

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH RITA POPELSKY

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Rita Popelsky on January 23rd, 2012 in Voorhees, New Jersey with Shaun Illingworth. Thank you very much for having me here today.

Rita Popelsky: You're very welcome.

SI: To begin could you tell me where and when you were born?

RP: I was born in Poland in a very, very small little town. It's actually called a "shtetl," and the name is Zawichost, in September of 1930. When I was nine years old, my family, we left Poland. That was actually six months before the Second World War. My aunt and uncle who lived in New Jersey sent us the papers, and we couldn't get into the United States so we went to Cuba. ... There, we lived for about five years, and in 1944, in May, we were able to come to the United States. ...

SI: I want to first ask about your family background in Poland. First, what were your parents' names?

RP: Sarah and Lieb Warech. In Polish you add, the "W" is pronounced as a "V" so W-A-R-E-C-H, and if you want to ask me questions, please do.

SI: Your father's family, had they always lived in this little village?

RP: Always, always. Actually, his family was in a different village than ours, we lived there all our lives until I was nine years old.

SI: Your father was from a nearby village?

RP: Yes.

SI: And your mother's family lived there?

RP: In Zawichost, forever.

SI: Do you know the name of your father's village?

RP: Zaklikov. As a matter of fact, I wanted to know whether Zawichost, whether I could find it on the map. ... By that time, my boyfriend, I took him to the 42nd Street Library in New York, and there it was, my little "shtetl" was on the map.

SI: Can you give me a rough idea of where this was in relation to some of the bigger cities?

RP: Quite a distance from any of the big ones.

SI: Was it in Central Poland or North Poland?

RP: ... Let's see, it would have been the eastern part. I'm trying to remember on the map where it was situated, and it seemed to me in the eastern part of Poland.

SI: Do you know how your parents got together? Were they matched up?

RP: Oh, yes. That was, more or less, what had happened in those years. Actually, I had heard that she had been going with someone, and he had left for America--this was during the First World War--and he was supposed to have sent for her, and she never got the message because of the war, didn't get any mail going through. So, my father was a match, and most people during those years, especially in Europe, were matched.

SI: What was your father doing before he came to the United States?

RP: The way we made our living was they rented orchards, and during the summer, we moved across the Vistula River to a place called Yenshiv. ... We rented the orchards, we stayed there for the whole summer, picked the fruit, and every Thursday, went to markets to sell the fruit. This is the way we did it.

SI: The whole family would be involved?

RP: Yes. I remember when I was a little girl, being wrapped up and put on a wagon because we traveled by horse and wagon going to the market. ... Then, we also had market days in our little "shtetl" and I used to sit there with my mother to watch whenever she had to go get something and I helped with the selling. ... I was seven, eight years old.

SI: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

RP: Yes. I was one of five. ... We were five, two girls and three boys, and my, right now, we're two left of the five. ... I was next to the youngest.

SI: How much older were your older siblings?

RP: The oldest was my sister, and we were ten years apart between my sister and I. ... My brother, the baby, he was born in 1933.

SI: The older children probably would have been doing more during the orchard picking season?

RP: Well, I don't remember them going with my parents to the markets, it was only I. I guess they must have left the baby with someone else but I do remember those trips, it was pitch black at night, they bundled me up, and put me on the [wagon. It was quite an experience.

SI: What was your life like the rest of the year when you were not picking the fruit?

RP: ... Going to school and to cheder, which is Hebrew School. I used to go with my brothers, and besides that, there wasn't much else. I used to know a couple of kids from the neighborhood, but you have to figure that even if I had friends, every summer, back and forth, it wasn't a long friendship.

SI: Was it typical in your village for a family to rent the orchard?

RP: I don't know, but I don't think there were too many that did that. It was quite an experience. There was one day, I remember we were crossing the Vistula, and there was a storm that came up, and a really bad one, and I remember my mother throwing a sack on my head. It didn't do anything, but I remember that very distinctly.

SI: Was there a ferry that you would take?

RP: We would go down with the horse and carriage, and go right on the flat bottom boats, like you see in movies, old times, and crossed over and went on our way. That was the only way that we crossed over.

SI: Was there a cabin at the orchard where you would stay?

RP: A very, very tiny cabin. ... My sister, I don't think came with us, but my brothers did. ... My mother used to give me a little wicker basket to go around, and if there was a bad storm, to go around and pick up the fruit that was blown off. That I remember very well, and I remember she had put like a blanket on the floor and had me open up ... the poppy seeds, and I remember this big, like to me it looked like a mountain. I was little so it was so big, and those poppy seeds, my mother used to make prune jam for the holidays. Purim, they would make the tri-cornered.

SI: Hamantaschen?

RP: You got it, the hamantaschen, and that was used to make the hamantaschen, so that was my job, to open up the poppy seeds.

SI: Can you describe for me a little bit about the shtetl and what it was like? Your village, what was that like?

RP: We lived in the back of this, to me, it looked like a huge house. My sister and brother went back to visit not too many years ago, and that house in the front was gone, but we lived in the back. It was a one house, there were two apartments in the front and one in the back. In the front, it was my family, which consisted of seven, my mother and father and the five siblings, all in one room. ... On the opposite side of us, there was a couple, and they had, they were what we considered rich--they had two rooms. In the back, there was my uncle, and his wife, and my mother's mother, my grandmother. So all of it was within one big house but divided. That was our living quarters, and as far as it was one long street that I can remember. Next to us, there was a big stone fence, and I believe that either was the mayor of that little town or someone very

important that lived in that big house next to us with a big fence. Just recently, my niece sent me a picture of our synagogue in Zawichost when I used to go with my mother, and of course it was ultra-orthodox. Upstairs was the women's section and downstairs were the men, and I still can see myself climbing up those stairs and looking through downstairs where the men were praying. I was going to cheder or Hebrew School. I started when I was very, very young. I went with my brothers. I think I was the only girl in that class. My mother believed very much in education.

...

SI: What was the school like?

RP: One little room and one long table with the boys and me all around. That was my cheder.

SI: Who taught you?

RP: It was a rabbi, but actually I don't think he was the rabbi in the synagogue, just ... a Hebrew school teacher.

SI: What about your regular school? What was that like?

RP: I have it very well written in that little booklet that I was telling you about. It was quite a distance to walk, and I only was feeling safe when my two brothers were with me going to school because there was a lot of anti-Semitism. This was in the '30s.

SI: The school was outside of the village?

RP: Yes, it was bit of a walk and we could only walk. ... It wasn't the happiest time of my life. ... Would you want me to describe it?

SI: If you do not mind, I would appreciate it.

RP: ... The way I have it in that book is that there, it was towards the end of the school year, and they were giving a show in the school. ... I wanted to go so badly until finally my mother gave me the money, and I walked by myself, and it was getting kind of dark. Anyway, the room where this was being held, it was just packed, I mean, like I described, I couldn't even pick my arms up that it was so packed in the room. ... One of the kids nearby said something or whatever, and the teacher came straight at me, and pulled me out, and had me leave the room, and I was so upset, I had to walk home. By that time, it was getting really dark, and I had to walk home by myself. Now, this is over sixty years and I can still picture it in my mind. It wasn't the happiest time for me when I went to school there. If, God forbid, you did something that she felt it was wrong, she came over with a stick, or I don't remember if it was a stick or something else, and had you put your arm out and she would whack you, like that, real hard. So is it any wonder that I didn't like the school, I didn't like that part of my life. That's the way it was.

SI: Were they just strict or would they do that only to the Jewish children?

RP: See, they had us, the whole class, they had the morning prayers and they told us children who were Jewish to put our hands down on the table and this called more attention to us. So, it wasn't very pleasant, not at all.

SI: How many Jewish children were in the class?

RP: I don't know. I doubt if there was even a quarter percent, probably much less than that.

SI: Can you describe to me where the shtetl was in relation to other communities? How was it set up?

RP: Well, it was, the Polish people lived mainly outside, and ours was just that one long street with a few houses around it, but it was, the way I remember it, it would be the main street, just a few off and then beyond it, it was the Polish section.

SI: You were surrounded by the Polish?

RP: Yes.

SI: Other than going to school, would you have much interaction with Polish people?

RP: No, just ... some of the men that helped us with the picking of the fruit, and that's about it, and the school.

SI: Growing up, do you remember cultural and religious traditions that were carried on in your family?

RP: Very orthodox. I was brought up in an extremely orthodox home. Passover--the special preparations that we had to have for Passover--being that we were very poor, we didn't have dishes or silverware or stuff like that that we could use just for Passover, and then other ones for everyday use. There was a special way that we had to make the silverware and the glass. Glasses and dishes, there's certain ways that we did it in order for it to be able to be used for Passover. ... The table was made out of wood, and we had to scrub it with a heavy scrub brush, and the silverware, we had to put rocks, and have them heat until you saw the red fire in the rocks, and put that in a bucket with water, hot, and put the silverware into the bucket. Put the water in it, and the boiling water, and that is the way we were able to use the silverware for Passover. As far as glasses, it had to stay three days, each day in a clean glass of water, and so on. It's very intricate, but that's the ultra-orthodox way of doing things where we lived. So, I remember those things because I was involved with my mother doing that. Yes, it's something different.

SI: What would you do on an average day? Would you have time for yourself to play or were you mostly doing chores?

RP: ... Actually, it was my brother that was younger than me and my brothers that were older than me. We were together, and so, in the end, I really didn't need any outside friends, and I didn't know that I didn't have that many friends. As far as that's concerned, it didn't bother me at all.

SI: What would you and your brothers do?

RP: That's a good question, besides school and Hebrew School, not very much. Not really much. ... Around Passover, we used to play a game where we would, get hazelnuts, and we used to make like a little hole in the ground, and sort of flick this finger and whoever got the hazelnut inside the little hole was the winner. That's a big game that we played, but not much else, and like I said, I didn't know that I was supposed to have more friends, or that I should be happy, or whatever. That was life for us.

SI: Did you have to do a lot of chores or things to help around the household?

RP: Not much to do around, we were all in one room. So there wasn't too much to be done, there weren't too many beds to be made, or it was just the everyday routine, whatever there was.

SI: You mentioned it was very difficult to go to school particularly by yourself.

RP: For me, yes, yes, definitely.

SI: Would people say things to you?

RP: Yes, yes. They used to throw stones, and yell, "*Zyd do Palestine*" meaning, "Jew go to Palestine." That I remember very well.

SI: Were there ever any attacks on Jewish people in the village?

RP: Well, some of the men that used to come in on Sundays to go to, I don't know if you'd call it a bar, because I've never been near it, but I know they used to come into town. ... When they got a little bit too much to drink, they used to go looking for the Jews. ... I remember my cousin, Mordka, he was one guy that wouldn't take it from anybody, but my mother and my aunt, they would start yelling for Mordka to hide because they're coming into town. I remember those days, and we would close up the house, the room, the house, whatever you called it, until they went away. That was in the early, mid-thirties, before the Second World War.

SI: Even though you were very young, did you have any awareness about what was happening in the world?

RP: Not the outside world, no. As a matter of fact, if it wouldn't have been for my aunt and uncle, that I told you were living here in New Jersey, we would have been one of those numbers that were slaughtered because we didn't know, we didn't, you had to be rich to have a radio, which tells you something about the shtetl. ... We didn't know what was going on in the outside world.

SI: Growing up, did you only speak Yiddish, or did you speak a mixture of Yiddish and Polish?

RP: Polish, Yiddish and Polish.

SI: Before you left for ultimately Cuba, and then the United States, had you ever been away from your "shtetl?"

RP: No. My sister did. She used to go to visit our other grandmother in the town where my father came from, but none of us kids, other than my sister and my brother Martin.

SI: Did your father's family visit you in your town?

RP: Not that I know of. I remember my mother's oldest brother used to come, so that I knew. When we had company, it made an impression on me, so I knew more or less who had come to visit. They couldn't stay overnight in our little room.

SI: You were nine years old when this happened. Were you aware that something was going to happen, or did they just say one day, "We're leaving and we're not coming back?"

RP: I didn't know at the time, but years and years later, I realized that my mother must have been in contact with her brother here, and that he had seen, more or less, the handwriting on the wall, and he and my aunt got to work and got papers for us to leave. As a matter of fact, we left with the last ship around that area, because when we were already in Cuba, someone from our village had come on the ship, the *St. Louis*, and he was not allowed to get off in Cuba. The reason, his brother sent him the visa a bit too late, and he couldn't, but by the time he got off the ship, it was in France, and the war had already started. So we were very fortunate because we had a wonderful family here.

SI: From your perspective, you were just told to pack up?

RP: Yes.

SI: How much time did you have to prepare?

RP: Not that much because we didn't have very much. We had very little to take with us. I remember, one of these wicker, big baskets. ... See those brass candlesticks that are up there against the wall? Those are my mother's that we brought from Poland. Some silverware, all I have left is one tablespoon as a remembrance, and some tablecloths, and just whatever could fit



into that wicker basket. ... Later on, my mother put on top of it, a board and blanket, that was my bed when we lived in Havana. So, not much.

SI: Was it just your family going or were you going with others from the village?

RP: ... The one that was supposed to have come with us was the one that had to wait for the next boat. Something interesting on the ship that left Le Havre to Havana, there were a lot of young people. My sister was, I think eighteen or so, and there were a lot of them on the boat from different cities across Poland, and one of them eventually became my brother-in-law, my sister's husband.

SI: Your family left Europe from Le Havre.

RP: We left from Poland, Gdansk, that was a big city in Poland, and we got to France, and from Le Havre we took a boat to Havana.

SI: You traveled by boat from Gdansk to Le Havre?

RP: Yes.

SI: What was the journey from your "shtetl" to Gdansk like?

RP: We went by train. I remember we went, we were in Warsaw, and us coming from a little "shtetl," and a big city like Warsaw, I had never seen a bus or a car. ... We traveled by train, and it was quite an experience as you can image, quite an experience.

SI: How did you feed yourself on the trip? Did you bring food with you or were you able to buy things on the way?

RP: No, we had, my mom must have brought something somewhere. I remember a train station in, I think it was Paris, and we, I was on this bench, and my mother had left me to watch over things while she went so she must have gone to buy something to eat. ... I can still see myself sitting there with the heavy coat, nine years old.

SI: How long were you in France?

RP: They took us to this wonderful place where they had food which we had never seen before, and we were up there. ... My brothers and I had a wonderful time. I remember playing ball out there and other games. It was just heavenly. It was a wonderful time to be there, but we didn't, I guess we must have stayed several days, and then we took the boat, the *Flandre*.

SI: That was the name of the boat?

RP: Yes, and then, later on, I read that it was one of the boats that the French sank so that they wouldn't fall into Germany's hands. I remember that very well.

SI: Do you remember the ship voyage from Gdansk to France?

RP: Well, that voyage, there was a very bad storm, very bad storm, and all of us, with the exception of my kid brother, who at that time, if I was nine, he was six, he was tending to all of us. We were so seasick, practically everybody except him.

SI: What were the conditions like on the ship?

RP: Packed. I remember I was down, so it wasn't first class. [laughter]

SI: Do you have a sense if most of the people on the ship were refugees also?

RP: I think so, from different parts of Poland.

SI: At this point, did you understand why you were leaving?

RP: No. ... They wouldn't discuss things like that with us, not at this age.

SI: When you got to France, did you go directly to Le Havre, or did you go through France to Le Havre?

RP: We went through France, but I remember that place vividly because it was heavenly, it was just wonderful.

SI: You were in Paris at least for a little while?

RP: At a station, at a train station, yes.

SI: Tell me a little bit about the voyage over to Cuba.

RP: ... That was, we had more fun on that boat, and wonderful food compared to the food we had at home, of course. It was like no other trip before, and I do remember that it was pleasant. ... As a matter of fact, when we were in Cuba, I think I mentioned it before, and this gentleman from our "shtetl" came after us. Before they sent the ship back to France, the *St. Louis* had gone to the States, and they sent them away, they went to Mexico, they came back to Havana, there were some that committed suicide by throwing themselves overboard because they knew what they were going to go back to. So, we were so fortunate, yes.

SI: Do you remember the month that you finally arrived in Cuba?

RP: Yes, we got to Cuba in March of '39. It was about six months before the war broke out.

SI: What was it like to get settled in Havana?

RP: Well, first of all, it was hot. It was very hot, and I was wearing a heavy coat, a winter coat. I was thirsty, and there was no place I could get fresh water, and I don't know what, I didn't know about salt water or not salt water. I finally got some water and it was salt water. ... At that time, my mother and my sister did all the arranging that needed to be done, but I'm picturing myself. There I was, a little *nebekh*, it's a Yiddish word for "poor soul." I was sitting there with that heavy coat, and it was so hot in Havana. In '02, I went with my nephew and niece on a trip to Cuba, and I went back to that area where that ship was standing when we got off and the whole neighborhood where we came in, and it was unbelievable the feeling that I had gotten to think that here I was. You can't describe that feeling, and I'm thinking to myself, all those people that the next boat came, and they couldn't get off the ship.

SI: Did they have facilities or a routine for new people coming in or were you left to your own devices?

RP: No, they always, as I said, my mother and my sister took care of everything. ... My mother, as soon as she found a Yiddish-speaking person, she took care of everything. I mean, wherever we were, wherever town or village, wherever, whether in Cuba or in the States, or wherever, she's the one that got everything organized.

SI: Where did you live in those five years in Cuba? Were you in one place or were you moving around?

RP: No, we moved around between two cities, between Havana and Guanabacoa, and I had gone looking for all the places, for the school that I was in, it was an experience. I was looking for my school, and nobody seemed to know, or the street, and found out that the streets were, the names of the streets in Guanabacoa, in my neighborhood, had been changed since I left, since we left, but I did remember that it was, our street was between two streets that were named after famous generals, famous Cuban generals. So, I knew that it had to be there. Anyway, I found an old timer in this park. When I was a kid, I thought it was so huge, and this was a little park, and I asked him for that name. "Oh, yes, that was changed, that was Calle de Division," and I was right, but everything was so broken down and terrible. It was quite an experience for me to go back. I'd like to go back again to see what else they've done with it.

SI: When you first arrived there, what kind of living conditions were you subject to?

RP: Well, we, first my father was selling ties, neckties, and then we brought work from a factory--shoe factories. We brought into the house to do the work because if you were not a citizen, I don't know how it is today, but if you were not a citizen, you couldn't go to work for a factory unless you were a, what do you call, the word doesn't come to me at the moment, but you couldn't work for anybody else. So mainly we brought in work from the shoe factories, and eventually we made shoes of our own for a while, and again, we didn't, there wasn't too much

money around, and my mother, I guess, was in touch with her brother. No, they came, my aunt and uncle came to see us when we were in Havana, and he saw to it that one of the gentlemen that he made friends with, that lived in Havana, to help us in any way he could. Not money wise, but whatever information, and so on, that he would help us with, and we didn't make too much money. My sister went to a factory. She was taught how to cut diamonds, and my brothers and I, and my mother and father, we worked on the shoes, and that was our main income.

SI: Were you in areas where refugees were living together or were you surrounded by Cubans?

RP: In Guanabacoa, at that time, there were very few Jews, very few Jews, and there I made a friend. ... As a matter of fact, one of the main reasons why I wanted to make that trip in '02 was to see my friend and see if she was around. Turned out that she had been in the United States for fifty years. ... That trip was very worthwhile for me to go in '02. To go back to the '39, '40, and so on was quite an experience. ... Here I dreamt that I was going to see Dora, I haven't seen her in so many years. I used to write to her from the United States, and in those years I could remember Spanish very well, although I can get by now.

SI: You had grown up in an ultra-orthodox household, were you able to keep that?

RP: Oh, with my mother, definitely. We weren't supposed to do anything that we weren't supposed to do. Of course, it's different nowadays, but once you're born into it, you don't know any other way of life. It comes very easy and very natural to you. I still keep a kosher home.

SI: I was just curious if it was difficult to keep a kosher home under those circumstances.

RP: No, it was as far as getting meat for the high holidays. Well, my mother would take a bus from Guanabacoa and travel to Havana, and there they had a kosher butcher shop, and she'd buy everything and bring it back. So, we only had that for the high holidays and during the week it was other stuff. ... We had a lot of fruit and vegetables. ... As a kid, we didn't realize how healthy this food was. So, we did okay that way.

SI: Was there a synagogue in the town?

RP: Guanabacoa? No.

SI: Would you go to Havana?

RP: We'd go to Havana and she'd rent a room, a little room somewhere, and stayed over, but when we moved to Havana, it was a different story.

SI: You lived in the town for a while and then you moved back to Havana?

RP: We lived in Havana when we came in March of '39. Then we moved to Guanabacoa, and later on, she felt that we, it wasn't religious enough around the neighborhood and so on, and so

we moved back to Havana. ... From Havana in May of '44, we came to Carmel, New Jersey. Do you know Carmel, New Jersey?

SI: Yes.

RP: South Jersey.

SI: How long did you live in Guanabacoa?

RP: I know that from about 1940 or '41, because I remember being in this girl's home and listening, they had a radio, and listening to the radio that there was a war that broke out--it was United States was attacked. I could still see myself sitting on the rocking chair and listening to the news that the war had broken out, and we were there in Guanabacoa until, I'd say, 1943, and then moved back to Havana until we left in May of '44. We moved around a lot.

SI: When you moved back to Havana, were you still doing the work with the shoes?

RP: No.

SI: Did Cuba eventually get involved in the war effort?

RP: Well, we were very pro-American. We learned songs, and, as a matter of fact, I learned "God Bless America" in Spanish. I don't know all the words in English because I only learned it in Spanish. To this day, when we sing "God Bless America," I just, "*Dios Salve America*" and I followed news of the war. I remember we had a radio that was like the height of that cabinet there, and the speaker was on top, and so I had to stand on a chair, and put my ear down to listen to the news, all the different battles and so on. I even listened to "Hi-O Silver."

SI: "The Lone Ranger?"

RP: "The Lone Ranger," in Cuba. When we came to the States, that's when we were told, what we could do to help the war effort and we did.

SI: I was curious if there were any changes that the war brought while you were in Cuba. Was there a rationing program or anything like that?

RP: No, maybe there was, but we didn't have that much to begin with. So, it didn't hurt us in anyway. We sang all the songs and were a hundred percent pro-American. I was telling somebody a couple of days ago, they had, of course, with Russia after being attacked by Hitler when they weren't supposed to, they were supposed to be friends, but before that, they put on a big, not a show, but in the *capitolio*, the capitol of Cuba, in Havana, they had so many pictures of the war effort going on in Russia. ... At that point, I was what, maybe twelve years old, we thought that Stalin was a God. ... Yes, I don't know what made me go in there, twelve years old, going there and looked at pictures and so on--so how things change.

SI: How far away was Guanabacoa from Havana? How much of a trip was it when you would go there?

RP: ... It was a big trip. We had to take a bus to a town called Regla, and then we had to take a boat, a ferry, across to the Havana harbor, and back again the same way. ... Then, on the trip of '02, we went to Guanabacoa, but there was no ferry. ... They had built, in all those fifty some odd years, they had built a tunnel. So, there was no ferry, there was no boat or anything, and I was stunned. I said, "Where is the town Regla, where I used to go to?" Gone. That's what happens, at least you call that progress.

SI: What was your education like while you were in Cuba?

RP: It was good, it was very good. I was, fifth and sixth grade, I was in Cuba, but there, because we moved around so much, again, after a while, I stopped going because I could never catch up. ... Besides, I had to help in the house and help with making the shoes and all of that. So, it was a whole different life style, and I had gotten friends in Havana besides the daughter in Guanabacoa, I met a few kids, very nice. ...

SI: What was the education like?

RP: ... Fifth and sixth grade, when I compared the education of Cuba, and when I came to the United States, it was, at that time, it was far superior in Cuba. They really put you through the wringer, but you came out knowing the subject matter. We had geography, history, handwriting, so many different subjects. So, when I came to the States, math, I didn't speak the language, so math, I'm not boasting, I'm just telling you that, in math, I got hundreds, and in spelling, I got hundreds. ... In my mind, I pronounced the words, the English words, the way it is written. So, in other words, a word like "know, I know," who would know that you have a "K" in front of it. What was a "K" for? So I would say, in my mind, "ka-no" and many other words that way. So I got good grades in spelling and good grades in math, and I was, I think, three or four months in the class here in Carmel and I was skipped to the next grade, especially when it came to math and spelling and so on. ... Here, you have four or five majors in high school. There, in other South American countries as well, you have at least ten, twelve subjects. I mean, we used to say here, they call it, the South American countries, there was a name that they gave them, it wasn't a very nice connotation, no, but I found the education above, so it was fine. I was happy in school there. I didn't have to worry. There was no anti-Semitism there, not when we were there, so never had to worry about that.

SI: For your family, was the goal to eventually come to the United States?

RP: Well, again my aunt and uncle were the ones that brought us over, not that they had such a good time doing it. ... In those years, ... he had to put down eight thousand dollars so that we wouldn't become a ward of the state. Today, anybody can come in, and eight thousand dollars in

1940 or 1941 or '44 was a lot of money, but thank God they did it. I always say, if it weren't for them, we'd have gone up in smoke.

SI: Tell me a little bit about coming to the United States. What was the trip like?

RP: That was something else. We came by airplane, which was something else, yes, from Jose Marti Airport, and came to Miami, and this was during the war. ... Then, we had to take a train from Miami to Philadelphia, no such thing as air conditioning or anything like that. Every time we would open up a window to get some air, we got soot in our faces, and we were sitting all those hours. So, my aunt always says, "a more bedraggled of a bunch of people I've never seen in my life." That was us. I think most of the train was full of soldiers. It was an experience, because, first of all, the heat, there was nothing to keep you cool, and again, I was wearing this stupid warm coat because I had had, when I was in Poland, I had the croup, which is a sort of a cough, which I had. I always had to be careful, and so I had to wear warm clothes. Although, I remember the doctor telling my mother back in Poland that I needed a warm climate, and that's when I got better, when I was in the warm climate in Cuba.

SI: Had you studied English before coming to the United States?

RP: No. In Carmel, school, I mean there was one girl that used to make fun of me of the way I spoke, and I was very upset. ... My aunt spoke to the principal and the principal let her have it good because here's this kid who was from West Virginia and with a Southern accent, and she's standing there in front of me and with other kids around me and making fun of the way I spoke English, wasn't very pleasant.

SI: You came up to Philadelphia?

RP: To Philadelphia. My aunt and uncle brought us back to Carmel.

SI: And you lived with them for a while?

RP: No, they had a little house for us, one room downstairs, one room upstairs. ... Then, later on, we bought a little house. We lived in Carmel from May of '44 to August of 1946. ... Then, we moved to Brooklyn, Williamsburg. Now, while I was going to Carmel School, and during the war, we were told, for the war effort, to collect newspapers. I sold war bonds and war stamps, and then, we were told to collect milk weed pods, that they would be using it towards making parachutes, so I did that, and one bond that I sold, an eighteen dollar seventy-five cent bond, all in pennies. I can still remember sitting at the table counting pennies, and we knitted squares to make blankets for the soldiers. That was our help for the war effort.

SI: Aside from that unpleasant incident, what did you think of your schooling in Carmel?

RP: Oh, I loved it. I loved it, really. I had to learn English, and my aunt used to drill us, drill us, and she would say, "This and that and cat and bat and sat," and went on and on and on, so by

September when school started, I knew somewhat how to speak English, but I only learned here in Carmel. People have told me throughout the years when I tell them that I was like maybe fourteen when I came to the United States, they told me that's unusual because I didn't have any accent. Well, I have no idea what my accent should or should not be. I guess I was lucky.

SI: How did your siblings adjust to coming to the United States?

RP: Well, they didn't go to school. My brother, Joe, went to Carmel School with me for one year, and then when we moved to Brooklyn that was the end of their schooling. ... Then, I had to go to high school in Brooklyn from Carmel, where I graduated eighth grade, we were twelve in the class, and here, I started high school with thousands of pupils, so it was a big adjustment as far as the school, you know, the amount of pupils you go to school with. ... Again, my two years, my English, I don't think, was that great, but I got by, and I did okay. As a matter of fact, the other day, I was looking through some of my stuff, and I found my high school medal, sterling silver medal, second prize. I graduated at night school, because I had to go to work, and I finished high school at night. ... I don't know what it says. I have it somewhere. ...

SI: At this point, what did you see for yourself in the future? Did you have any plans for what you wanted to do with your life?

RP: I wanted to get married. That was later on, of course, but I had been going to high school daytime, full-time, and then I got sick, and had to stay out of school for more than a month. By the time I got back, I was so behind on everything, so I went looking for a job, and I couldn't do very much. ... My brother-in-law was a manager of a factory that made men's hat bands, you know, the summer hats, the bands. So, anyway, after I got a job there, and then, I went to high school at night to finish, by then I was going steady, and I wanted to get married and my husband to be said, "Not until you get your diploma."

SI: Going back to when you were in Carmel and the war ended, what do you remember about the end of the war both in Europe and the Pacific?

RP: Well, I was following, we had a radio, and I was following the news of the war. I was always interested in what was going on, I think beyond my age, but I remember the death of Roosevelt was April 12th, and how sad we all were, but the war ended in 1945, I believe. ... We left for Brooklyn in 1946, yes. ... When I was still going to high school, I had gotten a babysitting job for every Saturday night. So, between high school at night and working daytime and my babysitting and I already had friends around the neighborhood, I was pretty busy. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: We were just talking about going from Carmel to Brooklyn. You were in high school. Which high school were you at?



RP: Day school--I'll be darned. I remember the high school that I graduated from, the evening high school. It was Washington Irving Evening High School in Manhattan, but the one in Brooklyn, Eastern District High School in Williamsburg.

SI: It must have been a hike to go to night school.

RP: It was. After work, I stopped over at the corner to have supper, and then I walked over to, it was on 16th Street in Manhattan. It wasn't too bad, at least that's the way I got exercise. It was a good experience because in evening school, you meet people from all walks of life, not just kids, and I guess I was a little bit more, what should I say, not experienced but ...

SI: Worldly?

RP: That's a good word, yes.

SI: Were there any GIs in that class?

RP: I don't know. No, that was in 1950, and I graduated in January of 1951 in that high school, that evening high school.

SI: When did you enter the day school?

RP: ... September of '46, 1946.

SI: That would be about a year after the war ended.

RP: ... I went three semesters in day school, and then I got sick, and I was out of work, and then I quit altogether and got a job and then went to night school. ... This one evening, I said to myself, "Well, if I'm doing this, what I'm doing now, each evening, meeting with my friends around the corner and just schmoozing," I thought, "Well, if I count all the time that I'll be doing this, and if I would be going to school, I could show something for it. I can have my diploma, whereas at the end of that amount of time, I couldn't show anything for this, just hanging around." So that's what I did, I went to high school at night, and then I wanted to get married, and he said, "No, no, you got to get your diploma first." So, we got married in October of '51.

SI: How did you meet your husband?

RP: He worked in the same factory that my brother-in-law was the manager. ... He used to help me with my homework. He was six years older than I. I was just a kid, but we started going steady. We went steady for three years.

SI: Was he from the United States?

RP: Oh, yes, he was American born. At that time, they were living out in Long Island, which was a real schlep from Laurelton to Manhattan to go to work. ... Then, when he was taking me out from Laurelton bus to Jamaica, subway from Jamaica to Williamsburg, took a two-hour trip. So he'd go back Saturday night and Sunday morning at ten o'clock he was back at the station. So, all my friends and him, we went to Coney Island every Sunday, and he'd say he took the last car, the subway car because there was a conductor there so he could go to sleep until he got to the end of the line.

SI: Had he been in the service?

RP: No. He had problems with his ear. When he was a kid, playing stick ball in the streets in the Bronx, a car hit him, and he had problems with his ear. He had lost more than fifty percent of hearing in one ear, and he had infections for many years. So, no, he wasn't.

SI: After the war, had your family tried to find out what had happened to people they knew in Poland or any family left behind?

RP: Yes. Well, we found out, we had gotten mail from my cousin Mordka, the one that I said that used to fight with all the guys when they came to town. He survived. His father had survived, and went back to the "shtetl," and he was killed, not by the Nazis, but by the Polacks. He was killed, and then we found out that our whole village, all the Jews in Zawichost, were herded together, and they were all, my grandmother, was taken to Treblinka and was killed there. Everybody in the family, except my cousin Mordka from Zawichost that I knew had been killed. So yes, that's something else. [Editor's Note: Treblinka was a Nazi extermination camp located in Poland during World War II, where hundreds of thousands of Jews and others were systematically murdered.]

SI: Is there anything I have skipped over from your time before you started your family with your husband? You moved around quite a bit. Did you find it easy to get established in a new place quickly?

RP: ... Oh yes, I was used to, as a matter-of-fact, when we were married, I counted once that we had moved eleven times while I was married. We came, after I was married in later years, we went to, the first trip to Israel was in March of '63, and my husband gave me a, what should I say, well anyway, we were having dinner at the Dan Hotel in Tel Aviv, and he said that to me, "How would you like it if, in 1968," that's five years hence, "that we take off a year, and come for a year to Israel?" Well, I was floored, because I'm a Zionist. I went out collecting money for Israel before Israel ever became a state in 1945 in Carmel. One of the ladies that lived there, she had a brother that lived in Palestine at that time, and she gave me a, one of those J and F blue boxes to go out and collect money. So, here I'm walking up and down Carmel roads collecting money for Israel in 1945 and '46. So, here he's asking me if, how would I like it if we go there for a year, and we had two children then, and I said, "Sure." So, that's what we did. ... My uncle and aunt, the ones that helped us get out of Poland, they had opened up a lumber yard in Carmel. There was a Carmel Lumber Company for many years there, and my husband was, at that time,

he made him president of the company. ... So, they could go away on vacation, and ... six months out of a year, they would live in Israel, and the rest of the time, either Florida or wherever, and he knew, when they'd come back, the business was a running concern, that everything was fine. ... Anyway, so those five years went by. In 1968, we went to Israel, and we stayed there a full year. ... When we came back, there was this bit with the kids in high school, and even younger, beginning with the drugs, the drug scene, and when we were in Israel with our kids, they could go out at night time, come back any time they wanted. There was no fear, as long as I knew where they were going, where they would be, we had no fear. So, here, we came back to the States, and suddenly we find what's going on, and then, my husband said, you know, he said, "I think it was better for the children there than here." So, we went back, we went back in 1971, and we were in Israel through the Yom Kippur War which was 1973. ... My husband, at that time, had become a teacher when he had left the lumber yard, and that year that we were in Israel, he had started going to college, Tel Aviv University, and then, they took us all over the country. It was a marvelous year, marvelous, and anyway, he said, "I think we should go back, it's better for the children," and we did, and we went back. ... It was difficult for him to grasp the language. I find that American-born people have difficulty with foreign languages, he did the best he could, and so that was the reason we came back.

SI: How long were you there?

RP: We were there from March of '71, it was Purim, the evening of Purim we arrived in Tel Aviv, and I never saw anything like it. The town was just, everybody was outside, and they had, it looks like a little plastic hammer, so when you hit somebody over the head with, it's called Petish, it makes a noise, and these kids were going all night long, and everybody was having fun. ... Then, I see it's ten o'clock at night, ten-thirty, and they're not in. I was petrified. Where are they? ... When I found out what they were doing, I said, "Okay, let them have fun," didn't worry a bit. So, we came back in '74. It was June, the end of June of '74, he just couldn't grasp the language. I had no difficulty. Not that I didn't, I went and took the classes and so on, but having come from such a religious home with the praying Hebrew words and so on, it wasn't as difficult for me. I wasn't very happy to come back. It was very difficult for me. The adjustment was very difficult, and eventually, he had health problems. We did move around a lot and I guess it wasn't as easy for the children, but I figured when they grow up, and they get on in years, I'm sure they'll look back on their experience and think better of it. I went through so much more than they did and here I am.

SI: I would like to go back and ask some questions about that. You mentioned your first interest in Zionism and a home state was collecting money with the little blue box. Between that and the time Israel was founded, did you do anything else related to Zionism?

RP: Oh yes, yes, I have always belonged to an organization, and I worked for Israel Bond Organization, Development Corporation for Israel. We sold Israeli bonds, and whenever we had the, let's say, usually it was like three months out of a year I worked, when we had the dinners, and we sold the bonds and I collected, you name it. I collected money even when I was a

teenager in Brooklyn. We were putting these different boxes in stores to collect money too. We were told to buy arms for Israel before the War of Independence broke out. I always did.

SI: Did the rest of your family feel that way?

RP: I was the only one that was active in that respect. I don't know, I don't remember my brothers whether they had done that but I don't think so. I was always, always doing that, and I remember in Hebrew School in Carmel, so this was back in 1945, and the teacher taught us the Hatikvah, Israel's national anthem, in Hebrew, and he was just so proud. Every time he got a chance to show off his pupil, I had to sing for them. It's, you know, it was, it's like part of me, very deep roots, and the one that, like I told you, that she had her brother living in Palestine at the time, and she actually, in Carmel, was the one that started me off in 1945. My philosophy is the belief in a state for the Jewish people and the support thereof. That's Zionism, as far as I am concerned.

SI: What did it mean to you when Israel declared its independence in 1948?

RP: Oh my. When my mother and I were listening to the radio from the United Nations in 1947, I believe, November 29th, when they were voting for a state to be declared, the two of us were sitting glued to the radio. It was, it's difficult to explain that feeling. Then, of course, we lived through the Yom Kippur War. My husband, at that time, was a teacher. He was teaching English as a second language in high school, in the ORT High School, and he took over some of the classes that the other teachers had because they had to go to the front. ... He was taking his class to Jaffa, the main street in Jaffa, and they were digging, filling up sandbags. I was collecting, I got a bunch of women, they all came from different countries, from Argentina, from Brazil, from England, from so many different countries. I got a hold of them, and we, I decided to open up a store of used clothing. I asked people to donate clothing, and I found an empty room in an organization around the corner from me, and got all this clothing together. ... There was a neighborhood right around the corner that they were on the poor side, but I mean, they had their dignity, and so I had them open up the store, and charged a very minimal amount, so it wouldn't be given for free. ... It was, I drew up a list of how many each day should be in the store, I called it a store, to take care of the store. Well, that first day, everybody came in. All the women came in to be there, and it was going very nicely until the organization decided that they needed that room for classes. So, we had to move someplace else. Well, the expression, "location, location, location," well that was it. The location was not the proper one, so eventually, we had to close, and we donated all the rest of the clothing to the neighborhood where they were coming from. ... Whatever money we had, we bought a TV set for the soldiers' home, so I felt I did something for our little group.

SI: When did you and your husband start your family, and how many children did you have?

RP: Two, a boy and girl. Marc was born in February, it's going to be his birthday soon, February 6th, 1957. ... My daughter is June 11th, 1958. That's my family.

SI: They were about twelve or thirteen when you were living in Israel?

RP: A little younger than that. Well, the first one year was in '68, '69, so Marlene was ten, Marc was ... eleven, yes. ... Then, when we went back the second time in '71 and we came back in '74, well you figure it out. [laughter]

SI: Sixteen and seventeen?

RP: Yes. On the way back from Israel, we had traveled throughout Europe, so they've seen places that a lot of kids would give their right arm. ... That's why I figured that when they get older, they'll appreciate being taken to all these places and having their experiences.

SI: Did you ever go back to Poland?

RP: No. Actually, no. My sister and my brother, Joe, went once, and then my sister took her granddaughter the second time. I couldn't because I remember the experience that I had and I just could not do it. ... Some people can overcome it and some not. We were fortunate, the family of seven, that we got out alive and in one piece just six months before.

SI: When you came to the United States, did your older brothers have to serve in the military?

RP: No, no they weren't, no. My brother Joe was in Korea. Yes, he went to Korea. ...

SI: You and your husband got married in 1951?

RP: Yes, October of '51.

SI: Eventually, he was working for the Carmel Lumber Company. What did you do before that?

RP: ... I was working. I got a job, and at that time, before the children were born, I worked once in Milville, for a feed company, then I worked for the Israel Bonds Corporation, and we had the offices donated to us. The use of the office was donated to us in Vineland, and we covered Bridgeton, Milville and Vineland, and the smaller communities around the area. ... I worked for nine different years, three months out of each year, and yes, I always was busy doing something or other, or volunteering for organizations.

SI: When you worked for Israel Bonds, did you work in an office or would you be doing outreach work?

RP: I was the secretary. We had just me and the gentleman that was the one that was in charge of the area, and yes, I met a lot of wonderful people. As a matter of fact, I met people here that, and we still sort of meet like a little family when we have our dinners from Vineland, and I don't forget these people, just try to keep in touch. I had a wonderful life with all the moving around and all. I think I had a wonderful life.

SI: At that time, where were you and your family living?

RP: We were living, at one point in Carmel, and then we moved to Vineland. So, we just moved back and forth.

SI: In between living in Israel, did you come back to Vineland?

RP: Yes. We came back to Vineland. That was many different experiences. A lot goes into a lifetime. It's not what you do in the beginning or the end, it's what you do in between that's important.

SI: You said you made your first trip to Israel in 1963. What was that like for you?

RP: It was like a dream come true, because, at the beginning, after Israel became a State, and I remember a book that was written by the Ambassador from the United States to Israel, I just recently found it somewhere, [James Grover] McDonald was it? Anyway, and I wanted to go to Israel and just, you dream about it and then when that dream comes true, it's phenomenal. Yes, I loved every moment of it.

SI: What did you do the first time? Were you just sightseeing?

RP: Well yes, ... the first year, he had gone to Tel Aviv University, and wherever he went, I went along with. I got a babysitter and stayed with the kids, and the babysitter was also one of his students. My husband was forty-five at the time, and these were American kids, the first year that Israel was offering American students to come to Israel, so I went with him. We went to a kibbutz, we picked apples, and for me, it was wonderful because I was back to when I was a child picking apples. ... We went for a week on an archeological dig by ... the Dead Sea. We spent there a week of digging. That was an experience and a half. ... We had a Passover Seder in an army post. They were, I'm trying to remember, they made the menu to resemble a tank. It was a tank corps, and that was an unusual experience. ... They were opening up the door for Elijah, and they're asking, "Who goes there?" These are soldiers asking, "Who goes there," and we have to open up the door for Elijah. ... To us, it was so funny, but it was wonderful, really, really wonderful, and just trying to remember what other things that they did, and I wasn't going to miss anything.

SI: Was that in your first trip in 1963?

RP: No, in '68 to '69. Yes, that's when he went to Tel Aviv University. ... When he taught, he got a job teaching English as a second language, he did fantastic things with those students. He taught them how to run an auction, because when you're learning a language, it's very boring, so he did things that were so different. The auction, and then they had a trial, he had them conduct a trial. It was just unbelievable, and this, the one thing that I was so proud that for the first year, they offered him tenure in that high school, and this is unheard of even in Israel. He was a born

teacher. He started Glassboro State College at the age of forty-five, because, when he couldn't go to college, they had no money, and he was the only one out of his brothers and sisters that had a college degree.

SI: During those three years that you lived there from '71 to '74, where did you live?

RP: We lived in Tel Aviv and we lived in Bat Yam, which is outside. There's Tel Aviv, then you go through Jaffa, and the next town is Bat Yam. ... He taught in the town next to us in Holon and that's an ORT School. I'm sure you've heard of the ORT Schools, they're all over the world. ...

SI: What were you doing at this time?

RP: ... I went to my classes in Hebrew at Ulpan, and then, like I said, I decided to do the store. Not only that, but we collected from different stores. We collected shaving supplies, toothpaste, tooth brushes, all kinds of things and we made packages and sent it down to the front, to the Sinai. So, I got all these women together, and we, again they gave us a little space in a basement and we made up all these packages and had them sent down. I always kept busy.

SI: What were those first few days of the war like when it was very precarious?

RP: Well, let's see, it was a Saturday. It was Yom Kippur. Did it fall out on a Saturday? Well, at this point, I can't remember, but the alarm, it rang, and we were just wondering, I had gone over to look down, we lived on the fifth floor, and I saw a truck driving by. ... It was very strange to me because Yom Kippur, you don't see cars or anybody driving around. It's very strange, and then, I listened to the radio and heard Golda Meir announce that we were attacked. First thing we did, the two of us went down, because when they had finished building, that building, they didn't clean out the basement. ... It was supposed to be used for just such an occasion. We went down and straightened things out, and then, we brought down canned goods and candles and blankets and folding chairs and all kinds of stuff, and left it down there if we had to go down. Thank God we never had to, but then, I was part of the Vaad, the committee in the building. I used to collect monthly dues, and so, one of the jobs that I took on was to check the building to make sure that everybody had the lights out at night. ... Of course, some people didn't pay attention as usual. That's one of the things I was in charge of, and then again, to create those little stores. I was used to collecting. [laughter] In Vineland, when people used to see me coming, they say, "Ah, there goes the collector."

SI: How long did the war last?

RP: The Yom Kippur War I think it was eighteen days if I'm not mistaken. It was eighteen days, and I remember the planes that were coming from the US with equipment and so on. They went right over our heads, over our buildings. It wasn't pleasant, but we went about our business, and, like I said, my husband took over the classes of the other teachers and we all did

our share. [Editor's Note: The Yom Kippur War began on October 6, 1973 and ended on October 25, 1973.]

SI: He was too old for the service?

RP: Oh, yes, besides, one night, I'll never forget, I think it was about 4:30 in the morning, and the doorbell rang from downstairs, and I answered it. ... They asked for, I said, "You must have the wrong number, wrong apartment." ... In the meantime, during the night, my neighbor upstairs had left, somebody else downstairs had left. They come in the middle of the night to call them up to the service.

SI: After you came back to the United States, what did your family do in the early seventies?

RP: We came back in '74. I think it was the end of June or July and ... my husband started school. He first started school at night. The college that opened in Vineland, the community college, and I said, "Why don't you take a course, you're not doing anything right now, take a course." So he did. He took two or three at a clip, and that's when he got his college degree. At that time, he was forty-eight. So, he'd gone to the community college, and then he went to Glassboro State College. He got his teaching degree from there. That took a lot of nerve.

SI: Did he teach in New Jersey after that?

RP: Yes, and then we had moved to North Jersey, Woodbridge. We moved around a lot, what can I tell you? I should have kept a list of all the towns, places that we moved to, and I counted altogether, when I was married and when I was single, we moved twenty-two times, I moved-- twenty-two times.

SI: That is pretty remarkable.

RP: I'm having my son run-off, well he's taking it this week to the printers to print a few more of those little booklets that I wrote, and if you give me your address, I'll mail one to you.

SI: Sure, that will be great. When you moved up to North Jersey, did you continue to work outside the home?

RP: Yes, I always did. This is the only time in my life that I'm not doing much of anything, but other than that, I was always busy.

SI: What did you do when you moved to Woodbridge?

RP: In Woodbridge, I worked in an office, and then, I used to do flea markets and antique shows. ... I was a collector, and I did antique shows. I used to do the Atlantic City Convention Hall shows, mall shows, Cherry Hill, Morristown. I did the malls from north Jersey down to Virginia. ... It's just about, let's see, about less than five years that I finally gave up on the



shows. I loved that, I loved meeting people all over, and what you see here, everything I bought, we bought from people's homes that were moving. You could furnish a home with just other people's belongings, and when I look at each item, I know where I got it from, and so on, even in Israel. Used to get the *Jerusalem Post* on Friday, and I'd look up and make a list, and when Benji came home from school, well I showed this that and the other and off we'd go. It's wonderful. ...

SI: Did you continue to go back to Israel?

RP: I hope and pray that I can do one more trip. That was my dream to be able to make one more trip. So, yes, what will be, will be.

SI: You have not been back since 1974?

RP: ... I went back almost every other year. See, I had many friends and relatives there, and the people that we sold our apartment to, so whenever I went she wouldn't hear of it, I had to stay with her and her family. It's nice to have such friends, and Marc went to a school down in the Negev.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: You were telling me about your children's education.

RP: Yes, and Marlene went to a high school in Bat Yam. They had, I think twelve, around twelve subjects that she had and I tell you, when I think of here, four or five majors, and that's a big deal, well.

SI: Did they just go to school while they were there?

RP: Well, when we came back in 1974, my son had gotten so accustomed to that school that he was very upset that he had to come back and leave the school, but my husband wouldn't hear of it. ... When we were back a few months when I said, "Let him go." Well, I decided I would talk to my brother-in-law and see if he could do anything because my husband had a lot of respect for my brother-in-law. So anyway, he did and he finally said okay. So, he went back to finish the last school year on his own. He stayed there in the school, and he wrote me when Ben-Gurion died. Nearby there is where Ben-Gurion had been living down in the Negev, and he wrote me a card, and I know I never, I hardly ever throw anything out, and I know that I had saved it. ... He wrote what he saw and then he brought back a flag, one of the soldiers gave him one of the flags, so I'd have to dig somewhere to find out where I put these things because it had meaning to him that he brought all this back. But he enjoyed that school, it was English speaking, but I think that was, I think the happiest that he was ever in school. ... I thought that every time he'd come home on weekends, and I thought, "Oh my God, when it comes to go back to school, he's not going to go. What am I going to do?" But came Sunday early morning, he was ready to go because it wasn't, from Bat Yam down to outside of Beersheba it's a haul, but had no problem, no

problem. I was thrilled about that. It's not that much fun having to move around so much, but like said, eventually, I'm sure that they will appreciate what they had.

SI: Are there any other moves or travels or activities that kind of fill in this space between the seventies and today?

RP: Well, Marc had gone back to Israel either once or twice, and Marlene once came with me, and the last time that Benj went to Israel was in, I think it was '79. ... I had been going, more or less, since my husband passed away, I had been going almost every other year, and like I said, stayed with friends. ... I had twice had to cancel my trips because of medical reasons, and I haven't been able to go since. ... I think the last time I must have gone was about either '05 or '06. ... A lot of changes, I'm sure, but that's why I say it's my wish, my dream, whatever you call it, to be able to go once more, so we'll see.

SI: Living in New Jersey, you were in Woodbridge, and then you came here. When did you come back south again?

RP: March, towards the end of March. I've been living here in this place five years. The quickest five years I've ever felt anywhere, it's unbelievable.

SI: Did you come directly from Woodbridge to here?

RP: No, I lived in Marlboro, that's next door to Freehold. I lived there for the longest span in my life, twenty-three years, in one place. It's unlike me. [laughter]

SI: Why did you live there for so long?

RP: It was my own home, and I did the antique shows, which I loved, and life was good. ... Then, when my girlfriend called me one day, she said, "Well, they're going to build this place and I put a deposit, are you interested?" I said, "Sure." I never asked her what is it, what's it's going to be and blah, blah, blah, you know, I never asked her a single question. All I said was sure, and when Marlene heard me saying that I had put a deposit in this place, "Mommy, mommy, you don't want to live in a place like that." I said, "Marlene, it's going to take years. By the time I get there, I'll be old." So, of course, now she loves where I am and I love this place. The people here are just marvelous, all walks of life, and very, you wouldn't know by seeing who is here, it's a wonderful place. I have my little Vineland group, others very nice. They are very helpful, very helpful to me. It's good.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add or anything that we skipped over?

RP: Oh my God, when I give you my little booklet, you'll find things that you may find interesting or not, then you can put it in wherever.

SI: Well, I would love to get a copy of that, and if there is nothing else, thank you.

RP: I hope I didn't bore you.

SI: No, no, it has been very fascinating. You have had a very interesting life and a very positive message in the end. You really made the best of your life.

RP: I want to show you what this little booklet looks like.

SI: Sure, sure. Well, I will just conclude the tape. Thank you very much.

RP: You're very welcome.

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Reviewed by Katie Ruffer 2/1/13

Reviewed by Nicholas Molnar 2/28/13

Reviewed by Rita Popelsky 5/15/13