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## Gordon, Ina

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Transcriber: Kathryn Amend

*Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than polished prose. The following transcript has been reviewed, edited, and approved by the narrator. Time codes may thus no longer be accurate throughout the transcript. Where there are differences between the transcript and the audio recording, the transcript is the document of record.*

Ina Gordon (IG): I grew up at 1114 Morris Avenue, and here it is [indicates on map]. Right next to it was a playground and the junior high school, which they tore down, They built it while I was living there. And here is my elementary school. I could walk everywhere: that was the point. In those days, it was not how good the school was. It was how close it was to where you lived. Because nobody drove, everybody walked. And Yankee stadium was here, and 167 street is here. Today this whole area is gone; there's nothing left except my apartment building and the one next door. The apartment building had steps and a stoop, so that's what I can tell you about that. I lived in a one bedroom apartment with my sister and my parents, and then my brother was born, and we managed. Fortunately, when I left for college he started kindergarten WE had moved to another apartment with two bedrooms on the same floor. The apartment was \$20.00 more a month and my father was so upset and worried about paying the rent. We had to pay the superintendent to get it, because that's the way it was in those days. But I was very lucky because I won a scholarship to an out -of- town school and thus was very lucky to leave and have my own space. In the Bronx I had 2 draws in a chest which my parents purchased from the tenants who left the apartment. But because I won a full scholarship to the University of Chicago I had a desk and an entire chest of draws. Nobody in my apartment building went out of town to school. They all went to CCNY or to Hunter College which is where I would have gone. I did not get accepted at the Bronx High School of Science but I did at Hunter High School. I attended Hunter High School for two days but decided I did not want to attend and take two trains to school everyday. So I decided to go back to the public high school, which was the best decision I made because all the smart kids went to Science or Hunter—not Stuyvesant that was too far—so there were few left the local school (Taft High School) which made it far less competitive.

IG: I did very well, and I wanted to go out of town to college. I said that to this guidance counselor because I had this distant cousin who went to Vassar as an undergrad on a scholarship. The counselors were very wonderful. They called me down one day—this is a funny story—and they said we found a school for you: the University of Chicago! I said, “What's that? Where's Chicago?”

Sophia Maier (SM): [laughs]

IG: They looked it up, and they showed me, and then I applied. I said, “okay, I have nothing to lose”. So I applied to the University of Chicago and every scholarship that was available in the school. Nobody else ever did, everybody just wanted to go to City College. I was the only one who had this vision. I’ll never forget, the Director of Financial Aid—because, of course, I needed it—was the one who interviewed me at some place in Manhattan. I went down there, and he was lovely. He said, “look, I want you to know I left Chicago this morning. It's 10'clock. I'm here. I'm going back tonight. It's not so far away.” Because, you see, people and girls in the Bronx had no concept of this. And that was the only school I applied to. Then I was accepted and I couldn't decide. Should I go? Shouldn't I go? Something said to me: go for it. And it was the best academic decision I made in my life. I ended up with a couple of other scholarships, and—I don't know if this is part of what you want—one of my aunts knew why I was doing this. By the way, none of my cousins went to college before me. Nobody. And in my apartment building, which is 1114 Morris Ave, we were like a family. Nobody locked their doors. So I my aunt and the women who were in the bakery were talking about somebody in their family who just won a scholarship from the Educational Foundation for Jewish Girls. I had never heard of it before in my life. I got \$500 a year from them, and I received (full room and board for 4 years). When my interviewer George Playe (the director of financial Aid) Oh, he was wonderful—said to me, “you know we’ve never taken anybody from your high school before.” That's because they all went to Science. “But,” he said, “we're willing to take a chance on you.” Because I was very socially involved, and they wanted more. Which is still the case in Chicago. The joke is: Chicago’s where fun goes to die. You haven’t heard that one?

SM: No [laughs], but I’m not as familiar with Chicago.

IG: And then I was accepted, and I said, “oh my God!” Up until the last minute I wasn't sure I was going. Then my parents bought a trunk, and we put my the stuff in it. My father was a letter carrier. The reason he was a letter carrier, as with many of the men who were, is because he knew that you had a pension and you knew that you wouldn't get fired because you're working for the government. Today, nobody works for the government unless they actually have to [laughs]. Anyway, my father and mother took me to the train station and put the trunk on the train. In the neighborhood where my father delivered mail, there was a guy who was a pullman on the train. He kept coming over to me, “can I get you a pillow,” because he knew my father. Anyway then I went to the University of Chicago, which I said was the best thing that ever happened to me in my life. I received an education that was second to none. Yes, City College would have been great. My sister went there, and she went on to get a doctorate. My brother went to U of C and then medical school at Washington University. I really encouraged him and he never regretted it. By the way, we were the only people in this apartment building to do any of these things. They were fine people. They were my friends, but they just never thought of it. They never thought they would do it.

SM: No.

IG: They didn't even look for any other choices, and they all went to the city colleges. In case they didn't get into City College, they had to pay the money to go to NYU. NYU was the safety school that you had to have money to go to. I went to Taft High School, which was not the fancy school, and of course I was on top of everything. I got 100 on everything and I was involved in every single organization. At the high school graduation the head of the student honor society said to me: "good thing you don't have more awards because there's no more room on this card." I was a real success story, and it could be done. But you had to look for it. Then I decided I wanted to be a guidance counselor because I was going to do the same thing for other kids. But that didn't happen. So my parents stayed here [the Bronx] until 1960. From 1940-1960 they stayed in the same apartment, and so did all of their friends. The apartments weren't big, they weren't fantastic, but it was safe. 167th Street had the bakery, the delicatessen, two movie theaters. That was the neighborhood. Occasionally, we took the bus and walked up to Fordham Road, which was where Alexander's was. That is where you went if you needed something, and it wasn't cheap, but it was the only place I would shop when I was a kid growing up. Except for the hand-me-downs that came from my cousins, but they were all bigger than I was, so it wasn't that good. I really loved my four years at Chicago. I'll tell you another funny story—I must have had aspirations. I wanted to play tennis. I had a good friend who lived on the other side of the Concourse, in a beautiful apartment. She played tennis, and I just thought I had to play tennis. I didn't have a tennis racket. I think of all this compared to what my kids had, you know.

There was a man in the building who worked for Sears Roebuck, and my mother said to him: "Can you do me a favor? Can you pick up a tennis racket for my daughter? She wants to play tennis." And we had no money, so it was a big thing. He did! And that was my tennis racket. My friend took me to 161th Street, across from Yankee Stadium. You had to go across the Concourse and then down to River Avenue. There they had a tennis court. By the way, Althea Gibson, who was a champion on the circuit, used to practice there. My friend decided to teach me how to play tennis, which didn't work. When I moved to the suburbs after I had my first child, another friend of mine found a tennis teacher in Harlem. He gave us lessons, not that it was any good. But that's that story. Now, what else can I tell you? My mother became a Girl Scout leader so that my sister and I could be Girl Scouts, which we were. My mother didn't work up until I was in college, and then she went back to her old job, which she had when she met my father as a bookkeeper in the Bronx. My sister was born. She was not as good a student, but she had a little bit of school-phobia, I think. She ended up with a PhD, so it turned out all right:

SM: —It didn't stop her—

IG: —yeah. And my brother became a doctor, which in that building was like the golden prize. In fact, when he was born my parents kept saying "my son, the doctor, was born." I kept

thinking, what if he doesn't want go to medical school? He went to the University Chicago on a full scholarship, because I said you gotta try it. And it was the best thing that happened to him. You see—now it's all gone, because nobody's doing liberal arts— but it had a wonderful two-year program in liberal arts. You really learned a lot about how to think. It was incredible. The only reason I was able to go—and my brother—was because of the scholarship.

The playground next to where I lived was my nursery school. They had a morning thing in the playground, and I could walk there. The funniest thing is, when I went to this junior high school, my parents still lived in this building, so my mother would come down with my brother in the carriage for the fire drills. She would wave to me from the building. On the summers those of us who could afford it would rent a bungalow. We were not Rockaway because it was too far, but the Catskills were close enough. In my place, we were looking at price. I don't remember the bungalows, but they were not large. We were on the cheap side of the bungalows, but we still could use the pool. My mother loved it because she played mahjong every day.

My husband grew up in Pennsylvania and he got a job in the Catskills from somebody delivering meat for one of the butchers there. He'd say on Friday, when he came to deliver the meat— because that was when they needed it—they were so rude. Waiting, and it's a hundred degrees, and he finally one day just dropped the meat in their lap and left. It was a Kosher butcher he worked for.

SM: Okay, yes.

IG: For his summers My brother got a wonderful job cutting carpeting for a cousin. My mother's, and he was there for us. That was a wonderful job for him. He made a lot of money because his cousin gave him a really good salary. My father stayed at the post office, worked two jobs. My uncle, his brother, was sort of our banker. They borrowed money from him whenever they needed money, and then they paid it off all winter. That's the way you live there. He was a wonderful father. He drove us anywhere we had to be, and if I needed a book and they didn't have it at the local library, he'd go to whatever library there was and pick it up for me. The library was so different. It was down at the end of two blocks. I went there every two weeks to get books. My kids don't go in a library ever. It's a different generation.

SM: You and your siblings both pursued such great education. Was that something that you all decided, or was education always an important thing within your family?

IG: From the time I was born, I was going to college. I was going to become a schoolteacher because there were no choices. It was very important even though nobody was really educated in my family except my one aunt, who was a schoolteacher. She never got married. She was like the old maid school teacher. My mother had two sisters and she sort of oversaw everything.

Education, no matter what. My father would go to the other end of the Earth if I needed something. Their lives were absolutely around their children. When my sister was born they moved into the living room, to the pull-out couch. We slept in their bedroom, which had two single beds. When my brother was born they put the crib in that room. But then they moved, and they kept the crib in their bedroom. The second building we went to was a lot nicer. They went because the new neighborhood was changing. That was the only reason anybody from that building left.

There also was no place to go. As I said you had to, under the table, give money to the superintendent to let you look at the apartment. Every Saturday my mother would give us—my sister and me—money. All my friends knew if they were going to come with me on a Saturday, my sister came. We'd go to the Chinese restaurant. 90 cents and you'd have what's called the "combination plate". You'd have chow mein, and fried rice at the neighborhood Chinese restaurant.

SM: Yum.

IG: My sister didn't like that, so she had to get a tongue sandwich from the delicatessen and bring it in. Then we went to a double feature for 25 cents. We sat in the movies for, I guess, 3-4 hours and then we went home. My father had a car, not everybody had a car. My father's family, I think, was autistic. I really believe they were autistic. My father's two brothers never married. They weren't kind to me. They didn't like my mother. Every family has their issues. My grandparents died before we were born, except my one grandmother died when I was about a year. So I never had grandparents.

SM: Were your grandparents born here?

IG: My parents were born here. My grandparents came [to the U.S.] when they were very young. My mother graduated from high school. She was in Arista. And my father graduated from high school. I had an uncle who didn't graduate from high school. My father thought "oh, he thinks he's such a big shot. He did not graduate from high school, but I did." After the war they were giving veterans medallions for the taxi cabs. Do you know what they are? A license?

SM: Yes.

IG: At the time they gave him them for free. Now they were going a couple of years ago for \$100,000 each. So my uncle couldn't drive the taxis. He ended up with two taxis, but couldn't drive either of them. So he hired people during the week, or whenever he could. My father, on his days off from the post office, would drive the taxi. My uncle had a lot of money, He spent

nothing but he never thought of helping with the education of me and my siblings. He died leaving a lot of money which was squandered by an older cousin who was a manic depressive.

SM: It's very funny you say that because the last time I was in a taxi—this is getting off topic—the man who was driving it was an immigrant from Bangladesh. He lives in the Bronx. He was a postman, and on the time he was not a postman, he drove the taxi. That's how I met him.

IG: That is funny. That is great. I'll have to tell my family. The big thing for my father was that my uncle let him keep all the money he made on those days. Otherwise you didn't make that much money. So, that's that. Ask me what else you wanted?

SM: Before we move on, because you've been talking a lot about education—I'm a teacher, so I'm interested in that as well—are there any memories from your younger time in school, public school, or junior high school that stand out to you?

IG: Public school there were like forty kids in the class. We sat at the desks, thing in the front. As you can tell, I had a habit of calling out. I'll never forget. my teacher would give me these notes about calling out. I had to show it to my mother, sign it, and bring it back. You don't bring it back, you can't stay in the classroom. My mother was so upset when I brought these home. It was stupid when I think about it. I stayed in the elementary school as a girl. I don't have too many memories from there, but I was at the top of the class. I was an overachiever. I was telling my kids what that was. They didn't even understand it. They didn't understand what it meant to be an overachiever. I once handed in a fifty page paper for high school. Nobody wrote fifty page papers. In those days we went home for lunch. It was a hill and then we would go home for lunch. My mother—because my father worked in the post office he went in at 5 AM—she would make the main meal for lunch. Meatballs, spaghetti. So when it rained, she would take these plates of food and bring it to the gymnasium so we could eat this food there.

SM: Wow.

IG: Yeah, that was kind of a fun story. My parents were totally devoted to us. They had a terrible marriage, and they fought a lot. If you ask me what was the worst part of my childhood, that was that. My mother spent too much, you know. All about money. All about money. We walked back and forth from school for the first couple of years. When I was in high school, I would come home sometimes ten o'clock at night and walk home. Today you can't even walk it. But I never felt deprived.

SM: Yeah. Was it a predominantly Jewish neighborhood when you were growing up there?

IG: Yes. 99%—it was literally Israel. Except for the superintendent, who wasn't Jewish. So we all went down to see his Christmas tree, otherwise we wouldn't know what a Christmas tree was. Very Jewish. Now, we couldn't afford to join a synagogue. So all I would do is my mother would go to Seders. We'd all get dressed up on the Jewish holiday. That was the big thing, to have an outfit for the holiday. We'd stand outside the synagogue. Nobody went in. Kids weren't even allowed. We marched around the neighborhood so we knew we were Jewish. Now the interesting thing is—I shouldn't say this because it's prejudicial—on the way to the library, on Morris Avenue, there was a street with all African Americans—we called them “negroes” then—living. Do you know that everybody crossed the street in front of their building? I think about it now. I can't even imagine why that happened.

SM: What street did you say that was?

IG: That was probably 164th Street. Maybe 163<sup>rd</sup> on Morris Avenue There was this one block full of Black people across the street from the 5 and 10. That was what my kids would call a Target.

SM: Okay

IG: On the weekends we visited family. I think to myself how we lived so close to the museums, but my parents never thought of taking us there. It was not even part of their culture. My mother used to play mahjong one night a week in the building. You had to put fifty cents in and at the end of the season they had enough money and they'd buy a theater ticket.

I remember the first show I went to was Carousel. Why? Because one of the women in the mahjong group couldn't make it. They gave my mother the ticket for me. That's just the way it was. We'd walk to the Concourse. We didn't even walk to any other park. We went to this little playground next door with a wonderful teacher who was in charge. No play dates. We did not need play dates because everybody we played with lived in the building, and nobody locked their door. So that's why, after school, when we wanted to do homework we'd go to somebody's house.

SM: You mentioned how people would cross the street to avoid where the African Americans were living. As you got older and the neighborhood started to change, were there more tensions that you noticed? Or was it kind of not until after you left for college. After I left for college most of my neighbors were all moving. It could have been prejudice but I think it could have been that in the early 60's new apartment buildings were being built and most of my neighbors could afford to move to nicer places and they did. My parents moved further north off the concourse to a smaller apartment on Valentine Ave. To get that apartment my maiden aunt took and increase on her rent at another building the landlord owned. Really crazy but that was the



way it was. The apartment was smaller and I lived there for a year after graduate school. My sister and I shared a pull out bed. It was but the neighborhood was much nicer. My mother was working by then and my brother was a latch key child. He did cook dinner for my parents/

IG: Now, what are you saying, honey? Tell me, what did you as

SM: No, no problem. Sorry that was a—

IG: —No, no. There was that street, and I'll tell you another story. But you know this is between us, because I'm still ashamed of it. It was sixty years ago. The only other Black person was this woman who came one day a week. Everybody had a housekeeper one day a week, even if they couldn't afford it. She was so lovely. She had two kids. I'm sure her kids went on to be PhDs, but she cleaned houses. Now I'm thinking she had a lot going for her, but I guess she couldn't get a job. So that's what they'd do.

SM: Right

IG: The neighborhood must have started changing when everybody started moving out. In other words, more Black people moved in. I think that's exactly what happened. Now here's my funny story. Before college, I get a letter in the middle of the summer for my roommate-to-be. Did you go away to school?

SM: Yes and no. I didn't live at home, but I'm from about an hour upstate and I went to Fordham in the Br

IG: Anyway, she sent me a letter. She grew up in Sedalia, Missouri. I don't even know where that is, but she sent me a picture of herself and her best friend. She was Black. Best friend is white, and I am sure she sent me this letter because she didn't want me to be afraid. Now, interestingly enough, I didn't know what to do. My father said “you're not going to college where they have *schvartzes* [derogatory term for Black people]. You're not going. You're just not going to.” It was summer, so I wrote a letter to this guidance counselor, and I said, what should I do? So she wrote back, “you're going to college. You should accept whatever experience is there, and if that means that you live with this Black girl” —or whatever they called them then, negro?— “that's what you should do.” So I went. But the funniest thing is, I became so friendly with all the Black girls there. But the interesting thing—and this should be part of it—the Black girls who were there were brilliant, brilliant women. The reason they went to the University of Chicago on the scholarship they needed was because they felt they would be more comfortable as a black person. One of the girls—I'll never forget, I still keep in touch with her—she was a National Science Finalist. Brilliant, brilliant. She went to Chicago because she felt she'd be comfortable. In the four years that she was a student there she got married, had a child, and graduated Phi Beta Kappa

SM: WoIG: So then I met her again twenty years ago. I said, “What are you doing with yourself You should be running a company.” She would have been if she were today. “Well, not really,” she said. “I got married.” This is the boyfriend: he was in the business school, so there was no problem with that. And, by the way, the business school didn't have one Jewish guy. I'll tell you that. Anyway, she said “well, I was a stay at home mom.” Her daughter became pregnant in high school, so there was no real success there. Eventually, she was running her own company, which was a printing company or something. But honestly, this girl could have done anything. The same for the other girls who I was not so friendly with. She was lovely. Every year-reunion we spend a lot of time together, but she was very relaxed with her life. I was more neurotic than she was. So that was Marva Ella, that was her name. And then she told me “I have family in New Rochelle.” I said, “why don't you call me? I live right there, next town over.” She never did. She never did. Anyway, I did have a very good experience. It was only because of college. Otherwise, who knows, maybe I'd still be prejudiced today. This teacher, this guidance counselor, was right on target with that.

SM: Absolutely. So what about some more fun topics? What about music? What kind of music did you enjoy?

IG: I was a nerd. When I wasn't with my friends—and I had a lot of friends—I was doing my homework or working because I was so afraid. And when you go to the reunions—there were a lot of kids like me at the University of Chicago who were on scholarships because they couldn't go otherwise—they talked about how we were at the school, and everything was happening, and none of us paid any attention because we were too busy studying. We were so afraid of losing our scholarships.

So what did I do for fun? Well, I went roller skating. I wasn't an athlete. I played a lot of house. I remember having a doll carriage coming home from school, and we'd walk up and down the street with the doll carriages. Never played sports. Never. On the weekends I went to see my family. My aunts, uncles, and cousins. My uncle had these taxis. One time he decided, rather than trade it in, he painted it black and gave it to my father. So this became our family car. We almost got killed, and that was the end of the car. My father had to put hooks in eyes to keep the doors closed, and one time it opened and we fell out.

SM: Oh my God [laughs]

IG: That's what we did, we went riding. Once a year we went to Coney Island. That was the big treat. Everybody went to Coney Island. We had people in the building who were wealthier than we were, but they didn't live any differently. My mother said, “you know, Rose gets all her clothes wholesale because her husband's an accountant and these are all his clients.” We did go to the wholesale house. Anybody tell you about this?

SM: No.

IG: A lot of the Jewish people on Saturday mornings—the ones who weren't religious—went into the city. The wholesale houses would sell off their samples and whatever they couldn't sell, you could go and buy it. So that was a big thing. A lot of people got their clothes there. There was no such thing as even going into Manhattan until I was in high school. It was not a thing. Once a year we went to the Museum of Natural History with the elementary school. And I played. I played in one house, another house, in the apartment with the toys, or downstairs. Nobody had activities after school. Nobody. Maybe they did, I just didn't know about it, but they played. They played with their friends. The boys played their ball game against the building. What was that called? They played, and they sometimes went into the school yard. I don't remember too much of that. But there was no physical activity for girls except for roller skating. We'd all roller skate up and down the sidewalks.

SM: Did you feel like, growing up as a woman during this period, you had different expectations than, say, your brother or your male peers? Obviously you are very motivated, so you didn't seem to have let that stop you.

IG: I think most of the people in the building were motivated. It's interesting. My mother's best friend—she was bright and so was her husband, he was a postman. They were very bright, but they didn't have money to go to college. So they noticed that their older son was not a student. They were smart. They took them to a vocational school. He learned to trade, cutting, and he ended up owning his own business. He did better than the kids who went to college and dropped out. They were smart. Nobody else would have thought to do that. My mother would have put her head in the oven before she did that. Yeah, we were very motivated, and we didn't have to be. She didn't say, “did you do your homework?” I don't know why. My aunt Ruth, she was a schoolteacher. She must have been behind all of this.

There were the kids who went to Bronx Science. But everybody went to City or Hunter College. You went out of town, you did something like that, if you couldn't get into City College. You had to have an 85 average to get into City College. That was kind of high, so if they didn't have it they didn't go. They went to City College. My husband went to City College at night. He realized after one year that would take him forever to graduate. So he went to college in the day, and he worked from 3-12 or 3-11 every day.

SM: Afterwards, yeah.

IG: I never felt poor. Never. Except when my parents fought over money. I had everything my friends had. I don't know how, but I did. My father worked the second job, and he'd say, "you're killing me. I can't do this." But he did it.

SM: Did your family keep kosher when you were young?

IG: No. My mother came from a kosher household because of her parents, but it was dropped. No, no, we didn't belong to a synagogue because we couldn't. I'll tell you another interesting story—I decided I wanted to learn about my religion. So I said to my mother, "I'd like to learn about my religion." So she went and did the research. She found there was a Yeshiva nearby—all girls. She took me over one day at four o'clock, and all the girls were there. I got so nauseous from it. The smell, everything about it just turned me off. That was the end of my Jewish education. When I learned it, I learned it as an adult in the synagogue. I always wanted to play the piano. Of course, I had no talent whatsoever. Finally, somebody in the building moved and gave my mother their old piano. In my senior year of high school, I took piano. Really terrible.

SM: Okay. It's never too late [laughs]

IG: That was terrible, it was really terrible. I guess I was motivated.

SM: Did you come back to the Bronx after you finished college?

IG: Absolutely. First of all, I went for a master's degree. Anything to not have to move home. Oh, are you kidding? If I had moved to an apartment with friends? Forget it. That's when there were five of my family living there with one bathroom. It must have been impossible but I don't remember that. Thank God, I met my husband and I got married the following year. I think a lot of the girls in the Bronx got married early to get away from the house. Because they couldn't have their own apartments.

I think that's why there was a lot of divorce. Well, nobody got divorced in my mother's generation, but I think the next generation realized that you have a choice. When I was a senior in college, everybody had an engagement ring. Everybody. I thought there was something wrong with me because I didn't have an engagement ring. Even a school that was as education-oriented as the University of Chicago, the girls had to have engagement rings. They all got married right after college.

Oh, and I joined this organization—I'll tell you two other stories. I joined B'nai B'rith. My friends made me go to the meeting, and after one meeting I became President. So the following year, I decided we'd have a big party. And we did. We decided we'd invite all the guys so we could meet them. And that's when I think I started dating. That's the way it went. When I was in

college I was also social chairman of the dormitory. In Chicago, if you had half the personality that liked to have fun, you became a leader. I went over to the business school, which was right down the block from where I lived—I had an apartment dormitory. I met the social chairman there. We planned a party because they were having a big dinner dance and nobody had a date. So he and I sat down. He had a list of the guys who were interested. And I got a list of the girls. So I'm sitting there and I'm thinking, is there a Jewish guy in this group? I'm looking at all the names. Well, there wasn't. So I ended up going with the other social chairman, who was brilliant and good looking, and his father was a State Senator.

SM: Oh!

IG: So I went with him to the dance, and he was delightful. He said, "I'd like to see you again." I said, "no, you can't." He said, "why?" I said, "because you're not Jewish." Are you Jewish?

SM: Yes, I am

IG: Yeah, so I'm telling you, if I had dated somebody who wasn't Jewish, I'd be disowned. It's not the same now.

SM: It's different now

IG: It's so interesting. I'll never forget that. I'm looking at this whole list with these good, you know, list of boys and they're all good looking. And they're in the business school. Oh, I'm so stupid, it's the stupidest thing. So I came back and moved into this tiny apartment. There was hardly room for me. I'd said no way was I going to go to an apartment. I'd said, well, I'll wait a year. And then I met my husband. That was the end of that.

SM: Did you stay in the Bronx after you got married, or did you move?

IG: I tried to. I looked at apartments there because they were very reasonable. I went to Riverdale, which is really the Bronx. Do you know where Riverdale is?

SM: Yes.

IG: People think they live in Riverdale, but they really live in the Bronx. I lived in the Bronx. It was so funny—my husband wanted to live in Queens. I said, "I'm not living in Queens because I have to drive, and I can't." Every woman's dream—every girl's dream, mine included—growing up was to get married and move to the Grand Concourse. We moved to the suburbs! That's where I raised my kids, who knew! That wasn't even part of my vocabulary. So, we were looking at apartments in Queens, and then we came back to the Bronx. He didn't want that, and I

understand that now. The buildings are fine, the apartments were probably nicer than the ones in Riverdale. But we stopped at one building that said “apartments for rent, in Riverdale” so we stopped. There was a doorman. Oh, my God! Was I impressed? He said, “well, we have one apartment. It's a one-bedroom. Would you like to see it?” I said, “sure.” So, Arthur came with me, my mother-in-law was with him too, and we went in. It was lovely. It was a nice, big living room, kitchen, and a little dinette. We stayed there for ten years.

SM: Really? Okay.

IG: Well, actually, let's say six years. I stayed there, and then I became pregnant, and I had a baby. Somebody in the building said, “look, if you want a two bedroom, you better put your name on a list because when they come, they're only good for a day.” So we ended up moving for a two bedroom in the apartment, which was huge and lovely with a terrace overlooking Henry Hudson Parkway. There's where we stayed. So we're in this building for ten years. And then we thought it was time for a house. What happened is we went to the beach for summer. It was so nice walking out without an elevator. Now I live in apartments all the time. But we ended up moving to a house, and we ended up in this—I'd never even heard of Mamaroneck—but we ended up there. Best decision we ever made in our lives. It was such a wonderful community. We had a beautiful house. My husband became very successful, also from nothing. He had to work his way through college. It's so funny because we meet so many people whose fathers had businesses, had money. But you can do it on your own. You really can. And we did. I never worked, which I should have. Summers we went to the bungalow colony, and it was so nice to get away from the city. We lived in a smaller bungalow than we did an apartment. It's hard to believe, but it was so nice, the outdoors. It was Monticello—the whole thing with Jews from the Bronx. Where did you live?

SM: I grew up in Monroe.

IG: Oh, I know that. That was close to the city, so the bungalows there were more expensive. We went up to Monticello because it was farther away.

SM: Oh, that's great. My last question for you then, which I always like to end with, is: as you look back on your time in the Bronx, what kind of emotions or memories do you associate with it?

IG: Interesting, very nostalgic. I enjoyed it for what it was. I didn't know that I was deprived. We went to the bungalow colony even though my parents had to pay it off all winter. Then we got another one. I never, ever felt deprived. It must have been something in me. Later, I ended up becoming friendly only with the brighter kids who came from the other side of the Concourse. I didn't even know people lived there. That's what happened. I never went to Yankee stadium. I

grew up around the corner. I never did anything on that side of the Concourse, except when I went to visit friends who lived there.

SM: Wow

IG: I never felt poor. I guess I did feel deprived, but we did go to the bungalow. I loved that for the summers. My mother felt deprived. I think she would have liked a better life. When I was an adult I would take her shopping with me for clothes. If I bought something I would buy her the same thing. I just wanted to give her everything she never had. I'm sure a lot of people tell you that, too.

SM: Absolutely

ADDED POST INTERVIEW:

I want to add one thing about medical care. We had one doctor. He delivered us, was pediatrician, dermatologist and even psychiatrist. He removed my tonsils in the Lewis Morris Building on the Grand Concourse. It is no longer there. It was replaced by a beautiful new hospital in 1956 which I think is now a city hospital with knife wound etc. Right of the Grand Concourse.

When my mother was getting depressed and my sister and I were 13 and 10, our doctor told my mother to have a baby and she did (my brother). Most interesting was the fact that Dr. Ballen made house calls. Any time we were sick he came to the house, checked us out gave us our penicillin shots and charged \$3.00 for the visit. He drove a cadillac and my parents thought he was the most successful member of the family. He was at my wedding....