were colored entertainers permitted?

**Alene:** I really don’t know that. Not being a member of those clubs, I really don’t know. You don’t hear as much . . . if you notice, when opera week comes along, you don’t read quite as much about all the festivities.

**Ruth:** Tell us about the [Atlanta] Symphony board and meeting at the [Piedmont] Driving Club.

**Alene:** The [Atlanta] Symphony board used to meet at the Driving Club. As I say, in the beginning I never realized how bad that was. I began to feel very uncomfortable at those meetings and thought it was wrong to have them there. I just started not attending. It struck me that that was a dumb thing to do. Nobody knew why I didn’t come to the meetings. I seemed like an uninterested board member. This happened about 1968, when the [High] Museum was enlarged. The whole [Atlanta Memorial] Arts Center was enlarged. We then had a members’ room at the Arts Alliance. A very nice man, Charles Towers, was president of the Symphony board. He was head of Shell Oil in this area.

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73 Rudolf Bing was the General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera in New York City from 1950 to 1972.

74 Aida is an opera in four acts by Giuseppe Verdi first performed at the Khedivial Opera House in Cairo in 1871. The grand opera tells the story of a love triangle which includes a beautiful Ethiopian princess, now a slave, named ‘Aida.’

75 Leontyne Price (born Mary Violet Leontyne Price in 1927) is an American soprano. Born and raised in Laurel, Mississippi, she rose to international acclaim in the 1950’s and 1960’s, and was one of the first black Americans to become a leading artist at the Metropolitan Opera.
One day I just decided that I was going to do something about that. I called his secretary, made an appointment, and said I wanted to come to see him about a Symphony matter. I went. I told him my story. He started off saying, “I grew up not being a member of any club. My parents worked hard, and we were poor. I never dreamed I’d have a position like this. I guess it was just one of my dreams to know that I had risen to this position.” I said to him, “No matter how hard my father or husband worked, they would never be allowed to join the Driving Club.” He said, “I’ll be damned. I didn’t know that. That’s wrong. If I were in your place, I would feel just as you do.” I said, “Do you think you might be able to later change the meetings to the members’ room over at the Arts Alliance?” He said, “No, not later. We’re going to change the next meeting.” He sent out notices right that minute that the meeting would be changed. The meeting was set for two weeks and we would meet at the members’ room. At that meeting, there were very few people in attendance. At the Driving Club meetings, one of the men who was a member of the club would always act as host, and serve drinks after the meeting was over. That didn’t happen at the members’ room. For years, Charles Towers teased me. He said I had reduced the attendance at Symphony boards by half. But later . . . it did take a while, but later they got used to coming to the members’ room. The people on the board now don’t know the difference. They don’t even know about the other way.

<general conversation about the interview>

Ruth: Mrs. Uhry claims she’s said quite enough. She really has nothing more that she cares to add to this tape. At this point we will conclude the interview. This is Ruth Zuckerman, interviewer. We do have a signed form that Mrs. Uhry is signing for permission to use the tape.

<Ruth: This is Ruth Zuckerman taping an interview sequel to the first interview with Alene Uhry, taken on March 24, 1986, for the Esther and Herbert Taylor Oral History Project. Today is September 8, 1989, at Mrs. Uhry’s home. Alene, we would like to start with Driving Miss...>
Daisy,\textsuperscript{76} the very highly successful play which is presently being made into a movie. We would like to begin with the 1958 Temple bombing\textsuperscript{77} . . .

\(<\text{interview pauses then resumes}>\)

\textbf{Ruth:} . . . Rabbi [Jacob] Rothschild and his congregation.

\textbf{Alene:} Rabbi Rothschild\textsuperscript{78} was a very active rabbi in the community. The congregation, at that time I think up to a point, was quite proud of what he stood for. But some of the older members, the more conservative people, were afraid. They didn’t want him to be so outspoken. He was a co-chairman of the dinner that was given later for Martin Luther King [Jr.]\textsuperscript{79} and . . . it was later . . . it was in the 1960’s. He reflected finally great glory on the Temple . . . but older people, many of them, tried to persuade him from participating. At the time of the bombing, the community poured out sympathy to the congregation. It was almost unbelievable the way the ministers . . . he had a good relationship with all the priests, the ministers, and the social workers in the community. He always firmly stood for what I consider the right things. Conservatives may not always go that far. He was a strong believer in civil rights long before it became popular . . . in the days when it was a little bit conscience-shaking to some of the members of the congregation. He was known in the community, really, as a fair, open-minded person who was very, very anxious to bring the various preachers, priests, and rabbis together.

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Driving Miss Daisy} (1987) is the first in what is known as Alfred Uhry’s ‘Atlanta Trilogy’ of plays earning him the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Uhry adapted the play into the screenplay for the 1989 Academy Award winning film of the same name. The film stars Jessica Tandy (Daisy Werthan), Morgan Freeman (Hoke Colburn), and Dan Aykroyd (Booie Werthan). The story of Miss Daisy, a Southern Jewish widow and Hoke, her black chauffeur, is set in Atlanta between 1948 and 1973 as their 25-year friendship reflects the social changes in the American South.

\textsuperscript{77} The Temple on Peachtree Street in Atlanta was bombed on October 12, 1958. About 50 sticks of dynamite were planted near the building and tore a huge hole in the wall. No one was injured in the bombing. The temple’s Rabbi Jacob Rothschild was an outspoken advocate of civil rights and integration and friend of Martin Luther King Jr. Five men associated with the National States’ Rights Party, a white separatist group, were tried and acquitted in the bombing.

\textsuperscript{78} 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.

\textsuperscript{79} 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. King helped to organize the 1963 March on Washington, where he delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. In 1964, King received the Nobel Peace Prize for combating racial inequality through nonviolence. King was assassinated in 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. His death was followed by riots in many United States cities. He 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.
Ruth: Would you attribute the bombing to that reason?
Alene: No. I would attribute the bombing to the same thing that causes burning of crosses.\(^{80}\) I don’t think . . . this is just my opinion, but I don’t the leaders of those movements had much to think with. I think they reacted to their prejudices.

Ruth: Did they ever capture the person who was responsible for the bombing?
Alene: They did. I don’t really know what happened to him.

Ruth: Is it true? I heard someone tell me that actually the bombing was to have been to the AA [Ahavath Achim] synagogue\(^{81}\) which was being built, but that he had made a mistake and went to the wrong place.

Alene: I don’t think that’s true. There’s a line in *Driving Miss Daisy* when she says, “It’s a mistake. We’re Reform. They meant to bomb the Orthodox\(^{82}\) congregation.” Someone asked me if my mother really said that. I said, “I never heard her say that.” People of her time at the Temple could have said it. They were so anxious, after the Frank case that we talked about on the other tapes, to be so American, Atlantan, and citizens of this country. They thought the Reform group was considered a different element to the riff-raff. You see, it wasn’t. It was like [Adolf] Hitler. There’s a line also in the play where this chauffeur Hoke [Smith] says, “Miss Daisy, it don’t matter if you’re light or dark, you’re the same nigger,” which describes that other thing, too.

Ruth: Did they ever apprehend the person, if they knew who it was?
Alene: I’m real fuzzy about that. What his punishment was, I really don’t know. I’m trying to think who might tell you. I think maybe Joseph Haas, who was active. Billy [William B.] Schwartz, I believe, was a vice-president or president of the Temple at that time.

Ruth: What were the attitudes of the congregants towards integration?
Alene: It was as varied as you can see in almost any group. I think primarily the Jews, for the most part all branches of Judaism, were leaders in the field of integration. That’s one reason I

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\(^{80}\) ‘Cross burning’ or ‘cross lighting’ is a practice widely associated with the Ku Klux Klan, although the historical practice long predates the Klan’s inception. In the early twentieth century, the Klan burned crosses on hillsides or near the homes of those they wish to intimidate. The first instance of a cross being burned in the United States was on November 25, 1915, when a group led by William J. Simmons burned a cross on top of Stone Mountain, Georgia, inaugurated a revival of the Klan.

\(^{81}\) Ahavath Achim was founded in 1887 in Downtown Atlanta. The synagogue moved to its current location on Peachtree Battle Avenue in 1958.

\(^{82}\) Orthodox Judaism is a traditional branch of Judaism that strictly follows the Written *Torah* and the Oral Law concerning prayer, dress, food, sex, family relations, social behavior, the Sabbath day, holidays and more.
find it so disturbing when you hear about the black-Jewish problems, in later times, and now with the Jewish slumlords and all of that kind of thing. In those days, I really think that Rabbi Rothschild was certainly leading the younger members. By younger, I would say fiftyish down. I do think some of the old ones, it was hard to break. They might have been for integration, but they didn’t want their rabbi to be in the forefront. There was always a feeling among Jews in Atlanta that I knew, “Be quiet. Don’t call attention to yourself, [you’ll] get in trouble.” That’s what they objected to later when Rabbi Rothschild was one of the co-hosts of the Martin Luther King dinner.83

Ruth: Was that the attitude of the majority of the congregants, would you think?

Alene: No, I really don’t.

Ruth: Had there been earlier incidents of antisemitism in the recent past?

Alene: You mean outward breaks like that?

Ruth: Outward and inward.

Alene: There had always been restricted neighborhoods . . . a gentleman’s agreement84 kind of thing. It was never written down. I think in one of the last tapes that we made, I talked about how there was a swimming pool near me that was closed to Jewish children. I don’t remember any . . . always you would read in the paper [about] cross burnings at Stone Mountain,85 where now I understand there’s a new Reform congregation. Marietta, which they say ‘May-retta,’ is where little Mary Phagan [lived] who was murdered at the pencil factory, and [Leo] Frank was accused, you remember. Marietta was a hot bed of antisemitism. The [Ku Klux] Klan was not as strong in those days, openly, but they were still doing all their devilment.

Ruth: Were they attacking synagogues and houses of worship, as well?

83 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 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 Co. does not need Atlanta. You all need to decide whether Atlanta needs the Coca-Cola Co.” Following the meeting, every ticket to the dinner was sold.

84 A ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ is an informal and legally non-binding agreement between two or more parties. It is typically oral but it may be unspoken by convention, perhaps sealed with a handshake.

85 Stone Mountain is located in what is now the site of Stone Mountain Park. At its summit, Stone Mountain’s elevation is 1,686 feet. It is well-known not only for its geology, but also for the enormous bas-relief carving on its north face depicting three figures of the Confederate States of America: Stonewall Jackson, Robert E. Lee, and Jefferson Davis. Stone Mountain was the site of Ku Klux Klan activities. It was purchased by the State of Georgia in 1958.
Alene: I don’t remember them attacking synagogues in Atlanta. You remember later the incidents in Montgomery, and in Alabama. Those were in the [Martin Luther] King days though, which was in early . . . in the 1960’s, and in 1958.

Ruth: Had Rabbi Rothschild or members of the congregation established a formal or an informal program with the black congregations, etc.?

Alene: I don’t remember that. I think the American Jewish Committee . . . I don’t know at what time . . . they have been very active in promoting black-Jewish relationships. Cecil Alexander [Jr.]

Ruth: How recent would that be?

Alene: I would say the 1970’s. Have you seen the book by Janice Rothschild [Blumberg], the rabbi’s wife?

Ruth: No.

Alene: I’ll show it to you when we finish. It has a good account of the bombing of the Temple, and all about what went on.

Ruth: Good. Have the attitudes within the congregation changed over time?

Alene: I think definitely, as everything changed. Issues that were once controversial are not controversial any more. Most of the religious institutions are searching for acceptable ‘blacks.’ The Temple has at least one member, I know, who is black. There was, in those days, a wonderful cartoon in the New Yorker where two black women are standing at the entrance of a church. When they see the deacon coming, they quickly bring out their buckets and mops, kneel down and say, “We’re only cleanin’ the floor.” That’s the only way they could get into the church.

Back to the bombing. In this book I’m telling you about, there are vivid descriptions of

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86 Cecil Alexander Jr. (1918–2013) was a prominent Atlanta architect and civic leader responsible for some of the city’s most notable public buildings. During the civil rights movement of the 1960’s and 1970’s, he was a leader in the movement to peacefully desegregate the city’s public housing and local businesses.

87 As But a Day: The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967 by Janice Rothschild chronicles the history of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation in Atlanta including the bombing of the Temple in 1958. Janice Rothschild Blumberg, is an author and speaker on American Jewish history, particularly Southern Jewish History. She experienced Jewish history first-hand as the wife and widow of two outspoken Jewish leaders: Rabbi Jacob M. Rothschild of Atlanta, leader of the Temple when it was bombed in 1958 and friend of Martin Luther King, Jr., and David M. Blumberg of Knoxville, Tennessee, civic leader and international president of B’nai B’rith from 1971-1978.

88 The New Yorker is an American magazine with reporting, commentary, criticism, essays, fiction, satire, cartoons, and poetry. Started as a weekly in 1925, the magazine is now published 47 times annually, with five of these issues covering two-week spans.
[how] the rabbi and his wife were threatened. They had Secret Service people, or whatever you would call the security people, I guess, around their house night and day, as did the various leaders in the congregation. It was a very tense time. While the ministers and people of good will were pouring out their sympathy, the other element was doing the opposite. Atlanta has always been a city of contrast. Lester Maddox⁸⁹ and Martin Luther King. The [Ku Klux] Klan and the way the integration went here so well when schools were integrated. Atlanta was one of the patterns. It was copied because it went so smoothly. It’s always had the two elements here.

<discussion about Janice Blumberg’s book and how to obtain it>

Alene: Then she wrote her sequel.⁹⁰ There are two books by her. I think I gave my son the second one. He really did some research on the bombing of the Temple days. Of course, he happened to be in Atlanta. He’d just graduated from college, and he happened to be here the day it was bombed.

Ruth: Have there been any confrontations over the civil rights issue?

Alene: You mean connected with the Temple?

Ruth: With the Temple and after that.

Alene: I don’t really remember any. Of course, in those days people were just beginning to integrate civic associations . . . maybe a few years earlier . . . maybe in the early 1950’s. On several boards on which I served, there was great concern about how to plan . . . [how to] have black members, because no place in town would serve a lunch. For a while, at Family Welfare [Society] as it was called then, we met at the YMCA [Young Men’s Christian Association]⁹¹ because they would serve . . . that was the first black members we had on the board. We had our lunches at the YMCA. It was the only place you could serve a mixed group.

Ruth: Which organizations were you affiliated with?

Alene: With that particularly, and the Community Council which was a United Way agency. It’s not in existence any more. They did research on the needs of the community. With the arts

⁸⁹ Lester Maddox was the controversial governor of Georgia from 1967 to 1971. Originally a restaurateur he came to political prominence as a staunch segregationist, although his record as governor often aided blacks. When Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated he denied the slain civil rights leader the honor of lying in state in the Georgia state capitol. He died in 2003 of cancer and pneumonia.

⁹⁰ Alene is speaking here about the sequel to As But A Day: The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967 by Janice Rothschild Blumberg covering an additional 20 years of the history of the Temple.

⁹¹ Commonly known as the ‘YMCA’ or the ‘Y.’ The ‘Y’ is a worldwide organization founded in 1844 that aims to put Christian principles into practice by developing a healthy body, mind and spirit. They offer recreational facilities, parent/child education programs, youth and teen development with after school programming, etc.
groups, there was no such thing as black members for a long, long time. Now they have very
many from all the colleges, the wealthy blacks, and people like that. It sort of burst forth, but it
certainly took a little [time]. It was just an unheard of thing. The Piedmont Driving Club
wouldn’t allow . . . they’d allow Jews to come in and eat lunch and go to parties. It was never a
question of that, but you couldn’t have any kind of a lunch or dinner and invite a black person. I
think the first one invited was Maynard Jackson\(^{92}\) when he was mayor [of Atlanta] . . . the first
black mayor.

Ruth: That was just recently.

Alene: Yes. This is the Driving Club. They are just now waking up to . . . I think they are
going to be forced to take Jews now. Businesses have been writing off as business expenses the
dues of their people. They want them to meet. They can’t argue anymore that it’s simply a
social club if it’s a business expense. It always is settled by money.

Ruth: I don’t understand why Jews would want to belong, knowing . . .

Alene: . . . I can understand it . . . the way that Charlayne Hunter\(^{93}\) sacrificed to be . . . the boy .
. . [Hamilton Holmes] . . . to integrate the University of Georgia. Somebody has to be first. It is
a put-down, in my opinion, on Jews as a class. I can see you wouldn’t want certain Baptists, or
certain Catholics, but to say, “We don’t take Jews,” when they . . . the children of members think
something is wrong with Jews. Their friends can’t belong to clubs that they belong to. I
certainly wouldn’t want to be a member. But somebody has to do it, in my opinion, because it’s
more than a social club. It’s where dignitaries come . . . you meet all sorts of people. The
businesses have a good reason to play on the golf course of their country club. You become
friends. It’s a business advantage.

Ruth: I understand there are one or two Jews who are members.

Alene: At last, because of the new tax law.

Ruth: How had the building fund raising drive been progressing?

Alene: What funding drive?

Ruth: Was there a funding drive for the enlargement of the Temple?

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\(^{92}\) Maynard Holbrook Jackson, Jr. (1938-2003) was a member of the Democratic Party, and the first black mayor of

\(^{93}\) Charlayne Hunter-Gault and Hamilton Holmes hold a place in Georgia civil rights history as the first two black
students to be admitted to the University of Georgia in 1961. Hunter-Gault has worked as journalist and former
foreign correspondent for National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting Service. She is married to Ronald T.
Gault and lives in Johannesburg, South Africa. (2014)
Alene: That came later.

Ruth: How much later was that?

Alene: It’s recent, I think. Certainly not before the mid 1970’s. I don’t remember that having a thing to do with it. Of course, they had to redo what was bombed, if that’s what you mean.

Ruth: That too, yes.

Alene: The churches opened their auditoriums to congregational use. It was a wonderful feeling in the community.

Ruth: Everyone pitched in?

Alene: Everyone pitched in and made donations . . . the churches and the civic leaders. Donations were made from all over.

Ruth: How did people first find out about the bombing?

Alene: In this book, which I’m going to tell you the exact name, they tell the whole story of it. It was not done on a Saturday as in [Driving] Miss Daisy. That was just an artistic privilege to change the date, so she could be going to Temple. It was done on an early Sunday morning. I think the aim was to have it done later when the children . . . nobody was there except the black man who took care . . . his name was Robert. I understand he called the rabbi. The rabbi got the people, and they went over there. Of course, Sunday school was called off. There was a great furor in the community. Nobody . . . the bomb went off at an early morning hour before anybody came. Maybe an hour or two before Sunday school opened. There was great damage to the building, but no lives were lost.

Ruth: How did the people first find out about this?

Alene: What people?

Ruth: The congregational leaders. How did they first respond?

Alene: They called the president over, and they went to look at it. There wasn’t any . . . and the news spread. It was all over the news media that day. You couldn’t escape it. We heard it on the radio, the television, everything. It was a calamity, a five-star calamity.

Ruth: Do you think it was a political expediency to soft-peddle the person responsible for the bombing? Was that a cover-up of any sort?

Alene: Not that I know. I’m the wrong person to ask these questions, because I absolutely don’t know. I do think some of the men that I mentioned could enlighten you on that, particularly Joseph Haas. I think he’d be good. I really don’t know.
Ruth: What about the responses of other organizations, like the National Council of Christians and Jews\textsuperscript{94}

Alene: They’re the ones that responded so beautifully. The churches, the Methodists, every denomination I can think of, responded whole-heartedly.

Ruth: What were the media and longer-term responses of the news media and the local politicians?

Alene: Ralph McGill\textsuperscript{95} was alive then. He won a Pulitzer Prize\textsuperscript{96} for an article he wrote. He wrote a column every day in the paper. You’re familiar with his name? Ralph McGill was the editor . . .

Ruth: . . . I remember the name, but that was before I arrived here.

Alene: He was the editor of the [Atlanta] Constitution in the days of school integration, and in the days when he wrote very controversial editorials.

Ruth: He won the Pulitzer Prize for that?

Alene: That’s what I said. He won it for the article he wrote about the bombing of the Temple.


Alene: They were all aghast. They compared it to Hitler and all of that in this modern time. It was a shocker to everybody, shook a lot of people’s sympathies.\textsuperscript{97}

<End Tape 3, Side 1, 01>
<Begin Tape 3, Side 1, 02>

Ruth: What were the reactions to the capture and trial of the accused bomber? I assume he was . . .

Alene: . . . I don’t know why I’m so fuzzy on that. I don’t remember. I really don’t.

Ruth: Would Mr. [Joseph] Haas know that?

Alene: I think he would. He’s a lawyer.

\textsuperscript{94} The International Council of Christians and Jews (ICJ) serves as the umbrella organization of 40 Jewish-Christian dialogue organizations worldwide that engage in the renewal of Jewish-Christian relations.

\textsuperscript{95} Ralph Emerson McGill (1898-1969) was an American journalist, best known as an anti-segregationist editor and publisher of the Atlanta Constitution newspaper. He won a Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing in 1959.

\textsuperscript{96} The Pulitzer Prize is an award for achievements in newspaper and online journalism, literature, and musical composition in the United States. It was established in 1917 by provisions in the will of American (Hungarian-born) publisher Joseph Pulitzer, and is administered by Columbia University in New York City. Prizes are awarded yearly in 21 categories.

\textsuperscript{97} Janice Oettenger Rothschild Blumberg discusses the Temple bombing in great detail. Please see her oral history, OHC 10084.
Ruth: Yes. As a matter of fact, he might have been interviewed.

Alene: Could have been.

Ruth: What was the impact of the bombing on particular segments of the Jewish community?

Alene: Sympathy, same as the Christian. Tragedies bring people together that good times never do.

Ruth: That’s true.

Alene: I think that this really had a healing process.

Ruth: How did the bombing impact Jewish reactions to later phases of the Civil Rights Movement?

Alene: I don’t believe . . . that element was just lost to any kind of conversion. I just don’t think it had any real effect. It might have, but among the people I knew, by that time they were all committed anyway to integration and the Civil Rights Movement. When they had the dinner for Martin Luther King, I don’t know the exact date, but it was in the 1960’s because he was assassinated in . . . was it 1968? I don’t remember the day. I think by the time that the Temple was bombed in 1958 that we were well on the way.

Ruth: What was the reaction to Rabbi Rothschild’s sponsorship of the Nobel [Peace] Prize winner?

Alene: I think I mentioned that earlier in this interview, that the older members of the congregation . . .

Ruth: . . . yes. I thought possibly there’s something else you might want to add.

Alene: He took a very courageous stand. It reflected glory on the Temple and on him. Then he was praised by the very people who had objected to his . . . it was that same old theory of ‘be Jewish, but not too Jewish. Keep quiet. Don’t make waves.’

Ruth: Homogenized.

Alene: He did. He stood out. He was very courageous.

Ruth: Were there any other temple bombings?

Alene: Not in Atlanta. There are still . . . I read of them. I’ve read of them in recent times, small temples that were bombed, or else burglarized.

98 King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4, 1968.
99 The Nobel Peace Prize is one of the five Nobel Prizes created by the Swedish industrialist, inventor, and armaments manufacturer Alfred Nobel, along with the prizes in Chemistry, Physics, Physiology or Medicine, and Literature.
Ruth: What of black churches at that time?

Alene: That was happening all over the place. You remember the one in Birmingham [Alabama] or Montgomery, Alabama, when a whole group of black children at Sunday school were killed in an incident like that. They were almost like lynchings used to be in the old days.

Ruth: Is there anything else you would like to add at this point in time?

Alene: I think you’ve . . . I don’t think of anything else. I probably will when you leave. I don’t now, but I would like to . . .

Ruth: . . . if you do would you let me know?

<general discussion, interview resumes>

Ruth: Getting back to the present, has your son’s success with Driving Miss Daisy, which is rather a universal statement, and that’s why it’s so popular I suppose all over the world . . . how has that impacted your life? Has it changed in any way?

Alene: No. My daily life hasn’t changed, but I’ve had the great opportunity of meeting a lot of people who are in the theater and people who have thoughts along the same subjects. It’s been very gratifying to me. I’ve been included in openings in London [England] and in Washington [D.C.], and all around . . .

Ruth: Did you go to London?


Ruth: Who played it in Washington?

Alene: Julie Harris was on the tour. I saw her in Washington and in Boston [Massachusetts]. She was on a tour from September through June. She is doing it again this year through the Midwest for three months, I think, starting in September. She was wonderful, just wonderful. The Atlanta group is going to Moscow [Russia].

Ruth: That’s wonderful.

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100 Alene is referring to the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama. A bomb was placed under the steps of the church on September 15, 1963 and detonated at 10:22 a.m. killing four black children. An investigation revealed that four members of the local Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Robert Chambliss, Thomas Blanton Jr., Herman Cash (who had died) and Bobby Frank Cherry were the perpetrators. All but Cash were charged with murder and convicted many, many years later in the 1990’s and 2000’s.

101 Dame Wendy Hiller (1912-2003) was an English film and stage actress who enjoyed a distinguished acting career that spanned nearly 60 years in the United States and Europe.

102 Julia Ann ‘Julie’ Harris (1925-2013) was an award-winning American stage, screen, and television actress.
Alene: They’ve invited my son and his wife to go with them. It’s an exchange program. A Russian play was here in the early spring.

Ruth: When will that be?

Alene: They leave here on October 13. They go a week in Moscow . . . the show in English . . . and a week in Leningrad [Russia], and a week in Tbilisi [Georgia].

Ruth: Who’ll be playing the lead there?

Alene: Mary Nell [Ivey Santacroce].

Ruth: Wonderful.

Alene: This . . . Atlanta . . . and they are all studying Russian.

Ruth: It was a wonderful production.

Alene: They’re all excited about going to Russia. It’s been wonderful. I was an extra in the filming of the movie in the Temple scene when Miss Daisy . . .

Ruth: . . . I was too in three scenes, but I don’t think you’ll get to see me at all.

Alene: What were you in?

Ruth: I was in the scene on Lullwater [Road] where she’s coming out of her house and she will not get into the car with Hoke. She would rather walk.

Alene: Were you a neighbor?

Ruth: I was one of the passersby on the street. I’m with my supposed husband. They had pulled him for something else, so that left me high and dry. After that, it was the rain scene where the people are standing on the hillock in the pouring rain looking at the smoke.

Alene: Helen [Eisemann] Alexander told me about them.

Ruth: Of course it was a long distance shot, and the backs turned and the umbrellas and everything, so that . . . and one was in a car but it was raining so badly that the windshield wipers were going furiously. There’s one on Sherwood Forest where . . .

Alene: . . . the Christmas . . .

Ruth: . . . yes. I’m walking down the street with a neighbor . . .

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103 Mary Nell Santacroce (1917-1999) appeared in films and television movies and played the title role of Driving Miss Daisy on the Atlanta stage and on international tour. A graduate of the University of Georgia and Emory University, she taught speech and drama at the Georgia Institute of Technology from 1948 to 1965 and taught at Georgia State University from 1965 to 1972. Her daughter, actress Dana Ivey, won an Obie award for her portrayal of Miss Daisy in New York.
Alene: The day the Temple filming went on happened to be Jessica Tandy’s\textsuperscript{104} eightieth birthday.

Ruth: She’s remarkable.

Alene: They had a birthday party for her at lunchtime. It was . . .

Ruth: . . . she has so much stamina.

Alene: I have to show you two pictures of her that I have during the taking of it. She came out to see me. These are the kind of wonderful things that happened. The director, who’s Australian, do you remember him?

Ruth: Yes.

Alene: A very nice . . . he came down a couple of months before they began to shoot. He came out here and took a tape of me to send to Jessica Tandy. When she came, before the shooting . . . she came a month ahead for fittings and to find a place to live. She came out here to see me. She wanted to see family pictures. Just by herself she came. They sent her with a driver. She stayed here several hours and we just talked about . . . she asked me various questions and looked at pictures and all of that . . . of course ‘Miss Daisy’ is a fictional character . . . every word she says is certainly not my mother, but it’s a lot of my mother and a lot of her sisters and friends that are incorporated into her character. Julie Harris has several pictures of my mother that she carries around with her, in her dressing room. She has a copy of a letter that Alfred sent her that my mother wrote. It was something that pertained to the play. I don’t know what it is, but . . .

Ruth: . . . do you have a picture of your mother in here?

Alene: I’ve got a lot of them. There’s one right behind you. She is sitting at the table.

Ruth: Here?

Alene: That’s my aunt. My mother’s the other one, way over to the back. No, in that picture.

Ruth: I’ll have to get up and take a closer look at that one.

Alene: I’ve got some others. I’ve got Julie Harris’ picture in a hat of my mother’s that I gave to . . .

Ruth: . . . the costumes were really so well thought out, so thorough.

\textsuperscript{104} Jessica Tandy (1909-1994) was an English-American stage and film actress who spent most of her 67-year career in the United States. She appeared in over 100 stage production and had more than 60 roles in film and TV, including as ‘Miss Daisy’ in \textit{Driving Miss Daisy} (1989).
Alene: They were. They made us wear stockings with seams in the Temple. I said to Alfred, "That was so foolish, because we were sitting there until we got up to leave." He said, "The wardrobe people are told the period and what to put . . . they don’t know what scenes the director’s going to take. The costumes have to be ready for close-ups."

Ruth: Even as an extra, I was given a garter belt and . . .

Alene: . . . that’s right. Me, too.

Ruth: They’re quite thorough.

Alene: They were very nice. Everybody who came in contact with the director and his people commented on how cheerful and cooperative they were.

Ruth: It was really very democratic the way everyone ate together and met . . .

Alene: The important people are those camera . . . in fact, the day we were at the Temple, we all laughed. They had the crew eat before we did.

Ruth: Yes. I understand the crew, and then the stars, and then the extras.

Alene: No, the stars ate with us at the Temple. You saw the big catering van that went around.

Ruth: It was quite an experience.

Alene: Yes it is. It certainly is.

Ruth: Is there going to be a sequel to Driving Miss Daisy?

Alene: I don’t think there will be a sequel, but Alfred wants to do another play.105 He’s doing several movie scripts right now. I don’t know. He’s working on two or three movie scripts that he’s already contracted for.

Ruth: I’ll certainly be in touch with the Oral History Project and with Alfred Uhry . . .

Alene: Good luck.

Ruth: . . . and the possibility of making a tape.

Alene: Maybe . . . you can probably . . . you can’t do that on the phone, though. It’s going to be hard to get to him otherwise.

Ruth: I’m in New York often, so one of these trips. Or if he should come to Atlanta, we can do it if he has a few hours to spare.

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105 This play turned out to be Parade, which is a musical with a book by Alfred Uhry and music and lyrics by Jason Robert Brown. The musical premiered on Broadway in 1998. The show has had a United States national tour and numerous professional and amateur productions in both the United States and abroad. The musical dramatizes the 1913 trial of Jewish factory manager Leo Frank, who was accused and convicted of raping and murdering a 13-year-old employee, Mary Phagan.
Alene: Yes, he’s coming in the morning of this celebration, and leaving the next morning.

Ruth: We’ll work it out. I thank you again so much.

Alene: It was nice to have an opportunity to see you.

Ruth: We’ll make a copy of the tape for you.

Alene: Thank you.

<interview pauses, then resumes>

Ruth: Additional questions about the life style of the 1940’s, 1950’s, and 1960’s, their social life, youth and adults, education, politics, community involvement, business, etc., have been covered by the previous tape with Mrs. [Alene] Uhry. The books mentioned by Janice Rothschild [Blumberg] are As But A Day: The First Hundred Years [1967], and As But A Day: To a Hundred and Twenty [1987]. The men discussed who can be referred to for additional information are Joseph Haas and Cecil Alexander.

<End Tape 3, Side 1, 02>

INTERVIEW ENDS