RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ADALINE GLASSER BLOOM

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

KURT PIEHLER
and
BARBARA TOMLIN
and
LARA FLETCHER

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TRANSCRIPT BY

LARA FLETCHER

Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Ada Glasser Bloom on November 18, 1996 in Edison, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and …

Lara Fletcher: Lara Fletcher.

KP: We would like to begin by asking you some questions about your parents. Both immigrated, I believe, from …

Ada Bloom: From Latvia, which was then under the control of Czarist Russia. The town where my mother was born was Aahov. My father was born in Marienburg, about thirty-five miles from Aahov.

KP: And do you know why they came to the United States?

AB: Well, I think my father came, probably, to avoid being drafted. During his generation, during his lifetime, most of the young men who immigrated to this country from Russia and Poland, came for that reason. And I never really asked him about it, but I know that other members of the family came for that reason and I imagine he did, too. He was at the age where he'd either have been drafted or had to escape. He came to the United States seven years before my mother emigrated to the U.S. He was twenty-eight years old at the time. My mother arrived at the age of fifteen.

KP: So your parents met in the United States?

AB: Well, not really. My parents were second cousins, so their families knew one another. And when my father came to this country, he saw a picture of my mother. My mother was very beautiful and he fell in love with her. And he sent her this beautiful picture postcard which has lilies of the valley on it, no, violets. My sister, my one sister has that card. And he practically proposed to her in that, on that postcard. And, of course, at that time, among the orthodox, Jewish orthodox families, marriages were arranged. And I imagine her parents arranged her marriage for her, too. And when she came to this country, she had no say in the matter, I guess. And my father was considerably older than my mother. So, he wanted to make her look more Americanized, and he took her to New York to buy clothes. This was even before they were married. But the parents, apparently, my mother's parents consented to it. And my mother was all of eighteen when they were married.

KP: And your father was in his thirties?

AB: My father was thirteen years older, yes. He was thirty-one.

KP: Which for your mother, this must have all been very shocking.

AB: The whole, the whole experience was. In fact, I have a younger sister who passed away just about a year ago. And for a couple of years before she passed away, she worked on the family genealogy. I've worked on it at times, too, but she did a more thorough job and completed it.

And, she has described a lot of the experiences that she was able to, you know, learn from my mother before she passed away. And these are just some of the experiences that I've read in my sister's record.

KP: How did your mother adapt to America?

AB: I never heard that she didn't adapt well. I think they both adapted well. The interesting part about my mother's trip to America was that her father came here first. And he came here to see if he really wanted to settle [here] and bring his family. And he was so ill from the voyage, when he came, when he arrived, that he wasn't able to go back for his family to, you know, bring his family with him. So he wrote to his wife, my grandmother, and told her to liquidate the family business and whatever property they had, and just pack up and come. And that's what she did. There were nine children at the time. And my grandmother handled everything. And my mother had spoken, any number of times, about how they traveled. She said they sailed out of Liverpool, but they traveled by ox cart, practically all the way from Russia to Liverpool. And then they took the boat in Liverpool, and my mother had a very frightening experience on the boat. There were so many children that, I guess, they had several state rooms. But my mother was with her grandmother, my great grandmother, and my great grandmother had been ill during the trip. She was well when they landed, but she had been ill during the trip. So when the boat arrived, they quarantined my mother. And my mother, who was all of about fifteen at the time, I guess, fifteen or sixteen, and very unsophisticated, was a very frightened child because there, she was left. They landed in Philadelphia, which was quarantined for I don't know how many days, until they released her and saw that she was not the carrier of any illness. And they lived in Philadelphia for, I don't know how long, not too many years, I don't think. Then they moved to New Brunswick. And actually, the house that they moved to in New Brunswick, I can recall very well, because that's where my grandparents lived when I was growing up.

KP: So your grandparents also settled in New Brunswick?

AB: Oh, yes. My father's whole family and my mother's whole family all settled in New Brunswick. Now, what originally brought them to New Brunswick, I don't know. My father originally came to New Brunswick, though, whereas my mother went to Philadelphia. My father's original home, when he arrived, was in New Brunswick.

KP: And you never knew the original reason why they settled in New Brunswick?

AB: No, I don't know whether somebody was here, a very distant relative might have been here first and attracted them. I really don't know, because I don't know the sequence of their arrivals. They were all, all I know is that my father did arrive before my mother's family.

KP: And what did your two families do to make a living?

AB: You mean in this country?

KP: Yeah.

AB: My father, when he arrived, went into the feed business. You know, that was the horse and buggy days. And from what I could tell he, it was successful. And he had a feed store on Burnet Street. Oh, and I'm remembering something else now. My mother worked for him for a while before they were married. She was his bookkeeper, I think. And then my grandfather was always, my grandfather was a sheet metal expert.

Lewis Bloom[husband]: Coppersmith.

AB: Coppersmith, yes. A lot of his work in Europe was for the very elite. You know, they all had copper roofs and, didn't he work even for the, didn't he do some work for the czar?

LB: He …

AB: Lew sometimes knows more about my family.

LB: He was brought from Riga, by a brother of Count Zeppelin. Many of the German aristocracy had dual titles in imperial Russia and in Germany. They had estates, because the Teutonic knights had come through there and established themselves. So Graf von Zeppelin, the duke, he was in Germany, and the baron took over the family estates in the area and he needed a coppersmith in the village of Pothole which is near, it's further north, Estonia. And her grandfather moved there. And I know this, because I used to discuss this with her grandfather.

AB: When he came to this country, he continued doing something in the sheet metal trade.

KP: And your father, what had he done?

AB: I don't know what he had done in [Russia], I really don't. I don't know that anyone in my family ever knew.

KP: But he did very well in the feed business?

AB: He did very well in the feed business and then, I guess, when automobiles started to appear, it wasn't very profitable anymore, and then my father had a movie theater. First in Perth Amboy. The first one I remember, anyway. And then in Newark, and then the Depression came along and our family was very hard hit. And then my father opened a retail store in New Brunswick and that's what he was doing [at] the time that he passed away. My father, he was very young when he passed away. He was forty-nine. And my mother was all of thirty-six with six children. We were six kids.

KP: And six children in the midst of the Depression was quite a load.

AB: Oh, yeah, it was, we were really very hard hit. The family lost our house. I don't know how they managed, really.

KP: Was your mother working before the Depression?

AB: My mother never really worked until the Depression came along. When my father opened the store. And then, when my father passed away, my mother continued running the store for a while. But during the war, it became very difficult to get merchandise. So that's when she closed out the shop and worked in several stores in New Brunswick that don't exist anymore.

KP: So your mother kept the store going during the Depression?

AB: Yeah. She kept it, well, she and my father. My father died in 1934. That was probably still the midst of the Depression.

KP: So it was only in the '40s that she ended up having to close the store.

AB: That's right. She shut the store, I'd say about, 1942 or '43, about that time.

KP: But it must have been very difficult to have a store in the Depression.

AB: Oh, it was. It was very, very difficult. They probably, they just eeked out a living, really. My one brother was already in college, and that made it even tougher. He was at Rutgers. And then, when my father passed away, I guess, maybe they were just about beginning to get back on their feet. My brother was at Princeton, doing graduate work. He's the oldest.

KP: So he went to Rutgers and then Princeton?

AB: Princeton, yeah.

KP: You mentioned that you parents' marriage was, in some ways, arranged in the orthodox tradition. How observant was your family?

AB: They were quite observant. I wouldn't say that they were as observant as many of the orthodox people we now know, but they had kosher homes. That was really strictly observed. And I know they were very observant of the holidays, of all the holidays, not just the New Year. I don't think that they went to services every evening and every morning, the way a lot of the orthodox Jews, that I now know, do. I think that they went on Saturday, when it was convenient, you know.

KP: Was the store open on …

AB: No, no, they conducted their business on the weekend.

KP: Did they …

AB: Yeah, they did. Yeah, yeah, that's right.

KP: They kept the store open on Saturday, except for the highest of holy days.

AB: That's right. That's right. And my father, when he had his movie [theater], I know, kept that opened on Saturdays. And what happened, I guess, on the high holy days, somebody else just ran it for him, because I know he wouldn't have, you know, conducted that business at that time.

KP: The movie theater sounds so intriguing, because it was really the first generation that had movies.

AB: Yeah, it was. I have a lot of good recollections, I would say. The first movie [theater] was in Perth Amboy. And, at that time, there was no music, there was no soundtrack at all, so there was a pianist right at the base of the stage. And it was a big treat for me. I would often, he would let me sit with him. And also, they had a little booth at the front where they sold the tickets and there was a cashier, but sometimes, my father would have to fill in. And I would feel so important if I was allowed to sit there with him and just tear off the tickets, you know.

KP: How big was the theater?

AB: It certainly wasn't the size of the big theaters now. But it was bigger than the really small theaters. I really don't know.

KP: It sounds like it fit a few hundred people.

AB: Probably, maybe two hundred. And also, the projectionist, there were no automatic, projectors. The projectionist he actually turned it, turned the wheel, the crank. And, actually it was rather hazardous, because they didn't have a heat control or anything, to help the film cool off. And it was very, I can remember a couple of times when there were almost fires in the projection booth.

KP: Oh, especially if the film stops ...

AB: That's right. Sure, sure. There just weren't the precautions that they have now for it.

KP: What films did your father show? Do you remember any great classic of the silent screen?

AB: Well, I was so young at the time. I'm trying to, of course, there were, I couldn't remember titles. But I remember there was, you know, Mary Pickford, Rudolf Valentino, and all the oldies. I vividly recall "The Ten Commandments," and "Uncle John's Cabin," although I can't recall the names of any of the stars. And of course, these were plenty of Cowboy and Italian movies, "westerns."

KP: Why did your father leave the movie theater business?

AB: Well, the one in Perth Amboy was very, very profitable. That was probably the most

profitable time in my father's business life. And he had a lease, and because it was so profitable, the owner of the building wanted to turn it over to a family member. So my father lost the lease and there was nothing he could do. And he spent about six months looking around for other theaters. It was what he wanted to do, he was very successful at it. And he found this theater in Newark called "the Lyceum," on Springfield Avenue, which he watched for a number of weeks. It was always crowded, and it looked as if it was the place to buy, so he bought it. And it was a failure, because a lot of the people who were in there had been attracted, they didn't pay. The owner of the theater had just filled up the theater [in] whatever way he could. I don't know how long my father had it. A couple years, I guess, but he nearly lost everything there. And the Depression didn't help, either. And then for, I think, for a year or so, he just did nothing, until he found this other business to go into.

KP: Did he go into the retail store business alone?

AB: Yeah, just alone. I don't know how he had the experience, but he did the buying and everything.

KP: Where was the store located?

AB: 305 George Street, where one of the big office buildings is now.

LB: The big red building.

AB: Yeah, the big red building. There were a number of stores. In fact, that whole block …

KP: Yeah, I remember.

AB: That whole block was a lot of small stores.

KP: Yeah.

AB: Are you from town?

KP: No, but I've been at Rutgers for a long time.

AB: Oh.

KP: I started in the early '80s, so I remember what was there, the small stores that were there in the early '80s.

AB: Yeah.

KP: You grew up in Highland Park and New Brunswick.

AB: Right.

KP: Back then, the two towns were probably even closer together.

AB: They were.

KP: Do you remember when Highland Park was surrounded by fields?

AB: Oh, definitely. We lived on North Sixth Avenue, and I went to Hamilton School. And one side on the lower part of North Fifth Avenue did not exist. It was all woods. We used to walk to school through the woods. There was a path, and, in good weather, that's how we got to school. It wouldn't be safe for kids to do that now, I know, but we did it. It was much shorter that way. And this area where we're living was the dumps. Wasn't it?

LB: What?

AB: This area where we lived?

LB: The dumps ended, a little bit beyond Eighth Avenue, … but here was woods, because I used to hunt here.

AB: Woods and dump.

LB: Heavy woods.

KP: I get the sense that, particularly in Highland Park, that you didn't even have enough students to have a high school.

AB: They had a junior high school. I'm not sure how old Highland Park High is. It was there for me. Oh, yes, my brother went there, too. I guess the high school was built in the early thirties, probably. It was called Franklin Junior High School, and it went only to the ninth grade. And then the students went to New Brunswick High School. And I know my brother, my oldest brother, graduated from Franklin High. So I know it was there during his school days.

KP: But then you all went to New Brunswick for high school?

AB: Yes. But my family moved to New Brunswick when I was in the ninth grade, the middle of the ninth grade. So that, I did not really graduate Franklin Park High. I [left] in the middle of the year.

KP: But you should have graduated.

AB: I should have, but I spent one semester at Roosevelt High, which is now a middle school, I think, in New Brunswick. And I always consider myself more of a Highland Park school, high school graduate, than Roosevelt. I was very unhappy with that move.

KP: Why did your parents move from Highland Park to New Brunswick?

AB: Well, when we lost our house on North Sixth Avenue, we moved to North Tenth. And then, there was an apartment over our building. The building where my parents had the store, which became available and it made the living, made living expenses much lower. So they did it for economy reasons. We moved above the store.

KP: And how was that move, to go from having a yard and living in a house to …

AB: Well, I know that I was, I was very unhappy. I was very depressed. Plus, I was leaving all my friends that I had gone all through school with. And I knew that we'd be reunited in the tenth grade, because they would all be coming over in the tenth grade. But just to leave them even for that one term, you know, was pretty rough for me. I don't know how my other siblings handled it, but I know, I recall that I was very unhappy about it.

KP: How good was the education you received in Highland Park and in New Brunswick High School?

AB: I'd say it was excellent. For one thing, it was much more personal, [being that] the teachers knew your family. The teachers knew everybody's family. Our classes were larger, yet they seemed to have a close relationship with their students and their families. I guess, one reason for it was there weren't as many outside activities for anybody. So a lot of your activities centered around the school.

KP: So what activities did you take part in while growing up?

AB: Well, I was, Girl Scouts was very important to me. I was a Girl Scout. And we had lots of friends, of course. Coming from a family with six kids, we were never alone. We also, families were very close. I had a lot of first cousins who lived within three to four blocks, and we were constantly with one another. You know, we were the same ages. And some of their homes were our second and third homes. And ours was that to them, too. So, it was very different. We didn't have a lot of toys. My sister and I, my older sister and I, always shared everything. And my two older brothers shared. And each of the younger ones had their own. But there seemed to be a lot to do.

KP: What would you and your friends do for fun, especially in junior high and high school?

AB: Junior high and high school, junior high, I don't think I did too much, because I think my family was already, already had the pinch, you know, the financial pinch. I belonged to a, in high school, senior high, I belonged to a sorority. So that, thank goodness, those don't exist anymore in high school.. That was a large part of my life. In the lower grades, I guess, even junior high, at that time, the girls and boys played together more, I think, than they do now. And we played, you know, during our younger years, hide and seek, and I was a tomboy, I guess. I played baseball with them. We used to go to the, into the woods and have bonfires and toast marshmallows and even baked potatoes. I don't think kids would be allowed to do that now. We

had a lot more freedom to do those sort of things, than kids have now, I think. In the spring we would wonder in the woods picking wild flowers. We would also hike and picnic a lot.

KP: You mentioned that a high school sorority wasn't a good idea.

AB: Well, I enjoyed it, but now when I look back at those days, I think it was horrible. Because we actually used to blackball people. There were a couple of sororities, and we always considered, the one that I belonged to, as the most elite. It was awful. It was really a snobbish, very snobbish attitude and I know that girls were blackballed. Some people with whom I'm friendly with now were blackballed from that sorority.

KP: Why would you reject people?

AB: I don't know, I guess, maybe, we didn't like where they lived or something. I don't know.

KP: You don't remember?

AB: No, I don't remember. I know, in my family, it was almost a tradition to belong. I have older aunts who were members. You know, maybe three generations were members in the same sorority, so you'd never be blackballed if you came from one of those families.

Lara Fletcher: Was your older sister in it?

AB: Yes, and my younger sister.

KP: And this was a high school sorority?

AB: High school, right. It was a national sorority. Phi Delt, they had frequent meetings in Manhattan. And they used to have, we would have our own dance once a year. A formal. And there would always be a national dance in some city. It wasn't in the same place as that. Wasn't that awful? There were fraternities, also. Lew belonged to a fraternity. But I don't think that the fraternities were as snobbish. They might have been, I really don't know. But the fraternities did horrible, physical things. They actually paddled the boys during initiation. We never did anything like that.

KP: Was the sorority religiously segregated?

AB: It was Jewish.

KP: So you were all Jewish?

AB: Yes, we were all Jewish. Yeah, yeah. I don't know of any Christian sororities at the time. I don't know. In fact, I guess I can talk about [it] because I certainly don't hold it against these people now. When my family moved to North Sixth Avenue, I was about four years old, I guess, and Highland Park was very anti-Semitic.

KP: That's interesting, because now Highland Park is the quintessential Jewish community.

AB: Oh, well, it's unbelievable. We had a family living next door to us whose children were not allowed to play with us. And they would actually pass our house and spit and say terrible names. And the mother, it must have been the mother's influence, because she passed away during a scarlet fever epidemic, and a maiden aunt came to live with them. And one of the children was my contemporary, we were in school together and everything, and the aunt became very friendly with my mother, this anti-Semitic feeling just died. It was, it just didn't exist anymore. And some of my best friends at school were Christians and we were very friendly at school, but I was never invited to their parties. And I was never invited to their house after school, which was, I don't know if kids still do that, but at that time, that was the customary thing to do. And I really used to feel bad about it, but I never knew the reasons and, just about ten or fifteen years ago, I was chairing one of our college reunions, and most of the people on the committee are people who live in the area. And [there were] about half a dozen girls I went through school with from kindergarten through college. And the ones that are in the area, still function on these committee, and I had a luncheon here for the first meeting, and one of the people that I was very friendly with at school was here. And I mean, we don't have any ill feelings for one another at this time, at all. And a few days after the meeting, I got this beautiful letter from her, which I have upstairs, thanking me for, you know, for chairing and the lovely lunch and everything. And she said, "Now, I'd like to tell you something that you never knew. You were always one of my favorite people." And what she was telling me was that, you know, that if it were up to her we would have been much closer as children. I should mention that our family never encountered any anti semitism among the teachers in either school, elementary or Franklin High.

KP: So it sounds like it was due to her parents.

AB: Oh, it definitely it was. I mean, how could a young child know about these things unless they heard it at home? But it was that, that attitude existed amongst all those girls that I went to school with. And I know it doesn't exist anymore. But if I met any of them at our reunions, they were overly gracious, really, and so nice. So I know it was a parental thing.

KP: When did you think that broke down? Because you lived in the area and you raised kids in the area.

AB: Yeah. Well, I left the area, I was in the ninth grade, so I kind of left everything behind in Highland Park. In New Brunswick, I didn't run into that.

KP: You didn't sense that at all?

AB: Didn't sense that at all, no.

KP: So you would be invited to stay at your friend's houses in New Brunswick?

AB: I don't think I had as many …

KP: Christian friends?

AB: Christian friends. I really didn't. In fact, I kind of, I probably was a loner that first six months or so that I went to this other school, and then all my friends from Highland Park came to New Brunswick and I had a nucleus of Jewish friends that I was close with. At that point, I didn't miss the attention that I might have wanted from my Christian friends earlier, you know, in the earlier grades. And then, I left New Brunswick. I didn't encounter any of that at Douglass, at all, and these same girls were there. Because our relationships were different, you know, we didn't invite one another to houses the way kids did at that time. And then, we were away from this area until 1958. When we came back, I don't think my children encountered any of it.

KP: So by the late '50s …

AB: Yeah, by the late, I'm sure it didn't exist even before then. I think a lot of these feelings started to fade after the war, probably. I know I ran into it even when I, my first job, which was with Pathe News. I had no experience in the film library where I worked. The women were just wonderful. But I was walking to the station to work one day with one of the other, a male employee, I don't remember what he did, something on the technical end, and he said something, made some derogatory remark about Jews. And I said to him, "You know, I'm insulted. You've offended me. I'm Jewish." He said, "Oh, well, I don't mean you." You know, in a typical remark. "Some of my best friends are Jews." But that was the only time I ran into it during my career days, I guess.

KP: When you were going to school, what were your career goals? Did you have career goals?

AB: I'm not sure that I did. I really am not sure that I did. I know that when I, even when I applied to college and started going to Douglass. I don't think that, the first year or so, I had, I knew I wanted to major in economics but I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. But then, I guess, by the time I was in my junior year, I knew there was a great need for librarians. And that's when I decided, you know, to major in library science. And then, when I started library school, I didn't feel that I made a mistake, but I knew that I never wanted to be just a regular librarian. I wanted to specialize. I decided I wanted to be a business librarian. Something in one of these corporations or banks or what have you. And I really stuck to my goals there and I wouldn't accept any interviews for school libraries or public libraries. However, I did end up in a school library many years later, but I was ready for it then. But initially, I didn't want to have anything to do with that. I accepted interviews only towards these very specialized positions.

LF: Was education stressed in your home?

AB: Oh, yes. Very much so. Very, very, very much so.

LF: And you and your sisters all went to college at one point?

AB: Well, my older sister went to work when she got out of high school. She didn't want to go

to college. She went to work, and after she was married, she regretted that she hadn't gone to college, so she did start college, I'm trying to remember what year it would be. Probably in the '50s, when they, when Douglass first started accepting married women. They had a special program. And then she had to take a couple of years off. She was raising a family and then she went back and she did graduate, probably in about, I think I left her graduation date open. I meant to ask her about it. She lives in Florida now. I meant to ask her and I forgot. But in the, probably '59 or early '60, when she finally graduated. My younger sister, I can't understand why she gave up college, because she was, she and I are much more alike. She had a scholarship and everything. And she went one year and just decided that she didn't want to go back. She was more interested in earning some money, too, I guess. So she went for one year. And my two other brothers did not go to college. The younger one didn't because the war came along.

KP: You had one brother who went on to Rutgers and Princeton, right?

AB: Yeah, well, my parents encouraged education to the Nth degree. I think, I can't think of any of our friends who had the World Book and Encyclopedia Britannica and Harvard Classic. We had all those things and we used to go to the library a lot. So it was certainly encouraging.

KP: I'm curious about your brother who went to both Rutgers College and Princeton. Princeton was well-known for its anti-Semitism.

AB: Well, he had a scholarship. And, well, my brother was a very unusual person. This is very interesting, speaking of anti-Semitism. Abe graduated high school at fifteen. He was a genius, he really was. And he applied to Rutgers as a pre-med and he was rejected. And the town was up in arms, because here, he had been either valedictorian or salutatorian of his class. The whole school system was up in arms. They said that they would not accept any more NJC or Rutgers students as practice teachers if they didn't accept him.

KP: The town was up in arms.

AB: Oh, yeah, they were up in arms. And my father, finally, went to speak to, I don't know, the dean or the president of Rutgers, I don't know who he went to see. And they said the reason they hadn't accepted him was because he was too young for pre-med. My father said then that he will apply as pre-law. And they accepted him. I mean, that was their way out. And after that, we found out, we had one Christian neighbor on our block who was not anti-Semitic. She was very close to us and there was, I don't want to mention names, but there was somebody in the neighborhood who had a high position at Rutgers, and she knew, through him, he had actually told her that he was the one who kept my brother from being accepted.

KP: So they were trying to keep your brother out?

AB: Oh, yeah, because he was Jewish. Absolutely. I don't think they'd admit to it, but it absolutely was anti-Semitic.

KP: What year did your brother graduate?

AB: He made Rutgers in three years, Phi Beta Kappa. See, my father died in 1934, he graduated Rutgers in 1932 or '33.

KP: Your brother was Rutgers Class of '30?

AB: '32 or '33.

KP: So he applied to Rutgers in the late 20's?

AB: Oh, yeah, yes, yes. And, as I said, he had a scholarship at Princeton. My father wouldn't have been able to afford to send him, I'm sure. And, I guess, he was about the youngest grad student there.

KP: What did he study at Princeton?

AB: Political Science. He never finished his Ph.D. because my father died, and he felt that he should help support the family. While Abe was at Princeton, he was offered a position in Washington in the Attorney General's office, and he was just selected. I guess they had contacted Princeton and asked them to recommend people and Abe felt that he could help out the family, financially, if he took the job. He was all of about nineteen, maybe, certainly no more than twenty, and he went to work in Washington and never did finish, never did get his Ph.D. But after working for a number of years, he was told that he could go just so far because he didn't, you know, have any further degree. And they suggested, and they suggested to him that he get his law degree. So he applied to the evening classes at either Georgetown or George Washington University, I can't remember which one. And after going a few evenings, he felt that he knew more than the professors knew. So he dropped out and he was allowed to take the Bar [exam]. He boned up on it and he passed the Bar. And he, during the war, the war broke out a number of years after that, he really helped establish the Office of Price Information for the government. That was the agency, during the war, that controlled prices, and he, a lot of his activity was in the Supreme Court. He really, he wanted to go on. Do you want me to go on about him?

KP: Oh, yes.

AB: He had a very interesting professional life. When the war was over and the Office of Price Information was dropped, there was no need for it, he went into private practice in New York with two other legal friends of his. I guess, they were struggling for a couple of years there. So, to supplement his income, he became a law professor at the Rutgers Law School in Newark. And a student delved into his background, he said something in class once, which one of the students didn't like and felt that he was a communist. So they delved into his background and they came across some information which kind of pointed at part of his background that was questionable. So Rutgers, I want to make sure that I get the sequence of events correctly. He had been called before the, not the House Un-American Activities Committee, but whatever the other committee it was.

KP: Was it a state committee, State Committee on Un-American Activities?

AB: I think that's what it could have been. I think it was someone at Rutgers [who] really started the ball rolling in that direction. Anyway, he was promised that there would be no publicity there, that the newsreel wouldn't be there, the radio, newspaper reporters wouldn't be there, in Washington. He came there, and he was surrounded by cameras. So he took the Fifth Amendment, although he promised Rutgers that he would tell everything that had to be told but, of course, he didn't, because they had broken their promise to him. And as a result, Rutgers fired him. And he went through some very difficult years there. He really, you know, not only financially but emotionally and professionally. He was just heart-broken because no body would touch him with a ten-foot pole. And then the air kind've cleared, and he was offered a lot of legal jobs in Jersey City and other areas. And he was really a lawyer's lawyer. He was very, very successful. Very successful. But he went through a period of about five or six years there, where he was just a broken man. And to this day, we've tried any number of times, to get Rutgers to reverse their decision, and refuse.

KP: When was the last time you tried to have a …

AB: Just about three or four years ago. Dr. Bloustien was still alive. How many years ago did he pass away, because it …

KP: He passed away in 1989.

AB: Oh, so it's more, longer than I thought. He was no longer alive the last time we tried. And my brother's widow lived up in Massachusetts. She has two children, and we were working through someone that we knew at Rutgers and we knew that (Jeannie?), my sister-in-law, had a letter from Dr. Bloustien telling her that, he knows that it was the wrong decision. And in his mind, Abe is cleared, but there was nothing he could do with the Board of Trustees or anyone else at Rutgers that had that power. And we were asked for a copy of that letter. So I called my sister-in-law, and she never got back to me, never had the letter, but we did it on our own. You know, we continued to pursue on our own. And we were just told that, we were told that Rutgers felt that they had done what they had to do and that was it. And we've kind of given up at this time . For his letter, Dr. Bloustien did say that if the two children ever wanted to come to Rutgers, he would see to it that they were given scholarships. And that he felt that might ease the wounds somewhat.

LB: He wrote a letter.

AB: Yeah, yeah, that's what I'm saying. In that letter he said that. And we've just kind of given up for the time being.

KP: It sounds like your older brother was fairly influential on you.

AB: I think he was. I really think he was. Of all the siblings, I think Lew and I were about the

closest to him, and we knew more about what was going on in his life than the others. Abe was a very independent person. Very unconventional, too. But we accepted it and, you know, we respected him, and I think he felt comfortable with us, and, you know, we felt comfortable with him. He was a very good person. I know that he made a lot of sacrifices for the family and I could overlook any of his other shortcomings.

KP: Because all siblings have shortcomings.

AB: Yeah, don't we all?

KP: How important was getting married to you when you were in junior high or high school?

AB: I don't think it was at all.

KP: You didn't have this notion that you had to get married?

AB: No, no, no. In fact, I was very unsophisticated. I wasn't allowed to use makeup until I was about sixteen, I guess, if that. And then, we used, it was called Tangee, which was a very pale lipstick, you know.

LF: I know that one.

AB: You had that restriction, too?

LF: Yes, I did.

AB: I didn't know it existed anymore.

LF: It did in my family.

KP: Why did you major in economics?

AB: I don't know. I just, I wasn't interested in education, you know, teaching. I had no artistic skills and, I don't know, maybe because my older brother majored in economics in Rutgers. He may have influenced me. But I did enjoy the courses, and I did quite well.

KP: This continues our interview with Ada Bloom, joined by Barbara Tomlin. And I just want to ask you about your chosen major. In some ways, economics was not the traditional major for women.

AB: I don't know. When I think of all the girls that were in my economics class, I think there were quite a few that were majoring in it. Maybe they were splitting their major with something else. And of course, I was splitting mine with library sciences, you know. By my junior year, I knew I would be splitting it.

KP: Did you follow the news when you were growing up? How much did you know about what was going on in the world?

AB: I guess we knew what was going on in our area. I don't know how much of it [went] beyond that. I can remember the Lindburg kidnapping case, you know, the sensation that that caused. And I can remember the wreck of the Graf Zeppelin and …

KP: You probably remember the Hall/Mills murder.

AB: I can remember the, you know, the talk of it in the house. And I remember the, at that time, there would be extra editions of the newspaper and there would be people out in the street, shouting, "Extra! Extra!" You know, "Read all about it." But I don't think, until maybe I was in high school, that I was really cognizant of ...

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE----------

KP: It was cut off. You did work in your mother's store?

AB: Oh, yeah, I used to help out, and Saturdays, I worked elsewhere as a salesgirl in local shops, because I had to earn some money, I also baby sat. And when I was in college, I had what they called a NYA job, it was National Youth Administration. You could make about three and a half dollars a week working twelve hours a week or something like that. Well, there was no minimum pay then.

KP: What did you do for the NYA?

AB: The only real time that I remember, senior year, when I was in library school, I actually worked after classes with the professors. I corrected catalog cards and did research for them and that sort of thing. I don't recall what sorts of jobs I had before that, but I did have NYA jobs all along.

LF: I'm currently a Douglass student. Did you have a scholarship?

AB: I had a scholarship. It was a hundred dollars a year. Can you believe that?

LF: Oh, my.

AB: You'd be surprised how far that went. It really did. I think it paid all of my tuition, because my mother wouldn't have had any money. Oh, I had a loan. How could I forget them? When I got out of , when I graduated, I had about a three or four hundred dollar loan that I had to pay off.

LF: Did a lot of your high school friends also go to NJC? Did they go through in a similar way?

AB: One or two of my close friends. Most of my close friends were pretty much in the same

predicament as I. I think I only had one friend who went there with me whose family could afford almost anything. But the rest of us were all pretty much in the same boat.

LF: It seems kind of unusual to me that you knew so many women who went to college. I know my grandmother never finished high school. It just seems like there was a high number of women that did go on past high school.

AB: I'd say that a very large percentage of my class that I graduated with went on to college. I think we were, it was just becoming much more acceptible, much more expected of us, I guess. Not as much so as now, but it wasn't as unusual then. I had a lot of friends that didn't go, who went on to business school. And it wasn't that they couldn't afford to. It was just that they weren't interested. They probably didn't want to give the time to it.

LF: What type of activities were you involved in when you were at Douglass?

AB: Not too many, because I didn't live at school. I commuted. My, I lived just about a half a mile away, so I would even go home for lunch, most of the time, to save money. But I didn't have too much time, and a lot of the activities were at night. And I couldn't see going back and forth. I guess I wasn't that interested. I probably could have done it, if I was more stimulated. I think I could have enjoyed college more if I did live there. This was like almost a continuation of high school for me. And, although, I enjoyed my classes, I don't think I had as an exciting extracurricular life as I had in high school. I know that with Junior Show, I was in charge of selling tickets for that, in charge of the ticket committee for that. But other than that, and the Bees, the Bees was the commuting group. Located at the bottom of, the lower level of what was the recitation building, I think. I don't know what it is now. It's one of those brick buildings that faces Bishop Place.

LF: Is it near College Hall?

AB: Yeah, it's near College Hall, yes. There are two brick buildings and the basement of one of those was sort of a lounge. It wasn't, it didn't look like a basement. And that's where the Bees would park themselves in-between classes or, they even had some cots that, and I think, if you had a reservation, you could stay overnight if you had to. So we used to kind of gather there. I think I'm more active in college activities now than I was then.

LF: So you weren't involved with sororities, even though you were in one in high school.

AB: No, I don't, Douglass didn't, NJC didn't have sororities, I'm pretty sure.

KP: Even illicitly?

AB: No, they had honorary sororities, that sort of thing, but not social, no. Do they have them now?

LF: Not exactly on campus, no. They have sororities where they accept Douglass women but

they're not a Douglass sorority. I mean, they have honor sororities.

AB: Yeah, yeah that's all they had when I went there.

KP: Because we know that Rutgers College was very oriented towards the fraternities.

AB: Oh, yes, definitely. Yeah.

KP: And there was no movement to start a similar sorority tradition at NJC?

AB: I don't think so. Not that I could, there might have been [one] among the resident students that I didn't know about, but I'd never heard anything.

LF: Was campus safety an issue when you were at school? I know that today, it is a very big concern, especially on the Douglass campus.

AB: No, I don't think so at all. There was no issue of security in that whole area, wouldn't you say?

LB: The only security, that I remember, that existed wasn't predicated on the security situation today. If you wanted to date a girl, you'd go in, you'd have to leave the house after a certain time.

AB: There were a lot of restrictions.

LB: They were very strict.

AB: That wasn't security. That was just social restrictions. There were no males allowed in, I think, beyond their living rooms, if that's what they call it. It was very rigid. In fact , just a few weeks before graduation, one of the freshman squealed on a senior, whom I knew very well, saying that she had a male friend in the room. That girl, she graduated but she was not allowed to come to graduation. Yeah, they didn't suspend her, but she was not allowed to attend graduation.

KP: One of the things I'm struck by was how the Douglass newspaper was more serious than the Rutgers paper. My students often commented that it was a much more thoughtful paper and was much more concerned about world events and other things. Do you recall anything about that?

AB: I don't even remember. No, you know why? It was probably, it involved the girls living on campus probably much more than me. We spent so much time going back and forth.

KP: That is something that current Douglass and Rutgers students would fully understand, because they spend a great time on …

LF: On the buses.

AB: On the buses, yeah.

Barbara Tomlin: Did you take the bus or did you drive here?

AB: No, we didn't. All of our classes were right on the Douglass campus.

BT: And when you went from home to school?

AB: No, I walked.

BT: You walked?

AB: I lived between New Street and Paterson, not Paterson, Schureman. I lived between, yeah close to Livingston Avenue And it was about, what, half a mile, if that? So I would walk to get there in the morning, and if I didn't stay for lunch, I'd walk home for lunch and walk back. So we spent a lot of time doing that. On reason why I walked was to save money, probably. But the walking, as I look back, if I did as much of it now as I did then, I would be a lot better off, probably. Now we live in cars.

BT: It must have been a little nippy in the winter time, though.

AB: There were only one or two girls who if they lived in Bayonne or Jersey City or Trenton, those areas, traveled by train or bus. But there were a couple of girls, who every once-in-a-while, had their family car, you know, their parents car.

BT: Most young people didn't have cars during this time.

AB: Oh, unheard of.

BT: Unheard of, yeah.

LB: Automobiles were restricted.

BT: Oh, were they?

LB: At Rutgers.

AB: Well, I don't know that they had restrictions at Douglass, but nobody had them, anyway. Nobody actually had a car that they kept there. It was the commuting students who every once-in-a-while, you know, would drive.

KP: Did you attend chapel when you were there?

AB: Yes, it was required, twice a week. It was required every Tuesday and every Friday.

KP: Because we've read in some of the Douglass papers that the NJC authorities admonished the women several times for not taking chapel seriously enough. Do you remember your attitudes towards chapel?

AB: I don't remember. We were pretty serious about it, I guess. But I wasn't a knitter then. But I can visualize that sort of thing probably going on.

KP: One of the complaints about chapel was that it wasn't interesting enough. Did you hear any prominent people speak at the chapels you attended?

AB: I don't think, during their weekly services, if they had anyone prominent. ...

KP: You wouldn't have any authors or politicians or …

AB: I have, no. No, I could be wrong. I just, nobody stands out in my memory, really.

KP: Because it is very memorable for a lot of Rutgers people. Apparently Norman Thomas was a regular and …

AB: Oh, no, I don't think we ever had, no, no.

KP: No one like that?

AB: No, I don't think so.

KP: What were the services like?

AB: I don't remember it being very Christian. I really don't. But I don't know how attentive I was. I don't think I did anything rude, but I don't think I was, maybe we just kind of rested when we went there. I really don't think I was, if I had been more attentive, I probably could remember more of the details than I do.

BT: So, obviously, it wasn't offensive or …

AB: No, I don't think so. I never felt that unwilling or that uncomfortable about going.

KP: You went to Douglass when NJC was still very concerned with tradition.

AB: Right, very traditional.

KP: Beginning from first year.

AB: Right, yeah, yeah, it was very traditional. If we attended any sort of luncheon or tea, a lot of them were given at Woodlawn, we always wore white gloves, a hat, and I don't know whether this practice still exists, but during your senior year, Dean Corwin was the dean when I was there,

each Friday after chapel, a group of seniors were invited to lunch at her house. It that still done?

LF: We still have dean teas and socials.

AB: But this was an actual lunch.

LF: I'm not aware of those.

AB: We were dressed in our finest.

LF: I mean, we're not required to go to chapel.

AB: It was very formal. It was a very formal lunch.

LF: I don't know about that one.

AB: That was a very important part of my senior year, I think.

KP: So you would go to lunch with the dean?

AB: Yeah, one lunch with the dean. And there were about, maybe, six or eight girls invited to each lunch, each time. There were only about three hundred, well, fewer than three hundred, in my class. We started out with more, but I think it was under three hundred by the time we graduated. So everybody knew everybody else. We really did.

KP: You also mentioned you had initiation rights, in terms of …

AB: Yeah, yeah. Well, we had, it was just the costume that we had to wear. It was a green apron and it was a Scotty hat and beanie, I mean, and we had to carry a shopping bag. That's strange. Each year, it was …

BT: What was going with the shopping bags?

AB: Well, we had to carry our books and everything in the shopping bag. Bag ladies.

KP: And you also mentioned that each class had its own dress.

AB: Yeah, yeah. Each class, each year had its colors. Our year was, our senior year was maroon, gray and maroon. And I remember one class was yellow and blue. I don't remember the other colors. I don't know when they did away with that.

BT: When did you wear the special colors?

AB: You could wear them at any time. We could wear the dresses any time. But you didn't get them 'till about the middle of your junior year. They were sure you were there to stay, I guess.

In fact, when you, if you do interview Frieda Feller, she still has her's. Frieda's a saver. She'll have a lot of interesting things for you.

BT: When did you actually where them?

AB: Well, special, we didn't wear them for graduation. We wore cap and gown. But if there was any special ceremony, you wore them. But you were free to wear them anytime. I mean, it was just another school outfit. Yeah.

BT: Was there anything special that you did at graduation?

AB: I don't think, I don't …

BT: The same thing always happened. The juniors carried, well, they ...

AB: I know it was raining and we were lined up in the drizzling rain outside. I don't remember anything that eventful, you know. Only thankful that, just graduating.

KP: But you had the Sacred Path.

AB: We had the Sacred Path, we had the Yule Log. Do they still have the Sophomore hop and Junior Prom and Christmas Dance? Oh, they were beautiful formals.

LF: No, no. I read about them in the *Caellian*, actually. And it just seemed to dominate the paper. They would talk about it every week.

AB: Well, that was the top of the social, the most important part of your social life there, I guess. Do they have any formals?

LF: No.

AB: No?

LF: No.

AB: You don't know what you're missing.

KP: The students have made comments that they are very jealous of the social world that Douglass and Rutgers had.

LF: You guys did everything.

AB: The rooms used to be beautifully decorated. The girls would do that. Christmas was just beautiful. I think our Christmas Dance was in the old music building, and it was beautiful. It was beautiful, and I don't observe Christmas, but I appreciated the decorations and everything so

much. It was just lovely. Does Rutgers have the prom? Because Rutgers always the ...

KP: Yeah, but not anymore.

LF: It's more the sororities and fraternities that have formals. But other than that, it doesn't happen.

AB: You're missing a lot, wouldn't you say?

KP: My students have been very envious of that part of Rutgers.

LF: There were so many plays. Did you see a lot of plays?

AB: No, I didn't. I guess for the same reason that I just didn't participate in a lot of the night-time activities. It was just like a continuation of high school for me. That's why I say, I think I would have been much happier and I would have had much more to talk about had I lived there. You know, been on campus.

KP: I was wondering if you remember an effort by Douglass to get the dean's office to create a dating bureau for the Rutgers men? Do you have any memory of that?

AB: No, I didn't ...

KP: The proposal created such an uproar that they ended up shelving the idea. They would basically have the women of Douglass fill out cards, and then the men …

AB: Was that while Dean Corwin was [in charge?]

KP: Yeah.

AB: Now, but that may have applied more to the girls on campus than to me.

KP: Yeah, we were very intrigued by the whole incident.

AB: Yeah, I'm not aware of that at all. Kind of amuses me.

KP: Do you remember the big debate going on at Rutgers and NJC over America's involvement in the war?

AB: I don't remember any.

KP: Any aid to the allies, fund drives …

AB: I don't remember that at all.

KP: Do you remember anything about the coming of the war, in general, during the '30s and the early '40s?

AB: Well, I can remember my family talking about it a lot, you know, and being very upset over what they would read about, the anti-Semitism, and I can also recall that there were times when they wondered if it was really true. 'Cause when it first started happening, it was difficult to really believe that those things were happening. But other than that, I can't remember too much going on, about, you know, peoples' feelings, while I was still at Douglass, 'cause Pearl Harbor came along the December after I graduated, and that's when most of my, when I, when most of my thoughts, you know, come to mind. From that point on, Pearl Harbor day on …

KP: But at Douglass, you don't remember any of the debates over aid to the allies or …

AB: No, no, I don't. No, I don't at all.

KP: We should have asked this earlier, but you mentioned that your favorite professor was Frances Hopkin?.

AB: Yeah, yeah, he was.

KP: What do you remember about him?

AB: Well, I just, he was very interesting. He was very relaxed and you felt very relaxed in his classes. He was very fair. He was kind and he was just a very likable person. There was another one that, really, if I had been asked for a second choice, was Ms. Higgins in the library school. There were three professors in the library school. And of the three, the one that I really got along best with was Ms. Higgins. And I just, there was a closeness that I could develop with her that I just couldn't develop with the other two professors. And I've always kind of admired her.

KP: You mentioned earlier that professors were not only concerned with academics, but they were often almost as concerned with formalities and customs.

AB: Absolutely, and the behavior, mostly in Library School, during my senior year.

KP: Yeah, as to what you learned in the classroom. And you mentioned that it was also significant in terms of getting a job, that they taught you how to interview and how to dress and so on.

AB: That was very important. But I guess I was a rebel.

KP: In fact, there was even a dress code for NJC, wasn't there?

AB: I don't remember a dress code.

KP: You weren't allowed to wear pants, as I recall.

AB: No, I wore pants.

KP: Really?

AB: Sure I did, yeah. I'm pretty sure. Certainly, senior year, I can, I'm pretty sure. Yeah, I think so.

LF: I think it was for the dining hall.

AB: I was just gonna say, for certain social occasions and possibly the dining hall, which I wouldn't know because, you know, I …

KP: There was a real emphasis on dressing the right way for certain events?

AB: Oh, definitely, yeah, yeah. And of course, I don't know how it was in other fields, but certainly in, you know, the library science department, where they really made sure that you were dressed properly for an interview.

KP: You graduated in June of 1941. When did you get your first job?

AB: Well, I worked summers, every summer, as a camp counselor. So I wasn't interested, actually, I wasn't interested or that anxious to have a job during the summer. I started working in September of '41, when I got home from camp. I had a few interviews before, you know, for jobs in the fall. And as I said earlier, I didn't get them and I felt like a failure. And then the job that I really wanted was the one with Pathe News. And that's the one I did get and I started in September of '41.

KP: Going back to the summer camp. Which camp was it?

AB: The first one was the Carlisle Olympus, which was up in near Poughkeepsie, in that area. And I think I was there for one or two years. Then the next two years, I was at Scatico, which was owned by Nat Holman, the basketball hero from City College?

LB: Basketball.

AB: Basketball, I mean. He was the basketball coach at City College, during his day. It was his camp. They were both very well-run camps, and I was just a general counselor, initially, and then I became a group leader, I guess that's what it was. With about eight counselors under me, all for about, all for a hundred dollars for the summer. Hundred dollars plus tips. And if you weren't a group leader, you were paid fifty dollars for the summer. And you worked hard.

KP: Had you gone to camp growing up?

AB: Girl scout camp for weekend, short periods. Weekends, or just a week or two at a time.

But never for a whole season.

KP: And I'm, I should have asked you this in order, but who sponsored your group?

AB: There was a Mrs. Waller. Her husband, I think, was a professor at Rutgers at one time. And there was a Mrs. Nicholas, who was related with our group. But I remember Mrs. Waller the best, because we would meet in Hamilton School, where I attended classes, and then the practical part of scouting, where you learned to set a table and make a bed and do things properly, we would go right to her house. And that's where she would teach us. I don't think that's part of the Girl Scout program now at all, is it?

KP: You mentioned that you felt very provincial, even after graduating from college.

AB: Oh, I did. I really did. Highland Park was just a village, really, when I was growing up, and New Brunswick was just a small town. I was just a small-town girl.

LF: How was it working in New York then?

AB: It was very exciting to me. I had no fears. I had a cousin who instructed me on how to get around in New York. He told me that Fifth Avenue was sort of the divider. And one side of Fifth Avenue was east and the other side is west and that's how I learned to get around New York. And it was, I just loved it. I didn't mind the commuting and I just found it very exciting. Of course, working at Pathe News was very exciting to begin with. That was the Pathe Newsreel Company, which, I don't know if you're even familiar with it.

BT: With newsreels

KP They have some of the newsreels on the American Movie Classics Channel.

AB: And my first job was, they had offices in this horrible old building on West 45th Street. Then they moved to these beautiful offices, very glamorous offices at 625 Madison Avenue. And, I guess, in today's world, I'd be considered a yuppie. I was just another librarian at that time.

KP: How many librarians were there?

AB: There were, there was one head librarian and then I was the only other professional librarian. Then there were two other sort of clerks.

KP: What would you do on a typical day?

AB: I had to be trained. It required a lot of training because, it wasn't the traditional library work. Their whole function was to catalog all the newsreels. So I was trained, in a projection room, to watch the newsreel each week. And then, in longhand, write a full description of what I saw. So I had to learn how to identify people, identify planes, identify anything I looked at. I

had to learn to understand football and baseball, which I don't understand to this day. And then, from my notes, it would be typed up on large cards, and then from those cards, I would catalog by subject. In other words, there were, if there was footage on, say, Rutgers University, you would have to make out your catalog card. And they used very small catalog cards. And you didn't put too much description on that card, but you indicated in what newsreel it would be found, and very briefly describe what the card was for. And the people [who] used the library, were not only the producers and directors of the newsreels, but we had people from the outside, you know, Hollywood directors. And they, and they were [looking for] stock shots. They would come to Pathe News for stock shots. In fact, when I see a movie now, I can very often tell that what I'm seeing is a stock shot. It might not be from Pathe News, but you can tell that it's a stock shot. Yeah, yeah.

KP: So you were paid to watch a lot of newsreels?

AB: There was one newsreel each week, but it would take a long time to watch it, and then it took at least a week to get all that prepared for the catalog.

BT: Was there a library where you went or someone you could talk to help you identify some of the things on the newsreels?

AB: No, I could find out. Sometimes there were the photographer's notes or the head librarian, who had been there longer than I, naturally, and she would help out. Initially, she would go over everything I did, anyway. But it was amazing, I guess, when you're younger, you pick up things more quickly, anyway. And then, of course, when the war came along, it was a very exciting place to work. And then I really had to learn my identifications, which I did. I don't think I could do it now.

KP: So you were following the news very closely at this time?

AB: Oh, yes, yes. I was very well-informed at the time.

BT: Did you use the newspapers to help you identify anything on the newsreels?

AB: Well, as I recall, we did not depend on the newspapers.

BT: How interesting.

AB: We, I guess, [figured it out] among ourselves, and the photographer's notes would help us out.

LF: Did you notice any major contradictions between what the newsreels were saying and what the newspapers were saying about the war or a certain issue?

AB: I think not. Very, very often, you would have read it in the paper before they saw it on the newsreel. The newsreel came out just once a week. Much later, what really killed the newsreel,

was television.

KP: Did the newsreels perceive *Life Magazine* to be their competitors? Did you get that sense at all?

AB: No, I don't think so. I think, I don't know if they viewed anybody as their competitors. Actually, Pathe News was the only one that had the library, so they had that advantage. And I don't think, I don't know, maybe, the technical people felt … What newsreel viewers saw on the screen had a much greater touch of reality. Seeing the facts in motions is much more striking than looking at a still photo.

KP: Yeah, but you didn't get that sense through the organization?

AB: No, I didn't get that sense at all. No, it was so successful that I didn't get that feeling at all.

LB: They distributed to movie houses.

AB: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BT: Because I was going to say that I can remember the newsreel came on before the ...

AB: But there was also Movietown, there was also Movietown News. But, I don't know, there was probably enough room for both. As I say, Pathe News ...

BT: And everybody listened to radio. But if you wanted to see anything, you …

AB: You went to the movies.

BT: Basically, except for the shots in the newspaper.

AB: Sure, sure.

BT: Because I've been looking back to the 1940's, you know, '41 through '45. And I'm amazed at some of the pictures from those landings in the Mediterranean.

AB: Well, some of those pictures came right from these newsreel companies.

KP: Before Pearl Harbor, did you get a sense from watching the newsreels of how close the war was? Were you as surprised by Pearl Harbor as everyone else?

AB: I think, definitely, everybody [was surprised.] In fact, when I came to work that Monday morning, we were bombarded with calls and people wanting to use our library to get information, 'cause we did have files on pre-war Pearl Harbor. Very few knew about Pearl Harbor. Everybody was just taken by surprise.

KP: So you had stock footage of Pearl Harbor?

AB: Yes, yes, they had stock footage of Pearl Harbor, before the attack.

KP: So that was one of the first requests?

AB: Yeah, yeah.

KP: What about Japan? Did people want stock footage on Japan?

AB: I don't remember that.

KP: But they did of Pearl Harbor?

AB: Pearl Harbor is such a vivid memory. It was just, it was just wild that morning, when I came to work.

KP: What were some of the unusual request for stock footage? Do you remember any?

AB: Actually, I wasn't too involved with requests. The requests were channeled through another department, another office. They didn't come [through me.]

KP: So you don't know of any?

AB: They didn't come to us first. You know what I mean?

KP: Yeah.

AB: And we didn't have to go get it for them, either. There was somebody who, there were film vaults. And there was somebody who actually got the requests and went to the film vault. It was our job to make the subject matter available to them through the catalog.

KP: So you didn't know how the images were used?

AB: That's right.

KP: You just knew …

AB: That they did come to us for them. And when the war broke out, the Army had some sort of a production studio in Astoria, Long Island, and they would come to us for a lot of footage. We would help them sometimes. Find it in the catalog, but we didn't have too much time to do that, either, because we were so busy getting the subject matter ready for the catalog, that we didn't work as much one-to-one with the people who came in for the material.

BT: I'm curious about the Pearl Harbor footage, because there is some existing film from people

who either took snapshots or had a movie camera during the attack or the aftermath of the attack. And I got the impression that, at the time, that we were trying to cover up the extent of the damage or we didn't even know it immediately. So, I'm wondering, was there ...

AB: No, they didn't take the footage of that. They had footage [during] peacetime.

BT: When do you remember getting footage of the attack?

AB: I don't remember when, I don't remember when, but we did get it eventually, yeah. But I don't remember how soon.

BT: It seems to me that there was quite a delay, in terms of what Washington knew about the attack, and that always fascinated me.

AB: And even the footage that we got from the newsreel probably was not taken by our own photographers. It probably came through the State Department or, you know, one of the government agencies.

KP: Would you catalog any of the out-takes?

AB: No, we just …

KP: You strictly …

AB: We just, the only thing we saw was the completed newsreel that went to the theaters.

KP: So if they cataloged the stock image, the other images or whatever went into the waste basket?

AB: No, apparently it was, I guess, I don't know, I guess it was just tossed out.

KP: Yeah.

AB: Yeah.

BT: Can you imagine what was tossed out?

AB: Yes, it could have been repeats of what we kept, and we probably, they probably kept the best part of the footage.

KP: How did the creation of Camp Kilmer influence New Brunswick and Highland Park?

AB: Well, I was living in New Brunswick at the time, and I'll tell you, it was a great stimulus to business. A lot of Army-Navy stores opened up. And, of course, the bars started doing record-breaking business, I guess. And also, a lot of social centers were set up. I used to go to USO

dances, you know that?

KP: When did you go to USO dances?

AB: Probably in 1942.

KP: So, soon after the war started.

AB: Oh, yes, yes. They were, they had very active groups in New Brunswick that, it wasn't only USO centers, but there were churches and synagogues and other organizations that provided, you know, activities for these soldiers.

KP: Did your synagogue have ...

AB: I don't think so. I wasn't that active in it, but I don't recall them doing anything much with it.

KP: How did the presence of all those men affect this community, since this was the last place they would be before they shipped out?

AB: Yeah, this was a port of embarkation.

KP: Yeah, were there any problems with soldiers?

AB: I wasn't aware of any. No, [I] felt perfectly safe, because, in fact, there were many nights when I worked very late in New York. And I would have no fear of traveling alone in Manhattan, and I had no fear of, we lived on Livingston Avenue then. I'd get off the train, and if there was a bus still running, I would get on the bus. If not, I would have to take a cab. But there was no fear at all.

KP: So you didn't feel threatened at all with all these men being around?

AB: No, you didn't feel peril, and I don't remember anyone, any incidents or anything.

LB: There was a little city that grew up right at the edge of camp. But, it was very, not spoken of.

AB: Not that much. You know, are you talking about Plainfield Avenue? I don't, maybe, you knew more about it. I was just very unsophisticated, very innocent. If it was, I wasn't at all aware of it.

LB: A lot of MPs in the city, so ...

AB: Oh, yeah, well, that's what I was saying. [In] New Brunswick, I had no fear at all.

KP: So the war really didn't change New Brunswick that much, even though there were a lot of transients around?

AB: No, I think it changed the business climate a lot, but, as far as losing our security or anything like that, I don't think anybody felt threatened.

KP: You wrote on your survey that you also volunteered for the American Red Cross. You were still working full-time, so you must not have had a lot of free time.

AB: I know. I was living in New York, though, at the time. Once a week, my roommate and I, I shared an apartment with a friend whose husband was overseas. We would go to one of their headquarters, somewhere in downtown New York. I don't remember where it was. And we would just do filing and clerical work for them. Just once a week.

KP: So when did you move to New York?

AB: I lived with, my mother who was widowed in 1934, as I said before. And she remarried in 1944 and moved to Atlanta. And I moved to New York in 1944, I guess it was, a year after I was married.

KP: Which must have been even more exciting than working there.

AB: Yeah, it was. It was easier, because we lived at One University Place, so all I did was, you know, walk to Fifth Avenue and get the bus up to work. It was, my day wasn't quite as long. And there, too, though, I wouldn't think of doing the things now that I did then. There were many evenings when I worked very late and I'd come home very late and I didn't feel at all threatened.

KP: When and how did you and Lew meet?

AB: Oh, Lew and I knew each other for a long time. Lew was a friend of my next to the oldest brother, and he was coming around for, how many years before you noticed me? About two years before he noticed me. All of a sudden, I became apparent.

BT: And that was about when?

AB: I was, was I in high school?

LB: '35.

AB: '35, oh, he remembered. ...

LB: '34.

AB: '34, when I was …

LB: '34, your father passed away.

AB: Yeah, yeah, oh, yeah, but we weren't dating then. He just kind of realized that there was a sister in the family. But we started dating in college, I think, didn't we? Did we date in high school?

LB: Yes.

AB: You were out of high school then.

LB: You went to my high school fraternity dances.

AB: Were you in high school then? Oh, dear, I can't believe it was so many years ago. So we started dating probably in 1936.

LB: '35.

AB: '35. My mother let me date then?

BT: Probably only carefully supervised.

LB: One of the reasons that we dated was because there was such good food in the house.

AB: I don't think I really dated. I think I was allowed to go to the dances and things, because I was only sixteen. My mother wouldn't have let me.

BT: I was thinking about what we would consider dates.

AB: Parties.

LF: Maybe the movies. Maybe.

KP: And when did you get engaged?

AB: It was right before you went to O.C.S., wasn't it? So that would have been '43. The spring of '43, and we were married in July, but we knew one another, you know, for a long time.

KP: When did you become more serious? Was it before or after the war?

AB: Oh, no, this was, well, we were married during the war.

KP: Yeah, yeah, but before the war started or during?

AB: No, we weren't, it wasn't serious before the war started, but it became more serious, I guess, in '42? Yeah. But you were already in the service.

KP: How often would you see each other during the war? Did you correspond a lot?

AB: Well, we were married in July of '43, and you were stationed up in Massachusetts then, right? So Lew used to get home every weekend. Never during the week, then he went to Army Intelligence School at Fort Richie, when you had every eighth day off, was it? It was very peculiar. It was a different day each week. And it was just one day, and then, where did you go? From where …

LB: Overseas.

AB: Yeah, you went overseas from Massachusetts.

LB: Well, we went up to Boston, but I was [on alert], where I couldn't see anybody.

AB: Well, we didn't see one another too much.

KP: But you got married before …

AB: Oh, we were married, yeah, before he, right after O.C.S., we were married.

LB: You came down to Richie.

AB: Yeah, I went down to Richie once, for about a week.

KP: Had you thought of waiting until after the war before you got married?

AB: I guess because we knew one another for such a long time, we didn't feel that we had to wait.

BT: There were a lot of very hasty marriages during the war.

AB: Yes, I was just gonna say.

BT: Many of which have lasted beautifully.

AB: Oh, sure, sure.

BT: The stereotype was that you didn't really know the person you married and two weeks after the war was over, the marriage was over. But a lot of those marriages have lasted a long time, but you were not in that category.

AB: Oh, no we weren't, we knew one another. The families knew one another.

BT: And the families were all pleased by this, I'm sure?

AB: Oh, yeah.

KP: But you got married at the chapel at Camp Kilmer, even though you were from the area.

AB: Well , there wasn't, shall I say, we didn't want to take the time for a big wedding. 'Cause Lew just had a week off. Also, my mother couldn't afford to have a big wedding. Should I tell them why we were married at Kilmer? We were not supposed to be married at Kilmer. We were supposed to be married by our rabbi, and then my mother was going to have, you know, the families [over] for dinner. But Lew's mother was kind of disappointed in us 'cause we didn't want to have a big wedding, and I think that she had not told Lew's father what our plans were, and he went off to work that day. And Lew's sister, who was his only sibling, was visiting relatives. And there was no one to attend us, and, so we decided we would get married at Kilmer. And my mother said that she didn't think she should go with us, because, then it will always be in the minds of Lew's parents that my mother was at our wedding but they weren't. And I had an aunt who wanted to come and she agreed with my mother, so we went off by ourselves.

KP: Even though you had made …

AB: Yeah, yeah, yeah. But I think my mother was right, though.

BT: That's a hard decision.

KP: Did your families know each other?

AB: Oh, yeah, yeah, they knew each other.

BT: The funny thing about it is [that] everybody knew everybody, you know.

KP: Lew said that your witness was the guy cleaning the floor.

AB: Yeah, we were late, and when we got there, the rabbi thought that we were getting married against our parents wishes. And he asked us several questions, and I looked very Christian at the time, and he said to me, "Is it because, are your parents opposing the marriage because you're not Jewish?" I said, "But I am Jewish," and he said, "Where did you get the bible?" And I said, "Well, it was my mother's." And he said, "Well, I'll certainly be happy to perform the ceremony," and there were no witnesses, except these two soldiers who were sweeping up, getting ready for Friday night chapel, 'cause this was late Friday.

BT: So what did you wear?

AB: Oh, I wore a lovely light blue dress and matching hat. I had a very pretty dress. I don't know what happened to it. I'm not a saver, unfortunately. Well, we moved …

BT: You didn't take any pictures? Do you have any pictures of this?

AB: Not a one.

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO----------

KP: This continues an interview with Ada Glasser Bloom on November 18,1996 at Edison, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler

LF: … Lara Fletcher …

BT: … Barbara Tomblin.

KP: I should turn it over to Barbara, who mentioned that she had some questions about rationing and the war in general.

BT: Yeah, I'm always fascinated, because my parents also went through the war.

AB: Oh, sure.

BT: On the home front. I'm really fascinated by the home front. And this is a different home front than where I grew up in Cincinnati. But they had a blackout in Cincinnati, Ohio, which was so far inland, and it's always fascinated me that they thought the Germans were actually gonna fly that far. But there must have been a greater sense of war in this area.

AB: I don't think we had blackout. We had rationing, certainly. But I don't think we had blackouts, no, I don't think so. Did we?

BT: That's interesting, being so near the coast.

LB: The blackouts weren't so much related to fear of German invasion as they were for the saving of energy.

AB: We didn't have to cover or windows or anything. We were just, we were very ...

LB: We had dim-outs.

BT: Now, I think what they had in Cincinnati were dim-outs. Especially in terms of street lights, because there was a lot of industry.

LB: Same here.

AB: We didn't have to have light-proof window shades or curtains or anything.

LB: The coast did have some blackouts at times, because they discovered that German

submarines were just along the coast.

AB: Oh, sure along the coast, yeah. But we were far enough away from that.

BT: But you did have rationing?

AB: Oh, we had rationing, very, the whole country did. And I guess the thing that hurt people most was the gas rationing for the car. I know [that] my mother's car was up on blocks for about two years. It was in a garage and she just gave it up. Yeah, we didn't have to, you know, we all got around on with buses and walking.

KP: You mentioned your mother decided to go out of the dry goods business because of how hard it was to get things.

AB: It was hard to get merchandise, yeah. And she went to work, for what was Roselle's department store, at the time, on Church Street.

KP: And she got remarried during the war.

AB: She did yeah, yeah. Her parents encouraged her for a long time to remarry. My father, had died, had passed away ten years before she remarried. And actually, she met this person through her parents. He was a very religious man, and I don't know what brought him to New Brunswick, for some reason. And he went to service in the local orthodox synagogue, and my grandfather met him and invited him over for dinner, 'cause he was from out of town. People did that in those days.

LB: Well, you grandfather was the president of the synagogue.

AB: I don't know if he was president then, but he was active. And they found out, you know, [what] his background [was]. He had been widowed for a number of years. And, I don't know whether they asked him if he wanted to meet somebody, but they really encouraged my mother, who was their daughter.

KP: So your parents fixed your mother up again.

AB: Yeah, well, this wasn't a real arrangement, because my mother could have rejected it if she wanted to.

KP: Yeah, but still they had a real parental influence.

AB: Yeah, they really did. A real parental influence there.

KP: Do you think there was a parental influence with your own marriage?

AB: Oh, no, not at all. Our parents knew one another, but there wasn't that kind of a …

KP: That kind of influence.

AB: No, and that practice didn't exist anymore among our families, I guess. Did it?

LB: It wouldn't work. Once the older orthodox Jews had ...

KP: But that's a real generational difference. It seems like the two of you were first generation Americans who …

AB: Yeah, the first generation American. And my parents and your parents were very well assimilated, anyway.

LB: They didn't come from deep Eastern Russia. They came from the Baltic area, so they were very Western oriented.

KP: And how did you mother's second marriage go?

AB: Oh, very well. She was, I think she was very happy there. She had a whole new family there. She married a man whose children were all grown and married and [had] lots of grandchildren.

KP: And she moved to Atlanta.

AB: Atlanta, yeah. But I think she was happy there. She made a lot of friends, and his family liked her. And there aren't too many survivors, but the few that there are, kind of keep in touch. They're interested, we don't keep in constant touch with them, but if I can digress a bit, there was quite a coincidence. Our daughter-in-law has two twin brothers and they're both physicians. And the one was specializing in cosmetic surgery, and when he finished his residency, he was looking for the next step. Not to go into practice, but to work along with a plastic surgeon. And his first choice was with this very well established and very prominent plastic surgeon in Atlanta. And one day, we were having dinner, and my daughter-in-law said to me, "You know, I forgot to tell you [that] Jeff got his first choice. He's going to be working with this plastic surgeon in Atlanta." So I said, "Well, you know, my mother's second husband has a grandson who is a very prominent plastic surgeon in Atlanta, and I'm sure Jeff will bump into him somewhere or other, at meetings or possibly in the hospital, he will meet him because he is very prominent." So Gari, my daughter-in-law says, "So what's his name." And I say, "His name is Billy Silver." And she says, "He's the one." Small world.

LB: He was an Irish Jew. He was a ...

AB: We call that Jewish geography.

KP: You worked for the Office of War Information. How did you go from Pathe News to …

AB: Well, they were, people in my field were really sought after, at that time, because there were very few of us who were professional librarians who also trained as film librarians. There were a lot of clerks, but there were very few professionals. And one of the divisions of the Office of War Information was their overseas motion picture division. It was not stationed overseas, but they handled the overseas distribution and production of films for overseas. And they were looking for someone to establish their film library. And I don't know how I heard about it. Possibly somebody who came into the library mentioned it. And I was looking for a more responsible position, 'cause I had gone as far as I could. My supervisor, my boss had left and her job was open, but I looked very young. I looked like a baby and I was rather offended, because they gave that position to someone else who I didn't feel was as well qualified. And I wasn't just gonna leave. But I felt that if there was a good opening, I would leave for it. And sure enough, I heard about this position and I applied. And they were very anxious to have me, and it took a long time, because the agency wasn't even totally established yet, and then, of course, I had to be cleared and everything. Not that the work was that confidential, but during the war, I guess, anybody who worked for the government had to have a good, clean record.

KP: Did the FBI investigate you?

AB: No, no, that they … Not that I'm aware of.

KP: You didn't have that kind of clearance?

AB: No, I didn't have that kind of clearance. Because it wasn't, I wasn't doing anything that was that confidential. And, I guess, I left Pathe News in the spring of 1943. When I took the job, I said, "You know, I'm gonna have to have time off this summer, because I'm getting married." And they said, "Well, don't worry about it. Do whatever you have to do." And I worked there until 1946, until Lew returned. And I set up their library for them and managed it and it was a very busy job, because they used to receive a lot of the foreign overseas footage of the war activity. And also a lot of the captured film. And that's what we would catalog. And we would service the same type of people that we served at Pathe News. In fact, our library, you wouldn't call it competition, but actually, we were doing a lot of the services that Pathe News had done before. Pathe News would come to us, actually, for a lot of footage.

KP: Which must have made you feel good.

AB: It did. It made me feel good, because a lot of the people I worked with, came to me now, and I had to help them.

BT: Yeah, and there's such a direct ...

AB: Well, there were very few people, really, who were qualified to do it.

KP: How many people did you supervise? It sounds like you had a lot.

AB: No, at OWI really not. I had, I worked with a lot of people. But I had only one person

under me who did a lot of my clerical work for me.

KP: So you were responsible for watching most of these films.

AB: I had, I watched them and wrote up the descriptions and cataloged them. And then, one person [who] was directly responsible to me was sort of my, I guess, secretary. But then, there were other people who did the actual storage of the film for me. But I didn't have any direct supervision over them. They were supervised. It was, if you know anything about government agencies, there's a lot of supervisors, I should say. But I had no problems. You know, we were all very cooperative. We all knew we were working for the war effort.

KP: In your previous job, you would watch one film a week of the newsreel and you would catalog them.

AB: That was it, yeah.

KP: Whereas here, it seemed like you got a lot more.

AB: Oh, we were always behind here, because there was a lot more coming in than we could possibly handle. We didn't have a bigger staff because there just wasn't the money for it.

KP: So how many films could you catalog in one week?

AB: You mean how many feet?

KP: Yeah.

AB: Probably, whatever the same amount of footage a newsreel would have, so we were often behind, and what would happen is, many times, other directors and producers who were working there, and film editors, would see a lot of the material that came in that wasn't cataloged yet and they would say, "Well, they'd like to get their hands on something that they knew they had seen." And I would try and dig it out. You know, I would, by knowing what period the film covered or what area it covered, I was often able to pick out for them what they were looking for.

KP: But you were also watching these films in different languages.

AB: Yes, true. Yeah.

KP: How did you catalog those?

AB: Well, I just had to do it by describing what I saw, not so much [by] what I heard. Actually, you're more interested in the image, because a lot of the foreign film that was captured, was propaganda film.

KP: It's curious that you were looking at all these different films.

AB: Well, I tried to identify things as best I could I guess. If I couldn't identify them, you know, I just describe what I saw. Three motored plane.

KP: What did you think of all these propaganda films you were watching?

AB: By following the war reports in our own media, I recognized the enemy's attempts to make it appear that we were losing the war. Well, actually most of what I saw, I saw some propaganda film, but not that much. Most of what we got in, was the war footage, that war film footage that was taken by Army photographers. I don't think the OWI had their own photographers, but other government agencies did.

BT: Where were you located?

AB: We were in the old Pathe News building, which I had been so glad to get away from. We were at 35 West 45th Street. And that's where my first office was, with Pathe News, before they moved to Madison Avenue. Well, they moved there because all the facilities were there for them. The film vaults were already there, the projection room was there. All their editorial, editor rooms were there.

BT: What did the Office of War Information actually do?

AB: The office I was with produced propaganda films and documentaries for overseas and, of course, very often they would use some of the stock shots that we had cataloged. There was also the Domestic Bureau of the OWI, which was located on West 57th Street in New York City. I believe that that office handled much of the printed materials that were distributed to other areas of communication.

BT: And it went to overseas for the civilian population?

AB: Both. They did some training films which were for our troops, and they did propaganda films for, I guess, for theaters. Newsreel types and also films, propaganda films.

BT: Oh, I'd love to see some of those.

AB: Yeah, I just very recently, I said to Lew [that] I wonder where all their footage is.

BT: I'm thinking that they ...

AB: Probably the Library of Congress. I'd love to know. One of these days, I'm gonna take the time to research.

KP: Or even your notes of what you saw. All the newsreels.

AB: Yeah, of all the catalog. Well, they may have sold it. They could have sold it to Hollywood

for their stock library.

BT: It's a really good question, because when you go to the National Archives and you look for still shots or whatever. I was just appalled at the scarcity of Army Nurse Corps pictures.

AB: Oh, really.

BT: And I thought, "This can't be. Where is it all?"

AB: There must be something, sure, or it just doesn't exist.

BT: Or it doesn't exist.

AB: You know what, I wonder, if I wrote to the Congressman and asked him to investigate and find out where all that footage is.

LB: I would do it two ways. I would write to Palone and also …

AB: Library of Congress, too, I think.

LB: One of you can get into the …

AB: I'd love to know.

LB: The Library of Congress net.

AB: Also, what happened to all the Pathe News film, because there was very, I mean, what important historical material they would have.

BT: And all these recent discoveries fascinate me, especially the color footage of the war.

AB: Oh, yeah.

BT: Because I always, when I grew up, I was absolutely convinced that everything happened in black and white.

AB: Was in black and white. Yeah, yes.

BT: I was just astonished when I realized that I still intellectually cannot grasp the fact that it wasn't in black and white, that there was actually realism. It was so ingrained in my childhood. There's another new book of color footage. And I have some color footage on video from the Iwo Jima landing that just made it all look to me so totally different. For me, the war was those newsreels.

AB: Oh, sure, black and white, sure.

KP: Did you just watch black and white images?

AB: Oh, well, there was no color then.

KP: You didn't have any color?

AB: No, we didn't have any color then. It was all black and white.

KP: Yours was all black and white?

AB: All black and white.

KP: And you only used motion pictures. You never dealt with still imagery?

AB: No, no it was all motion pictures.

LF: Did you get most of them right, since you got a lot of footage?

AB: Oh, definitely, yeah.

LF: Did that worry you, since you did have a husband over there?

AB: Oh, it certainly did. I rushed home everyday to see if the mail was there. Oh, yeah.

LF: Because you got a better grasp of what was going on, since you got to see it.

AB: Oh, sure, sure. And I saw a lot more than what went out to the public.

KP: Did any of the images disturb you, particularly from the foreign films?

AB: Well, I think the most devastating films that I watched were, when the war was over and the prisoners were liberated. And you saw all this horrible footage from the death camps. That was, I don't think that image will ever leave me at all.

KP: Because you didn't get the sanitized version.

AB: Oh, no, not at all. In fact, one of the last requests I had, somebody had seen a picture of someone that they thought was their son in *Life Magazine,* and *Life* had gotten that footage from the OWI. And this person called to see if there was any more footage of that particular shot, because they wanted to see more of it. And, of course, whatever there was that was, that one shot, you know. That one, I guess, the camera just focused in at that one spot at that one time and that's what they saw.

KP: Was it of someone who died during the war?

AB: Yeah, yeah. They thought it was somebody that, someone in their family.

KP: One of the things that scholars have looked at is what was and wasn't shown to the public at the time. Did you ever look at this image and realize that it wasn't going to be shown to the public?

AB: Well, I don't know whether it was always much worse or just that there was much more. I mean, they didn't hide anything, really. I don't think they did, but it's just that there was much more than they saw. You know, it was on a much bigger scale. I mean, you might see thirty seconds of people in the death camps. When this footage went on and on and on for, maybe, thousands of feet. You couldn't show it all, but one part was no worse than the other.

KP: What about combat footage?

AB: I don't know how much. There was a lot of combat footage, but, isn't that strange that I don't have, I don't recall that as much as I do [the stuff] I just described to you.

BT: One of the most controversial footage I've heard about, and I don't know the whole story, but after the Tarawa landings, somebody took some pictures of the bodies floating around the beaches. And there was a lot of controversy at the time, because it was the first Pacific landing, that there was a really high death toll in a short period of a couple of days. And someone took the footage to the White House and showed it to FDR, and he was appalled, and I think it was the first time that Americans realized that this was gonna be a very costly war. But I don't know if the newsreel picked any of that up. I was wondering if you, maybe, remembered that at all.

AB: Well, not everything that the newsreel got was from the OWI a lot of the footage they got was from the Army Signal Corps, which had their own …

KP: In terms of images, there are a lot of images that weren't widely circulated, but you're getting all this stuff coming in, and you're watching it as fast as you can.

AB: That's right, and not everything that came in was cataloged, either, I imagine. I was, I cataloged whatever was given to me by the directors of this agency. Not everything came directly to me.

KP: So who did you report to?

AB: I reported to a person by the name of (Irving Lerner?), who really hired me. Now, of course, he had people over him that he reported to, who, I think, were probably stationed in Washington. Our unit in West 45th Street was strictly the overseas motion picture division. But we answered to somebody in Washington.

KP: Now did your unit make …

AB: Yes, they produced newsreels, and, I think, some training films, not too many, and, of course, films for propaganda.

KP: Were you aware of what was going on or were you just simply so busy with your cataloging that you really didn't know how the rest of your division was working?

AB: I didn't know too much. I, how should I put it? There were no secrets or anything, but it's true [that] I was very busy. I knew what each editor was working on at the time. And I didn't always know who else was working on it with them, who was doing the commentating and the commentaries and who was doing the final, making the final decisions on what remains in the film and what ends up on the cutting room floor. So I didn't get too involved, really, I guess, because I was so absorbed in what I was doing.

KP: Did you ever watch some of the products that they produced?

AB: Yes.

KP: Would you catalog those, too?

AB: No, those wouldn't be cataloged. No, no. It would be impossible to get all that done. Sometimes, I would see the finished product, but not always. I mean, I could, anytime I wanted to, I didn't have to wait for an invitation. But most of the time, I just didn't have time.

KP: It sounds like you had a lot of work on your hands.

AB: We had very little time, and that's why I worked nights for, very often, I would work at night to do the viewing. Because if somebody else was using the projection room during the day, I couldn't get into it, so I would have to do it at night. And I didn't mind.

BT: And you worked a full day.

AB: Oh, yeah, and it was six days a week, too.

BT: Oh, very interesting.

AB: It was Monday through Saturday, And holidays, we never had a holiday off.

KP: Did your pay go up?

AB: At Pathe News, we used to get our dinner paid for. We never got overtime, we got our dinner paid for. I think they would give us three and a half dollars for dinner. And at OWI, I didn't know until many years later, that I could have put in for overtime and I never did. My bosses never told me. Yes, yeah.

KP: And you didn't get dinner?

AB: No, no, it was on my own.

KP: But you also knew that this was helping with the war.

AB: Oh, yeah, I was very dedicated to what I was doing. I wouldn't have wanted to do anything else.

KP: You mentioned that you had a roommate in New York. Where did she work?

AB: She worked for one of the magazines that, in the apparel trade. I can't remember the name of it, but she was a writer. And we got along beautifully because her husband was also overseas. And we didn't know one another before.

BT: How did you meet her?

AB: We had a mutual friend. My mutual friend Madeline had gone to Michigan with Rhoda. And Madeline was supposed to move in with Rhoda, but I needed an apartment, I didn't have any place to go. So, Madeline said, "Well, look, you need it more than I do," because Madeline was still living at home with her parents, I grew up with Madeline. She said, "Why don't you move in with Rhoda, and then when you find an apartment, you know, I'll take over." Well, Rhoda and I got along so well. Madeline wasn't married, and Rhoda decided that she and I had a lot more in common and it was a very friendly decision. Madeline took it very, very graciously. She agreed, she thought it was a good idea. And we are very close friends to this day.

KP: And you really did have a lot in common, because you were both married

AB: That's right. Both married, and our husbands were both overseas. We had no children. She had a very responsible job. We were both very, very involved professionally and it worked out beautifully.

KP: What did you do for fun?

AB: Rhoda and I would go to the theater, occasionally. We'd eat out a couple times a week, probably. We had a lot of friends. We had a lot of friends in the building who were career women. They weren't married, but they were all friends of Rhoda, so, of course, they adopted me, too. And we really had a very nice, pleasant life together. I would go home weekends. I would come to New Brunswick because my sister was here and I had an aunt and uncle, and Lew's parents were there. And Rhoda would most often stay right in New York, but her family was in Rochester. But maybe once a month, she'd go home to Rochester, for the month, I mean, for the weekend.

BT: Did she take the train?

AB: She took the train, yeah.

BT: Because I always got the impression that it was hard to go anywhere during the war.

AB: It was, but, 'course, it was much easier for me. Rhoda, sometimes, would come to New Brunswick with me for the weekend. But the time went more quickly than it might have, because we were so busy in our jobs. That was the saving grace for both of us. But I would rush home after work every day, when I lived in Manhattan, to check the mail. To see if I had any mail from Lew.

KP: How regular was the mail?

AB: It wasn't. There were times when, it wasn't regular at all. There was one period where, for weeks, I didn't hear from him and I really was beside myself.

KP: Since you were staying up-to-date with the news, was there any point, in particular, where you were very worried about Lew, given what you knew?

AB: Yeah, during the Battle of Bastogne, I guess it was. That was when I didn't hear from you for a long time.

LB: It was the Bulge, a little later.

AB: The Bulge, yeah, I guess that was it. The Bulge, yeah.

BT: I was thinking that there was a lot on the news then. They really did know.

AB: And when the war was over we, Rhoda and I really had a ball. We used to keep track of all the troop ships that were coming in. We had all the charts in our kitchen, our little kitchen. And word got around that we always knew what troop ships were coming in and where and when. And we started getting calls from people. We had no idea where they were calling from, how they found out about us, but word got around that we knew the movement of the troop ships. This wasn't confidential, because they would be posted in the newspapers, and we would save them because we knew when our husbands were slated to come home or we hoped were slated to come home. Lew and I kid about that.

KP: So you kept …

AB: We kept this detailed record of what ships were coming in when and what troops were on it. But the war was over then. We weren't doing anything illegal.

BT: Yeah, and a lot of troops were overseas for a long time.

AB: Oh, yeah, well, Lew didn't get home 'till …

BT: A lot of people don't realize that.

AB: Well, you had to have points. Lew needed one more point.

BT: How many points did you need?

AB: And he was supposed to be going to Japan

BT: How many points did you need?

LB: I don't remember.

BT: But, yeah, and if you were, some people were one short.

AB: Yeah, Lew was one short, for about six months, I think.

BT: Can you believe that?

AB: But then, he was supposed to be coming home for just a short time, prior to going, or were you, you weren't going to go directly to Japan? You were going to come home first.

LB: Well, that was before the war was over. I volunteered to stay on with my division. I had been asked to stay and we were going to be one of the landing divisions in Japan.

AB: But when they bombed Iwo Jima, that was, they didn't need it anymore.

KP: Did you catalog the footage of the atomic bomb on Japan?

AB: Yes, we probably did. I'm sure I did. I'm sure I did … I have a hazey recollection of that coverage.

BT: Did they show that right away?

AB: I don't think so.

KP: Did you see any footage of the destruction caused by the bomb?

AB: I might have. I don't remember when it came out in the newsreels.

BT: Yeah, I'm wondering if it was in the newsreels ever at all?

AB: Oh, I think so. I think so.

BT: I don't work in the Pacific end of the war.

AB: Were you a nurse?

BT: No, I do military history. I do mostly Europe and Mediterranean. So I'm trying to think if they actually had footage soon after the bomb.

AB: I don't think I went to the movies much then, because, you know, I was so involved in movies all day. So I can't tell you whether or not I saw them in the newsreel then.

KP: No, I can imagine that that's the last thing you'd want to do on a Sunday during the war.

AB: Yeah, no, we never did. Almost never did.

BT: Was there theater during the war?

AB: Oh, sure, sure.

BT: I think there was.

AB: Oh, sure.

BT: I would think you would be right there, a great spot to be at.

AB: I saw *Oklahoma* during the war. And let's see, what else I saw during the war? *Our Town*.

BT: *Our Town*.

AB: Yeah, we used to go every couple of months, I guess. It was expensive. And we both, we were both saving like mad.

KP: You were saving to buy a home?

AB: Well, yeah, to have the things we needed when the boys came home.

KP: In the '30s, money had been pretty tight?

AB: That's right.

KP: It seemed like you were doing much better during the war?

AB: Oh, yeah, I did very well financially, myself. Although my first job, you'll never believe the high salary I had. Twenty-five dollars a week, with Pathe News, and I was about the highest paid graduate in my class. Everybody else started at about eighteen a week. A lot of the people I knew, went into the executive training squads at Bamburgers and Macy's, and they were getting eighteen dollars a week. Some of the people I commuted with.

KP: So you were the high earner.

AB: I was the high earner, yeah. And then, when I went to OWI, I think I was earning about ninety dollars a week.

KP: Oh, that was …

AB: Well, I had gotten a raise at Pathe News, so maybe I was making maybe thirty-five when I left.

KP: But the ninety dollars a week is a lot.

AB: Sure, sure, and when the war was over, my position would have continued, but I didn't want to stay. There were reasons why I didn't want to stay on. I'd become a little disillusioned, and one of the people I worked with at OWI was assigned to the Navy, but he had come out of the March of Time. And he had a great deal of respect for me, because he felt that I was doing my job the way I should and everything. So I went to him and I confided to him that I was thinking of leaving and asked him [if] he [thought] that there'd be a position for me at March of Time. Anybody hear of March of Time? I felt that I needed to be certain of another position before I left the one I had.

BT: It's not ringing any bells.

AB: That was the newsreel that was produced and distributed by *Time-Life Magazine*. And sure enough, a position opened up and I got the job there. And it was really not as professional a job as I should have had. I was actually distributing their films for them. But they told me hang on until something else would open up. And of course, I was a graduate librarian and a very good position opened up at *Time-Life Magazine*. So this same person recommended me for that position, and I was given that position. And that was really my last job until I retired to raise a family.

BT: Historians have noted that there was a lot of concern that there would be another Depression when the war ended.

KP: Is that why you thought you really needed to save your job?

AB: Well, I didn't know how successful Lew would be, you know, in finding a job. And he had a lot of trouble because there still was a lot of anti-Semitism. He was over-skilled. I mean, he was, I guess, because of his education and his Army responsibilities, he was kind of over-skilled for some of the jobs that would have been open to him. And also, he had some experiences where anti-Semitism really came to the forefront, you know. And I was interested in working, anyway.

KP: You sound like you enjoyed it.

AB: I enjoyed working and I did. And I've been very lucky because I've had such interesting

jobs, ‘cause when I went to *Time-Life*, I had a marvelous opportunity. Yeah.

KP: What did you do for them?

AB: They had a book service department which ordered all the books and all the publications for the company, and, in addition to that, our department did all the searching for books for Claire Booth Luce and all, any editor or any person on top who needed books for research that were hard to find, we would track down. We would track them down through the used bookstores and even overseas contacts. And they had a very nice service for employees. The company that we ordered our books from, of course, had a very big account. So they were willing to sell books to anyone in the company at a third discount. So we serviced everybody in the company and it was like a bookstore. And it was a very, very busy department, especially around Christmas time.

BT: Oh, I'll bet.

KP: Because even today, *Time-Life* is rated one of the best companies to work with.

AB: It was a very good company. One thing I remember, I had never gotten a bonus or Christmas present where I had worked before. And up until the year I had come to *Time-Life*, apparently, the bonuses were very high. I came to work in September, and, of course, that following Christmas, I got a fifty dollar bonus. And I thought I had been handed the world, you know. Well, everybody else had gotten small bonuses, and the complaints, and it was as if this was coming to them. And I could not conceive of anybody having that kind of an attitude, you know. You worked for a company and they're good to you and that's all you expect. But I was happy with my fifty dollars.

BT: Jobs, in those days, did not come with the enormous perks and …

AB: No, no. I don't think …

BT: ... and insurance and etcetera and so forth.

AB: I think I had, I had health coverage. I'm pretty sure I had that. Yeah, I think I had that. And I didn't get overtime because I was considered an executive. But I think if I, if I had to stay for, I think meals were covered, if you worked overtime. But it was just a very pleasant place and everybody was very nice.

KP: You worked at Rockefeller Center?

AB: Yeah, Rockefeller Center.

KP: You mentioned that you ordered books for Claire Booth Luce and others. You had a sense of what projects were being worked on.

AB: Well, not always her’s, because a lot of her books were personal. You know, for personal

reasons.

KP: So you did a lot of ordering of personal books for her and everything?

AB: Oh, yeah, yeah, that's definitely. In fact, one Christmas, my assistant and I, I have it upstairs, each got this clay sculpted angel, a cherub, and with it was a card from Claire Booth Luce, "To my angels." I really treasure that. And when our older son was born, he got a beautiful gift. It was a sterling Tiffany's porringer, and on it was engraved, "To George Sanford Bloom, from all his mother's friends at *Time-Life*, The Luces." He has that, I gave him that. I have my angel and he has that.

KP: Which is a very nice gesture.

AB: Yes, it is. And I don't know whether they did it for everyone. I really don't, but I know they did it for their executives. I'm sure that they must have acknowledged, you know, births and things like that, among all their employees. 'Cause the morale was very good there. I don't remember ever knowing of anyone who was unhappy.

KP: You mentioned you retired from the job to start a family. Did you just assume you'd have to do that or would you have liked to have gone back?

AB: Well, I always say, I did go back. I had a four month leave. We moved and I gave birth to our son and then stayed home a while. I wanted to go back because I loved my job, and, financially, it was a big help. And I hired this wonderful West Indian nurse to take care of our son. She was sort of the combination housekeeper/nurse. But most of her time was to be spent taking care of our son, and she was a registered nurse in Jamaica, but could not get her license here. So she was willing to do this sort of thing. And she was a saint. She was absolutely marvelous. In fact, both of our sons have turned out to be wonderful. But we always felt that her influence really rubbed off on our older son. And she spent one winter with us and she was unhappy with the weather. She did not like the cold weather. And I had promised Lew and also myself that I would not continue working if I had to keep changing people to take care of our child, so I resigned.

KP: But if the nurse had stayed?

AB: I probably would have continued. Today, I'd probably be a career woman, you know, because it's being done so much more. I see what happens in this neighborhood. They all have nannies.

KP: It sounds like *Time-Life* was also very flexible about that.

AB: Oh, they were. I could have, in fact, I think they extended my leave for a month. I'm pretty sure that they did that. Because I hadn't made arrangements yet at home. They were very, the only place where they were pretty rigid was, you were not supposed to, if you became pregnant, I think, you were supposed to leave after your fifth or sixth month or something like that. Well, I

didn't. I was quite small, so they didn't know. I stayed until about my seventh month, I guess. Yeah, 'cause Sandy was born just a short time after we moved, and I left when we moved. We had been living in Long Island and we bought this house in Matawan and we moved to Matawan.

KP: Yeah, but a lot of companies even had rules saying that married women are not allowed.

AB: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. No, nothing like that, yeah.

KP: And you would lose you job if you went on maternity leave.

AB: Oh, no, *Time-Life* was, I don't think they were ever strict in that area.

BT: What was the attitude concerning working mothers back then?

AB: Well, my mother was in Atlanta. I think she would have accepted it because she knew how important it was for her to work when she worked. I don't know how your parents felt about it?

LB: About what?

AB: My going back to work after Sandy was born. They never said anything. I think if they had any feelings about it, we would have heard.

LB: Old fashioned attitude about it.

AB: You think so? They never expressed anything to me. They were afraid of me, probably.

LB: I think one of the reason why they were so liberal at *Time-Life* was that Claire Booth Luce was the one who stressed family values. She was a Roman Catholic and very, very …

AB: Well, she converted to Catholicism, that's right. He son or daughter, I think the version I heard, was that after her child passed away, she received a lot of comfort from the Catholic church, and that's what swayed her in that direction.

KP: How did it feel to go back to work after having children, and then stop working and stay at home?

AB: I had mixed feeling about it, but I wanted to give it a try. And it seemed to work out well. The first year I went back, I had help, which didn't work out too well. So my mother pitched in and helped me. And then I didn't do anything for a few years again after that. I'd been kind of burnt. And then, when my children were on a good schedule in school, I decided to. Actually, what happened was that I had applied for subbing. And Metuchen, on my application, saw that I was a librarian, and they needed a librarian very badly for their three elementary schools, and they wanted me to cover all three schools, and I said, "No." I wasn't ready for that, and my husband didn't want me to work full-time, you know. "I'm just looking for either subbing or part time." And I said to them, "Why don't you try to find a part-time librarian for each of the three

schools?" The thought had never occurred to them. They thought it was a wonderful idea. So the one who was leaving, for the same reason that I didn't want the job, said [that] she would stay, you know, for just twice a week, for one school. And they had me for the other school, so they just had to find one more. And it was part-time, for quite a long time. It was twice a week. And then, it was increased to three times a week, and then, I guess, both of my children were in high school by that time, when Metuchen finally passed a budget. They never passed budgets before. They had been trying to create full-time elementary school libraries, and they couldn't because the budget was never passed. They finally passed a budget and that's when it became full-time.

KP: That's interesting, because Metuchen is now having similar problems with the school budget.

AB: Yeah, they always have trouble with their budget. It was just that few years running that they did not have trouble.

KP: Oh, I didn't realize that. Oh, that's interesting.

AB: Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, I think for one reason, their taxes are very high to begin with. They have the same problem as Highland Park does. They both lack big tax-rateables. And the taxes, being as high as they are, where are they going to cut? People cut schools. I don't think their elementary school has, I shouldn't say that. I don't know whether their elementary schools have full-time libraries or not. It would be a shame if they don't, because …

----------END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE----------

KP: Just before I flipped the tape, you mentioned that you enjoyed working in Metuchen.

AB: Oh, very much. Very, very much. I had, my first principal, Dot Gaydos, who passed away just about six months ago, was a wonderful person. She was so dedicated to her job. She had been a WAC, incidentally. Yeah, she didn't go to Douglass, I don't think, but she …

KP: But she had been a WAC?

AB: She had been a WAC. I think she was a sergeant. I don't think she was an officer.

KP: And it sounded like she was very proud of being a WAC.

AB: Oh, she was. And she ran that school with such a tight ship. But she was very dedicated. She was unmarried. Her whole life was her profession. And I worked under a number of principals. And to get back to what I was saying, when they finally passed the budget and we had all this funding for the library, we developed this wonderful, actual, physical library, and the program and everything improved because they had more money. And then, two years before I left, they were cutting costs again. And they assigned me two schools and I had to shift between two schools. And that wasn't too bad, but when it came time to ordering, at the end, of the year

and closing up two libraries, it was a monumental task. When I first started working there, I had a crew of volunteer mothers who were absolutely marvelous. And I had more than I could use, and, of course, as time went by, more and more mothers had to go to work, and I had practically no volunteers. And the end of the first year, when I was running the two schools, I developed shingles from the pressure. The doctor said it was from the pressure, anyway. And, generally, I can work under a lot of pressure, but I couldn't take that.

KP: I imagine that you experienced a lot of pressure in the OWI.

AB: I had been, yes.

KP: And *Time-Life*.

AB: But this was, this physical pressure was just overwhelming. And, of course, I had a family now, too. And I had decided, when I returned the following fall that if I didn't, wasn't getting more help, or they were not improving the situation, I just would not stay on. And I also was not doing my job the way I wanted to. I mean, I felt that I couldn't do the quality performance that I had done before.

KP: So you would have stayed if Metuchen was a little better organized?

AB: Yeah, if the situation had been better.

KP: You would have worked there quite a few years.

AB: Probably, I would have probably, until my kids were out of college. But, as it turned out, I left before. I had regretted leaving because I did nothing for about a year or so. And then I started subbing, and I subbed mainly in Highland Park.

KP: So you're still subbing?

AB: Well, I am, but I'm hardly ever available when they call me.

KP: We had heard about some of your trips.

AB: Well, not only that, you know. I'm tied up with a lot of other activities. And we have a granddaughter living near us. We never had grandchildren near us before. They were always in Massachusetts or Texas. Now that we have one here, I'm more involved with them.

KP: You've become very active with Douglass. You mentioned earlier that you're more active now with the school.

AB: Yeah, well, I'm active at reunion time, I'm very active, very busy. And I'm class representative for the alumni council. I've declined office. I don't want any of the …

KP: You don't want to be president?

AB: No, I don't want to be president of my class. No, I feel, I'm close enough, you know, as far as traveling, so I can represent them at meetings and things like that. In fact, I had a call from, I don't know what Flora wants, but she called me on Friday. And I didn't find, I didn't get home until after I knew she would be gone and I haven't called her. I don't know what she wants.

KP: It sounds like the war speeded up your career a little. The OWI really was a new opportunity.

AB: Oh, yeah. It was really a turning point. I would have stayed on at Pathe News. I wasn't as happy, at the time I left, I wasn't as happy as I was when I first started. I was very happy there, you know, the first year or two, and then. I don't like to be, I'm not aggressive, not aggressive at all, but I don't like to be overlooked, either. And I felt that I was overlooked, that time, for the position because I was really much more, much better qualified than the chosen person. And I felt that I would be doing much of her job for her and I didn't want to have to. And, you know, once you get pegged like that, it's hard for you to move up, too. So I think I made the right change with that.

KP: How did the war affect some of your classmates and friends?

AB: Well, I started out commuting with about four other girls, three others. And of the three, one of them had been on the training squad at Macy's, and right after Pearl Harbor Day, the Raritan Arsenal really burst. It really, and all these jobs opened up and they needed all these college-trained people, I guess for, I'm not sure what kind of work they did. I think a lot of it probably was pretty confidential. So one of my friends worked there. She was happy to relinquish her commuting every day. And two of the other girls I commuted with, went to work for the post office in Manhattan as censors. In fact, one of them was Frieda Feller. Frieda gave you her name, I think. I believe they censored mail. If I remember correctly, they had both majored in French at NJC.

BT: Oh, yeah, yeah.

AB: So, that's where they went. Let's see if I know, I don't really know where others went. They were my closest friends, really, at the time.

KP: Had you or any of your friends ever thought of enlisting in one of the services?

AB: I had a glimmer of a thought, but I didn't really do much about it. And my, I don't think any of my other, if they did, I wasn't aware of it.

KP: You never had any discussions with anyone?

AB: No, I don't think so.

BT: I'm kind of anxious to find out how much actual recruiting went on at NJC. But, of course, by then you had left.

AB: That's right, I was out. I imagine in 1942, from, you know, right after Pearl Harbor on, they must have done a lot of ...

BT: I think there was ...

KP: Lara, do you have any more questions?

LF: I can't think of anything right now.

KP: Okay, I just wanted to make sure that we weren't ignoring you.

LF: You keep hitting my questions.

AB: It's being covered one way or another.

LF: Yeah.

KP: Lew's talked about your children very often to me.

AB: Oh, yeah. I'm sure he has.

KP: And your children seem to follow a real family tradition. They seemed to have the opportunities you and your brother didn't have …

AB: Yeah.

KP: … in terms of advanced education.

AB: Yeah, yeah we've tried to do as much for them. They were good students, so, you know, we knew that they were capable of doing whatever they wanted to do. And, in fact, we just heard last night, our son is very, he doesn't communicate too well, when it comes to blowing his horn, I guess. We were, we called Texas last night and we spoke to our granddaughter first and she said, "Oh, did Dad tell you that he was elected to the Edison High School Hall of Fame?" Is that what it's called? Yup, the Eagles.

LF: My mother went to Edison High School.

AB: She did?

LF: Yeah.

AB: What year did she graduate? Or what was her name?

LF: Her name was Carolyn Moken,

AB: Let's write that down. What's your mother's name?

LF: Carolyn Moken.

LB: Merkins?

LF: Moken. M-O-K-E-N.

AB: Do you mind my asking how old she is, and then we could tell whether or not …

LF: Well, now she'd be about fifty-two or fifty-three. Something like that. She's probably older than your son.

AB: Yeah, she probably knew our niece who went there. Was she one of the earlier students at Edison High?

LF: I think so.

AB: Yeah, I bet she knew Georgine Glasser. I think Georgine was one of the first graduates of that school.

LF: My mom grew up in the area.

AB: Oh, did she?

LF: Yeah.

AB: Well, we can't, we didn't come to Edison until '58. They wouldn't have known one another, but she could have known our niece.

KP: You had grown up in this area and you came back in the '50s. So you've known this area for a long time. What has struck you about what has changed the most?

AB: I think I've seen more differences than continuities.

KP: What were some of the key differences that you've noticed.

AB: Well, the schools, for one thing. I went to Hamilton School, which is now a, it's a school, I think, for children with disabilities. I think emotional disabilities. I'm not [sure]. And then, of course, Highland Park High, it was Franklin High. At the time, it went up to the ninth grade and, of course, now it's, I think, seven through twelve, now. And the whole environment at the Highland Park High School is so different from when I went there.

KP: How different?

AB: I don't know, I just feel that the controls aren't there that were there when I was there. The whole environment is much more permissive. And not always in the right direction, I feel . Of course, I'm square.

KP: How did you feel raising your children in a much more permissive environment? You mentioned how shocked you and your son were going through the dorms at Vassar.

AB: Yeah, well, of course, that permissive period didn't come along until they were, you know, in high school. I don't think [that] there was that great a difference when they were younger. They were really young when we moved here. I think their childhood was pretty much, pretty similar to ours. Wouldn't you say? Most of their friends were from the neighborhood and, you know, we carpooled and they had curfews, which they didn't resent, didn't object to them.

LB: We ran a firm ship.

AB: Yeah, we did, we did. But they didn't seem to object to it. They didn't have a lot of things that a lot of their richer kids, richer friends had, but, then again, they had some advantages. We always had the books that they needed. And they were very happy kids. Very active, well liked, they always had a lot of friends. So it wasn't until they were ready almost to go off on their own, anyway, that this permissive period arrived. And once they went away to college, we know how they behaved at home, but we just hoped that they did the right thing away from home as well.

BT: And hoped you raised them right.

KP: Neither son served in the military?

AB: No, no, our older son would have been subject to the draft, and what I think he did, he volunteered and then, how did that work? He volunteered and they didn't need him at the time or something. I think it was one way of avoiding it, because he wanted to be able to finish college. He was at Penn at the time. Then, of course, by the time he graduated, there was no draft anymore.

LB: I doubt he would have been drafted.

AB: No, there was no draft then, but when he was, he had a number when he was at Penn.

LB: Yeah, he …

AB: And somebody told him that if you don't wait until they call you and you try to enlist and they don't need you, you're kind of off the hook. I think that was the situation.

BT: That might have been true.

KP: During the interview, you mentioned that Lew was very active in Edison politics.

AB: Yeah, he was.

KP: Did you choose to be active or was it by default?

AB: By default, mainly. Well, my own, my only real contribution to politics was when we first moved here. Somehow or other, we were recruited to register people for voting in this area, 'cause nobody was registered.

LB: We were the committeeman and committeewoman.

AB: I wasn't the committeewoman.

LB: I was the committeeman.

AB: You were the committeeman, and, as your wife, I had to help him. And we used to have people coming to the house all hours of the day and night. And every day of the week, yeah, and we would register them. And we knew that they were coming.

LB: We were allowed to register, if you were a committee person, you could register people in your home.

AB: And when Lew became a councilman, I wasn't that interested, really. I went along when I had to, you know, socially. I wasn't that, what should I say, excited, yeah. I went along because I felt that I was expected to.

KP: Were you active in any other community organizations?

AB: When the boys were younger I was an active PTA member. I was active in my sisterhood temple. And Douglass, I was always involved in that, because living so close to the college, I was always called upon to help out with reunions, which I enjoyed doing anyway. And for a while, I belonged to a Brandeis women's group, a woman's group at Brandeis University. But most of my, I've been most active, I think in our temple sisterhood. That's where most of my efforts go, even now. I'm not as active as I used to be, but I still do quite a bit. And I'm also involved in the volunteer work at the Central of New Jersey Jewish Home for the Aged. And now we're both involved with the Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey. And let's see, what else?

LB: You do a good job at cooking.

AB: Oh, I help out the Jewish Federation. I do phone calls, you know.

KP: So when you were working, when you first had a newborn son, who did all the cooking?

AB: Well, before I went to work, of course, I did it. While I was working, we managed to get our breakfast ourselves and when I came home, this Jamaican, who took care of our son usually had dinner started for us. I told her what we were having. She was really very helpful.

KP: It sounds like if she had stayed, you really would have had the ideal world.

AB: Oh, yeah, she was just so wonderful. She stayed with us for less than a year and went back to Jamaica. And she used to visit us every year.

KP: Oh, really?

AB: And she visited us until our older son's freshman year at Penn. She had a sister in New York and she would come to visit her and always come to spend a weekend with us.

KP: So you really built up quite a friendship.

AB: We did. I was so sorry we lost contact. The last time she visited us, she was not well. She had some sort of leg problem. And we never heard from her again and I've tried contacting her sister in New York and apparently she wasn't there anymore. We just kind of lost touch. I'm afraid she must have passed away because we would have gotten a Christmas card or something from her and we didn't get anything. No more communication.

KP: And then, when you were working part time at the library …

AB: Well, I managed pretty well. I had a more structured life. I think I had managed better than I do now. I had help. I had a part-time worker that came in three times a week, who was very good and did a lot of the things for me that I would have had to do when I came home. So I managed well. And as I said, I was better organized.

KP: Is there anything we forgot to ask you?

AB: I don't think so.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

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