

Glenyce Miller Kaplan Interview

Conducted by David Freidenreich, August 4, 2010, at Glenyce Miller Kaplan's home in New Castle, New Hampshire. Transcribed by Spencer Kasko.

DF – David Freidenreich

GMK - Glenyce Miller Kaplan

MK – Michael Kaplan

GK – Glicka Kaplan

[DF asks for and receives permission to record.]

DF: [1:00] What I'm interested in is just whatever stories you can tell me about your experiences and your family's experiences in Waterville. So, if we could start, tell me about your parents.

GMK: My family experiences in Waterville?

DF: Yeah, tell me about your parents first.

[encouragement from MK and GK]

GMK: Well, I moved to Waterville when I was four years old from Brookline. And my experiences in Waterville were extended family—I came into a family of, well, my mother had two single brothers, two single sisters, a mother and a father, my brother Howard, and myself. So it was quite an extended family and it was a wonderful experience, you know, getting along with everybody. And I just loved every minute of it. I still love Waterville.

DF: Were you living at the big house on Ticonic Street?

GMK: We lived at the big house. We all lived at the big house. [2:06]

DF: So what was that like?

GMK: It's hard to describe. My uncles and grandfather worked in the store. And we always had dinner together. We never sat down until they'd close the store and came home. And then we just sat down and talked about business. Business and family, that's what my uncles were interested in. Very, very family oriented. They never married. So Howard and I were their children, I guess you would say. They brought us up. My mother worked in the store until my grandmother died at 62. She had a big family to take care of. So she had her brothers, her sisters and my brother and myself and my grandfather. My grandmother died at 62. [2:58]

DF: And so your mother Frieda worked only until then?

GMK: My grandfather opened a ladies' department for her. But when my grandmother died, she had to close it and take care of the real estate.

DF: Got it. So your grandmother worked in real estate...

GK: My grandmother worked in real estate from the home.

MK: What did that mean, work in real estate? It's not like today's work in real estate.

GMK: No, but she bought real estate.

MK: So, for renting.

GMK: Yeah.

MK: She rented apartments.

DF: What was an average day like for Sarah Levine? [3:36]

GMK: Sarah Levine. Arising very early, getting Howard and I off to school. My uncles opened the store. It was a typical day. Cooking for lunch.

DF: What kind of food?

GMK: Jewish food. Wonderful food. [3:59]

DF: But what did that mean?

GMK: I'll give you one example. I used to go to the Brook Street School and we'd come home for lunch. And lunch one day was potted meatballs, and I said to my grandmother, "But I don't like them." "You don't like them? Bread and sugar, that's all you can have." She never changed the menu. I never ate anything. I went back to school, came home at 3:30, and I dug into that meatball like you never saw. I never said anything—you know, she didn't cater to us. It wasn't like when my kids didn't want puffed wheat, they got rice krispies. If they didn't want rice krispies, they got something else. She was very frugal. [4:40]

DF: Say more about that. How did her being frugal shape your experience growing up?

GMK: How did being frugal? She had a great big garden. And she stored things in the cellar for the winter. She would make her own root beer, didn't buy it. And any way that she could possibly save money, she did. [5:05]

DF: And so what other kinds of foods did you have growing up?

GMK: Well, my grandmother was kosher. For a while. But when my Uncle Pacy took sick, she had to get different cuts of meat. But, you know, we had lamb and beef. If we had non-kosher we couldn't eat in the kitchen. [5:28]

DF: But that changed when Pacy got sick.

GMK: Yeah.

DF: Why?

GMK: Because he had to have certain cuts of meat that the Jewish butcher didn't have. So my grandmother said Pacy's health was more important, which it was, and that's what we did. [5:46]

DF: So about when was that switch?

GMK: Try to think, it must have been in the late '20s, early '30s.

DF: So before that it was kosher, and if you had non-kosher you couldn't bring it into the kitchen.

GMK: We had to eat it in the laundry room. [laughter from all] Where the help ate, yeah. I had to say the help. It makes me think of that book. [6:18]

DF: Did you and Howard and your mother often have non-kosher before the kitchen switched over?

GMK: No, my mother wasn't kosher. My father's family was very kosher. They were religious. But my mother wasn't kosher. [6:33]

DF: How'd your parents meet?

GMK: I don't know. I think they were introduced by a cousin. My mother went to Boston. There were no Jewish people in Waterville. And my uncles never married because they never met a

Jewish girl, so they stayed. So we lived in Brookline until my mother was divorced. Then we came back to home. [6:57]

DF: It sounds like you had not one father, but several fathers in some ways.

GMK: I had three fathers. I had my Uncle Pacy and my uncle Ludy and my grandfather. So if one said no, I went to the other. If the other said no, I finally got it at the third—Pacy always gave in. [7:21]

DF: So what kind of things were you asking for?

GMK: Well, a little extra money, to be able to go out at night, go skating and I couldn't go. I was very, very—well, I don't know—suffocated, I say. I couldn't do what all the other kids did. [7:43]

DF: So what kind of things did you do growing up?

GMK: What did I do? I went skating, I skied, I sled. I did everything that they did in Maine.

DF: Skiing in Waterville itself? Or you went out to ski slopes?

GMK: Well, I went out on the ski slopes when I was older, but I skied in Waterville. Actually, up above Johnson Heights. There was a gold course there. A little tiny hill. And then we would go skiing at Colby. Up near the Lorimer Chapel, go all the way down. I didn't go too far. [8:25]

DF: And so what was it like going to school?

GMK: I had a wonderful experience at Waterville High School. It was great. I had wonderful friends. And I never applied to any other college. I just had to go to Colby. There was no question. I was lucky I got in. [8:45]

DF: Why do you say that?

GMK: I wasn't a good student. I was very sinful.

DF: So why do you think you got in?

GMK: Well, I just think being a Levine got me in. I mean, I wasn't stupid. But I wasn't a student like my brother Howard, who was super student. Very bright. [9:10]

DF: So high school was especially in your memories about friends. Who were they?

GMK: What was that? Well, I was a cheerleader, I did everything that a typical high school kid did.

DF: But what was that?

GMK: Being a cheerleader was one thing. Going to the football games, basketball games, baseball games. Doing everything that the school offered. I was very active. [9:43]

DF: And who were your friends?

GMK: My friends were the McQuillan twins, Muriel Brewer, and a Jewish girl named Rowen Kusnitt, who went to Colby with me. K-U-S-N-I-T-T. [9:59]

DF: I'm not sure I've encountered her name.

GMK: What?

DF: We've been looking for Jewish students who attended Colby, and I don't recall...

GMK: Rowen. R-O-W-E-N. She died right before dad. About four year ago. Well, there were quite a few Jewish girls there. The Russakoff girls. Did you get them? [10:22]

DF: I believe so. Who else? What other Jewish kids do you recall growing up?

GMK: Those were my three Jewish girls—and then there was another girl named Mimi Gitlin, but she didn't go to college. [10:50]

DF: Do you know why?

GMK: No, I don't know why, really. None of her sisters went to college. Her parents were foreign. And they weren't really too Americanized. They lived across the street. But it was wonderful. You could go and get all movie magazines and her mother never knew what they read. So I used to go over there and read them. My mother wouldn't let me get them. [11:19]

DF: So tell me more about the neighborhood on Ticonic Street.

GMK: Oh, Ticonic Street. Well, actually, Mimi was the only friend I had on Ticonic Street. Rowen lived on Kelsey Street near the old synagogue. You know where that was? She lived next door. [11:37]

DF: And what else do you remember from Ticonic Street? 'Cause it seems that there were a lot of Jews who were living right in that area.

GMK: Well, my grandfather started it. And there was the *shammas* from the shul. Did the girls tell you about Motki?

DF: No.

GMK: Motki Rabinovich. Oh my God, he was something.

DF: So tell me more.

GMK: He was like a real *schlup*. He didn't even have a phone. When he wanted to have a minyan, he'd come over to the house to use the telephone. Didn't have a telephone. His wife was very religious. She wore a *shaytl*. And they had a daughter, Goldie. That was another Jewish girl, Goldie Rabinovich. [12:26]

DF: Do you know what happened to her?

GMK: No, I don't. She lived in Boston. And she had a couple of brothers. I really don't know what happened to her. And I left Waterville when I was 21. So a lot happened after that.

DF: So was Goldie older than you or younger than you?

GMK: She was older than me, just by a few years. Not a whole lot.

DF: And she didn't go to college.

GMK: No. She came to Boston to work and I guess got married. I lost touch of her. [13:02]

DF: So what else are your memories of Ticonic Street?

GMK: All my memories are from Ticonic Street. Everything. Every Saturday we had a football game or something. And I had to report by 11:30 and I had to collect rent before that. Saturday was a big rent day. I'd come home, I wanted to go down to the store to add it up, my grandfather wouldn't let me. I had to do it all in my head. So they were all wonderful memories. It was a typical family life. That's all. [13:43]

DF: Well, what's interesting is that, especially from the perspective of students—these are kids that grew up in the '80s and '90s—and they have no sense of what it meant to grow up in the '20s, '30s and '40s. So what was typical life like?

GMK: Life—we went about our business, you know. We played as kids. We studied going to high school. Went to the movies on Saturday. It was typical. Of course, today it's a little

different. It was ten cents to go to the movies and five cents for a bag of candy. What was it when you were...?

MK: Twenty-five cents when I grew up.

GMK: Yeah. But it was the typical life of any teenager. I was a typical teenager. I rode my bike, roller-skated, whatever they did I wanted to do. [14:43]

DF: And it sounds like you had a large number of non-Jewish friends as well as Jewish friends.

GMK: In the summer we went to the lake.

DF: Tell me about that!

GMK: Oh, that was fun. That was a lot of fun. My Aunt Betty was the head counselor. She ran it, and my cousin Tema came. My cousin Audrey came. And we stayed there for two months. My mother never stayed. My grandparents always came down every night to visit. [15:14]

DF: So they worked in the store, lived in Waterville but came up to visit the camp.

GMK: Yeah, well, it only took ten minutes. That's all. But they'd come every night, bring food. 'Cause there was no stores in Snow Pond at that time. You'd have to go to Oakland, which was nothing. So they would do that. [15:34]

DF: So you said there was a counselor. But the folks there were cousins.

GMK: No, my Aunt Betty was the head, the matron, the matriarch—the matron, I say.

DF: So she just looked after all the kids, and the kids spent all summer long at Snow Pond.

GMK: She spent all summer. We always had somebody watching over us. Like a girl counselor. 'Cause she never swam. [16:00]

GK: Now, Mom, would Nana Frieda drive you from Brookline? No, you were in Waterville then.

GMK: No, she came like July 1st, stayed July until the end of August. There was no sharing of the camp in those days. My grandpa owned it at that point.

GK: So everybody just stayed.

GMK: There were three camps. And we rented two. One was to Rabbi Louis Ginzberg. Did you ever hear of him? [16:29]

DF: Yes!

GMK: He had the last camp. The other one was Epstein. Doctor Epstein from Kehillath Israel. Do you remember him? [16:38]

DF: No, wait, that's—from Kehillath Israel in Boston.

GMK: Yeah. So we had three camps. We had the big one. And then Rabbi Epstein had the middle one, and then Doctor Ginzberg had the last one. And he was a sweet, dear man. And on Saturday, after Shabbat, he would take us swimming, and float. And he was German, and his wife was German, and she'd follow him in the boat and she'd say [in German accent], "One, two, three, go Louis," and he'd go back and forth [laughter]. And then we couldn't do anything on Friday night or Saturday because they were very religious. So we were respectful. [17:22]

DF: So it sounds like you weren't very religious, but because of the Ginzbergs and the Epsteins...

GMK: Yeah, that's right. And they rented from us, so we wanted them to come back next year [laughter]. There was always a method to our madness. [17:39]

DF: So then what did you do on Friday nights and Saturdays while they were there?

GMK: Well, we used to sit and talk and typical...

DF: Sit and talk, and that was all you did all day?

GMK: No, we would go over to the Ginzbergs Friday night and have dessert. And then Saturday he would go in the field and read. And Rabbi Epstein would do the same thing. We went about our business. [18:06]

MK: At the camp, Mom, you didn't have a TV back then, did you?

GMK: Oh, no, just a radio. Well, Tim and I used to play games.

DF: What kind of games?

GMK: All kinds of games. Monopoly, things like that. And we would swim. They didn't...

GK: Oh, you could swim?

GMK: We would swim. They wouldn't swim. [side exchange]

DF: So when the Ginzbergs and Epsteins weren't around, what did Friday night and Saturday look like in your house?

GMK: Same as any other day. My mother lit Friday night candles because my grandmother used to do it. And Friday night was a typical Sabbath dinner. She always made baked beans and roast chicken. She really emulated my grandmother. Whatever my grandmother did, she did. My uncles as they grew older only wanted... [side exchange]. It was just typical, like any other family, you know. [19:27]

DF: Well, what's interesting is that different families, especially when it comes to Shabbat observance, some families were far more traditional, some were far less interested in the traditions. So what did that look like in your family? Your mother lit candles and there was a standard Friday night dinner. And Saturdays?

GMK: Saturdays my uncles went to work. No different. They weren't that observant. My grandmother and grandfather were more observant. My grandfather would go to shul. But no, they weren't observant like that. We didn't keep kosher. [20:07]

DF: So your grandfather, he would go to shul on a regular basis on Saturday mornings?

GMK: Yeah, if they had it at the, there was a little Talmud Torah, they'd call it, 'cause he couldn't walk up the hill, and he didn't really like to ride on Saturday. [20:26]

DF: Oh, so he couldn't walk to the shul on Kelsey Street, so they had a little a little service at the Talmud Torah.

GMK: Yeah, that's where they would have the minyans and everything. They didn't open the big place. [20:39]

DF: When did they open the big place?

GMK: Just for high holidays. And, you know, special events. It wasn't a very pretty temple.

MK: That's not the one that's there now.

GMK: No, they redid it.

MK: But that was the spot it was at?

GMK: Remember the old one?

DF: No, the old one was at the corner of Kelsey and Ticonic.

GMK: The old one was next to Aunt Lillian's house. Where Rowen lived.

GK: So, Mom, back to Ticonic because everything was on Ticonic, it sounds like.

GMK: Everything was at the big house. [21:13]

GK: Yeah, the big house.

GMK: You know, it wasn't that big, but they called it the big house. It had a lot of bedrooms.

GK: But, Mom, did Jewish families rent from Nana also, or from Sarah?

GMK: Well, yeah, a couple of Jewish families, but then they moved out. I can't remember. One moved near the high school. No, they were all real *goyim* [laughs]. [21:39]

DF: Were they Franco-Americans, were they Lebanese? Who was renting these places?

GMK: No, all French people. Mostly French. The Lebanese were people, you know, by themselves. They did very well. They were very much like Jewish people. [22:00]

DF: How so?

GMK: Well, because they were very family oriented. They stuck together. In fact, my uncles were very friendly with them. The Lebanese. A lot of families in Waterville. [22:14]

DF: And was your extended family friendly with many of the French families in town or primarily the Lebanese?

GMK: We were friendly with everybody because we ran a retail store. Everybody was our friends. We all had retail smiles. [22:31]

DF: Did you work in the store growing up?

GMK: Yes, I did.

DF: What was that like?

GMK: It was great. At first I wrapped bundles, and then I graduated to salesperson. And then one cute story was at Christmas time my grandfather would have ties all around the store, putting a something to hang them on, in those days they were a dollar or a dollar and a half, and they used to like to steal them, so my grandpa used to say to me, "*hid*." You know what *hid* means—watch. "And if they take one all you have to do is go up to them and say, 'May I wrap that for you, please.'" And Mikey, talking about that, they loved calendars. And they would come in at Christmas saying, "Can I have a *calenda*?" Mike does calendars as a hobby. [23:20]

MK and GK: *Calenda* [laughter].

DF: So, wait, this Mike [referring to MK].

MK: Yeah.

DF: Okay. So what years are we talking about here? So, Mike, you came in long after...

GMK: I worked at the store until I got married. But only on like a busy Saturday. Or if they needed things to be done, special things, I would do it. It was a big store. Do you ever see a...? [23:50]

DF: I've seen the outside.

GMK: They ruined it. It was a very beautiful department store. It had three floors. It was gorgeous. [24:00]

DF: Say more about that. So there were three floors. What was where?

GMK: The bottom floor was work clothes. The main floor was suits and ties, all the dress clothes. And the third floor was for older men and tuxedos. Those were the days when you carried tuxedos.

GK: My God, I didn't even realize that.

GMK: And then my uncles had a private office up there. Where they'd have a few little parties. They wouldn't bring the *shiks* home. Then I remember my grandmother saying, "Is the water hard, honey?" My grandmother said to my Uncle Pacy. He was a little wild when he was younger. And he wanted to go out at night. We had two cars, the big car and a little car. The little car at that point was a Whippet. She would say to him, "You take the Whippet. It's good enough for those *chipienties* [?]." [25:05]

DF: So...

GMK: Did you ever hear of a Whippet?

MK: Yep. It was a two-seater, I think.

GMK: Yeah, it was a little sports car. [25:16]

DF: So, what's going on here? So Pacy and Ludy have an office upstairs. And you said the *shiks*....

GMK: They did their entertaining there.

DF: They did their entertaining there, but they didn't want to bring them home.

GMK: No, they didn't bring them home.

DF: Why not?

GMK: 'Cause they were *shiks*.

DF: Who would've objected?

GMK: The whole family. [25:38]

DF: The whole family.

GMK: We were a unit of one. We all thought alike. You didn't think different in my family [laughter].

DF: It was okay to have non-Jewish friends, but there were lines.

GMK: Oh yeah. But there was a line of demarcation. You knew. My mother used to say, "Don't let your heart rule your head." That was a motto. Don't let your heart rule your head. [26:04]

DF: And so then you went to Colby. Tell me about that.

GMK: Oh, I loved it. I had a good time. But I went to Colby during the war, in 1942. I graduated in '46. But we had a wonderful time, and I made a lot of wonderful friends.

DF: Did you have much interaction with Colby folks before you started attending? Like when you were growing up in high school.

GMK: The only thing I did was I had dated some of the Jewish boys who went to Colby. The Tau Deltas. But my brother wasn't a Tau Delt. He was an ATO. When I went, they didn't take Jewish girls into sororities. And I had a very dear friend who was president of Tri Delt and she came to me and she said, "We want you to join. You only have to do one thing that's a little different." I said, "What is that?" "You have to swear on our Bible." I said, "I can't do that. I just

can't." So I never joined. But now they don't have to do that. My cousin Judy Brody's a Tri Delt. You know Judy? [27:15]

DF: Yep!

GMK: Is that a nice girl?

DF: She's great.

GMK: She's the best.

DF: So you weren't allowed in the sororities.

GMK: No, but I was still friendly with all the girls. But I never became a member of a sorority. [27:32]

DF: What kind of activities did you do as a student?

GMK: Oh, not really too much. I played volleyball. There wasn't that much to do. I didn't live at school. I lived at home.

DF: And you just walked to the old campus?

GMK: I only had a few classes at the old campus. We moved up on the hill. We moved on the hill in '43. I graduated from the new school. But we had a few classes at the old school. And there was a bus called the Beetle, and we had to take the bus. [28:14]

DF: So how many of your classmates at Colby were Jewish? Did you have Jewish friends there, or you hung out with the sorority girls even though they wouldn't let you in?

GMK: There were a few Jewish girls from Boston. I think there were about six Jewish girls. There wasn't a quota at that time. Plus Rowen and myself. About six. Quite a few boys until the army took them. Because it was at the very beginning of the war in 1942. [28:51]

DF: So you said you also spent time with the Tau Delt guys before you started school.

GMK: Well, I knew them, yeah.

DF: How did you get to know them?

GMK: Our store was the mecca of everything. We had a thing called Colby Corner. And they all came into the store. And when the Jewish holidays came, they'd come to the temple. So someone would always have some of them for dinner. Some of the Jewish families. I had a lot of cousins there. The Rosenthals, Sapersteins. That's how I met them, through the store. [29:30]

DF: So you met the Colby kids through the store and also through your cousins who were already at college?

GMK: Well, my brother.

DF: Oh, right, because you're brother was already there.

GMK: My brother graduated in '41. '40 or '41. He had to stay on a little bit because he was bad. [29:52]

DF: Say more about that, if you wouldn't mind.

GMK: I kind of remember what it was. I think he was a little drunk walking down the—I don't remember actually what it was. But he had to stay out a semester. But he was very bright. [30:10]

GK: When he graduated, did he go right off to war, after that?

GMK: Well, he started to work in the store and then he went right off to war, yeah.

GK: And you were still at school.

GMK: And they gave him a furlough of twenty-four hours, I think. Then he was shipped overseas. And that's where he met his wife. Gisele, who was a great addition to our family. Just wonderful. [30:39]

DF: Tell me more about Gisele.

GMK: Gisele? She became Americanized overnight. Very, very smart. She adjusted beautifully. She learned how to drive, she learned how to market. She came over with my niece Sara. Sara was born in Africa. And the family loved her. They lived at the big house. For a while. Wendy was born at the big house. They didn't move until Julie was born at Johnson Heights. [31:13]

DF: And of course you moved out of Waterville...

GMK: I moved out of Waterville in '46 really. I got married in '47.

DF: So you moved because of the person you were going to marry, or you met him after you left?

GMK: I met him after I left. I went to Boston.

DF: To do what?

GMK: To live with my aunt. I looked for a job, but I didn't really work—well, I worked for a little bit. My uncle Pacy came to see me. He didn't like it. He said, "You can come home." I worked in a little boutique in Coolidge Corner. Betty Singer's. He came, checked it out, said, "What you're doing here you can do at home." So that was the extent of my working. [32:00]

MK: You had met Dad yet?

GMK: No, I met Dad when I came back to Boston to visit Aunt Betty. My Uncle Eddie was their doctor. He had called me once and I was busy and I couldn't see him. Then he called me again one day when Uncle Eddie was sick with a cold. He called me and my first date with him... [side exchange] [32:35]

DF: So you went down to Boston for a job and stayed with your aunt and uncle. And then you moved back to Waterville.

GMK: I went back to Waterville.

DF: And then you came back to visit.

GMK: I'd go back and forth. I had two aunts living in New York... You never stayed in a hotel. You stayed with your family. We were really closely knit. And that's how I met my husband, through my uncle and aunt. And I got married in '47, June '47. I think a year to the day that I graduated Colby. June 17th. [33:20]

DF: And so did you find that you used what you learned at Colby later?

GMK: I majored in sociology, psychology. I never used it really. I think if I hadn't married I would've gone for a master's in sociology. That's what I planned. But it didn't work out that way.

MK: You used it raising your kids, that's for sure.

DF: Certainly the psychology.

GMK: Then, you know, I had a boyfriend first when I first went to Colby. Edgar Braff.

DF: Tell me more about Edgar.

GMK: I think he went to Colby with me for one year. And then he enlisted in the Navy. And that was the end of his college career. We dated for quite a few years, until I was married practically. [34:15]

DF: One of my students has been working on archiving the letters that Howard sent back and forth to the family, and there are various references to you and Edgar.

GMK: The thing that happened was Edgar met Howard the time that he had that short furlough. It was like in '46, when we first entered Colby. And I said to him when he joined the Navy, I said, "If you ever get to Oran, Africa, you know it's a small world." I said, "You look up my brother Howard and sister Gisele," which he did. And he got there and Gisele was working for the American army and Howard was in the army. And mother didn't understand one word of English. Finally, they spoke Spanish. And they didn't call Howard 'Howard'. They called him 'Miller' [pronounced with a French accent: *MillAYr*]. He stayed there for about a week and he brought them supplies, 'cause he was a pharmacist's aide. He brought them medical supplies. That's how I got word that my brother was fine. [35:24]

DF: So Edgar worked for the army's pharmacy department? Was that Edgar doing that or Howard doing that?

GMK: No, Edgar was in the pharmacy. My brother was in...

MK: He was a translator.

GMK: Yeah, but he was also part of the signal corps, so yeah, he translated. They both translated. Howard spoke French. [35:51]

GK: And Edgar spoke Spanish.

GMK: Yeah. And Edgar spoke, you know, not great. A student he wasn't. [36:02]

DF: So Edgar was from Boston originally.

GMK: He's from Newton. Yeah. He's no longer alive.

MK: Didn't he do Dunkin' Donuts?

GMK: What?

MK: What'd he do after that?

GMK: He worked for Joe Low Company. They sold all the flours and stuff for donuts and fudgicles.

MK: Yeah, that's what it was. [side exchange]

GMK: His father had a big job there. They didn't own it. He had a lot of stock in it. That's when Edgar's father said to me, "I understand that your uncle Harold has a very successful shoe business. I think Edgar ought to see if he can get a job there." That did it. [36:54]

DF: Wait a minute. What happened there?

GMK: It's a whole long story. I didn't want him working for anyone in my family. And my uncle Harold was not a blood uncle. He was my Aunt Bibby's husband. [37:15]

MK: So you felt...

GMK: I just felt it wasn't right. I equated it with my father. So I didn't want that.

DF: How so?

GMK: Well, that would delve into another whole long story.

DF: I'd be happy to hear it, if you'd be willing to share it.

GMK: No, I think it's a bit too personal.

DF: Okay. [pause]

GMK: I didn't want him to have anything to do with it.

DF: So even though many members of the extended Levine family worked in Levine's store, you didn't want to be marrying somebody who was gonna be coming into work...

GMK: It wouldn't be the Levine store. It would be Dexter Shoe. Which I didn't want. [38:11]

DF: Were you also looking to marry somebody not in Waterville?

GMK: No, not particularly. I would marry anybody that I felt that I loved. I was young. I was only 21. No, I was 22 when I got married. They thought I'd be an old maid. 'Cause all my *shikse* friends married really very young. They never finished school. Did you marry in college? [38:45]

DF: [after a brief exchange] So what was it like transitioning from Waterville to Boston? Was that a culture shock to be in a big city after growing up in Waterville?

GMK: Well, I loved Boston. Yeah, it was a whole revelation. You know, it was different. There was much more to do. And I loved it. I loved Boston. I miss it.

DF: Did you go back to Waterville often? [39:36]

GMK: Well, I had to visit my mother and my folks, yeah. I used to go all time. We'd go Christmas holidays. During the summer we would go. Take the kids there all of Christmas. They loved it. And then I had a son that went to Colby too. Steven.

DF: I'm not sure I knew that. What year?

GMK: Steven. What year did Steve graduate? [discussion about the year of graduation]

MK: I believe it was '72.

GMK: And now a cousin of mine's son, my second cousin's son, just got into Colby. Fifth generation. Isn't that something?

[side discussion]

DF: So have you maintained ties with Colby, or not so much? [41:04]

GMK: Well, I send them money once a year. I don't have that much to do with it really, no. I wouldn't call myself an active alumni. But I do remember them every year. 'Cause I love Colby. I had a good time there. Made nice friends. [41:31]

DF: Did you ever find it difficult to be Jewish at Colby beyond the sorority issue?

GMK: Well, I think I could have, but I wouldn't allow myself to.

DF: How so?

GMK: Well, because I had all gentile friends growing up. And it wasn't difficult. I never hid that I was Jewish. And if it was high holidays, I never ate there. Or if I would I'd bring matzah and something. And I think they respected me for that. No, I never found it difficult being Jewish at all. Not at all. [42:07]

DF: Tell me about the professors you studied with. Were any of them particularly memorable?

GMK: I had a wonderful psychology professor. Professor Colgan. My sociology professor, Mora [?]. I had all good professors. You know, that I was close to. Biology, geology, that just a year. I

never saw them after that. You don't really. You only see those that you're taking courses with. [42:39]

DF: Was the fact that you lived at home a barrier to making friends and getting involved in activities?

GMK: Not at all. Not at all. It wasn't a big school. I think if it had been a big school it would have been a barrier. But not at all. And then I had my friend Rowen. We were together all the time. We would take the bus together. She never drove. I had a little car. I would take the little car to school with my dog. [43:09]

GK: You can tell that story, Mom.

GMK: About Skipper? We had a dog, Skipper, when my brother was at college. He would follow him wherever he went. So at one football game, he was bothering—the game was on and he was running, so over the loudspeaker they said, "Howard Miller, come and get Skipper. He's disturbing the game." [43:35]

DF: So was Howard on the football team or was he in the stands?

GMK: No, Howard was probably working. Howard never played football. He worked from the age of nine. And Skipper would come to school with me. My English professor called me 'Mary and her little lamb'. He was so smart he knew just where my classes were. And it's when I was at the lower school before we completely moved up to the campus. [44:05]

DF: So Howard worked all the way through college.

GMK: Yeah.

DF: So he was working at the Levine store.

GMK: Yeah.

DF: And were you doing that as well? Were you also working while in school?

GMK: No. The only time I worked was on Saturday when they needed extra help. But Howard worked every day. [44:25]

DF: How did he balance that?

GMK: He was just so bright, I don't know how he managed it. He just did.

DF: So what did his day look like? How early did he show up at the store?

GMK: He'd go to his classes. And then if he had time, he'd go down to the store mid-afternoon. 'Cause he did all the signs and all that. He did everything. He managed it. [44:58]

DF: Did he always know he was gonna work in the store after he was done?

GMK: No, he didn't. He was gonna go to law school. But when he got married and had a child, he decided he couldn't do that. He had to make a living. So he went into the store. No, he was gonna go to law school. [45:18]

DF: Tell me more about Howard.

GMK: Well, he was a devil, that's all I can say. He was a wonderful boy, a wonderful father, a wonderful grandson, and a wonderful nephew, a wonderful brother. Whatever he was, he was great. [45:34]

DF: What made him so great?

GMK: His personality and his goodness. He was good inside. Very, very compassionate. Filled with love for everybody, a wonderful son. Wonderful to my mother. I can't rave enough about him. I just say every girl should have a brother like Howard. [45:58]

DF: You felt that close to him growing up to?

GMK: Oh yeah. Well, we fought. One would have to eat at the kitchen, one would have to eat at the dining room. My ma would say, "Mother, he hit me." "Why did you hit—" "On general principle," he'd say. [46:12]

DF: And were you living in the big house all the way until college?

GMK: Oh sure. Sure. All one.

DF: So tell me about the other folks living in the house. Tell me about Ludy and Pacy.

GMK: Well, they were two patriarchs, I can say. Pacy was a little more spoiled, 'cause he was always, you know, sickly. He had ulcers and they catered to him. So Ludy would open the store very early in the morning, and grandfather would wake my uncle Pacy up about nine o'clock, nine-thirty. He'd let him sleep. Then they'd go take care of the property. Then go down to the store. [46:57]

DF: Who, Pacy or William?

GMK: Pacy took care of the property.

DF: And so taking care of the property meant... what? Cleaning up, repairing things...

GMK: Repairing, making sure that everything's done right. Yeah, it was a big job. [47:14]

DF: So Ludy opened the store first thing in the morning. What was that? Eight o'clock, seven o'clock?

GMK: Oh, after a while he trusted somebody in the store to open it. They didn't trust too many people. Ed Morrisette [spelling?] would open up.

MK: But what time?

GMK: By eight o'clock.

MK: It was open to the public by eight?

GMK: Oh, no, I don't think it opened till nine. [47:37]

DF: So he would go in early in the morning to clean up before nine o'clock, the opening.

GMK: No, not clean up. They had somebody clean. They had a janitor. But he didn't have the key. [47:55]

DF: So you said Ed Morrisette.

GMK: He was one of the clerks. We had clerks, for years and years they stayed. There was one, two, three—we never changed clerks. I can remember. When my grandmother died, my brother was nine years old, and he was taking care of the store when they were sitting shiva, and he found a man steal, one of the salespeople stealing, and he fired him. He was nine years old. He used to make the night deposits in the bank. Just a very bright kid, just knew how to do everything. It was a good family. [48:42]

DF: Did you know Teddy well?

GMK: I didn't know Teddy. He died, I think I was just a few months old. He was the oldest. He and my Aunt Anne. I think my Aunt Anne, then Teddy. He went to Colby too. [49:10]

DF: And so who else was in the house when you were growing up?

GMK: That was enough!

DF: Well, I'm just trying to get descriptions. So we've talked a little bit about Pacy and Ludy. Actually, you told me about what they did, but tell me about their personalities. What was Ludy like?

GMK: My Uncle Ludy had a wonderful personality. He was the store-greeter. He'd stand and talk to people, and people that weren't waited on, my brother would scream, "Ludy, stop! Go take care of the..." And Pacy's personality was different. He had a wonderful personality, a retail personality. He'd put it on and then take it off. But Ludy always loved to talk. Pacy, you know, just the facts, that's all. [50:01]

MK: He'd talk sports.

GMK: Oh, they were both very sports-minded. They'd go to the games. That's when they'd leave the store, to go to the football games.

DF: The Colby games or the Waterville High games?

GMK: Both. But particularly Colby. I think Pacy graduated from Coburn. He went to private school. Ludy graduated high school. Evelyn went to Coburn, Bibby went to Coburn, Pacy went to Coburn. They were very poor students. [50:33]

DF: So why did they go to Coburn rather than Waterville High?

GMK: They got a little better attention, I'd say.

DF: So of the kids Ludy and Frieda went to Waterville High and the other kids...

GMK: They all went to Waterville High other than Pacy and Evelyn and Bibby. They went to Waterville High but the last two years they finished at Coburn. [51:03]

DF: And Pacy and Evelyn and Bibby were the youngest three?

GMK: Evelyn was the youngest of quite a few years, and then Bibby came along. It was Pacy, Evelyn, Bibby. [51:16]

DF: So the three youngest kids attended Coburn for a little bit, and everybody else was just at Waterville High.

GMK: Yeah, all of them went to Waterville High. My mother, all of them.

DF: Tell me about Evelyn.

GMK: Evelyn was a character. She was wonderful. She was married for a short time and divorced. She was very family-conscious, loved her brothers. She came home, she died at fifty. Very young. But she just lived for her family. [51:46]

DF: And was she living in the big house while you were growing up as well?

GMK: She was living, yeah, she was back and forth, Boston and New York. They wanted to get her married.

DF: Get her married the first time or get her married after the divorce?

GMK: No, she never remarried.

DF: She never remarried.

GMK: No, but she was home. My mother really brought her up. She brought Bibby up. Bibby was only fifteen when my grandmother died, or sixteen. [51:13]

DF: So tell me about Bibby.

GMK: Oh, Bibby was a beautiful, beautiful girl. I tried to emulate her. Whatever she did, I wanted to do.

DF: Like what?

GMK: I wanted to have all the boyfriends that she had, I wanted to be pretty like Bibby, and I used to wear her clothes when she went away—and she'd know it because I wasn't neat. "You wore my sweater!" I said, "No, I didn't." "Yes, you did, you folded it wrong. I can tell." We were brought up as sisters, really. [52:43]

GK: So she lived at the house too, Mom.

GMK: She was at the big house, too. Everybody was at the big house.

GK: Everybody lived there.

GMK: There was no other place to live. [52:52]

DF: So how much older was Bibby than you?

GMK: Let's see. Nine years older, I think. And five years older than Howard. I think that was it, yeah. [53:07]

DF: And so who was she dating?

GMK: Oh, she dated everybody. She had lots of boys. Lots and lots of boyfriends.

DF: Just Jewish? Also non-Jewish?

GMK: All Jewish.

DF: All Jewish. So how many people could she have dated in Waterville?

GMK: Well, she dated Colby boys, and then she would go to Boston. She never dated gentile boys. You know, we were always friends with them, but we just never dated them. [53:34]

DF: And so she would go down to Boston to meet people to date?

GMK: Well, she would go to Boston, stay with her sisters. She's stay with Aunt Betty. And then when she left, I would go. And Evelyn really stayed in New York more with Aunt Anne than in Boston. [53:54]

DF: Okay, so let me see if I can keep all this family straight. So Aunt Anne grew up in Waterville.

GMK: Yeah. But married a doctor.

DF: And moved to New York.

GMK: Yeah.

DF: And Betty married...

GMK: Married a doctor.

GMK and DF: And moved to Boston.

GMK: Yeah.

DF: And they are the oldest two children?

GMK: My Aunt Anne was the oldest. My Aunt Betty was before Pacy. [54:24]

DF: Before Pacy but after Ludy.

GMK: After Ludy. It was Teddy and my mother, Ludy, Betty, Pacy, Evelyn, and Bibby. And I think there was one that died. [54:40]

DF and GMK: Rose.

GK: So where was Anne?

GMK: Eric found out. I never knew that.

DF: You never knew growing up that your mother had a sister who died?

GMK: No, I never knew it. But I knew that Uncle Teddy died. That we all knew. [55:02]

DF: How did he die again?

GMK: He had perforated ulcers. It was an unnecessary death, Uncle Eddie said. They didn't know enough in Waterville. He ate the wrong things. [55:14]

DF: So he and Pacy both had ulcer issues.

GMK: Yeah.

GK: And Evelyn also had stomach problems.

GMK: Well, Evelyn had cancer, stomach.

GK: Interesting.

DF: And so when you were growing up in the house, Anne had already left?

GMK: Oh yeah.

DF: And Betty as well?

GMK: Oh sure. The only ones in the house was Evelyn, Bibby, Pacy, Ludy, Howard, myself, my mother, my grandmother, my grandfather. [55:45]

DF: The only ones. Tell me about your grandparents.

GMK: Well, my grandfather was a real patriarch. He was a great guy. Also frugal. But nice personality. And he was director of the bank, very well-respected in Waterville.

DF: Your grandfather was director of the bank?

GMK: Yes, he was. [56:07]

DF: Which bank?

GMK: At that time I think it was called the First National. In Waterville.

DF: And so what years was he director?

GMK: He used to go on meetings every Monday, and I would pick him up. Yeah, he was very well-respected in Waterville.

DF: So this was during the '30s he was director.

GMK: It was '30s and '40s. [56:29]

DF: 'Cause I knew that one of the Hillsons was a director of the bank.

GMK: Hillsons?

DF: Yeah.

GMK: Which one?

DF: I don't recall which one.

GMK: It wasn't Sam, I know that.

DF: Okay.

GMK: Ike.

DF: Lester Jolovitz told me—Yeah, it might have been Ike.

GMK: It was Ike.

DF: Lester told me he succeeded a Hillson to the board of the bank. But he didn't tell me that your grandfather had also been on the board. [56:55]

GMK: Well, my grandfather was one of the first Jewish people that was a director of the bank. It started in, I think, the late '30s. And then my Uncle Ludy took over from him, and then I think Howard did.

MK: For a while, yeah.

GMK: For a while.

DF: So all three of them were bank directors.

GMK: I don't know if it was all the same bank or not. You know, they changed names, so... I used to pick my grandpa up on Monday.

MK: Yeah, after the meeting.

GMK: We never let him walk too far. We were afraid. In those days if you had heart, you'd got to be careful. We babied him so. [57:34]

DF: So tell me more about him. Was he in the store every day, as much as Ludy, or was it really Ludy and Pacy running it?

GMK: He tried. Ludy and Pacy were running it, but my grandpa went every day. He still liked to sign the checks. If he wasn't well, he wouldn't go that day. But he wouldn't stay all day. But up until the day he died he went. We'd take him down and bring him back. I'm trying to think. I think he was in his early '80s when he passed away. But he was sickly, he had a bad heart. [58:13]

DF: What did he do around the house? Did he read?

GMK: Oh yes, he read.

DF: What kind of stuff?

GMK: He got the Jewish paper. And he could read the American paper, the English paper, too. And then he would take them around the property. And he'd be like Pacy, he'd give them a gallon of paint. And he would order the lumber if anything had to be... You know, it was a whole other business. But it was run out of the house. [58:44]

DF: Do you know how the family got into the real estate business?

GMK: My grandmother bought property.

DF: So it was your grandmother, really, who spearheaded it.

GMK: My grandmother was the one that really bought the property. She was the risk-taker, much more so than my grandfather. [58:58]

DF: Tell me more about it.

GMK: She made that rug up here. See that?

DF: Uh-huh.

GMK: That was interesting. Remember the burlap? You wouldn't remember the burlap that they carried chickens in. Burlap bags.

MK: No.

GMK: That's the base of it. And she'd go to the neighbors, and they used to have silk bloomers. She'd take all the old bloomers and dye them, and she designed that herself and made it. [59:29]

DF: So that's a hooked rug, right?

GMK: It is a hooked rug.

DF: And she designed the floral image herself?

GMK: Yeah, she was very talented, very artistic. She sewed, she did everything.

DF: Did she make a lot of rugs?

GMK: She made two.

DF: Just two.

GMK: She made two. Bibby has one and they don't know where it is, and I have the other one.

[59:54]

DF: So she did art for fun.

GMK: Well, I would watch her do that at night. That's why I got the rug.

GK: But she was a good cook, Mom?

GMK: Well, she was a Jewish cook. She used to make challah every Friday.

GK: She did a lot with her hands.

GMK: Judy Brody's grandfather...

DF: Julius.

GMK: Yeah, was my grandmother's father, Tati.

DF: Judy Brody's...

GMK: The triple 'L'. Lewis Lester's father...

DF: Lewis Lester's father...

GMK: And my grandmother were half sister and brother.

DF: Right, okay, so Julius was Sarah's...

GMK: Julius was Sarah's father.

DF: Sarah's father. Okay.

GMK: I remember him. [1:00:50]

DF: Tell me more about him. I haven't heard anything about him yet.

GMK: He was a little old man. I always thought he was mean. He was jealous of my grandmother.

DF: Why?

GMK: I don't know. He left her a dollar in his will. He left her a dollar in his will. He used to go the *shochet*, bring the chickens, and he'd stop in the house to see my grandmother. But she was very good to him. I remember going down one night, she went down to cut his toenails. I remember, I can just hear the... [1:01:30]

DF: So did Julius also live on Ticonic?

GMK: No, he lived on Chaplin Street. At the end of Ticonic. You know where that is? You know where the old canoe shop is? The end of Ticonic Street. [Discussion about location]. So my Uncle Lewis lived there with Tati and his second wife, Raizel.

MK: So that would have been your grandfather...

GMK: That was my great-grandfather. I called him Tati. [1:02:13]

DF: So you said Tati was jealous of Sarah.

GMK: He was jealous of my grandmother. He really was. I don't know why. Because she had acquired money and he hadn't at that point. Lewis Lester was the one that brought money into that family. Great lawyer. [1:02:37]

DF: Did Lewis have siblings? Or was he the only child of Tati?

GMK: Eva Loenberg [spelling?]. That was Uncle Lewie's sister. And then they had a step-sister, Annie Poorvu [spelling?].

GK: Oh, from the second wife.

DF: Oh, so Tati's second wife...

GMK: Came with a daughter.

DF: Annie Poorvu. I've seen that name around.

GMK: Very important people in Brookline. She used to come to the house, and she'd pick up the cup to look underneath to see where it was made. In those days if it was Japanese it was no good. [1:03:26]

DF: So Annie and Raizel moved up from Brookline when they married Tati.

GMK: I don't know. Annie must have lived in Waterville. Then she married in Boston.

DF: Annie married in Boston.

GMK: And so did Aunt Eva.

DF: And so did Aunt Eva. And Eva and Lewis are full siblings.

GMK: Full brother and sister, yeah. [1:03:53]

DF: Tell me about Eva.

GMK: I don't know, she married a very nice man. She had wonderful children, three great children. Burt Loenberg was a big lawyer. And Alvin. And then they had a daughter, who was Aunt Evelyn's age, Edna. She was a very nice woman. Very much like Lewis Lester. Big bad temper. The two of them had a bad temper. [1:04:29]

DF: Tell me more about Lewis. He was in Waterville as you were growing up.

GMK: Oh yeah. I liked him. He was a very good lawyer. He also wanted to buy property like my grandmother but he wanted it on a higher level, which he did. But then she was smart, before she died she sold it all. [1:04:57]

DF: Who?

GMK: That's Judy's mother.

DF: Judy's mother sold all the property.

GMK: Yeah. She said she wasn't gonna be a landlady. She was a wonderful lady.

DF: Tell me about her.

GMK: I don't... Just that she was a wonderful mother, great, great mother. She had wonderful children. Have you ever met the boys?

DF: I haven't. I've spoken with some of them, but I haven't met them.

GMK: Julius and Robert, Freddie. You'd go to visit him at night, he'd say, "Would you like to see my green pastures?" He'd take a flashlight and go to every bedroom and show you his children. Loved his kids. Judy's the oldest, then Julius. [1:05:42]

DF: And then Ida if I'm not mistaken.

GMK: Ida Joyce, I don't know, was she working? She used to work in the library in Augusta.

DF: Yep.

GMK: I think she's third in line.

GK: Right.

GMK: Yeah. [1:06:00]

DF: So we were talking before about Sarah.

GMK: Sarah?

DF: Yeah, your grandmother. Tell me more about her. You said she was a risk-taker in buying real estate. How did she manage the real estate?

GMK: How did she manage it? She kept the books in Yiddish, that's all I know. We had to call Motke to translate it. But she just knew. She was very good to the neighbors. It was during Depression. And she would bring them food. They couldn't even pay the rent, but she would bring them food. But they all paid after. I was in the '30s, I remember. I was only nine when she died. But I knew her better than my mother. [1:06:45]

DF: Why?

GMK: Well, my mother was always working, and she would go on buying trips, and my grandma and grandpa took care of me.

DF: So your mother went on buying trips down to Boston?

GMK: For the store, yeah, Boston and New York. Before she got a resident buyer. [1:07:01]

DF: So how often would she go down?

GMK: As often as she needed.

DF: What's that, every month, every few months?

GMK: Every couple of months she would go, yeah. [1:07:12]

DF: And so she would stay with Aunt Anne or her sisters Anne and Betty?

GMK: She would stay with her sisters.

DF: And so she bought the men's clothing as well, or just women's?

GMK: No, just women's. She closed the women's when my grandmother died. No, she didn't buy men's at all.

DF: It sounds like Sarah really enjoyed doing the real estate work.

GMK: Yeah.

DF: Did your mother also enjoy that?

GMK: I think my mother enjoyed it because she had to, but I think she would have liked to have remarried and gone to Boston. [1:07:48]

DF: Why didn't she?

GMK: She couldn't, she was a victim of circumstances. Her mother died, and she had everybody to take care of.

DF: So your mother became sort of the matriarch of the entire clan.

GMK: Absolutely. She had brothers and sisters and children and a father to take care of. She inherited it. [1:08:11]

GK: Now, Mom, did Sarah buy the lake property?

GMK: I don't know, I think my grandpa did. I think he paid very little for it, there were three things.

GK Okay. I thought maybe it was Sarah before she died.

GMK: I can only remember going there as a little girl, so I don't know. I must have been four, 'cause I was four when we moved there.

DF: So they already had the lake.

GMK: It seems to me that they did, but I'm not sure, I can't say. I really don't know. I think they probably did. I think a man by the name of Mr. Winchester...

MK: Sold it?

GMK: He sold it to my grandpa. Practically for nothing.

MK: I bet. I bet that was like a thousand bucks or something.

DF: And so it was your grandfather who split the property into three and then rented out the other two?

GMK: Yeah. We kept the big one, rented the other two out. Same people all the time. [1:09:21]

DF: For how many years? You said all the time. The Epsteins and Ginzbergs started coming when?

GMK: Every summer.

DF: Every summer for as long as you can remember. The Epsteins and the Ginsburgs.

GMK: Then we sold it I think once I got married. They sold the big one to Doctor Tarkash, and the middle one they ripped down.

DF: So which is the camp that still survives then?

MK: The big one.

GK: Snow Pond. The big one.

DF: The big one. So you just said they sold the big one.

MK: The bigger of the three. And that's the one that's on the left, right?

GMK: Yeah, that was the one that the Ginzbergs took.

MK: So they sold part of their property.

GMK: I don't know what happened when the middle cottage...

MK: And they ripped that down. That's where the ramp to the water is.

[discussion of location of cottages]

DF: Got it. So the family kept the biggest of the three, knocked down the smallest of the three and sold the middle one which was on the side. Okay.

MK: Yeah.

DF: And so that was the one that the Ginzbergs used to rent, that one got sold...

GMK: They bought land down the road a piece, actually down the lake a piece, and built their own.

DF: Oh, so the Ginzbergs...

GMK: Yeah, it's a matter of fact. It was Sophie, who did she marry? She married a professor at MIT, Sophie...

DF: Sophie, who was the Ginzbergs' daughter?

GMK: Yeah. I'm just trying to think of what her last name was. He's president of Bloomingdale's now. Michael...I can't remember the last name. Michael...Well, it's not important really. [1:11:37]

DF: Are there other favorite stories that you remember from growing up in Waterville, or perhaps favorite stories that you've heard a million times that I should make sure to get recorded?

GMK: You know, I never think of them as famous stories...

DF: Favorites.

GMK: Favorites? Just, you know, growing up, everything was my favorite. I just enjoyed every minute of being in Waterville.

DF: Never felt too small or stifling for you.

GMK: No. No, not really. 'Cause by that time I went to Boston. When I came back, it was like, you know, a vacation. And I was treated different. [1:12:16]

GK: Now, Mom, you know what I've never heard. What'd you do for the holidays?

GMK: Everything was at the big house...

GK: Like did you do Hanukkah?

GMK: No, they didn't come for Hanukkah. We were very busy in the store. But they came for Pesah. They all came from New York and from Boston. They all stayed at the big house. Don't ask me, must have slept ten in a bed. [1:12:42]

DF: So how did you get food for Passover? They brought it up from New York and Boston?

GMK: They came for Pesah.

DF: Right, but where'd you get matzah?

GMK: Portland.

DF: Portland.

GMK: Oh, well, I'll tell you something very cute. There was a little lady, Mrs. Mince, and she had a go-cart. And she would go to the railroad station every morning. From Portland they would send rye bread, and she would sell the rye bread to all the Jewish people. We didn't have any Jewish food. When grandpa went on buying trips, he'd bring home strings of bagels, bagels on strings. They were all so good. Bring home white fish and lox. You couldn't get that at all. [1:13:26]

DF: So the rye bread came in on the train on a daily basis from Portland, and bagels and white fish and lox came in when...

GMK: No, my grandpa...

DF: Right, when your grandpa...

GMK: My Uncle Eddie would send...Abe Kaplan owned the Greyhound bus line, so when it would come to Waterville he'd ship a package, and then he'd drop it off at the store. We'd get nova and white fish and stuff like that. [1:13:56]

GK: From Brookline. [Discussion and laughter.] When I was growing up, it got a little better, because we'd go to Sunday school and I'd get a bagel on every Sunday. You know, because that was such a big deal. So, Mom, who would do the cooking at Pesah?

GMK: My mother and Aunt Betty. Aunt Betty was a wonderful cook. Aunt Anne did nothing. She never did anything. She always had help.

GK: Would she bring stuff from New York?

GMK: She brought herself. [1:14:37]

DF: So all the food came from Brookline, and Betty cooked it and your mother cooked it...

GMK: Well, no, the meat and chicken came from Waterville.

DF: Meat and chicken came from Waterville.

GMK: Yeah.

DF: So is that Reverend Hains who was the *shochet*?

GMK: Yeah.

DF: Tell me about him. [1:14:54]

GMK: Rabbi Hains? I knew his son Benny, who was my brother's best friend. Rabbi Hains, he was a rabbi and he killed the chickens, and I never could stand it 'cause I remember there was blood on the apron. I didn't like it.

DF: So did you interact much with Rabbi Hains outside of the butcher context, like did you go to Hebrew school growing up?

GMK: I never had much to do with the rabbi, no. [1:15:24]

DF: Did your brother have Hebrew school with him?

GMK: My brother went to school with Benny.

DF: No, did your brother have Hebrew school to train for his Bar Mitzvah?

GMK: I guess he did. I never went, we didn't have Hebrew school.

DF: You didn't have it.

GMK: My brother did. Yeah, because I remember his Bar Mitzvah. He was so short he had to stand on a box. And he grew to be six feet tall. And Harold Wolfe was Bar Mitzvaged in Waterville too. [1:15:51]

DF: Who's Harold Wolfe?

GMK: My Aunt Anne's son.

DF: Oh, so they came up to Waterville for the Bar Mitzvah.

GMK: Yeah, they sent him to Waterville to go to Coburn Classical. My mother brought him up practically. And then he went to Colby.

DF: So Harold Wolfe was also living in the big house.

GMK: Yeah, he was there for a while too.

DF: So is he older than you or younger than you?

GMK: Older.

DF: He's older than you.

GMK: He's Bibby's age.

DF: Oh, wow. So Harold and Bibby were the older kids, and they were both going to Coburn.

GMK: Bibby was an aunt before she was born.

DF: Right. So she was Harold's aunt.

GMK: In fact, when he went to Harvard, she went over, she said, "I want to see Harold Wolfe. He's my nephew." They said, "Oh, yeah." 'Cause she was at Lesley and he was at Harvard Law. So they were across from one another. [1:16:49]

DF: So Harold came to Coburn Classical for high school, went to Colby and then went to Harvard...

GMK: No, he went to Coburn Classical for a year because he was too young to go to college. Then he went to William and Mary, and he flunked out. And then they got him into Colby and he graduated Colby. And then he went to Harvard Law. [1:17:09]

DF: Interesting. And Bibby went to...

GMK: To Colby for two years and then went to Lesley.

DF: Why did she switch?

GMK: She was a special student [laughter].

DF: How so?

GMK: Well, she couldn't go any further.

DF: But she went on to Lesley.

GMK: She went on to Lesley. She became a kindergarten teacher. That's all it was for in those days. It was called Miss Lesley. [1:17:35]

DF: Oh, right, it was an education school.

GMK: Their daughter just graduated from Lesley. [Side discussion.] Now it's a university.

DF: Yes, that school has definitely evolved over the years. So what other favorite stories do you have from growing up?

GMK: Well, I think I've given you so many, I could go on and on. Everything was a favorite. Everything that I could think of was a favorite. It was just wonderful growing up in a small town. Everybody knew you, you knew everybody. But you had to be very careful. Are you growing a beard? [1:18:17]

MK: No [laughter].

GK: Now, Mom, on the streets of Waterville, since there was so much going on at Levine's, were there other Jewish stores?

MK: Yeah, there was another, there was a competition.

GMK: Yeah, there was another Jewish store, Sterns, and that was a big competitor. My grandpa used to say to me on Saturday night, "Go see what the *boyach*'s doing." He had a big belly. So I would walk by like comparison shopping, see if he was busier than us. [1:18:52]

DF: What did your grandfather call him?

GMK: The *boyach*.

DF: *Boyach*.

GMK: Yeah, the stomach.

DF: Oh.

GMK: And then there was a gentile store, Dunham's. But we never competed with them. Sterns was our competitor. [1:19:04]

DF: Why?

GMK: Well, Dunham's was a different type of a store. It wasn't a department store. It was more or less, what would you call it?

MK: Specialty. Today they'd call it a specialty store.

GMK: Specialty, yeah.

DF: So Dunham's was a specialty store, and I guess at that time, while your mother was running the women's department...

GMK: Ours was a department store.

DF: Yours was a full department store and so was Sterns. [Phone rings; MK eventually picks it up.]

GMK: And so was Sterns. Sterns was a department store. [1:19:33]

GK: Sterns had women's and men's clothes, too?

GMK: Yeah. Then they went into domestic things too.

GK: Like furniture.

GMK: I don't know what that is.

GK: Was there a grocery store downtown?

GMK: Oh yeah, they had an AMP, a First National, yeah.

DF: What other stores were owned by Jews? [1:19:53]

GMK: Two shoe stores, the Hillsons. Two brothers each had a shoe store, Ike and Sam. Oh yeah, and the Shiros had a very high-class grocery store. They lived in Winslow.

DF: Okay, they lived in Winslow but the grocery store was in Waterville?

GMK: Yeah. Expensive stuff. Other Jewish stores I'm trying to think of.

DF: Did the Weins have a store?

GMK: The Weins, Sam Wein.

DF: Same Wein. What kind of store was that?

GMK: Very small specialty shop, ladies'.

DF: Ladies' clothing?

GMK: Yeah. Not a big store. I forgot about him. [Side exchange.] [1:20:42]

DF: One of the Colby students from Boston who we interviewed remembered going to the Wein store, because she kept kosher, eating all her meals at the back of the store, that Mrs. Wein would make food for her on a daily basis...

GMK: Mary Wein.

DF: Mary Wein, yeah.

GMK: That's right, I forgot about them. They just had specialty things. I think that was the only Jewish, the Hillsons, the Weins, the Sterns and the Levines. And the Shiros. [1:21:23]

DF: What about the Jacobsons?

GMK: Well, they didn't have a store. Henry Jacobson had like a bottling plant. That was Lester Jolovitz's uncle.

DF: Uncle, right. And Lester Jolovitz's father had a grocery store in Winslow.

GMK: Yeah.

DF: I guess the Wolmans were still in the junk business at the time.

GMK: Oh, there was another Jewish one, the Wolmans. We called him Orchuck [spelling?] Wolman. He had like a newspaper stand on the corner. Arthur Wolman, did you get him?

DF: No, so Arthur Wolman had a newspaper stand.

GMK: Well, he had like a cigars, cigarettes and newspapers and things. He was on the corner of Main Street and near the City Hall. We called him by his Jewish name, Orchuck Wolman.

[1:22:12]

DF: Orchuck, okay.

GMK: That was another Jewish man. And his son, he had a Ben Wolman. As a matter of fact, Bibby and Harold bought Ben Wolman's house on Silver Street.

DF: Oh, so what did Ben do?

GMK: Ben Wolman was a dentist. His brother ran the store, and the two women lived in New York, the two sisters. There was a nucleus of Jewish...

GK: Well, that's what I was gonna ask again. So then during the high holidays, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, everybody would be at temple? [1:22:47]

GMK: Oh yeah. Upstairs the women, downstairs the men.

DF: Do you have any memories from the synagogue?

GMK: Yeah, my memory is that I would sit downstairs with my grandpa.

GK: And he would let you go downstairs.

GMK: They would let me. We were always worried about him. So I would sit down there with him.

DF: So even all the way through high school.

GMK: Yeah. Yeah, all the way. And in those days we didn't have phone, and my grandpa wasn't feeling well I'd go into one of the assistant deans to use the phone to see how he was feeling. He always brought up that he was sick. And he was. [1:23:33]

DF: Did he also have stomach issues like some of the...

GMK: No, he had a bad heart.

GK: Now, Mom, do you ever remember, even when you were younger—I mean, you were only nine, so it would've been younger than that—that grandma Sarah, was she ever able to go to temple, or was she always home? [1:23:50]

GMK: Well, my grandma was very well. She was good until she got that appendectomy.

GK: Yeah, but was she able to go to temple, or was she always cooking?

GMK: Oh no, she went to temple. And every Saturday she'd go down to the store. [Side discussion about someone at the door.]

GK: But anyway, she would go to the store?

GMK: My grandmother would go to the store, every Saturday she'd get dressed, and she was very fussy, she had silk shoelaces. I used to watch her put powder on, and then she'd bring me to... There was a Jewish person who lived in the corner, I forgot, Sarah Baron. Did they tell you about Sarah Baron? [1:24:45]

DF: I've heard the name. Tell me more about her.

GMK: Yeah, and they would take me to Sarah Baron's, or else I'd go with the maid to her place on a farm.

GK: So that grandma Sarah could go to the store.

GMK: Grandma would go to the store every Saturday afternoon, 'cause those days we were open till nine o'clock at night on Saturday.

DF: So Saturday morning, did Sarah go to the synagogue, did she go straight to the store?

GMK: No, she didn't go to synagogue.

DF: Didn't go to synagogue.

GMK: No, there weren't too many religious Jewish ladies. Except Motke's wife.

DF: Did Motke have a job, or was he just the *shammass* to the synagogue?

GMK: No, he sold rags. He didn't have a car, he had a wagon. [1:25:40]

DF: And so when your mother and grandmother were both at the store, you got dropped off at Sarah Baron's.

GMK: I was dropped off at Sarah Baron's, or else we had a maid that lived on a farm. And she'd take me there, and I'd stay overnight. Then they'd come and get me in the morning.

DF: So tell me about the maid.

GMK: We had several of them.

DF: Several of them, okay. So the store kept the same staff all the time, but the maids in the house changed.

GMK: Changed. The upstairs maid changed, downstairs we had Mabee Brier. She had her for many years, and she was a cook. Then my mother loved her, because she hated to cook. Mabel made everything. [1:26:22]

DF: So there were two maids in the house.

GMK: Well, we were a lot of people in that house. We needed two maids. They didn't have dishwashers then. We all had a job. I had to sweep the floor in the kitchen. Bibby always had to go do the bathroom [laughter].

GK: And the laundry, Mom, were there sheets that were being ironed?

GMK: Oh sure, they had a mangle in those days. And Mabel every Monday afternoon would iron 22 shirts.

GK: Yeah, can you imagine? Retail—they wore shirt and tie and suit every day. Who cleaned the suits? Uncle Ludy and Uncle Pacy wore a suit every day.

GMK: Well, they brought them to the cleaner's.

GK: There was a cleaner's.

GMK: Sure, they brought them to the cleaner's. Twenty-two shirts, my grandpa, Pacy, Ludy and my brother. I don't know how they did it. [1:27:33]

DF: That was a job, that's for sure.

GMK: Well, it was different times.

DF: Tell me more about the Barons.

GMK: She had a grocery store. Her husband died and left her with four children. Harry was the first one, killed in the war, in the Second World War. And she ran a grocery store—poor thing,

she had a hard time—my grandpa gave her credit for I don't know how many years. She had one daughter that was a teacher at Waterville High, Edith Baron. Teresa. She had four children.

[1:28:15]

DF: And what do you remember of them from spending Saturday afternoons with them?

GMK: Oh, she was a wonderful cook and a very good-natured lady. And then you'd sit in the store and she'd cut from a big round of cheese, with crackers you'd sit and eat. And then she had penny candy, I loved that penny candy. I'd go with my finger, you know... And I'd send Skipper to get cigarettes. I had a dog who'd fetch cigarettes for me. I'd call Baron's and say, "Give her a package of Old Golds. Skipper, go get them..." He'd carry the bag and bring it home. [1:28:52]

DF: So was this grocery store at the corner of Ticonic?

GMK: That's where my grandma and grandpa first started.

DF: The first Levine's store was on Ticonic Street?

GMK: That's right.

DF: I didn't know that.

GMK: The downstairs was a store. My grandmother ran the store and my grandpa peddled. And they lived upstairs. And then they bought an orchard next door and built the big house. [1:29:18]

DF: So the original Levine's store was...

GMK: On the corner of Ticonic and Maple.

DF: And then when did it move to Main Street?

GMK: Oh God, I don't know when they moved to Main Street.

DF: Before you were born or after?

GMK: Oh yeah, before I was born. They went to Silver Street before Main Street. It must have been... I don't know, I can't say. I don't know. [1:29:43]

DF: And so the Barons had a grocery store also on...

GMK: When my grandmother ran the retail store.

DF: So your grandmother sold the original store to the Barons.

GMK: No, she didn't sell it.

DF: Oh, 'cause she's in real estate. She rents it to the Barons.

GK: And that's what you meant, your grandfather gave the Barons a lot of credit.

GMK: Yeah, they rented the store. [1:30:10]

DF: Got it.

GMK: It was a lot, a lot to do. But they did it, the hard work came natural to them.

MK: Yeah, that's what you did.

GMK: Like with you, Mikey.

MK: Yeah, that's what you do.

GMK: So what's all this gonna do? [1:30:28]

DF: Well, all this is helping us to get a better understanding of what life was like in Waterville. And we're really trying to put a lot of pieces together and tell the story of Jewish life in Waterville.

GMK: So you're interviewing several families?

[Discussion of project and who's been interviewed]

GMK: I always used to ask my grandpa why wouldn't move. "Why can't we move to Silver Street?" "Because this is where we belong." He brought everybody there. My grandpa was the first one. You know, the big house was an orchard. They used to have apple trees.

MK: We used to have two trees left in the backyard. [1:33:35]

GMK: We had apple trees, pear tree, plum tree.

DF: So even when you were living in the house there were trees around.

GMK: Oh sure.

DF: And did they take down the trees to put up more rental apartments?

GMK: No, no, we never built anything.

DF: Never built anything, okay.

GMK: No, it's all lawn.

DF: So the big house was built on part of the orchard. [1:34:04]

GMK: Yeah.

DF: Got it.

GMK: You know what grandma paid to build that big house? Five thousand dollars.

DF: Five thousand dollars. And this is in the 1920s.

GMK: Bibby was born in the big house, so it was 95 years old. They've done certain things to it, but I haven't been in since they sold it. I couldn't possibly go in there. [1:34:31]

DF: When did they sell it?

GMK: Well, let's see. You've just got your last check.

MK: Gotta be, ten years. Eight years.

DF: So they sold it after Ludy and Pacy both died, but before Howard died.

MK: Right. And it was one family.

GMK: It was Arthur. He used to work for them. He was a builder and stuff. So he took the big house and all the property. So you got your last check.

MK: Yup.

GMK: That's the end. That's the end of Levine Realty. [1:35:08]

DF: And so why did you want to move to Silver Street?

GMK: Oh, 'cause that's where everybody lived, my friends all lived down there. None of my gentile friends lived in the ghetto.

DF: So it still felt like a ghetto when you were growing up.

GMK: No, I didn't feel it was the ghetto, but I just didn't feel that it was the right kind of neighborhood. I wanted to be a little fancier. My grandpa was not like that. In fact, when you'd take the big car, he'd say, "Don't go down Maple Street." I'd say, "They know you have it." "But I don't have to flaunt it." We always had a small car and a big car. I said, "They know you have it." He'd say, "That's okay." He was very laid back. [1:35:48]

DF: So which street would you take instead?

GMK: Turn around and go the other way.

DF: Go the other way and come out on Kelsey?

GMK: Yeah, come out on College Avenue.

DF: Oh, okay. So go down to College Avenue and take it that way to get to Main Street, rather than...

GMK: You could go that way, you could go to Front Street. It wasn't one way then. He didn't like to flaunt it. [1:36:15]

MK: My father did the same, yeah.

GK: Now, Mom, they came to Waterville. Do you know why? Why did everybody come to Waterville?

GMK: Well, yeah. I'll tell you why. Because when my grandma and grandpa in Boston, they moved to Dexter, Maine, of all places. And my grandmother didn't like Dexter, Maine, at all. It was nothing, so they decided to move to Waterville. [1:36:41]

GK: To the city. And they went to Dexter, Maine, because he was peddling?

GMK: He was peddling, and I guess that's where he sold a lot of his stuff. But from Europe my grandmother lived in a bigger place. In Vilna gubernya. I don't know, it's on the border of Poland.

MK: Poland and Lithuania.

GMK: Yeah, Poland and Lithuania.

DF: Sarah and William both came from the same small town, right?

GMK: Yeah. They were distant cousins. I don't know how distant. I know they were cousins. I like to say distant. [1:37:17]

DF: And was William already peddling in Maine when he married Sarah, or did he start that afterwards?

GMK: Oh yeah. Yeah, it's a cute story. My grandma came from Europe to Boston. She worked for Jewish people called the Silversteins. And when she became engaged to this guy, not grandpa, they were giving her a party. And she's waiting and waiting for William to come, and he didn't show. "Wait, I want to go get William and I'll be right back." She went to get grandpa, and she said, "Where are you, Will?" He said, "I'm not going." "Why aren't you coming?" "Cause I don't want you to marry him." "Why?" "Because I want to marry you." She said, "Okay." So they never went back. And that happened to my Aunt Anne and to my Aunt Betty. They were engaged to other guys and they met these and broke their engagement, married. Isn't that something? [1:38:14]

DF: So what was William doing at the time in Boston?

GMK: Peddling.

DF: Peddling. And he was peddling all the way up to Maine?

GMK: That was his route. Boston to Maine.

DF: Boston to Maine. So how far in Maine did he go?

GMK: I think he went all the way up to Bangor. At least Bangor. He'd be gone for days. He had a horse. My Aunt Anne used to kiss the horse to thank him for bringing grandpa home. And that's when they lived on the corner of Ticonic. [1:38:50]

DF: And so after William and Sarah got married, they decided to move to Dexter, Maine.

GMK: They moved to Dexter, and from Dexter they moved to Waterville.

DF: And what was Sarah doing at the time?

GMK: Just being a mother. When she moved to Waterville, she ran a retail store downstairs of where she lived. [1:39:14]

DF: So she had a retail store in Waterville, but in Dexter she was just raising Anne.

GMK: Yeah, she was just a plain wife.

DF: And so Anne was born in Boston or in Dexter?

GMK: I can't tell you. I really can't. Probably in Waterville.

DF: In Waterville, all right, so Dexter was pretty short.

GK: And Teddy, Mom, was born first, right? He was the oldest.

GMK: Yeah, Teddy was the oldest.

GK: And he died when?

DF: Was Teddy older than Anne?

GMK: No, I think Aunt Anne was the oldest.

GK: Okay, and then Teddy. Okay, 'cause I was wondering if that's why she went into the retail business.

GMK: No, I think Aunt Anne was the oldest, and then Teddy.

GK: And he died, how old was he?

GMK: I think he was early 30s. Very young. Could even have been younger. [1:40:12]

GK: But never married.

GMK: No, never married. None of the boys ever married. [Side discussion.] You can go on and on and on.

GK: Yeah, it's good.

DF: Well, thank you so much for sharing all of these stories.

GMK: I used to look forward to the holidays. Then on Thanksgiving my grandma and grandpa used to send all the girls turkeys and geese, and in the cellar they'd take the things off—what do you call them? The feathers.

MK: Yup.

GMK: I used to watch them do that.

MK: After they were slaughtered, yeah. Pluck them.

GMK: Yeah.

DF: So they would take the turkeys and geese to Rabbi Hains...

GMK: Yeah.

DF: Bring them back to the house, feather them, and then send them down to New York and Brookline?

GMK: Send them to New York and Boston. For the holidays. And that was when my grandmother was alive. After she died, my grandpa didn't do it. My mother wasn't gonna flick chickens. [1:41:16]

MK: Yeah, she didn't like that.

DF: So you looked forward to the holidays.

GMK: Well, because all my cousins would come. It was fun.

DF: So they came for Passover.

GMK: Usually for Passover. That was the big one. They didn't come for the high holidays. It wasn't long enough. It was a trip, they'd have to take the train from New York. [1:41:38]

DF: How long did that take?

GMK: Oh, well, it used to take almost five hours to go to Boston. It was a long trip, almost ten hours, I would say. I used to take the train to New York. It was a long trip. All day. I also had a cousin that used to sell sandwiches on the train. Did they tell you about Nathan Levine?

[1:42:04]

DF: No.

GMK: I never knew him that well, but he used to sell...He went to Colby for a while but he never graduated. Did they tell you about Mike Levine, Mike and Frieda Libby? [1:42:17]

DF: No.

GMK: That was my grandfather's sister, Frieda Libby.

DF: Okay, so William's sister is Frieda and her son is Mike.

GMK: No, her husband is Mike.

DF: Her husband was Mike. Okay, so what did Mike and Frieda do?

GMK: She never had any children. And then my grandpa had a brother, too, Kalman.

DF: I've heard that name. Okay, so were Kalman and Mike also in Waterville? [1:42:29]

GMK: He lived on a farm. He was a farmer.

DF: Which, Mike or Kalman?

GMK: Kalman.

DF: Kalman.

GMK: Mike, too. No, Mike was a farmer, but he didn't live on a farm. My grandfather had a brother and a sister there. Frieda Libby was a sister of my grandpa's, and Kalman was a brother. And he had a lot of sons.

DF: Which, Kalman?

GMK: Calman. He had Merton, Abey, Harold, Fivey, Sammy. [1:43:22]

DF: Okay, so this is the branch of the Levine family that had a farm on the Sidney Road.

GMK: That's right. So you know about them. That was my grandpa's brother.

DF: Okay. I know about them, but I don't know anything about them. So did you see them often?

GMK: Well, he lost his wife.

GK: Kalman?

GMK: Kalman. He didn't really lose her. She became ill and she had to be institutionalized. Then he remarried. And then they had three girls and another son. He had about ten children.

DF: And they were all farmers?

GMK: No, Ralphie, the second marriage, Ralphie was a veterinarian. And the girls were, you know, I don't know, Pat and, I'm trying to think, Shannon and Zeita [spelling?]. Thee boys, I think only one was a farmer, Merton. [1:44:18]

DF: Merton, okay. But were they doing vegetables and crops, were they doing cattle?

GMK: Cattle.

DF: Cattle farming.

GMK: As a matter of fact, Merton married a girl that used to work for my grandmother. He met her. My cousin Irene.

GK: That's the one.

MK: That farm must be gone now, I bet. That must be broken up.

DF: If I'm not mistaken, part of that farm is now the campus of Thomas College. I think that was the story I was told. So Kalman came up because his brother William was already around and he decided to go into the cattle business. [1:45:03]

GMK: He was always a farmer, I guess. When my grandpa came over, he sold coal in New York City. He didn't like it, it was dirty.

GK: And then he went into selling rags.

DF: So your grandpa William came over through New York, sold coal originally.

GMK: He walked from New York to Boston.

DF: He walked.

GMK: Yeah.

DF: Wow.

GMK: And then from Boston they went to Dexter, and Dexter to Waterville. [1:45:33]

DF: And Sarah, did she also come in through New York, or did she come in through Boston?

GMK: I don't know. All I can remember is my grandma worked for people by the name of Silverstein. My Uncle Ludy told me. 'Cause she was 62 when she died. She was very young. Very young. She was a beautiful lady. Very smart. She used to walk downtown on Saturday, and some professor from Colby stopped her and said, "Mrs. Levine, you have such wonderful children, what do you attribute it to?" She said, "I don't know." They were just all so wonderful. So that's the story of my family.

DF: Thank you for sharing it. I really appreciate it very much.

GMK: You're welcome. So this is gonna go into the archives?