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Several, Ruth

Sophia Maier Garcia

Transcriber: Reyna Stovall, Sophia Maier

Sophia Maier (SM): Wonderful. So if you just want to start by telling me a little bit about your family and how they ended up in the Bronx.

Ruth Several (RS): Okay, so my parents moved to the Bronx in 1950. My father was working at the Concourse Center of Israel. I think it's a large orthodox synagogue on the Concourse, and that's why they moved there. They lived on 169 and the Grand Concourse where I was born in 1951. And I lived there until 1970. And there were three synagogues right across the street from us, one large one on the corner, and then two smaller ones down the block.

SM: And so where were your parents living before they moved up to the Bronx? Were they first generation immigrants or?

RS: No, they were both born in the United States. My father was born in New York, and he lived in Brooklyn. My mother was born in St. Louis. And she was living in Chicago when they met through mutual friends. And then she moved to New York. So when they got married in 1950, they moved to the Bronx because of his work.

SM: Yeah. Okay. And so tell me a little bit about the building that you lived in, or the neighborhood, was it predominantly Jewish?

RS: Oh, yes. The building that we lived in was a beautiful art deco, the lobby, the facade was really quite, quite beautiful. It was a corner building, and we lived on the fourth floor. Our apartment was considered quite spacious. With two bedrooms and two bathrooms. You know, large — what is it — sunken living room, and it faced the Concourse. And it had a small kitchen and a separate dinette dining area. And all of the rooms except for the second bedroom faced on the concourse. And because it was a corner building ours was also a corner apartment on the fourth floor apartment, 4C, right across from the elevator. And it was a beautiful building. The tenant in the building was a rental. And I don't know how much they paid for it. I would say the tenants in the building, 95 plus percent were Jewish. The superintendent who lived in the basement was not Jewish. So at Christmas time, there was a Christmas tree in the lobby and also a menorah. But as I said, the vast majority of the tenants were middle class Jewish couples and families.

SM: And so more about the larger neighborhood. I know that the Grand Concourse area was predominantly Jewish. In general, what kind of shops and amenities were around?

RS: Right. So as I mentioned earlier, there were three synagogues right across the street. And we actually didn't regularly attend any of them because my father worked at the Concourse Center. So it

was a little — but we knew the rabbi and the cantor at the large synagogue, Agad Israel. So we were on — the Concourse is largely, at least at that point, residential, so six storey buildings, and then the cross streets, there was 170 Street, which was not one block from 169. There were a few smaller blocks with names like Marcy Place, Elliott Place, maybe one other. So it was three short blocks to 170th Street. And then the other way was two longer blocks to 167 street and both 167 and 170 street were major commercial areas. There were also subway stops on the independent line, on the D train, both on 170 and 167. We generally walked to 170 street and there were tons of mom and pop shops, kosher butchers, fish stores, bakeries, appetising stores, there was sort of a larger supermarket named Orlinsky's. I don't think it was part of a chain, I'm not sure. And then at the end of 170 Street was Jerome Avenue and Jerome Avenue also had the El train. So there was another subway station there. But between the concourse and Jerome Avenue on 170 Street, it was teeming with small mom and pop shops. No chain stores at all. And I remember on Friday going with my mother shopping to the meat store, to the fish store, the fruit and vegetable store, etc. And it was a bustling, large street, very large, kind of densely populated, lots of people out shopping.

SM: And so did your mother work, or did she stay home?

RS: She did work, which was unusual, very unusual. She did work. And also I did not go to the local public schools. Most of the kids in our neighborhood did, but we didn't. I don't want to go into too much detail, but I was born into a blended family, which was kind of unheard of in those days. But, my father was a widower and had two children. And when he married my mother, she was their stepmother. And then I was born and I had another brother as well. And the older children, my older half siblings, went to a Jewish Day School in Manhattan. And so we went to a Jewish Day School in Manhattan. We took the subway every morning, not terribly far, you know, maybe 15, 20 minutes. But we — I always went to school in Manhattan.

SM: Okay. That's interesting. So what did your mother do?

RS: Oh so okay, so my mother, so you know, the Jewish day schools cost money.

SM: Yes.

RS: So, yeah. So she was a bookkeeper in a supermarket first on 116 street. So this was closer to the Upper West Side. And the school that I went to was also on the Upper West Side. So she would take us in the morning to school and then go to work. And then pick us up, or we took the subway home by ourselves in those days, this is in the 50s, and walk the two blocks from the subway to our apartment. It was safe in the 50s, certainly, and even in the 60s. And then it changed. But my mother was a bookkeeper for many years in that supermarket, and then she moved to another independently owned market. So the one on 116 Street was called Jaggermins, owned by the Jaggermin family, and then she moved to one in midtown Manhattan, called Ernest Klein and Company, which I believe is still there on

Sixth Avenue between 55 and 56 Street. And she worked there for many, many, many years, until she retired at the age of 77.

SM: Wow, so many years. Yeah.

RS: And my father worked in synagogues. He worked at the time — he was a choir director, quite an acclaimed Jewish choral director and arranger of Jewish music in those days. His name was Oscar Julius, and he trained cantors. There was no school at that time so he trained cantors privately. And he trained several well known cantors who then became opera singers like J. Pierce and Richard Tucker and Robert Merrill. Before they were, you know, Metropolitan Opera singers, they were cantors. In Brooklyn. So he was a musician.

SM: Did he have like, formal education in that field?

RS: Yes, yes, actually, he did. He grew up on the Lower East Side in a large immigrant family but I believe all of his — he came from one of seven or eight siblings all born in the United States, and they were all educated. And he also went to McGill University in Montreal. So this is, I am going to say, in the 1920s, where he studied music. I guess it was — you know, Montreal is still a little bit of a Jewish hub. And it had some people that he wanted to study with. Yes, he was really a very well trained, well educated musician.

SM: Wow, that's really awesome. And so did your mother have any college education as well or?

RS: No, my mother did not go to college. My mother went to high school. And she was also a talented musician, which is how they met through Jewish music circles. She was an accompanist, a very talented pianist, and she was an accompanist for a singer in Chicago. And then when she moved to New York and had her family, she didn't pursue music professionally. But she was, again, a very talented musician, you could hum a tune, and she could sit down at the piano and play it with all the harmonies and she also sang in my father's choir. For a while as well, there was, in the non-Orthodox synagogues, there were choirs with women's voices. In the Orthodox there was only men..

SM: So did music play a very large role in your own youth, your own upbringing?

RS: Yes, I always say I'm the least talented of all the people in my family. And I'm not just being modest. It's true. But I love music. I took piano lessons, I went to the High School of Music and Art in Manhattan, and majored in music in college and pursued a master's in musicology. So yes, definitely music is very much a part of my life, but not professionally.

SM: Yeah. Well, I don't know, you say you're the worst of them. But if you've pursued all of these degrees, you can't be that bad.

RS: Right, right.

SM: High standards. Well, I always ask – which is funny – that's why I'm so intrigued. I always ask what kind of music you like to listen to. So what kind of music did you like to listen to?

RS: Well, I am quite eclectic in my tastes. I was trained in classical music on the piano. So classical music, I'd have to say is definitely my first love. But I love Jewish cantorial music. I'm also of the age where, you know, rock and roll and pop music, particularly the Beatles, of course, very much figured in my teenage years. And then even in my 20s I loved disco, I'm a big Bee Gees fan and others and folk music from that era. Joan Baez, Judy Collins. I love James Taylor. I even like Burt Bacharach.

SM: The last one you said I am not familiar with it. What is it?

RS: Burt Bacharach. He actually just died last week, I think at the age of 94. He was – do you know the singer Dionne Warwick?

SM: Yeah.

RS: Okay. So she popularized his music. It was kind of like, you know, soft pop. It was considered a little bit less than, but I loved it. I always loved Dionne Warwick singing the Burt Bacharach tunes, so check him out, Burt Bacharach and he was Jewish.

SM: Definitely. Well, I right now — the reason that I had to run over here in the rain was because I'm in a rock and roll to hip hop music history class. We're just doing Beatlemania right now. So I’m in on everything.

RS:Wonderful.

SM: So yeah, besides, obviously, being really involved in music and things, what other things did you like to do for fun, either when you were younger or into your teenage years?

RS: Well, let me just say I came from a, as I said, a blended family and it was a tumultuous blended family. My parents eventually did divorce in the mid 60s. So it was not the easiest of a family to grow up in. But I loved school, and I loved to read and act in plays. And I would say sort of culture and the arts were fun things. TV, of course, and getting together with friends but I wasn't into sports very much, still am not. Although there were parks in the Bronx. But you know, we were not a sports oriented family. I have to say it was more intellectual pursuits. And so fun is sort of a free question for me. Although I will say I had extended family who lived in a little bit upstate New York, and we would go there in the summer, where my couple of aunts and cousins and my grandmother lived. And there was

always a carnival, sponsored by the local Rotary or Firemen's club, and I loved the rides at the carnival and being competitive and playing the games, you know, puzzles and games. That was a big thing. We had jigsaw puzzles and board games. I was kind of big on that. Checkers, chess even. And in high school, you know, music was a big part and social events. Sweet sixteens were quite popular. So socializing. Although I did go to day camp where I learned how to swim, so I did like swimming. That was the one, you could call it a sport. I did like that. And then there were always color war events. Two teams with two colors. And —

SM: Was the camp in the city or outside?

RS: No, it was in Spring Valley in Rockland County. In Nanuet.

SM: I'm from Monroe, New York. Very nearby. Yeah.

RS: Yeah, it was called Eagle Day Camp. I don't know if it's still there. But it was a Jewish day camp. And I loved it. School and camp, those things were a refuge for me, because home was not so easy. And I grabbed into — I loved school, because it was a way for me to shine and to do well, and to be recognized, whereas at home, not so much. There were a lot of people and a lot of ins and outs and a lot of stuff going on at home. And it was cramped, we were four kids in two bedrooms and two baths. So, you know, a lot of tumult. So school was a very positive force in my life.

SM: Yeah. Tell me a little bit about your experience in day school. Most of the people that I've spoken to attended public school, so that's very interesting.

RS: Yeah, yeah. I loved school. I loved school. The Jewish Day School I went to was called Manhattan Day School. And at that time, it was on Manhattan Avenue. Between 104 and 105, it still exists, but not in that location. I believe it's on 175 now, but still on the Upper West Side. And I went to school, mostly with children of either refugees from Europe or people who survived. So it was refugees and survivors, which are two different groups of people, you know, sometimes they get lumped together, but they're really quite different. So my peers, as I say, were sons and daughters of fairly well to do people who fled Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, in the 1930s, before World War Two officially began. They had money, and they were smart, and they got out. So most of my peers, most of my peers' parents, spoke German or Yiddish, or it was English when they got here. My parents were American born, so they didn't speak — well, they spoke maybe a little bit of Yiddish, but they certainly didn't speak German or Polish or anything else. They were very American. So I was in the minority in school, there were a couple of other peers of mine who had American born parents, but the vast majority were Europeans, the parents were European born, the kids were all born here because in the early 50s they were already here. So I remember I had a friend who also lived in the Bronx whose – both parents, mother and father — had numbers on their arms. And they didn't talk about it much, they actually lost a child. I found out later. And my friend whose name was Esther was, of course, born after they came to the United States.

But I remember they were a little bit different because they had been in the camps, you know, they just had different personalities, whereas the ones who fled earlier must have been children or teenagers in the 30s. Probably. And they were very, what can I say? A little bit harsh Deutsch if you know what I mean. You know, they had money, they lived in nice apartments on the Upper West Side, these huge, West End Avenue, Riverside Drive apartments. There's a difference between the few kids who came from the Bronx — there were a few of us, who commuted from the Bronx, down into Manhattan — but the vast majority were well to do, a little bit snobbish. But they were just different, well meaning, educated, of course. And I did very well in school, I have to say, I was bright, as most of these kids were, but I was always the smartest girl, I gotta tell you.

SM: And were the classes mixed with gender at the school?

RS: Yes, there were boys and girls, this was Modern Orthodox. But in those days, in the 50s, girls and boys together, I went K through eight, and the first half hour was davening. We had at least a half an hour, 40 minutes of davening girls and boys together — I mean, separated by a *mechitzah*, but all together. And then we had Hebrew instruction, we had Torah, and Talmud, and literature, language, dicto, grammar, you know, all of that from probably 9 to 12. And then after lunch, we had secular studies, you know, English, history, science, math. And it was a full day, it was a long day going from 8:30 to 4:30 in the afternoon. There wasn't much time for much else. And the lunch, we had to eat lunch in school, they didn't allow us to bring lunch from home, because it was kosher. And I had a hard time with that. But that's another story. I would come home, starved because I didn't like the lunch that they would give. But overall, it was a very, very positive experience. I had wonderful teachers, mostly, I would say, all male rabbis or male teachers for Hebrew, but English was mixed. There were a couple of male teachers in seventh and eighth grade, but mostly women teachers, and they were wonderful teachers. I remember all of them, I can tell you all their names and what they look like. The teachers and I got along, I liked them. They liked me, you know, it was a very positive relationship.

SM: Yeah, that's wonderful.

RS: And I remember the principals too. The principles were a little stern, but they put us on the right track, you know, they were good. Good leaders. Good principals.

SM: Yeah. And so going into public school for high school, did you feel like you were well prepared, at par or above par even?

RS: Oh, yes. Extremely well prepared? Absolutely. Yes. In ninth grade, I went to Music and Art. And ninth grade there were fewer kids. So ninth grade was where kids from other private schools came because in my day, you had K through six with Elementary, then you had Junior High. It wasn't called Middle School. Yeah, it was Junior High in seventh, eighth and ninth, and then you went to high school in tenth. So there was a little bridge there in ninth grade. So there were other kids from private schools.

And we were, I would say, we were all quite well prepared. And so certainly by 10th, 11th, 12th [grade] it was easy. It was easy.

SM: Was it a bit of a, I guess, culture shock at all going into public school?

RS: Yes, yes, it was. But a lot of kids took the subway and I actually became — I had more friends in the Bronx. See, when I went to elementary school, I really didn't. There were just a few of us. And then you know, kids in my building or kids in the neighborhood a little bit, but this widened my circle. Again, mostly Jewish girls and boys, but there were a few Hispanic, African American so it widened my social network. I remember commuting with a group of girls from the Bronx into Manhattan. And there was music and there was art. So there were arts people, and the school was very, you know, what we call artsy fartsy. It was like, these kids were a little unconventional. So it was public school, but you had to test to get in there. So it was still specialized. It wasn't everybody from the neighborhood. And as I say, it was pretty unconventional.

SM: Yeah. Did you — were you in high school during the 1967/68 teacher strikes?

RS: I was. I went to Music and Art from 1964 until 1968. I can't say. I remember there was a strike, but I can't really remember how it affected me, or what really happened. I know that, again, most of the teachers in Music and Art were Jewish. So it was sort of this leftist, socialist, and pro-union [environment]. So, of course, we were on the side of the teachers striking. I can tell you that. Otherwise, I don't know, I must have stayed home for some period of time. But it's funny, I don't really remember it being all that long either.

SM: Yeah, I'm going into education myself, so I always have a particular interest in that. And most people are like, “We know what happened, but it didn't really affect us so much.” But what was I going to say? So were you kind of — in that environment or growing up at all — was your family politically active or anything?

RS: Not politically active, no. But, of course, when John F. Kennedy got elected in 1960, we were ecstatic. And always democratic, always left leaning, but neither of my parents were involved in any, like workmen's circle or anything like that. They voted, I remember going to the polls with them to vote. And we certainly listened to Walter Cronkite on the news and read the paper. But, you know, no, I can't say that they were particularly politically involved. The mayor, I think it was Wagner, even in those days, oh, before Lindsay. Then John Lindsay came in, and they voted always left, democratic. You know, there was no such thing as voting for a Republican. No such thing. That was like, no way. *Laughs*

SM: And so, did your family keep kosher when you were growing up?

RS: Ah, good question. Yes. My mother always bought kosher meat. And we had two sets of dishes. And actually, we had four sets of dishes because we had two sets for Passover, as well. So we had four sets of dishes that were piled in boxes in the closet. So yes, we were kosher. And all through high school, I maintained that and then I didn't, although I still call myself kind of, you know, semi-kosher, which is ridiculous. I don't eat pork products or shellfish. But in our home growing up, yes.

SM: And so what kind of food would you like to eat? Any specialties?

RS: Well, very interesting also. My father was really ahead of his time. He actually was diagnosed with throat cancer. He was a smoker. Everybody smoked in those days, well my mother didn't smoke, but everybody smoked. And he was diagnosed with lung cancer in, maybe in the 50s. So when he was in his 50s, and he got cobalt treatments, and he was cured. But he was a little bit of a health nut after that, and he was very careful about his diet. He ate no red meat. And you know, it's in the 50s. But we had fish and chicken occasionally, occasionally maybe my mother would cook a lamb chop for us, but he didn't eat that. He didn't. He only ate — no red meat. So we had very healthy meals. We always had a freshly made salad. We had fruit for dessert, very well balanced healthy meals way before anybody else, because in the 50s, you had white bread and all this starch and all these processed foods. We never had a TV dinner. Nothing like that. Always freshly prepared foods every day. Now, having said that, both of my parents also had a sweet tooth. And so for breakfast, they would have a danish or — I don't know, are you familiar with, you know, Horn and Hardart's and the Automats? Do you know about that?

SM: No.

RS: Oh, yes. Okay. So there's a wonderful documentary that just came out last year called The Automat. And they had these — okay, I don't do a whole thing on the automat. But there were these retail stores and there was one in the Bronx that had, you know, boxed baked goods. And their logo was "less work for mother." And so my parents loved these little cupcakes and big doughnuts and stuff from Horn and Hardart's. And that's what they would have for breakfast. *Laughs*

SM: That's funny. Yeah, that's great.

RS: One more thing. One more thing I wanted to say about food. We had a malted machine. Do you know it? It's really a blender, but you can still get that, you know, at a fountain in a drugstore. So, we had one of those. And so we would have milk with chocolate. And we would make a malted. I didn't like white milk. I didn't like — I'm not big on dairy products. We would make a malted and it would bubble up. So I liked that.

SM: I'm the same way. Did you like an egg cream?

RS: I love egg creams. Love egg creams. Absolutely. Yes, yes, yes.

SM: I worked in an ice cream store all through high school. And I had never heard of an egg cream before, and that was something we needed to learn to make. And it was usually older folks who would come. But when I said something in front of my grandparents, and I was like, “Oh, an egg cream. I don't know.” My grandfather was like, “Oh my god. An egg cream is amazing. And you get a pretzel and you eat it with your egg cream.” *Laughs*

RS: Yeah. And in some modern delis, not kosher delis, they will still have egg creams on the menu. But I have to tell you, none of them are anywhere nearly as good as the old fashioned ones.

SM: I mean, I gotta say, I've been told I make a killer egg cream. But you know, I'm sure I don't compare.

RS: *Laughs* But here's the question. Do you use Fox’s U-Bet Chocolate syrup?

SM: I don't know. I don't think so. I know that’s the old one.

RS: They may not even make it anymore. Fox’s U-Bet.

SM: Yeah, yeah. Well, it sounds familiar. I can actually — I'm picturing like a logo in my head or like the writing but not that we had at the ice cream store, no. And so did you feel like growing up as a woman during this time period, that the expectations of you were different from let's say, your brothers or your male peers?

RS: You know, yes and no. Not so much probably as most people. My mother was a very strong, dominant force in my life. She had three sisters, I had three aunts, who were very dominant, independent thinkers. So the expectations for me were quite high. I went to Jewish Day School, I went to good education. I had piano lessons. I went to an excellent women's college, Barnard in New York. So the expectations were quite high. Where it was different was I never had a bat mitzvah. Only boys had about had a bar mitzvah. So there was a, you know, a juncture there. There was a gap there. Not that I necessarily wanted to have a bat mitzvah then, I've since had my own but that's another story. But no, I would say not really. You know, I was expected to do well, do well in life. And, you know, I had the best possible education. Absolutely. But of course in those days, women were expected to find a husband, but I wasn't expected to stay home necessarily. I always worked, of course, although most of my peers did. By the 70s, women's lib was heavily in force. And my peers all worked. I didn't have any friends who stayed home, though I did stay home for a couple of years after my children were born, but that was much later.

SM: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And so yeah, tell me a little bit about your experience at Barnard was that —

RS: Oh, yeah. That was quite, uh, those were quite turbulent years. So I got there in the fall of 1968. And the previous spring, there were all these protests and protest movements and the war in Vietnam. And I was caught up with that. There were marches and sit-ins. And you know, all of this was quite a noisy campus. I wasn't at the forefront of it, but I certainly was part of it, because just by virtue of being there. I was a commuter, which means I was still living at home, although my mother at this point had moved to Riverdale, which is still the Bronx, you know, but it's Western Bronx. By 1970 the neighborhood had changed. There was this huge white flight, mostly to Co-op City, you know about that?

SM: Yeah.

RS: Many, many couples and families in our building moved there. But my mother did not. She moved to an apartment in Riverdale. I only lived there for one year, and then I moved to an apartment off campus. And then I lived on the Upper West Side for eight more years. But again, I had excellent teachers. It was a vibrant, lively, intellectually stimulating place. I just went back for my 50th reunion in June. And it was spectacular. You know, connected with people I literally hadn't seen in 50 years. And professors and it was a wonderful institution. I believe it still is. And I feel very, very fortunate to have to have gone there. And I majored in music.

SM: Yes. Tell me a little bit more about what the environment of white flight was like. What were a lot of people — were people even talking about it? Or was it kind of an unspoken thing?

RS: Okay, so the big deal was crime. It's like, all of a sudden, you were afraid to walk from the subway to your apartments, particularly after dark, or maybe somebody’s going to mug you. So crime, I would say, is what — or the fear of crime — is what really drove, I think, people out. And Co-Op City, you know, at that time was a very attractive option. Again, not for my family, but for many, many people. You could buy your own apartment for not very much money, it was subsidized. You couldn't do that anywhere else in Manhattan, certainly. And it was its own city with its own schools and libraries. And, again, it was marketed as safe and up and coming. This was the closest thing you were kind of going to get to owning your own home. So it was very attractive for people who either weren't able to move to suburbia, or who couldn’t afford to move to suburbia. Another place people moved to was Queens and Long Island that was also popular. We had a number of families in our building, but the bulk went to Co-op City, and it was crime. It was fear of crime, and racism. You know, I have to say they were afraid of Hispanics. Was it? I think it was even more Hispanics than African Americans then.

SM: Puerto Ricans.

RS: Yes, Puerto Ricans. Yep. Oh, here's another thing that you might be interested in. So on the Concourse there was a synagogue, a few blocks down from us on 165 Street called, I think it was Young Israel of The Concourse. Have you come across that? It's no longer —

SM: I've heard of other Young Israel's but I don't know of that one specifically.

RS: Okay. Well, that was an interesting one. Because it was a Jewish neighborhood, that was opened I'm gonna say sometime in the mid 50s, late 50s, maybe early 60s. Around 1960 I'd say. And my brother had his bar mitzvah there in 1965. And it was a beautiful new building. Do you know what it's used for now?

SM: I'm going to guess that it's a church.

RS: No

SM: No? Okay.

RS: That's a very good guess because all the other synagogues on the Concourse, they're all churches now. Or, you know, almost all.

SM: Okay, so what is it?

RS: This one is the Bronx Museum of the Arts.

SM: Oh, okay.

RS: Have you heard of that?

SM: Yeah yeah yeah. I had no idea. That's so interesting.

RS: Yep. And if you go in — because I was there a number of years ago, I went into the museum and in the lobby, or somewhere off the lobby, is the cornerstone of the synagogue. They preserved that. But it was only open for a short time because the population changed by 1970, by the early 70s. So it was a very short lived synagogue, or that building was only used as a synagogue for a very short time.

SM: That's fascinating. Yeah, I had no idea. That's really great. So what did you end up doing after you'd finished with college?

RS: So I also went into education. I taught school for two years in New York at a Jewish Day School. I taught secular studies, though, not Hebrew. And I also was in graduate school, I was pursuing a master's

at Hunter College in musicology. So I was kind of, you know, working full time during the day, going to classes at night, and kind of, you know, cobbling together a living, which in the 70s, wasn't that hard to do. I lived on 110 Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam, in a really lovely building, but it was not so lovely when I lived there. It was a mess, but the rent was cheap. And it was a great location. So I did that. And then by my late 20s — and the 70s were a very kind of out of control time, I think, in the city. You know, there was that famous headline from Gerald Ford "Drop Dead New York," we went into bankruptcy, things were not good. And I was kind of looking to get out of New York. And I did. So by 1980, I moved to LA. I had a cousin who lived in LA, and I had a boyfriend who lived in LA, who eventually became my husband. And I thought, you know, this is going to be a better environment for me. So that's what I did. And I lived in LA from 1980 to 2020 in the same house, and I had various ventures in profit and nonprofit organizations, in sales and administration. And then I went back to teaching in 2000. And I taught for another 15 years until I retired in 2015. That's the kind of — that's what I did.

SM: Yeah. No, that's fantastic. Then I guess my last question for you is, when you think back on your time in growing up in the Bronx and being there, what kind of emotions and sentiments do you associate with it?

RS: Very, very positive. It was a culturally rich, diverse neighborhood. Even though our building was 95% Jewish, when I say culturally diverse, we had libraries, we had parks, we had synagogues, we had shops. You know, there was a lot going on. It was a vibrant neighborhood. And of course, the kosher butcher was Jewish, but I'm not sure all the other stores were. I don't know. But they were — oh, there was a Y, I guess it was a YMHA, not far from us. And there just seemed like a lot to do. We weren't in Podunk. And we were 15 minutes from Manhattan. So, you know, I went into Manhattan every day for school, and I had friends in Manhattan and I went to — Lincoln Center was being built in Manhattan. But the Bronx was very lively. And I have very positive memories and it was safe. It was clean. We had excellent public transportation. In fact, I would take the bus up to Fordham Road and Fordham Road had this big department store, Alexander's. I would go myself, I went with my mother, and then I would go myself. So my first experiences of doing things myself, would be taking the bus to up to Alexander's, or taking the bus to the Lowe's Paradise, the movie theater, although there were movie theaters within walking distance. Of course, Yankee Stadium was there too. So there was a lot of — so that's what I mean by culturally diverse. I don't mean, you know, racially diverse necessarily. So very positive. It was a wonderful place and it's sad to me that it's gotten such a bad rap. It's unfortunate. Oh, and then of course, the Bronx Zoo and the Bronx Botanical Gardens. Yeah, I forgot that.They were not far. And I had an aunt who lived in an apartment further up by Kingsbridge. And there was a playground, a private playground in the back of her building that was just for residents of her building and I have very fond memories of that. So yeah, it's sad that it went into — that it continues, I think, to get a bad rap. It's too bad. And you know, I'm so glad that Fordham has this project. It's wonderful. If I were closer, I would certainly participate in the in person events.

SM: Yeah, no, I am as well. I'll end the recording.