

**Marilyn Blomberg Patton**

**2004-02-23**

**Subject: Harry Blomberg Family History in Asheville, N.C.**

**Interviewee: Marilyn Blomberg Patton**

**Interviewed by Sharon Fahrer and Jan Schochet at Patton Residence**

(With camera rolling, interview begins suddenly)

Sharon Fahrer: So they had to go somewhere...

Marilyn Blomberg Patton: Well, they were related.

Sharon: With more Jewish people.

Marilyn: Because we were all related somehow or other. The Zagiers came from the same town in Lithuania that my family did.

Sharon: Really, do you know the name of that town?

Jan Schochet: Now, I did not know that.

Marilyn: Yeah, Linkuva. Yeah. And, also, Ernie Whitten's family from Gastonia.

Jan: Well, see, that's not unusual either because they came here because they knew somebody, you see.

Marilyn: Well, I don't know.

Jan: And people moved in groups like that. Oh, there's a lot of Lithuanians, believe it or not, in South Africa for that same reason, like my family is also...

Marilyn: There are a lot of Jews in South Africa.

Jan: There are, but...

Marilyn: They're very religious for the most part, from what I've been told.

Jan: Well, yeah, I guess it depends on when they got there.

Marilyn: I mean, they're very...

Sharon: Observant.

Marilyn: Traditional. Observant. Thank you. That's the word I'm looking for.

Jan: What they would do, especially after World War II, they would do Yahrzeit books. It would be the people that escaped that would write a story about their village and the people that they remembered and things like that. They would be in Yiddish. But, you know you would have this group in South Africa...

Marilyn: Oh, I'm sorry. Have your water.

Sharon: (announcing the camera is recording ) Here. And we're rolling.

Marilyn: You don't want something else?

Jan: No, we're...

Sharon: Okay!

Jan: We had pretty big lunches.

Marilyn: Okay.

Sharon: Try not to put this on...

Jan: So, tell us your name and where you are from.

Marilyn: My name is Marilyn Patton and I'm from Asheville, North Carolina.

Born and bred.

Sharon: Okay.

Jan: Now, where did your family come from and when did they come to Asheville?

Marilyn: Well my father was born here in 1904. And my mother...

Sharon: And tell us his name.

Marilyn: Harry Blomberg. My mother came from Atlanta. My grandfather came to Asheville in 1887.



**Harry Blomberg**

photo courtesy of Grovewood Gallery 111 Grovewood Road Asheville NC

Sharon: And what was his name and where did he come from?

Marilyn: Louis Blomberg. And he originally came from a place called Linkova which is in Lithuania.

Sharon: Did he come right to Asheville? Do you know?

Marilyn: No.

Sharon: Did he go to New York?

Marilyn: No, he came to Savannah because he had family in Savannah. The reason he came to Asheville was because he got malaria. The doctors told him he had to go to the high country because of the malaria. So, he was a peddler and he came... I think he went to Aiken, South Carolina first and then came here in 1887.

And he was a peddler, and probably knew very little English just, wandering around selling some to the mountain people and went into business. He opened up a store called the Rackett Store. Which I assume had...

Sharon: Dry?

Marilyn: Dry goods and...I know it did...overalls, boots, what have you.

Sharon: About when do you think he opened up the Rackett store?

Marilyn: I think it was 1891.

Sharon: Do you know where that was?

Marilyn: It was on Broadway. Biltmore Avenue it is now.

Sharon: That would be South Main Street?

Marilyn: Yes, I think so. I think that's what it was.

Jan: Can I ask a question in here?

Marilyn: Please.

Jan: Do you know anything about how A. Blomberg? L. Blomberg owned the Rackett store and then A. Blomberg owned the Rackett Store or vice versa. They both owned it at different times. Do you know anything about that?

Marilyn: I don't. Except I have those dates I told you downstairs where they... I don't know which was older or... I know very little about that. I know my grandfather, according to Aunt Edna's book, was 20 when he came here. Is that right? Or something. I think he was born in 1867 and came here in '87. So he was quite young.

Sharon: Came to Asheville?

Marilyn: Came to Asheville.

Sharon: But he had already come to America...

Marilyn: He came to America as a very young boy.

Sharon: Oh, very young.

Marilyn: I mean, I would think about fourteen or fifteen but they did that.

Sharon: Uh-huh. Did he come by himself?

Marilyn: To escape...

Sharon: Do you think?

Marilyn: I don't know. I really don't know. I know his family was in Savannah already.

Sharon: His family meaning...

Marilyn: Meaning he had relatives, uncles or...

Sharon: Oh, like uncles or aunts. Did he come with his parents?

Marilyn: I don't know that. I don't think so.

Sharon: There are ships' records. It might be possible to find that information.

Marilyn: I don't know. It was interesting to me because, you know, everybody thinks that all Jewish people came through Ellis Island. The Southern Jewish people did not. He came, I was told, through Baltimore. Now my husband's family came through Fort Worth, Texas. Which I thought was strange, but...

Jan: Yeah, well sometimes they took the ship to Galveston.

Marilyn: Well maybe it was Galveston. But anyways...

Sharon: And then, and then they stayed in Texas...

Marilyn: It was Texas, yeah...

Sharon: For a while.

Marilyn: He was there before he came here.

Sharon: Yeah. Galveston was actually...

Marilyn: I think you're right, it was Galveston.

Sharon: A very popular port for...

Marilyn: Right.

Sharon: ...for some of the ships.

Marilyn: But everybody always thinks that they came through Ellis Island and I think most Southern Jews did not. That's how they ended up in the South, I guess.

Sharon: And peddlers, he might have gotten his merchandise from the Baltimore Bargain House.

Marilyn: He did. He did. Wasn't that in Aunt Edna's book then? That's where they got their merchandise, right?

Jan: Yeah.

Sharon: So is the building still standing where he had his store?

Marilyn: I doubt it. It was one of those old buildings on Biltmore Avenue below the Plaza. Below the Art Museum.

Sharon: Okay, so when he came he didn't know anybody, your grandfather when he came to Ashville, he just came for his health? Or do you think some other family members came with him?

Marilyn: I don't know.

Sharon: Okay.

Marilyn: I know all his children were born here and his wife was from Savannah and I'm assuming he came here first since he was only like 20 years old. And must have gone back to Savannah and met or married her. And then they came here

because they had five children. They were all born in Asheville. My Aunt Frieda and Coleman Zagier...I told Jan this...were the first two Jewish babies born in Asheville. And that was in 1894. So...

Sharon: Now, do you know where they lived in Asheville?

Marilyn: I'm thinking. I'm not sure. I just remember when I was a little girl and living in various places but no particular big family home that I can remember.

Sharon: So, where did your Dad grow up? Do you know where he lived?

Marilyn: Wait a minute, I... forgive me... I do know where they lived. They lived right near Tom Wolfe's on Spruce Street. Come to think of it. Yeah, because that's where they lived, because my Aunt Frieda used to tell a story, whether it is true or not, I don't know... that when Thomas Wolfe was a little boy and... I mean like two or three years old, running around the street, filthy dirty, because Wolfe's mother was too busy to take care of him, that her mother would take him off the street and give him a bath. How true that is, I don't know. Have you heard that story?

Jan: In other words, Frieda's mother did that. Would take him in and...

Marilyn: Yeah, my grandmother.

Jan: Huh. No. I like it though.

Sharon: Did they take in borders? Do you know? There were a lot of boarding houses in that neighborhood.

Marilyn: No, they didn't. There's more about that in Aunt Edna's book about where they lived and so forth and so on. I just don't remember it, but that's where it was, right near Thomas Wolfe. No, they didn't. They had five children and they didn't take in borders. Mrs. Wolfe had all those. Far as I know.

Sharon: Yeah. But she had more than one house.

Marilyn: Yeah.

Sharon: So, because she had eight children...

Marilyn: I don't remember. She didn't have that many.

Jan: She didn't have that many?

Marilyn: Yes.

Jan: She had five or six?

Marilyn: I don't know.

Sharon: Well, so, now, did your dad grow up in that neighborhood?

Marilyn: Yes.

Sharon: Okay.

Marilyn: As far as I know, yeah.

Sharon: And then, what did, what happened when he grew up? Did he move away, or what did he do for his business? Did he take over the family business?

Marilyn: No, well, his daddy never finished high school. He left school.

He, evidently, was quite a reprobate. I think they finally sent him to military school in Stamford, Connecticut. And he ran away from there and went to New York and drove a cab and did all kinds of stuff, you know, when he was sixteen years old or so.

Jan: So what...wait...what year would he have been born?

Marilyn: He was born in 1904.

Sharon: Uh-huh, okay. So this would be like in the '20s.

Marilyn: Uh-hmm. Well, he actually went into business here in 1924 which is when he married my mother. He was twenty. She was twenty one. And he, my grandfather, was quite angry with him and because...

Sharon: Wait, his father? Which grandfather?

Marilyn: His father. His father!

Sharon: Okay.

Marilyn: Because he would not go into the family business. And he said "You'll never amount to anything! You've got wheels in your head!" because the automobile business was what he loved.

Sharon: So, the family business was still a dry good business?

Marilyn: Yes. I think that business...

Jan: The Rackett Store?

Marilyn: The Rackett Store, I think, closed in about 1929, or maybe a little after that. Daddy went into business in '24, but as I said, his father said he would never amount to anything and he had wheels in his head meaning because he loved automobiles.

Sharon: So, is that the business he went into?

Marilyn: Uh-huh.

Sharon: So, where was his business?

Marilyn: It started when he and a man named Clarence Sluder, I think, built it with their own hands, a little building that we have since given to AC-T. It's at the corner of Market Street and Walnut. It's that little white building. And that's where they started. It was a filling station.

Sharon: And how long did they have that?

Marilyn: Not sure, because then he built another building down the street where the Thomas Wolfe...

Sharon: Welcome Center?

Marilyn: ...welcome Center is. It was called Harry's Motor Inn Number One.

Jan: Did he call it Number One at the beginning?

Marilyn: Well, I don't think so because he built it where the library is now. That was Harry's Motor Inn Number Two.

Sharon: And can you explain to us what a Motor Inn was?

Marilyn: It was a filling station and they had a wrecker and they went on wrecker calls. It was a big service station.

Sharon: So, that one, the first one on the corner, he sold that? Did he have two of them?

Marilyn: I don't know what he did with that building. It was just a small building. It's a little brick building. And, I'm not sure. And then, you know, he built the Motor Inn on Market Street and then the Motor Inn on Haywood Street.

Sharon: Is that the one across the street from the library?

Marilyn: Uh-uh. It was where the library is now.

Sharon: Okay.

Jan: Didn't he also have that place across the street?

Marilyn: Across the street?

Jan: Where there's a parking...

Marilyn: Where the parking garage is, yeah.

Sharon: Uh-huh.

Marilyn: That was the Cadillac company.

Sharon: Now, when did he start that?

Marilyn: I think he became a dealer, a Cadillac La Salle dealer, in 1936.

Sharon: Okay, so he started his first business in 1924.

Marilyn: Right.

Sharon: And by 1936 he started the car dealership.

Marilyn: Yeah, or got the franchise. I don't know how much it meant until after the war.

Sharon: So up until then he just had these Motor Inn...

Marilyn: Uh-huh.

Sharon: ...things?

Marilyn: Uh-huh. Yeah.

Sharon: Okay, now, so, what's your first memory of what business he was in when?

Marilyn: I remember the Motor Inns. Being up there when I was a little girl.

Sharon: Do you remember any of the people who worked there. I mean, what kind of people were working there or the clientele or anything. Do you remember any impressions?

Marilyn: Well, I can remember the Motor Inn Number Two, which was across from the Vanderbilt Hotel and they used to have a lot of sort of, you know, celebrities that came there. Gene Autry was there one time with this car. He had a Cadillac station wagon which had been made especially for him. People like that. But I don't...

Sharon: Did you get to meet these people?

Marilyn: No. I was home with my mother. My father was never home because he was always working.

Sharon: That sounds pretty typical.

Marilyn: Yeah.

Sharon: So, where did you grow up? What neighborhood?

Marilyn: Actually, I grew up probably within a mile from where we right now, where I always lived. I lived on Graceland Road. Do you know where that is? Lived there until I was seven and then we moved to 390 Kimberly and lived there until I was about seventeen and then we moved to 199 Kimberly. So I've always lived in this neighborhood.

Sharon: Was it a Jewish neighborhood at all?

Marilyn: No. There are very few Jews. I had just about no Jewish friends. I mean there just weren't that many.

Sharon: Did your family go to the Synagogue or the Temple?

Marilyn: Temple. My Grandfather was a charter member of the Temple. Of course, he belonged to both, and so did my father. Everybody did back then. I can remember, on the high holidays, my Grandfather going to Temple and then walking over to the Shul. Back and forth, you know, between the two of them.

Sharon: They were pretty close to each other, right? Within a couple of blocks?

Marilyn: Yeah.

Sharon: Yeah, across the street, basically.

Marilyn: Yeah, just about. Almost.

Jan: Like a half a block away.

Marilyn: Yeah. Right.

Sharon: So, did your family keep kosher?

Marilyn: No. I think the big thing, probably, with most Southern Jews in that era was to assimilate. Do you agree with that, Jan? Or are you too young to know?

Jan: Yeah, I don't know.

Marilyn: Yeah. It was to be more like everybody else. You didn't want to be different.

Sharon: Were the services in English?

Marilyn: Yeah.

Sharon: Did they have any Hebrew?

Marilyn: A little. Yeah. Um, no, it was very reform.

Sharon: Uh, did you go to Hebrew, you know, Sunday school?

Marilyn: Went to Sunday school. Yeah. And, uh, was confirmed when I was fifteen. It was very ultra-reform.

Sharon: Was your whole family like that? In other words, your cousins and your aunts and uncles, or were some of them Orthodox? You know.

Marilyn: Well, never Orthodox, but more conservative. My family, my mother's family in Atlanta, was more conservative. But not any of the family here.

Sharon: So they all just went to the Temple?

Marilyn: Yeah.

Sharon: As you did.

Marilyn: Right.

Jan: But when you started to say they were ultra-orthodox, you kind of looked like you wanted to say something else.

Marilyn: Ultra-reform.

Jan: I mean ultra-reform, you kind of looked like you were thinking about saying something else about that.

Marilyn: Well, I guess... something I shouldn't say, right?

Jan: You can say whatever you want to say.

Marilyn: Now, see, I don't like the way the Temple has gone now. I mean...

Jan: You wouldn't...

Sharon: Meaning it's gone too religious?

Marilyn: Yeah. Well, I...

Sharon: I mean...

Marilyn: I don't call it religious; call it traditional or observant or something. You know, I mean, no men ever wore Yarmulkes in the Temple including the Rabbi.

I mean it just wasn't done. That's just that's one example. Do you remember that Jan?

Jan: Uh-huh.

Marilyn: My husband would die before he'd wear a Yarmulke. Well, no, I shouldn't put it that strongly, but...

Sharon: Right, he was against.

Marilyn: Very much against it.

Sharon: Would it stop him from going to the other Synagogue? You know, say, somebody had a Bar Mitzvah?

Marilyn: Oh, no! No, we have friends in London who are very observant and we've been to Bar Mitzvahs over there, where it's something I'd never done before in my life. I sat upstairs with the women and the men were all downstairs. And it didn't look like anybody was paying attention to anything and the women had a wonderful time! Everybody was up there talking about that one's hat and this one's thing. I thought it was great fun. But no! Of course not!

Sharon: I did hear a story about that. Who made the decisions in your family when you were a child?

Marilyn: Probably my mother. That's a funny question.

Sharon: We need to make a connection.

Marilyn: My father would leave before I had breakfast in the morning and we would usually, my sister and I, would have dinner before he came home. And he probably came home at night after we were in bed. We saw very little of him because he was working seven days a week. And he really worked hard.

Sharon: My dad was like that too.

Marilyn: Yeah.

Sharon: Um, now...

Marilyn: So it had to be my mother who made the decisions.

Sharon: So, do you consider yourself a Southerner?

Marilyn: Yes.

Sharon: Do you think the Jews in the South are different from other Southerners and how do you think they're different?

Marilyn: I think they're different from Jews in the North. If you'll forgive me.

Jan: We don't have...we have that question later.

Marilyn: Oh.

Sharon: Yeah, after that.

Marilyn: Well, you know we're bitter snobs about that. Southern Jews. We think we're a little better than northern Jews. Forgive me. It's not personal.

Sharon: We take no offense. We take no offense. But, and, do you think that you're different from other Southerners?

Marilyn: Probably.

Sharon: Yeah, so you said you had a lot of non-Jewish friends.

Marilyn: Yeah, yeah.

Sharon: Most of your friends were non-Jewish. Did you feel different from your friends, or did your friends treat you differently?

Marilyn: Yeah, sometimes. Well, I don't think they treated me differently. It was, I can remember as a child, you know, religion was always very important to the people here. And it was a bunch of kids, you know, a bunch of girls, and they'd say 'What church do you go to? Southern Baptist. What church do you go to? Central Methodist.' And I would kind of cringe because they were coming to me and they'd say 'And what church do you go to?' And I'd say "I'm Jewish."

Sharon: What was their reaction?

Marilyn: Nothing. It was more my reaction than theirs. I didn't like being Jewish then. I do now. But back then as a little girl and being in such minority, I cringed. I didn't want to be different. I was.

Sharon: Were there any other Jewish kids in your class?

Marilyn: At school? No.

Jan: What school did you go to?

Marilyn: Saint Genevieve's.

Jan: Oh, you did go to Saint Genevieve's. Okay.

Marilyn: For 12 years. Yeah.

Jan: Okay, so you know why they sent you to Saint Genevieve's?

Marilyn: Because it was a lot better school than the public schools. It's a good school.

Jan: They're all good.

Marilyn: Did you go there, too?

Jan: From the 8<sup>th</sup> through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

Marilyn: Okay, well it was a good school.

Sharon: So let's get back to the question of, you know, how do you think Southern Jews are different from Northern Jews.

Marilyn: Well, I think not as brash. They're just different! It's hard for me to answer that question without hurting anybody's feelings.

Jan: You are not going to hurt anybody's feelings!

Sharon: Oh, you are not going to hurt my feelings.

Marilyn: No, I don't mean you.

Jan: She's got [laughs] a steel cage around.

Marilyn: No, I mean...

Jan: She can deal.

Sharon: No, I understand.

Jan: She doesn't take offense.

Marilyn: I don't know why it is that we feel a little but maybe because there are fewer of us and we just feel a little superior. I don't know. Well, I kind of felt that way about New Yorkers in general, so it's not just a matter of a Jewish thing.

Jan: You mean, about non-Jewish New Yorkers too. About all New Yorkers?

Marilyn: Yes. Yeah. Just New Yorkers.

Jan: Now why do you say that?

Marilyn: Because my sister lives in New York and gets totally aggravated with me.

Sharon: And do you think she's turned out that way?

Marilyn: Sometimes, yeah.

Sharon: Where does she live in New York?

Marilyn: In Manhattan. Oh, she's been there for years and she gets absolutely furious with me. Like, we do not discuss politics, we do not discuss... we just don't go there.

Jan: So, oh, do you just have one sister?

Marilyn: Uh-huh.

Jan: Okay. When did she leave Asheville?

Marilyn: Oh...

Jan: Or how, in other words how old was she, right? Not the year.

Sharon: Yeah. You know, did she leave after high school? Did she go away to college?

Marilyn: Well, she went to the University of Wisconsin. And then she came back here for a while and then she went to New York for a while, came back here for a while, then went to New York and stayed. So she's been there for many years. I'm not sure for just how many. A lot. A long time.

Sharon: Now, did you go away to college?

Marilyn: I went through the University of Miami for a couple of years and then I got married.

Sharon: Okay, um, so, I'd ask, what is your occupation?

Marilyn: I don't have an occupation as such. I have volunteered at St. Joseph's hospital since 1957. And I've done just about everything out there except brain surgery. And, I don't know why I've stayed there so long. That's my occupation.

Sharon: It is.

Marilyn: Hospital volunteer. Been there forever.

Sharon: Okay, well, that's, you know... that's a good occupation. So, then this asks, what's the occupation of your parents? What would you say your dad did? Your dad was a businessman?

Marilyn: Yeah.

Sharon: Okay and where did... where were his suppliers? You know, was he able to buy things locally, or did they all come from far away?

Marilyn: Of course, automobiles came from Detroit. And I assume tires and what-have-you, that kind of stuff. Gasoline came from Spartanburg somewhere. Yeah, I mean not locally particularly. This has absolutely nothing to do with what we're talking about, but...

Sharon: Well, we are kind of on the business segment.

Jan: No, she's going to say something.

Marilyn: No, I was just going to tell you what I thought was a very funny story was during World War II they... people couldn't get metal to make toys. And they were making wooden toys and there was a New York man, a Jewish man, who came down here to buy wood to make children's toys. And he went out in the countryside and people wouldn't speak to him. I mean, he'd open his mouth and the Yankee accent came out and they'd slam the door in his face so he got Daddy to go with him. And Daddy went with him and they sold him the wood to make the toys because they would talk to Daddy and they would not talk to the man from up north.

Jan: Do you remember who he was?

Marilyn: No. I just thought it was funny.

Jan: Did someone tell you that story?

Marilyn: Daddy. Yeah.

Sharon: He told you.

Marilyn: But they would speak to him because he spoke more like they did. Okay, I'm sorry I got off on a tangent.

Jan: No, that's great to have that kind of story.

Sharon: No, that's fine. That's fine.

Jan: Throw in whatever you can remember.

Sharon: Yeah, maybe you have some more stories about your dad and things he did.

Jan: Yeah, when you remember stuff just blurt it out.

Sharon: Yeah.

Jan: That's fine.

Sharon: Yeah, how did he get the Grovewood from Fred Seely?

Marilyn: Dad went over there... he had a cabin at Lake Lure and they had a still. An old mountain still.

Sharon: The Seely's? From the Grove Park Inn?

Marilyn: At Biltmore Industries.

Sharon: Oh, at Biltmore industries.

Marilyn: Right next door. And, uh... he went over to buy the still and that was in 1953. It was a still that has holes drilled in it. It didn't work, it was just a thing.

And...

Sharon: A display kind of thing.

Marilyn: A display kind of thing. Yeah. And he went to buy it and at the time they were selling it they said ;'Why don't you just buy the whole thing?', so he did.

Sharon: The whole property?

Marilyn: Yeah.

Sharon: Because he went to buy the still and they just told him...?

Marilyn: They said 'Harry, why don't you just buy the whole thing?' and they got a very good price and he bought it. I'm glad he did.

Sharon: So, was Biltmore Industries still running at that time?

Marilyn: Yeah. Sort of. It wasn't in such good shape. A lot of the weavers had died and the material was too narrow for today's clothing and that sort of thing. It did run for a while, yeah. But, it kind of went...



### **Weavers Operating Loom at Biltmore Industries**

photo courtesy of Grovewood Gallery 111 Grovewood Road Asheville NC

Sharon: So, then what did he do with it?

Marilyn: Well, he rented part of it to, like, Hadley Sweaters. They had a plant there. I don't know, they had like a...

Jan: Here? They had a plant here?

Marilyn: Uh-huh.

Jan: Before they went out on Main Street?

Marilyn: Just... not a plant, really, they had some machines, before they got bigger.

Jan: Right.

Marilyn: And he had a gift shop in there and so forth and so on. He didn't do a lot with it. Actually my husband did, and my sister and I did, after Daddy died, and made it what it is now.

Sharon: Which is the, you know... remember people won't know what we are talking about.

Marilyn: Oh, it's Grovewood Gallery and we have artists and we have about eight artists who have their studios there. Have you been there?

Sharon: Oh, yes. I love it, yeah.

Marilyn: And the car museum. They were they were my father's cars... all the old antique cars. And it's a nice complex.



**Harry Blomberg's Estes-Winn Antique Car Museum**

**Located in the Former Loom Weaving Room**

*photo from UNCA Special Collections- heritagewnc.org*

Jan: When did he start collecting the cars?

Marilyn: Oh, heavens, I don't know. Many years ago, I assume, just as they became available.

Sharon: Like, were you a child when he started collecting them, or was he...?

Marilyn: I don't know. I never knew much about them. He just kind of accumulated them.

Sharon: Well, then, where did he keep them?

Marilyn: Probably in...

Jan: Probably...

Marilyn: Hmmm?

Jan: Probably at Harry's Cadillac.

Marilyn: Yeah. And before that, probably at the Motor Inn, downstairs in the basement. Places like that. Just around and about.

Jan: And he probably owned a lot of property, too.

Sharon: Well, I guess we should take a step back and say, okay, so we know that he had all these places in downtown, when did he actually move out of downtown?

Marilyn: Let's see...about '65 or '66.

Sharon: He moved from the show room that was across from the library?

Marilyn: Uh-hmm. And built a building that's Harry's on the Hill.

Sharon: And what made him decide to leave downtown?

Marilyn: Well, they needed a bigger facility and there was no room down there.

And then, I think, the city bought the property across the street for the library. And the Thomas Wolfe thing is where the other Motor Inn was. So, there's one story.

You want to turn the thing off and let me ask you about it?

Jan: Um, yeah. I hope I can turn it off...wait for me!

Marilyn: But Tom Wolfe is such a hero.

Jan: We don't care. It's fine.

Sharon: Yeah, yeah, it's okay.

Jan: We actually have a paper from some Rabbi who...I don't know, people think Wolfe's anti-Semitic and can't understand why Ilene Bernstein was his lover, but...

Marilyn: Oh, yeah.

Jan: You know...

Marilyn: Yeah, I...

Jan: He grew up in the middle of a Jewish section and I'm sure he had a lot of issues with what's going on, but...

Marilyn: You have to realize and...Jan might be too young and you're from up north. There was always anti-Semitism. I guess there always will be. And this movie coming out I don't think helps anything.

Jan: Did you, growing up, feel like you experienced anti-Semitism?

Marilyn: Yeah, some.

Jan: Can you remember instances?

Marilyn: Some. Yeah. I remember being on a train coming back from camp with my friend Bobbie Cooper and it was a Pullman car, you know you went in for breakfast and this was like during the war. World War II.

Sharon: Where did you go to camp?

Marilyn: Maine. I was sitting there having breakfast and this man was sitting at the table from Black Mountain, and he said something about

‘Oh, Black Mountain was fine, but now they got the army there, they got all those Jews there.’ You know, and Bobbie and I, were these two little Jewish girls...we were like about twelve or thirteen...and we didn’t say a word. I would today. But back then we just crawled into our little selves, you know? Just, yeah, things like that, sure.

Sharon: Did you go to a Jewish camp?

Marilyn: Um-hmm. Camp Tapawingo in Bridgeton, Maine.

Sharon: Would there be Jewish kids from all over the country there?

Marilyn: Yes, but mostly Southern. We lived in Atlanta at that time. The reason I went there was because a lot of Atlanta Jewish kids went there. So, Bobbie’s mother and my mother sent us there. It was owned by some people from Baltimore. So, it was mostly Southern Jewish kids.

Jan: Was it affiliated with an organization?

Marilyn: No, just a camp. It was a very nice camp. A Jewish camp. We had lots of lobster. It was cheap back then. We used to have lobster dinners all the time at camp. It was great.

Sharon: It probably wasn’t kosher.

Jan: It was probably a reformed Jewish camp.

Marilyn: It was. As I said we were all Southerners that went there.

Sharon: At the time you are talking about in the reform movement Rabbis

were not allowed to be kosher.

Marilyn: No, I never knew anybody that was kosher. I did have cousins in Atlanta that were.

Jan: Could you buy kosher meat here?

Marilyn: I don't think so. I doubt it. I still don't think you can, can you?

Jan: You can get chicken. I'm not sure about meat. Actually, this is before your time, I interviewed a man when I was in grad school in the late seventies and he said you could get kosher meat here...

Marilyn: At Schandler's?



Aaron Schandler in front of Schandler's delicatessen at 47 Oak Street in Asheville, c. 1950's

Jan: No, not at Schandler's, just at some of the grocery stores because he said there were so many Jews here. He was conservative. He wasn't reformed.

Marilyn: He was dreaming. There weren't that many Jews here.

Sharon: Somebody else told us that story.

Marilyn: I never knew anybody that kept kosher.

Jan: The people in the synagogue did.

Marilyn: Maybe so. I never thought about it.

Sharon: I guess we will go back to some of these business questions.

Do you know if your father was part of a loan or credit society?

Marilyn: I don't think so.

Sharon: Did he employ non-Jews?

Marilyn: Yes, as a matter of fact he did not like to employ Jews.

Sharon: Why?

Marilyn: He didn't want them to know his business. That's the truth. He would not employ Jews.

Jan: He didn't want them to know how well he was doing or he didn't want them to learn it and go into competition?

Marilyn: I think he did not want them to know how well he was doing. It wasn't a matter of competition. He was funny that way. He also didn't like people with mustaches.

Jan: What was that about?

Marilyn: I don't know.

Sharon: I guess that's interesting. Did you or your sister ever work for your father?

Marilyn: No.

Sharon: Now, you said your father didn't finish high school. What about your mother?

Marilyn: I don't think my mother had much education either. I don't know much about her as far as her family goes. I think they grew up quite poor and she didn't want anybody to know.

Sharon: She grew up here?

Marilyn: No, Atlanta.

Jan: Did you tell us how they met?

Marilyn: I think he was in Atlanta for something and somebody introduced them. She was a year older than he was but I didn't know that for many years because she would never admit it.

Sharon: And your children... how many children do you have?

Marilyn: Three.

Sharon: Where did they go to school? Did they go to college?

Marilyn: Let's see....Lynn ...Lynn went to many schools. She finally ended up going to UNCA and getting a degree in biology and a masters in reproductive

physiology at NC State and now she works at the San Diego zoo. Now, Pat...Pat got her degree in medical technology from Chapel Hill but now she runs the Cadillac company.

Jan: She did work in hematology...

Marilyn: She did work at A-B tech for eighteen years in their med tech program.

Harry was a Morehead scholar at Chapel Hill. He's now at the dealership.

Sharon: So, you have two children with families in Asheville and one in San Diego.

Marilyn: Right.

Jan: Did your father have expectations that you would continue in his business?

Marilyn: No, not women. My husband...yes. Women were not supposed to work. I'm sure you do understand. It's a whole different generation. Daddy didn't believe they should work. When I was about fourteen, I went up and saw Mary Parker. She was going to give me a job working part-time over the Christmas holidays. I had to get my father to sign the work release thing. He wouldn't do it. Times weren't too good. What he said then was that 'You don't need the job. You'll take it away from somebody that needs it.' The truth was I think he didn't want me to work. So, no, I never did work in his business. I am so proud of Pat. There were no women in the automobile business. I so glad Pat is running the automobile business.



## Harry Blomberg's Cadillac Dealership

Patton Avenue Asheville NC

*photograph from Harry's Cadillac website*

Jan: I guess times have changed.

Marilyn: They have and for the better.

Sharon: I have a few questions about community life. You said you moved about mostly in this area. Did the Jews live in one area when you were growing up?

Marilyn: There weren't that many.

Jan: What about the people that you knew? There were kids there.

People had businesses downtown.

Marilyn: Well, we lived in Beaver Lake. We always lived in Grove Park. We never lived in Biltmore Forest although there are some now that do.

Sharon: Because they weren't welcome?

Marilyn: Oh, no.

Sharon: What civic organizations did your father belong to?

Marilyn: Well, he belonged to the Kiwanis Club. I know he went to the Kiwanis Club. He was a Mason and a Shriner.

Jan: Yes, my dad was, too.

Marilyn: He was active. He was on the board of the hospital. He did things like that but those aren't civic organizations.

Jan: Didn't he contribute something to the hospital?

Marilyn: Well, actually, if you're talking about the Blomberg surgical thing, We gave that in their memory, my sister and Buddy and I...we gave that in their memory.

Jan: Was involved in other charitable civic organizations?

Marilyn: Oh, yes.

Jan: Did he have a favorite?

Marilyn: Well, I know he always gave to UJA and the hospitals and United Way. The same thing everybody does or everybody should.

Jan: Were any of the charities restricted?

Marilyn: I don't think any charities were restricted.

Jan: He was not a member of the country club was he?

Marilyn: No, Uncle Mat Blomberg was and so was Coleman. The Asheville Club needed money. So were Uncle Matt and Coleman Zagier and Max Crone. A lot of them back then when the club needed money.

Sharon: When your children were going away to college did you have a perception that they should go one place or another because the Jewish life would be better?

Marilyn: No. I never thought about it.

Sharon: Now, where in Asheville did you go to school?

Marilyn: St. Genevieve's. From first grade through twelfth...high school.

St. Genevieve's was not a parochial school...it was a private school. Do you know the difference? A parochial school is much more Catholic. The Catholics were actually in the minority at St. Genevieve's. It was a good school.

Sharon: One lady told us today there were as many Catholics as Jews at St. Genevieve's and many students were Methodists...

Marilyn: Most of the students were Protestant.

Sharon: Were there blacks employed in your house?

Marilyn: Yes.

Sharon: What kind of work did they do?

Marilyn: Housework and cooking and taking care of the children. Colleen has been with us for fifty years. We are like family. There's her picture.

Sharon: What about at your dad's business?

Marilyn: Oh, yes. Some of the employees have retired but still like to come to the Cadillac dealership. We have a special rocking chair them.

Sharon: Was your dad ever a landlord?

Marilyn: I don't think so. He owned property but I don't think he ever rented any.

Jan: The lady that took care of me died when I was twelve. She was the same lady that took care of my daddy.

Sharon: Were there racial tensions at the car dealership?

Marilyn: No, but we did have to have to separate Christmas parties because back then the restaurants were segregated. Now we don't do it that way. We did have the first black automobile salesman in this part of the country. His name was Sam Burr.

Sharon: How long ago was this?

Marilyn: He taught me how to drive so that's a few years back.

Sharon: Did he work his way up?

Marilyn: No, I always remember him being dressed up in a coat and tie.

Sharon: Did he wait on everybody?

Marilyn: I think so. Everybody liked Sam. I don't think we had the racial tension here that existed elsewhere. I remember the separate water fountains at the train station and sitting in the balcony at the movies with the lady that took care of me. I could sit up there with her but she couldn't sit downstairs with me when I was a little girl. It was just the way it was. It changed and it changed quickly and I'm glad it did. Asheville changed well. I don't remember a lot of demonstrations when the schools were integrated. There may have been some but I don't remember any. Then the restaurants were integrated and all that sort of thing.

Jan: Did the Rabbis ever talk about integration?

Marilyn: They were all for it. That's true religion isn't it?

Sharon: Which Rabbi?

Marilyn: Unger. He made the biggest impression on me. On you more than likely. I don't know.

Jan: He had stopped when I was small. My brother was close to him. Did Rabbi Unger preach from the pulpit about integration?

Marilyn: Yes, he did. I couldn't give you his words but he did.

Jan: Do you remember his radio show?

Marilyn: "Message of Israel" wasn't it? There's a book that mentions Rabbi Jacobs, who confirmed me, and it mentions that he started that radio program.

Jan: That camera's blinking.

Sharon: We have four minutes left.

Jan: What kind of Jewish education did your children get?

Marilyn: They went to Sunday school. I don't think they liked it very much. Not all were confirmed. None of them married Jews. If you ask Anna if she is Jewish she will tell you she is. She will be eighteen in March.

Sharon: How many grandchildren are there?

Marilyn: Two. Lindsey is twelve. She is Catholic. Anna is eighteen. She's going to the College of Charleston.

**-SIDE ONE OF TAPE ENDS-**

**-SIDE TWO OF TAPE BEGINS-**

Marilyn: He was my husband's uncle, Buddy's uncle...

Jan: What was his full name?

Marilyn: Gustav Lichtenfelt. He was married to Edna Lichtenfelt who was the matriarch of the Jewish community. She was a Cone from Cone Mills in Greensboro. Did you not meet any of the Lichtenfelts or Sternbergs?

Jan: Not yet. Not for this program.

Marilyn: Well, you really should. Uncle Gus and Buddy's Grandmother, Anna Sternberg, were sister and brother. He was Buddy's mother's uncle...Buddy's great uncle. He was quite a character.

Sharon: Tell us something about him. Why do you say that?

Marilyn: I don't know. He lived alone over on Lakeshore Drive after Aunt Edna died. He used to have a barber that would come and shave him. He charged him twenty-five cents and he went up to fifty cents and Uncle Gus said he wouldn't do that. So Buddy had to go over and shave him except he didn't get paid. One day he nicked him so he got fired. He was a character.

Sharon: Did you have family events with older generations? Holiday events?

Marilyn: Not particularly on holidays but my mother used to have all the aunts and uncles and my grandfather over for Sunday dinner every week and they would always end up in big fights.

Sharon: What did they fight about?

Marilyn: Who knows? They just fought.

Sharon: But they came back the following week.

Marilyn: Oh, yes. I don't remember my grandfather too well although I was seventeen when he died. He didn't really have much to do with us. He wasn't a grandfather-grandfather. We were his only grandchildren because of the five children in my father's family Daddy was the only one who had children.

Sharon: Is that because they didn't get married?

Marilyn: Aunt Edna never married. Uncle Sid never married. Uncle Nat was married several times but never had any children. Aunt Frieda was married but

didn't have any children. So, Daddy was the only one who had children. He was the baby of the family.

Jan: What did some of his brothers and sisters do for a living?

Marilyn: Uncle Sid was a memory expert.

Jan: What does that mean?

Marilyn: He went around and gave courses on memory improvement.

Aunt Frieda was very talented actually. She could make very beautiful things like clothing. I think at one time she was a buyer for a store in New York. Aunt Edna worked for the government for many years. She was very active in Washington.

Uncle Nat...I'm not exactly sure what he did. He was sort of a playboy.

Jan: He was a dandy.

Marilyn: Yes, that's a good word...he was a dandy.

Sharon: Where did he live?

Marilyn: Sometimes here. He had a photography studio in Florida called the Abby Star.

Jan: Why was it called that?

Marilyn: Uncle Walter, Aunt Frieda's husband, was a photographer. Uncle Nat was Mr. Abby and Uncle Walter was Mr. Star.

Jan: That's really funny because he had the Star Store and I asked my uncle why he called it that and he would not really answer. There was a relative in Savannah

I was researching in the library directories and one of the Blombergs has a store called the Star Store.

Marilyn: Really? I didn't know that. The only one I really remember well was Uncle Isaac because he used to come here a lot and he and my mother would play gin rummy all the time. He would stay with us and he would want special towels and she babied him. She would take good care of him and he never left him a dime. She would ask him he was going to leave her anything and he would say her husband would take care of her.

Sharon: I see you have this letter from 1893 from the Model Cigar Store.

It says 'L. Blomberg. Wholesale and Retail Cigars and Tobacco : 17 Patton '.

Marilyn: I think he had a little cigar store. It was when they were building the Biltmore House. He catered to the workers. He lost that. Then he was going to open a bar. I have some of the glasses he had bought. Then, the day before he was going to open, Asheville went dry. So, that fell through.

Sharon: Do you know when that was?

Marilyn: No, a long time ago. I don't know what year. If we could find out when Asheville went dry we would know that.

Sharon: Maybe it was Prohibition?

Marilyn: No, it was before that.

Jan: How did you meet your husband?

Marilyn: Actually, his mother and my mother were very good friends many years ago. I didn't know him because he's older than I am. Then they moved away when he was eight and was only a baby. He came back here after World War II.

When I met him I was having a party. Annette Sternberg called me. He worked for Joe Sternberg when he came back here. Joe was in the junk business. Annette called me. That's Jerry Sternberg's mother. She said she had heard I was having a party and that she had a nephew in town and she would like for him to meet some of the people. So, I invited him to the party and that's how I met him.

Sharon: So, was it like love at first sight?

Marilyn: No, I was sixteen. He was six and a half years older than I was.

Sharon: Were there other people his age at the party?

Marilyn: Yes, Billy was there.

Jan: Then what happened?

Marilyn: Well, I thought he was nice looking. I had my sister call him up to come over for coffee. Then, we were all going to go to Buck's Drive-in for a hamburger.

Sharon: How long did you know him before you got married?

Marilyn: Three years. I was nineteen.

Sharon: What did he do for a living?

Marilyn: He was still working for Joe. After about a year he went to work for my father. My father adored him but not at first. They thought I was too young to get married. Of course I thought I was quite old enough. I'm not sure now if I was.

Sharon: You look at your kids now...

Marilyn: I look at Anna, she's eighteen, there's no way she's ready to get married. But, I thought I knew it all.

Sharon: Did Buddy like working at the car dealership?

Marilyn: I guess so. He's been working there ever since. He started at the bottom. He worked in the parts department and the used car lot. Then he ran the business.

Sharon: Tell us about your dad. What was his standing in the community?

Marilyn: He was very frugal with himself and us. But I hear stories I never knew about. Someone came into the hospital not long ago and she said that her mother had needed an operation and it would cost one hundred and fifty dollars. She was a waitress at the Vanderbilt. She didn't have the money and the banks wouldn't lend her the money. She went to my father, Harry, and asked if she could borrow one hundred and fifty dollars for her mother's operation. He said no but he gave her the money. He wouldn't lend it but he gave it to her.

Sharon: Was she Jewish or somebody he knew?

Marilyn: No, he knew her as the waitress at the Vanderbilt because they used to eat there all the time. I hear stories like that all the time. But, for himself, he was very frugal.

Sharon: What does that mean?

Marilyn: One time he bought a suit. It shrank in the rain because he wouldn't spend the money for a good suit. He was a character.

Sharon: Saul told us he donated twenty-five thousand dollars to the synagogue in Saul's honor.

Marilyn: I'm sure he did. He did stuff like that. He was very charitable but not for himself.

Sharon: Did he know a lot of people in the community? Did he have a lot of friends?

Marilyn: Yes. I don't know who because he worked all the time. He liked to go to Florida because he had a boat down there. He called up Buddy one day from Florida and asked how business was going. Buddy told him it was snowing and Daddy said he didn't ask for a darn weather report.

Jan: A lot of people have said that whatever Harry touched would turn to gold.

Marilyn: Carl Strauss said that about him. Carl said he was with him when Harry saw a pile of horse manure in the street. Harry wanted to buy it because it would turn to gold. That's where that came from.

Sharon: He was smart. He had a vision.

Marilyn: He wanted to leave an empire. He wanted to leave a legacy.

Jan: What do you think his legacy is?

Marilyn: He has a good name in the community. I think he cared about other people. I think all of my children care about other people. I think I do as well.

Sharon: Did your children get to know him?

Marilyn: Yes, they did.

Sharon: When did he die?

Marilyn: He died in November '91 so they did know him. My mother died in July of 1992. He was eighty seven and she was eighty nine. She would always ask for Anna when she was at the hospital. She was only five when my mother died but they had a wonderful relationship. I think it's unusual for a little girl to remember her grandmother that well.

Sharon: Was your dad close to your children?

Marilyn: Not particularly but I think he was closer to my children than he was to us because he wasn't working all the time then. I think that generation worked all the time. They weren't like today's fathers that take a bigger part in their children's upbringing.

Sharon: Tell us what it was like to have grown up here and to have stayed here.

Marilyn: Sometimes I will be walking over by the gallery and I will look up at the sky and I will thank God for putting me here. I feel lucky, blessed to have grown up here. I really can't imagine living anywhere else. I never wanted to.

Sharon: Did you travel?

Marilyn: Yes. A lot. I still do. I still come home to the mountains.

Jan: You had a lot of family here. Did it ever make you want to rebel and get away like a lot of kids do?

Marilyn: No. I always had to account to somebody for what I did. Either to my mother and father or to my husband. I never was really on my own. Sometimes I think it would have been nice to have gone to New York and had a job and an apartment like my sister did but I never really wanted to.

Sharon: When you were growing up did you go on family vacations?

Marilyn: Not a lot. More with my mother.

Jan: Where did you go?

Marilyn: Not a lot of places, Jan. We went to Atlanta a lot because my mother was from there. We went to Florida a lot because Daddy had a house there. We went to New York to the World's Fair.

Jan: We have this post card that's in an album of Saul's that shows your father shaking hands with Bob Hope.

Marilyn: Yes, Buddy has a picture of Bob Hope in his office. He has a picture of Cardinal Spellman and Roosevelt. I remember when Roosevelt came here to dedicate the Blue Ridge Parkway. Daddy drove him. He came home and said he had shaken hands with the President and he was never going to wash that hand again. I was real impressed by that. Never going to wash his hand again.

Jan: What about Bob Hope? Do you remember that? That looks like it was in Florida.

Marilyn: Bob Hope came here and performed at the Civic Center when they opened it.

Jan: That would have been downtown.

Sharon: What about your mother's family? Did she have people here?

Marilyn: No, her family was in Atlanta.

Sharon: What did they do in Atlanta?

Marilyn: I'm not quite sure what they did. They were quite poor. I didn't know them that well. I have cousins in Atlanta that I still stay in touch with.

Jan: What is your relationship with your sister?

Marilyn: She's terrific. She's very pretty and a career woman and a talented actress. We are close now but we weren't that close growing up. She is six years younger than I am.

Jan: Did she act? Did she have a stage name?

Marilyn: She is in a play now at Saint Bartholomew's Church. It's a group she has been in for years. They did the *Diary of Anne Frank*. She played the mother. She is very good. They got a great write up in the New York Times. She is a wonderful actress.

Jan: Does she have another job as well?

Marilyn: She did. She has retired now. She was in advertising in New York for many years.

Sharon: Tell us about your Cousin Jenny.

Marilyn: That is Jan Shockett's cousin. I don't know much about her. She moved from here to New York and married some wealthy man and changed her name to Jane and then moved to Florida and lived happily ever after from what I understand. That's all I know about her.

Jan: Do you have any other stories about family members? Uncle Nat or Uncle Sigmund?

Marilyn: Well you know Uncle Sig was going with a really nice lady. Do you remember Faye? Uncle Sig was a very handsome man and all the ladies really liked him. Every time he planned to marry one of these ladies, Aunt Frieda would promise to go to her mother's grave and kill herself. Did you know that? So, he never got married.

Sharon: What did Aunt Frieda do?

Marilyn: Her mother died when Frieda was eighteen. Her mother was thirty eight and died of blood poisoning. You wouldn't die from that today. They blamed the doctor. The children ranged in age from eighteen, sixteen, fourteen, twelve and Daddy was the baby at eight. She raised the children and let them know how she gave up her life for them.

Jan: But she did get married and moved to New York.

Marilyn: Yes, when she was older. She married Walter Stern.

Jan: She was married before for six months. He died. I don't know if she met Walter here or in New York or Florida.

Marilyn: I knew she was married before but I didn't know him or what happened to him.

Sharon: Did one of them take over your grandfather's store?

Marilyn: I think he lost that. He was not the greatest business man. He had the cigar store. He had the State Theater and that didn't do so well. I don't know what happened to the Rackett Store. I think Aunt Edna and Aunt Frieda worked there when they were young. Then he had the bar that was supposed to open and then Asheville went dry.

Jan: Talk about bad luck. I think Harry had all the luck that his father didn't have.

Marilyn: Yes, I think so.

Sharon: Tell us what you remember about downtown Asheville.

Marilyn: Downtown Asheville was great. Mother and all her friends would get all dressed up in their suits and hats and furs and gloves and go downtown and have lunch.

Sharon: Where did they have lunch?

Marilyn: At the Vanderbilt or the Battery Park. They had nice dining rooms. They would shop at John Carroll's on Haywood Street. They would shop at Ivy's where the Haywood Park Hotel is. They got all dressed up and went to town every day.

Jan: Who were her friends?

Marilyn: Julie Cooper, Helen Zagier, Helen Pollock, Claire Lipinski. They also had a poker game every Friday. I can remember coming home from school and they would be sitting there. Fannie Gross had a little green eye shade. Do you remember her? Leo Finkelstein's mother would be there.

Jan: Finky?

Marilyn: They would do all sorts of things to change their luck. They were wild.

Jan: What kind of stakes were there?

Marilyn: I have no idea. One time the Rabbi wanted Mother to do something and she said she couldn't because that was the day her literary society meets. Frank Edwin did Mother's funeral and he talked about the Friday Literary Society. The obituary mentioned that she was a member of the Friday Literary Society.

Sharon: Did they rotate houses?

Marilyn: Yes.

Jan: Where did you go downtown?

Marilyn: We would go the Village Drug Store and Pritchard Park and Eckerd's and Goods.

Sharon: Where was Goods?

Marilyn: It was on Haywood Street. Eckerds was on Patton Avenue.

We weren't allowed to wear makeup so we would go in the ladies' room and put on this lipstick. We thought we looked so cool. Then we'd have to wipe it off before we got home. Sometimes Mother would say that my lips looked dirty.

Jan: What did Mary Parker do downtown?

Marilyn: I think she was in charge of personnel.

Jan: Do you ever see her now?

Marilyn: No, I haven't seen her in years.

Jan: I got a phone call from her the other day. She is amazing.

Sharon: Were these businesses of your friends' parents? Did people know who you were?

Marilyn: Everybody knew everybody back then. It was a small town. I used to be in Atlanta and I would see people I knew on the street. It's a lot different than it is now. I don't know anybody now.

Sharon: Where did you eat?

Marilyn: S & W.

Sharon: What was that like?

Marilyn: It was great. We went there every single Thursday night. I loved it.

It was family night. You went through the line and they had toys for the children.

You went upstairs and they had cartoons. All the mothers sat on these big sofas downstairs and the children watched cartoons upstairs.

Sharon: The husbands did not go?

Marilyn: Not usually. They all worked.

Sharon: Where else did you go downtown?

Marilyn: Buck's Drive In. Maybe a movie. There wasn't a lot of excitement around.

Sharon: Where else did you go? Rec Park?

Marilyn: Yes.

Sharon: On hikes?

Marilyn: No, I wasn't terribly athletic.

Sharon: I was just curious.

Marilyn: We used to swim at Beaver Lake swimming pool in the summertime.

Sharon: Where was that?

Marilyn: At Beaver Lake. If go to the lake you will still see a curve. Part of the lake was a pool. It was walled off. It was a large swimming pool. They had a beach. It was a fake beach. All the kids hung out at the swimming pool.

Sharon: Was it a public pool?

Marilyn: Yes, it was public. I think what happened was the wall leaked and there was pollution and all that so the pool went.

Jan: Actually, it was the polio epidemic.

Marilyn: Was it the polio? We had two polio epidemics.

Jan: When?

Marilyn: One was '44 and one was '48.

Jan: It was '48 because my Mom would take Barry there when he was a little tiny baby and he was born in '47 and they closed it and she couldn't take him there anymore.

Marilyn: The second one was in '48. My mother said she couldn't go through another summer like that. During the first one in '44 they closed the pool, they closed the theater, and you couldn't go out to eat. At first, children weren't supposed to go out of their neighborhoods and then they weren't supposed to go out of their yards. This went on all summer. People were petrified. The second one, my mother said she wasn't going to put up with another summer like that, so we went to Atlanta for six weeks. The doctor told her he didn't think she should go but

if we went to not come back. The first two weeks we were in Atlanta nobody would have anything to do with us. We weren't allowed to go to their pools and clubs because we came from North Carolina. Mrs. Frank lived at the hotel we were staying in.

Sharon: Did you get to know her?

Marilyn: No, she was an elderly lady. There were a bunch of elderly ladies that lived at this hotel and they used to sit out on the porch. They would watch everything that went on. I was a teenager and was dating and they would talk about the girls going in and out. One of the ladies was Mrs. Frank. That was '47 to '48 and the Leo Frank thing was 1913.

Sharon: Did you know about that?

Marilyn: I didn't at the time but my mother knew. I read about it later.

Sharon: Did she tell you why she was a special lady?

Marilyn: Mother was nine when the Frank thing happened and people were just petrified, all the Jewish people in Atlanta, because of all the anti-Semitism.

Sharon: Did she go to that temple?

Marilyn: I don't think so. The Montages are the ones he worked for and they were an old German Jewish family from Atlanta. They went to the reformed temple which is the big temple which is still there. It was mostly German Jews.

Sharon: How did other event affect your life? Did you ever hear of Joseph Neilman?

Marilyn: No, who is that?

Jan: Just someone we are supposed to ask you about.

Sharon: What about the Ku Klux Klan?

Marilyn: Mother Potts used to tell a story about them.

Jan: Do you remember it?

Marilyn: Mother Potts lived in Cleveland Tennessee. She was the nun at Saint Genevieve's. I think they were the only Catholic family in the town. See, it's not just Jews that are affected by this stuff. There was a Ku Klux Klan rally. The men had hoods and robes. She recognized a ring on one of the men's fingers and it was the sheriff. She went and told her mother that the sheriff was one of these people and her mother told her to be quiet. She must have told you that story.

Jan: She was gone by the time I went there. She had gone back to Boston.

What do you remember about William Dudley Pelley?

Marilyn: I remember hearing about Pelley and the silver shirts. I read that story in the Mountain Express. I think the story was wrong when it said Asheville was so accepting of everyone. I forget who wrote that article but I think that was wrong.

Sharon: What do you think?

Marilyn: I think there were a lot of people who agreed with him.

Sharon: What about the people who didn't agree with him?

Marilyn: I was really a very little girl when and don't know anything about it. I remember my father mentioning something. I didn't make much of an impression on me. I remember where the building was. It's that building next to the railroad station at Biltmore.

Jan: I thought that was the second building. The original building was at the corner of Charlotte Street and Sunset Parkway.

Marilyn: Was it? You know a lot more about than I do.

Jan: Do think it was a dividing line between town and country people?

David told us he had a lot of people who would come to séances. Some were from Biltmore Forest...dilettante people...would come.

Marilyn: He was into that sort of thing wasn't he?

Jan: So it wasn't an education level thing that made people follow him. It wasn't lower-education people that would follow him.

Marilyn: I really don't know anything about him other than just hearing his name and the silver shirts.

Sharon: What about the rise of Hitler? How did that affect your family?

Marilyn: Well, it brought a lot of people here. Buddy's grandfather, Siegfried Sternberg, brought a lot of people over. Did you know Buddy's name is Siegfried? His name is by S.M. Patton, Siegfried Milton Patton, but he goes by Buddy.

Anyway, he brought people over like Alfred Lichtenfelts and others. When I was a little girl the Jewish ladies would have parties for the refugees.

Sharon: To raise money for them?

Marilyn: No, to welcome them. They had a party at our house and they were playing Chinese checkers. Most of them didn't speak a word of English. I just remember, as a little girl, playing Chinese checkers with these people who did not speak a word of English. Evidently there were quite a few.

Sharon: Did they stay here in Asheville?

Marilyn: Rudolph was one of them. Carl Strauss, too. There were quite a few.

Sharon: Did people talk about the holocaust?

Marilyn: Not at first. I don't think people knew much about it. Then as the war went on you heard more about it.

Sharon: What was said?

Marilyn: They were horrified. It was like...there, but for the grace of God, go I. We were very fortunate and these people were very unfortunate.

Sharon: What do remember about the community or family reactions to the founding of Israel?

Marilyn: We weren't too much for it at first.

Jan: Why not?

Marilyn: I think we were influenced by an American Jewish Congress...something like that...you were either Zionist or not. A lot of people were not for it. Maybe they didn't understand it. I don't know. A lot of Israelis came over here raising money and they had an antagonistic attitude like we owned them because we had a good life and they gave up all this for us. The Israelis could be very arrogant. I feel greatly for them now but did not back then.

Sharon: How do you think the Jewish community has changed over the years or has it remained the same?

Marilyn: It has changed greatly here. There are not a lot of the old timers left. The new people came in and took over the Temple. My friend Dorothy said we let them. She was absolutely right. That's not necessarily a bad thing. It used to be such an honor to be president of the Temple or president of the Sisterhood. Now they have to beg people to do it.

Jan: Why do you think that is?

Marilyn: I don't know. Why do you think?

Jan: Well, it's a different time. Women pretty much all work.

Sharon: The numbers have changed. If only the old timers were running the Temple there wouldn't be anyone to do the work.

Jan: I think men's and women's work roles have changed.

Marilyn: I don't think that has anything to do with whether it's an honor to be president of the Temple or if you have to beg someone to be president.

Jan: People don't have the time commitment. There are so many things they can be committed to.

Marilyn: I remember when my father was elected president of the Temple, he was so thrilled. He thought that the most wonderful thing. He was so thrilled.

Jan: Why do you think so many of your friends have moved away and your kids stayed.

Marilyn: I think because of jobs and professions. The Perlmans are still here and some Lipinskis have moved back here.

Jan: All of the kids I went to Sunday school with are gone.

Marilyn: Two of mine are here and Lynn would love to come back here. She loves it here. But you are right...all those children are....

Jan: If they were here there would be enough people at the Temple to....

before you had a lot of people who stayed. Now we have this generation that left.

Marilyn: What Sharon said about numbers is true. When I was a little girl and went to Temple I knew everybody there and everybody there knew me because there weren't that many of us. We had two hundred Jewish families including both the congregations.

Jan: We have four hundred now.

Sharon: That's affiliated. Many unaffiliated families have moved here.

Jan: We are running out of tape.

Sharon: Were some families in the JCC but unaffiliated if they didn't want to belong to the Temple?

Marilyn: I don't think so. Actually Julius Levich, Adele Cohen and Mother started the JCC way back when they bought that building on Charlotte Street.

Sharon: Do you know if somebody lived there?

Marilyn: I would assume so. It was a big old house. They added a ballroom to it.

Jan: We have talked quite a bit.

>TAPE ENDS<

