INTERVIEW WITH JANE DOE

INT: This is Barbara Trainin Blank interviewing Jane Doe in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on June 8, 1998, with the written consent of the interviewee. We’re going to start with biographical information. Date and place you were born and something about your family.

Jane: I was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the Montefiore Hospital, the old one, on January 31, 1921. At least after many years of investigation, we believe it was the 31st. My mother’s recollection of the birth—I’ll never forget this—was that when they were wheeling her out of the delivery room the clock was 12:00, so whether I was born on the 30th or the 31st is still a matter of discussion. The first few years in school, one year I would put the 30th, one year I would put the 31st, and finally one of the teachers said to me, “When is your birthday?” So we chose the 31st, so that’s how I happened to be born on January 31, 1921. My mother was Rose Lieberman Goldstein, and she was born in Russia and came to America when she was about twelve years old. She was born in 1898. That would have made her a hundred years old this year, but unfortunately she died on her birthday when she was sixty, in 1958. My father—I’m not sure where my father was born. He claimed he was a Litvak, as we say, but whether it was Latvia or Lithuania or whether Russia owned it one day and didn’t own it the next or whatever, I don’t know. He came to America at about the same age. He was born in April sometime. We never did figure out a birthday. My mother’s birthday was March 25. That we thought we knew.

INT: And your grandparents were alive?

Jane: My mother’s father died in Europe from appendicitis and the family came to America. They left one brother behind who was ill, and a cousin of ours came with the family on his passport. So we were always very close to that cousin, who settled in Philadelphia. His name was Lieberman and his two sons and daughter still live in Philadelphia. He had an upholstery shop on Cherry Street in Philadelphia. His kids ran it. His name was Harry Lieberman. My mother had two sisters and four brothers. My mother was next to the youngest, but she was the one who kept the family together. Her brothers lived in small towns around Pittsburgh—Oakmont, Farmerville. Now I think they’re called suburbs, but a visit to their homes was always a voyage, a real experience, because my Dad had one of the first Model T Fords. He was in the produce business and he used to go out to the farms to get produce. We had a Model T and I can remember the snaps on the windows. I remember those rides, and I was not a good rider and to this day I still have a problem with motion sickness. I can remember the times when I walked beside the car, not in the car.

We lived in the Hill section in Pittsburgh. My brother, who was two years older than I, was born in the house and my mother told me never again a house delivery, and that’s why I was born in what was then Montefiore Hospital. That was really a big deal to be born in a hospital. We lived on Bedford Avenue at the time, and when I was eight months old my Dad had me out on a stroll in a carriage and we had those brick uneven sidewalks and it started to rain and he
rushed home with me. Today, I guess they would call it a strangulated intestine or something, but in those days they didn't do what they do today. It's very simple, with the barium treatment. So at eight months old I probably am in medical history. I survived an abdominal operation. And then we moved to Ledley Street, which was close to the McKelvy School where I went to kindergarten through second grade, I guess.

INT: Let me interrupt you just for a minute. You had, you mentioned, a brother. Did you have other siblings too?

Jane: I had a brother who was two years older and then I had a sister who was nine years younger than I.

INT: And their names?

Jane: My brother was Jack and my sister was Fay. My sister was named after my mother's mother. I must tell you that we lived on the second floor of a house where we had Negro neighbors downstairs who were very, very fine people and we didn't have any problems. We moved from Ledley Street to Squirrel Hill, and I'm sure anybody who knows Pittsburgh-Squirrel Hill was the place. We were able to do that because I had a rather wealthy uncle who was able to take the mortgage so that we would be able to move there. When we moved there, another one of my mother's sisters moved to Squirrel Hill and had a store there. My grandmother-every Shabbos would get chickens at the chicken store and deliver them to her children on the streetcar. My grandmother was killed by a streetcar after she had delivered the last chicken to my aunt Sophie on Murray Avenue. So I was seven when my grandmother died. My sister, who was born two years later, was then named after her. Faige. My grandmother was Fay. My grandmother spoke Yiddish to me and though I was seven when she died, the Yiddish that I knew, I knew because she taught me. I knew where the cookies were in the kitchen table that used to have a drawer that came out of it, and they were just sugar cookies, but she always had them in a sack. When I think about all those things, they're very warm feelings about this past.

When my grandmother died, there were still two single siblings in the family, and we moved to a three-bedroom house, so the two siblings came to live with us, my mother's youngest brother and an older sister. Then when the brother got married he brought his bride. Well, the house was very crowded. There was an attic and we put a bed up there and we took turns sleeping in the attic. I don't remember how old I was probably nine or ten my brother and I shared a room. We had twin beds obviously. So I went to Colfax Elementary School and I did very well. For some reason, I inherited some good genes and I was an ambitious kid, so I worked hard and got good grades and everybody liked me. I'm not sure the kids did because they never liked the kids that the teachers liked.

And then I went to Taylor Allderdice High School, and I really excelled there in the music department. In eighth grade, we were able to have an elective and my friends, who had visions of going to college and everything, took their languages and I don't know why I was so
practical, but I took typewriting as my elective, which certainly held me in good stead for the rest of my life. I was in the chorus and at nine I started to take piano lessons and showed some talent.

INT: Was anyone else in the family musical?

Jane: My Dad told me that when he was a kid, he sang in a boys’ choir in his shul in Russia. I was able to sing, and maybe that’s where I got it but my brother had a very nice voice too. There was no music in the house really. We really were, in those days, poor. We were just managing, but my mother was a fantastic manager and I think I learned leadership from my mother. She held her family together, her extended family together, and she certainly took care of us very, very well. At Taylor Allderdice, I got the Daughters of the American Revolution medal for the eighth grade student in our school, and so my name was on a plaque someplace, and I’ve often asked some of the kids who go to Allderdice if they still have the plaque in the office. I’m sure the Daughters of the American Revolution don’t do that anymore, or the schools would not accept it. So we really moved...it was a Jewish neighborhood. We lived two doors from the shul, from Poale Zedeck.

INT: Was it an orthodox shul?

Jane: Orthodox shul. I was brought up in an orthodox home, observant to the point that people were observant in the Twenties and early Thirties. We had a kosher home. People didn’t eat out because we didn’t have any money to eat out. My Dad worked in the produce yard so my Dad was really not around much because he would go to work at two o’clock in the morning and come home at two in the afternoon and go to sleep and see us maybe at dinner and then go back to sleep. So my mother really raised my brother and I and my sister.

In high school, we had an opportunity for an elective in I believe it was tenth grade or eleventh grade—I don’t remember—but I was still on whatever track I was on that I knew that I would have to make a living at some point, so my elective was bookkeeping. I remember why it was bookkeeping. I worked from the time I was twelve years old. I worked in my Dad’s office in the summer and I would write bills and he had a secretary or one person in the office, and she taught me a lot of stuff. When I was thirteen she went on vacation for a week and she showed me what to do and I was doing fine the first three days. Bank deposits were right. Everything came out... and then my Dad came in and said, “Why are you doing all of this stuff? Just put the money in the bank.” Well, that poor soul. When she came back from her vacation she wanted to kill my Dad because everything was...she had to retrace every one of the sales. But I worked from the time I was a kid because I had to do my share, and that was my way of getting spending money. Maybe I got ten dollars a week. And then I wanted to go to college in the worst way, and my Dad told me outright my brother was two years older and it was most important for my brother to go to school and they didn’t see any way that I was going to get to school. Well, my brother wasn’t a dummy either so he got a half scholarship to Carnegie Mellon.

I was in a February class. At that time there were June and February classes and I stayed
in the February class while a lot of my friends were going to the June class to start college in the fall, because the University of Pittsburgh was giving one scholarship for every hundred kids in the class. Well, there were five hundred in the June graduating class and a lot of really bright kids, so I said, “I’m staying back and maybe I’ll get the scholarship.” In February there were only one hundred and fifty of us, so they gave one scholarship. Well, I was valedictorian of the class, I got the scholarship and I went to school. I made up that semester in the summer. I took my biology lab course because that was the longest, and I worked at my Dad’s in the summer. I think I was getting fifteen dollars a week then.

But that wasn’t the only thing I was doing. I was giving piano lessons for fifty cents a lesson, and I went to the house but of course the streetcar only cost me a nickel so I was making a big profit. So I always had spending money and was able to get through school without any financial help from my family except that I lived at home, of course. I took the streetcar to school. I had a friend who had a car because her father was an executive in a steel company. So she had a car, but I couldn’t rely on her because she was one of these people that if we had an 8:30 class she was there at 8:28 and I was a nervous wreck. I had to be at school at the right time. I did very well at the University of Pittsburgh. After my freshman year—my sophomore year I was tapped a member of the honorary fraternity of women’s. My senior year I was tapped mortarboard and at that time the university did not have a Phi Beta Kappa but they had a Phi Ta Pi, which eventually became their Phi Beta Kappa. I was tapped to that in my senior year. I was very active in the music department. I was a charter member of the Heinz Chapel Choir.

INT: That wasn’t your major though.

Jane: No. My major was sociology and psychology. I was a charter member of the Heinz Chapel Choir. I was the only Jewish person in the choir, and I was the soloist, and after the first year—I had a spring tour so I sang in the Riverside Church in New York and the St. Nicholas Church in New York, and I don’t remember the name of the church in Washington, D.C., but I had an aunt, my father’s sister in New York. She would not come to the church to hear me sing.

INT: How did your parents feel about that?

Jane: Well, they knew music was my life. I could sing it without believing it, and actually the work that we did were major works like Bach or oratorios and things. The chapel at the University of Pittsburgh was non-sectarian, so that it was not Catholic, it wasn’t Protestant. It was just a religious service. I loved it. We rehearsed every day at four o’clock after classes, and we sang every Sunday at four o’clock at a vesper service. My mother thought that was pretty terrible but I did it anyhow because I just loved to sing and this was the opportunity. I was a member of the women’s chorale and the music department put on Purcell’s “Dido and Aeneas,” the opera, and I was Dido in that opera so I had some of that experience. I think those opportunities gave me some courage to speak to an audience without being nervous, because when I was a kid I was very nervous. I was still a kid. I was seventeen years old when I went into college and I graduated when I was a little past twenty years old. I graduated from college in
1941 and it was...I had no profession. I could not afford to go on. That was the first year of the Newhouse School of Social Work at the University. I could not do that. So I took a walk, took the streetcar and went downtown to Business Training College and met Dr. Dorothy Finkelhor, who owned the college. She was a Ph.D. and I told her my story and so she said she was writing a book on speed script, which was a new form of shorthand—because I was looking for shorthand for office skills. Maybe I could be an executive secretary or something. She said she needed help. Well, I learned speed script. In two weeks I was taking 100 words a minute, and of course it just blew her mind. So I learned the switchboard. I did all these odds and ends and then I taught the class, the speed script class, at Business Training College and helped her finish the book. Well, I did that for about a year and a half and I was not happy because I didn’t have time to practice my music, either piano or singing.

INT: I think I probably should interrupt you at this point because we’re getting a little out of order. Let me come back a little bit to family religion. The home was kosher and you went to an orthodox synagogue. Did your father work on Shabbat?

Jane: No, my father didn’t work on Shabbat. The produce yards were not open on Shabbat. My Dad worked on Sunday. He went Sunday night. No, my Dad went to shul every Saturday. My brother went to Hebrew school. But I didn’t.

INT: You didn’t get a formal religious education.

Jane: I didn’t, but they had a Sunday school and of course here I go again. I went to Sunday school and by the time I was fifteen I was teaching one of the Sunday school classes. I was confirmed, whatever that was. I lived in a Jewish atmosphere and my mother was a very, very special lady. The holidays were very important, and all these uncles and all these kids came to our house for the holidays, because there was no synagogue where they lived. I have to laugh. My aunts would sleep across the bed because you could get four or five [in a bed] that way when you could only get three the other way. We kids slept on the living room floor because there was somebody in our age group all along. It seems like everybody had one at the same time. On perenas—you know, those feather big...they were blankets or whatever, or like pillows. That’s why I always felt close to my cousins. There are a lot of them that are gone now. I lost the closest one just this past March. So I had that basic religious training. I sure knew I was Jewish even though they were very upset that I was singing with the choir, but those were the opportunities that were there. I would say that that had really kept me within the fold.

The thing that disrupted all of these things was World War II, of course, because every male member of our entire mishpocha was in the service. We did not lose anyone in the service, but we lost a few of them quite young after they got out of the service for whatever reason. My brother died at fifty-eight. He had been ill for ten years. He was in the South Pacific and he was the one we worried about the most because he was in the reserve at Carnegie Mellon and he took ROTC, so as soon as the war broke out he was the first one to go. He worked for RCA in Haddonfield. He only worked for six months and wham, he was on one of the first convoys to the
South Pacific. He was there for four years, and when he came home he was never the same person.

INT: It was pretty brutal.

Jane: He was with the 91st Engineers and he had all poor black troops from the South, and they used to put different color shoe strings in their shoes so that when they told them left to right they would know what to do. The group left from Indiantown Gap. They were stationed in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and they left from Indiantown Gap and when my brother called and said they were going overseas, it was two days before I was to give a piano recital at the Stephen Foster Memorial in Pittsburgh. The university had invited me back for one of their student faculty recitals. I came to Harrisburg—that was my first visit to Harrisburg—on the train. No, we drove up. I saw my brother. We went into a secure area at Indiantown Gap. We were able to see him. My parents stayed overnight. I got back on a train so I could do that concert. Actually, that concert is a blur. I played all the notes. I didn’t stop once between the pieces. I got a nice review. Harvey Gaul gave in a nice review. But I don’t remember how I did it. I was so tired emotionally and physically because the train ride wasn’t too great from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh. That was a very, very difficult time for all of us. I got in early in the morning. It was the day of the concert. I think I was on the train overnight. My parents got to the concert at one o’clock. They got back in time, but it was a very, very difficult time. So I lived through the war.

INT: Let’s talk a little bit about friends and...well, activities we sort of touched on with the music, but you mentioned the one friend who had the car. What was your social life like throughout the school years?

Jane: Well, when I was in high school I had very little social life. I developed very early. I was very self-conscious. I was first in my class and kids don’t like that, and in Squirrel Hill we used to say north of Forbes was where the rich kids lived and south of Forbes was where I lived, so when the kids who were affluent had parties and stuff I was never included. I will never forget. I went a couple of times...we used to have these dances after school. I was not very happy. My social life was very limited except that my brother was two years older than I, and he was a member of a Boy Scout troop and I was the mascot of the troop. When we were at the theater on Saturday—the Boy Scouts could get in free and my brother was a Master of Ceremonies. We’d have a little singing, and I played the piano while the movies were going on, so I got in free too. I really was close to my brother’s friends. As a matter of fact, just yesterday I spoke to one. He’s having his eightieth birthday and we’re still in touch. I didn’t have too many close friends. When I look back, people used me if they had a paper they had to write or if they had to study for an exam or something. I went through grade school and high school with all A’s, and kids didn’t like that. They don’t like that, and especially if the teacher says, “You come up here and help me do this.” I can remember my algebra class. I sat next to the teacher’s desk because I was way ahead of where the class was. I had my problems growing up. I was talented and adults adored me, but the kids—not too great. (End of tape 1, side 1)
INT: So we were talking before about music and I guess that leads us into aspirations. When you were a child growing up, did you have an idea of what you wanted to be when you grow up, as they say?

Jane: I don’t think so. I had so many skills. I didn’t have any specific direction. However, I must say, I took voice lessons at an Irene Kaufman Settlement. It was fifty cents. I would not have had those opportunities if those institutions had not been available to me. When I was a senior in high school we had an all-city chorus that was directed by the dean of the vocal department at Juilliard School. That’s when he heard me sing, because I was a soloist for that. Harvey Gaul wrote a couple of Appalachian Spring with a soprano descant for me to sing. His name, I believe, was Bernard Taylor. The name somehow comes to me. That’s when we had the discussion about my going to Juilliard. He assured me that there would be a scholarship for me, and of course there was a big discussion in my home and my parents really didn’t want me to go to New York.

INT: Was it because it was New York or just going away?

Jane: Because it was New York. Because it was New York. In those days, it was too fast of a life. It was not...Maybe they were smart. Maybe they figured I was really not prepared for that. I was seventeen years old.

INT: So it was before college.

Jane: Yes, before college. So it would have been...that’s when I decided to stay with my class so that I could go to college, because that offer was out there and my mother said, “Well, what about where is she going to live?” “We’ll get her a job so she can pay for her lodging.” Well, that didn’t go down too good with my folks. So that’s why I went off track there, but really it was something that always was with me. During the war, I sang on KDKA, because after I graduated college I got to a teacher, a voice teacher in Pittsburgh that was highly recommended. At that point, the war started and things got better for my Dad because the produce that would sell for a dollar and a quarter a bushel at 5% wasn’t very much money, but during the war, a bushel of apples was up to five and a half dollars, so that 5% became a little bigger. So my Dad was able to...we had a few more things that we didn’t have before. So I got to this other teacher. That was four dollars. No, no, no. It was seven and a half dollars a lesson. She wanted me to take two lessons. There was no way I could take two lessons. So you know what I did? I played the piano in her studio and I really learned more playing the piano and listening to what she was saying to other students than when I was doing it myself. But then we got into business by ourselves—I literally was into business with her because she had so many pupils and they all wanted to take more lessons, so she sent them to me for four dollars. Cut rate. So for a young person, I was always like an entrepreneur. Took advantage of every situation because my family couldn’t help me. But they did help in the sense that I gave lessons in our living room and many times it interfered with their dinner and so forth because the living room and dining room were together.

INT: Did you have a piano at home at that point?
Jane: The first piano I got when I was nine, when I wanted to start piano lessons. We lived sort of like on a corner of two streets and the lady behind us-her back door faced our backyard. It was an older couple and she had an upright piano and she sold it to us for twenty-five dollars, and we ran it across the yard to get it in the house. Well, that was the piano I learned on. Everybody was so proud of me. This uncle, who had the mortgage on our house, he bought his three boys this great big baby grand piano, and I got to the piano because I would go down there and play their lessons and these kids-they weren’t any more interested in playing the piano than I don’t know. So that’s when they decided to get me my own piano. Well, I can remember that when I was about thirteen or fourteen I was doing real well playing for Hadassah and for the Jewish organizations and the Sisterhood at the synagogue. They had a Sisterhood. My mother was on the telephone squad. That’s what she was able to do. She did not go to school at all but she learned to write a little bit and she could read the newspaper. She read a little bit, but she had no formal education. So they decided that they were going to get me a baby grand piano, and they got me a five foot piano and when my brother passed away there was a box with the receipt, the twenty-five dollar a month receipts for that piano. That’s what I got. He saved that because he was the executor of my Dad’s estate and that was with him. My mother would go downtown. Who had a checking account or anything? You paid cash, so she had a receipt for all these things. So that’s how I got the piano, but with the voice...I stayed at Business Training College for about a year and a half but the [lack of] music was driving me nuts, so I went back to my music and I did very well as a teacher of voice.

INT: Were you still taking lessons yourself?

Jane: I was still taking lessons myself. I think I was twenty-two years old. And the war came, so I played the piano for USO. I led community sings for the USO. The YM-YWHA in Pittsburgh was across the street from the university. I had a wonderful teacher over there. I didn’t know Israeli music and M. Ephraim taught me a lot of Israeli things and then I became like a music advisor to all the clubs that they had.

INT: You don’t mean literally Israeli. You mean Jewish music because that was pre-Israel.

Jane: It was the stuff that everybody knew. Hava Nagilah and that kind of stuff. But I had a good teacher. She was one of the most outstanding leaders in the Jewish community center movement in New York.

INT: That name sounds very familiar to me.

Jane: M. R. Ephraim, and I was one of her protegees. She said we had that affinity because my name was M. too. My life’s been touched by some really outstanding Jewish figures, and my rabbi in Pittsburgh, Rabbi Joseph Shapiro, who recently passed away in his nineties, was a real friend. He encouraged me in everything that I did but the girls didn’t go to Hebrew school. I didn’t learn Hebrew until my kids started the yeshiva when I was thirty-five years old and living in Harrisburg. Life in a small community is very, very different than in the city, although I’m
sure...I don’t know if girls went to Hebrew school in New York. I have no idea. The girls were really segregated.

**INT:** My mother grew up in a very secular home so they wouldn’t have sent her even if it was available, but my father learned at home mostly. They didn’t have yeshiva day schools.

**Jane:** And it’s interesting, because my mother was very upset that I sent my children to a day school. As she grew older, she had some problems with some of the practices of orthodoxy. The synagogue that we attended, Poale Zedeck, had a balcony. She didn’t have a problem with the balcony. She would go there and I would sit with her. But when they had more women and they needed more space and they put a mechitza up, but a really high one, and did one side of the synagogue in this huge mechitza, my mother was very distressed about that. She really wasn’t very happy about that. She was Jewish through and through. She didn’t know anything different. And when I set up housekeeping, I didn’t know anything different either, and to this day my house is still a kosher home. I do eat out like everybody else does, but it’s a Jewish home. As we go on further, I’ve been active in everything that’s Jewish.

**INT:** We’ll come to that a little later. Right now we’ll get back to career kind of things. So just to kind of sum it up, you completed the business school. You weren’t thinking of going on into the business world though.

**Jane:** No. I wasn’t very happy. I wasn’t happy. I was doing it by rote. I was just automatically going to work in the morning. But it gave me some skills that a lot of people never have an opportunity to learn-to operate a switchboard and all the mechanical things that were available at that time. In 1942 there wasn’t the kind of sophisticated stuff we have today. I never went back to that kind of work except that the dean really made me her administrative assistant so that’s where I got some administrative skills. I always was a leader in whatever I did. I never was a follower. These sort of rounded out some other skills. In college I developed some of those skills too, in the work that I did there.

**INT:** Now with the music, you couldn’t go to Juilliard but were you thinking of...I think I remember that you were thinking of going into music or singing professionally?

**Jane:** I did sing more or less professionally. I did some radio work and then I did a lot of recitals that were for Jewish organizations, because at that time, I was learning some real good Yiddish stuff and I really was in demand. But when I think about it, I wasn’t great but I was a good musician, and the fact that I had a piano background and a fairly decent vocal background and had a soul for the interpretation, people enjoyed listening to me. It was not a voice that made you sit up with your eyes wide open. It was a pleasant voice to listen to.

**INT:** I know you did opera so you must have had a range.

**Jane:** When the Pittsburgh opera was founded, the first opera they did was “Faust” and I was
with this new teacher and I really learned the role of Marguerite. I studied it then. I did Dido and Aeneas in college and then in Harrisburg, when the Harrisburg Opera Company started, I was in the “Old Maid and the Thief” by Menotti, and that was one of their first productions that went out to the schools. I remember doing it at the Middletown Campus, a beat up little...I haven’t been back at that campus. I’m sure they have a magnificent auditorium now, but this was like an extended lecture hall. We did that at a couple of schools. We did it around five or six times. That was fun. At that time already I had a family.

I also did one production at the Harrisburg Community Theater. They did “Where’s Charley,” and I was the aunt from Brazil where the nuts come from. And it was the voice part. That music was the nicest part (sings) “Springtime was never lovelier than ever”...that was in the second act. It was supposed to be one weekend and it turned into four weekends, and my eldest daughter was in a dance recital, so that Saturday night I had to run to the dance recital and I got to the theater just in time for the second act, and they were standing there with my costume. So I decided some of this stuff is too much. I did some other things. I started at Temple. I thought I’d get my Masters in social work, and I took one course in juvenile delinquency and I drove my family crazy because I was driven. I had to get an A or I wasn’t going to do anything. Well, I got my A and that was the end of my graduate work. My formal graduate work, I should say. Later I’ll tell you about it. I feel like I really earned a doctorate in economics and political science.

INT: In your work.

Jane: Yes, in my work.

INT: They probably should give you an honorary one.

Jane: Well, they gave Steve one. Right now I’m handling with Dean Whitkin.

INT: The reference is to Stephen Reed, who’s the mayor of the city of Harrisburg.

Jane: He’s been requested to have proclamations for various and sundry things. This is the third time that he sent a letter to these people and said Jane will represent me, so I’m going to have a discussion with him. I want to be deputy mayor.

INT: You’d better think about that carefully! Okay, so you were twenty-two about, and the war was...well, you were older and you were continuing singing. What were your thoughts about what you wanted to do next? I don’t know exactly when it was when you met your husband. I think that was later on though.

Jane: No. I met my husband in 1941, the year I graduated from college. He had just received his Ph.D. from Penn State in biochemistry and came to work in Pittsburgh for Fisher Scientific. He rented a room at the home of a sorority sister of mine. She was determined to get me married off to somebody. That’s when I met him. Right after he met me he wanted to marry me right away. It
was the war and I said, “I’m not doing this.” A lot of the girls did get married before their fiancées went overseas and they got money and they had kids and stuff, and I was afraid. I really didn’t have confidence in the outcome of all this mess. So he enlisted in the service.

**INT:** His name was Mortimer?

**Jane:** Yes, Mortimer. He did not have to go to the service because he was in the science and the development community, and he did enlist. He ended up on the desert in Egypt as head of the laboratory for the Jefferson Hospital Unit at Camp Huckstep, someplace in Egypt. APO 676. I didn’t know what I wanted to do but when I came to Harrisburg, that’s when I started to make some choices because it was a new community.

**INT:** That was because of marriage that you came to Harrisburg?

**Jane:** Yes, we moved to Harrisburg when he got out of the service. That was really a rather difficult time for us because he didn’t go into his profession. His father was very ill when he got out of the service in July of ’46, and his father asked him to come into the family business. He had offers to be head of the agriculture department at the University of Idaho but he didn’t want to go to Idaho. He did have a wonderful interview with United Fruit and Banana Company in New York, and it looked like this was a great opportunity and then they asked him about his religion and he said he was Jewish and he never heard from them again. So he went into the business and I will say he was very unhappy for several years.

**INT:** What kind of business was that?

**Jane:** Capital Bedding. We manufactured the Serta Perfect Sleeper mattress and we also were a distributor of carpet and Congoleum linoleum. He was not happy and I knew it. There were several times I said to him, “Let’s just turn around and go back to your profession.” Well, he didn’t have any confidence. He said, “Oh, it’s three, four years. Look what’s happened in the nuclear and all that kind of stuff.” But I know had he gone back to his profession, he would have made tremendous contributions in the field of science and in medicine. Right before we got married though, when he got out of the service, he wanted to go to medical school and I just said to him you know what? I was twenty-five and he was thirty-one. I said, “If you want to go to medical school, I don’t think I could do that,” so he didn’t go. There are things in life that in retrospect...that I blame myself for whatever happened, but he would have been great because he was brilliant in his field. But when computers came out, he was challenged by that and he loved it, so he got a computer system into his business and developed all kinds of programs for inventory and manufacturing. It was NCR at the time, and they had him go to mattress factories all over the United States to introduce his products, and I used to say to him, “Why are you doing this? They’re not giving you any money. They’re not paying you to do this.” Well, he was loving every minute of it because it was something that he really wanted to do. It was math and it was challenges. That’s the kind of guy he was. If he could help somebody, that’s what he would do. So he remained in the business but his goal was at sixty to sell the business and go back to
teaching, to get back into the academic. He was really interested in Technion and after our first visit to Israel...we didn’t have too much money but he gave $2000 to Technion and it became like a scholarship for some kids to get some help. That was in 1971. That was the time when he was chairman of the United Jewish Appeal, of the campaign. Do you want me to tell you about my husband?

INT: Yes, about courtship and spouse and children.

Jane: Well, I could tell you about him because he was a very special guy. He had no religious training at all. He wasn’t even bar mitzvah, which even in reform was... But when we got married—he loved my mother and when we got married—

INT: And that year was?

Jane: 1946. I said his home had to be where my parents could come and it was going to be a kosher home. Fine. Anything I wanted. Fine. Well, he bought a Shulchan Aruch because some of the things he said, “How come your mother is using this knife,” and so forth. It had to be according to the law. So we went synagogue shopping and we went to the reform synagogue first, because with nothing I certainly...I wasn’t happy with the role of women in the orthodox community, so that was not where I wanted to be. We ended up in a conservative synagogue, and I will never forget that when we...I was pregnant with my first child and she was born in September and it was right after Yomtov, and he went to shul with me the first day of Rosh Hashanah. He went to work on the second day. He did go to shul with me on Yom Kippur. And then we had a talk. I said, “We’re either going to do it together or we’re not going to do it at all.” Well, that was the last time he went to work on the second day of Rosh Hashanah.

He loved the atmosphere here of a Jewish home. He got involved because I got involved and I said to someone in the leadership, “You really ought to get Mort involved in what’s going on.” That’s how he got involved. He loved it, and he studied Hebrew and the Jewish religion. He would not miss a class that the rabbi was giving on Sunday morning. I was very, very proud of where he got to from where he was. And it wasn’t easy for him because his family was not committed to any of that. For a while, I guess they made him feel a little uncomfortable. He was devoted to me and whatever made our life the way I wanted it...it’s terrible to say that but that’s the way it was going to be. He became a leader in the Jewish community and was president of the Jewish Community Center. He was president of the Hebrew school, the community Hebrew school, before the yeshiva.

INT: You’re referring to the conservative synagogue—it was Beth El.

Jane: Yes. And I got involved there right away because somebody heard me sing and the cantor got a hold of me and said, “You’ve got to be in the choir.” And I had a friend who lived a couple of doors from the synagogue on Second Street and we lived out on the hill, so we had to ride, but when it came to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we stayed uptown. Before the kids were born
we stayed uptown, and then the first opportunity we had to move uptown we did. And I live now across the street from the synagogue in a great big house that everybody thinks I’m nuts, but it’s the best place for me because I can walk across the street to the synagogue, and on my good walking days, if necessary, I can walk to the Jewish Community Center. It’s one mile from my house. The downtown is two miles or two and a half miles from where I live. Although all my friends have moved into the suburbs, I know that since I’ve been a widow for twenty years, if I were out there, I would not be going to services every Friday night, not being part of the minyan on any day that I feel like going over to the synagogue, and I wouldn’t be there very Saturday morning. I just wouldn’t. At night I certainly wouldn’t go in the winter. Like this, I put a warmer coat on and I walk across the street, and the synagogue takes care of me because we have security at the building and they watch. When my porch light goes on they come to the curb to watch me cross the street and they walk me to the door when I come home. So I have a personal escort.

(INT: Let me repeat again. This is Barbara Trainen Blank. This is the second interview with Jane Doe on July 14, 1998 with the written permission of the interviewee. I believe we were discussing marriage and family.

Jane: I met my husband in the Fall of 1941. He had received his doctorate from Penn State in June and got a job in Pittsburgh, where I lived, at Fisher Scientific, and he was heading up their development laboratory. As fate would have it, he rented a room from a sorority sister of mine who was determined to see that all Phi Sigma Sigma Jewish girls get married to the right person. I met Mort Doe in the Fall of 1941 and unfortunately probably, when I met him I was in love with somebody else who was already away at the service. After the second date he was asked me to marry him and I said “whoa,” so we courted for two years and I was not prepared to make a commitment. I was singing on the radio and I was doing a lot of USO work and the war had come and he was one of the few men really who were home at the time. But since I couldn’t make up my mind, he enlisted in the service in 1943 and was given the second lieutenant rating in the sanitary corps. You must know that the sanitary corps is affiliated with the medical corps. It’s really the auxiliary, the lab people and the technicians. From 1943 until 1944 he was all over the place. He was at Fort Dix. He was in Memphis, Tennessee. Here was a man with a Ph.D. in biochemistry and they sent him to a medical school in Memphis to learn a little bit more about parasitology so that means you’re going someplace where there are parasites. He learned to dissect the glands of a mosquito and he did end up in a laboratory with the Jefferson Hospital unit in the desert of Egypt.

He spent his R & R’s in Palestine. It wasn’t Israel then, and there’s an interesting story that he told. He had taken a lot of pictures and took them into a photo development place to have them processed, and when he came back to pick up his pictures they said the film was bad. That’s what they told him. It was German film and it didn’t work and all that stuff. And then he hears them talk in Yiddish a little bit and he knows he’s hearing that they goofed up on these films, and then all of a sudden in his broken Yiddish he says “I want to see my pictures.” Well, those guys...I mean Doe could be almost anything. They flipped. But he had some wonderful...
experiences in Israel and he wrote extensive letters about what he did there and what he saw.

INT: Do you still have those letters?

Jane: I don’t have those letters unfortunately. Well, he came home New Year’s Eve, 1946, and we were married February 9. In those days, you didn’t take six months to order a wedding dress. I went into a store and got a short dress and the invitations were printed and everything was boom, boom, boom and-

INT: What happened with the other guy?

Jane: Well, that was very unfortunate what happened. He was in British Guyana and before Mort went overseas though, we did announce our engagement. That was a piece I just missed. I was corresponding with my friend in British Guyana and I was prepared to write him a letter. I didn’t get to the letter when his brother sent him the engagement announcement that was in the Jewish paper in Pittsburgh. I had his fraternity pin. I did not see him until the end of January 1946. He came home and he called. It was the day Mort and I got our marriage license. He came over and we had a nice long talk and it was a very difficult time for me then. Who knows what would have happened in my life if it didn’t happen. He was a good orthopedic surgeon and ended up in California. I lost touch until my husband passed away. I wrote to him that I probably would be traveling and I got a real nice letter that when you’re in this area, please call. I’d love to see you. Now, as fate will have it, 1998, my daughter moves to San Jose and I don’t know if this gentleman is alive or not and he’s in San Mateo, which maybe is fifteen miles from where my daughter now lives. I’ll be going out there in October.

We had three children and I have to say we had three in four years. Three girls. It was a busy time for me. After the war, my husband had several interviews to do the work that he was trained for, and in June of 1946 his father had a blood clot on his lung and it was the introduction of the drug Dricomoral that was supposed to dissolve clots, and he was in his sixties. My father-in-law prevailed upon my husband to come in to the business. It probably was the biggest mistake we ever made.

INT: That was a furniture business?

Jane: No. We had a Serta mattress factory. The first few years were really very, very difficult. I encouraged him to go into the business because I always had this feeling that the family would be angry with me that I didn’t want to come to Harrisburg, that I wanted to stay in Pittsburgh or someplace else. Well, needless to say, those first few years were very, very difficult because he was very, very unhappy, and when I would say to him, “Well, let’s just go.” He felt that he had lost...It was sad that he felt that so much had happened in the field of science that he was way behind the times and it would be very difficult for him to go back into his field. There was nothing less of a truth than that. He knew everything. He understood the atomic energy, all this stuff. The salvation was the introduction of computers. He got a computer for the business.
INT: What year was that?

Jane: Probably in the Fifties. It was one of the first. He developed a program for inventory control and all that, and NCR had him running all over the country talking to people who had factories and how these programs...and I’m saying to him, “Why are you doing this? They’re paying your plane fare? They should be paying you to do this. You’re selling their equipment.” Anyhow, he was so fascinated with computers that it really got to be an obsession. He stayed at the office at night. We had rules. Friday he had to be home for dinner. When he first went into the business, my father-in-law always had his salesmen’s meetings on Saturday morning. In a very short time they were gone because once we had our first child, which was in 1947—we were married in February of ’46 and she was born in September of ’47—I said, “We’re either going to do this together or we’re not going to do it at all.” So from that time on there were no meetings on Saturday.

INT: That was probably the next thing I was going to ask you about, religion in the home and the children.

Jane: Well, my home was set up as a kosher, Jewish home because I was brought up in that kind of a background and I didn’t know anything else. I also did it mainly because...not mainly. I did it because that’s the way I was brought up, and secondly I wanted my mother to come to my house and be able to go into my kitchen. Actually, I set it up—the closets were exactly the same—the milk dishes, the meat dishes. There was no problem finding anything. But my husband was brought up in a reform home and he never went to Hebrew school. Had not religious education at all. But I will say after we were married and my daughter was ten when his mother died, he said Kaddish for her every morning and every evening for eleven months, and in that experience he learned to read the Hebrew and actually I think he knew a lot more than the old guys who were reading the Hebrew and not knowing what they were saying because he would read the English at the same time he was learning the Hebrew. And then he started to go to every class that was available to him. The rabbi had classes on Sunday morning. He had them sometimes during the week in the evening. He really became a partner in our Jewish life.

INT: Was there a question about which synagogue you would choose?

Jane: The question...in this marriage I have to say that whatever I wanted is what happened. If there is, when I think about it...there was so much love and respect that I can remember the last thing he said to me when he died was that he thanked me for being with him and for making him happy. (Crying) When I came here we went to the reform temple for service. I knew I did not want to go to the orthodox. I had never been in a conservative synagogue before and I didn’t want to go in the orthodox because I resented the fact that my mother sat in the balcony and she was a second class citizen in our synagogue at home. I did a lot of weddings in a lot of synagogues, but in that particular shul I had to sing from a doorway that led into the balcony, even though they let me do it. But I literally was not in the sanctuary. And I felt since he had nothing, that that was a giant step. But he made those steps within the conservative movement
himself, and for the last five years of his life he was shomer Shabbos. We rarely went away for a weekend because he would be missing these classes and all the things that he wanted to do. I got him involved in the Jewish community and he became the president of the Hebrew school and he was the president of the Jewish Community Center. He was a campaign chairman. He loved Judaism and we shared that love. To this day—he’s been gone twenty-one years—I still maintain a kosher home. My home has not changed. It’s my sanctuary. And I’m still very involved in the synagogue.

INT: I’d like to hear a little bit about your involvement in the Jewish community as a volunteer.

Jane: It’s very interesting. When I first came here and they heard I could sing...Cantor Reisman, in Beth-El Temple, called me right away. Since music was such a big part of my life, I started to sing in the choir and there was a wonderful couple in the choir at the time, Sarah and Abe Katz, and Sarah’s ninety years old and she’s still banging the piano and singing Jewish songs and all kinds of songs at the Jewish home and for the senior clubs and all those kinds of stuff around. She keeps telling me I was her inspiration. She was my inspiration because the only Jewish education I had growing up was I went to Sunday school. Girls in our orthodox setting didn’t learn Hebrew. So when I started to sing in the choir it was the transliteration that I was reading in the music, because I didn’t know an aleph from a bet. And after a short time...actually, when my first daughter started to school—I’m wrong. My mother-in-law died when my daughter was six, not ten. I was thinking that my daughter was ten when my mother died, but when my mother-in-law died she was six.

When we first got married we purchased a house that was right across the street literally from an elementary school, which would have been perfect for us. In those first five years, they tore the school down and built another school a mile away. At that time, there was no busing. You had to get the kids there. And by then I had three. I had three children in four years. So there was the problem of getting her to school and getting her back and so forth. And when Rabbi Silver, who was the founder of the yeshiva in Harrisburg, came to pay a condolence call, we started to talk about school and they suggested the yeshiva, that there were some kids in our neighborhood and there was a cab that picked these kids up in the morning. Abie was the cab driver. The kids loved him. The Stein kids, who were over a few blocks away...and so we sent her to the yeshiva. And then I decided if she could do it, so could I, so Cantor Reisman taught me in two weeks to read Hebrew. It was easy for me because I already had heard the sounds from the transliteration so I wasn’t trying to create new sounds. They were not new sounds to me, so the basic prayers I literally knew by heart but then I had to associate them with the Hebrew letters.

From the very beginning, when I came to town, I was—I guess the Jewish term is a kochleffel. I liked to be in the middle of everything and so I went to the first Hadassah meeting, always looking for new members, and I really wanted to become active but at that time there was a strong group of women who were in charge and you didn’t do anything unless they said it. So at the same time there was a B’nai B’rith women’s group forming in Harrisburg and a dear friend of mine from Pittsburgh—that’s a whole other story—joined that group and I went with her. I went up
the ranks in B’nai B’rith. I was the president. I became president of the Pennsylvania Council. That’s the kind of person I am. If I get into something, I just keep doing it. And I got involved in the Jewish community through the annual campaign. They say I’m the greatest fundraiser they ever had but you know what—I’m getting very weary of that. It’s pretty hard. It’s very interesting. As things progressed, a few years after my husband passed away, they didn’t have any more men to be chairman of the United Jewish Community appeal, and I’ll never forget Dr. Ralph Sherman. He said, “Jane, I’d like to take you out to lunch.” So I said okay. We had a nice lunch and then he said to me, “How would you like to go to Israel?” Well, I had already been there twice but he said to me, “How would you like to go?” and I said, “Okay, what’s the catch?” “Well, we would like you to be campaign chairman.” Well, I thought about it for maybe twenty-four hours and I said okay, and so I did go to Israel. I took two young men with me on the mission, the president’s mission.

It was a very exciting time but it was a very...the first day was a very difficult time for me because my husband and I had made the decision—our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary was spent in Israel. We went on a UJA mission because he was campaign chairman at the time. We left the United States on my fiftieth birthday and our last night in Jerusalem at the King David Hotel was our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Then we went back after the ’73 war, and going back to Israel by myself was difficult. So the first night my two guys and I went to the Wall and I said it’s time to move on. So then I was able to really participate and not be sad through the whole trip. It probably was the most successful campaign this community has ever had because I didn’t have any baggage. I didn’t owe anybody anything and they didn’t owe me anything and when I called a president of a corporation or an owner of a business and said I want to talk to you, “Okay, Jane,” and it was no problem—whereas if it’s someone in the same business or whatever, there’s sort of a great deal of resistance. So I was very successful and I think it was the first time that we had really used face-to-face solicitations. We stressed it.

INT: That actually leads me to some of what I was going to ask you. When you came, was the role of women here very traditional? Was it very unusual to be asked to be campaign chair, do you think?

Jane: In 1983 I was the first. I was the first. But I had already been the first in a lot of things in our community. I was the first Jewish person and the first woman ever elected to office in the city of Harrisburg.

INT: Let’s talk a little bit about that.

Jane: I never really had a job. This was what you would call my first job for $2100 a year, I recall, that paid my expenses maybe involved with the job. I have to give the chairman of the Dauphin County Republican committee a great deal of credit because the government had changed in Harrisburg. We had been living under a commission form of government, so that every commissioner was a head of a department. There was a greater Harrisburg movement that explored alternatives and came up with a strong mayor and council form of government. Well, at
the primary in May of 1969, there was a referendum whether the citizens would accept the change in government and they did. The change said there had to be seven people, not five. So some of the powers that thought well, they’ll wait for the next time around. The leaders of the movement were ready to move, so each party was allowed to appoint instead of running in a primary—appoint candidates for the Fall election. They were electing four at that time because every two years there was four, then it was three. That was the way it was to work. And this year it would have been three and two, so they had to add two more people. He just decided, “You know, there’s a little bit going on there about women, in 1969, and here’s an opportunity to get a woman.” Well, one of the leaders in the Jewish community, Sam Abrams, was very active in the Republican party in our area and they went to him and asked him if he could suggest someone who would be a good candidate to run for this office.

**INT:** Had you been active in Republicans politics before that?

**Jane:** No. I voted at every primary and so forth and at reelection but I was not active in politics. I was too busy being president of the PTA and president of B’nai B’rith. The big thing really was I got involved in the Wednesday Club, which was the music organization, and I was president of the Wednesday Club, and that’s another whole story because I was the first Jewish person the club ever had. I think, with tongue-in-cheek, I remember going for my first audition and I got wonderful...you had to have two people present you, a presenter and an endorser, and oh, they’re so glad I came to Harrisburg and I’m going to be a wonderful addition, and the voice teacher who was at my audition was a teacher of some Broadway people. Martha Roberts. I can remember—it was in Steelton. There are little things, when you start to talk about it they pop out in your mind. I can’t tell you what I did yesterday but I can tell you what I did fifteen years ago. That was early in January, and then I became pregnant and had some difficulty with my pregnancy at the beginning. I called them. The final audition was in March and I told them I could not take part in the March audition. So I figured when the Fall auditions came around or the next Spring or whatever, I didn’t hear from them for over a year and then I said, “They’re not going to get away with this. I’m going to proceed and finish the audition, since I was already presented.” So I called them and they did take me, but it was about a year and a half after I had my first encounter with them. In spite of all their prejudices and whatever, I guess they figured they had a leader and frankly, I probably was one of the better singers in the group.

**INT:** How do you think you developed the leadership abilities? Do you think it was sort of innate, because like you said, you didn’t actually have a career in the conventional sense of the word and yet you were heading different organizations.

**Jane:** From the time I was a kid. I was that way in school and my peers didn’t like me. I was a straight A student. The teachers liked me. I always did extra stuff. And in the music department I was the soloist, either piano or voice. But I did live in a neighborhood where it was very mixed, so there were a lot of Jewish kids around. But I was not included in the fun part of school because—(end of tape 2, side 1) In eighth grade I got the Daughters of the American Revolution medal. In eighth grade. Wow! They’d turn over in their grave if they knew I was Jewish. So it
was always that, and when I got to the university it was the same thing. I got there at a time when the Heinz Chapel Choir was organizing. I had to be involved in my music no matter what my studies were. That was just so much a part of my life, and it did take me to places. I was able to earn some money with my profession. Well, profession-my avocation, I would say.

INT: Let's go back to city council. Was there opposition based on your being a Jew or being a woman at that point?

Jane: No, because they went to Rabbi Silver and said, “What do you think about Jane Doe?” And he said, “Oh, if you could get her it would be the greatest thing for this city.” As it happened, at that time I was empty nested. My youngest daughter went off to college in 1969. I had been president of all these women’s organizations and it was time to get into the world. So I do have to say that as soon as my candidacy was announced, without even setting a letter out the money just started to pour in. There was so much support. But we did have a strong Jewish community in Harrisburg in 1969. Since then it’s suburbia and we are really depleted of Jewish people in the city except some of the very orthodox who feel they want to be close enough to where they synagogues are to walk on the Shabbat and the holidays.

Getting into politics as the first woman—that’s the key—opened so many doors it was unbelievable. I was sworn in in 1970. By the beginning of 1971, Capital Blue Cross came to me and asked me to be on their board. They had never had a woman on their board. I’m not sure they were looking at me as Jewish. They were looking at me as a woman and a leader. I served that board twenty years until mandatory retirement at seventy, and I was vice-chairman of the board the last two years I was on the board. And to this day, I am a board member emeritus. I’m included in everything that they do. It’s been wonderful friendships, and there are no Jewish people on that board yet. The other place was that I became the first woman on the board of a bank. Actually, the First Federal was founded by a group of Jewish men and my father-in-law was on the original group. When he passed away my husband got his seat, and when my husband passed away I got his seat and I served on there until I was seventy. At seventy, everything lowered the boom. It was really bad because all of these things that I were so involved in were all cut off at one time and it was a very, very difficult time for me. But something crazy happened then. All these crazy things that helped me get through some of these bad times. I had served as chairman, campaign chairman, for a young woman who ran for city council, and at the beginning of 1990 she became pregnant and had a very bad pregnancy and had to leave council. I was appointed to her seat for eight months.

INT: How many years did you serve originally?

Jane: Twelve years. I served three terms. The last term I was president of council. There has never been before or never has since been a woman president on the city council. I had state recognition because that’s just the way I am. I’m a people person. The first time I went to a Pennsylvania League of Cities convention there was no question that I was going to get involved in leadership, and the second time I went I was elected treasurer and I served as treasurer for ten
years. So I was signing some of those big checks out there for all the city. So I got to meet all the mayors of the cities. I got around to many because our conventions were different places. I was in Erie and Pittsburgh and Philadelphia and they all knew me. They were all very kind. The most important thing, I think, with all of this is that my husband supported me in everything that I did, because he knew that I had that kind of energy and if I was not able to use that, I was going to be an unhappy person and I was going to really...it would be very difficult because he would bear the brunt of it, as most of us know. So he was very supportive. Actually, after my first year in office, I got him involved. He was a registered Republican and we elected our first Democratic mayor, Harold Swanson, and he said to me, “Jane, do you know anybody who...I need people for the redevelopment authority,” and I said, “I know I good guy but he’s a Republican. I don’t know how you feel about that.” “I don’t care what his politics are,” he said. “I want good people.” And I said, “Why don’t you talk to Mort” because he had already met him, and he did.

A month before he died, Mort did a very important thing for this community, for Harrisburg. We had started a new project, the Harristown project, what was going to turn the downtown around. It was a massive project and the original bond issue just looked...it was not enough once they got into the process, so they had to refinance the bond. It was in September. I’ll never forget. We were in the kitchen and the phone rang and they told Mort that there was a meeting in the redevelopment authority to approve the new bond issue and they needed him for a quorum. He said, “I’ll be there.” Fortunately, the building where I took him had an elevator because he really wasn’t walking very well then. I took him down there and he sat at that meeting and I’m sure he wasn’t hearing too much of what was going on but when they called the roll he was there. And so shortly after he passed away. The first building that they restored was a historic building. They called me and said they’d like to name the building after him, and to this day everybody knows where the Doe Building is, downtown Harrisburg. My grandson, who was three at the time, cut the ribbon. Rabbi Wohlberg was there to give the prayer. It was special. The building changed hands a few times and it’s still the Doe Building, even though the name of the building that was across the front of it was removed because Charles Schwab rented the space and would only rent it if they had recognition on the building. So now there’s a beautiful bronze plaque at the doorway. And also I noticed now there’s a glass panel above the door, and that has the “Doe Building” engraved on it. It’s still there.

The other thing I got involved in—when I went off of city council I decided not to run a fourth time because I was elected the third time two weeks after my husband had passed away, and those four years were very hard because I became president, there was a lot of upheaval in the community, there were a lot of racial problems, and it was too much for me when I had no one to vent with, so when I got out of that, I had some friends on the county commission and there was a space on the transit authority that was open so they asked me if I would take it and I did, and I did that for ten years. The terms were five years and I was reappointed the second time. Then the third time, when I was up for reappointment, I didn’t get a reappointment because I’m a Republican. I’ve been a registered Republican because that was what you did when you came to Harrisburg in the Forties. I chaired the campaign of the young woman Democrat who ran for Common Pleas Court, and she won. The Republican county commissioners were really angry
with me, so they would not reappoint me. Well, they did me a big favor because then the bus company, the transit authority, hired me as a consultant. I didn’t get anything as a member of the transit authority. I became a consultant for their senior ridership. I went to all the senior high-rises in the bus circuit. I was in places I have never been, but it was fun. It was fun. And I could write a book about some of the experiences I had on the bus. I never told the bus driver who I was, but I would talk to the people to find out where they were going, was it convenient for them to go there and so forth on the bus, but then when I would go to the senior high-rises and I said, “Why would you want to sit in your apartment? It really doesn’t matter where the bus is going. Just go.” And the ridership was up the whole time I was out there on the street and everybody loved it. And I had a lot of fun. I even went to Carlisle on the bus. It was a two hour trip, but I could drive there in twenty minutes. I took Rabbi Greenspan’s mother with me. The schedule was every two hours, so we got off at a mall and we had some lunch and we wandered around and then took the bus back. So I really had a lot of interesting experiences.

INT: When you started out with your various volunteer...it’s professional whenever you got paid obviously, did you find not so much from the non-Jews you were dealing with but let’s say from Jewish women in the community, was there any sense of alienation from them because they weren’t out there doing these kinds of things that you were doing?

Jane: I didn’t sense that. I did not sense that. And I will say that as a representative of the Jewish community, a lot of non-Jews had a great deal of respect for me. On city council they knew I would not attend anything on a Friday night or a Saturday. They knew that, and if there was a regularly scheduled meeting and it came out on a holiday, it was changed. I had some Jewish men who followed me. That didn’t happen, but I insisted. So it wasn’t that I was hiding that I was Jewish. I was very up-front about it, and up-front about the things that were important to me. I remember the first time they asked me to be a judge at the Greek festival. It was a Friday night. I said, “I can’t go. That’s my Sabbath. I do not go.” And a couple of years they kept calling me. I said, “If you feel better calling me, that’s fine. But I’m not going to do it.”

INT: Have you thought of running for higher office beyond city politics?

Jane: I made a very serious mistake in my career. In my third term on city council, there was a seat available in the state legislature. I was offered that seat. I’m sure if Mort had been alive I would have made the right decision, but I had to make this decision myself and it’s hard for people to understand why I didn’t do it. I was president of city council. It was a very split council at the time. There was racial tension in the council and in order to get the vote that I needed to get the presidency, I had to allow a strong black figure in the community to be the vice-chairman. He was not a good person. My decision not to take that seat [on the state legislature] rested on the fact that I would have had to give him the presidency, and I didn’t want to do that to my community. When I think about it in retrospect, I’d probably still be sitting in that seat and it was probably a down decision because in politics you make decisions that are for you, not for the community, but that’s not me. I made that decision for the community. As it happened, this gentleman, after he got off of council, went to jail with all the stuff.. I couldn’t do it. He was just
a bad person. He was like a Jerry Falwell, but a black representation. He was a preacher and words just came out of his mouth. He was a fabulous speaker. He could sell you the Brooklyn Bridge and then buy it back and sell it back to you. This guy...that’s the way he was. And the black community, of course, I have to say—the followers, the blind followers, were supportive of him. I will say the three times I ran, the first two times I had the highest number of votes. My first time out I beat everybody who had been in politics for a long time. And the third time I was second. And the third time I never went out on the streets once, because my husband was dying, and even the editorial right before the election said that I had not been out on the street but I deserved the support of the community.

**INT:** Do you want to say something about this last time?

**Jane:** Not really. I guess I could for the record. At the beginning of June there was a vacancy created in City Council and I thought a long time about whether I would like to do that for a year and a half. So knowing the politics of this community, I made an appointment with the mayor and asked him if he would feel comfortable if I did this.

**INT:** You have a very close relationship.

**Jane:** I have a very close relationship with him and he said, “Jane, I’m supporting you all the way. Go for it.” So I did. There were forty-three people. Somebody said it had to be open. The last time they just...my name was the only name that came up. I also told the mayor that I was not in a race, that they either wanted me or they didn’t and I was not going to lobby for the job. So they had forty-three people send in resumes, and they had a three-member committee screen those forty-three applications and they interviewed five people. I was one of the interviewees. That was a week ago Monday, and nobody could have received more accolades from the members of that council as they interviewed me, and the president saying, “I’ve learned so much from you,” because he was on the council seven years ago when I did the interim term, and “you’ve been a role model” and all that kind of stuff, and when I finished my interview the people who were present applauded. I was reading it actually that the seat was mine but they were going through the process because that’s the way the process worked out. That was Monday night. Facetiously, I said to them, “You know, my grandson would love to be here when I’m sworn in, if I’m to be sworn in,” so you see how the tone of the meeting was. Okay. So I called Tuesday morning and I said, “You know, my grandson is in Philadelphia so I have to give him some time to get up here.” This was going to come down on Wednesday. And that’s when I got a sense right away that these people had learned very, very well how to look you in the eye and lie. I could never do that. And in the back of the minds of at least three of them there was going to be a black person on that council and it was going to be a man. And the man they took, I have to say, probably had to have somebody tell him where City Hall was. They’re doing some checking now but it looks like the guy hasn’t voted in the last three elections. Well, they can find out in two seconds. He was a registered Republican and sent his resume in as a Democrat.

**INT:** Do you think that there was anti-Semitism involved or just black empowerment?
Jane: No, I don’t think so. Really, in this instance, I think that the president decided that if there were another woman on council there would be four women and three men and there would be three white people and only four black people. Now there are five black people, which places them in the position that if they decide that there’s something they don’t like that the mayor is doing, they have the strength to stop it. And it makes me very sad because those people are really not interested in the community. They are racists, and yet every place I went on Thursday and Friday and Saturday after this what I call fiasco, everybody said, “Jane, what did they do?” I said, “Well, they did it. They’re the ones that are voting.” If the community were to vote, there would have been no question about who got that seat. I was only unhappy that all the president had to say to me quietly, because I know them all, “Jane, we’re really looking for a guy” and I would have withdrawn and given some kind of crazy excuse like I looked over my schedule and I have too many things to do. I was not in a race. I was offering them something that was very valuable to them. They decided that that didn’t have the edge over their edge. So that’s okay. That’s my last trip around that way.

INT: You’re still now on the community relations council?

Jane: I was chair of the community relations council. I have stepped in many times in some of the organizations when things looked like they were falling apart, to keep them together. The Sisterhood here at the temple couldn’t get any leadership. I stepped in and took the presidency for a year. I said only for a year, but in that year I cultivated a group of young women, about twenty of them. In the middle of the year I called them together and said, “Okay girls. What are we going to do?” So they came up with three people, so instead of having one president they had three people and they worked it out and the whole thing didn’t go away like it was going. The CRC, the Community Relations Council, could not get a chairman, and I had been active on the committee and I said, “okay for this year.” Those times are very, very difficult. You walk in with no support and you have to develop support. I was chairman of the community club concert series for over twelve years—the chairman. I served on that committee for forty years. In the last two years I saw that there was a lot of stuff going on around me, not with me but around me, and I said, “Okay, it’s time to let you do whatever you want to do.” In that case, I’m not sure that there wasn’t a little undercurrent of anti-Semitism, because as I pointed out earlier in the discussion, I was the first Jewish person in the history of the organization, the actual club. I did bring a few Jewish women into the concert association. Our membership chairman is Jewish. I don’t think she’s going to stay too long either. She feels the same thing, that all this stuff is going on. And I walked, because there’s no point in just being a part of it if you’re not in it.

INT: You were involved in other cultural activities. I know that with the yeshiva you’ve been-

Jane: I’ve been very active in all the fundraising concerts that the yeshiva has had. I was president of PTA. I was president at the time when my mother was dying in Pittsburgh. It was a very difficult time. I did those. I did one thing for Hadassah. They had started a concert and it wasn’t going anywhere, so they asked me if I would help them, but after they had goofed the whole thing up, you know. It was very hard to get anything out of it after they had started it. I
tried to put it together. To me, that probably was the worst fiasco I’ve ever been in because again, the same group that didn’t allow me to get in the door was the group that was asking for help, but they had their own ideas. They were almost finished with the project when they asked me to come in, and I will never forget the night that Brenda Lewis walked out on the stage and in their infinite wisdom they had already seated the patrons—not in the orchestra but in the first level. And the lady walks out and there’s not a soul sitting in front of her for twenty-five rows before the first level goes up. I don’t do that. You need... So she just said, “Where is everybody?” She wasn’t very nice either. She was getting paid. When you’re a paid performer you do your job and whatever is there is there. That’s the way the business runs.

INT: Tell me a little bit about your daughters and what legacy...

Jane: Our three daughters went to the yeshiva, and then they went to public school. All three of them went on to college and all three of them, on their own... I mean we supported them through their undergraduate work. All three have Masters that they were able to work out at whatever level they had to do it. My eldest daughter probably is the most involved in Judaism. She has a magnificent voice so she sings in a choral group that the synagogue has, but she reads Torah regularly. In the summer she’s assigned a day that she does minyan. She was president of her Sisterhood and very involved in the branch, and most things that she does are around being Jewish. I’m sure she doesn’t do anything else. She spends a lot of time at the synagogue. She has two children. My grandson is twenty-three, just going into his second year of law school, and my granddaughter is twenty-(end of tape 2, side 2) (Talking about younger families and synagogues today.) There’s no connection. There’s no connection with their Judaism at all unless G-d forbid they have a death in the family or if there’s going to be a bar mitzvah. We have people who join this congregation who spend maybe $50,000 on a bar mitzvah, and if you send a note for a High Holiday appeal, they’re not going to give you a dollar more than the minimum dues. I’m chairing the High Holiday appeal this year. I chaired it last year.

INT: This is for Beth-El?

Jane: Beth-El Temple and for the first time, last year, I said, “We can’t do it the way we’ve been doing it,” because we’ve been having a card at the seat at Yom Kippur and you turned down a little tab. Well, if you got up on the wrong side of the bed or if you had some words with somebody or something, you’re going to do the minimum. I said, “We have to have a pre-High Holiday appeal.” And Mike Sands and I called over 150 people. Previous years we raised anywhere from $15,000 to $16,000. We raised $33,000, because we called people. And I’m doing it again. The letter is going out next week and I have a list of about sixty-five people that I’m going to call.

INT: What makes you so successful, you think, in what you do? Obviously intelligence but persuasiveness?

Jane: I make people feel good about what they’re doing. I don’t pressure anybody. If I sense that
they’re uncomfortable then I just say...if I’m introducing more than they think they would like to
do and I get the sense right away, then I’ll just say,”You know, do what you feel good about,”
and then the onus is on them, not on me. Those are my famous words, and I’ve told these guys a
million times. Don’t jump all over these people. Many solicitors make...you get mad at them so
you’re not going to respond to that. You’re not going to respond to that. Of course, it’s a big joke
now. If Jane calls, beware. And with the campaign...I’ve worked the campaign for many years,
but the last few years I’m not happy because they’ll give a card to someone and they’re
unsuccessful, and then I’m the second person, not the first person, they hear from. Then it’s a
whole different ball game.

INT: Have you thought of becoming...I know there’s a vacancy for program director here. Have
you thought of going for that job?

Jane: No. I’m very unhappy, and I’m going to say this on the tape-

INT: Maybe we shouldn’t. (Tape shuts)

Jane: Over the years, and I’ve been involved in community work for fifty years now, I just feel
that most of the Jewish people who are in any way involved or whatever don’t have enough
respect for Jewish professionals. Jewish professionals have a very hard job because there are so
many levels in Judaism and so many different ideas that you have to deal with, and I think they
work very, very hard, but I don’t think we give them the credit. In the last few years, I’ve seen
our community chew up and spit out professionals like a grinder, and that makes me very sad.
These people are Jewish professionals because they love Judaism, they love what they’re doing.
They’re not there just as a professional. They are there as a Jewish professional and that makes
them different. And it does make me very sad when it comes to the point where many Jewish
professionals are always leaving. Every four, five years they’re uprooting their families. There’s
no security in anything. And even the rabbis. Everybody is looking for something else in a
person, and you get enough people looking at something else, you point fingers or often toes and
it’s not good for the community. I’m a strong supporter of a united community, and yet after a
while you have people who feel more strongly about segments and pull, and that pulling pulls the
whole thing apart. That thread is the one thread. It’s like a house of cards. One card goes out and
the whole house starts to fall.

INT: Let’s go back to speaking about your other two daughters.

Jane: My middle daughter was a product of the Sixties, but I have to preface that with a very
serious medical problem that she had. At sixteen she had Hodgkin’s Disease, and I think she
thought, and I think a lot of us thought that she wasn’t going to be around very long. She just did
whatever. She went off to college. She got in with a really bad crowd, drugs and sex and all that
junk. She decided drugs weren’t good for her so she stopped them. She started off in chemistry
because that’s what her Dad was in and she was a straight A student. She was a good student, but
everything went by the wayside and she decided, after her first semester at school and she had to
maybe study a little bit, she wasn’t going to do that. She stayed in school and took courses in
music and the arts. She graduated from Penn State with a degree in music. They don’t have a
music school up there but, you know…and she went off to Boston with some guy and worked at
Friendly’s and then went to Europe for three months and came back, but she still had a sense of
loyalty. They went to North Carolina and if you establish residency in North Carolina you could
get your schooling free. Well, even though she was having a great deal of difficulty with this
relationship, she stuck with this guy so he could finish being a dental hygienist and then she went
off to the University of North Carolina while she was there. She worked in a photo lab. She was
developing stuff. She was just doing her thing. So they accepted her. She was interested in
audiology and everyone who was taking this graduate course were teachers, and they looked at
her transcript and they said, “You know what? This kid is involved in sound. This may be an
interesting experiment for us.” So they admitted her and she got a Masters degree in audiology.
She was out in Sante Fe at the school for the deaf. She didn’t like that. It was too quiet. She said
it was so quiet there that it would kill you.

Anyhow, in the meantime she met another young man who was in the Special Forces at
Fort Bragg. That’s in the area. This was after her father died, a while afterwards. She was thirty
years old. She sent me a letter and said, “I’m getting married March 9” and she did get married.
She ended up in Flagstaff, in Tucson, and she’s been all over because her husband is with the
park service, the national park service. She has two great kids who don’t know they’re Jewish,
because wherever she has lived there’s been no Jewish community. But she knows she’s Jewish.
She’s in Mancos, Colorado now. There’s nobody there. She fasts on Yom Kippur. She gives me
a list of stuff that she wants for Passover which we send to her. Obviously she doesn’t have a
kosher house, but in this household there’s no seafood, there’s no pork products. I’m not saying
she has kosher meat because she’d have one hell of a time finding it, but they eat very little meat.
They eat mostly chicken and stuff like that, and fish.

But I had an interesting experience. This Passover, eight o’clock in the morning my
phone rings and it’s my daughter. It’s six o’clock in the morning there. “Mom, I’m making your
Passover bagel and there’s something missing. Let’s go over the whole process again and see
what I missed.” I said, “What are you doing? It’s six o’clock in the morning?” Well, Becca,
that’s her daughter, decided she wanted to be-she said-kosher this week, and she was baking
these bagels so Becca could take her sandwiches to school. That was the first I ever heard about
anything. And I said, “What about Conor,” her son? Oh, forget about that.

Her husband is Scotch Presbyterian but never practiced anything. When I was there just a
few months ago in May, for my grandson’s high school graduation, he was going to a little
Baptist church and I said, “How did this happen?” He was in the Special Forces. He’s still in the
National Guard. He was head of a company on a field march on maneuvers, and the helicopter
dropped them at the wrong place, so where he thought he was in a field...it was foggy and they
were high up. He was at the edge of a mountain and he fell off that mountain over a hundred feet,
and if had not been for his backpack and a tree limb sticking out he would have fallen to his
death. He lay there for eight hours till they could get him, and he thought he was dying. The fact
that he survived that—his backpack took the bangs. He had a very badly injured leg but it has been completely restored. It’s been a year and a half. I think because of this experience that he had, being so close to death, he thought...He met someone...because there are so many single people out there who are looking for help. It’s a very small group but they help each other. They’re going to help him build his house and he’s over there helping them with the church. But the children have had no religious upbringing at all. Nothing. So that one’s lost.

My other daughter, my youngest daughter, has been successful in her career, and she was successful because she saw that her marriage was not doing what it should be doing, that her husband was not going to provide for her, so she went back to school. They ended up in Champagne, Illinois. The first few years they were in six communities because he could not hold a job. They ended up in Illinois and he was a personnel manager for the city, a guy with an MPA (Masters in Public Administration) but couldn’t work for anybody. So she decided...she was an English major, English and theater at Penn State, so she decided that she was going to try for admission to the communications program, the Masters program, at Illinois. She was accepted, but it was a one year program and she had a two-year-old, so she couldn’t do it in one year, but they were so pleased with her that she got a scholarship for the second year. She worked twenty hours a week at the university in the publications office. Over the years she became director of publications. There was a vacancy as the vice-chancellor of public affairs and they asked her if she would take it in the interim while they were on a search, and she did do that. She should have gotten the job. In that case, I think her gender was wrong and maybe he knew she was Jewish.

INT: Does she have Jewish involvement?

Jane: Not much. They attended the one synagogue that there was in Champagne. My grandson had a lovely bar mitzvah. He continued his studies through confirmation. My granddaughter went to Hebrew school. My daughter did her share of what parents were doing at the synagogue, but really between the house...she was divorced then. Between taking care of the children and the house, she didn’t have too much time to do much else. She started out with a kosher home. Her husband was Jewish and that was fine until he decided he liked Louis Rich deli and it was too much trouble where they were. They had to order their meats through Hillel at the University and they would get it from Chicago. She could get Empire chicken but she couldn’t get any meat. She does not have a kosher home now. I really don’t look in the kitchen too much. She doesn’t serve me anything that’s not kosher style when I’m there. She did not get the job as vice-chancellor, and they did not want her to leave because they were really on a guilt trip, I’m sure, so they created a job. She was director of communications at the University of Illinois and then she took a lot of inventory of herself and what was her future there and so forth and she sent out her resumes. She’s now director of communications at San Jose State University in San Jose, California. I didn’t like that move because it’s much further away, but she said she had to do this.

INT: She’s with her husband still?

Jane: Oh no. They’re divorced. She’s been divorced six years now, seven years. My grandson
graduated from high school in June and I was there. He has been working in the computer center at the University of Illinois since he was fifteen. He’s eighteen now. He was accepted in the architecture school and that’s what he was interested in, so he’s back in Illinois. My granddaughter is with her mother in California. She just spent a month with her father back in Illinois. Her father’s remarried to a Greek woman and when the kids are there they’re not considered part of the family. The mother of these children has nothing to do with the kids. I’ve had my share of watching my children go through some very difficult times, and my eldest daughter, who graduated from Radcliffe, got her Masters from Brandeis and when she went to Brandeis to find out what program they had after she graduated from Radcliffe, she got a full scholarship and an $1800 a year stipend that paid her rent at the time. She’ll be fifty-one years old. Her husband was in a family business and they were brothers of his mother. His father died when he was very young, so they were supporting his mother through the business and so forth. They were the ones I really didn’t worry about because it was a tremendous business. The uncles who are involved are multi-millionaires. He and his brother were really running the business because the guys are in their eighties. They just decided to shut down.

INT: I wanted to actually come back more to you.

Jane: And I have six grandchildren, three boys and three girls.

INT: How do you feel it is to be Jewish and female approaching the twenty-first century?

Jane: I think a lot of Jewish females have become very mainstream and unless you’re working in a Jewish organization like Hadassah or something like that, the world that you’re working in is an integrated world. You have to have really understanding employers for those people who want to be in the business world, to be professionals, to understand that there are things that make you different in your practice, in your belief, and if they can’t accept that they can’t accept you. I’m not sure how many women put those cards on the table up front or if they think they’ll work them out as they arise.

INT: You’re talking about observant women now.

Jane: Yes, observant women. Otherwise, I think the world we’re living in now is looking for skills, expertise, what can you do and what can you accomplish and how creative are you. Everything is going so fast that if you’re not creative you’re behind all the time. You never catch up. I wish I were in the business world. I really do, because I think I would have a lot to offer. I certainly have all kinds of administrative skills and even if I say so, I think I have people skills. There are very few people that can say that in any of my relationships with them that I have offended them or not made them comfortable in whatever we were doing together. It’s funny—there’s one person in this town, one person, that I just...if I ever had any feelings of dislike for anybody and the feeling is probably mutual.

INT: Should we go into that?
Jane: No, I'm not going to say that, but I'm just saying that...and I have a sense that when people have feelings about you sometimes, they're jealous. I've given more talks on how women support women than you could count, because if women supported good women in the political arena-look at the number, they're still way down-women would win elections. But just by the same token, one of the key people in my not getting that seat was a woman and I sense it. I think women sometimes have a hard time dealing with successful women.

INT: That's what I had asked you about before.

Jane: Yes. I think they have a hard time doing that. But I think as we approach the twenty-first century, I really believe that unless you are specifically a Jewish professional in a Jewish setting, that Jewish women will be mainstreamed the same as other women, with the right skills.

INT: I think we'll stop at this point, but we always have the option of revisiting at some point. Thank you.

Jane: I have to say that it did bring back some very special memories.

INT: And some difficult ones, I know.

Jane: And difficult ones. I haven't said anything about this. There were five members in my family. I had a brother and a sister. I was the middle child. I'm the only survivor. Four died of cancer. I'm so glad when I get up in the morning that I can do the things that I do, because somehow G-d's been good to me. (Crying) (End of interview)