RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH MIRIAM NULL

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Miriam Null on August 23, 2006 in Southbury, Connecticut with Shaun Illingworth and

Jonathan Wolitz: Jon Wolitz.

SI: Ms. Null, thank you very much for having us here today.

Miriam Null: Well, you're very welcome. Fire away.

SI: To begin, could you state for the record where and when you were born?

MN: I was born in Brooklyn, New York on February 12, 1926.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about your family history beginning with your father's side of the family?

MN: My father, David P. Berenberg, was a teacher. He was the principal of Franklin School for Boys and from the late '20s until his retirement, which I believe was around 1950, he was a student of German, and history, and … also Latin. … He was a firm believer that Latin was the foundation of all languages so he insisted that I study Latin. Somehow, my sister managed to escape [studying Latin], my older sister. He was born in the United States, in [Elmira], New York State, I believe. His family came from Europe. I think … both his father and his mother had come from either East Germany or Poland; it's very uncertain. My grandmother insisted that she was an East Prussian but we all doubted that very much. My mother was also born in the United States. She was also a teacher. She taught English in the New York City Public Schools, primarily what we would call middle school these days, and [she was] a strict grammarian. She … did not have what is known as a Brooklyn accent, neither did my father. They were very proud of the fact that they didn't. She came from a fairly large family, and her family … had also come from Europe but I'm not quite sure where, whether it was Galicia, which could have been in Czechoslovakia or in Poland. I have an older sister, who was also living here. She's also a Douglass graduate. She majored in science and … I have a funny story about her later on. I went to the New York City Public Schools. I was initially sent to a private school. My parents wanted me to go, my sister had gone there, very successfully, but I would not go there for a million dollars. I don't quite know now why I was so upset about it. I think, and I was only in kindergarten or pre-school, but … it seemed to me the kids were very cliquey. They all knew each other from before and I was left out, I didn't like that. There was a new elementary school built right around the corner from our house, so it was only natural that I would want to go to that school with all my friends, which I did. I went through eighth grade. At the time, they were offering junior high, but my father did not like the language preparation in junior high so he insisted that I stay in the local elementary school and then I went to high school also in Brooklyn. It was a brand new high school and, of course, it had no reputation. It was in a horrible neighborhood that none of us knew anything about. … The kids with whom I graduated all assumed we would be going to a high school that everybody knew about with a great football team and here we were being sent to the wilds, but it turned out that we had a marvelous education. We had wonderful teachers who, who we forced them to teach up. They were faced with a very unusual crew of kids. … I had written a story about them for a writer's program

down in here. We were all, either first … generation American, all fairly [well off], of course, my parents were not poor because they were both teachers, but we were all hell bent on getting an education. That was the way to get ahead and we produced doctors and lawyers and physicists. One of our members was, I think, a dean of physics at [the] University of Michigan. A friend of mine was head of the biochemical department at City College, and I myself went to law school, as did another member of … this group, and we had courses in high school that were quite remarkable for the day. We had a course in economics. We had to write a research paper. We had excellent history preparation and then … after I graduated, and I made high school in three and a half years, so I was quite young when I graduated, I then went off to NJC [New Jersey College for Women] in … September of 1942, with the usual steamer trunk and knew nothing about the place, you know, here it was in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Of course, I knew my sister had gone there but, and I had some recollection of some of the activities there. I remembered the … campus night, some big do, out in the athletic field right bordering the river, and, of course, I looked forward to doing all these things myself. Want to ask me anything at that point?

SI: Was that Antilles Field?

MN: Yes, yes. I learned how to drink coffee in college, which was not the best thing. I did not learn how to smoke and that was a good thing. I started out an English major, like ninety percent of high school graduates, but I very quickly moved over to language and history and I discovered that I just loved history. I … must have been reading history books when I was quite young in that I remember reading up on evolution, the Fairchild, … Osborn Fairchild or Fairfield Osborn, who had been the head of the … New York Natural History Museum. He had written a wonderful book back in 1913 and I practically ate it. … Granted it was hard times, I had a good time in college. I didn't like the fact that it was not co-ed. That "all girls" atmosphere was very, as I say, insulated, but I remember now we were forbidden to go on dates with these soldiers who were … at Camp Kilmer. … It wasn't until very much later that I realized that Kilmer was an embarkation point, and that was where the boys were being shipped out, and that's why they didn't want us to mingle with them too much. They were very concerned about our chastity. I got involved in various college activities. There was a history, economics and political science group that developed a spiral kind of papier-mâché forms. This was a project, one of those semi-annual projects that we worked on, where we showed the progress of mankind. I wonder what the class would think of it now, what progress we have made, if any? … There were a couple of professors that I really took a shine to, Margaret Judson, who was a winner. She was such a wonderful teacher and she had such a grasp of history … from the Renaissance on, and she would give tests like, "Present a Conversation Between Aristotle, Machiavelli and Roosevelt," and that would be the exam. I just loved that stuff, and then there was Anna Campbell, who was the … medieval and ancient history professor, and it was under her that I worked on my honor's project, which was about the history of the Jews in England, between … William the Conqueror and their expulsion by Edward III in 1290. … I had to come into the city [New York City] to do my research because all the material was in the New York City Public Library. They had nothing, but nothing, on that, maybe they had a large text but the texts were, you know, … very general. … I got a grasp of that, the development of English Common Law, reading up on that material. … That became my high honor's paper and that was my doorway to Columbia. It was a very easy step up and when I graduated I went right into law school, along with all the

returning veterans. They filled the classrooms … they were hell bent on … graduating early. They forced Columbia to accelerate the program so that there were no summers. They had to work straight through and they could get their degree in about, let's see, in about … two years. They could get their degree in about two years. I took my time. There was no rush. I met the man that I ultimately married in law school, that's not a new story. He graduated early so that he could get a job. We got married the year before I graduated and when I graduated there were not jobs for women. The men were taking up all the jobs and a woman, in those days, … were just *persona non grata* in law firms. They asked all the wrong questions, as did the deans of the law school at the time. "They are only going to get married and take the place of the men. Why are we letting you in here?" … They made no bones about it, either. They were right up front. They wouldn't get away with it now. My daughter graduated from Columbia Law, I think it was in 1984, and her class is already having confrontations with the deans about that kind of stuff. … Let's see, do you want me to fill in any detail of any kind?

SI: Well, if you want to continue, that will be great.

MN: Yes, okay. I graduated from Columbia in 1949. I went to work for the State. … The Civil Service category was clerk, but I was doing research for the board. This was the State Labor Board, and at that time it was run by Republicans for whom I had no use even then, and some of the work was pretty interesting. I learned a lot about research, even more about doing research. Then that job category folded because of a state budget crisis, which is hardly anything new, and I couldn't get, there was just no room for me in the private sector, so I said, "Okay, I'll raise a family." So I had … three kids. We then moved to Long Island. … We were living in Stuyvesant Town, which was a very interesting community then, lily white and filled with kids. I mean, you just couldn't go anywhere without seeing a million kids. It was a very good place to raise little ones. We moved out to Long Island when my son was born and, let's see, was Caroline born there? Yes, my third child was born there, and then we moved from there, because of … the house was getting kind of small. We moved to Great Neck and it was a very wonderful community to live in. It had a lot of activities, a lot of … civic activities, a lot of political activities. … My kids went to school there; they got a wonderful education. … My marriage began to crack up in 1971-72. My husband was getting involved, over his head, in some serious problems and he was very wrapped up in them, and, I guess, we were just pulling apart and it was a reasonably amicable separation. I sold the house which we had bought, the Great Neck house, moved to an apartment, and wanted to get back to work. I felt it was time. My younger child was at the time thirteen, she was going into junior high, and I called up a fellow who was living in Great Neck, that I knew was living there, with whom I had studied for the bar back in 1949. … I asked him, "How do I get back to work?" He told me first to post a notice at the Nassau County Bar Association building, you know, "freelance … attorney available for whatever." … He then called me back about a week later, and he said "come talk to me … I have a proposal to make." I went to visit him, he said, "Come to work for me. I can't pay you anything but you'll be my clerk and this will be a way for you to learn, to get back into the business," and I did and it was absolutely marvelous. I ran to court, I filed papers, I wrote motions, I prepared affidavits, I spoke to the clients. We were basically a two person partnership and in the course of that era, his marriage broke up. Then we got married and so my name, Null, is really the name of … my second husband. Pincus was my first married name and Berenberg was my maiden name. We had a nice little law firm for about ten years. Our main client was …

a plastic packaging company, but then we had a myriad of other clients, basically general, a small practice, a little estate work, a little matrimonial work, real estate, a lot of collections, small corporate work. My husband got very interested in class action [lawsuits] and we would get on board the class actions and we would have to go to California, we went to Hawaii, we do a lot of traveling on the class action circuit. Meanwhile, my older daughter, well … she was graduating from college when my first marriage broke up. She had gone to Oberlin and graduated in three years. She was a brilliant student. My son was entering Princeton at the time, and he was not thrilled there. He took a year off, he worked, and he got very interested in Orthodox Jewry. He would go to meetings of these Students for Soviet Jewry. He would go visit orthodox families in Crown Heights, and he then, to my surprise, took off for Israel in the summer of 1975, and I said, "Dan, if you go, stay. I don't want you coming back in the middle of the semester wondering what you're going to do with your, going to do with yourself." So he did. … He struggled at it, he wasn't too happy. There were times when he wanted to come back, "You stay." Meanwhile, my younger daughter by that time was in high school. … Meanwhile, my second husband was having a problem with his ex-wife. She had the house and she had the custody of their youngest son. All of a sudden, we find him on our doorstep. "Hi, what are you doing here?" "Mom kicked me out." The man that she was living with at the time was his … a sixth grade school teacher and was cracking the whip, and this young man did not like that one bit. "Well, where are we going to put him?" We put him in my son's room. So, if my son wanted to come home, there was no place to put him. So, it worked. There were other problems but we won't go into that. Our marriage began to break up. … We got married in '75 and I think what happened was when I began to act like a partner and not like the associate, he didn't like that much. I was kind of indicating that what I thought he was doing was not quite the right thing and we began to pull apart, and we finally decided that the best thing to do would be to separate and then he wanted a divorce, so we had a divorce, and it was always amicable, no hostility. I keep up with his kids as a matter-of-fact. His sons, who are the younger two, and I have maintained a nice relationship over time. So there I was on my own. After, well, I worked a while for a single practitioner in Brooklyn. … He was a terror. He was not a nice person and I began to sense that he was going to be caught in a malpractice problem sooner or later. So I moved on, to work in a matrimonial office for a man with whom I had graduated from Columbia, and that didn't last very long, and then I found a job with a … again, a small office in Queens that had just filed bankruptcy papers. I had worked on a bankruptcy with my second husband and I found that I enjoyed the practice very much. Basically, you're a … you're a detective looking to see … what awful things people have done, find out some material on them and then bring a lawsuit, and that worked out very well. Out of a pot of absolutely nothing, I was able to collect about eighty-thousand dollars from various sources and … I learned all I knew about bankruptcy law working on that case. So I was walking into another bankruptcy. When his wife graduated from law school, he told me he had no room for me. That's when I went to work for the City of New York. … It was pure chance. There was an ad run in the Sunday [*New York*] *Times* business section that the Office of Child Welfare Administration was looking for lawyers. I applied for the job and I got it, and that was at a time when New York City was not hiring. So I went to work for the City, bringing parents who had neglected or abused their children to court and, again, I found that it was a job … how can you like doing a thing like that? But it was something I certainly could do and I was able to help other attorneys, younger attorneys in the job, do their work, help them write their papers. I gave them lectures on discovery techniques. It's amazing that that office knew so little about the … practice, well, they didn't really deal with

the practice. When I brought on motions, "My God, she's bringing on a motion, never heard of such a thing," and I stayed there until I retired from there in 1997. I figured I had put up enough money so that I could afford to retire and I kept my hand in for about two years after that preparing wills for the case workers. One of them had become my friend and she had a gaggle of women … who all had gone to the same church. … She would refer them to me and I would handle their estates for them, until I began to see there were Medicaid problems coming along and I said, "This is something I'm not qualified to handle. I really can't do this anymore." So I hung up my shingle and then I started working for the co-op that I lived in. I went on the board because I had sensed that there were some things that were not being done right. … I then became, when the secretary could no longer handle the work, I became the secretary, and when the treasurer could no longer handle the work, I became the treasurer, and then when the gal in charge of apartment sales moved away, I took that over. So the president and I were literally living in each other's living rooms, and I found it very engrossing. It took a lot of my time but it kept me busy, and I liked that. I don't like to sit around. Even reading a book, which I love to do, I get restless, I got to have something to do, so that kept me busy. Then I moved here last year. I began to feel that I needed a gym nearby and I was having a problem with my back, and I've done the same thing here. I get myself involved in things. I'm running an opera program. I'm involved in a writer's group. They have wonderful lectures and entertainment, and that's where I am right now. Of course, there was an awful lot of stuff, as I … zoomed by, I'm realizing I'm not talking about this, I'm not talking about that, so now you ask me questions.

SI: The best thing to do is just to go back to the beginning and ask questions about your family history and then take it from there. You mentioned that both of your grandparents were from Europe. Did you ever hear any stories passed down about their lives in Europe? Anything about *pogroms*, or anything like that?

MN: No, it's amazing, they didn't talk. I knew that my … paternal grandfather … was brought over to America by a relative. The relative went to Europe to find him a wife. He subsequently married my grandmother, brought her over. The only way that he could make a solid living was by selling tickets to the Hamburg Lottery, and as long as they did that, the family was very well off. They had maids, they lived in a big house, my grandmother had seven children. Then the Hamburg Lottery became illegal. My grandfather still sold lottery tickets. My father had to be the runner, he was a kid, and he learned to hate the cops. He was terrified that he'd be picked up and arrested carrying this illegal pool around with him. We really heard nothing from my father's family about any episodes of anti-Semitism that drove them here. I think it was economic at that time. It was Germany in the late 1880s and the situation was reasonably quiet. … We never asked questions. We sit around the table, when I say we, people of my age, when we get together at night, "Why didn't we ask our people this?" It was just not a subject of conversation, not the way it is today, just a completely different mindset. I also didn't know my maternal grandparents very well. They were Orthodox. My father was atheist. He really didn't like them very much so we didn't see them very much, and I was at the tag end of the family and we lived a good distance away from them so that our contact was very limited. My mother … kept up a good relationship with her sisters, with whom she would talk for hours on the telephone. … We did see the sisters fairly often, as we saw my father's sisters very often, they were school teachers, also. … My mother's sisters were basically housekeepers, and very plain, simple people, not interested in very much. So … we have no family history at all.

SI: One of my questions was going to be how your parents got involved with college, and that sort of thing, but this image of your father going from running the lottery tickets to, you know, going to college and then becoming a professional as well, how did that happen?

MN: … His older brother was the prince, so he … never was required to do anything, so the burden fell on my father. He had to. When my grandfather stopped earning money, it was my father who had to go out and scratch, and he did all sorts of odd jobs. He was a graduate of City College in the days when City College was a very good school. … The stories are that when he was seventeen, he was giving bible lessons to kids on Randall's Island, one of the … islands in the … East River, and that was his job. That was the way he earned money. He then went into teaching, but I … never did find out what his first teaching; … oh, I think he did work for the New York City School System, but in the 1915s, he was a pacifist and he refused to sell Liberty Bonds. Also at that time they were cutting out German as a language, so that he found himself gainfully unemployed. My mother was still working, because she was in a relatively innocuous situation, but she was the only one who was working at that time. He had a terrible time finding a job. It was again odd jobs, and then he managed to meet the headman of the school, that he ultimately took over, who needed a successor. It was just luck. … He went on from there to develop the school. After … he retired, he drummed up a little income running book clubs in the '50s and '60s, so he developed an interest in that, and the women adored him. They sat at his feet and anything he said was wonderful.

SI: You wrote on your survey that his political leaning was socialist and Democrat, did he ever talk about that?

MN: Oh, a lot. He went to a lot of meetings. I would ask him, "What's the difference between socialism and communism? Give me a definition. Why are you and the communist so far apart?" This was back in the 30s and he would talk to me, I don't think I remember what he said, but he was very definite in his political ideals. I think the first time he voted for Roosevelt was 1940. He had voted for Eugene Debs and then Norman Thomas, and kept up his connections all through that time. He was a pacifist, but when Hitler began to rattle the saber, that's when he began to change his mind. As a matter-of-fact, when Hitler took power, my father got rid of all his brown suits. He would not wear a brown suit because of Hitler's brown shirts.

SI: What about your mother, do you know how she got involved with education?

MN: She was a bright woman. She was a reader and she … was the only one of her sisters who went to anything like a college. Of course, it wasn't a college; she went to Maxwell Training School for Girls. One of her older sisters had married a politician, sounds bad. … He was a socialist and he was a member either of the New York City … he may have been in the assembly. … He was an intelligent man, and I think, in a way, she took her lead from him and he may have been the one to tell her to go to school, and she became a teacher. I have no idea what her professional career was, absolutely no idea. But I do know that the only time that she stopped teaching was when I was born. The teachers were given a two-year maternity leave and when that two years was up, she went back to school and I was left in the … with a housekeeper.

… I don't know whether she stopped work when my sister was born, which was ten years earlier, whether they had any kind of maternity leave at that time. She may have had to retire and then go back in. Maybe that's the way she handled it, but she stayed. She didn't retire until 1945 and she had cancer at that time. So it was a health matter more than preference of any … other kind. It's funny; we just didn't ask our parents things. I mean, there are things about me my kids don't know. It's probably just as well.

SI: It sounds like in your household you were encouraged to talk?

MN: Oh, we talked a lot at the dinner table. That … was the one thing I missed in our marriage, in my marriages; we didn't sit down with the kids and talk. That just didn't seem … the travel time from work to home was so great and the pressure of work was such that there was very little time to just sit down with family and talk. … I do remember dinner time conversations and I remember when my aunts would come over after school for coffee and they would sit around and talk a lot about school politics. … I don't recall their talking about world affairs, but I can't believe, given my father's two sisters, that they wouldn't have. One of them was married to a journalist, who worked for the *Newark Star Ledger* at the time, and it would naturally be something that they would talk about, particularly with Hitler coming along in Germany. … I think one of the reasons we got a radio was so that we could hear newscast. We didn't have a radio until the mid-thirties, and then we were glued to the radio.

SI: You said your father was the editor and co-owner of the *Menorah Journal*.

MN: That's wrong. That's wrong. He wrote for them. I think he wrote articles for them in the teens, after he was thrown out of the New York Public Schools, he wrote articles for them. I don't think he had any other connection. I may be wrong, but I can't say definitely. I could go look it up in Google. I could check it out to see whether he had anything more to do with it. He may have been an editor, but I have to fight my sister on this because she is more familiar with this end of his career. So she keeps saying, "No, that isn't so."

SI: Was that the socialist theme journal?

MN: It was probably socialist, and left-wing Jewish, because *Menorah*, obviously, has reference to the Hanukkah *menorah*. … You know, it's funny; I never went in, to check that out.

SI: Have you read any of his articles that he wrote?

MN: No. They're lost. Who knows what happened to them? They may have been among his papers when he moved out of the house that he had lived in for sixty years. That's kind of scary, but I had to clean out their basement, after my mother died and he … moved to Pennsylvania to be near my sister, who was living there then. I had to clean out the basement and, heaven knows, … I mean, a lot of stuff I saved, but I don't even think that was in existence at that time. That may have gone away a long time before.

SI: Do you remember anything he did, like help with campaigns, or was it just mostly supporting through vote?

MN: He went to meetings. I remember a big conference there was between the left-wing socialists and the right-wing socialists in 1934. He was very active in the right-wing socialists. I know there was … a name to the other group, I forget their name. But I went along, I was eight years old, I was fascinated, and what really fascinated me was that one of the fellows there had a car with a rumble seat so I was able to take a ride in a rumble seat. … That was about as far as my political knowledge went at that time, but I do know there was that big conference. … I think he was so tied up in making the school go that he really did not get that involved in socialist politics. … I know he wrote for the *Socialist Call*, which is a newspaper. What his position was on the *Call*, I don't recall. He may have been one of the editors, but he kept at that … for quite a while.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about the neighborhood where you grew up and what it was like and the make up of the community?

MN: Okay, it was a very mixed neighborhood. … It … was small houses, small streets, one-way streets, bordered by two-way avenues. We were very near a large thoroughfare that went down to Coney Island at one end and the Prospect Park at the other end. The neighborhood was primarily Jewish, Italian, and Irish. The Irish tended to move away. There was a Catholic school about three blocks away and that's where they tended to congregate. My neighborhood, the Italian kids, some of them would go to the St. Brendan's, but most of them went to local public school. I know my father wanted me to go school on Jewish holidays. I didn't want to go. I didn't want to go. I very much wanted to be like all my friends, and then questions would be asked, "Why are you in school? It's a holiday," and I found that very hard to handle. I finally persuaded him, maybe I was already in high school, "Please don't make me go to school anymore on the Jewish holidays," and now, [2006] of course, all the holidays the schools are closed. I don't know what they're going to do when the Muslim holidays come along, there'll be no school days left. … We had friends on the block. There was no overt anti-Semitism that I can remember at all. My sister encountered a little bit of it much earlier. … The kids at her age, they were, by the time I got there, … already in their twenties and had probably forgotten the incident, but she relates an incident where on Easter Sunday she was beat up by a neighbor boy, who was Protestant, who had heard in his church that morning that the Jews had killed Christ. So, naturally, she was a target, she was Jewish, wasn't she? She couldn't understand why her friend was beating her up that way, and I think my parents had to go and talk to his parents and get things straightened out. They were horrified. But that just was not the way things were done then. That kind of blatant expression was just not done, or the other way. I mean, we may have had our thoughts on the little Italian kids … who lived next door to us. But, basically, it was a nice Sicilian family, and they were very noisy. We knew they were there. They would have parties on Sunday afternoon, it was still out to the backyard, but they were our neighbors, you know, they were there.

SI: Was there any of kind of under the surface anti-Semitism? I know a lot of people who wanted to go to engineering, or some of the sciences, say, "Well, you know, I didn't even pursue that because I'm Jewish," and they did not?

MN: Well, I applied to Barnard, when I graduated from high school, and I would have been valedictorian had I not made up a half a year, so that they were not going to displace the woman who was then scheduled to be valedictorian just to put me in. I applied to Barnard. I didn't get it. Now my father was … kind of active in the Middle States Association, which evaluates schools. He said, "Just because you were … a bright, Jewish girl from Brooklyn, they were just not going to take you in. You were not in their quota." I thought it was ten other reasons but I have no reason to believe that he was wrong. I had no trouble at all getting into NJC. Now maybe it was because my sister had gone there and so there was sort of a path paved for me, and I had no trouble getting into Columbia. As far as profession goes, my sister … who was a biologist and was working in a lab at NYU after she graduated, this would have been in the very early '40s, I think she may have encountered some anti-Semitism in the office. I sensed it at law school that, of course, I don't know what the proportions were, but our class had to be more than half Jewish because of all the veterans. I mean, the veterans were just flooding in and there were many, many of us. I don't think the law school dean at the time was particularly happy about that. But it was all a matter of feeling, not a matter of expression. I don't recall his having been even reported saying, "What are those kikes doing here?" or something like that, nothing that pejorative. It was more a feeling that the women weren't wanted. "What are they doing here? They don't belong," and that was, as I say, quite overt.

SI: Did your parents ever voice any opinion on what they thought you could do, or did they say, "Well, go in this direction and not that"?

MN: My mother … wanted me to be a piano player. I quickly abused her of that because I had taken lessons for a long time, and I did like it. I did enjoy it, I did love the music. My mother would have liked, … both of them would have liked me, really, to be a teacher, because you have a career, you have a pension, you have tenure, you have a steady job, a civil service status. I wanted no part of it. I did not want to be a teacher. I could not see myself getting up in front of a classroom and talking to a bunch of kids. I just couldn't see it. It was my father who suggested that I go to law school. I had liked the work that I had done in medieval history so much that he … saw what I didn't see. All I could see was, "What the heck am I going to do with myself?" But I said, "Gee, law school, yes, it sounds like a good idea."

JW: You didn't consider staying to pursue some graduate school?

MN: There was no graduate school. You know there's so much available now that wasn't then. I mean there was musicology, all sorts of history that would have been available. It just … wasn't there then. The subjects were much narrower, and I couldn't see what was I going to do once I got a master's degree. Once I got a master's degree in history, what was I going to do with it, paper the walls with it? With a law degree, that's the job. So that was … where I went; and although I did not like the first year, when you had to learn a whole new vocabulary and a whole new way of thinking, I quickly realized that this was the right choice because what I really liked about the law is the philosophy. I loved jurisprudence. I loved the conflict of laws. "How do you decide which jurisdiction to bring a case in? On what basis do you decide what jurisdiction? Is it that the laws are more favorable, or the setting is more favorable, it's easier for the people to get to, and on what basis do you make that decision?" That's really what I liked.

SI: You mentioned earlier that at Lafayette High School, there was a heavy emphasis on academics and education.

MN: Yes. … Among my group, we had a very interesting bifurcated student body. There were the people like me who had been displaced from another high school in a much better neighborhood. There were the kids from a much poorer area who were the children of immigrants who were hell bent on getting an education. We two got together and then there were the Italian kids, who lived in the area, who couldn't care less. … One of the big boys, who must have been fourteen to our twelve and thirteenth almost hit one of the teachers, who was absolutely … the look on his [face]!

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

SI: This is side two of tape one. We were just talking about the academic load at Lafayette High School.

MN: Yes. I don't even remember what classes I took. I know that I read *Macbeth*. We must have read *Julius Caesar*. … We had a very good English teacher. The one … area where I fell flat on my face was in mathematics, very common, unfortunately. I loved math up until intermediate algebra; at which point I had a teacher that I would have cheerfully strangled. … You know, if you didn't get it, she didn't bother with you. If you got it fine, she would progress, but what are the rest of us supposed to do? … There happened that one of my friends was the son of the head of the math department, so I went to talk to the head of the math department, to talk about this gal. I'm sure this was not the first time he'd heard this. So he sat in on the class. That day she was marvelous. She had it in her. She just didn't care and, when he left, she went right back to her old shenanigans and I really regret that I never got to calculus, because even a lot of intermediate algebra, I loved parabolas and hyperbolas, you know, and all that spacey stuff, but I couldn't do a quadratic equation to save my life. Now that they're treating girls better, they give you the much better math treatment. We had a wonderful French class. I had a very good Latin class. I went through three years, for whatever they do with Cicero and the … history class that I took, no more social studies, I mean, this was history. … We studied the history of medicine, we studied the history … I don't think we got back into what I call … ideology.

SI: Anthropology?

MN: Yes, whatever would precede ancient history, pre-history … I read books on it and … when I got to college and we had a survey course in western history, I loved it. I had a nice teacher, too. I forget her name, but she was good. The book was terrible and now I realize what a disservice it does to a student to have a survey course in history because … if that's where you stop, you know nothing. I can't think of anything else I can tell you about high school.

SI: Were you involved in extracurricular activities?

MN: I think I was. I must have been a member of the French Club. I know that we served as secretaries to the teachers. We ran errands for them. We helped fill out their attendance sheets

… little clerical jobs, which were interesting for kids [who] didn't have any paying job. In those days, those jobs were just not available. … Among my friends it was not the thing to do, not until you graduated from high school. Then many of them went to work during the summer. My parents were school teachers, so we had the whole summer off and they bought a place in the Adirondacks, where the family could go to in the summer, and that's where I spent my summers while I was in high school and college. … That was a whole other education. You learned about weather, you learned about crops, you learned about … what berries grow and where the mushrooms grow. …

SI: Where in the Adirondacks were you?

MN: Above Lake George. If you're familiar with the area up, what is it now, 88? No, what's the [New York] Thruway, 87? I guess it's [route] 87. 87 goes clear through our property between Lake George and Chestertown. You know the area, Jonathan?

JW: Yes, well, we used to go fishing a few times. …

MN: The town was Warrensburg. That was … the little town that we went to for our supplies. My friends would come up. … Occasionally, a friend or two would come up to visit. But it was during the war. We were at the very bottom of the rations, so we had to be very careful, we couldn't take any joy rides, we were very limited. … Everything was kerosene, we didn't have electricity at that time. It was really, in a way, quite primitive, but I loved it. My mother hated it, clearly, hard to cook on a kerosene stove.

SI: They didn't get the place until the war.

MN: They got the place in 1940, just before the war. …

SI: What had you done in the summers before that?

MN: I went to camp. We took a trip around the country. In 1939, there were some specials being offered to school teachers to take a trip around the country for eight weeks by train, cost them nothing, and my parents and I went. My sister had just gotten married, so that was my summer vacation. That was a treat. We went to Chicago, we went to Denver, climbed Pikes Peak, went to Yellowstone, went out to San Francisco, by train. I think it was the Northern Route, so you're going along a river canyon up there. We went to San Francisco, met up with relatives there, went down to Yosemite, went to Los Angeles, then across to the Grand Canyon, New Orleans, and back by boat. When you're …thirteen years old, for eight weeks, that's a real treat. That was wonderful.

SI: Very unusual, in that time, to travel so extensively.

MN: Right.

SI: Do you remember your impressions on that trip?

MN: Big cities, lots of nature, redwoods, Niagara Falls, geysers, the Rocky Mountains, which are impressive no matter when you see them … the tree line, the … Continental Divide, what happens on this side, what happens on that side, the rocks in Yosemite, the height, the wildness, the Grand Canyon at different times of the day. I went back on a trip like that many, many, many years later. Two summers during that period of time I went out to visit my sister, who was living in Albuquerque. Her husband was in the public health service and he was stationed at the local airfield, and I went out. I guess part of my job was babysitter. Oh, the Southwest was wonderful. I'm a desert rat. I loved the dry heat and the Indian artifacts. I was introduced to them and, really, it became a lifelong love. I went back last year, a couple of years ago to Santa Fe and had a wonderful time there. The size of the country, the enormous size of this country that it takes you so long to go from one coast to the other coast and you see … here, we see the sun rising over the water and there you see the sun setting over the water, and, when I was in Portugal and I saw the sun going down in the west, I said, "Something's wrong, it shouldn't be going down." For heavens sake, that's right, we're at the edge of the Atlantic, on the eastern shore of the Atlantic.

SI: Do you remember interacting with any people of these different areas?

MN: No. No. I don't think my parents would have approved. I was only thirteen. I was a kid and very much under their thumb and tutelage, and they were not letting me run loose anywhere, so no, I didn't really have a chance to meet anybody.

SI: Do you remember if the Great Depression had any impact on your life, or your neighborhood?

MN: My neighborhood, yes. My next-door neighbors, their little boy and I had been very, very friendly. All of a sudden they vanished. They lost the house, they moved away, never heard from them again. The family talked about it. We were very, very lucky because my parents both had jobs that they could rely on. My father had his school, which was limping but functioning. My mother was an appointed teacher, so that we came out pretty well. But I know that all around us, there was terrible economic hardship. Stories of men, you know … men jumping off … ledges of buildings, and selling apples on the streets, this was talked about all the time. Didn't see any visible evidence on our main shopping block, but I don't know if I would have known it if I'd seen it. Possibly an empty store, the movie theaters weren't cleaned as much as they could have been. You know, when you're seven, eight, nine years old, what you see around you was normal. … Nobody … of my friends said out loud, "We lost a job, or we lost a commitment, or we lost the contract," or anything like that.

SI: Do you remember hobos coming to your neighborhood, coming for food?

MN: There was an old black man who lived in somebody's basement. … I don't know what his background was, how he got there. We called … him Willie and he was kind of scary because he really didn't talk to us. He might have been mentally … ill, or something. There may have been something else wrong with him that I would not have known about. I know that I was told, "You can't have this, there's no money for that," very, very, tight reigns. I may have wanted a particular doll, "You can't have it, there's no money for it." … I had an old phonograph, wind-

up, with the old metal needles, that was down in the basement. Finally, in the '30s, the *New York Post* ran a promotion that for five dollars you could buy a phonograph and for a dollar apiece you could buy a record and, of course, "this is a bargain of a lifetime." My parents bought the phonograph. We bought a fancy one, we bought one with a cover, that was ten dollars, put it on top of the radio and we got, oh, Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, Mozart's *Fortieth Symphony*, Mendelssohn's *Italian Symphony*, and, probably, [Edvard] Grieg's *Peer Gynt* music. Only years later did I realize that that was Leopold Stokowski. Those were records they had … apparently the Philadelphia Orchestra had sold the rights, to knock these off for a buck a piece. I think I found that out from a *Romeo and Juliet* overture. Stokowski because he was the only one who finished in a particular way, I said, "Oh, my God, that was the way it was done on those records that I had when I was a kid." … Then I realized they were all Stokowski. So that was quite a haul, but that was about the; … it was never a matter of, "I'm getting medical attention, not getting clothes." I may have wanted something my parents didn't think I ought to have, but there was not that feeling that you can't have a pair of shoes, you must go to school in these old rags. … I mean, nothing like that. … I can't recall any of my immediate area buddies having that problem.

SI: Your parents were urging you to go into teaching, but did you have, at that time in high school, any kind of career aspirations, or ideas?

MN: I wanted to be a scientist, whatever that meant. I loved science. I think I had been going through the history of science … the history of the advances in medicine. It was very inchoate. But, of course, my sister … had been working in a laboratory. So I figured, you know, "I'll go work in a laboratory." … The gal that became the head of the biochemical department, I didn't know her then, I only met her later. … Looking back, I was very naïve, very, very naïve. I really didn't have any concrete notion of anything that I was burning to do. If I were doing it now I would say, "Let me become a musicologist, that's what I really would like to do," but time doesn't go backwards, and at that time, there really wasn't even the history of musicology. It didn't exist. You either performed, or you wrote, and for reasons that escape me, I never took theory at home … when I was a kid. I went back to school after I retired to learn what I should have learned when I was playing the piano.

SI: It sounds like music was very important

MN: Very important, very important. Well, my mother had aspirations for me and then they [there] may have been a minute or two and I thought, "Gee, maybe I could become a pianist." But I really didn't have the dedication, or the technique, and I knew better, even at that age, not to pursue it. It would have been a mistake.

SI: You mentioned that you followed your sister, she went to NJC. Do you happen to know how she became involved?

MN: Yes. Yes. Well, first of all, my father because he knew schools. … I think it was through my father, that he had done a comparison of women's schools. For some reason, I know it was very inexpensive, very, very cheap. I think it was much less expensive than Barnard. I don't even think, they only applied to Barnard, and it was only natural that when, you know, when the

choices came up for me, in those days we didn't apply to ten million colleges the way they, kids do today, very, very limited. I think we were allowed, maybe four applications and all the, you know, the records that have to follow along. I think even four was too many. I don't recall applying to more than two schools. Oh, no, I applied to Brooklyn College. It was Barnard, NJC and Brooklyn College. Brooklyn College, no problem, it was a shoo-in. I even had reservations about going to NJC, if all my friends were going to Brooklyn College. … I think … my father and I were buddies and I knew that he had a great sensitivity about money and I did not want to cause him to have to spend money unnecessarily. … It could have been that one of my reasons for thinking Brooklyn College was it won't cost him so much but he, in effect, said, "Forget about it … if you're accepted, you're going to go to NJC."

SI: What did you know about the world situation in the late '30s and before Pearl Harbor?

MN: Very aware, very aware. We heard all the horror stories, *Kristallnacht*, the burning of the books, the burning of the *Reichstag*, the killing of [Austrian Chancellor Engelbert] Dollfuss. I mean … this was in my living room, Julia Stryker, Josef Goebbels, very much in our consciousness.

SI: This is all from radio broadcasts.

MN: And the newspaper, talk in the house, talk in the neighborhood, talk among the family, "What are our relatives going to do? Where they going to go?" As a matter-of-fact, in 1937, I don't know who signed the papers for him, but suddenly a cousin from Germany turned up on our doorstep, and I have no idea whatever happened to him. My sister would be much better at this than I, because I just don't remember. All of a sudden, he was there. Somebody must have sponsored him, maybe the family sponsored him, and he came to my parents because they had a house and my other relatives lived in apartments, this is on my father's side. He was my father's cousin. We knew, I knew nothing. … It may sound very weird. I knew nothing about relatives in Europe in terms of who they were, what their relationship was, were they maternal, paternal, what the degree of relationship was. It was just there and then, of course, when I got to college and the war began, … when December 7, 1941 came around, we said, "Thank God, this country is finally going to get involved, finally something is going to get done. Those isolationists, they should be thrown in jail." We had nothing but evil things to say about them. My sister had a very interesting experience. There was a *Herr* Hauptmann, who had been in the German faculty. Does this ring a bell?

SI: Absolutely, go right ahead.

MN: … All of a sudden, he vanished and the story was … this was in 1935-36, that he had gone to Germany to study, or to get some kind of award. About six months later, my sister is standing on a subway platform in Brooklyn, she had just come out of a department store and she saw *Herr* Hauptmann on the subway platform. Well, she nearly fell over. She may even have tried to call to him, but he got away from her. She never found out what happened; why he suddenly vanished. She got me interested, so I contacted Rutgers last year and I got to somebody in the archives who gave me information about him. He apparently had received an award from the Nazis and had been doing some spy work, either over there, or over here, I don't remember. I

don't know what the college ever did, whether they ever fired him, or he just retired or resigned by himself, or just never showed up. I never could find out, but it was a very interesting follow through and I felt that it did not show up the college particularly well, that they allowed this guy to stay on. Didn't actually force him to retire, sign some kind of a letter. Now tell me what did … you learn?

SI: Well, it's a famous case at Rutgers. There's a book that was published in the mid 1980s called *The Case of the Nazi Professor*. It was written …

MN: Do you even know who wrote it?

SI: It was written by Richard P. McCormick, David Oshinsky, and, I believe, the third man's name was Daniel Horn. What happened was, it was a controversy at the time, but kind of like you said, it was breezed over a bit because also the main crux of the case was that he was involved in persecution by having fired a anti-Hitler professor.

MN: Yes, my sister had told me that.

SI: The crux of the case was, did he use his position to get rid of the guy who was going to speak out against Hitler? Then, it went into how he disappeared. I think he was captured by US troops in Slovakia; he was in charge of some sort of training facility. Then, it was not really touched by Rutgers for a long time, but it resurfaced in the 1980s. Under President Edward Bloustein, they set up a commission to figure out, was Rutgers in the wrong? I forget the upshot of it, what Rutgers did in the end, but the book kind of ends there, with that investigation.

MN: *The Story of the Nazi Professor*, or *The Case of the Nazi Professor*?

SI: If I find a copy, I will send it to you.

MN: I'd love to see it. Is it out of print?

SI: I am not sure. We used to assign it to the class that is associated with this program. We may reassign it, or make it an extra credit, but we love coming across people that have some connection, whether they were students of Hauptmann or Bergel. That makes me even more interested in meeting your sister.

MN: He was supposed to be a very good teacher. I think she liked him very much, and there was no, as far … as my sister is concerned, there was no overt anti-Semitism that he showed. It was purely the fact that he had gotten rid of this other teacher, who was anti-Nazi, that triggered her interest, and then when he vanished, I mean, my God, what happened to him? Where did he go? What happened to his wife?

SI: I'm not sure.

MN: Because she also figured in the disappearance and there was something, I still have that letter in my mail cache that I got from the archives. It was from a professor whose wife had

some contact with the situation. They never mentioned a book, which I find very interesting, why didn't they? That is worth examining. I'm going to get back to that guy and I'm going to say, "Hey, I just found out there was a book about this, why didn't you tell me?"

SI: Maybe they figured …

MN: I think they're trying to overlook it; they're trying to get beyond it.

SI: Did you contact the Rutgers University Archives?

MN: Yes.

SI: Out in the library?

MN: Yes. … Yes, I contacted Douglass, they put me in touch with the Rutgers Archives and it was to Rutgers Archives that I sent the letter.

SI: Okay, you probably spoke with Tom Frusciano.

MN: Yes. Yes.

SI: It probably just slipped his mind.

MN: When somebody is asking about Hauptmann? Oh, really, that's a bit far. He probably just tossed off the letter, said, "Get back to that broad, get rid of her." [laughter]

SI: We kind of got off on this tangent but we were talking about what you knew about world affairs.

MN: Yes, we were as aware as we could be. When it came to the death camps, that was unbelievable. We found that, I guess, the Jewish people didn't find that hard to believe. … There was enough history of German anti-Semitism to get a pretty good understanding that this was not beyond the pale, but it wasn't something that was a major topic of conversation. … I was in the History Club, we were really talking about what the future was going to be like, what's it going to be like after the war? What is world government going to be like? You look back and you could cry.

SI: I know Emily Hickman had a big influence, putting a lot of focus on the UN.

MN: Yes, yes. That's how Dot Field got into it. Because she loved, she was Emily Hickman's girl. I was more Margaret Judson's girl, so my heart was back in the Renaissance; Dot was working for the UN.

SI: I'm interested in this cousin that showed up on your doorstep, did he live with you for a while?

MN: He must have lived with us for a short while … maybe a week or two. I mean, a very short while, then he moved on.

SI: You don't remember if he'd said anything that maybe you weren't hearing in the news?

MN: No. No. He confirmed that things were not going well, that he was very glad to get out. Now back in Warrensburg, we did run into a family of refugees. … I think they had lived in Berlin. I think at the time the man was involved in running a drug store. … No, I'm getting things mixed up. I think he may have had a piano and I was looking for a piano to play on during the summer and so somebody said that, "The Lowensteins have a piano, go talk to them." So my father and I did. Lovely people, surrounded by beautiful, old, oak, German furniture from the last century, from the two centuries ago, and they were telling us how terrible it was, how awful it had been for them, the terrible lives they had led and how terrible it had been to have to leave Germany. They were the kind of Jews who would have loved Hitler if he hadn't been an anti-Semite and there were many like that, very aggrieved at what Hitler was doing to them. They were good German citizens, they had paid their taxes, they had served in the Army. "Why should they be visited with this horrible plague now?" And all he could do was say, "Yes." We heard from them. … There were not many refugees where I lived, and, of course, the school had many at that time, and none of them wanted to talk about what they had left. They had just clammed up.

SI: You talked about this; there was this pro-intervention mood in the neighborhood.

MN: Oh, yes.

SI: Was that just from the Jews in the neighborhood or did it permeate the Irish and the Italians as well?

MN: Never found out. … In my family, this was in my family, very much. … "We've got to get rid of that scoundrel," and, of course, in school, in school very much among the students, this is high school now, very much, "We've got to get into the war," and, of course, all my friends were going to be drafted. They knew damn well they were going to go, but they were a little young … they didn't really go in until '44-'45. One of my classmates was captured at the Battle of the Bulge. He made it back but, boy, he was a shadow of his former self. He had been taken prisoner and he has stories to tell about the way the Jewish prisoners had been treated by the Germans, even in '45, not very pretty. There was a special camp; there was a story about that in the *Times Magazine* as a matter-of-fact.

SI: Berga?

MN: Yes. Yes, within the last year.

SI: Was he sent there?

MN: Yes, he was there. We find these things out by indirection. We knew that he had been taken prisoner by the Germans at the Battle of the Bulge, then the story pops up in the *Times* and

another friend of mine, from my high school class, … said, "I wonder if Julie went there?" And then this other fellow contacted somebody who knew and then, "Yes, he had been there." He was on the roster of prisoners. Julie unfortunately was already dead by then.

SI: Covered up for a long time.

MN: Like so much else. … I don't think we wanted to arouse problems with our neighbors by discussing world politics with them. We didn't think it would … lead to any neighborly feelings. "Leave it alone," if they don't talk about it, and, of course, my next-door neighbors were Italians and they probably loved *Il Duce*, but when it came to … the war, they were Americans.

JW: Was there any reaction on the question of the Japanese?

MN: … The Japanese really didn't figure. That was … not our war. Our war was the European War. Possibly on the West Coast, it would have been much more of a problem but I don't think there was a Japanese student in my high school. We didn't have any Asians except, you know, the occasional Chinese laundry and they may have had a child of school age but they were almost invisible.

SI: Do you remember any kind of *Bund* activity, or any public pro-Mussolini activity like marches?

MN: I know there were *Bund* marches on Long Island. I know they were there in New Jersey. I … can't believe given Brooklyn's very Irish reactionary churches that there wouldn't have been some kind of *Bund* march in Brooklyn, but … I don't remember. I only remember one parade, that was a Brooklyn Day parade when I was still in elementary school and I wanted to march, my parents said, "No, that's not our march." Apparently this was done by the Protestant churches and I saw two of my classmates riding by on their bikes and they waved to me. I said, "I want to ride; I want to ride with you." … I don't recall its having any political overtones at all.

SI: You mentioned earlier how Pearl Harbor had resolved the question of whether we were going to get in the war or not. Do you remember where you were that day and what happened and what the reaction was?

MN: I was at home listening to a symphony concert when the news came through and, of course, war was declared the following day and I knew when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, we were going to be in the war, as … two follows one, and when my parents came home, they had been out on a walk. I said, "Guess what? The Japanese have dropped bombs on Pearl Harbor." They didn't believe me. But the following day in school, I think Roosevelt spoke in the morning, of course, we picked it up, the entire school picked up the speech and there was generally a sigh of relief, "Oh, thank heavens," because the United States had played this very careful, wavering game. We had given lend lease to the British and even that caused controversies and there was a heavily isolationist streak and then there was Lindberg out there pushing for America stay out of the war, "America First," and we all learned to loathe him and, "Okay, the die has been cast, we didn't cast it, ah, okay." None of us knew how badly things were going over in Europe. That was very carefully kept from us. We heard about the invasions

but … none of us, and don't forget we were still kids, we weren't reading the papers that much, we didn't know what kind of loses we were suffering. We did know that Rommel and Montgomery chased each other across the desert, that we knew. Why did we know that? I guess, it was because it was so dramatic and we knew that there was an invasion into Italy through the south, at Anzio, and there was tremendous battling there. I think our big … invasion was 1944 and friends of mine, my classmates at college, they all had boyfriends over there. They … were biting their fingernails at the quick waiting for the telegrams to come. One of them … was a bomber … in the 8th Air Force and they would go off to Germany every night. She was having fits. We were all having fits with her. But this had to be done.

SI: Was there an informal support group for people who had either boyfriends or brothers?

MN: Well, we all, we were all support group. We all, you know, … they lived in our houses, we had dinner with them, or anything, we all talked about it and sat around and chatted and we all got together in the living room of the cabins and talked about what was going on.

SI: Do you remember anybody losing anybody?

MN: No, I don't remember. I can't believe it didn't happen. It had to have happened but nothing that brings, that triggers a memory of anybody specific.

SI: After Pearl Harbor, do you remember if you were concerned about your own future, or safety, or anything like that?

MN: No. I guess we were so insular, it didn't occur to us that maybe a plane could come over and bomb us; … you know, "We have the two oceans to protect us, don't we?" I did not know of any family in Europe. I only found out about six years ago through the efforts of my nephew, who has done a certain amount of genealogy, and a fellow, who had the same name as my mother's family, he got together with my nephew and they dredged up relatives, brothers or sisters of my maternal grandfather. I knew nothing, I mean, oh, my God, we have a whole family out there and some of them are still alive. Of course, most of them went in the Holocaust. There was an Australian branch, there's an Israeli branch, we were just amazed, all these people, all over the world, and we didn't know about them. So, of course, we all got in touch with each other and had a great, big, family reunion. Apparently some of the family still living in Brownsville, didn't know that. It was very interesting, very interesting to find out all these strangers who turned out to be relatives.

SI: That reminds me, before World War II, did your family know anything about Zionism or were they involved at all?

MN: Oh, yes. My father was anti-Zionist. He did not think that was it. When Israel was founded, his statement was, "It will last twenty years, I give it twenty years." He didn't think that it was any solution. Of course, they knew about Zionism, they knew about Herzl, and my mother's family, I think, I even saw a Jewish National Fund box when I visited … one of them. It was not a major topic of conversation. … Maybe before the war, there had to have been talk in the family, "What are the Jews going do when the war is over, if the war was over, if they

survive? Where are they going to go?" Nobody ever had a reasonable solution. Certainly the Palestinians were in Palestine. Carve out a piece of the United States? What are the European Jews going to do? There's no place in Europe. There was Birobidzhan [the Jewish Autonomous Oblast] in Russia. Have you ever heard of Birobidzhan?

SI: Yes, it's called …

MN: Birobidzhan, or something like that. It's in Siberia.

SI: Yes, it's on the Mongolian border, thereabouts.

MN: Yes, yes. Stalin or the Russians had thought that they would create a Jewish homeland in Birobidzhan. This was back in the '20s and a certain … number of pioneers did go and settle there, didn't last very long. I think it had no economic base; I think the transportation was lousy. There … was an exhibit about the settlement in a museum in San Francisco that my daughter and I saw, not overly long ago, and I said, "Birobidzhan, my God, a name from my past," because, back then, we thought maybe this was viable. This is possibly a place where the European Jews could go. It turned out not to be and it was a huge dilemma, "What on earth is going to happen to those people after the war?" … That's basically where we left it. When … a friend of mine knew somebody who was going over to Israel to fight in the *Haganah*, this was before the … creation of the State, he was shipping on and I'm sure other friends of mine were doing similar things at that time. We were all hoping that Israel would be founded because it was—this is where the Jewish people wanted to go. For 2000 years, every year at Passover, "next year in Jerusalem," so next year has finally come and, of course, there was all the British shenanigans that were going on. It was a terrible, terrible problem and then finally the State was recognized and again, we heaved a sigh of relief. I think the day after, there was an invasion and shall I say? It hit the fan at that point. There was nothing that has ever been the same since. … Like most things that people try to plan out, it hasn't worked out too well.

SI: Is that why you think your father was anti-Zionist, just that he didn't think it was going to work?

MN: He didn't think it was viable. He didn't think it was going to work. My father was a great student of history. He knew a lot of history that many people forgot and he knew that with the Ottoman Empire … sitting right there. … He didn't know too much about the Muslims but he figured that having a Jewish Palestine, in effect, was going to cause problems. … Well, don't forget, Lawrence of Arabia had aroused Arab nationalism and that was a force to be contended with in that area. That may have been one of the reasons my father felt so strongly that Israel would not survive … not so much the Muslim religion, but Arab nationalism was going to cause a terrible problem. Well, it's lasted a few more years than he predicted, but how much longer? Nobody is going [to] predict now.

SI: But he wasn't of the opinion that Jews should just assimilate wherever they are?

MN: He would have liked that. He would have liked that because that was the way his family was going. I don't think he really had any insight into what the European Jews were thinking

because I don't think … many of them would have said, at that time, "I really would like to be an assimilated German. I really would like to be an assimilated Pole." They had had too much hardships at the hands of both of those groups. … Then you had Czechoslovakia, you had Romania, you had Bulgaria, you have Russia. [laughter] You know, the only people who loves us are the Scandinavians, and even they don't want us anymore. … I think assimilation at … that time, even though it might have in hindsight been the right route, was not at all feasible, could not have been.

SI: It sounds like your generation and your friends were more hopeful about …

MN: We were sweet, American kids and I don't think until the end of the war, well, it was at the end of the war that we began really to, even then … when we began to grow up a little bit and we began to realize that, it's just now, it's just not the way to go, and now you have an arousing of a whole new group of Orthodox Jews to whom assimilation is absolutely anathema. They don't want to go that route any old way. They're going to wear the clothes from the Poland ghetto until their kids die. They're not going change their ways and that's another ball of wax that's hard to contend with.

SI: You mentioned that some of your friends were actually going to go fight.

MN: Yes.

SI: Were all these friends who were aware of what was happening in Palestine, were they your neighborhood friends, or were any of them at Rutgers, Douglass?

MN: High school friends. … I only knew girls … I knew none of the men. There were, there were very few. My high school friends, now, I don't know whether they were drafted or whether they volunteered. Some of them went into what was the V-12 program, which was a combination of basic training and college and one of my friends, may have gone to Oberlin on the V-12. It was really his making. … Many of them went into the Navy. Another one went with the Coast Guard. A few of them went into the Army.

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

SI: This continues an interview with Miriam Null on August 23, 2006 in Southbury, Connecticut with Shaun Illingworth and …

JW: John Wolitz.

SI: Please continue.

MN: Where were we?

SI: We were talking about the Navy and why …

MN: Oh, yes. You know, it's interesting I never thought to ask. I know that the friend of mine who went to Oberlin, the V12 offered that program. Now, there had been something like that in the Army…

SI: ASTP?

MN: Yes, ASTP. I think that had been canceled. Maybe it was a money thing, or maybe they needed the boys over there more than they needed them in college here, so that the young men who had signed up to the ASTP found themselves in the Army. … You know, I'll have to ask him. One of them has Alzheimer's; I better get to him fast and find out why he went to the Navy.

SI: Was there any appeal made to either the women in your neighborhood or the women at NJC to join the service?

MN: There were always posters and I'm sure that they were recruiting … people coming in. I … know that some of the women did respond because I remember them coming back in uniform. I don't recall any really huge push to induce us to volunteer and … my class was very young, so I don't think this would have been appealing, except maybe if somebody who wanted to be a nurse, or something like that. I think the nurses, the nursing students might have gone into the service but maybe somebody who wanted to fly would have signed up, but I don't recall any of the kids that I associated with volunteering to go into the service.

SI: Do you remember if there are any, either you took them or if they were just offered, courses that were war related?

MN: I know we had to do certain amount of physical conditioning, running around the quadrangle, and I was a fat kid, that was not easy. There may have been, particularly toward the end of the war, and maybe Emily Hickman had one on the future, you know, "What the future holds," or something like that. This would not have been Judson's interest or Campbell's. I may even have taken one, but it would have been like a one credit course, or something maybe even given without credit. I don't recall.

SI: Now you entered NJC in September of 1942, what do you remember about your first days there?

MN: Confusing. I went by myself, my trunk had been sent ahead of me. I registered myself. I went to where I had to go, I was told what to do and I did it and then I discovered a couple of days later that there were junior sisters assigned to us, that were supposed to help us register. "Where was my junior sister?" She finally surfaced and then when she found me she said, "You mean you did it yourself?" I said, "Of course. Why not?" "Well, I was supposed to do it for you." I had no idea that this was even going to happen. I got utterly no, shall I say, prep material at all, nothing. "Just come to campus on XYZ day and go to such and such a place." I was assigned to Gibbons, which is now something else, it's out by the river … you had to cross over the bridge to get to campus. Are you familiar with the campus at all?

SI: Yes.

MN: I know it has a different name … this is old Gibbons then. They're little houses now. I didn't even know whether the little houses are still there. They were little houses

SI: The Horseshoes?

MN: Yes, yes.

SI: They are still there.

MN: My sister had lived in Gibbons, so, of course, I had to live there. I didn't realize what a struggle it was going to be, particularly with double wartime when you had to get up at like five o'clock in the morning and cross a muddy meadow on duckboard to get to breakfast and it was quite an experience. My roommate and I were not compatible. I'm sure it was both our faults, but I asked for a single room and I got a single room and I was much happier. I was a student. I was not one of these girls who went to college to get a husband; I went to college to get a degree and to stuff my head full of all sorts of interesting facts and I found that having my own room, with my own newspaper and magazines and I could do my homework when I wanted to, suited me much better. … I stayed that way pretty much through college. I went to … the Jameson French House, my junior year. I think I stayed there my senior year as well; no, I was there my junior year. I like the language house because you really had a chance to practice the language and get some of the finer points but I stayed on Jameson because it was much more convenient my senior year.

SI: Do you remember if there was any initiation or hazing?

MN: Yes, there sure was. Well, we had to wear a costume. Our costume was a green, I made a like kind of … paper cap and a sword and a green sash of some kind, green for freshmen. We could not wear red. Red was forbidden to freshmen. Only sophomores and up could wear red. So I had brought a lot of green clothes with me and we could be stopped anywhere on the campus if they saw somebody wearing red, particularly sophomores, and made you do something stupid. Then there was hell night. On hell night, you were woken up at eleven o'clock at night, or anytime they decided was feasible, roused out of bed, driven over, forced over to, herded over to Antilles Field for whatever the sophomores chose to do to us. I wanted to kill them. I was miserable, because here I was, a big, fat kid, I didn't know beans about the girls, I felt very self-conscious. I saw myself as being singled out for specific torture and I did not fall into the spirit of it, at all, except I was asked to sing by one of the sophomores and I was asked to sing *The Blues in the Night* and that song I knew and she was very impressed, so I finally had a friend among the sophomores. She would stand up for me. I can … still sing it. After that, we had a big tug of war with the sophomores and I think I was one of the anchors, so was one of the big kids, they put me in front so nobody could pull me over. I still have pictures of that as a matter-of-fact. That was a lot of fun. … After that we got rid of our cap and our sword and our green belts and we could buckle down to do what had to be done. The hazing stopped at that point. It did not continue.

SI: What about other traditions?

MN: Oh, they had a lot. They had the … lighting of the Yule Log and chapel at Christmas-time and it was a very impressive ceremony, a very, beautiful ceremony. … I was not used to going to church. I knew nothing about church services. As a matter-of-fact, I got to be quite fond of some of them, some of the preachers, if they came back, I would like to go and hear them. I felt the lesson they taught was lovely and I liked the hymns. I loved singing the hymns and if I could do them in harmony, even the better, and I made up my mind I was going to be on the Yule Log and I made it. … Then, we had caroling outdoors, which I absolutely adored. I remember caroling my sophomore year; it was a bitter, bitter, cold winter and I think we were standing there with flashlights, singing Christmas carols in the snow and it's a very powerful memory. We were led by the fellow who was the chief organist at the time, I forget who he was, but he was very, very good. There was a Sacred Path; freshmen could not go on Sacred Path, that was reserved for sophomores. What else did we have? I don't recall any spring traditions that were as strong as the winter traditions.

SI: It's kind of interesting because you had an older sister who had been through this before, so you must have got some familiarity?

MN: We had very little to do with each other once she got married. She moved out West. I didn't talk, I may have, you know, I may have mentioned, I don't even think I told her about the ceremonies. Maybe I said, "Gee, I can make Sacred Path now," and she might have said "What are you talking about?" These things made very little impression on her. She was a very different, much more, her skin was much thicker than mine, and I think a lot of these things just did not leave any impression.

SI: Well, kind of what I was getting at was whether or not you knew if things had been cut because of the war?

MN: I know some of them were but I don't know which ones because I don't know what they had been. I know there had been a singing group called the Weepies, which … had a lot of concertizing. We had no Weepies concerts. There was a thing, a little establishment, called the Cabin in the Watchung Mountains, that the groups would go to through the late Fall and then starting in the early Spring. It was very rustic, you froze to death, but it was a lot of fun with the girls and singing and making breakfast and all that home-life stuff. That was cut out. There might have been some night meetings that were cut out. … I don't recall an active blackout but then there were dances that were cut. I'm sure there used to be … mixers with Rutgers and she went to one. She talks about one that she went to. … I may have gone to one or two but, after the middle of my freshman year, they were cut out. There was nobody to have a dance with. The Rutgers was emptied out. I think Rutgers had an ASTP program but even when that was cut down, there were very, very few students left. I know that the fraternities had affairs. They may have been cut because of the war but I was not involved in anybody who was involved in a fraternity.

SI: On the weekends, did you go home or did you stay on campus?

MN: … On occasion, I went home, maybe I went home once a month, but for the rest of the time I stayed on campus and there were times during the war when I stayed on campus during Thanksgiving, never during Christmas. I always went home at Christmas. Well, we had a different vacation, we had from Christmas through … with the beginning of January and then we picked up again and we didn't have exams until after the Christmas holiday, very different today, where everything takes place before. I don't know how you have the time to learn anything before.

JW: The Ivy Leagues, they still keep exams until afterwards.

MN: … I just don't remember any spring traditions, what else might have been cut. … We had a junior year abroad, that was cut out, oh, was I mad. I said, "Why does everything have to happen when I get to school?" I'm sure there were many lectures of visiting professors and scholars that we could have had, that did not take place. We had concerts. We went over to Rutgers for concerts but that may only have been my freshman year. I know I heard Vladimir Horowitz was playing there. Oh, we had dances. We had a Christmas dance; there was a freshman dance, a sophomore hop, a junior prom and a senior prom. I went to, which one? I may have gone to the freshman dance and to the senior prom, didn't go to the others. Oh, no, I actually … brought one of my friends down from Brooklyn to go with me to the senior prom, that was a lovely dance. So they didn't cut those out but there might have been many intermediate activities on a monthly basis that did not take place.

SI: How formal were these social events?

MN: Depending on the event. If it was a lecture, I think we could wear pants but if it was a concert, we wore street clothes: skirts, hats, gloves. As a matter-of-fact, … you could always tell when a girl had come back from church if she had a little hat on her head and then she had gloves and a small pocketbook, then you knew that she had been doing her duty. That was the standard fare for going into New Brunswick. You had to dress up.

SI: Did you go into downtown?

MN: Downtown, go over to Rutgers, we always dressed formally. … What makes me think I wore a long dress to a Rutgers concert? I don't even think I owned a long dress. That was to the Horowitz concert, I don't think so. … What else do you want to know about life in Douglass?

SI: In your time at Douglass or in your time at home, did you see other ways that the war was affecting your life, like with rationing or…

MN: Yes, we had rationing. … I'm glad you mentioned that, I forgot all about that. There was gas rationing, obviously, and that was one of the reasons I found it so hard to go home. I didn't have a car, had to go home by train, had to get down to take a taxi, you know, all these things cost money and money was not all that free. There is rationing at the college. Red meat was virtually cut out. … I was anemic and the doctor had told my parents that I had to eat red meat so my doctor writes a letter to the college, over my violent protests. I said, "What do you think this is going to accomplish? Don't be ridiculous." They sent it off anyhow. Of course, they

never got an answer. The meal were always, you know, reasonably decent, I can't complain, but they always said the eggs were not fresh. They were, you know, powdered eggs and powdered milk and very basic but adequate. At home, there was rationing and, again, we were at the low end. We had red meat very rarely, chicken, fish, chicken, tuna fish out of a can. We had fresh vegetables and that was one of the nice things we had up in the country. We had a vegetable garden up there and I was the one in charge of the weeding and the picking of the vegetables for dinner. We had carrots, beets, spinach, squash, cucumbers, all different kinds of lettuce, tomatoes, corn, in season potatoes, onions, and that was quite an education to have all that because, you know, I was the only one of my friends who ever had her hands dirty in a garden. When they came up that was one of the first things they wanted to see. … Of course, the gas rationing meant that we couldn't go visit my relatives in New Jersey. We couldn't go visit my … aunt, who lived in Bay Ridge, or my aunt, who lived on Long Island, or my aunts, who lived in Brownsville, or they couldn't come see us. A lot of the visiting took place after school because two of my aunts were teachers and it was on their way home for them to stop off and see us. Of course, it was very restricting for the summer vacation; the gas rationing. But we managed to work it out and, occasionally, we would walk to Warrensburg. It was about a six mile hike and you don't want to do that having to carry heavy bundles back, but for a loaf of bread, or a quart of milk, or just a walk in the outdoors, it was fine. I must say we did not suffer undue hardships during the war. A cousin of mine was in the Navy, he was a radioman and he went on to work for Bell Labs in their radio department. … I think he was one of the radar operators. I think … that's one of the things that appealed to the boys that I knew. The Navy was much more technologically advanced than the Army and they had their chance to learn a little bit more about the physics of this stuff. I think that was the appeal. What else did we do? Of course, … this was a family that normally would have gone to quite a few concerts and theater, cut out, didn't go. I did go to concerts with friends of mine. We took the subway. There was a series of concerts at a high school in Manhattan that were dirt cheap and we could hear some pretty good musicians. They were like me, they liked the kind of music I liked. … After the concert, we'd stop in at the automat get something. The automat kept going. Have you ever been to an automat, either one of you?

SI: No, I haven't.

MN: Great food for twenty cents. … Oh, clothing; clothing, it was not so much rationed as the colors were very limited … no nylon stockings, they were completely out. So we all had to wear either Lyle or rayon or silk and since my family didn't buy silk stockings, we couldn't afford it, and they were not, not what my father considered the right thing. We wore the ugly lisle stockings and rayon stockings that were shredded when you looked at them and when nylon came back the entire female population of the United States said, "Hallelujah, we're back in business."

SI: Did you make any of your own clothes?

MN: My mother made clothing for me. I knitted a lot. I probably knitted sweaters, scarves, knitted a lot in college. I made socks, we made scarves through the … Red Cross had a knitting operation going. … We called it *crochetin' for the Sovietian.* [laughter] We knitted scarves for the Army, knitted scarves for the Navy. We knitted for the Russian Army. I think we made

Balaclava helmets [ski mask-like cloth caps]. We made socks for the Army, we learned how to make argyle socks for ourselves, got a lot of knitting. … Yarn was hard to come by because it was wool, and wool was reserved … for the Army, for the services. Material was hard to come by, even though my mother knew places to go where she could get some unbelievable lengths and silks and stuff. … We made a fair amount of clothing but I was in college, you know, I didn't have a sewing machine available, so it was hard, mostly knitting hats, gloves, stuff like that.

SI: That's interesting you would be knitting things directly for the Soviets, was that just a program?

MN: Yes. Oh, yes, knitting for the Russian Army, that was a program. Remember the Russians were our friends in those days.

SI: I've heard of bundles for bread but I haven't heard of anything specifically for the Soviets.

MN: Yes, well, maybe we called it *crochetin' for the Sovietian* but I do think we made things, khaki scarves and Balaclava helmets for the Russian Army under one of the programs.

SI: What about Civil Defense-type activities?

MN: They were conducted at night. … I remember, well, of course, one time I went around, this is in the … New Jersey Constitution, we had exercises, Civil Defense exercises, some of our physical exercise programs were geared toward Civil Defense. There was one night when we had to do sort of a mock, like a mock hospital. We were assigned different roles, one of us had to be the injured and then a nurse and who's going to take the records. You know, looking back it was just so much nonsense, none of us really had a clue of what was going on and it really was 'make work' because we didn't retain any of it and it wouldn't … have done us any good if anything serious had happened. … It may have triggered the interest in some of the participants to go and do something else but not among my colleagues, not among the friends that I had.

SI: How often did you do things like that?

MN: If it was three times a semester, it was a lot, because I don't think it took place that often.

JW: This is, I guess, skipping ahead. When the atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima or Nagasaki, what was your impression of that initially?

MN: I think we were all glad that the war was over. … We were in New Mexico when the bomb was being developed and my sister and her husband knew people who were involved in the project. The secrecy was tight as [you] can even imagine. There was somebody who claimed he was dealing with weather balloons and it was only later that we found out that he was doing something else. We knew that something was going on. We were very happy to have a weapon like that. I don't think we thought in terms of "the end of all wars" but I'm glad we have it and the Germans didn't. I don't think we realize what the Germans had been doing but with … an atom bomb project, but my family's relief was, "This means the end of the war, thank

heavens, enough." I know that a lot of latter-day thinking was that we destroyed two Japanese cities and the war was coming to an end anyhow. We didn't know that. All we looked at was a tremendous invasion, more men being sent overseas, the Japanese were fighting like demons on the islands and it was going to be a disaster.

JW: Did you have any impression of what diplomacy … or was there any sort of idea about how this … any world policy around this new weapon?

MN: We didn't really talk about it, if you can believe that, we didn't talk about it. Not even my senior year, now I didn't take any classes that involved what I call modern history. I was too busy working on my high honors paper and that was way back in the twelfth century, thirteenth century. I don't recall. Of course, we talked a lot about the need to have a world government, some way of controlling the nations of the world and, of course, we had to be among those who did the controlling. There was just no issue and the Allies were, of course, had to ride along and, of course, Britain, there was no question, she had been fighting a good fight since '39. France, well, De Gaulle made a good pitch, but I don't recall the atom bomb, well, of course, there was a lot of talk about, "it will never be used again." "We must never use this again, we have used it once" and Oppenheimer was right out front, making a lot of statements about how we just cannot let this get into other hands. We have to make, keep very careful check on the atom bomb to make sure that it is used … that it is just not used ever again. Then, of course, we found out that Russia had it and that we had been, part of our crew had been instrumental in getting the word over to them. … The UN was formed. We had great hopes for it. Nobody really knew how the General Assembly was going to shake out, we figured the Security Council would keep control over the way nations dealt with each other. Well, that was a colossal failure, if anything, worse than the League of Nations, because it had such pretensions. But I don't recall anybody talking about how, in our presence [at least], how the atom bomb was going to affect our relationship with the world. If anything, it put us on top, which made it even more important for us not to allow anybody else to get it and to make sure that, it sounds terrible, did our bidding. That was how we thought back then. I remember sitting with my friend, Dorothy, saying, "We have got to leave the world a better place for our children. It's up to our generation to make sure that something like this never happens again, and the world is a better place." I guess we didn't do a very good job.

SI: You didn't necessarily do that badly.

MN: [laughter] I had some awfully powerful classmates. … Paul Nitze was a classmate of mine and he was very high up somewhere in politics. … This was at law school, many senators and congressmen came out of my class, judges, powerful judges, all very good people. Somehow we missed the big picture and I really think, you know, if you have a global sense of history, you can protect yourself, you can see general directions of where things are going, and I don't think this country has an adequate sense of history. I certainly think the people who are running it don't.

SI: Do you remember any discussions about how American society was going to change, specifically America after the war with the influx of GIs?

MN: Well, we all knew that the America was going to be an international force. Isolationism was gone. We had to take an active part in the community whatever that turned out to be.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: We were talking about how you thought America was going to change after the war.

MN: I don't think my immediate circle realized the impact of all those people coming back from overseas, what that would mean for the job market. It is possible that somebody in the family thought about the impact on the economy. We all knew, and, of course, there had been automobiles, no cars had been produced, no housing had been produced, no new factories had been produced, they were all being aimed at the war. We figured, new cars, new houses, new highways and whatever goes along with that, the home improvement industry, the kitchen gadget industry. … I was married; well, of course, I got married in '48. My father in-law was in thread, what this would mean for the fabric industry? I mean … we knew that there was pent-up demand that was just going to be overwhelming and it really took us out of the Depression, once and for all, and built, just an amazing development since then. We have all those Levittowns and Stuyvesant Towns and the interstate highways, which I don't think we foresaw. We knew something had to be done about the roads … but I don't think this was something that … we thought; new automobiles, everybody needed a new car. There was a terrible housing crunch. My sister and her family came back; they lived with us for a year. Other people … were probably renting rooms because there was such a need for the soldiers to have a place to stay, but I don't think we realized the total implication on the economy, what was going to happen.

SI: You mentioned Stuyvesant Town earlier, was it one of these communities where all the houses are kind of similar?

MN: Yes. It's a large apartment complex between East 14th Street and East 20th Street and First Avenue and the East River in Manhattan, twelve story buildings. They were either seven or twelve with internal parks … stores on the outside and playgrounds for the kids. It was … Metropolitan, developed by Metropolitan Insurance Company. As I said, it was only white and no blacks were allowed. I mean, it was really hideously racist. Nice little apartments, well-maintained, and they really provided much needed housing for the returning soldiers and there was … a companion development, slightly higher class, called Peter Cooper Village, which is across the street on 20th Street. They were larger apartments. I think there was more parking and, again, playgrounds and people with more money could move in there but they were … really a boom to Manhattan.

SI: I think I remember hearing about this that, Robert Moses and La Guardia really pushed everything out to develop this?

MN: They probably did. Robert Moses was the great destroyer. … Later on, he got stopped at various places when he wanted to put highways through and the community came through and said, "No, you can't do that" but I think he may have … I don't know, who did Lincoln Center? Because that was also a disaster area before it became developed into all these concert halls.

Robert Moses may have had his hand in that also. But it's very likely, I don't recall the history of Stuyvesant Town anymore.

SI: Do you remember where you were when the war ended?

MN: I was out in New Mexico. I was on my way back from my last summer out there. My parents were with me at the time. … We knew that the atom bomb had been dropped. I don't know whether we knew when we left that the war had been officially over … that the hostilities had ceased, that we were coming back by train. It was a hellish trip because the train was loaded with soldiers and sailors who knew … they were not going to have to go to war. They were drunk as lords and making all sorts of noise. Many of the trains were diverted for other trains passing through, and we lost touch with each other. We got separated. I think, my father was in one car and my mother and I were in another, I mean, a train. We finally managed to reach Chicago in one piece and from then on we were able to get home together. But it was a madhouse, everybody was just delighted beyond words that the war was over and they could get on with their lives again. I mean, they could see these young men going off to this horrible battle, the war was brutal, the seas, the weather was brutal. Of course, there were no trenches. That's supposed to be a good thing but the tanks, the armor they had, the airplanes flying, New York City was supposed to be under a blackout. Since I wasn't there during most of, a lot of the war, I have no idea how effective that blackout was, but I can't imagine it was terribly effective, there's too … much ambient light.

SI: You talked a little bit about, you know, your classmates who had boyfriends that were sweating out the war. Did you know anybody who either left school to get married, or get secretly married?

MN: Secretly married, yes. … Girls were not allowed to get married. If you got married you had to live off campus, so they did allow married women to come to school. But I think in my junior or senior year they did allow the women to get married and stay on campus. Clearly their husbands could not live with them but then that presumed that the men were overseas, that they had married their Army sweetheart and he then had gone overseas. So if married women were allowed, as a matter-of-fact, two of my classmates were pregnant when they graduated and possibly more but I didn't know about them. The senior gown covered a lot. [laughter]

SI: Was that something that was discussed among friends, like whether they should get married?

MN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, oh, yes. You know, "What if he dies over there, what's going to happen to me?" … The children did not figure in the discussion, but, "Is he the right one." A diamond ring … was a big obsession, "Oh, she's got a diamond, let's take a look." Everybody ran to take a look at the new diamond because many of the girls were engaged during that time. But I think my sister said the same thing happened when she was in college. I think it's just the fever that affects young women going to … female colleges, the marriage fever, but it certainly was intense, particularly, when the guy was going overseas. "Do I get married now, do I wait until he comes back?" … We talked about that at the dinner table here because so many of them were in that situation and, you know, they're making up their mind whether do it or not. …

SI: How do you think the NJC administration at the time, I'm not referring to just specific professors, but how do you think they viewed women's education at the time, the purpose of women's education?

MN: I think the purpose was to enable them to be independent, make their own living, not have to be dependent on a husband, because husbands can be unreliable. They can die, they can beat you, they can divorce you, they can do all sorts of terrible things, and the best thing … is for you to be able to make your own living. … I'm intensely grateful to my father that he enabled me to go to law school because I would not have been able to make my own way. Well, you know, I would not have had that profession … to see me through after the collapse of my marriages. It was just the most wonderful thing that he did for me. They were a strange brew. One of them, Dean Corwin, was a sweet, little lady, who was very nervous in public. [I] had absolutely no idea what was in her head. … We did have Eleanor Roosevelt come and talk to us, and that was quite an impressive meeting. I don't remember a thing about it other than she was there. She must have made a wonderful speech.

SI: Was she coming to NJC or was she coming to, I know she also came to Hillel at Rutgers, do you remember which time it was?

MN: It was in my sophomore year because … I have a picture of my house chairman, sitting with her and Dean Corwin at a table. That was in 1944. I think she may just have been doing the rounds of the women's colleges, or something like that, raising the morale at home. What Dean Boddie thought was a mystery. I always thought of her as a very, prissy, Southern lady, who really didn't like sex very much, and was just a smiling vacuum. … I had no idea what went on in her head either. I kind of suspected that she was a closet anti-Semite but … I have nothing to go on, just … a sensation.

SI: You mentioned earlier that you think you were being discriminated against at NJC?

MN: No, I did not feel that way at all, possibly by some of the girls, some of the students, but not the faculty, not all the faculty.

SI: Do any incidents stand out?

MN: No, no, just a general sense. There was one kid who, I was a freshman, she was a sophomore … I still remember her name, now I forgot it, flaming redhead with freckles. She thought she was the queen of the mob and I … kind of sensed that she didn't like me because I was Jewish. Now that just may have been me, had nothing to do with her, she may just have it in for all fat freshmen, but I didn't like to have anything to do with her. I tried very hard to steer away from her. … There were little things like we were passing each other on the path and she would give me a bump, you know, little unpleasantnesses like that, that I thought were unnecessary.

SI: I get the impression that the school was of the size where you knew everybody.

MN: Yes, yes. It was a very, comfortable, small school.

SI: Today, you wouldn't have that problem, you would never see them again. You mentioned this senior honors paper, can you kind of tell us how you got involved with that and then what you worked on?

MN: That's purely grades, it's a matter of grades. I had done a paper for Ms. Campbell on prejudice and tolerance in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, that's where I got involved in these travels, and, of course, I was … one of her students, and we were given the opportunity to do high honors if you had a certain grade average. She had quite a few, Judson had quite a few, and Hickman. It was kind of an even spread across the board and I self-chose my topic. Of course, I had to tell her about it, and have her approve it, and it took a good three quarters of the year. You know, we didn't have a word processor in those days, it was called a typewriter, and it happened that I was able to borrow somebody's electric typewriter, but the typos abounded. As a matter-of-fact, I found the paper not too long ago and … I was amazed. I made a copy of it before it fell apart.

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

SI: This is tape two, side two.

MN: I don't think it was brought up at that time, how much the English missed them once they were gone because they had been such an economic force with the international trade. … As a matter-of-fact, there was a wonderful piece about Hebrew as the Internet of the Middle Ages because the Jews could go anywhere in Europe and find other people who could speak their language. So they had trade routes that the Gentiles didn't have and they were very valuable. For that purpose they were a valuable part of the population. I didn't think that came out in my paper.

JW: How many pages was the piece when you finished?

MN: It must have been about fifty pages.

JW: And the source material, was that in various languages or in English?

MN: In English, it was English but I was able to get to the New York Public Library which had the … rolls.

JW: Pipe rolls?

MN: Yes, they had the rolls and …

JW: In book form.

MN: Yes, book form. It was fascinating and I realized the role in creating the mortgage, the whole mortgage system. I told my son that recently. I don't know when, how, because he's a cantor and … I think it was while he was still a cantorial school. I said, "Do you realize what the

Jews had been; they created the whole system." He said, "Really?" I said, "Yes, let me give you an excerpt of my paper you can take it to your teacher," which he did. I never got a comment.

JW: So the material was all in English that you knew?

MN: Yes. I could have gone into French but there was no need because I was dealing with English.

JW: I was curious, because you mentioned you were taking Latin until high school, and your father had …

MN: Well, they may very well have been. My Latin … never turned into Medieval Latin, different language. So I also … studied French when I was in college. I loved French. I took three years of it as a matter-of-fact, got into the great playwrights. Never read Shakespeare. People say, "How did you manage to escape college without Shakespeare?" I said, "It's very easy: study [Jean] Racine." [laughter]

SI: What was your thesis statement for this paper, do you remember?

MN: Well the basic statement was, they were welcomed, brought in by William mainly to be economic cows for the king's use to raise taxes, because the Jews had the trade money. Gentiles could not collect interest and therefore they had no banks. The Jewish traders, I forget the details really, but the whole idea was that William the Conqueror saw to it that when he … conquered England, he had his royal Jews there to provide money for the treasury and every now and again, there was what you call a *pogrom*. Some Gentile child was found killed and blood libel was raised, the child was killed to make the *matzo* for Passover and there would be a general slaughter in the community. This went on periodically. I don't recall exactly what happened under Edward III, whether maybe he would have been a crusader, or his family had been in the crusades, and he decided that … for religious reasons he had to get rid of the Jews. I do know, that I have read fairly recently that that was one of the biggest mistakes some monarchies ever made because they lost a large economic base by ousting the Jewish population. It would be interesting to read some economic history of that particular time to see exactly what happened. It just preceded the Black Death. The Black Death I think was a century later, the fourteenth century.

JW: 1346.

MN: … 13-something?

JW: 1346.

MN: That would be the fourteenth century, yes. Did you read (Coulter's?) book, *The Black Death*?

JW: No, I read; I forgot the author. It was sort of an amalgamation of internal and external things. There was a twelfth century work written by a Frenchman, whose name escapes me at

the moment, but that was very good evidence of, prior to the Black Death, how much expansion had gone on, and then, the recession.

MN: Interesting. The connections are just fascinating.

SI: I am glad I brought my own medievalist. [laughter] I was wondering if you could give me some kind of a general sense of what daily life was like in NJC during the war? Was it just mostly studying?

MN: See, you're talking to a blue stocking. … I lived in the library. You get up in the morning, and I was one of those who was up early. Early breakfast, you know some people would even skip breakfast, and I wouldn't be averse to an eight o'clock class. As a matter-of-fact, I think one of my freshman chemistry classes was eight o'clock in the morning. See, I'm a morning person. Class, lab, possibly a free period, there were times when I had time to go to the music building with my piano music and sit down at the piano and play. Saturday afternoons I would get out a batch of records and sit and they had listening rooms and I would take my homework with me and pick up maybe a new piece of music for me. But, by and large, it was study, meet friends, another class, lunch, maybe another free period, another class, go to the library and stay until dinner. Occasionally, I would get home in between and talk to some of the kids in the building. In the evening, it was either back to the library or hang out … with some friends.

SI: Where would you hang out?

MN: In their rooms, in the hallway, on the staircase, in the living room, in the basement with the laundry, there's always laundry, and it was [scrubbing] boards, scrubbing boards, no washing machines.

SI: Do you remember any of the places you would go socially?

MN: We'd go to the movies, go to a concert, or two. There were some local dinettes around we could go for ice cream. Didn't really leave campus all that much during the war. We stayed pretty close to … home.

SI: When you went down into New Brunswick, what would you do?

MN: Maybe we had to do a little clothing shopping, go to a clothing store, pick up something like a pair of stockings. Maybe … I can't recall ever going out to lunch. We would go out for an ice cream soda or plate of ice cream. There was a Sarah Lee, what was it? Somebody Lou, had a place that was very popular with prior classes, but I think she was a victim of the war, and the movie house was where the Robert Treat Hotel, is or used to be. That was to us the center of town. … I know we saw a great James Mason movie there.

JW: Did you travel at all to the Queens College Campus or to Rutgers College? Did you ever go to chapel or see concerts?

MN: Never went to chapel at Rutgers. The only time we went to Rutgers was for the concerts in the gym.

JW: Which groups were there?

MN: Horowitz. I know that there were quartets there, but I don't think I was into chamber music at the time, so that didn't impress me. It would be a great pianist and … you know, I don't recall that we were given any transportation. Again, a victim of the war, we were really sequestered. We had concerts at our place but if you ask me where or who, you would draw a blank.

JW: There were no choral groups performing?

MN: Oh, we had our own theater group; we had our own dance group. We had organ concerts, we … did have concerts, a piano. We had some of the faculty singing. I remember one guy singing and, it's from the *Messiah*, a great bass aria at the very end, and, "A trumpet shall sound." One of our professors was a *basso profundo* and he loved to show off. We had our own homegrown concerts but I don't recall any quartets coming. Of course, there weren't all that many quartets out there at that time. It's only since the mid fifties that the quartet business has taken off.

SI: Were you interested in any other types of music, like swing music, or any of the jazz bands?

MN: Yes. I was a, jazz no, but swing, yes. Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw, dance music; I would have loved to dance but I never had a good partner. I married two men with two left feet.

SI: You mentioned that most of the men were gone. Was there much of a dating scene during the war?

MN: No, in a way. … I know that might have been my senior year when the men were already coming back. I know that a group of our girls went over to the Sammy [Sigma Alpha Mu] House. There was a terrible fire, a terrible fire in one of the fraternities and she was killed, sweet kid, too, nice girl. We were horrified. I wasn't much for the fraternity scene. I basically felt that they were very elitist and very selective and not my cup of tea, at all. I'm amazed it's still going. I thought that with the war gone, they'd all be gone, but they are still thriving.

JW: There wasn't much transportation, because gas was an issue. There wasn't much interaction between the Rutgers College men, who were there and gone?

MN: No, no, very little. … Maybe a class above me or a class below me, there may have been one or two who were dating Rutgers men, but they were very rare.

SI: I know that Rutgers men had to go to chapel every, either once a week or several times a week, was it the same?

MN: Twice a week: Tuesdays and Fridays. I think we had to dress up for chapel. What that meant I couldn't tell you. I think it meant you could not wear pants but maybe toward the end and then, I think, was chapel canceled my last year? I somehow have the recollection that it may have been dropped to once a week in my final year. … I enjoy listening to the Bach Preludes that the organist played. That for me was a treat, and I liked the hymns. I loved to sing the hymns. I liked even to hear the sermons and, occasionally, we'd have … one Rabbi, who would come down. The designated Rabbi would come and give a talk. I always found him a bit pompous, didn't like him much and I didn't have much to do with the Jewish girls. I always felt much an outsider. I had never had any religious background. My father was an atheist and so we were atheists and it's not the thing to do, to go into a Hillel meeting and announce that you're an atheist. It doesn't quite go. [laughter] So I never really had too much to do with them and I really didn't know how many Jewish girls there were in my class until I started to do the bulletin column, which I've been doing now for the last five years and … it was probably close to forty percent.

SI: Oh, really?

MN: Yes, a large number and, of course, almost everybody was from New Jersey, … very few outsiders. I'm trying to remember, we may have had a couple of kids from Massachusetts, from Maryland, or something, but certainly not an overwhelming number, most of them and they still live in New Jersey.

SI: Do you remember any international students?

MN: Yes. We had a Persian girl, who was Mazda. She seemed to have a connection with the Pahlavi family. I seem to recall her last name was Pahlavi, (Metha?). … She was not in my circle but I knew her. We talked occasionally, never talked politics and I don't know what religion she was because that didn't come up either. She might have been a Christian, for all I know.

SI: Where did you draw most of your friends from? Was it from the dorm or your club?

MN: It was my classes. My classes above and below me, and not my dormitory so much, sometimes the clubs, but … I wasn't all that outgoing. I was really quite reserved and I found it hard to approach a strange group and I think most of my friends were from my classes, all flaming radicals. We were all going to remake the world and do such good.

SI: Yes, it's really remarkable that you were all so active, socially conscious.

MN: That whole group, and do you know?

SI: Sorry to interrupt, but do you think it was just your group that was like that; were there any other groups that were like that?

MN: No, I think this is a particular group, and it's interesting. One of them, it turned out, was married to, his story came out recently, I found this out from the alumni office. His name was

Albert Schatz. He had been in Selman Waksman's laboratory, developing streptomycin. He was the guy who did it but nobody knew because Waksman took all the credit. … It only came out very recently. Well, I have been writing to Vivian Schatz trying to get some news from her. She's one of them and then there were a couple of others that I have contacted over time. None of them, it's as if they got rid of college, they didn't want to have anything to do with anyone. "Don't bother me with that school anymore." Very strange, because I just get no … reaction from these kids that I was so friendly with way back.

SI: Maybe it's because of what happened since, with the relationship between Rutgers and Douglass?

MN: No, nothing at all, nothing at all. This has been going on for years.

SI: Can you tell us about the transition from NJC to Columbia and that process?

MN: Well … I think, we were told to report to the school in September and go to a certain place to see what assignment there was for the first day of class. I said, "Assignment for the first day of class? They've got to be kidding." Well, I saw that. I think I had maybe two classes or three classes that day and I saw this assignment in contracts and it was … about three chapters and I read all three chapters. [It] didn't say it, but that was the assignment for the first month. So I was just sitting there in class wondering, "What the hell are they talking about?" …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: You were telling us about how you had the assignment.

MN: It was really, here I was, twenty years old, thrown into this mad house of all these young men, all wearing their Army … it was in the Fall so they weren't wearing that. They were wearing their uniforms, this big lecture hall full of, I never heard of a big lecture hall like that. We [NJC] didn't have them. It was a totally different environment and it took me a while to get my legs under me. It was scary. I took a long train trip, I was living in South Flatbush. To get up to 116th Street, to make a class at eight o'clock in the morning, or eight-thirty in the morning, I had to get up, at God knows what. My sister and her family were living with us, she had two babies, one bathroom. My father had to get out of the house, it was a little bit interesting, to escape in the morning. I was able, finally, to get myself a place to stay up there in one of the female dorms. It was a very shattering experience, and, you know, they all tell you, here I graduated practically at the top of my class and now I'm down at the bottom trying to understand what are they talking about; what is this strange language. … We had, the curriculum was interesting. We had contracts, civil procedure, legal method and something called, well basically, legal history. The legal history professor was a royalist. He thought that the American Revolution was a mistake and he would play such tricks on us. He was just an unpleasant character, but very, very, funny and very, very, brilliant. There wasn't much about English and French legal history that he did not know but his textbook was coming out in pieces. It was not a whole textbook. We had to buy sections and it was … set up, according to his set up, not any logical set up because he would suddenly have a case jammed in to bring up a point and you had to dig hard to get to the point, which was something that he was talking about three pages before,

very strange man. Then, legal method, we had to learn how to write a memorandum and it's a completely different way of addressing a problem and I found it very hard because I go in for long expository stuff, which is what you do when you're writing a paper. … Terse, to the point; very directed and lot of citations. Well, it took me about the first semester before I really began to feel comfortable and then everything sort of settled in and I found out that there were a couple of courses that I found very interesting that nobody else did. I loved agency. The idea of somebody, under what circumstances can you assume that somebody is working on his own, or working for somebody else; what is his authority? How far back does it go? I loved it and I also loved negotiation paper. Well, it's probably called … uniform commercial code, dealing with commercial paper and all the transactions. I liked that very much. … I also loved the last courses I had on conflict of laws and jurisprudence, the philosophy of law. … In between that were also some practical courses, including a lot on trust and estates, because my future husband was destined to a career in that area and additional work on contracts and torts. I didn't even know what tort was when I went into class. I think that tort was something you ate with a fork. It was quite a dash of cold water.

JW: Columbia Law School was very structured. Was there any type of campus life, or was everyone in there studying, getting ready to get their degrees as fast as possible?

MN: They were really working very hard. … Many of them were married. They had to get home to families. Oh, there were the usual bunch who went to the West End Bar and drank. I mean, the West End Bar is a well known and there were all sorts side streets, the Hungarian Gardens is still there, I understand, on Amsterdam Avenue. That was a nice restaurant. It was pretty much, again, pretty much amongst life. You really had to work hard. I know a guy that, I dated many, many, many years later, played bridge for three years and graduated very well. He's just, you know, one of those guys who can absorb it in class. I could not; I had to read the book, I had to study the case law, I had to even read the footnotes.

JW: Barnard was, of course, across the street. Since you had applied there years earlier and been rejected, was it strange to go to school there?

MN: No, no, screw them. [laughter] They can go their way.

SI: How many women were in your class?

MN: Maybe ten, of whom five were veterans. … One of those, as a matter-of-fact, wound up a family court judge in Massachusetts. There was Sarah, Muriel, Ginny, maybe four of us, who were not out of the service. It was a very, very narrow slice and it didn't begin to improve until the '60s and the women's movement, and the girls began to demand their rights and I said to myself, "I wonder what dear Dean Smith would think if a woman walked into his office and said, 'I demand to be able to use the men's bathroom.'" That was a big thing. The only women's bathroom in the building was in the basement, you know, with two classes back to back, what are you supposed to do? I had to get special dispensation from the Dean to be able to use the faculty bathroom, because there were women faculty, and it was really terribly insulting. They just did not count us as human beings.

SI: Do your think your male classmates kind of shared in that idea?

MN: That women have rights, or that?

SI: This kind of institutional sexism.

MN: Oh, they couldn't care less, that didn't bother them. I mean, they weren't involved. We weren't involved, you know, we were glad to be there. We would have licked their shoes and this is something the young women can't understand, that we were delighted to have been accepted to Columbia Law School. My God, look at the competition and either the thought of standing up for rights had never occurred to us, even when it came to job applications.

SI: Is there anything that kind of stands out that we haven't discussed?

MN: No. Not really. … As I said I settled in so that by the time I reached second year I was doing reasonably well. I kind of knew how to conduct myself, and what was being required. Really, there's nothing; nothing that sticks out as being particularly remarkable. I got married and, of course, carried on a courtship. It wasn't long distance; by that time, I was going home pretty much every weekend. I was living up at Columbia, at Johnson Hall, which was one of the women's dorms; I don't know whether it was still all women. I would either go home to my place, or to my fiancé's place, and spend the weekend there. Always studying, always carrying the books with me, always had a paper to write, or something. We never really had any practical experience. We didn't have the clinics that they have today, here you had the opportunity to go out in the field and work with a client, work with a brief, work on a court case. Everything was corporate law, corporate and tax. I laugh when I see how litigation has come into its own. "Oh, you want to go to litigation?" That's the people who hang up their own shingle, you know. "You don't want to do that, they get your hands dirty." Frankly, that's where the law lives, that's really the heart of it. All the other stuff is soft.

JW: Was there a competition between the law students at the time? First, my father went to NYU.

MN: Oh, yes, oh, yes, oh, yes. … As a matter-of-fact, I think, no, it was Brooklyn Law School that I could have gone to on a full scholarship. I applied to NYU and I was accepted but there was just no question that Columbia was the better school. NYU has come up so far and so fast that it is now considered a school where you really want to send your undergraduate. I was very surprised as I would never have thought that NYU would improve so dramatically. I know the law school has been very, very fine for a long time because my second husband … was NYU law, Harvard undergrad, NYU law, so he was always, … "At NYU we did things differently," you know, "NYU is much better than Columbia."

JW: Before an exam, did you take books from the library where pages had been ripped out?

MN: No.

JW: Nothing like that.

MN: No, nothing like that, no. It may be that in a loose leaf the pages were ripped out, or were removed. I think, by and large, they were pretty honorable. Don't ask me why? When you think of the ways you can cheat and some of them did, but there were no pages ripped out.

SI: So your first job out of law school was working for the …

MN: With the New York State Labor Board, run by a very peculiar crew.

SI: What did that job entail?

MN: Basically, I wrote memorandum for them to help back up their decisions. I would be there to discuss how they should … rule and very often they told me what to say, you know, how my memorandum should go … pretty routine stuff.

SI: Was that considered a traditional job for a woman, or were you like the first?

MN: There was no such thing, there was no such thing, whatever you can get. Many of the traditional women hung up shingles in their neighborhoods and waited for their clients to come in. No, it was very rough. The really top, crackerjack, students may be able to get a job at one of the better law firms, one of the good law firms in their estates department, or in their mutual fund department, where they're kind of buried. They don't have a public face. I worked for a mid-sized law firm in Manhattan for a couple of years. My brother-in-law was a partner. I worked in the mutual fund department. You know, I'm the kind of person who can find something good in anything, as long as I'm busy. It's terrible. It was a very valuable insight into how these operations are run, the kind of regulation they have, the kind of oversight they have, and how they happened, and the way you can slide through the … cracks. As a matter-of-fact, Drexel Burnham Lambert was one of our clients and Michael Milken was one of our boys. We never thought he was doing anything wrong, interesting. I'm trying to think of some of the really bang-up things I did … I had a three-day bankruptcy trial where I took the candy company to court. Oh, I had fun with that case.

SI: Can you say which candy company?

MN: This was Carousel Candy Company, they were in operation in the late '70s, big, big operation. They did a tremendous business importing candy from South America, bagging it, and selling it to candy stores, little ones. Our client provided the plastic bagging and, all of a sudden, they weren't paying their bills. So we took a look and we found out that they, they were very shaky. They were not paying little bills. They weren't paying our clients' bills, didn't concern us so much, they weren't paying electricity. They weren't paying the janitors. Okay, so we threw the new bankruptcy statute at them. It was brand new, just minted, and had them declared bankrupt and then I had to go find the assets, get back-money that had been improperly spent and find what else was out there in the collectibles. It took me the better part of the year to work that case out and I was virtually alone. I found out stuff on some attorneys that would curl your hair. There was one of them required … one case required, it was a motion. The attorney had to turn in his time records, which he did, and the judge looked at them and said, "You made

those out yesterday, didn't you?" The guy said, "Yes." He said, "Didn't you keep your time records all the way through?" "No." "No allowance for time," and he kept doing this. He did that down in Florida, too. … Then there was a business; they started doing business as a corporation down in Florida. They had transferred all the assets down to Florida, what was left of the Candy Company, and they started doing business before they had gotten a certificate of incorporation, that's just slightly illegal. I tried to get money from the insurance carrier … They had a very state-of-the-art peanut roasting machine that had a fire. I don't know why there was no warranty on that machine, I'm sure I asked, but there was business interruption insurance so I contacted the carrier of the business interruption insurers and it turned out that it was bifurcated. I mean, it was really many, many complications but it worked out well. I got the money; I got by debtors, my creditors satisfied, they didn't get much money out of it, but they got something. That was, that was fun. That's about it. Oh, … I think I talked a little bit about my later years in my co-op, where I was working with three hats, and the president would call on me for all sorts of incidental information and I realized that the secretary is really the keeper of the records. A good secretary knows where everything is, and when everything happened, and has a good set of minutes to back up, and even writing minutes is … something you have to learn and then I resigned last year; came up here. I'm trying not to make trouble.

JW: You were there for so many years, the cultural shift in the '50s and '60s, the beat generation, and the Beatles.

MN: Well, I had kids. I had two girls and a boy and the whole youth [movement], I mean I loved, I loved the Beatles, and the Beatles and the Rolling Stones and the Bob Dylan, that's my music. Why? Because I had kids and they drilled it into me. My son was a drummer at the time. My older girl became a crackerjack guitarist. She … even considered going into coffee houses and singing for a while, then she decided; she first became a teacher, and then went to law school, and, finally, got the job that she had really wanted and had the misfortune of getting lung cancer … died in four months. So she died in 1991. Well, my other two keep me going and I have a little grandchild out in California, six and a half years old, who is going to be the terror of first grade. … Well, I was very much involved … involved emotionally. I said, you know, finally the women are asserting themselves and it had to be done in a mass movement. It could not be done on an individual basis. I came along with the Civil Rights movement and we had gone to black churches and we had participated. We went to … Washington on anti-war marches. It was a very, very affecting time, very important. I know a lot of nasty things are being said about it but I think it had to happen and … I really can't see that any change, any of that shift had anything to do with our international status. To me, that's totally, it's in another camp. It may have affected the politics to a degree. I know that the Democratic convention in Chicago, in 1968, produced a riot and some very ugly … backlash. Then Nixon came along, whether Nixon would have come along anyhow, what he represented certainly was … many steps backward. Except in retrospect, he wasn't so bad. It's funny how time has a way of wearing away some of the sins, and the women's movement has seen certain turns but I think … it's been beneficial by and large. I mean, I can't see myself doing some of the things that the early feminists did because, in order to make a point; they had to exaggerate but I think that had to happen, and, in a way, I'm sorry that we did not get the benefit when I was in college and I think there could have been many things done differently.

SI: Did you participate in activities like marches and meetings and all that?

MN: Yes. We went to consciousness-raising meetings. Not with the men, we didn't take the men with us, we didn't do that. … As I said, my husband and I went, we marched, we went down to Washington twice for an anti-Vietnam War march. … We were members of Ethical Culture at the time and they had several black meetings, with black churches. We went to those, met the black congregates, were very much involved in … Great Neck, which is a very liberal community, making sure that there were, that black families were made welcome. My son's … he was in the Cub Scouts, his Cub Scout leader was a black woman, whose son became a lawyer. I used to run into him in family court all the time. Yes, interesting times. Well, I think you just about run me dry.

SI: Thank you very much. Is there anything that you think we missed that we should add to the record now?

MN: I can't think of a thing.

SI: All right, well, thank you very much and for great answers to our questions.

MN: Well, thank you, thank you. I'm glad I had something to contribute.

JW: Very much so.

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

Reviewed by Charles Edmonds October 19, 2006
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak December 5, 2006
Reviewed by Miriam Null January 15, 2007