

Cheryl Goldstein

Cheryl Goldstein: My husband is sitting here with me.

Ellen Rovner: Hi there.

Ken: Hi there.

Rovner: Your name?

Ken: Ken.

Rovner: Nice to meet you, Ken.

Ken: You, too.

Rovner: Thank you. Are you a Chelsea person, also?

Ken: No, I'm Revere.

Rovner: Well, close enough, but not quite the same.

Ken: Just interested.

Rovner: That's great. Cheryl, I'm going to ask you some of the same kinds of questions I asked you before. The difference is that this is being used for an oral history project, which you got some information about, called Neighborhood Voices. All of this information will be digitally archived, so you are in effect telling your family's story to the world [laughs] as a story that is unique, of course, to your own family, but also representative of what earlier 20th century Jewish life in America was about. I'm thrilled that you're doing this. I'm thrilled that we get to talk some more. Some of questions at the beginning are going to sound familiar. Don't worry about it. This is all being recorded, so I'll just keep asking you.

Goldstein: What cities does this include?

Rovner: It includes Chelsea, Lynn, Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury.

Goldstein: I don't think there's anybody from any of the other communities. Chelsea and Lynn are the only North Shore communities. Can you start off by telling me a little bit about your family history? Your grandparents and your parents and then of course yourself. Where your family came from, when they came here, et cetera.

Rovner: I'm going to have my husband go on our Ancestry, because I have all that information on there. Ironically, I found my grandparents' citizenship papers. I don't know if I told you that ahead of time. My grandfather—can I see that big—? I pulled out some things here. My grandfather came—I'm trying to read it—is that Wolyu? W-O-L...

Ken: W-O-L-Y-N.

Goldstein: Oh, "N." W-O-L-Y-N, Russia. Wolyn, Russia. He signed this paper that I have—and I'd be glad to send copies of everything—where he had to denounce his allegiance to Czar Nicholas.

Rovner: What year was that?

Goldstein: The day he signed this was August 6th, 1910.

Rovner: Wow, wow, so 122 years ago. In a few weeks, that will mark his anniversary—of becoming a citizen? Or coming here?

Goldstein: This just says, "Declaration of Intention." His citizenship, I have here.

Rovner: You can show it on the screen, because this is part of the interview.

Goldstein: Is this the citizenship? Yes. This is July—

Ken: July 20th, 1937.

Goldstein: That's when he became a citizen.

Rovner: Great. So it was a few years from the time he arrived before he became a citizen.

Goldstein: Right.

Rovner: That's great.

Goldstein: Now, I believe, and I don't know where I got this information in my head, that he was like a stowaway on a ship.

Rovner: How old was he? What was his name?

Goldstein: David Glassman. Do you have this stuff on Ancestry?

Ken: I don't think we have anything on that.

Goldstein: Oh, I don't know if I—

Rovner: That's okay. Do you know how old he was when he came over?

Goldstein: He came over in nineteen-thirty...

Ken: He was born in 1884.

Goldstein: And he came over in 1937.

Rovner: Or, he became a citizen. Did he come over in—?

Goldstein: Oh, I'm sorry, he became a citizen.

Rovner: Did he come over in 1910?

Ken: Yeah, he came over in 1910.

Rovner: So, he was 26?

Ken: Yeah.

Goldstein: That's right.

Rovner: He was a young man. Do you know what he was doing in Russia before he came?

Goldstein: I don't think I do.

Rovner: Did he meet your grandmother there or here?

Goldstein: My grandmother was distantly related to him. I don't know if she was a great-niece? Or something like that.

Rovner: Oh, a niece?

Goldstein: Yes.

Rovner: What was her name?

Goldstein: Her name was Becky and her maiden name was Friedman.

Ken: It was Rebecca.

Goldstein: It was Rebecca. Well, they called her "Becky." I only knew her as Becky. But, Friedman. I believe it took my grandfather seven years to save money to bring her over here.

Rovner: So he knew her from Europe?

Goldstein: No, they got married in Russia. Then he left right away, and it took him seven years to—

Rovner: Wow.

Goldstein: —save enough money to get her over here. Because I know my father was born seven or eight years later.

Rovner: Where did he go when he first came here, to this country?

Ken: He went directly to Chelsea.

Goldstein: He's helping me with the Ancestry, because I'm so overwhelmed with it. He went directly to Chelsea.

Rovner: Did he have family in Chelsea? Is that why he went to Chelsea?

Goldstein: I don't think he had anybody in Chelsea. He might have had cousins, now that I'm saying that.

Ken: There were a lot of Glassmans.

Goldstein: There were a lot of Glassman cousins in Everett and Chelsea.

Rovner: This was a known place, so he came directly. What did he do when he got to Chelsea?

Goldstein: He was a grocer. He opened a grocery store.

Rovner: Did he do that right away, do you know?

Goldstein: That, I don't know.

Ken: When did they buy the house?

Goldstein: This, they bought the grocery store August 3rd, 1925. No, that doesn't sound right, does it?

Rovner: Yeah, it does, because your grandmother—if he came in 1910, yeah.

Goldstein: He bought the grocery store, with the house on top of it, for \$7,000. [laughs]

Rovner: Do you want to show us that?

Goldstein: The deed?

Rovner: That's the deed?

Goldstein: Yeah.

Rovner: Wow. For \$7,000. [laughs]

Goldstein: \$7,000. And that's a two-family house and a store.

Rovner: Wow.

Ken: This is David. That's him. That's her grandmother.

Rovner: Very nice, very nice.

Goldstein: He was my best friend. [laughs]

Rovner: How do you think he influenced you?

Goldstein: I felt from my grandfather—probably from him, the most loved.

Rovner: Do you think you were his favorite?

Goldstein: I do. I do.

Rovner: [laughs]

Ken: I'll vouch for that.

Rovner: How many children did David and Becky have?

Goldstein: They had my father, and then I think a year or two later, they had another son. I don't know if his real name is Irving or Isador—I have no idea—but they called him Izzy.

Rovner: What was your father's name?

Goldstein: Benjamin.

Rovner: So they had Benjamin and Izzy.

Goldstein: Izzy. And I know my father wanted to become a pharmacist, and my grandfather was very—I think they were pretty domineering. I didn't see it as a granddaughter, but I think as a father, he was, and he made my father go into the grocery store business with him. And it was difficult. They were open seven days a week, 6:00 to 6:00.

Rovner: And what happened to Izzy?

Goldstein: Izzy moved to Newton [laughs] and I think there was a lot of family issues, so we didn't see too much of them.

Rovner: Did your dad go to pharmacy school?

Goldstein: I think he wanted to; I don't think he did. Then he went into the service.

Rovner: He served in World War II?

Goldstein: Yeah.

Rovner: He was in the Army, or—?

Goldstein: He was in the Navy. He was a Seabee in the Navy.

Rovner: Then he came back and went into the business. Now, when did your dad marry?

Goldstein: I think they got married in nineteen-forty...do you have that there?

Ken: Let's see, he was born in 1916.

Rovner: I'm going to ask you everybody's name, just to keep it all clear.

Goldstein: 1941, they got married? I'm trying to think. I was born in 1950, and my sister seven years—

Ken: They married in September of 1940.

Goldstein: Oh, 1940. September 1st, 1940.

Rovner: Do you know where they were married? Were they married in Chelsea?

Ken: Cambridge. She was from Cambridge.

Goldstein: She was from Cambridge.

Ken: Still there.

Goldstein: Yeah. My mother is Sylvia.

Rovner: How did they meet? Do you know?

Goldstein: I think they were set up.

Ken: It says here on a blind date.

Goldstein: Yeah, a blind date. That's so funny! We were, too! [laughs] Wow, history repeating itself. Yeah, and I don't think she liked my father at first, but then obviously it worked out. [laughs]

Ken: They were married in their house, they had a reception in Sharon, and they honeymooned at the New York World's Fair.

Rovner: Oh, how great. And then did he go off to war, after that?

Goldstein: No, I just remember the stories from my mother. When my sister was six months old, I think that's when he went off.

Ken: He joined the service in October of 1943 when he was 27 years old.

Goldstein: Yeah, and then he didn't come back until my sister was two and a half, because she said it was really hard.

Rovner: Did he work with your grandfather prior to going into the service? He was at the store?

Goldstein: They worked together every single day.

Rovner: [laughs] We'll get into that a little more, but I just want to get this family history down. So, you had an older sister, and what's her name?

Goldstein: Arlene [sp].

Rovner: Is she alive?

Goldstein: Yes.

Rovner: Where is she now?

Goldstein: Most of the time, she is in Florida.

Rovner: Then you were born how many years after that?

Ken: She was born in 1943, and Cheryl was 1950.

Goldstein: I was born in 1950. Seven years.

Rovner: Yeah, long time. Are there any other family members I should know about who were prominent in your nuclear family?

Goldstein: Just aunts and uncles.

Rovner: On both sides? On your mother's side and your dad's side? Okay. Were they in Chelsea?

Goldstein: No. Everett. My father had cousins in Everett and other surrounding areas.

Rovner: Can you tell me about the role of Judaism in your daily life? What comes to mind when you think of that?

Goldstein: It was more spiritual than—I remember my Zayde going to shul for the holidays and things like that. I also remember Passover, they would clean out the store and put all Passover food in. Because the whole neighborhood was Jewish. I remember walking to the synagogue.

Rovner: Which synagogue?

Goldstein: Shurtleff Street Synagogue. My grandfather helped building that. There was a cornerstone on the shul, which is sitting on my back deck. My husband surprised my mother when she was 90 and—because now it’s a Spanish church—and he had someone actually remove the cornerstone. On the cornerstone is my grandparents’ names, my mother and father, my aunt and uncle, and the one male child. My sister and I, and my two girl cousins, we weren’t on there, because I guess women didn’t count back then.

Rovner: Or at least not girls, anyway. Wow, wow.

Goldstein: Yeah. I wasn’t thrilled with the synagogue because it was Orthodox. I remember that. I was afraid of the rabbi.

Rovner: Do you remember his name?

Goldstein: Rabbi Tenenbaum. Hersh Tenenbaum. I won’t forget him. I didn’t like him. [laughs] I remember walking in on Rosh Hashanah, and I walked over on the men’s side—I was a little girl!—to say hello to my grandfather, and he stopped the service—

Rovner: [gasp]

Goldstein: —and kind of yelled at me to get out, because I was on the men’s side. I was probably eight, nine years old.

Rovner: Oh, wow.

Goldstein: It kind of made a lasting impression, and I really didn't go into the synagogue very much, because I didn't like it.

Rovner: Yeah, it was kind of a scary place.

Goldstein: Yeah. It wasn't welcoming or anything. But I do remember my Zayde walking on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Even when he was older and he shouldn't be walking, he still walked. But I feel like as the generations went on, we lost a lot of that Judaism. I still feel that way, now, even with my family.

Ken: You should read this sentence to her.

Goldstein: "Mr. Glassman—"

Ken: This is David Glassman, her grandfather.

Goldstein: David. He was president of the Mishna Cemetery Corporation, treasurer of Mishna Free Loan Association, treasurer of Chevra Mishna of the synagogue, on the Board of Directors of the synagogue, past treasurer of Liberty Progressive Cemetery, a member of Chevra Tillim, the Chelsea Hebrew School, and the Golden Age Club of the YMHA.

Rovner: Oh, boy!

Goldstein: So, he did a lot of stuff.

Rovner: Yeah, he was very active.

Goldstein: But I don't remember any of that. I don't know why. I do remember them taking me to the cemetery all the time to do business, and I hated going there. I mean, I'm a little girl and I got stuck going to the cemetery all the time. [laughs]

Rovner: When you say to do business, what do you mean?

Goldstein: They sold graves and all that.

Rovner: So you would go. You spent a lot of time with him, as a child?

Goldstein: Yeah. They lived upstairs from us. We lived in a two-family house. My grandfather spoiled me rotten, and I loved him.

Rovner: [laughs] When you say he spoiled you rotten, how did he spoil you rotten?

Goldstein: “Whatever you want, Cheryl. Whatever you want, I’ll get you.”

Rovner: [laughs]

Goldstein: I said, “Okay!” I had a special bond with him.

Rovner: That’s great. You and your sister were like the first daughters, so to speak. Granddaughters.

Goldstein: True.

Rovner: He only had two sons, yeah. Did he have brothers and sisters? Did he have family who came here as well?

Goldstein: His father is actually buried here.

Rovner: Oh, wow.

Goldstein: I know. We found his grave. Took me a long time, but I found his grave. And *his* father’s name was Zussie. I mean, that’s what’s on the grave. Z-U-S-S-I-E.

Rovner: Zussie Glassman. And is he buried in Everett?

Goldstein: Everett, yeah. Not with my grandfather, but we found his grave.

Rovner: Did you know that he had come to this country? That’s incredible.

Goldstein: No.

Rovner: He was gone before you were on the scene?

Goldstein: Yeah, I think he died in the 1940s.

Ken: He died in 1924.

Goldstein: Oh! [laughs] He died in 1924.

Ken: He was 102 years. He was born in 1822 in Russia.

Rovner: Wow!

Ken: His father was Yosef, and they had two sons—with Devorah—between 1884 and 1893. He died at 102 in February of 1924.

Rovner: Wow, he was a robust guy. Wow.

Goldstein: Yeah, and they didn't have all the medicine they have now. Think about it.

Rovner: How old was your grandfather when he passed away?

Goldstein: He was in his nineties.

Ken: David—

Goldstein: I know he died in May of 1972.

Ken: He died in May of 1973.

Goldstein: Oh, we were married in 1972.

Ken: We were married in 1972.

Goldstein: I'm sorry, seventy...

Ken: He was 89 years old.

Rovner: That's great, that's great. You said that your family wasn't terribly observant, or they were? Did you have rituals in the home?

Goldstein: We never did Shabbos. We never did anything for Sabbath. But we did seders. We did all of that.

Rovner: Did your mother keep kosher?

Goldstein: No.

Rovner: What about your grandparents?

Goldstein: I don't know if they kept kosher, to be honest. Obviously they didn't have pork and things like that, but I don't know if they kept kosher.

Rovner: You had Jewish holidays. Passover. Any others besides Passover?

Goldstein: Passover stood out because it was always both sides of the—it was my father's brother and wife and my cousins came for Passover. That made a big impression because they normally didn't get along, and we really didn't see that much of each other. So I *loved* Passover, and it was a long Passover.

When you're a kid, it seems like, "Oh my god, I hate this," but now I wish I had it back.

Rovner: Where was your father's brother?

Goldstein: He lived in Newton.

Rovner: He moved to Newton, too. So, your family always hosted Passover? And who did all the cooking?

Goldstein: My grandmother. She was a fabulous, fabulous cook.

Rovner: Really! Did she have specialties?

Goldstein: She did, but it was very hard to get a recipe, because it was—what is it, a shit-arein recipe?—you just put a little bit of this, and when it feels good, you stop mixing it. [laughs] But I do have some of—she made the best frozen dough, and I make—well, I used to make it; now my son makes it—so I have her recipe passed down.

Rovner: That's great. So, she was a baker as well as a [inaudible].

Goldstein: She just made everything delicious.

Rovner: Did you eat with them on a regular basis?

Goldstein: Not really, no.

Ken: You ate every day with your grandmother and grandfather.

Goldstein: In the afternoon, when I came home from school, in the store, there was an old-fashioned stove; my grandmother used to cook there. But we didn't eat together. They ate their meals; we ate our meals. I think they needed a break from each other, to be honest with you.

Rovner: They worked on Saturday and Sunday as well? Yeah.

Goldstein: Now that you just said that, obviously they didn't observe the Sabbath.

Rovner: They didn't. You never remember that.

Goldstein: No.

Rovner: Were your grandparents or your parents involved in civic life in Chelsea, outside of Jewish organizations?

Goldstein: I think most of them were the Jewish organizations.

Rovner: In the city?

Goldstein: Yeah. My father was very, very active in the Jewish War Veterans. I know he used to run the seder at the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea, because he made me go with him and do the Four Questions, which I hated doing. It was kind of scary to go to that Soldier's Home, because, you know, not everybody was in good shape. But I know he was very proud of all that. And I did find a lot of pictures.

Ken: This is Cheryl's father, with the glasses.

Rovner: Great.

Ken: Memorial Day, he was the chief marshal of the Memorial Day festivities in Chelsea.

Rovner: Wonderful, wow.

Goldstein: Yeah, but I know he was so proud of the JWV. That was his big thing.

Rovner: Wow. So, he was president, or—?

Goldstein: There's a lot of things in here, about my father. I'm going to have to look—I don't know. I have tons of pictures here of him getting awards from the Jewish War Veterans. That was that. This one says, "Impressive rites mark induction of J.W.V. officers."

Rovner: Great, great.

Goldstein: But I think it was mostly Jewish events.

Rovner: Right, and there were certainly many Jewish organizations in Chelsea at the time.

Goldstein: Yeah.

Rovner: Did you have any particular traditions in your family that you think were unique to your family, around holidays? Like in the summer, did you go anyplace that everybody loved?

Goldstein: I never went on a vacation with my parents.

Rovner: Never, ever?

Goldstein: Never.

Rovner: They didn't take vacations.

Goldstein: They took one week a year, and they used to go up to the Catskills. They went with their friends, and they left—I think my sister was still—I don't remember, but they left us with my grandparents. I think they needed a break. I'm saying that now, but I felt very left out, because all my friends were going on vacation with their parents, and I *never* had a vacation with them.

Rovner: Did you ever go to camp?

Goldstein: I went to Camp Menorah day camp.

Rovner: Did you do that for a while, or many summers?

Goldstein: I think I did for a couple of years.

Rovner: Can you describe what Camp Menorah was like for you?

Goldstein: Oh my god, I loved it. I just remember playing jacks.

I think it gave me something to do with a group where I didn't get to go on vacation, so it was fun for me. I remember going up in Essex to Lake Chebacco, when they went up there. I hated it there because there were so many leeches

in the lake. I'll never forget that! But I think it was the camaraderie that I liked. Because before that, I would just go outside and see the same few people, if that makes any sense; my next-door neighbor here, my next-door neighbor there. But once I went there, I just remember being in big circles with lots of friends, and it was nice.

Rovner: Can you tell us a little bit about Camp Menorah and the Y?

Goldstein: Those are my only memories of it, to be honest with you.

Rovner: Did you go to the Y?

Goldstein: The YMHA.

Rovner: Did you go to the Y for activities other than Camp Menorah?

Goldstein: Yeah, I went to all the dances there. I loved going there. Nate Finkelstein was the head of it. And Maury Segal, I remember him. And Chuck Glaser, who everybody had a crush on! [laughs] I remember the dances, mostly.

Rovner: Were you part of BBG, B'nai B'rith Girls?

Goldstein: Yes, I was. I was actually—all of a sudden, it's coming back to me—I think I was also a leader for the younger girls there. I was part of BBG. At the Y.

Rovner: At the Y. So, did you go to the Y all year round?

Goldstein: I don't remember.

Rovner: Camp Menorah was based at the YMHA on Crescent Ave in Chelsea. You had activities there, and you went off to other places as well. Do you remember the food there? Because I went there, too, so—

Goldstein: Did you?

Rovner: Yeah. I remember the salmon loaf, or salmon cakes.

Goldstein: No, I don't remember! My mother probably didn't let me eat there! I don't know. She probably packed me something, if I know my mother. I don't know.

Rovner: Do you know Gary Kaplan?

Goldstein: Yeah. He lived in Peabody, I think, for a while.

Rovner: Yeah. I think his mother was the cook.

Goldstein: Really! I think my daughter babysat for them. What's his wife's name? Do you know?

Rovner: I don't know.

Goldstein: I think my daughter [laughs] babysat for them.

Rovner: That's so funny. I'm going to ask you a little bit also about your neighborhood, and then we'll get into the store. Can you describe your street, your neighborhood? Then I'll ask you for more descriptions of your house, your home.

Goldstein: My neighborhood. I just remember there were so many kids, and we all went out and played with each other. That was the best part. I'm trying to think. There were some houses we were not allowed to go to.

Rovner: You were on Chestnut and Highland?

Goldstein: Cottage and Highland.

Rovner: That's right, Cottage and Highland. I'm sorry. So when you say "not allowed to go to," what do you mean?

Goldstein: I don't know—how do I say it nicely? I don't know how to say it. They were from the wrong side of the tracks, or they just weren't trust...—"Don't go to that house. We don't trust the people there." But 90% of the people were just really friendly, and we all played together. We were all the same age.

Rovner: Was it Jewish, when you were growing up?

Goldstein: Predominantly Jewish.

Rovner: Were there other groups too who weren't Jewish?

Goldstein: Yeah. I'm trying to think what group they were. I think there were some Polish people, there.

Rovner: Tell me who your neighbors were. Can you describe what the houses were like on the street, and who lived there?

Goldstein: My next-door neighbor was a piano teacher, and I always wanted to take piano lessons. My mother said we didn't have enough money, so I couldn't take piano lessons, but I was friends with her daughter, so I used to go up there and play on her piano.

Rovner: What was their names?

Goldstein: My friend's name was Rona [sp] Toltz—T-O-L-T-Z—and I can't remember her mother's name. Her father's name was Marshall. I don't know. Next door to them, they were friends of my grandparents.

I used to babysit at that house.

Ken: Can I interject for a minute?

Rovner: Sure.

Ken: Just to give you an idea of how it was set up, their grocery store on the corner of Cottage and Highland was right on the corner. Diagonally across the street, you'd get on Cottage Street, and their home, where they lived, was on Cottage, two houses from the corner. So, they were diagonally across. For her father and mother, that was their whole—just going back and forth, all day long. The people you're describing I think are on Cottage Street, right?

Goldstein: Everybody was on Cottage Street. And they were all my age. Everybody was like either a year older, younger, or the same.

Rovner: Yeah, it's all baby boomers.

Goldstein: Yes.

Rovner: Right, right. What were the houses like? Can you describe them, and your house in particular?

Goldstein: I thought my house was beautiful, but now when I go back and ride through the city, I'm like, "Whoa, I really grew up there and thought it was nice."

Ken: It was a two-family.

Goldstein: It was a two-family house. My grandmother and grandfather lived upstairs. My grandmother was crazy clean. I mean, crazy clean. You didn't sit in the living room; she had plastic all over the furniture. [laughs] You didn't touch anything. And I remember she had a woman come in to help clean, and every Friday, the back stairs, which were wooden stairs to get into her house, were scrubbed. Soap and water, every Friday. I remember the smell of chicken, always—for Shabbos dinner, I guess. My house, the kitchen was huge. I wish I had a kitchen like that now. Big old kitchen with a pantry. The thing that stood out in my house was the dining room, and the walls were wooden, and I don't want to say paneled; they were natural wood. Do you remember that? They had beams on the ceiling. It was just beautiful. Again, at my grandmother's house, that stood out more. She had the candelabra out all the time, which had prisms, and I just remember her washing every single prism individually in soap and water.

Rovner: Wow, wow.

Goldstein: I mean, you could eat off her floor. I remember more about her house than mine. Her bathroom had black wallpaper with swans on it. I remember the smell of Tabu perfume. She must have used it all the time; Tabu. They had a table with a phone on it. They had the big radio in the kitchen. Red and white tile. I don't remember my house! Just more my grandparents'. My Zayde had an extra room, and he used to sit in that window, all the time, and just watch everybody. I remember it bothered me; I felt like he was really nosy! [laughs]

Rovner: Did your grandmother also work at the store?

Goldstein: She did. I don't think she could stay too long. She had very, very bad arthritis. But she did. And she died early. She died in—I was 13—she died in 1963. She died young.

Rovner: So she was busy cleaning the house, and helping out there.

Goldstein: Yeah. And there was always a fresh pie. Always. Fresh apple pie, lemon meringue pie. I mean—

Ken: And outside, in the little plot of land that they had, little plot of yard, your father planted flowers.

Goldstein: Oh, my father loved to garden, and we had literally a small plot, but he grew roses, and people would come in the yard to see them, because they were just beautiful.

Rovner: Oh, that's great. How long did the family live in that house?

Goldstein: 1980, my mother sold the house.

Ken: They sold the house in 1980.

Goldstein: My dad died in—no, they sold the house in 1980, then they moved up to Peabody. They bought a condo up here. Yeah.

Ken: That's when they sold the store, sold the property.

Goldstein: Yeah. It was too much for my father. The store was actually killing my father.

Rovner: You mean they wanted to get out of the business?

Goldstein: Yeah.

Rovner: Why did your parents leave Chelsea? Why did they leave the neighborhood?

Goldstein: I think the neighborhood started to go down, and I think they felt secure being near us.

Ken: They followed us. We bought our house in 1980, and then later in the year—

Goldstein: They came up.

Ken: —in 1981, they came up.

Goldstein: So I'd be able to help out.

Rovner: Did they like living in Peabody?

Goldstein: Yeah, they did. They really did. But they also went to a condo that was just being built, so nobody knew anybody, and once they got in there, everybody was just really friendly.

Rovner: That's great.

Goldstein: It was good for them.

Rovner: Now, when you were a kid, did you run into anti anti-Semitism in Chelsea, or did you hear stories?

Goldstein: Not a lot, not a lot, but I do remember walking home a few times and getting called a Jewbagel.

Rovner: A Jewbagel? [laughs]

Goldstein: A Jewbagel.

Rovner: Who were the kids who were doing that, for the most part?

Goldstein: I didn't know them.

Rovner: Just some kids. And your parents, in terms of the business, didn't run into anything?

Goldstein: I don't think so.

Rovner: That's great.

Goldstein: I don't think so, because again, it was predominantly Jewish there. Then when the neighborhood started to change, a lot of Polish people came in. Because I remember they asked my father why he didn't sell Polish sausage, and he said, "I just can't" and then it was like he *had to*, to survive. And I remember he

couldn't even touch the sausage [laughs]. He was putting them in bags, and he was getting sick touching them.

Rovner: Wow, wow. Had the store kept kosher prior to that?

Goldstein: It wasn't kosher, but it was very Jewish. And the one thing that stood out and I miss terribly is my father sold lox, but not packaged. He would buy a big lox, and it would be on a slab in the store, and he would hand-slice it. And I can't tell you how delicious, because it was thin. Then he would get hot bagels from Katz's, that came on a string, and he had a block of cream cheese, and every Saturday, I would go in, he'd cut a bagel for me, cut a piece of cream cheese, and put the lox on, on a hot bagel, and it was to die for.

Rovner: [laughs] Yeah, wow.

Goldstein: It was so good. And I can tell you the other funny thing about the store is—cigarettes. That was popular; everybody smoked cigarettes. And when people came into the store and they didn't have money, they said, "We'll pay you next week." I mean, everybody was on us. My grandfather, to keep records—you know a carton of cigarettes—he would tear up the carton, take one of those slats from the carton, write your name down, like "Goldstein" and then he'd write how much you owed. And it was all in Yiddish.

Rovner: [laughs]

Goldstein: And that's how he kept records.

Rovner: That's how he kept his books.

Goldstein: That's how he kept his books. I remember when he fought with my father, because my father wanted to get an adding machine. Because people would have big orders. And he said he wanted no part of it. My father got the adding machine—it's the one with the big handle—and I swear my grandfather added much faster and he never made a mistake. And my father, we had a big station wagon, and he would go around and deliver groceries in our neighborhood. We

would sit on the tailgate, because you could, and he would go house to house and bring the orders in.

Rovner: Wow. So people would call in for orders.

Goldstein: Call in their orders.

Rovner: Can you describe the store? I've been there, I've seen it, on the corner, but can you describe it?

Ken: Just something before you describe the store itself—when we got married in 1972, he would lock up the store at 6:00 with a screen door and a hook-and-eye latch.

Goldstein: Never locked it!

Ken: And that was it.

Rovner: Wow.

Goldstein: Nobody bothered him.

Ken: That was it, for about three or four years, like that, until he had to actually get a lock on a door.

Goldstein: Yeah, I mean, it was so honest. No one would think to do that. So you'd walk in the store, and on the left-hand side, there was a window, and he had all fresh bagels there. All fresh bagels. On the right-hand side of the store was all the fresh fruit in boxes. Then you walked in and groceries were—all over the place.

Ken: In front of the counter was the pickle barrel.

Goldstein: Yeah, there was a pickle barrel.

Rovner: Did he make sandwiches, too?

Goldstein: Technically, he did not make sandwiches. You bought whatever you needed. However, across the street from where we lived was the Nurses' [sp] Home for the Chelsea Memorial Hospital. Do you know where the hospital was?

Rovner: Yes, I do.

Goldstein: Across the street was where all the nurses resided. When they came in, my parents and my grandparents melted for them, so he would make them sandwiches. But he normally didn't—you couldn't walk in and say, "I want a bologna sandwich" or whatever. But he made the sandwiches, always, for the nurses and the doctors there.

Rovner: Why do you think that was?

Goldstein: Probably because my parents were impressed [laughs] because they were doctors.

Rovner: Right, right. And there's a park right across the street from the store, also.

Goldstein: That was the nurses.

Ken: That was the home where the nurses lived.

Goldstein: Yeah, that's where the nurses lived.

Rovner: Oh, right in what's now a park.

Goldstein: Yeah.

Ken: That park, there used to be a building there.

Rovner: Oh!

Ken: Which was like a little apartment building for the nurses that worked at the hospital.

Rovner: Oh, I see, so it was directly across the street. Now, was the store—? When I've been in it, it's just a little small store, but there's a back area. Is that—?

Goldstein: That's where my grandmother had her stove, and she cooked everything there. There was a toilet there, with a chain. Because I still say to my kids, "Did you pull the chain?" Then there was a set of stairs that led upstairs to the apartments upstairs.

Ken: When we got married, we lived upstairs over the store.

Rovner: Oh, you lived over the store.

Ken: For five years, yeah.

Rovner: But your grandparents at that point had already bought the other house? Oh, yeah, because you grew up in—

Goldstein: Yeah, they had both.

Rovner: And they kept one as a rental thing?

Goldstein: Yeah.

Rovner: Great. When you say your grandmother cooked there, did she make soup? Did they sell stuff that she cooked?

Goldstein: No, it was just for family cooking. Because you had to have three meals a day. They had to be healthy. You had to have soup. You had to have this. Or else something bad would happen to you! [laughs]

Rovner: That's right. They had to be hot. It had to be hot food.

Goldstein: Yes, absolutely.

Rovner: Right. No sandwiches for dinner, or—

Goldstein: No, no!

Rovner: No, no, no, no, no, no. When you say it was a Jewish neighborhood, did it seem different to you from other neighborhoods around in Chelsea that weren't so Jewish?

Goldstein: I really didn't know the—I felt like that was my little ghetto. I didn't know too much about the other side of the tracks. Because that's where all my parents' friends were. That's where all my school friends were.

Rovner: Where did you go to school, Cheryl?

Goldstein: Shurtleff School.

Rovner: At that time, how large was the Jewish population then?

Goldstein: I think it was pretty large. I think the majority. Again, without sounding awful, I felt like I was in my own little ghetto world with my Jewish friends. We kind of weren't allowed to be with the other kids. If you ask me why, I don't know. I just—

Rovner: When you say you weren't allowed, do you mean your parents said, "Don't—"?

Goldstein: They would prefer that I was with the Jewish kids.

Rovner: Right. What about at school? Were you in clubs or organizations that were mixed or mostly Jewish or what?

Goldstein: I was in clubs. I'm trying to think if they were mostly Jewish. They were mostly Jewish. Yeah.

Rovner: What kind of clubs were there?

Ken: From an outsider's point of view—like I said, I grew up in Revere, so I was on Shirley Ave, but the Italians were up on Broadway, and the Irish were down at the Point of Pines or wherever they were, and I had friends all over the place, and we didn't really know our neighbors. When I moved to Chelsea, when we got married and I lived in that neighborhood, it was weird because everybody that anybody associated with was in this two-block area.

Goldstein: Yeah.

Ken: Nobody went outside of that area.

Rovner: Wow. So it was pretty stable, for a while—the same people, several generations of families.

Goldstein: Yeah.

Rovner: Wow. Do you remember any of the other neighbors besides the Toltzes?

Goldstein: I could name every single neighbor going down Cottage Street.

Rovner: Would you try? Would you do that?

Goldstein: I can! The one house on the corner was Stanley and Lydia Phillips. Going back down was Rona [sp] Toltz.

Ken: What about Sachsy?

Goldstein: Well, Sachsy, he was a bookie that lived next door to us.

Rovner: What was his name?

Goldstein: I want to say Sachsy. I don't know his real name. His last name was Sachs, but they call him Sachsy. And *every day*, he walked down to I think Maxie's, and everybody bet with him. He was the town bookie!

Rovner: Wow. And really more like the neighborhood bookie, because they were all over the place.

Goldstein: Yeah.

Rovner: Did he have kids?

Goldstein: They did. They lived upstairs. That was my friend whose mother was the piano teacher. That was Sachsy. Next to them was Bowman, Billy Bowman. His parents lived upstairs. It was always family. Their last name was Barr, Mr. and Mrs. Barr. Everybody was Mr. and Mrs.; you never called anybody by a first name. Next to them was Mrs. Pearlman and the Zarambis. That was also grandparents. Next to them was an Italian family—Costello, I think, was the name. Across the street, there was the Sealys. There was Arnie Goodman who was an English teacher at the high school. Roberta Stone.

Rovner: Oh, Roberta.

Goldstein: And Judy Stone. And I worshipped Judy Stone. One of the games I used to play is, "I want to be Judy Stone."

Rovner: [laughs]

Goldstein: I loved them. Next to them was Merna Gordon. Next to them was Davey Newman. I think he was an assessor in Chelsea. Next to them was the Zigmans.

Lilian Bornstein [sp]. Maybe I remember them because my father delivered to everybody. Next [inaudible]—well, that's the other end.

Ken: The other way.

Goldstein: Okay, and next to them was the Zumanskys. Then Jerry London. Mrs. Epstein. I mean, I just—

Rovner: Wow.

Goldstein: Harvey Kagan. Stephen Gross. I just—I could go all the way right down the street.

Rovner: Wow. Now, do you recall the time when the neighborhood was visibly changing, when Jews were leaving or other people were moving in?

Goldstein: I think as I got older; not when I was a kid. I would say probably when I was maybe 16, 17. I think my generation was moving out, and the parents were dying. That's when it happened.

Ken: The mid to late 1970s.

Goldstein: I was going to say 1960s, 1970s.

Ken: 1970s, yeah.

Goldstein: Yeah. Again, the parents were dying, and then my generation said, "I'm not staying here." The school system got terrible. I mean, that's why I left. When my daughter went to school, when she started kindergarten, I said, "I can't stay here. I don't want her in the school system."

Rovner: How did you know that the school system went downhill? What were people saying or—? Because it was before it went into receivership.

Goldstein: Yeah, it was before it went into receivership. I don't know. What did we—?

Ken: It was the people. It was the people that were coming into the city, the people that weren't taking care of their houses like they did in the past.

Goldstein: Yeah, that's what it was.

Ken: And you knew that the city was going downhill.

Goldstein: My father—and it was a standard joke—when he would walk across the street, we used to tease him and say he was like a garbage picker, because if there was *anything* on the street, he would be picking it up and throwing it away. I mean, everybody had such pride in their houses. And *that's* one of the things that started to go downhill, is nobody had pride anymore. The curtains were blowing out of the windows, and you could just see it going. It broke my heart. I mean, I loved growing up there.

Rovner: Yeah, it's hard to be part of that transition. That's difficult.

Goldstein: And I don't want to sound snobby, because it doesn't mean I'm better than anybody else, but it was difficult to watch the city go down. But that happened in Revere, too. I mean, Shirley Ave was all Jewish, and then—you know, it happens.

Rovner: It changed. Now, did you go to Hebrew school, Cheryl?

Goldstein: I went for a year and a half. The first year, I was fine. I went to the Chelsea Hebrew School.

Rovner: How old were you?

Goldstein: I was probably 10 or 11. I went to the Hebrew school. I forget who I had for my first grade teacher. Then the second grade teacher, I remember her name was Mrs. Babbín [sp], and she was very hard.

I remember I said to my mother, "I don't want to go anymore." Without getting into my mother, she said, "Okay, you don't have to go if it's too hard for you." And I didn't. And that's my one biggest regret is that I didn't finish Hebrew school and I was not Bat Mitzvahed.

Rovner: Oh. And what about your sister? Did she go?

Goldstein: I wish I had [inaudible].

Rovner: Yeah, yeah. Did you ever try to go through the Bat Mitzvah process as an adult?

Goldstein: I've talked about it. I have talked about it. But that was my one thing. Part of the religion—my father, I truly believe, loved going to shul. He loved being with people. And I'm trying to be nice when I say this: my mother's perspective of going to shul is, "You're supposed to go, so you need to show your face." It had nothing to do with praying, nothing about God; it was what was right. And so I got dressed up when I had to go to shul. I never went in the shul. I stayed outside and socialized. It was a big party for me. So I really didn't get a lot of Jewish education.

Rovner: And it wasn't offered, for the most part. I mean, it was barely offered. I think when anybody doesn't go—when you don't have literacy to go sit there, it is really not a fulfilling experience [laughs] for the most part.

Goldstein: Yeah. And I just—again, that's one of my biggest regrets in life, is I didn't have it. And just learning more about Judaism. I mean, I know the basics, obviously, and I know it's never too late, but—

Rovner: Never!

Goldstein: I know. I know.

Rovner: Never too late. So, you went to Shurtleff, and then from Shurtleff, did you go to Chelsea High School?

Goldstein: Mmhmm.

Rovner: Can you talk a little bit about high school?

Goldstein: Yeah. I kind of branched out from my friends, and had mostly non-Jewish friends.

Rovner: Really! How come?

Goldstein: I don't know if I was getting a little rebellious? I don't know if I just had more in common with them. So it wasn't a good time for my family and myself. [laughs] Am I saying it nicely?

Rovner: They weren't happy about you having non-Jewish friends?

Goldstein: Yeah, and non-white friends. [laughs]

Rovner: Who were your friends? Do you remember their names?

Goldstein: I do. I still had some of my old friends, which I still have, actually, my kindergarten friends. Jesslyn Medoff [sp] was my oldest friend. She lived three or four doors down, and I just adored her and her family. They were a very poor family, but I couldn't find a family that was closer to each other than they were. I tell her all the time how fortunate she was that they were so close. Because I didn't have that. So I was friends with Jesslyn [sp], and Phyllis Fishbein. One of my good friends who was not Jewish was Linda Langley [sp]. Then—

Ken: Faith?

Goldstein: Faith. Faith Poolis [sp].

Rovner: Did you go out with boys who weren't Jewish?

Goldstein: I snuck out with boys who weren't Jewish.

Rovner: You did? Did you have a non-Jewish boyfriend?

Ken: This is going to be made public, now! Be careful! [laughs]

Rovner: I think it's very representative of that time in American Jewish life.

Goldstein: My father would have hit the roof.

Ken: Your grandfather would have hit the roof [inaudible].

Goldstein: Right, but my father was upset, too. I remember when I was at UMass, I said to him I wanted to go out—I don't even know his name—and he wasn't Jewish. I 'fessed up to my father and I said, "I really want to go with him," just for a date. And my father said, "No."

Rovner: Wow.

Goldstein: I guess that doesn't work that way now. [laughs]

Rovner: No, no, not at all. Are your children married?

Goldstein: My children are married. One is married to someone Jewish; one is married to someone Italian. But they're both very nice. [laughs] I like them both.

Rovner: Good. [laughs] Good, good.

So that anytime you went out with anybody who wasn't Jewish, that was kind of on the sly? That they never really—?

Goldstein: It was on the sly.

Rovner: They never acknowledged—?

Ken: She had a friend who was Jewish who would pick her up at the house so that her mother would think that she was going out with him. Then he would drop her off wherever she was going.

Goldstein: Yeah.

Rovner: Yeah. You figured it out.

Goldstein: Well, he also had a girlfriend that wasn't Jewish, so it worked for both of us, because he brought me home to his house and said, "Oh, I'm dating Cheryl" and his parents were like, "Oh my god, I know her parents. That's so nice." I said to my mother, "I'm going out with Howie" and she's like, "Oh, he's such a nice boy!" [laughs] So, we helped each other.

Rovner: It's so interesting how you helped each other in your social lives, but also part of a greater assimilation process, too. You obviously have a lot of photos and family keepsakes. It would be wonderful if you copied them or sent them to the Wyner Jewish Heritage Center, because they would be part of your data.

Goldstein: Tell me where exactly to send them.

Rovner: The name of it is Wyner—W-Y-N-E-R—Jewish Heritage Center, and it's 101 Newbury Street in Boston.

Goldstein: 101 Newbury Street?

Rovner: Yes. It's part of the New England Genealogical or History Society, Association, or something.

Goldstein: Do I have to—?

Ken: You think they'll take them digitally, or should I call them and ask them?

Rovner: I think so, yeah. I think they'll be thrilled to do that. I just have a few more questions. Did you ever work when you were in school?

Goldstein: I did. I worked at Woolworth's five-and-ten-cent store. I remember that.

Rovner: On Broadway.

Goldstein: On Broadway.

Rovner: What did you do there?

Goldstein: I think I might have stocked some shelves, and I think I was a cashier at one time. I graduated to cashier. I remember the one part I didn't like was they sold fish, live fish.

Rovner: They sold fish at Walgreen's?

Goldstein: Yeah. And I never wanted to go in the tanks. I don't mean fish you eat; I mean fish that you put in an aquarium.

Rovner: Oh, yeah, yeah. Right.

Goldstein: I said, "I can't do that. I don't want to take any dead fish out." I just couldn't do that. That was my big job. And, I did a lot of babysitting. I babysat for everybody on the street. Ironically, I ended up babysitting for Judy Stone.

Rovner: Who was older, Roberta or Judy?

Goldstein: Judy was older. Roberta is a couple years older than me.

Rovner: Did you ever work in the family business, in the store?

Goldstein: I hated going in there to work.

Rovner: You did!

Goldstein: I did. I helped out very, very little. I was uncomfortable being in there. I didn't have a lot of confidence as a kid, and I just was always afraid I was going to screw up. And there was nothing worse for me than to screw up in front of my mother.

Rovner: Yeah. Yeah.

Goldstein: Without getting into being my therapist [laughs] it was just not a good thing. I remember my father had to go out someplace, and he asked me to stay in the store for like an hour, and I said, "Okay." One of the neighbors came in, and he asked for a head of lettuce. And it's so vivid in my mind; I gave him the head of lettuce, and he said, "How much is it?" I said, "I don't know. Can you pay my father tomorrow?" Because again, everybody was honest. And he *yelled* at me, because I didn't know how much the lettuce was. Yelled at me. And I said, "That's it. I'm never working here again." But I was very shy, I was very introverted, and my mother was almost pushing me too much. You know—"Talk to them." "Do this." "Do that." And it's like, "I don't want to do it."

Rovner: Yeah, so that was rough.

Goldstein: Yeah.

Rovner: Where did you usually hang out with your friends, then?

Goldstein: Bellingham Square.

Rovner: Any particular places in the Square?

Goldstein: Just right where the post office is. There used to be a Chinese laundry there. I'll never forget; people came in, and they brought their shirts, and two for a quarter, or whatever it was. But we hung around on the Square. That's after I started to hang out with my non-Jewish friends.

I don't think my mother was thrilled, but—that's where I was.

Rovner: Were you active at the YMHA at all, in high school?

Goldstein: I went there for the dances, but I don't remember anything else. I think there were some clubs that I belonged to, now that I'm saying that. I'm saying Lambda Sigma Phi. There was a club, I think, that [inaudible].

Rovner: Sorority.

Goldstein: It wasn't a sorority. I belonged to a sorority. I belonged to Eta Chi sorority.

Rovner: And that sorority was there, at the school, or—?

Goldstein: I don't even remember where we met. I remember I had a black and white sweater. There were two sororities. There was Kappa Alpha something, and Eta Chi. I had to go into Eta Chi, even though I didn't want to, because my sister was in there, and my mother said, "You have to go into Eta Chi." So I did.

Rovner: Did you have friends in Eta Chi, or—?

Goldstein: I did, I did.

Rovner: Why didn't you want to go?

Goldstein: The other one was the more popular one.

Rovner: Oh! Is there anything else you want to tell me or you want to talk about?

Goldstein: I remember going down to the smokehouse on Marginal Street. That was where my father got his lox. I remember when we got married, we had a German shepherd dog. Who did he follow? He walked every day to the—he walked down—and dogs were never leashed, and he used to walk down to the smokehouse with whoever used to get the lox for my father, and come back. But it was just a—I don't know if you know the name—and you probably, because it was from Chelsea—Jay Ash?

Rovner: Oh, of course, yeah.

Goldstein: He used to work for my dad.

Rovner: Oh!

Goldstein: He was one of the delivery boys. When my mother had her 90th birthday, we invited him to come, and he did, and he said if it wasn't for my father, he doesn't know what he would do. Because he didn't have a dad.

Rovner: Ohh.

Goldstein: My father was a father figure to him. If I had to use a word to describe my father, I would just say "nice." He was just a nice man. Mellow, easygoing. I remember, I think it was Jay, his mother sent him up with a list of what to get, and he came home, and his mother called because there was a pack of gum that wasn't on the list, so she knew he took it and didn't pay for it. So she sent him back to the store. Which was wonderful. I mean, think of the lesson he learned. And he had to go back and apologize to my father.

Rovner: Wow.

Goldstein: And my father said, "You were wrong to take it, but I'm glad you apologized." And that was it. But I remember Jay said if it wasn't for my dad, he doesn't know where he would be. So, it was nice to hear that. People really liked my father a lot. My mother was tougher. But yeah, it was nice memories.

Rovner: Beautiful, beautiful. I think I asked you this before, too—what does this all mean for you, growing up there, and then leaving? When you think about it, if you can put your mind sort of back—

Goldstein: Obviously, it's a whole different lifestyle, living in a suburban town versus a city. However, I feel that—and this is including my children—I feel like there's no friendships as close as what we had in Chelsea. They're just not as strong. Because we lived with each other. Every day, you came home from school, you went out, and you played. There weren't a lot of organized sports, organized groups. You just played with each other. You played ball. You played hopscotch. You shared your first kiss. You were just so close. And I don't think that the kids have that now. Again, I love where I live, my kids have really nice friends, but I just—there's just not that closeness. And the innocence. Also, if you did

something wrong and somebody's mother was there, they'd yell at you or discipline you. Now, you can't touch anybody; you can't say anything.

Rovner: Right, right.

Goldstein: If I had to describe it, it was one big happy family. Well, I don't know "happy," but one big family. I will say one thing, though, that I think things went on that we didn't talk about.

I know there was a family across from the store, a Polish family, and I talked to my friend Jesslyn [sp] now, and the girls that I get together with, and now that we think about it, we're sure that they were being abused in that house, but nobody talked about it. This girl was never allowed to have friends in the house. She was deathly afraid of her father. Her mother was deathly afraid. She almost reminded me of Edith Bunker from *All in the Family* where she was scrambling. But we didn't think anything. I think everything was hush-hush, you know? That was kind of sad.

Rovner: Yeah, it's so interesting, how even though nobody is talking about it, you kind of know.

Goldstein: Yeah. But I think the adults—obviously, the kids didn't know, but I think our parents probably knew. Did they just turn their heads and ignore it? I don't know. But when we think about it now—you know, she couldn't be 60 seconds late. There were times that we came back late and our parents yelled at us and all that, but [inaudible].

Rovner: One more thing I didn't talk to you about: did you go to Revere Beach in the summer?

Goldstein: Oh my god, every day. Every day, I took the bus for ten cents. I walked down the street, I took the bus, I was there from 9:00 in the morning until probably 6:00 at night. I got my pizza, my soda at Punks Corner. And my husband, who lived right there, never went to the beach! [laughs]

Rovner: Where did you get your pizza?

Goldstein: Anna's Pizza.

Rovner: There was Anna's and Bill Ash's.

Goldstein: I was an Anna's girl. It was greasier. [laughs] Yeah, but we lived there. Every day, we went to the beach.

Rovner: It was mostly kids from Chelsea?

Goldstein: A lot of kids from Chelsea. It was a lot of the Clovers and the Lubells from the Y. The Clovers were the bad boys; the Lubells were the good boys. And some Revere people.

Rovner: Can you tell us who the Clovers and Lubells were, about them?

Goldstein: The Clovers were the boys that were trying to get to first, second, and third base with the girls. [laughs]

Rovner: They were an AZA group.

Goldstein: They were wilder.

Rovner: They were a youth group from American Zionist Association.

Goldstein: Right. And they had a reputation of being wild.

Rovner: Party boys.

Goldstein: Yes, party boys; that's a nice way to say it. And the Lubells, I think they were part of the AZA too, but I think they were more mellow. It was almost like the two sororities. The one I wanted to go in were the more popular girls, the girls that did all the stuff, and the Eta Chi were quieter. I think that's how it was with the Clovers and the Lubells. If you were dating somebody from the Clovers, you must have been a fast girl. If you were dating someone from the Lubells, that was more acceptable.

Rovner: Yeah. [laughs]

Goldstein: I know.

Rovner: Right. And fast, meaning—

Goldstein: A little risqué.

Rovner: A little precocious, sexually precocious.

Goldstein: That's a good word.

Rovner: Fast, yeah.

Goldstein: But, I mean, I had crushes on everybody. [laughs]

Rovner: Of course. I know your husband is sitting here, but do you remember any major crushes?

Goldstein: I do.

Ken: I know them all; don't worry about it.

Goldstein: He does! [laughs]

Ken: I went to school with most of them!

Goldstein: The funny thing is, I dated the boy that lived next door to him and up the street from him. Three boys on the same street.

Rovner: Really! So they were from Revere?

Goldstein: Yeah, they were from Revere.

Rovner: That's so funny. How did you two meet?

Goldstein: Like I said, he knew them all.

Rovner: How did you meet?

Goldstein: I was at a wedding, and his brother and his wife were at the same wedding, and we started talking, and he said, "My brother just broke up with his girlfriend. I really think you should meet him. He's a nice guy." I said, "I don't do blind dates." I really thought his brother was a nice guy. He said, "No, but you'll really like my brother." I said, "I just can't. I don't do blind dates." Ironically, he broke a date to meet me. I finally agreed, and then he—

Rovner: How old were you then?

Goldstein: Seventeen.

Ken: I was 17; you were 19 or 20.

Rovner: Oh, wow.

Goldstein: We were married—I'm three years older than my husband.

He was 19 when we got married. He couldn't even have a drink, legally! [laughs]

Rovner: Wow, wow, wow. Where was the wedding?

Goldstein: We got married in Belmont, at the temple in Belmont, because my mother was impressed with Rabbi Grollman. Where was our reception?

Ken: It was at the temple!

Goldstein: Oh, was it at the temple?

Ken: Yeah.

Rovner: That was your wedding.

Ken: Our wedding, yeah.

Rovner: What about where you met your soon-to-be brother-in-law?

Goldstein: I don't know. It was a work person that I went to a wedding.

Rovner: Wow.

Goldstein: Yeah, so we were really young. But it was a good thing, I guess. It lasted.

Rovner: It's great. Did your parents have concerns because you were young, both of you?

Goldstein: No, they really liked you a lot. My mother loved him. Both my parents adored him. And, I loved his parents, so it was just—

Ken: Nobody liked my father, but she did, for some reason.

Goldstein: Yeah, nobody liked his father. He was a tough guy. And, I loved his father. I got along with him really well, and everybody else was afraid of him. I actually had a very special bond with my father-in-law, too. And he was an Archie Bunker; I mean, he wasn't an easy man. But we both got along with each other's parents, so I think that was a big help.

Rovner: Right. And were your families of similar backgrounds?

Goldstein: Not really. My mother and father were pretty mellow compared to his father. [laughs]

Ken: My family would go in the group of the fast boys, and her family was the opposite.

Goldstein: Yeah. I mean, I never heard the word "damn" from my father. I never heard anything bad. I learned all my bad words from his father. [laughs]

Rovner: What did your father do, Ken?

Goldstein: My father was blue-collar. He was a toll collector on the Tobin Bridge for many years. He was a security guard at a bank for a while. Back in the old days, he delivered bagels from Boston Bagel Bakery. That's the first thing I remember.

Goldstein: He was a tough man. Kenny was really nervous to introduce me to his father. He kept warning me, "Don't judge me by my father." I thought, "How bad can he be?" Then I met him, and I'm like, "My god!"

Ken: He was a character. We called him a combination of Ralph Kramden and Archie Bunker all wrapped up together.

Rovner: Wow.

Ken: He was pretty crude.

Goldstein: But his mother, there was no one like her. I was actually closer to his mother than my mother. My mother-in-law was—a gem. She was. I couldn't ever find anything wrong to say about her. I was blessed to have her as a mother-in-law.

Rovner: That's great. Now, do you feel like your children have similar relationships with their in-laws?

Goldstein: Not even close. And it breaks my heart. Well, my son's relationship, his in-laws didn't want their daughter marrying somebody Jewish.

Ken: We need a whole other session for this one!

Goldstein: So, it's not pretty. I think that's why it's so hard for me, because he was wonderful to my parents. I mean, he was. My mother lived with me for ten years. He took such good care of my mother. So it's hard for me to not see that same thing. Because my kids grew up seeing how much love we had for each other's family.

Rovner: It's a loss. It's really a loss.

Goldstein: You can't pick your family, and you just do the best you can. I mean, thank god we get along really well with my daughter in law, with my son in law, so that's all I care about.

Rovner: That's great. I want to thank you.

Goldstein: Oh, thank you! I had fun doing this.

Rovner: You are both fabulous, really. It was wonderful. Your descriptions, especially of your neighborhood and your family—

Goldstein: I loved my neighborhood.

Rovner: —just really brought me back. It was great.

Goldstein: Now, where did you grow up?

Rovner: Actually, my parents are also from Chelsea, and my grandparents, too. I'm sure they knew—my mother's family belonged to Shurtleff Street, and my father's family belonged to Temple Emmanuel.

But my mother grew up on Grove Street right next door to the shul, the apartments next door to the shul. My father grew up kind of all over the place. They moved around a lot. Then I was born—

Goldstein: Did you grow up in Chelsea?

Rovner: I lived in Chelsea until I was ten.

Goldstein: On what street?

Rovner: We lived at the Burma Road Projects.

Goldstein: Oh, Burma Road, okay. Oh, my mother had friends there.

Rovner: Who were her friends?

Goldstein: Ethel and Arthur Herson.

Rovner: I didn't know them.

Goldstein: Their daughter was Roberta, and I forget—that's one thing; all the couples used to play cards every month, the couples' clubs.

Rovner: Right, and what kind of cards did they do?

Goldstein: I don't know. At one point I know they played Po-Ke-No and stuff, but I forget the card games they played. I just remember big cigars. The house smelled when they came over with their cigars. Is there anything I can do to help out, besides just give—with the project that you're doing?

Rovner: I think there probably are things you can do, and I think the best bet would be to speak with Stephanie Call. She is coordinating this.

Ken: I have her information right here.

Rovner: You have her info? She's great. She's very accessible. It's a wonderful organization. It's archiving Boston's Jewish history. Before this project, I think for the most part, most of their papers and photos and stuff were from really prominent families. They wanted to really get more of a sense of what was happening in Jewish neighborhoods.

Goldstein: Everyday life.

Rovner: Yeah, everyday life. It's great.

Ken: What is the goal of this—what happens to this material that you're collecting?

Rovner: All of these interviews will be digitalized, and they will become part of a digital archive called Neighborhood Voices. This oral history can be seen presumably for decades to come. People who are doing research, whether it's genealogical research or some kind of social science research, will be able to look at these and start to get a sense of what life was like during that time. I mean, you're talking about—you were born in the late 1950s, so 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, at that time, as the community was really changing. I think it's really important also to show the contrast, and how it felt, which you do, which you expressed really well.

Goldstein: I wish I remembered more. Unfortunately—you know.

Rovner: Yeah, well—it happens! [laughs] So, it will be used in that way. And I think that they're planning some kind of a reception for people who participated. You're considered narrators, so it's like you're the historian. You're telling your story, which is part of a history that was, for the most part, not captured in books, but it's just as significant, or I would say even more significant. So, that's what it's for! If you ever have a chance, you should get over to Newbury Street to go visit the archives. Anything you're interested in about Jewish history in greater Boston probably exists there. It's a really fascinating place. Or if you have research to do about your own family, and you know they came into Boston, there are ways to help you find that stuff. So, it's a great place. It's good. That's part of it. They're hoping to have about 20 people, 20 narrators, from greater Boston.

Goldstein: I think it's wonderful. Again, I have such fond memories. I wish I could give what's in my heart to my children, but I don't think they'd understand.

Rovner: This is for your children, too, and your grandchildren. At some point, they may be curious, or more curious. And so this is a mitzvah, and a gift to them as well. So, thank you very much.

Goldstein: Thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

Rovner: You're going to get release forms in the mail from me. I put them in the mail. Included in the package is a self-addressed stamped envelope that will go back into Boston. All you need to do is sign it, send it back, and then they will send you a signed copy, your own original copy.

Goldstein: As far as the pictures and stuff, do I need to write anything when I—?

Ken: I was just looking on the website, and there's a section to donate a collection.

Goldstein: Oh, okay.

Rovner: I would call specifically Stephanie. She is a very organized person, and she will tell you how to do it so that you don't have to jump through too many hoops.

Goldstein: Okay, because I have so many nice articles and—

Ken: I mean, a lot of these documents, we keep saying we're going to digitize them. But, what are we going to do with them afterwards? Instead of us keeping the originals, if she wants the originals, we'll give her the originals.

Rovner: That would be great. She'll tell you. I'm not an archivist, so I don't know exactly.

Goldstein: All right, I'll give them a call and see.

Ken: Because when we die, they're going to just empty out our house. Our kids aren't going to want this stuff.

Rovner: They're going to say, "What do we need this for?" I know.

Goldstein: Exactly, exactly. But. Well, thank you again, Ellen. It was very nice to meet you, and hopefully I'll see you again at some point.

Rovner: I hope so, too. Be well, enjoy the summer, and thanks.

Goldstein: Thanks, you too.

Ken: Nice meeting you.

Goldstein: Take care.

Rovner: Bye-bye now.

Goldstein: Bye-bye.

[End]