My husband, Raymond Pace Alexander, and I were both born in Philadelphia. I come from a family that on my mother's side, from census returns establishes that we have been residents of Pennsylvania for six or seven generations. This is recorded by Carter Woodson in his book entitled, "Three Negro Families Prior to 1830." My husband's family came from Virginia. His father was born in slavery and was the son of the master of the plantation. His father often told me stories of what happened and how he happened to come to Philadelphia. Union soldiers came across the lawn of his father's home or rather, plantation and his father went out to tell them not to dare cross that lawn, which was held as something very precious as he had brought back the seed from England. The soldiers paid no attention to him and one of them pulled his gold watch and chain which he also brought from England off of him and they all laughed and of course they retained it. My father-in-law said that this made him know right then that his father was not the big colonel that he always thought he was and that there was no future for him because his father could no longer protect him. Also, the slaves began coming back from Louisiana where his father had plantations and they thought if they could get back to Col. Alexander that they would be taken care of, but there wasn't food for them. So his father decided to leave (Raymond's father decided to leave) and in slow stages walked all the way to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

There was little work in Harrisburg and he heard that if he got to Philadelphia he would get work and he did come to Philadelphia. He was a man over 40 years of age before he married and he lived with one family, Cassius Harris, who lived on the Main Line and he began to train horses and people to ride them. He established later a riding academy in Philadelphia. He had charge of the horses of the first city troop and he used to carry the horses to Gettysburg in the summer, where the troops had their activities for the summer. And Raymond had told me many times that he had to ride one of those horses all the way to Gettysburg. But he loved the horses and anybody who married into the Alexander family simply had to love horses. As a consequence, I too took to the horses and was taught to ride in good fashion by my father-in-law and his only brother. My father-in-law was Hilliard Alexander and his brother was Sam Alexander. They were both born on the plantation of the same father.
Raymond went to Central High School and worked his way not only through high school but as a youngster he sold newspapers and before he was 17 he had his full height so that he found he wasn't making enough money selling papers and he went down to the wharf, helping to fill barrels of fish -- empty barrels of fish that were being sold in smaller lots. He would do all this in the morning before he went to school. He however maintained his stand in front of the old Metropolitan Opera House and Broad and Poplar Sts. One day the manager of the opera house came out and asked Raymond if he could get a few other colored boys to be in the slave scene in Aida. Well, Raymond was so anxious to see the inside of this opera house that he agreed. But what a time he had to get any of the boys to agree that they would play in Aida as slaves. He was successful and he was so overcome with awe -- he said it was the most beautiful place he had ever seen -- the music was the most wonderful -- that he began going to rehearsals and as a result of going to rehearsals they gave him a job of keeping the men's room clean.

When I met Raymond when I was at Penn he was -- I was a junior, but I finished in three years, so I was almost a senior when he came as a freshman. Due to the fact that his mother died when he was five years of age, she left five children who were thrown from pillar to pillar until one aunt took them all and he never had an opportunity to go to the opera or the theater or have the finer things in life for which he had a great yearning. So he soon learned the social register, which stood him in good stead in many ways thereafter, but particularly in the opera house because when I met him he got boys -- young men who were at Penn -- to come take care of his men's room. He put perfume in, Bromo-Seltzer, ties, and collars to take care of the drunks when they spoiled their attire and they rewarded him well for his care of them. He soon needed some help in the men's room and then he thought to himself, "If I could take the librettos to the horse shoe ring, I could make much more money." So he asked for permission to sell the librettos. And his knowledge of the social register helped him because when he would bring back a libretto because someone asked him if he could get Caruso's autograph, he would know which Biddle wanted it and they would say to him, "Which Biddle is it?" And they would say, "He's got plenty of money. Tell him I wouldn't sign it. Make him give you $5."

But the thing that will probably interest you, Walter, most is that Raymond learned the operas -- he could tell you who had sung what the first time -- so that when he went into City Council one of the first things he promoted was a contribution to the opera company in Philadelphia and he
was able to get through the contribution for the Grand Opera and for the Lyric Opera. He wasn't able to get the two companies together but it happened just when he died when they had been working on it for years. I think that is most interesting.

Also, the fact that when he went to Central High School and he was selling his papers his professors used to stop to have their shoes shined and when he was in his senior year one of his professors said, "Raymond, can you keep a secret?" And Raymond said, "I certainly can. What is it?" He said, "You're going to get the scholarship to Harvard." They did call him in and tell him that but he couldn't see how he could raise enough money for his board and lodging there but he could if he were here in Philadelphia because he had ways -- he was waiting tables at the fine restaurants and he knew where he was going to be able to make enough money. And so they gave him the scholarship to Penn. In those days the scholarship was full tuition.

And it was at Penn that I met him -- must have been 1918. He also finished the Wharton School at Penn and he completed his work in three years. I should note that his sister, Virginia, the same year that Raymond got the scholarship from Penn she won a scholarship from William Penn to Penn and she also had to work her way through. And I told my mother about this girl who didn't have any home and sometimes she didn't have any lunch and for three years my mother packed two lunches -- one for me and one for Virginia. I wasn't thinking about marrying Raymond or anybody else because I had things on my mind that I wanted to do.

When Raymond finished at Wharton he went to Harvard -- he graduated with honors from Penn, as did I -- he made the grade to be admitted Phi Beta Kappa and I did too, but they wouldn't elect us. You should know that William J. Coleman, Jr., Secretary of Transportation, also made the grade but they wouldn't elect him. However, about three or four years ago Raymond and I received letters from Dr. Harnwell, stating that the university had gone over our records and they hoped that we would accept our Phi Beta Kappa keys, which we did.

When I finished college in 1918 I entered the graduate school and in 1919 I got my master's degree and in '21 I got my PhD. I did all my graduate work in economics and insurance. I couldn't get any work anywhere. In fact the
situation was such in Philadelphia that I could not even have taught high school after I had gotten all this training because they didn't employ any colored teachers.

So in order to get work I accepted a position, very gladly, with the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company in Durham, N.C. as assistant actuary and I stayed down there from 1921 until '23 and Raymond finished Harvard in June of '23 and we married in November of '23 and we lived to celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary.

The three years that I was doing graduate work, Raymond was in Wharton and then he went up to Harvard. When Raymond was getting ready to go off to Harvard for law school, his father told him and Raymond told me that his dad said, "Now you've taken up all this time with Sadie. Have you asked her mother for her?" And Raymond said he told him, "Nobody does that any more." His father told him, "You will speak to her mother." One Saturday morning I went to the door and here was Mr. Alexander. And you didn't call on people on Saturday mornings because that's when you did your housework. And he wanted to speak to my mother. So he said something to my mother and left. And when my mother came back she said, "You didn't tell me that you (tape unclear). That's not old-fashioned at all. That's proper."

From the time that -- I was married in November of 1923 and I got busy with PTA and a lot of organizations, but they didn't particularly interest me and I wasn't satisfied so Raymond said to me, "What did I want to do?" Well I knew -- my major professors in economics and so forth and called not only all over the city but all over the country to try and get me placed and they couldn't place me. I knew I couldn't place myself. I said to him, "I think I'll go to law school." So he said he could afford it and he would be delighted. So to law school I went. And as I often used to tell him, "Raymond, you have to get up very early in the morning to beat you. Wars can come and the men can leave, but you know your wife is going to be there. She's a lawyer and she'll watch the till and perform the duties that she can." And it did work out very well. People often ask me, "How does it work?" And I say I don't know how it could work better. Because we've had the same interests and the same purposes.

Philadelphia was a very prejudiced city in my youth. How it has developed and grown is beyond the imagination of the average person. For example, all the years that I was at Penn I had to carry lunch, except when I was at law school. When I was at law school I could go to the corner drugstore. But no restaurant would serve any of the colored students.

Line #14 - You did not tell me that Mr. Alexander told Raymond he should speak with me about his intention to marry you.
I went to Edgar Peis Smith, who was the President of the University, to state my concern, not only for myself but I took two other girls with me. It was bad for our health that we could never have a warm lunch in the cold winter time. And it was an indignity and I thought the university was too big not to take this matter into consideration. And he said that he realized what we were suffering but really he could do nothing about it.

Well, between that experience and then another one, one Christmas I had a friend who went to Cornell to college and she was going to come visit me for a few days. So I had asked Raymond if he would see if one of the boys at Penn would escort her. And so Raymond asked me about the girl, what did she look like, did she have personality and so forth and he said he would see what he could do. So he did get one of the young men to have a blind date. And he asked this fellow to go to the Shubert to get tickets to go to the theater. So the fellow was fairer than Raymond and I suppose if you just passed him by you wouldn't know whether he was colored or not. When we got to the theater they told us there was some mistake. These tickets were no good and where did we find them? So we were quite persistent and each one of us started to speak what little foreign language we were able to handle and it was quite amusing because Raymond was more fluent in Spanish than he was in French. I was more fluent in French. And my friend was very good in German. And the manager didn't know what we were speaking and he finally said, "They're not niggers." And then he offered us a box and we pretended that we didn't want a box. It was intermission when they finally decided to seat us and nobody was in those seats. And Raymond and I said that we were determined to see that Philadelphia was better than that. So our interest in better race relations had naturally come as a result of our experiences and our desire to see that this doesn't continue to happen. And I know that my husband and I are responsible for opening these movie theaters. Do you know that the movie theater on 19th and Chestnut Sts. opened with the playing of the Ten Commandments they wouldn't let a colored person into it -- it was about 1925. There were two girls -- Agnes Chew and Deedie Chew. Agnes was so fair that you would not know she had a drop of Negro blood and her sister was brown-skinned. They admitted the girl who looked like she was white and she turned around and looked for her sister and they were man-handling her to keep her from going in. And the plaintiffs we had, however, were a man and wife who worked for one family on the Main Line and they said that whenever that case was called they were going to be there. Now we didn't win the case in court but every time Raymond would go around to public meetings and I would too and we would tell the people we didn't want any money but if they didn't let you into a movie theater, you come see us. All we want you to do is promise that you will take the time to come to court.
And we had that man at that theater — and our office was across the street — we had him arrested so often that one day he came over and he took his handkerchief and he waved it in the air and he said, "I surrender. They can take my job. But my wife can't stand it."

Raymond represented Joe Rainy — you remember the magistrate Rainy? — he represented him when Horn and Hardarts wouldn't let him sit at the table.

Raymond and I went in Horn and Hardarts at 18th St. and this was about '35 and we had with us a friend from Boston and that was a nice Horn & Hardarts — all the people from Rittenhouse Square used to eat there. The girl refused to wait on us. Pretty soon the manager came and said, "I don't know what in the world has happened. I know you didn't do anything to her and I'll see that you are waited on properly." And as we left the manager said to Raymond, "You don't remember me." And Raymond said no. And he said don't you know when you worked at the cafe on East River Drive. Don't you know that I was the second man? And Raymond said, "Harry Mattison." Now, I was trying to give you some idea of what the atmosphere was back in those days.

When Raymond was at Penn he used to get out of class in time to serve lunch at the hotel at Broad and Ridge Ave., which is now one of Father Divine's places. He would go there to serve lunch so as to get a lunch and make a few tips. He would go in the afternoon to Fairmount Park to this cafe that was on the East River Drive and one night the manager gave Raymond John R. K. Scott to wait on. So Mr. Scott became interested and kept asking Raymond what he did. And Raymond thought that he didn't like his service and that he wanted to get an older waiter so he said, "I work here. I'm a waiter." And Mr. Scott kept insisting and finally Raymond told him that he went to school. From then on Mr. Scott always wanted to know, where was Alexander? And he tipped very heavily and Raymond was only too delighted to have him. And in those days you counted the corks to the champagne and you presented the corks when you presented the bill. And the service was very fine and Raymond learned a lot of things and he knew what to order and what year wine and so forth.

When Raymond finished Harvard Dean Pound gave him a letter to one of the top firms in Philadelphia that had written for some names. And he told Raymond, "I'm not giving them anybody's name but yours. And you go see them." So Raymond went in and the girl didn't ask Raymond to sit down and in a few minutes the head of the firm came out and told Raymond that he had no need for his services. And Raymond's heart sunk because he felt that anybody that Dean Pound would send down there they would surely take.
So Raymond thought to himself, "I'm going to try John R. K. Scott. He was always interested in me." So he went to Mr. Scott's office. Mr. Scott came out and said, "Where have you been? I've asked and asked and they all said you had gone away to school." And Raymond said, "I passed the bar and graduated from Harvard." And Mr. Scott took him into an office and he said, "I want you to meet Masmano." Masmano then was calling himself Mussman. And there was a double desk. Raymond was on one side and Mussman was on the other. And they became good friends. So then Scott took Raymond over, introduced him to the court and gave him a case to try.

In the meantime I was still in North Carolina waiting for Raymond to get established so we could get married. He got my mother to go with him to the August furniture sale to pick out some furniture. He was so confident that he was going to make it. But they wouldn't let him have anything because he had no credit in Philadelphia. Then about a week later he got a letter from Mr. McNight, who was the credit manager at Wanamaker's. And he asked him to stop in to see him. So Raymond went in and McNight said, "I know you think it's strange that I'm sending for you. I want you to tell me where you want that furniture sent. I told you last week you couldn't have it but now I'm going to let you have it." So Raymond said I intended to ask you to keep it for me until I get an office, but now I'm lucky and I have an office and I think I will need it about October. And McNight said he didn't know the cost of keeping it and so forth. And then he said to Raymond, "You know one thing? I am betting my ability to choose a man on you. I have a big responsibility if I make a mistake. This is over a thousand dollars worth of furniture. And I want to tell you why I'm doing it. I was in court last week and I heard you try a case. I was there to testify about some goods that had been stolen from Wanamaker's and I sat and heard you do that case and I am saying that you are going to be a success."

So Mr. McNight, if he would see me in the store he would say, "Come on upstairs and talk to me." And one of the things he told me over and over again was when the credit managers of the store had a meeting and they would start talking about whether or not they would cater to colored patronage he would take the floor. And he said it got to the point where they said "here comes McKnight and Alexander."

But I used to send people who worked for me in my home
with a note to Mr. McKnight. And he told me how many butlers and maids and so forth who worked for the well-to-do families that he had built up a trade with.

The thing that you know most about Raymond and me is the work that we did in the Clark and Dilworth administrations but we had laid a groundwork long before that, otherwise we never would have had the support that we got from both the Black and the White people.

Dick was fond of Raymond. Joe was colder than Dick. Raymond -- for example, you ask how he happened to be slated for City Council. He was slated because he had been out here working for the party. To bring back the Democratic party long before we ever thought we would get where we did. And he and I both were working at the level of the street.

(WMP: Who recognized you -- was it Jim Finnegan or Mike Bradley?)

It was Finnegan who was very helpful. Dick knew Raymond from City Hall. He knew that he was extremely active in the courts and that he was a good lawyer and he had some of the refinement that Dick would like to have in the party. They wanted representation, but they wanted it that they could be proud of and that they could depend upon. And Finnegan was very very good to him. Both of us had financially supported the renaissance. When I say that we worked from the ground up -- every election night I would take the street list from my division and I would go to every house and ask the people to come out and vote. Raymond and I worked together just like twins. The only places we divided ourselves up were when it came to organizations, so that he would be on some boards and I would be on others. So that we would have a wider experience with people.

When Doc Creed wanted so badly to be in Council that he held out when Raymond came up for reelection and said that he wouldn't vote for him. So Earl Chudoff asked Doc to come up to his house on 33rd street and it was on a Sunday and Dick was up there and Raymond was up there and they stayed up there until afternoon until they got Creed to agree that he would vote for Raymond. But Dick stayed up there for hours working on him.

And Raymond enjoyed City Council. And he enjoyed his being on the bench because it was the first opportunity he really had to use his legal mind fully in writing opinions and of course his opinion that created the Community Legal Services was at the top of his contributions to social welfare. We were in Ireland when Time magazine published Raymond's picture and the story of his opinion in CLS which caused New York to change its decision on the same issue.
They had turned them down as having the right to a non-profit organization for legal services in New York and along came Raymond's opinion sustained in praecipuum by our Supreme Court and then New York's Court of Appeals reversed.

There is a great deal of discontent among the lawyers because those lawyers who made their living going to the police hearings don't get the work any more because these people -- it is a funny thing, they can be ever so poor but if Johnny is in jail or the father, they seem to raise money. I think the families get together and raise it.

I found this article that Raymond wrote and it appeared in the Philadelphia Bulletin on the Girard College case. May 23, 1965. My husband wrote this article and he stated that he was aware of the deep and fervent dedication of a leader -- referring to the leader of that great organization, the distinguished Rev. Dr. Eugene Carson Blake and remembering his sacrifices in marching (?) in seven communities, supporting the pleas for freedom of the Negro people and his having suffered arrests in jail, I felt it was my duty no longer to be silent and as the one most eminently associated in the long period of litigation which I undertook in July 1963 and which ended in the fall of 1968, hence this report." And then he proceeds to state that he introduced a resolution in City Council which was unanimously approved, both by the Democrats and the Republicans, urging the trustees -- (interruption during interview) -- to admit fatherless Negro boys and pointing out that the trust had been broken in several ways -- first it was for orphans and the Orphans' Court had said that where the child was fatherless, it was an orphan. He said that Girard houses here in Philadelphia should never be sold and they were sold. That his coal mines should never be sold, and that had been done. So to say that it was breaking the will, the court had permitted any number of changes to have been made in the handling of the estate which Girard said absolutely should not be done. He mentions the fact that he (Raymond) had the strong support of Mayor Tate, Paul D'Ortona, Tom Gerry, Lou Stevens, and the entire City Council. It was necessary for him to file suit and to pursue the matter up to our highest state court, and that he was assisted in this by the City Solicitor, who at one time was Abe Freedman, and the Attorney General, Thomas D. McBride and his deputy, Lois G. Forer, and then afterwards, Dave Berger. In 1956 Dave became City Solicitor. Professor Louis H. Pollack, who is now Dean of the Law School of the University of Pennsylvania and William T. Coleman, Jr., all of whom assisted him in the preparation of his briefs and arguments and each of whom argued the case on appeal in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.
I should also mention about Dr. Kenneth Clark of New York University, who also testified in the Brown case in which the United States Supreme Court declared segregation illegal was present to testify in addition to others mentioned that you lost your appeal but he said that people say that he lost it in the Supreme Court of the United States. But he did not. He won it. The Supreme Court of the United States sent the case back to our state supreme court for them to make a finding in accordance with the law.

Our Orphans’ Court immediately appointed private trustees because the Supreme Court had pointed out the fact that public trustees were acting for the city of Philadelphia and government could not discriminate. And they overnight appointed private trustees. Then Raymond went on the bench and in this article he states that his efforts after he got on the bench to get other lawyers to take up this case, because it really could be won, and one of the men he depended upon most said that the time wasn't ripe. What really happened in the end was that Cecil Moore got together his group of people who marched around there for almost a year and so disturbed the citizens who lived up there that they had to keep police up there at all times.

And I was up there many times because at that time I was Chairman of the Commission on Human Relations. In addition the demands of the people that the governor act through his Attorney General became so intense that he appointed William T. Coleman, Jr. and another lawyer whose name I cannot remember as Deputy Attorney Generals and they saw that the action was sustained by our Supreme Court then saying that the Negros must be admitted.

My husband further states in this article that he himself spent over $3,000 in printing the records and that he did not receive any money for his labors in the case. He pays a nice respect to me — "of course I had the moral, intellectual, and spiritual support at all times from my good wife, who was associated with me in the practice of law for a long number of years, Sadie T. M. Alexander."

I should make some mention of my 15 years with the Commission on Human Relations. Joe Clark appointed me to the Commission, but before we were appointed we had to have a commission. And I had the privilege of presenting to the City Charter Commission the proposal for a commission. Murray Shusterman and I as a committee from the Fellowship Commission worked on this proposal for a commission and our proposal was accepted by them without removing a comma except that they had only provided for five commissioners and we said that that would be too much work since we were not paid and we recommended that it be increased to nine.
It was under Joe Clark's administration that the commissioners were appointed and I was one of them. For some reason, not known to me, one of the concerned citizens of Philadelphia told Joe that I was related to Tanner Doherty and that therefore I should not be on there because there would be two people in one family and Joe was coming through the City Hall plaza and he saw Luther Cunningham and Rev. Shepperd and he asked them was Sadie related to Tanner Doherty and first they said no and then they said yes they thought I was his cousin. So Joe sent for Tanner and he told Tanner that he understood that we were related and Tanner said, Yes, my mother and Sadie's mother are first cousins. So he said well I may need Raymond's vote in Council and I don't want to do anything to offend him and I'm going to appoint you to the board in PGH, which was the first time we had a colored appointment on that board, which was quite important.

As long as Joe and Dick were mayors we were able to work. Very successfully when you consider the atmosphere and what we were trying to do and you take the resistance today with the integration of schools -- to be able to bring in the heads of industry and question their conduct was progress. To have a board that was willing --

(WMP: Who was your key staff people?)

When we started out it was Frank Lescher. And then -- Frank is a devoted Quaker and I have talked to many young Quakers who say that the older ones can wait on time but they say the shoe wasn't pinching their toes. And when these younger ones were called into the army and resisted by refusing to serve and taking assignments in hospitals and so forth and they were so mistreated, they began to realize what prejudice was. Frank was devoted to the cause but he moved like a snail and we needed action and that's when we got George Schermer. And we were really flying high when we got George. Then Tate came in and for a while he didn't bother us, but between when we started to bring up cases of police brutality and the Commissioner, then Frank Rizzo, determined that we would never interrogate a policeman, Mayor Tate pulled in the chains on us and the result was his determining that he was determined that he was going to put Clarence Farmer in. Now the rules and regulations of the Commission, which had been approved by the City Solicitor provided that the Commission selects its own chairman. But the Mayor hadn't read that and so he sent Clarence Farmer over for us to talk to him and we talked to him and we decided we didn't want him because his only experience with handling people was seven men in his printing shop. George Schermer resigned because he couldn't get cooperation from the Mayor and the police department.
Schermer left along the time that Leary (who was the Police Commissioner) left to go to New York. Leary couldn't do anything. He got the job in New York and he just wasn't going to put up with the foolishness he had here. And George made a blast -- you ought to be able to find it in the newspapers -- against the city and went to Washington and set up his own business.

Let me tell you the rest of it -- and I've never published this -- Tate sent in Austin Norris to me to tell me to resign. Austin did it in a smoother way. Austin kept telling me, "Sadie, why don't you retire?" And I said I wasn't going to retire. I didn't have any idea of retiring as long as I had my physical and mental capabilities. So then Mayor Tate called me and he said he had tried to get the message to me but I didn't seem to be able to understand it -- he wanted me to resign. And I said, "Why should I resign? You tell me anything I've done that's improper." He said, "Because I want you to resign." And I said, "Now you employed me. And you can fire me. But I'm not going to resign." And then he went to my husband. And my husband said he didn't know anything about it -- and he was right -- I never worried Raymond with my problems. I settled them myself. And he said he knew nothing about it and that he would speak to me but he said, "Sadie has a mind of her own and if she told you that I'm afraid she's going to stick to it." And after that the Mayor didn't have anything to do with either one of us. He would act as if he didn't see us. He did send a great big -- one of these cards that the Catholics use -- when Raymond died. Anyway, he did do that.

I'm sorry -- I didn't realize -- I must leave to get ahead of the traffic.
Interview with Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander

10/12/77

I was born on January 2, 1898, in Philadelphia, in a house which bore the number 2908 Diamond Street. This house was just this year declared a historic house, not because I was born there, but rather, because my distinguished uncle, Henry Osawa Tanner, lived there the majority of his early life, in fact, up till he had expatriated himself by going to Paris.

My mother said I was destined to be born, because she was cleaning her bedroom on the second floor of the house, when she tried to move a solid cherrywood bed. And as she went to push the heavy bed, she felt something drop. And that was the first time she knew that she was pregnant. She told her husband and he said, well, I guess this is the loss...we're not going to have another baby...because she'd had several miscarriages. However, the doctor came and said, get into bed, which she had done, and I went back into position.

Soon thereafter, she had my brother and sister, putting them on the Ridge Avenue trolley, which, after all, my mother told me, was a wooden trolley pulled by horses. And the conductor started off after she got the two children up into the trolley, and dragged my mother for almost a half a block on Ridge Avenue, between Twenty-ninth and Diamond. She then knew that she wasn't going to keep this baby. But I still stuck. And so my mother used to say that I was destined to come into the world, and if I would tell you my medical history, you would agree with me that I was destined to live for some years.

Before my mother was out of bed, because in those days they kept you in bed forever, my grandfather, Bishop Benjamin Tucker Tanner, came to visit. He was then presiding over the Kansas district of the African Methodist Episcopal church, and having business in the east, he came to see his new grandchild. And my mother was very concerned about naming me, because my father had named the first-born, my sister, Elizabeth, after his mother. And when a son came, he had to be named Aaron, after my father's father or grand-father, and my father was Aaron. Well, my mother made up her mind, he will not name another one. So she said to her father, Papa, look up in that closet and you will find a bottle of water that Henry, referring to Henry Tanner, the artist, brought from the river of Jordan. I want you to baptize this baby. And she got that idea because we lived in an Irish Catholic neighborhood. And when there was a child born to a family in which one of the parents was a Protestant, invariably they would come over to 2908 Diamond Street, and ask Bishop Tanner to baptize the baby so they could tell the Catholic member of the family, parent, that the baby has been baptized. My mother's reason was that she wanted to name me, but I discovered years later, when I applied for a birth certificate, that my name was not on the certificate. I was only registered as a female child.
Fortunately, my mother was still living, so I got my birth certificate.

Now my mother and father separated. I have no recollection of seeing my father, because I wasn't a year old when he deserted her. I did not know that my father was dead until I was in eighth grade when children told me at school. And I came back and asked my mother and she then told me that what they said was true. My mother never told me why, or what happened.... because my father was a graduate of Lincoln University, the first Negro to graduate from the Law School of the University of Pennsylvania, and therefore held a high position. She never told me, but I only thought the thing out for myself. It was a deep embarrassment in my mother's day, for her husband to desert her, and for her to have to change her style of living.

So she had a sister who was married to Louis Baxter Moore, the first black person who got a PhD. from the University of Pennsylvania. And he was a dean of education at Howard University. Dean Moore and my Aunt Sadie, I wasn't named for her, I was named for my grandmother, she was named for her mother, persuaded my mother to come to Washington and they said, we can always get work for you at Howard University. In addition, our grandparents, the Tanner grandparents, bought a home for us. Although we had a home in Washington, my mother would come back to Philadelphia every time she had a cold, it seemed to me. And since I was the youngest, six years difference between me and my brother, and seven between me and my sister, she left the two older children with my uncle and aunt, the Moores in Washington, and brought me to Philadelphia. So I scarcely ever finished a full term in Washington. But when I got to high school, and my mother had me apply for Girls' High School, they wanted to put me back a year. So my mother said, No, she would not have me suffer that way. She promised she'd leave me till I finished high school.

I finished high school and I was awarded a scholarship to Howard University. Now Howard University played a big part in my life. They used to have speakers from all over the world come to Howard University, and I remember distinctly Booker T. Washington coming. Now I think I remember, I may have heard it so often, but I do recall that they had planned a reception for Mr. Washington, and that he first said, when he got up to speak, how he regretted that he couldn't stay for the reception. And he jokingly said that people who come to Washington and breathe the air of Washington overnight, seem never able to leave. And he was afraid to stay that long. He wouldn't get back to Tuskegee.
Also, in my grandfather's home in Philadelphia I would meet distinguished citizens because my grandfather was one of the better lettered men of his time -- he was a graduate of Avery College and Western Theological School in Pittsburgh. And he was a writer -- I have seven books that he published. They were mostly about religion and the development of the African Methodist Episcopal church.

Now, back to Howard University. I sewed all summer, getting ready to be the best-dressed girl on the campus. When it got to the end of August, my mother told me ... I didn't want to spoil your summer, Sadie, but you're not going to Howard University. I've been out to the University of Pennsylvania, and I have got your credits and I've deposited them, and they are going to admit you. Well, I tell you, I could never explain the distress that I felt. All my friends that I'd gone through high school with, were going, most of them, to Howard University. I was going to live as I had for the four years I was in high school, with my uncle on the campus. I loved the place. But my mother said ... I would be very unwise to let you go back to Washington to Howard University when you have right here in Philadelphia a great university. And I hate to see you so discouraged, but you are going to the University of Pennsylvania.

I jumped up and down on the bed trying to break the springs. I cried and she just let me alone. Well, in my day, you didn't do what you wanted to do. You didn't do your thing. You did the thing your parents told you to do. So out to the University of Pennsylvania I went. I didn't know a soul. I didn't even know my way around the campus. I really didn't know anybody to say goodmorning to. But, I buckled down and there was one thing I had learned in Washington. I went to what was then known as M Street High School. It's now Dunbar. It's the school which Judge Hastings attended. Robert Weaver, who was the first black cabinet member, he was appointed under Franklin Roosevelt...Well I don't need to go on. And all of our teachers were graduates of the leading universities because they couldn't teach any place else. And they put in us a determination that nobody would beat us. And I started that way. I used to pray every night, ...ask the Lord to give me the ability to do whatever I had to do the very best I could do it. After a while I began to realize that I didn't need to ask the Lord for that...because I only knew how to do it the best. I only knew how to give every answer possible to a question.

(WMP: Well that's great. Now maybe you'll tell us now what you achieved in your life.)

Well, I finished Penn undergraduate school in three years. I was propelled to do this because my grandfather was approaching ninety, and I was dependent upon him for my tuition. And when I finished my undergraduate school, I received a graduate scholarship and that paid my tuition in full. But I was determined I wanted to be a fellow and do you know, in my day, they only had three fellowships for which a woman could apply. We couldn't get the Harrison Fellowships; just three. The head of my depart-
ment, Dr. Henry Miner Patterson, helped. He said that his
department had voted entirely they would support me for a
fellowship. Well I knew what day they were meeting. When
the meeting was over I was still in the library waiting to
hear. And Dr. Patterson told me to come over to his office.
When I got over there he asked me what had I done to the
books of a student, a graduate student, who was in the library;
graduate students who had qualified for the PhD. course, had
their own desks upstairs in the library. I told him I had never
touched anybody's books. So he said that Dr. Jastro, the librar­
ian, had got up and made a speech against me and said that under
no circumstances should I have it, because I had disturbed all
these books of a student who was just at the point where she
was comparing the citations to make certain they were correct.
Well, Dr. Patterson said ..well, I will go back...but it's too
late..they've already awarded it to someone else. But when
the members of the faculty found out that Dr. Jastro had mis­taken me for another colored woman, Jessie Fawcett, who had been
one of my teachers in high school, a Philadelphian who gradu­
ated from Girls' High School, got the scholarship to Bryn Mawr;
they wouldn't admit her and they arranged for her to go to
Cornell. I was sick. But they stood behind me in the next
year, and I got the Francis Sergeant Pepper Fellowship and
that was what I wanted above all..to be a fellow of the univ­
ersity, and of one of the outstanding endowments. That paid
my tuition and as I recall, gave me about $25 a month, which
was a lot of money in those days, and at least I knew my car­
fare was ready, my lunches settled.

Now, in June of 1921, I received the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in economics. It was a great occasion because I
was the first black woman in the United States to qualify and
to receive the degree. And I can well remember marching down
Broad Street from Merchantile Hall to the Academy of Music
when there were photographers from all over the world taking
my picture. All of the glory of that occasion faded, however,
quickly, when I tried to get a position. Dr. Patterson, we
used to call him Smiling Sol, was the chairman of the depart­
ment of Insurance, in which I had minored, was certain he was
going to get me placed with one of the insurance companies.
But he couldn't. In fact, he became so incensed over the fact
that no one would take me, that he refused to recommend anybody
that year, to any of the corporations. As a result, I finally
won a position with the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance
Company in Durham, North Carolina. The president was C. C.
Spaulding. It was one of the leading insurance companies in
the country. I became assistant actuary. I must say that my
days in Durham were not happy. There was a kind of prejudice
down there that I knew nothing about. And there was a life
that I knew nothing about. I had never tasted turnip greens;
I didn't know what they were. So one day at dinner, and I
was living in a very comfortable home of one of the insurance
executives, I tasted the turnip greens and I didn't know they
were bitter, and I thought that the lady had chicken, the head
of the house, and I thought that she'd gotten some of the gaul
from the chicken onto the turnip greens. And I said to her,
Oh, I guess some of the gaul got over here. She said, what are you talking about? Well, it ended ... she immediately told me I had to move from her house .. that I was just a fool. Well, I was a dumb fool to go down to North Carolina when I had never lived south of Washington, and I'd been so well protected by living on the campus of Howard University and having a family to protect me. And, in addition, I found a great deal of prejudice among the black people down there against me because I came from the north and because I came from a northern university, and I had never been trained in a black university. And I led two years of great loneliness. I was never invited to join any one of the clubs, I wasn't invited anywhere. I went to church, and I had a good roommate who was very sympathetic, although she was a southern girl, but she was very, very kind.

And at any rate, I was waiting to get married. Raymond wrote me ... now when I say Raymond, that's my husband, who died recently, Raymond Pace Alexander, wrote me almost daily, and I wrote him daily. He wanted me to marry him, and I told him no, we might have a baby right away probably, and I didn't want that. But Raymond had finished Harvard Law School, came back to Philadelphia, passed the bar, then I resigned, and I came to Philadelphia in October of 1923, when he had passed the bar and in November, on November 29, 1923, I married Raymond Pace Alexander.

I stayed home the first year of my marriage. I couldn't get any work in Philadelphia. I worked in the public schools because they didn't appoint people of my racial ancestry to high schools, and I was certainly not prepared to work in the primary grades. I worked with P.T.A., Parent Teachers Association, and NAACP...it was then the Odd Fellows Association which later became affiliated with Urban League. But this didn't fulfill my ambitions. My husband asked me what would I like to do, and I said, well, I think I'll study law, if you can afford to send me. He'd only been practising for a year. So he said, yes...he would do it, if I wanted to go, that would be fine. So I went to law school, and I enjoyed law school. However, I met with many obstacles, but I was strong enough then not to let them worry me. And also I realised that on the campus, as a graduate student, I had become really a pet.

(WMP: What law school did you go to?)

Penn. I was really a pet at Penn as a graduate student. Booth was a girl who came up from Texas and she had a teaching fellowship. She was working for her PhD. She told me some years later that she was scared to death all the time because they told her when she arrived that they had a Negro student and they were very proud of her, and they hoped that Miss Booth would not in any way offend the student and I was that student.
As I tell you the Jastro fiasco ... I was telling you I didn't get the fellowship ... that was something that hurt my professors deeply. Everybody was upset and they were trying to make me not lose courage, which I didn't. In the law school, Dean Michael, who didn't call on me, I would meet him in the hall and attempt to say good morning, and he'd walk as if he didn't see me. He told the other women students under no circumstances to invite me to join their club. And the women told me it's not them...after they got out...almost apologizing to me.

I made the Law Review my first year. Dean Michael said I shouldn't be appointed. Then the next year, my second year, I made it again, and the editor of the Law Review told Dean Michael that he would not be editor if the people who qualified were not on the board.

(WMP: Who was that?)

His father was once a teacher out there. Amram. It was Phil Amram who stood up, and that's how I made the Law Review. I had made it, but was actually admitted to it, and wrote many notes.

When I graduated, I'll never forget, the boys looked at the program and they saw my degrees; bachelor's, master's, PhD., and they began laughing, and they said, what degree is Sadie going to get next? And then, somebody yelled ... Mamma, Mamma! Mamma didn't come that fast. I passed the bar, and I remember going to the first bar meeting of the Philadelphia Bar Association ... a reception, a chancellor's reception. And General Francis Shunk Brown was at the head of the line. And when he saw me he said ... here she comes, she made the highest mark on the bar exam. Now I never had common sense to write to ask if that was a fact, so I could write it down, but that is what he said.

My husband opened his office to me and I enjoyed working there. He had a little difficulty with only one of his partners who didn't want a woman in the place, and my husband said...then I guess you would like to resign. And that stopped that. But at the same time he was never very nice to me, and he eventually did leave, or was asked to leave.

I had an unusual experience in my practice in the beginning. My husband assigned to me what he didn't want and what the other men didn't want. I don't know how the women are getting along today, but in order to get your foot in a firm, you had to take what was offered you. And he offered me the work of the Orphans Court. It was too tedious, and there was no occasion to be tried, and no excitement of a jury trial and so forth. Well, he needed me because if the Orphans Court work had been neglected ... so I got to work to clean up the backlog. One day, Judge Thompson of the Orphans Court, told his tipstaff to tell me that he'd like to see me. And I saw Judge Thompson's law clerk and asked him when I could see the judge and I went
to see him and he said...we've been watching you, and you have a lot of this work. Now I want you to learn to do this work so well that when a judge sees your name on a backer I'll know this is all right. Now, every Friday...and that was on Friday you handed up your petition, after the judges have had their conference, Mr. McBride, that was his personal tipstaff, will call you. I want you to come over, and I'm going over your work, until I feel that you know what you're doing. Now, I did this for about four months, five months, until he said...well, I believe you've got the swing...you can go on your own. If you have any problems, you come to see me. And I thanked him and I have always appreciated it because that is a great thing...to be able to hand up a petition to the judges of the Orphans Court and never have them ask you a question. Just take it for granted that if you've done it, it's all right. However, as I reflect upon what was done, I'm wondering whether the judges didn't get together and decide that...she's coming in and we don't want to be tangled up with some woman, because they did have one woman in particular, who never knew what she was doing. And they thought, well they'd straighten me out from the beginning. And the reason I question it is that once I had to take several petitions on an accident case in which a young boy had lost one of his limbs. And he came from a very prominent black family. He had a lot of witnesses because the boys were all out in the street playing ball, when the accident happened. There were plenty of people to testify as to what took place. Well, when I came in for guardians to be appointed, and the judge counted up the amount of money that had been awarded each one of these boys, he turned to his tipstaff, Mr. McBride, and said...did you ever see anything like this? What do you think of these niggers getting over a $100,000? And I said, well, that is the way he refers to them, and I suppose he just decided that they would make a difference with me because they didn't want to get tangled. Anyway, it was a great value...what he did.

I continued to work for my husband and with him, until he was elected a judge. And then I opened my own office, where I stayed until very recently when I was invited by this firm to come over...in fact, I was going home to retire. Mr. Atkinson heard that I was and he came to see me and asked me would I come over as of counsel. Now people ask me...what is of counsel. And I say, when you are old enough to be able to give young men advice.

I had a great deal of illness in my life following the birth of my children. Incidentally, I worried about getting married too early or we might have children. But I did not have a pregnancy until I had been married about eight years. And then I lost my first baby, a premature, at less than six months. I lost the second one, a terrible experience, at a little over six months, and I went back to try again. And I had my first born, to live; Mary, was born in 1934, although I was married
in 1923. She only weighed about five pounds, and then lost, and went to 4 - 8. But with good attention, she survived. And then I had one other daughter, and incidentally, each one of these pregnancies was a female. So when the last one was delivered, I was very, very ill. In fact, the doctor told my husband, ... I guess, Mr. Alexander, you know your wife cannot live. Raymond said, he thought the elevator would fall from under him. I had gone into labor, and then stopped and they had to do a Caesarian, and that is a most serious thing to happen. The nurse asked me for the name of the baby, and I said Rae Pace Alexander. And my husband came in and he told me what the nurse had said. And I told him...yes, that's the name. He said...now, you know that Sadie and Sarah are family names for generations in your family. Don't you want to name that baby for your grandmother or for yourself? I said no, this is as close as I can come to giving you a son. And this is the end of the road, because I was three months in the hospital after the birth.

Now my daughters both went to the Putney School in Putney, Vermont. And the older one, when she finished Putney, went to Barnard College, as you know, the women's side of Columbia University. My younger daughter also went to the Putney School, Putney, Vermont, and to Boston University. She has now completed all of the didactic work for her doctor's degree at Penn and is working on her thesis.

I have two grandchildren who are the children of my daughter, Mary, and her husband, Colonel Melvin F. Brown, who is now assigned to the Pentagon. Rae is married to Dr. Thomas K. Minter, who is deputy commissioner for secondary and primary education for the Department of Education in Washington, D.C. I am fortunate to have two grandchildren and maybe we might have another...we can never tell. And that both of my girls have well satisfied their parents by completing their education, and by making good wives, I hope...and I believe they have done.

My husband distinguished himself, and if you read the statement I made previously, you'll notice that I think he did more than that. He proved to be a wonderful husband. We were fortunate in having companionship for fifty-two years, less six days. We went to work together, we went home together, we talked together, we lived together. And having our children around us was a great happiness for both of us. I enjoyed the opportunity to give this brief story of my life.

I have failed to state my activities in the community; there's one experience that I think I should mention. I received a telephone call one day from Philandro Nash. He was a personal man to President Truman, especially in Negro affairs. So he told me that the President was going to appoint citizens to a committee to study the status of Negroes in the United States
and asked would I serve. And I told him yes. Well, I had never heard of him, and I didn't even tell my husband that I'd received it. You get a lot of foolish calls on the telephone. I thought this is someone who's pulling my leg. Maybe three months later, I got a call from the White House that I had been appointed to the Truman Committee on Civil Rights, which was a great experience. In fact, I would say that Mr. Truman deserves much more credit for what he did than I believe he's gotten. For fifteen private citizens to be appointed by the President of the United States to study the status of civil rights in the nation, and to make a report critical of the government, or not critical, and to have this report printed by the Government Printing Office, they printed over a 100,000 and they all were absorbed in one day...and Mr. Truman permitted additional printing to be printed. That this should happen in a nation such as ours is a rare thing. It is a great nation of which the people can say what is bad. And that is what we were permitted to do.

My experience on the committee proved interesting. One thing was, we first met at the White House. And we had lunch there. So I asked the question, now where are we going to meet, and where are we going to eat? Mr. Wilson, who was president of General Electric at that time, said, we're going to eat here in the White House. And I said, well, where are we going to sleep? Oh we'll sleep in a hotel. To my amazement, he really didn't believe the situation was as bad as it was in Washington.

Not until John Carey, you remember John Carey, labor man, said Sadie's right...she's right... we can't eat here all the time. And I said, no I don't want to seek protection by eating in the White House and I'm not going to ask my friends in Washington to give me a place to sleep, as I had to do this time. I'm happy to serve my government, but I'll only do it if my government will serve me. Now all these hotels here...the White House has only to ask, and it will be done.

So, as a result, we stayed at the Statler. The Statler asked if all of the members of the committee would stay there. And they agreed to do it although there were some who wanted to stay at more exclusive hotels, but they agreed to stay. One day I was going to lunch and I was to meet some members of the committee in the dining room. And as I entered, the head waiter put his hand up and he said...they're reserved. I said yes, I have a seat reserved right down there. Frank Roosevelt's down there, that's where I'm going. I have a seat reserved. No, you can't go there. And Mr. Wilson was behind me, and he said...oh, yes she can...come on, Mrs. Alexander, come down with me. And then he said to me when we sat down...You know, I know what you said at the first meeting. But if I hadn't seen this, I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it.
Well, at least, I'll tell you one thing we did. We opened the hotels because after we had made our report, every time I wanted to go to Washington, I called Mr. Nash to tell him I was coming, and I needed a room. And that's the way I got a room. One day I was at the Washington Hotel and they wouldn't wait on me. They sent a colored girl who was a busgirl. And when I left, I gave her a dollar, but I put the dollar down where it couldn't be seen. But I didn't have any more trouble after I gave her that dollar, getting served.

I also served for twenty-five years on the National Board of the Urban League. I've served on the national board of the Committee for Christians and Jews, and I guess I should have made a list because it's quite long, but the names of the different organizations slip your mind. My secretary recently told me, the one who's now my secretary, Mrs. Alexander, it's the first time in my life that I ever worked for anyone who spent at least half, if not more of their time on things that have nothing to do with their business. So I said, Well, this is my business. My business is to serve my community as well as my clients.

So I lead a very busy life. I've just been put on the board of the PAL organization. I accepted because my husband was active in it and I thought he would want me to carry on the work that he had done.

(WMP: What organization was that?)

Police Athletic League. And then I've been in the Bar Association. I was president of the Philadelphia Bar Foundation for one term. I've enjoyed my work both in the community, in my home, and in my profession.

(WMP: Very good. Sadie, the first question that I want to put to you about the city, is...what had you done that Joe Clark selected you for membership on the Human Relations Commission, and later, I guess, on the City Charter Commission.)

What commission?

(WMP: Weren't you on the City Charter Commission?)

No, I went before them, but I was not a commissioner.

(WMP: Okay. Let's tell about the Human Relations Commission, then.)

I was an assistant city solicitor......I was not a member of the City Charter Commission. I did however, work with Murray Shusterman to prepare a statement for the charter to provide for a commission on human relations. We were working as part of the Fellowship Commission. And as you know, Murray Shusterman was a drafter of much of the legislation for City Council. We presented to the commission the proposal...I presented the
proposal to the full commission. And they accepted it exactly as it had been prepared with the exception that they cut us down to seven commissioners, as I recall...it might have been five, but I don't know. It was the opinion of all of us who were concerned about this, that we, the commissioners not being paid, and they having to sit on the various cases, we would have to have more than six or seven commissioners in order to carry out the work on a volunteer basis. And the Charter Commission made the change and gave us nine. And other than that we got everything we asked for in the law. We didn't get all the money we asked for at that time, but there was hardly a year that we didn't get an increase in our budget.

Frank Loescher was executive director when we first came in. Frank was a very good-hearted man. He was a strong Quaker and he hoped that you could always settle everything by conciliation. And that wasn't possible. It wasn't in his type of mind and his whole life, to force people to do anything...they were to agree upon it...

(WMP: Frank was the first executive of the commission. You hired him, didn't you?)

Yes. He had been working on some little committee before we hired him. He'd been in this field. But anyway, we then got George Schirmer, who was a very strong executive. In the early years the mayor didn't pay any attention to what we were doing.

(WMP: Joe Clark.)

Joe Clark called us when he was in need. I remember when we were facing a race riot at Abbotsford, and Joe Clark sent for us to come in. He followed our advice as to what to do.

(WMP: I went out to that situation...it was very tense.)

Very tense, very tense. And he was with us and he attempted to get for us whatever we needed. Dick Dilworth did the same thing. And they didn't meddle in our cases. Then along we came with the Tate administration. At first Mayor Tate didn't bother us, but then it seemed as if he and Rizzo began to feel that maybe we were going too far on some of these cases. Particularly when we would send our investigators out to rent a house or an apartment. And they would find that there was a vacancy. And then, the person who had been there and had been told that the applicant had already been, and had been told that there was no vacancy, we sent an investigator and they'd got plenty of vacancies. And then we cite the owner or the rental agent to come in with his books and so forth...they would
complain, you see, and some of them were very important people in the community, making the complaint. And then the complaints started getting over to city hall and we began to feel the strings being drawn in.

(WMP: Did you have the power to subpoena them?)

Oh yes. Yes, we had the power. Then there was a lot of police brutality. When they took the police...what was the name of the board of investigation...we had a civilian board..

(WMP: Police Advisory Board.)

That's it. They decided that the police should police themselves. Well, that was just the end of it. When I left the office we'd had any number of complaints about police brutality. But, you could get a hearing before the police board and you'd never get a word as to what the results were. They wouldn't tell you anything.

Well, Mayor Tate then decided that he'd better get rid of me. And he told several people to tell me to resign. One of them was Austin Norris. So Austin told me and I said I hadn't done anything to resign and furthermore I know Mayor Tate well enough...why didn't he tell me...what have I done? What have I done? Mayor Tate spoke to my husband and my husband told him, Jim, I don't bother my wife with her activities. If she's wrong, you know what to do. Well, he then called me on the telephone and he said to me, I have tried every way to let you know I want you to resign. I said, I know...I got the message. Well, why don't you resign? I said, I want to know why I have to resign. Now we were coming to an election and I knew he wasn't going to fire me before an election. And I told them, now, you can fire me, but I'm not going to resign...unless you give me some reason, to know what I did was wrong. He hung up the telephone; he stopped speaking to Raymond. So after the election, I knew he was going to fire me then, so I resigned and Austin arranged a great big luncheon at the Warwick for me.

And Clarence Farmer came in. Interestingly enough, Clarence Farmer came in as executive director. He then had himself made chairman, and he had a council...he or the mayor...council passed a resolution that he could be both executive director and chairman and his salary is that of any other commissioner, and he has an automobile. I served 15 years, and would pay for my lunch and everything...never thought of taking anything. Never thought of asking for it. But, I'll say this, we had a commission that was respected throughout the United States, when we were allowed to operate.

About the cases.

(WMP: What were some of the precedents-making cases?)

I don't know that they were precedent-making, other than that they did clean up a terrible situation. You probably don't realize
that when I came to the bar in 1927, there wasn't an office building in Philadelphia that would rent to a black person. When my husband came in 1921, he had to go to Broad and Lombard Streets and rent an office in what used to be a bank on the corner there. And he was so determined that he would not stay down there that he came up to Twelfth and Chestnut, which was then the Provident. They gave him a one-year lease, but the tenants objected to a black tenant, and they wouldn't renew it.

(WMP: What year was that?)

1921,'22. His lease was up in '23. I can remember it because I married in '23 and I thought when I came to our home, that nobody could put me out of there, but here he was with a flourishing business and no place to take it. He met one of his classmates on the street and told him this story and his concern. And the classmate got him on the corner, the north-west corner of Nineteenth and Chestnut, but it was an awful building. As a result, after the crash, I refer to the financial crash of 1929, we had exactly $40,000 left. Raymond purchased the south-west corner of Nineteenth and Chestnut, used Yellin as contractor and Frank Hahn as architect and built the building that's still there so that he could have an office that was on Chestnut, or in the business section.

Shortly before this, I'm going ahead...they built the movie theatre at Nineteenth and Chestnut, on the southeast corner and they opened it by playing The Ten Commandments. There were two young women in Philadelphia, their maiden names were Chew. One of them was of brown skin, the other one so fair, you would say she was white. They went to get tickets and the white girl was the one who got tickets....and she said...my sister is behind me....she went in, and they caught the brown skinned sister and pulled her aside and told her she couldn't go in. They were playing The Ten Commandments.

(WMP: What year was that?)

It was somewhere around '29. As a result, wherever my husband and I would go, to any public meeting and so forth, and we had a chance to speak, we would tell people...if you're denied the right to come into a movie theatre, if you are denied the right to eat in a restaurant, come to see us...we're not charging you anything. We only ask one thing. That you stick to the case until it's tried. If you have to come down four times, that's the way we want you to pay it.

Well, of the case of the old there at Nineteenth and Chestnut, we used to get John Doe warrants because we didn't know the manager's name. And we then had police wagons, with horses around here in 1929, and we would get the warrant, and then have them go pick up the man who's the manager.
Well, one day the manager came over to our office, and he his handkerchief, and he said, I surrender. And he went to my husband, and he said..my wife cannot stand this strain...because maybe today someone will come in say, what happened to him, and maybe somebody will come in tomorrow and maybe next week. But whoever would come, we'd get the warrant... even if we had to pay for it. And he said...my wife can't stand it..they can fire me..they can have the job. But I'm not going to do it. Then he gave us passes to use, which we never used because..we didn't use them because we didn't believe that anybody was going to get in as we got in.

Doug Stubbs, who was a graduate of Harvard Medical School, who passed the national boards number one in the United States, and his wife, who was John Turner's daughter, you remember John P. Turner, Board of Education member, and Charlotte West Strickland, whose father was the dean of the Medical School at Howard University, and Dr. Wilbur Strickland, whose father was also a physician in Philadelphia. They were in the theater down here at Twelth and Market..I don't remember the name of that one.. And they were refused. I'll tell you the character of the people...both of those girls were college graduates, well-trained, refined people. The husband's a fine physician. Well, we would go around and that is how we finally broke up the segregation in the theatre. In the movies, they'd seat you upstairs in the balcony, but they wouldn't seat up downstairs.

And when we went to Stouffers on Chestnut Street, Marjorie Penney went, a girl named Davis, who was a colored girl, I can't think of the others..they put salt in the food. Now you don't have any precedent-making cases to record, but all you do have to say is...when I see colored people walking in the hotels, and when I see them in front row seats in the movies, I say to myself, this is what we did.

(WMP: Right. That's something to be proud of.)

Yes, this is what we did. Now, of course, I'll tell you another thing that I did. My sister-in-law, Virginia Alexander, was a physician. She had quite a fine practice. She was looking for an associate. As a result, she obtained another physician from the University of Illinois, whose name was Dr. Helen Dickens. Dr. Dickens came and lived in the home with my sister-in-law, and my father-in-law. And I observed her and I said to her, Helen, you're too smart to be carrying a bag the rest of your life. Go back to Penn, take your didactic year, get a specialty in whatever. Well, finally, it took me about five years to get her to do that. She called me one day after she'd made application and said...Sadie, you have too much ambition for me..they won't take me. I said, how do you know it? ...I got a letter; the letter says they won't take a colored student. I said, what stationery is that on? She said...it's on University stationery. I said, bring me that letter. I got the letter. I called President Gates and I told him. He asked me the same thing I'd asked
her. Is it on University stationery? Would you let me see that letter? I said, yes, I will. I sent it by messenger. He returned it. Then he called me and asked me to come out a certain day. I went out. He had the dean of the graduate school there, the vice-president in charge of all these deans, and he said to the dean of the graduate school who had signed this letter, ...do you have with you Dr. Dickens' application? He said...I do, sir. I'll never forget it, because he stood, all the time he was being interrogated by the president. Did she graduate from a school that is approved and would warrant her admission to our graduate school of medicine? She did, sir. She graduated from the University of Illinois Medical School.... Did she graduate with such distinction as to warrant her admission? .....She did, sir; she graduated with honors..... Whereupon, the president turned to me and said, well, Mrs. Alexander, we don't have any problem. He said to the dean... you tell Mrs. Alexander when her friend should come to register. He said...I will send that information to Dr. Dickens.... He said, evidently you didn't understand my question. Will you answer it please?.... The dean then told me, and I said,...where, what's the room number, you know, to get it all straight, the time, everything. And he said he would also confirm it and I said ...thank you very much. We shook hands and I left.

As a result of that, the Distinguished Daughters of Pennsylvania would not elect me, and Helen, my friend, was elected very soon thereafter. And she went to every meeting to find out what was going to be said when my name came up. And they said I was a troublemaker.

(WMP: What are the Distinguished Daughters of Pennsylvania? I've never heard of them before. Is that an organization?)

Yes. They finally elected me just a short while ago.

(WMP: You have to have achieved in life to be that, I guess. It's an honorary thing?)

Yes, yes. It's women of distinction, supposed to be, who made some distinction in their lives. Dr. Dickens is now a full professor of gynecology and obstetrics at Penn. I don't think they know all this; these people out there don't know it. But, you see, when you do all these things, you're a troublemaker. And Raymond had a lot of trouble because he was a troublemaker.

(WMP: You told of yourself very well, Sadie, thank you very much.)

My pleasure.