

ORAL HISTORY OF HARRIET SHAPIRO
First Interview
February 2, 2012

This interview is being conducted on behalf of the Oral History Project of the Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit. The interviewer is Judy Feigin, Esquire, and the interviewee is Harriet Shapiro, Esquire. The interview took place at Harriet's apartment in Rockville, Maryland, on Thursday, February 2, 2012. This is the first interview.

MS. FEIGIN: Good morning, Harriet.

MS. SHAPIRO: Good morning, Judy.

MS. FEIGIN: To get oriented, let's start with where and when you were born.

MS. SHAPIRO: I was born on September 7, 1928 in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

MS. FEIGIN: I know you have an incredible family history, so tell me how you learned about it, and let's go through some of your fascinating ancestry.

MS. SHAPIRO: My source is a book that was prepared by my father, Alfred Henry Sturtevant, who was a geneticist and therefore interested in genealogy. He prepared in January 1955 a book, handwritten. He had three originals, one for me and one for each of my two brothers, and it's a fairly extensive work. It goes back. The earliest date is of William Marston who was born "about 1592, came from Yorkshire to Salem, Massachusetts in 1634. Moved to Newbury, Massachusetts and then to Hampton, New Hampshire in 1638. Died in Hampton, June 30, 1672. He was a Quaker." That's a quote from the book.

Father used the Ahnentafel System. Each individual in this pedigree is given a number. If the number of any individual is represented as N, then his father's number is two N and his mother's is two N plus one. That's the Ahnentafel System. So William Marston was 1308, and

the earliest number is 4222, Alexander Carpenter. He doesn't have any dates; he just has a name. Of course there are a lot of numbers where Father didn't find anybody. For instance, 838 to 1039 are unknown.

My favorite old ancestor is Penelope von Princis. I'm quoting from Father's book. "She was of Dutch origin, and she and her first husband, name unknown, were with a party captured by Indians on Long Island. The others were all killed. Penelope was bound to a tree, disemboweled, and left for dead. She managed to free herself and replace her innards. With the help of a friendly Indian, she recovered and was returned to the whites. She later married Richard Stout and bore him several children, among whom were our ancestors. They lived in New Jersey. She died in 1712."

My other favorite ancestor is more recent: Meribeh Curtis. My cousins and I liked her, partly because her story made my grandmother uncomfortable [laughter]. Meribeh Curtis was born in 1792. She died July 12, 1868. The family story always was that she went to help a friend of hers who had just had a baby, and while she was there, she was seduced by the father of the baby. The theory was that she was this innocent young child, but if you check the dates, she was about 28, so she was kind of an old maid for the time. But in any event, she had the baby, who was my grandmother's father, and apparently that ruined her life. She was a Quaker, and she was read out of Meeting, and became a recluse. There are several theories about who the father was, but anyway, there's an

illegitimate child in our ancestry which delighted, as I say, my cousins and me [laughter].

Anyway, there's a whole bunch of Revolutionary War soldiers in here.

MS. FEIGIN: Do you know anything about the Revolutionary War experience?

MS. SHAPIRO: Not really. Father didn't go into this. Every once in a while it says he was an officer or he was in the Civil War or he was one of the Minutemen.

MS. FEIGIN: One of the Minutemen?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes. Anyway, it goes back [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: Which side of the Civil War was your family?

MS. SHAPIRO: We were all New Englanders. There aren't any Southerners. Mother came from New Jersey. Father's ancestors were Massachusetts or Maine. If you start me on Father, I will go on forever.

MS. FEIGIN: We do want to hear about Father. But first going a little further back, if there are other interesting ancestors you want to tell us about.

MS. SHAPIRO: This is another one that I always liked. This is Nicolas Gaubert. He's number 46. "He was born in France. The family tradition says at Marseilles. He was on a sailing vessel on the coast of Maine during the Revolution. He went ashore and saw a girl who took his eye." That's all Father's quote. This is not Father's quote: The story I heard as a child was that he said to the girl, "By God you're painted." And she said, "And by God only." [Laughter] Anyway, Father's quote continues: "He left his ship and persuaded the girl to marry him. So runs the family tradition.

There is a published record of intention of marriage at Topsham, Nicolas Gaubert and Diana Reed, July 7, 1779.” And he gives the source for that. Drummond, J.H. *The Rogers family of Georgetown*. So that was Diana Reed who was painted by God [laughter].

One of the things that’s nice about this is that Father did put in little things like that. It isn’t just Born, Married, Died. The other one that I like is one of Granny’s ancestors. It was Granny’s grandmother. Granny, my mother’s mother, was the only grandparent I knew.

MS. FEIGIN: So now we’re on the other side of the family?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes, we’re on the Reed side. This story is not in Father’s genealogy. It was Granny’s story. Granny had a large family. She was the seventh of eight children, all born at Point Pleasant.

MS. FEIGIN: Where is Point Pleasant?

MS. SHAPIRO: New Jersey. Her oldest sister died in childbirth shortly after Granny was born. Then she had five older brothers and one younger brother. And they lived in a big old house, and Granny was cleaning up. You know, all these boys made kind of a mess and she was tidying up and felt very proud of herself, and her grandmother said to her, “Any slut can clean up. It takes a neat woman to keep a clean house.” I think it’s kind of appropriate that that’s the way she is remembered forever in the family. Make a nasty remark and you get remembered [laughter].

Anyway, there’s a lot of stuff in here. There’s another person I can mention before getting to Father. Julian Munson Sturtevant had four

children. He's number 8, so he was Father's grandfather. Anyway, he was kind of a pill I think [laughter]. His first wife bore him six children and died in 1840. His second wife, who is our ancestor, was the sister of the first wife, and she bore him five more children.

Julian Munson Sturtevant was born in Warren, Ohio, and he and his brother "rode and tied" to college at Yale. They had a horse, and first one of them would ride, and the other would walk, and after a while, the one that was riding would stop and tie the horse to a tree and walk on, and when the walker caught up with the horse, he would untie it and ride on. In that way, they each walked half of the way to Yale where they took an exam and were admitted. And then this Julian Munson Sturtevant when he graduated went back to Jacksonville, Illinois, where he founded – with other people – Illinois College, on the frontier at that time.

The reason I think he was kind of a pill is because he apparently decreed that the only proper profession for a Sturtevant was either to be a minister or a teacher. My grandfather was the youngest child. Father always said he was very mathematically inclined and that he would have liked to use his math in business. For a while, he taught math at Illinois College, but then (I think to get away from his domineering father) he moved to Kushla, Alabama, which was then in a yellow fever area, with his family – Father was 7 – and ran a turpentine farm, which turned out to be a very good thing for us. He had quite a lot of land for the turpentine farm; the land was cheap because of the yellow fever. A long time later,

gas was found on that property after Father died, and that was what supported Mother rather than TIAA-CREF [laughter]. Anyway, Father grew up in Alabama from the time he was 7; he was born in 1891. He often said he grew up fighting the Civil War.

MS. FEIGIN: He had to justify?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes. He was the Northerner. When he went to Columbia University in New York, he worked very hard on losing his southern accent. He didn't have a southern accent when I was a child. He could put it on – he used to read us *Uncle Remus* with a great southern accent. He was a Midwesterner. I think he thought of himself as a New Yorker. He certainly did not think of himself as a Southerner.

MS. FEIGIN: What kind of education did he have?

MS. SHAPIRO: At first he went to a one-room schoolhouse taught by his maiden aunt. He once told me he saw her ruin a lot of people for math, but after that, he rode a horse to high school in Mobile. He didn't expect to go to college. That just wasn't on his plate. His oldest brother, who was a good deal older than he was, about 20 years older, was out of the family, on his own, by the time they went to Kushla. Uncle Edgar taught linguistics at Barnard, so he was up in New York. He wrote to Father and said, "If you want to go to college, come up and I will support you through college." So Father, of course, did, and he lived with Uncle Edgar and Aunt Bessie.

MS. FEIGIN: We should say for people who might not know that Barnard was the women's college of Columbia. At that point, Columbia was totally a male school.

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes. Anyway, so he lived with Uncle Edgar. And as a matter of fact, that started a family tradition. Father and Mother did the same for his niece when she went to Barnard years later. She, in turn, supported her niece through college. Father graduated from Columbia in 1912; he was part of the Morgan group that really rediscovered genetics at about that time (in the sense that their work was based on the original work of G. Mendel, who first worked out the rules of inheritance). Morgan taught the beginning biology course the year that Father took it. I think he did that very rarely. Father took it and was intrigued by it.

There's an oral history of Father, and in it, he says that in his sophomore year, he was taking that beginning biology course. Being a farm boy interested in genealogy and horses, he realized that much data was available on the genealogy of race horses, including not only the parentage but the color of the horses. So he wrote a paper in his sophomore year using that data to trace out the inheritance of the colors in race horses. That paper took Doctor Morgan's eye, and so Father, before he graduated, joined the Fly Room, which was Morgan's small group of people who were just beginning to figure out the gene and the chromosome.

I've often wondered about what it was like to have the really big

achievements of your life coming so early. At the time Father joined the Fly Room, the whole field was just bursting open, and discoveries were just waiting to be made. Morgan, Father, and Bridges were the core group working together. Father said nobody paid attention to who made any particular discovery; it was completely cooperative. Morgan eventually got the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1932 for discovering the linear arrangement of the gene.

When the Morgan group moved out to Cal Tech to start the biology department out there, Bridges, who was married and had a daughter, didn't bring his family along. Neither my brothers nor I had any idea that Bridges was in California. We grew up knowing about the Fly Room and its history, but Father really didn't approve of Bridges, who eventually died of syphilis. So Bridges wasn't part of our lives. We never heard anything about him in the present. Mother and Father talked all the time about Father's work, but we children weren't listening to that stuff. I don't think Bridges was ever mentioned. But they were working very closely together in the lab. Just pure compartmentalization.

MS. FEIGIN: So, we've got you in California. Before we do that, he goes to Columbia, and --

MS. SHAPIRO: He went to Columbia for his undergraduate degree, and he stayed at Columbia for his PhD. Morgan got the Nobel Prize in 1932, before they were giving the prize to groups. Morgan took out enough money to go to Stockholm and back to accept the prize; the rest he divided *per stirpes*

among the children of the Fly Group's members. Morgan had four children, Father had three, and Bridges one. Each of Morgan's, Father's and Bridges' children got an equal share of the Nobel Prize money to be used for their education.

MS. FEIGIN: That's incredible.

MS. SHAPIRO: It is incredible. The other story about Morgan's generosity is that Father miscalculated. Father had an undergraduate scholarship, and he didn't calculate carefully enough so that he had the credits to graduate before he expected to, and so he lost his undergraduate scholarship. He went to the bursar, and the bursar said no, he was sorry, there was no money for further support. So Father went to Dr. Morgan and said he was in this pickle and he didn't really know what to do. Morgan was kind of a father figure for him. And Morgan said, "Well, you know, that's too bad, but why don't you go back to the bursar and see whether maybe something could be done." Father went back to the bursar and it turned out that money had been discovered for him. Father said he was so naïve that he didn't figure out for a long time that that was Dr. Morgan's money. Dr. Morgan was a descendant of Morgan's Raiders in the Civil War. They were a Southern guerilla band. Anyway, Morgan was pretty well fixed, but very generous. He was at Cal Tech when I remember him. He was a very sweet man.

Anyway, it was Morgan's stipulation that the Nobel money be

used for our education. And so one of my proudest boasts is I went to law school on Nobel Prize money [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: Wonderful! How long was your father at Columbia?

MS. SHAPIRO: He was at Columbia from about 1909. After he got his PhD, he was an assistant professor or something, but he was mainly working with Morgan. In 1928, Cal Tech asked Morgan to come out to California and establish a biology department at Cal Tech, so in that year, Morgan took his group out there.

I was born in New Bedford in 1928. The research animal used in genetic research was the drosophila, the fruit fly. The flies needed to be kept cool in the summer, and of course there wasn't air conditioning in New York. So the researchers, poor souls, had to take the flies to Cape Cod [laughter], and the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) in Woods Hole was where the research was done in the summer. The MBL had property up in the woods above Woods Hole, which they subdivided and sold to their scientists in the 1920s. Father and Mother bought a plot up there. Their very good friends the Lancefields bought the next plot, and the year before I was born, when my older brother Bill was a year old, Mother and Father built a house on their plot. They asked brothers of the wife of one of Father's colleagues, who were carpenters from Ireland, if they could build a house, and Pat and Jim said "We never built a house before, but sure, we can build a house" [laughter].

It's a wonderful house. When it came time to put the windows in,

Pat and Jim said, “Okay, where do you want the windows?” So Mother and ‘Becca Lancefield went around and said, “Put a window here,” and “put a window here.” Real architectural planning [laughter].

This house was where we spent the summers. Mother wasn’t in any particular shape to move to California in the summer of 1928, so they stayed in Woods Hole until I was born in early September. The nearest hospital was New Bedford, so they drove over to New Bedford for me to be born, and then I went to California in a basket [laughter]. In Father’s biography, he said they decided I had a right to be born in the East. It was just a joke, but it’s left its mark [laughter]. I’m an Easterner. My two brothers are Westerners.

MS. FEIGIN: Even though your elder brother must also have been born in the East?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes, he was. He was Granny’s favorite not only because he was the first grandson but also named after her father and born in her house. So he had it made [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: Before we get to your birth, we mostly spoke about your father’s family, a little about your mother’s, but is there anything more we should discuss about your mother’s family?

MS. SHAPIRO: Mother’s family was New Jersey from the get-go, and I guess the boast on that side is that her father, who was a lawyer – the only lawyer in our lineage, at least until recently – was the first Democratic mayor of Morristown, New Jersey. So we’ve been Democrats for a long time on both sides.

As a child, I was afraid of Granny, really. She was kind of fiery, and she certainly said what she thought, and unlike Father, Granny certainly felt that men were more important than women. She was devoted to Bill, not so much to me and Fritz. She really was very fond of Father because they were interested in the same sorts of things. He was her favorite son-in-law I'm quite sure because – well maybe she was kind of an intellectual snob, I don't know. But she taught me how to braid rugs and I shouldn't really bad mouth her. She did her best. She didn't really approve of the way we were being brought up, and she didn't make any bones about saying so.

MS. FEIGIN: What was it she didn't approve of?

MS. SHAPIRO: Mostly that we weren't polite enough. She was an earlier generation. I think each generation perhaps thinks their children aren't being quite strict enough with their kids. Why do they let them get away with this? It was that kind of thing going on. She wasn't mean. She did her best, but she was a rather prickly personality.

MS. FEIGIN: How did Mother and Father meet?

MS. SHAPIRO: When Father was in the Fly Room, there was an illustrator, Miss Wallace, who was a maiden lady. She was very good. I have some of her pictures of drosophila. They really look like photographs. They're incredible. She was an art major at Mt. Holyoke. She also had epilepsy so she wasn't around all the time and Dr. Morgan really needed an additional illustrator. So he said, okay, that worked, we need another art major from

Mt. Holyoke [laughter], and that turned out to be Mother. Mother certainly wasn't as good an illustrator as Miss Wallace, and she eventually ended up being in charge of the fly food which I always thought was just rotten bananas, but maybe there was more to it than that. Anyway, she came to the Fly Room as an artist, but wasn't up to the detail work that Miss Wallace did.

MS. FEIGIN: Your mom went to Mt. Holyoke, and again for people down the road, we should say that was one of the Seven Sister schools which women went to because they couldn't go to the Ivies. Do you have any knowledge from your mom what it was like to be at Mt. Holyoke in that day and age? Whether it was more of a finishing school?

MS. SHAPIRO: I don't think it was. She certainly enjoyed it. I went to Wellesley, another Sister School, mostly because of 'Becca Lancefield, who also went there, but certainly for Mother, a woman's college was a perfectly fine place to go, and I think it was a good place for me too.

MS. FEIGIN: It was pretty extraordinary for women to have gone to college when your mom went I would think.

MS. SHAPIRO: That was due to Granny, and I guess my grandfather, who I never knew. Education was very important to them. Aunt Rachel, her older sister, also went. All her surviving sisters went. There was Rachel; Phoebe, who was my mother, the second oldest; there was Martha, who had a genetic disease. She was a bleeder. Mostly bleeders are men, but she was a bleeder so she didn't survive her second period. Then there was Elizabeth,

who also went to college, perhaps in her case, more of a finishing school. And then there was Emilie, who went to Rutgers. So, they all went to college. That was what was expected.

MS. FEIGIN: Were they expected to have careers?

MS. SHAPIRO: No, I don't think so. Mother never quite figured out what a career entailed. She once said to me, "Can't Howard help you with your briefs?"

MS. FEIGIN: We should say Howard is your husband.

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes. In Mother's view, a career wasn't a bad thing, but it certainly wasn't expected. Aunt Rachel never married. She taught. She was a sad story. She taught in Newark when teaching was mostly trying to maintain order. She couldn't do it. But they all went to college.

MS. FEIGIN: Wasn't one of your relatives a scholar in Hittite languages? Who was that?

MS. SHAPIRO: That was Uncle Edgar.

MS. FEIGIN: The one who taught at Barnard.

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes. He was quite a person. He also was in codebreaking in the First World War. He loved languages. Hittite languages are kind of puzzles.

MS. FEIGIN: Your father was in the First World War, wasn't he?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes. Father was in the First World War. He didn't go overseas. He was in the medical corps, he always said because he knew how to read a thermometer [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: Did that interrupt college?

MS. SHAPIRO: That was after college, because he graduated in 1912. And I think Dr. Morgan kind of got him out a little before he otherwise would have on the theory that he was necessary in civilian life.

MS. FEIGIN: Do you know any stories about World War I from him?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes, a couple. One of the stories was he was doing autopsies and when somebody they didn't particularly want to eat with sat down at the table, why they would talk about their most recent autopsy [laughter]. The other thing that he said was that he usually won at poker, not because he was really good at poker but because he had a little more money than most of the others did so that he had more staying power and that turned the trick [laughter]. He wasn't in any action. He was just an orderly in a military hospital I guess.

MS. FEIGIN: More than an orderly if he's doing autopsies.

MS. SHAPIRO: There is a great picture of when he got out; it's a picture of the biology department at Columbia. They're all sitting around a table. Father isn't in uniform, but sitting next to him is a skeleton wearing Father's uniform [laughter]. They were young men, they were full of piss and vinegar.

MS. FEIGIN: So your parents meet in the lab, and get married, and take us from there.

MS. SHAPIRO: They were in New York, and that was when Father told his niece, Hope, that if she wanted to go to college, to Barnard, why she could live with them. I don't know what the financial arrangements were, but she very likely had a scholarship. Anyway, she lived with them when they were fairly newly married.

I don't know whether I told you this before, but Father was the youngest of six children. His older brother, Edgar, was born in 1875. Father was born in 1891, so there's a big gap. Father always said that he thought that his birth kind of broke his mother's health; he was pretty much brought up by his only sister Helen who was born in 1877. The next-to-the-youngest child, Bradford, was born in 1885, so even he was considerably older than Father. A few years after they moved down to Kushla, the boys went swimming in a creek that runs behind or across their land. Brad got caught underwater by a root. His older brothers tried to free him but couldn't, so he drowned; they almost did too. Father, who was perhaps 10, had to go back and tell his mother.

Father didn't like swimming after that, not surprisingly. In Woods Hole, swimming was what it was all about for us kids. But Father didn't swim.

Helen was married in 1903, and Hope was her oldest child, so she was a generation older than me. Hope majored in Phys Ed, sort of to the horror of everybody, but she later became a population statistician. She worked for the Agriculture Department.

MS. FEIGIN: It must have been a new field then.

MS. SHAPIRO: Pretty new, yes. She worked for the Agriculture Department just about when McCarthy was beginning to be a problem. Her husband, DeWitt, was a lovely person. He was a Communist; I think Hope was too. I know that during the war she would write letters to Mother and Father and it

would upset them terribly. They were worried about Hope. There was something going on, I never really knew at that time what it was, but they were worried about her, and they were trying to persuade her of something. So I think that was probably what it was. But anyway, because of McCarthy, she decided that she had better get out of the U.S. government, and she went to work for the U.N., which turned out not to be a safe haven. She was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee, and she said she was willing to talk about herself but she wasn't going to give any names of any of her cohorts, relying on the First Amendment. The U.N. fired her, and she and DeWitt had a pretty awful time of it.

I was at Columbia in law school at the time. I think she was teaching, some kind of an adjunct something-or-other at Columbia. When this all blew up, I knew her enough to be fond of her, and she was family. Anyway, I called her up to invite her to come to dinner at the dorm, and DeWitt answered the phone and he was, you could tell, he was defensive and scared until I said who I was. But I think I was kind of in their good books because I did what I could (which wasn't anything but let them know I was on their side), but they went through absolute hell. DeWitt was a professor of Romance Languages (he ended up at Temple when things blew over), but he was working at a bookstore, and Hope couldn't work at all. So they went through a very rough time. I think they went to Kushla for a while. It was awful. It really was awful.

So that's Hope. So what else is there? Bill was born, and I guess what happened when they moved to California, they closed down the apartment in New York, and most of the furniture and all that sort of stuff from the apartment in New York went to Woods Hole.

MS. FEIGIN: Is there still a family place in Kushla?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes there is. Well there was up until the 1970s or 1980s, maybe 1990s, and it was sold to the Sons of the Confederacy [laughter] for a museum, because it was the house in which the document ending the last battle of the Civil War was signed. Those houses were built of the kind of wood also used for kindling because it's full of sap, so it catches fire very easily, so it's one of the few houses still standing from that era.

MS. FEIGIN: So your family moves out west with baby Harriet.

MS. SHAPIRO: And two-year-old Bill. And that's where I grew up. Father was in the biology department. He was head of it for a while after Dr. Morgan died. Father didn't like that position much. He wasn't an administrator. He wanted to do research.

My husband's nephew is at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, a virologist doing AIDS research. He works in a fantastic laboratory. We were up there for his son's wedding and he took us around. The machinery in that lab! There's spectrophotometers, and these huge machines all behind glass because they have to have closely controlled temperature. I kept remembering Father's office lab which was lined with pint glass milk bottles. Each bottle had a little piece of paper

towel that was smeared with rotten bananas for the flies it contained. The bottles were all lined up behind Father, and in front of him was his binocular microscope. Beside it was a little porcelain tile. Father would study the flies in the microscope, and the ones that he didn't want to keep, he would put on the tile and squash with his finger [laughter]. That was his equipment. Quite different from the Hamilton lab [laughter].

Each one of the three of us modeled ourselves on Father I think, but we each took away a very different picture of him. Bill, who was an anthropologist, took Father's dedication to his work. Father worked seven days a week. That's what he did. He would come home for Sunday dinner at noon and stay the rest of the day, but he lived for his work. That is what interested him. What I took away from Father was that he was also devoted to his family. One of the things Mother told me he said was, "Give me my mother, my sister, my wife, and my daughter, and you can have the rest of the female population." Mother said he didn't really mean that; he liked women. But we were special. We knew we were special. Neither Mother nor Father were particularly demonstrative, but we always knew we were important to them and that they really had expectations of us. I think Mother certainly never felt any of the people we married were worthy of us [laughter], which is kind of backhanded, but we were cherished. We really were.

MS. FEIGIN:

And what did your younger brother take from him?

MS. SHAPIRO: Henry (Fritz, as a child) I think has got more than any of us his disposition; he was a real avid gardener, and so is Henry. I'm not quite sure what Henry took from him; perhaps his aversion to gossip and his essential gentleness. In that way, I think Henry is most like him really. Henry is an engineer. He has Father's analytical mind. Father certainly wasn't handy, but Henry is very handy, and a good carpenter.

MS. FEIGIN: As your mom was?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes, mom was, that's right.

MS. FEIGIN: She was self-taught?

MS. SHAPIRO: She went to an adult education class in Pasadena, but yes, she liked to do that. She was pretty good at it.

MS. FEIGIN: So you grew up in Pasadena, but you grew up during the Depression. Did that impact your life?

MS. SHAPIRO: Father had a steady job all through the Depression. They reduced his salary. He once said "I never thought I'd earn as much as \$5,000 a year." The only thing I remember was that it was quite common for me to come in and find a hobo being fed in the kitchen. It wasn't that they were being fed in the kitchen while we were eating in the dining room, it was just when they came they got something to eat. But no, it didn't really impact us. We lived in a fairly elegant house they bought in the middle of the Depression. It was on the corner of California and Arden Road. Arden Road went down to the Huntington Library, which had been the railroad baron Huntington's house, so there were pretty elegant houses on

Arden Road. California Street was a very heavily traveled street so the corner of California and Arden wasn't a prime location, but it was a big old house and they bought it when I was in first grade in 1934. They were doing alright in the Depression.

I do remember a certain amount of discussion about stock prices, but we certainly weren't hurting. As a matter of fact, in 1932-1933, we were in England because Father was on a Carnegie grant. The idea behind the grant was that the really big-name universities, Oxford and Cambridge, that kind of place, got visiting professors from America pretty regularly, but the red brick universities didn't, and so the grant sent Father to spend a semester at a couple of those colleges. We were in Leeds and Birmingham. I was about five or six. I really don't remember much of that trip. I remember we had a nursemaid who took Fritz in his pram and me out for a walk. I was being a mechanical doll, and she turned me off and went into a store. I decided that my switch had flipped and I was turned on again so I pushed Fritz in the pram along until I came to the street. I wasn't quite sure whether I should cross it or not. Fortunately, Father was coming home for lunch down the other side of the street [laughter]. He brought us home, but not before the nursemaid had come home to Mother and said, "Now don't get upset Madam but I've lost the children" [laughter]. She didn't last very long after that. I don't remember being punished. Maybe I was. But my memory of England is very spotty.

MS. FEIGIN: You grew up in obviously fascinating times. Your family, at least your grandmother and father, were interested in politics. Was politics a big part of growing up?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes it was, and as a matter of fact, Mother, although my image of her is probably not – well it's not correct, I know – but my image of her is that she was the ultimate housewife; the family was her focus. But she also was a very active member of the League of Women Voters.

MS. FEIGIN: In those days, what did that involve?

MS. SHAPIRO: This was the 1940s. Granny always thought that it was silly to give the women the vote because they'd just vote like their husbands [laughter]. What the LWV did was study political issues. I assume they still do. It was strictly non-partisan; they would study the issues and they would have meetings and people would give reports. There was a strong emphasis on voter education and participation in the political process. Although the League was non-partisan, obviously people that were in it had political views and these were discussed. Both Mother and Father were avid Democrats.

MS. FEIGIN: Were they involved in campaigns?

MS. SHAPIRO: Not that I remember.

MS. FEIGIN: You grew up in the Roosevelt era.

MS. SHAPIRO: Oh yes.

MS. FEIGIN: Was he a big presence?

MS. SHAPIRO: Oh yes. I certainly remember where I was and what I felt when I heard that he had died. I was coming home from school with a friend of mine, and somebody across the street yelled and told us. God, the world had collapsed. It was just awful and scary. Earlier, when Landon ran against Roosevelt for his second term, I was in 3rd or 4th grade, something like that, in this private school that Mother and Father sent us to because they thought we would get a better education there. It was really an adjunct of Cal Tech. Almost every student in that school was for Landon and very vociferous about it. I think I was one of the few people in the country who was really surprised when Roosevelt won [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: Wasn't there some meeting with Eleanor Roosevelt?

MS. SHAPIRO: Oh well, that was much later. That was when Eleanor Roosevelt was in her U.N. phase and she would talk to any group that she could get together, and so the Columbia Law Review asked her to come and talk, and she did.

MS. FEIGIN: Since we jumped ahead, let me just finish that part of it. What was that like, do you remember?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes I do. I was the editor-in-chief so I sat next to her. I remember noticing that her skirt and her jacket were different colors of dark blue [laughter]. I thought that was kind of nice. "Okay, she doesn't care about clothes. That's great." She talked about Franklin. And I introduced her as the author of *Betty and Bob in Washington*.

MS. FEIGIN: What is *Betty and Bob in Washington*?

MS. SHAPIRO: She wrote a book, a children's guide to Washington. I was being kind of a smart aleck [laughter]. She was very nice. I was obviously awe-stricken.

MS. FEIGIN: Do you remember what she said about Franklin?

MS. SHAPIRO: I don't remember exactly, but it was about the TVA and his recognition of the importance of it. I remember the subject was the TVA, but I don't really remember particularly what she said.

MS. FEIGIN: So what was life in Southern California like then?

MS. SHAPIRO: My brothers and I went to a private school (Polytechnic, known as Poly) from 1st grade through the 6th grade, and that was fine. I knew everybody else was different, richer and different, but that didn't bother me. I had enough self-confidence so that the way I was was fine. Then each of us left Poly when we reached 6th grade. I went to public school for a year, and then Poly set up a scholarship in memory of one of the teachers and they asked Mother and Father if I would be the recipient of it. So I went back for the 8th and 9th grades, and that was a little tougher. For one thing, we had French from the 1st grade on, but it was in the 7th grade that they first started really learning grammar, so I had missed all of that. After that gap, it was hard to pick up French. And also by then it's puberty and I didn't mature very fast. I was at the bottom of the heap socially and it kind of mattered. In a way, maybe that was where I first developed a tough skin so that being one of about 20 women in law school didn't bother me too much. But at Poly, it was kind of tough.

As a senior in high school, I took a test given by the Seven Sisters for scholarship applicants.

MS. FEIGIN: So there was one exam for all the Sisters?

MS. SHAPIRO: Yes, for scholarships. Each test taker identified the college she wanted to go to. You never knew how you came out except if you got your first choice that meant that nobody else who did better than you had chosen the same college. I was offered a scholarship to Wellesley, my first choice. One of my friends also took it, and she got her first choice too. I was also offered a partial scholarship to Swarthmore.

MS. FEIGIN: That's not a Sister School.

MS. SHAPIRO: No. That's a co-ed. I kind of debated but chose Wellesley mostly because 'Becca had gone there. 'Becca Lancefield was really my role model. She was a bacteriologist at the Rockefeller Institute and did very important early work on staphylococcus. She was a serious scientist. Jane, her daughter, has always been my best friend. Donald Lancefield taught at Queens College in genetics. And Mother and Father and 'Becca and Donald were just close as can be. Jane and I were friends before we were born, as Jane says [laughter]. But anyway, 'Becca was a very important model for me. They were in Woods Hole in the summers while we were.

'Becca and Donald and Mother and Father bought adjoining plots when the MBL sold land in Woods Hole. Mother and Father built our house first. While the Lancefields were away one summer, after the main house was built, Mother and Father added an outdoor porch that was very

close to the property line between the Lancefield and the Sturtevant plots. The Lancefields could have built on their plot, but it would have left little space between our houses. Instead, the Lancefields decided not to build on their plot, so our house looks out on the former Lancefield plot, which is all woods. This was the start of Mother and 'Becca's arguments about money. All the time that Jane and I were little, Mother and 'Becca would argue about money. "We owe you this." "No, we owe you that" [laughter]. After the war, we went to Woods Hole every other summer, and the Lancefields stayed in our house on the odd summers. And they kept insisting that they should pay rent, and Mother and Father kept insisting that they shouldn't since we prevented their building on their property. So Jane and I swore we that would never fight about money, and we never have.

MS. FEIGIN: So you went out every other summer to Woods Hole. How did you get out there?

MS. SHAPIRO: We drove as soon as Bill got to be full fare. I guess when we were all half fare on the train, we took the train, but for pretty much as long as I can remember, we drove, and of course there was no air conditioning in the car and there were no through highways. The aim was to get 300 miles a day. Mother drove for an hour, Father drove for an hour, roughly, and the parent who wasn't driving sat in the middle of the back seat so that the children wouldn't squabble [laughter]. At the driver change, we would all jump out of the car, run around the car once, and then get back into the car

in our new assigned places [laughter], doing it as fast as we possibly could. Father's aim was to visit every state in the union. This was, of course, before Hawaii and Alaska became states. So we took different routes for each trip. And Father had colleagues all across the country, so we stayed with them when we were nearby. Otherwise, we stayed in motels.

MS. FEIGIN: And the South was segregated then.

MS. SHAPIRO: I guess so. Yes.

MS. FEIGIN: That isn't part of your memory?

MS. SHAPIRO: Not on those trips. In general, we knew it was wrong, but that's the way it was, and that's the way it always had been, and it wasn't a cause. That's just the way it was. I have a very distinct memory of walking home from school and regularly meeting this elderly black man who always raised his hat to me, and I thought, wow, that's neat. That makes me feel like a grownup. I didn't get any of the back story of that at all. And when I was in the public high school, well I guess it must have been when I was in 7th grade too, the schools were integrated, but there weren't many blacks, if any, in the college prep kinds of classes that I was taking. There certainly were no blacks in my classes at Poly. So I didn't have much contact with blacks, although certainly there was no question that we knew that it was wrong, that segregation was wrong. Father was a geneticist. He knew these things [laughter].

When we went down the southern way, we stayed in Kushla with

Father's family. They were still there most of them, whichever ones were left. Kushla turned into kind of a Sturtevant commune. There was the main house, a small auxiliary house, and then there was a trailer and also a stable which had been converted into another small house. These houses were occupied by various Sturtevant relations.

MS. FEIGIN: You must have been in high school during World War II. What was the impact of the war?

MS. SHAPIRO: When the Japanese were moved out of the West Coast was another one of these situations where we knew it was wrong, but that was the way the world was. I guess neither parent was a crusader really. They certainly had standards and they were very ethical.

Father got into a big fight over radiation. In the early days, the common view was that a little radiation was okay. Father never believed that. Radiation is cumulative. He objected to those x-rays you took of your feet. That was not a good thing.

MS. FEIGIN: We should make this clear. That was to get your shoe size, to buy new shoes.

MS. SHAPIRO: Right. We thought they were wonderful. Oh no, they were bad, bad. And he didn't approve of having x-rays of your teeth just for regular checkups.

Before I joined the Atomic Energy Commission, I was worried about Hope, whether that would impact my security clearance. Actually, I don't think they ever put it together, but what they did ask me about was that Father had written a letter to the House Un-American Activities

Committee saying he thought what they were doing was awful, and they did pick that up, and they asked me what was Father's view of Communism, and I told them that he had once explained to me that Communism and Nazism were kind of a circle, that they came at it from different sides but they ended up at the same awful place. I didn't have any trouble getting a clearance. But it was Father's letter to the House Un-American Activities Committee that turned up, not Hope. I guess there's no real reason why they would have connected me because she didn't have the same name.

MS. FEIGIN: Nowadays they would.

MS. SHAPIRO: They probably would.

MS. FEIGIN: So World War II was not . . .

MS. SHAPIRO: Father was an air raid warden, and he was out and I guess observed the "Battle of Los Angeles," which lit up the sky one night.

MS. FEIGIN: No rationing?

MS. SHAPIRO: There was rationing. And I put stamps in ration books, and I also went down to the Huntington Library and rolled bandages. We saved toothpaste tubes.

MS. FEIGIN: For what?

MS. SHAPIRO: They were made out of metal, I guess. I don't know, but you saved the toothpaste tubes and turned them in. In the 1930s, when we were in England, Father went for a month or so to Germany and he came back absolutely horrified. He was sort of a somber figure from then on. He

knew war was coming I think, and he believed that we had to get into it, but he had a draft-age son. Father must have been terribly conflicted. He did believe that we had to get into it. And I think that was based in part on his experience in Germany. At that point the Jews were really being discriminated against in a pretty violent way, and he was horrified.

MS. FEIGIN: Bringing up Jews, you mentioned earlier that there was a Quaker strain in the family. What role did religion play in your family?

MS. SHAPIRO: A very big role [laughter]. Father's grandfather, Julian Sturtevant, was president of a Congregationalist college, and he'd married the sister of his dead wife, which apparently was to some Congregationalists immoral; almost incest. When he was a child, Father's family was observant enough that Father was not allowed to read anything but the Bible on Sundays. Father, I don't know when, whether it was as late as when he went to college, rejected religion. 'Becca used to say that Father took his religion very seriously. He did. He was a committed atheist and convinced that religion was responsible for much of the evil in the world. The notion that ethics had anything to do with religion was absurd, and we were brought up as committed atheists, and I still am [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: Was that a difficult thing to be in those days?

MS. SHAPIRO: Not really. I do remember getting into trouble because one of my friends asked me what church I went to, and to conform, I said "Presbyterian." She said, "Which Presbyterian, because I go to Presbyterian church and I've never seen you there" [laughter]. So there was a certain feeling at

some stage that I had to pretend that I went to church, but not seriously. No. This was one of the ways that we were different. We were Democrats. We were atheists. We were academic. We weren't rich Republicans with swimming pools. But that was fine. That was what we were, and in a way, we were better for it [laughter]. It was a very secure childhood, it really was.

I was kind of shocked at Bill when he was toward the end of his life, he was in the hospital and some staff member – a psychologist, maybe – asked him in an interview whether he had a happy childhood, and Bill said, “I don't know, not really,” which shocked me. Of course he had a happy childhood. Don't be absurd [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: I'm glad you had a happy childhood, and when we continue next time, we'll get into college and law school. Thank you so much.

MS. SHAPIRO: You're very welcome. I don't know that I'll be as talkative. But you asked me about my father and it turns on a spigot.

MS. FEIGIN: It's wonderful.