

Bonnie Gorman

Interviewee: Bonnie Gorman
Date of Interview: May 3, 2007
Interviewed by: Barry Kessler
Transcribed by: Donna Williams

Qt: "This is Barry Kessler. It is May 3, 2007. I am visiting Bonnie Gorman to interview her about Shady Side. So, Bonnie, what was Shady Side? What was it all about?"

BG: "It was our...it was what we did in the summer. When school was out, Shady Side was in, and we went every weekend. I started as an infant. I slept under the big oak tree near the big, green swing. And that's what I did from probably infancy until I was old enough to then start remembering it. But that's how old I was. I mean my brother and I came probably when we were both infants, and it was just...it is in my heart. My ashes are 'gonna be there. My husband and my children know it, that when I die, I'm 'gonna be cremated, and I'm going to have my ashes spread by the pier. I hope they allow it.

It is a very, very special feeling for me. It's kind of a peaceful feeling. I could just go sit on the pier for...by myself, and just sit there and think and sit on the green swings by myself. And it was also not just an alone thing, I mean, you were always with nine other girls and playing, and it was kind of like a camp. It was a commune, actually, when you look back at it, it was probably one of the first communes without knowing it was. It was ten families living under one roof with a pump for water when we first started, and two families sitting at each table, cooking in horrible conditions with little tiny stoves and small little refrigerators and...but it was probably the best times any of us had, you know? At night you would just...you would swim all day, before the pool came, you would get up in the morning, put your bathing suit on, and you would have breakfast, and after breakfast, you were out on that pier and you were swimming. And you pretty much swam until it was time to be called in for lunch. You had lunch, you had to wait probably an hour...don't know if that's still even a rule or not. Had to wait an hour. Go back out again, do the same thing till dinner, and then for dinner, you would get dressed and that was pretty much the end of swimming off of the pier. You know, once the pool came, you even swam after dinner. But when we didn't have the pool, we finished. And when we finished swimming and after dinner, we would just sit in the swings and swing and the girls would talk. We would sit on the porch and rock. There was always a real long chain of, probably, eight to ten rockers there, and we just talked, and it was just something that you look back at. I say to my husband today it was probably the best, cleanest fun that you could ever have. It's just...I don't even know if kids would still do it today. You know, they probably want more out of it.

The boys would play ball. The girls would make up games. We would, you know, even going to bed at night, we had our games of tickling backs until we fell asleep. And it was **2.**

just fabulous, fabulous memories. The parents pretty much stayed out of our way, made us solve our own problems. And if we had problems with any of the other girls, they didn't want to hear it, so you had to learn to solve your own problems, 'cause it wasn't going to happen.

I was kind of the middle age between Phyllis and Linda, and there was me and then below me a year or two was Laura and Susie, and Ellan and, you know; but I hung around the younger ones because Phyllis and Linda were the gods, and we had to kind of...we didn't have a lot to do with them. But if they told us to do something, we did it. And if they did something and made us do something horrible to join their club, and we hated it, we could never complain because parents didn't want to hear it. So we learned to get along and solve our own problems pretty independently, you know? And that was kind of a good thing. It taught me how to do that with my kids. You've 'gotta figure it out for yourself.

So I think it was a wonderful thing that the parents did because I think that it kept them sane, and it kept them from having their own disputes amongst themselves over the kids, 'cause if they had gotten involved, it could've been just hell for everybody. And I don't know whether they purposefully did it or whether they truly just didn't care. 'Just get 'outta my hair, kids'! Because they had their own agenda, you know? They played cards at night, and they played mahjong, and Lily Yochelson played some other game I forgot. My mother was not a game player. She didn't do anything with games, but she would sit and she would just read or talk to one of the other women; and you know, the big room was just this great big room, and everybody sat there in their...what was it, wicker? Wicker furniture? Everybody doing their own thing. Nobody bothering anybody else and just...I wish I could go back to some of those nights and actually see what we did. I remember that the parents would always be down there doing whatever they were doing. There was nowhere to go. You couldn't go outside because the mosquitoes would eat you alive.

So after dinner, you pretty much stayed in that big room, and you stayed there until you went to bed. And there was no TV. There was no radio. We might have had a TV at the very end, when I was already getting to be a teenager, but it never worked well so we didn't really watch it. So we entertained ourselves, and our parents entertained themselves. We put on shows for them. It was just an incredible, incredible experience, and I wish...my kids did have it. They didn't have it like we had it. It was, you know, it was different. But they had it; and they have wonderful, wonderful memories of it, too."

Qt: "Let's imagine that we're standing in the front, at...like the porch door of the house on a typical hot, summer day and just looking out over the whole yard and down to the pier. And if you can go back to that point, tell me what we would be seeing."

BF: "When you looked out...?"

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Qt: "Look out toward the water."

BF: "It's funny. As magnificent as the water was, as a kid, you didn't appreciate it. But you would always see sailboats. On Sunday there were always the sailboat races. So it was, now that I look back on it, it was just magnificent. We had a plot of land that was gorgeous and it was just expansive. So when you're looking at the porch, you see your green gliding swing, and you see expansive lawn, and you see a horseshoe pit to the right, and you see...all the way down you see a hammock. And later on, you saw a pool; but before you saw the pool, it was pretty much just a straight look up to the water. And all we cared about was really getting into the water. So it was kind of you were there and you were running down to the water.

You did have houses to your left where the Dunns lived and other people, and you had a house to your right. We didn't have a lot to do...at least I didn't...the girls didn't have a lot to do with the neighbors. We were very, very...we were so much our selves, with so many...ten families, we didn't need anybody else, you know. We had enough people to be with that we didn't venture out. And so we...it was just...that's pretty much what I saw from there."

Qt: "Yeah. Let's then go back, to what you were talking about to the big room. And if you could paint a picture of it for me with the whole group assembled there in the evening, what are people doing, who's where?"

BF: "Well, there was a round table, like a card table, everything was wicker; and there would always be probably four women playing cribbage, that's what they played... cribbage or mahjong. And then at another table there would be men, and they would be playing cards. And then you would always have some people like Freedman, I think it was Sidney Freedman, who would either be on the porch just reading or in the Big Room reading. And you would also have some people that were reading, too. And then you would always have children around on the floor playing games. That's kind of what I remember. It was just all generations sitting there doing whatever we did."

Qt: "And then let's go up to the dorm, and tell me from the point where your parents finally tell you you have to go to bed. What happens?"

BF: “So we turn out the lights, and we keep talking, and we keep talking and then there was always Annette Kamerow, always wanted to go to bed before any of us. And she just always would tell us: ‘Be quiet, be quiet.’ and we wouldn’t; so she would go down and tattle-tale on us and tell her mother. And, inevitably, one of the mothers would have to come and sit on the top step until we stopped talking and went to bed. Now when she left, we weren’t really asleep, but that’s when we did back tickling. We would just ...there were ten of us usually, so you could always couple up, you know. And you could have one tickles the other person’s back and, of course, you always wanted to be last ‘cause the last one, it felt so good, you could then fall asleep. And it was tickle and

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scratch because we all had so many mosquito bites on us, that we also counted mosquito bites. And sometimes you would get up to 60 mosquito bites, 70 mosquito bites on you. It was pretty incredible, but it didn’t even bother us. That was Shady Side and that was part of it. So that ‘s what I remember. We talked, got yelled at, shut up, tickled backs and fell asleep.

And I don’t even remember how it was in the morning when we got up. I don’t remember if some slept later than others. You know, I don’t remember any of that except going down and having breakfast. That’s all I remember. And in the middle of the night having to go to the bathroom, which was always part of Shady Side. You had to go out. You had to walk down a flight of steps. You had to go down outside, you never had slippers, you’re walking barefooted, and the big tree right outside the back door had pine cones...not pine cones. It was round pricklers. I don’t even know what kind of tree that was.”

Qt: “It was a sweet gum tree.”

BF: “Yeah and they were tough. They were sharp little pricklers, and you went to that bathroom, which was in another little house. It was indoor...it was plumbing...it was a regular toilet, but it was three toilets or four toilets sitting there. There was no separation between one toilet and the next, so it was very common. You just learned to go to the bathroom with every body else, and it was a cement floor and it was dead bugs, and today it would just...it wouldn’t even get me there. I’d probably do what Ann Danheiser did and have a pot that she went in at night. She had a chamber pot that her husband had to dump every single morning. I don’t know if that was ever told to you, but she would not go downstairs; and every morning he would take this chamber pot and he would dump it for her. Not even she would do it. He would do it for her. So that was probably a bad part of it but it was a part of it and we didn’t look at it as a bad part today. And that’s basically what the sleeping was.

And we slept on cots...horrible cots that were lined up right next to each other. I mean, beds touched ‘cause you didn’t...it was...I looked at it now when we went back to the ... Shady Side, when I looked at it when we had our meeting there; and I looked at this room

that I thought was tremendous. And it's probably smaller or the same size as maybe one of my bedrooms in my house, that we just took, you know, that we just did everything there. And we basically just slept there. We really didn't play there. It wasn't the kind of room that we played in. There was no room for it. So that's what I remember about the dorm."

Qt: "And then, in the morning, you got up. Tell me about your breakfast."

BF: "Breakfast was just what my mother...she wasn't a cook. She never was, and it was pretty much cereal. And you had your cereal and you downed that real quick. I don't even think I did toast. Some of the other mothers...I always would envy the Kamerows

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and the Sachs because they had big-time breakfasts. They would always have eggs and sometimes they would have bacon, you know...No! They wouldn't have bacon. They were Kosher. I just remember them having more elaborate breakfasts than we did. But we were pretty much just cereal, and I think we came downstairs not dressed. We came in our pajamas, and we had our breakfast. And then we went upstairs and put our bathing suits on. And then it was 'good-bye' and our parents really didn't see us till lunch time. Lucky them! You'd think my mother would've loved Shady Side, you know, and not felt the way she did about it."

Qt: "What if it was raining? What if you were there on a rainy day?"

BG: "We played games indoors; we didn't go out. I don't think we did go out, and we always had the porch, so we could always sit on the porch. And the rocking chairs were a big deal for us. Everybody seemed to enjoy those rockers, and we would sit on the porch and we would either talk or we invented games all the time. Either we played real games, which I don't remember too much, we would do fashion shows. We would do charades. We would just do all kinds of different things to entertain ourselves."

Qt: "Can you think of any of the games you invented? What would be invented games?"

BG: "Well, probably we would put on shows...we would put on plays that the parents had to watch; and I just remember one fashion show that we did. It was the kind of fashion show that you put on layers, and layers and layers and layers of clothes. So you would go out and you would do this, and you would show your fashion, and then you would take pieces off, and you would have another thing. And we would...one person would have on about six outfits. And then the next person would come down and they would do their fashion show. And the parents probably thought it was so funny, I mean, doing this, and they would look up for their ten minutes.

I don't remember too much what games we did. And I don't remember...I wasn't much of a game player, as my mother isn't. I have a memory of going out with the Foers, and

they were always very bright kids. And Bert and Laura were my...my contemporaries, and we would always play games with them, in the car, going to Annapolis or going out to dinner or doing something, and it was always...they always won. And I always, to this day, I hate games, because it was always: 'Come on, we're going to play with the Foers again. They're smarter than us and they're 'gonna win'. Although I really loved Laura, and we got along great. She didn't show that part of her. It's just a memory I have. She will not even remember this memory but it did start my hate of games way back then, now that I think about it."

Qt: "Is there something especially fun that you did with Laura? I mean, you said you had this very nice relationship."

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BG: "I was probably closer...we were all close. I was probably closest with Susie, but we all did play together. It was Susie and Laura...Susie and Laura I remember them most. Annette...it's funny. Annette we played with, but my best friends were Susie and Laura. And I don't know. I can't remember not liking Annette. It's just that I don't remember too much of playing with her. I remember more about she wanted to go to sleep at night. So those were the two I totally...and I slept next to Susie, and I don't remember if I slept next to Laura.

I do remember playing on...there was a swing out back and it hung onto that big tree that had the prickles on it, and it was...we would go on that swing, and you'd wind yourself up [Demonstrates winding action with her hand.], and I remember Laura always had a raspy voice. That was Laura's voice. And I remember her unwinding and, I mean, we would really unwind quickly, and her [Demonstrated Laura's squeaky voice.] her squeaky little voice, just loving it and holding on for dear life because, God forbid IF, you would've killed yourself. And I remember doing that more with Laura and Susie than anybody else. It's funny...with all the girls. Ellen, we weren't real close with. She hung around more with her Mom. And that's kind of...you know, there were the other people there. There were the Colkers...there was a Frannie and there was a younger Colker that was probably more my age. They weren't there as many years, and I know we played with them, but I don't remember them as well. I mean, there were ten families and I'm only mentioning like four or five people; so somehow I'm missing some other families."

Qt: "That's ok. You mentioned your mother wasn't much of a cook, but maybe you could take me back to a summer week where you're getting ready to go to Shady Side. And if you can describe your home in the Washington, DC area, what that was like, what you did during the week during the summer, and how you felt and what you did to get ready for a weekend in Shady Side."

BG: “Summer was just, you know, back then, there weren’t all these extracurricular activities that kids did. I might’ve gone to a day camp that I walked to, you know, that I might’ve gone to that for some hours a day. And then the same thing...just kind of played in the neighborhood with friends. My mother probably had to start getting ready for Shady Side ‘cause I think we left on Friday. Later in life, we left on Thursday afternoon; but I think we left on Friday. And, you know, she had to cook everything in advance and have it ready, and now I see why it was a big deal for her. She had to pack for everybody when we were younger. She had to pack all of our clothes for us, and, you know, have everything washed and done from the weekend before.

And then she had to think of things to eat. I mean it was three meals a day. We didn’t go out to eat. So it was three meals a day of things that they...all the parents had to come up with. As a kid, I didn’t think about that at all. As an adult, thinking about it now, I would’ve hated it. You’d come home on Sunday night late because you had to leave late to avoid the traffic, so you probably didn’t get home till close to 10 o’clock. And then

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before you knew it, you had to be starting to think about it again on Wednesday because you’re going to be having to cook and do stuff Thursday and to leave on Friday. So my mother probably had a much harder time. To me it was just fun, ‘Oh boy! We’re going to Shady Side again Friday.’ And it was really just looking forward to seeing my friends there. It was a lot of friends that you got to play with. It was just instant fun, where at home you didn’t always have that. You had to make plans to be with your friends. It was just there for you and we all looked forward to it.”

Qt: “Yeah.”

BG: “Oh and the boat! You know, every day with the boat...I forgot about that part. Every day, you know, there was swimming, of course. But we had the boat, and everyday we would take boat rides. In the earlier years, the water was higher at the pier, so the *SacKam* and the *MelArt*, the two...my father’s boat was the *MelArt*, it could come right up to the pier. And we would...whoever wanted to get on...it wasn’t just our family...’the *MelArt*’s going out. Who wants to go out for a ride?’ And we would go out. It’s funny, that we didn’t go far, far out. My father...I don’t know why we didn’t. I mean, we could’ve gone as far as the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, ‘cause you could see it from the...you could see it from the pier on a clear day. But we didn’t really...we just took little rides.

We did take, every summer, we would spend a week and we always did take about a three or four night boat trip where we slept with the Yochelsons. You know, and we would sleep on the boat. And it would be eight of us. And then we would stop and have dinner out at a marina and stop at places during the day and swim during the day. And maybe even stop and have lunch. It was part of our vacation, and that was always a lot of fun. Now that I look back on it, it was not that big of a boat. It was probably so cramped

but, you know, and again, the mothers had to cook the breakfasts and probably some of the lunches, too. I don't think we went out for every lunch. And it was just a...

The boats were a very, very big part of our life. And I didn't go on the *SacKam* that often, you know? I went on my father's boat most of the time. And the *SacKam* people went on the *SacKam* boat. We didn't...and in those days, boats broke down all the time. I remember practically every single time we went on the boat, it would break down. And my father and Mel would be opening up the engine and looking in it and figuring it out. And there was one time...it's an interesting story. I don't know if anybody told you about the dead body in the water? No. There was...we were out on the boat one day, and we all, the young girls, we would always sit on the top on the front. That was our fun...lean our feet over...I don't even think they let you do that today...it's probably...never wore life preservers back then. That's another thing we didn't do. And I remember looking into the distance of the water, and I saw something floating. And I went, 'Gee, what is that?' I said, 'Gosh, it almost looks like a dead body'. And we get closer to it and it was a dead body floating. And it had all...it was kind of black, but I don't think it was a black person. I think it was just...had been there and had blown up

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and my father and...'Everybody get down, get down, don't look! Get down.' And we had to call the Coast Guard, and we stayed around and we watched the Coast Guard lift this body out of the water and take it away, and it was a pretty amazing thing. And instead of getting freaked out, it was kind of like...I must've put it like this... I didn't get freaked out by it. It was like, 'Oh, my goodness. Look at this.' It didn't scare me. It was just an experience I was going through. I think, if anything, we were joking our way out of it. We would make jokes because it made the whole experience seem to be lighter. And I remember making little jokes and not even remembering what they were. But that was a pretty...now that I look back, a very heavy, heavy thing. Today I would not have been so light about it, finding a dead body in the Bay."

Qt: "How old would you guess you were when that happened?"

BG: "Oh, my God. We were probably in elementary school. I don't think I was in junior high yet. I had to have been probably about 9 or 10."

Qt: "Can you think of who else was on the boat with you that day?"

BG: "It was probably Laura because...probably Laura and Susie...were always on the boat with us. I don't know who went on the *SacKam*'s boat but it's kind of who went on our boat with us a lot."

Qt: "Can you describe the boat? If I had never seen the *MelArt* what did it look like? What kind of a boat was it?"

BG: “It was an old wooden cabin cruiser. It was 32’ long. Not a real pretty boat. It was the *MelArt II*. The *MelArt I* was a much more open boat and it was a real fishing boat. It was probably longer than this boat. This boat slept eight people. You know, it slept eight people. You take the kitchen table and you put that up and you put a pad on it, and you sleep here and you sleep here. And it was small. The back part had a couple chairs you could sit in. Then you walked to the living area where the wheel was, and there was a little sofa there. And that was small, but that was kind of the living room. And then you walked down three steps and that’s where your eating area was. And then in the back was a little bathroom. And it was all wood, and every year it had to be totally sanded, repainted...it was really a lot of work for my father and Mel, but it was what it was. They loved it. They didn’t have fiberglass boats back then, and that’s what it was. So when that boat finally sank, it was sad.”

Qt: “Well, what happened?” [Phone rings in background.]

BG: “I was already probably married at the time when the boat...it didn’t get put on drydock or anything. They kept it at the Shady Side Marina, and we had a hurricane, I think, or a very bad storm and the boat just didn’t make it through. And it was really an old boat by then. And years before that, because I was already married at the time, my father did [Another phone rings in the background.] Oh, that’s my cell phone.”

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[Interview picks up again.] “I was already married and my father had offered Ivan, who’s my husband, he said ‘I’ll buy a brand new big, beautiful boat if you will help me get it ready every spring. You don’t have to pay for it...I’ll do it, but I need help.’ ‘Cause you know my father was probably in his 50’s at the time. And I was so excited to have this unbelievable boat and my husband wasn’t interested. He wasn’t so much interested in the water and boating at that time. He came down with me and he didn’t even go on the boat usually when we went for rides. He would be playing ball with Bert Foer or whatever; he wasn’t into it. The irony is we have a boat now...not a big boat...we have a 24’ boat and it’s a Bellrider, and we keep it at the lake. But I guess my love of water and boats came through; and Ivan didn’t come through for my father, but he did come through for me, so that’s ok.” [Laughs.]

Qt: “Is there some other way in which you can see that your experience at Shady Side has shaped your character or how you’ve raised your family or other factors in your later life?”

BG: “I don’t know that I can say that that had a direct influence...”

Qt: “In later life?”

BG: “...on the way I am today. I don’t think so.”

Qt: “Ok. Tell me more about your father. Since I can’t interview him, if you can give an idea of what he was like, something about what kind of a relationship you had with him, what his experience of Shady Side was?”

BG: “Well, Shady Side was truly his love. He was a very big man. He was a very Type A personality, very short fuse. He could lose his temper at the drop of a hat. He could be scary. He was a scary man. I loved him, but he was a scary man. And he just lost it [Snaps her finger.] like that. He yelled and screamed and then, you know, he’d calm down but he would still be like this. But when he got to Shady Side, something changed in him...totally, totally relaxed. He was...he would fish a lot, so he would go fishing early, early in the morning. He would take Ellen Freedman fishing with him. I went when I was very little, but Ellen always loved to go with him ‘cause her Dad didn’t do it. And then when he got older, he was in charge of the pool...of keeping the pool cleaned; and he would spend hours just with the long net and he was almost...you could see he wasn’t even really cleaning it as much as just totally, totally relaxing.

So you really didn’t hear that high stress, you know...anger...it didn’t really come out at Shady Side because it put him in a whole different place, and it was probably the best thing in the world for him. It took him away. I think when he was there, he didn’t think about business, he didn’t think about anything. And he was a totally relaxed man. But, otherwise, he could be a yeller and a screamer; but...he didn’t take that out on anybody else, you know, it was just...I don’t think he yelled at anybody else’s children. And like I

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said, he was always...he always had a very soft spot for Ellen Freedman, and he always would take her out with him. So as much as I’m saying he was a tough guy and he yelled and screamed, he was a very ethical man, a very good person, a very giving person, if you...He was a person of high morals and high ethics, and if you needed help, he was there for you. He was not a judgmental person. He was really a good, good kind person. I always felt enveloped with love from him; but in those days, that’s what fathers were like. A lot of fathers were just tough, you know? Whether they yelled it or whether they gave you a look or whether they hit you, I mean, you know, that’s what it was back then. And I guess, you know, that’s what my father is, and for a long time I didn’t like it. But now, as an adult, I forgive it and I understand it...where he was coming from.”

Qt: “Tell me about his friendships with the other men who were there.”

BG: “They were like his brothers. They had been friends since they were teenagers, forming this Brandeis Club, started going down to Shady Side as teenagers. I don’t know how they got down there ‘cause I’ll bet you they were under 16 before they started driving. So I don’t know who drove them, whether it was older members or not, but would’ve laid down their lives for each other, truly, truly loved, loved, loved each other. It was always apparent. My father and Mel were partners in business, partners at the boat; they both owned the boat together. Could just scream and yell at each other at work

and have the most volatile arguments 'cause my father was a volatile man, and Mel knew how to egg him on in his quiet way. And then they would say, 'Oh, it's time for lunch, let's break for lunch.' ...and they would break for lunch. So they loved each other, you know? When Mel got sick, it hurt my father deep in his heart. So there was a real, real love for those men, and I think all the men felt it for each other."

Qt: "You sort of walked me through your day at Shady Side, what about your father? What would his day be like?"

BG: "Well, probably starting out with fishing; and then after fishing they would clean the fish which was outside. They had their special place where they would clean the fish. And then he would clean the pool, and he would go swimming. He would swim a little bit and clean the pool. Always part of the day was the boat. He would go get the boat at the marina and bring it around to the front. Horseshoes...he would play horseshoes with the men. Sometimes they would play ball, you know, with the boys. I don't remember him...I don't remember him sitting around a lot. I don't remember him sitting in a swing or in a rocker. I think he was always kind of up and about and doing things."

Qt: "And how about in the evening?"

BG: "That's when all the men would be playing cards...he was probably playing cards in the Big Room."

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Qt: "What about during the winter, say during the non-Shady Side season? Did your father do any of the same activities or card playing or...?"

BG: "The Brandeis Club all played cards once a week, every Tuesday night they met until, I'll bet, five...I don't know how many years ago...probably maybe ten years ago...when there just weren't enough of them left any more. But every Tuesday night was Brandeis Night, and those men, come Hell or high water, they met and they played cards. And it was more for the camaraderie than the cards; they didn't really care that much about the cards. And, otherwise, my Dad would just come home. You know he worked, and he worked in...MelArt was a business that had some out-of-town stores; and he supervised the out-of-town stores, which was Frederick, Hagerstown, and Martinsburg, so he left every Thursday morning. We would take him to the B&O Railroad Station in Silver Spring, drop him off at the train, and he would be there and spend Thursday and Friday night there, and then we would pick him up Saturday afternoon to come back home. And usually my Mom and he went out on Saturday night; and Sunday was always with one of the Shady Side people. I forgot about this, too. It was always with the Kamerows or Sackses, as families. Either we went to their house or

they came to our house and we would have dinner together. So we always spent Sundays with them for most of our growing up period.”

Qt: “And that’s all through the regular...?”

BG: “That’s through the year when we weren’t going to Shady Side. We were always doing something on a Sunday with either our family family or, you know, my family, or with the Shady Side people. I remember a lot of get togethers with them and dinners with them.”

Qt: “But you didn’t mention the Foers?”

BG: “You know, I have a feeling that my father had enough of it and Mel at work all week that they didn’t need to see each other on the weekends; so we didn’t see them on the weekends.”

Qt: “Your mother grew up in an Orthodox Jewish family, and you probably remember your grandparents; but Shady Side was a place where there was all kinds of shellfish and Maryland crabs. I wonder if you can tell me something about how you experienced the Kosher food tradition at home and at Shady Side?”

BG: “It really wasn’t too much different. You know, we kept Kosher, the Sackses, the Kamerows...there were a lot of people that kept Kosher there. When it was ok to have... everything was paper plates and plastic, so it was ok if you wanted to eat crabs because it wasn’t my Mom’s kitchen. So it wasn’t ruining any of her dishes. It wasn’t ruining her table. It wasn’t ruining anything that she...it wasn’t really hers. She didn’t feel it was hers. She shared a refrigerator any way. So she let that happen. Now if my father

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wanted to have crabs at home, he did have to have them outside on a table outside. They couldn’t come in the house. And once in a while, that would happen. But in Shady Side it was like, ok. Now we didn’t eat un-Kosher, though; she didn’t bring un-Kosher food. Everything she made was Kosher, and we didn’t mix the milk and the meat at mealtime. But I think that the crabs were eaten, and that was just part of it. And it was always a few times in summer big batches of crab soup and these great big things that were.... [Demonstrates height of soup pot using her hands.] At the time I never ate it. I wish I could go back now, ‘cause I didn’t appreciate it, didn’t like it then. And also clams...they always went for clams, and we would have clams, but it was all on the tables that we ate our meals on and it was ok with my mother... newspapers...everything was covered. It was fine. She didn’t go any where near...she was in another...she didn’t sit with us when we did that. She was probably in another part of the house.”

Qt: “I think Lily Yochelson told me about making crab soup and trying to get your mother to stir the pot.”

BG: "And would she?"

Qt: "I don't think so."

BG: "Wasn't Kosher. She probably didn't want to. And everybody had something to do with that crab soup. Everybody would throw a little something in there. They'd go by it and throw in a little salt, you know, seafood seasoning, so that crab soup was a real community effort."

Qt: "Was there anything else...you talked about it being a community...a commune, were there any disagreements or ways of resolving problems?"

BG: "That's what I was saying before. The problems...I don't remember problems arising. The parents didn't get involved. I don't even remember them getting angry at each other. I don't remember any disagreements. I don't remember any of that if there were. Everybody really, really got along well. It would be interesting to know if anybody else remembers anything different, but I don't remember any disagreements. And I remember when I would be angry with Linda or Phyllis 'cause they made me do something, and Linda would say: 'And if you dare go tell your parents, I will make sure that you never ever have a good time at Shady Side again.' And so you wouldn't even go down and tell your parents. You said 'ok' to yourself, 'I'll sit on this' and, eventually it went away."

Qt: "Wow. Any other way in which it was a ...you feel the sense of a commune or communal living?"

BG: "Well, I think the fact that you all ate together. You know, you ate at around the same time, and it was all long tables. And, I guess, in a commune you'd all be eating

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from the same...everybody would be cooking one thing, and you'd all be eating that. It wasn't like that. Each family made their own food, but we always ate with another family. So we always ate with the Yokelsons, and they would cook their food at the same time and we would all just sit together and eat. How much more of a commune, I don't..."

Qt: "Well, let me ask you this, how did you feel when outsiders came in like on the occasion of the Freedman Company picnic?"

BG: "Oh we loved it. We loved it because it was an exciting day, and it brought great food. We always had food that we wouldn't have had, I mean, you know. We would eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and here we're having fried chicken and potato salad and cake and, you know, it was really, really good fun. And there were always games.

You know, they would always organize games and things, so it was...plus, you always met new people. You know, they always brought their kids and it was new people and it was really, really fun. So the Freedman Picnics were fun, the Brandeis Picnics were fun. Whenever people always...families would always bring either their relatives or their friends. It was always ok. Nobody minded it. We always accepted it. It was always an accepting thing.”

Qt: “And you said you didn’t have much interaction with the people who lived nearby. Did you ever wonder around into Shady Side, into any of the stores or...?”

BG: “We never...we were very isolated there. If we went into a store, our parents drove us. And it was only to go to the little grocery store, Renno’s Grocery Store, and there was one around the corner from Renno’s, which was the bigger market. But we hardly ever, you know, we would maybe stop there before we got to Shady Side to fill up on a few things that we didn’t have. And, otherwise, we stayed pretty much on the grounds. We didn’t really have much of a reason to leave.”

Qt: “You didn’t take walks?”

BG: “If we walked, we would walk just up and down the road that leads into our house, either left or right of that. You know, we would go to maybe where the field was, you know. Or else...we didn’t go further than that though. [Chuckles] Weird, but we didn’t.”

Qt: “No need to, really?”

BG: “I guess we didn’t have a need to.”

Qt: “Did you ever get a sense of being, as Jews, being different from the neighbors or the community? Any experiences of ... ?”

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BG: “We were so not involved. Now the Dunns lived next door. Jerry Yochelson, I think, was friends with Mike Dunn. We didn’t interact. As far as being Jewish, I never felt any prejudice. We never felt anything about them not being Jewish. So it was never an issue. We really were very self-contained.”

Qt: “Did you ever go fishing?”

BG: “I went when I was much younger with my Dad, and I did love it, and I loved getting the fish on the line. He always took it off for me. I wouldn’t touch it. And I hate fish. To this day, I never eat fish. But I liked being on the boat and I liked fishing. And

then as I got a little bit older, I think he was going at like five in the morning or six in the morning, and I wanted my sleep more, so I stopped going. That's when he got Ellen. She was into it more than I was."

Qt: "What about when the renovations were being done to the house. Were you there at that point?"

BG: "Yeah. The first big deal was the pool, you know. I think that what happened is the water was becoming un-swimmable. There was so much seaweed it had already lowered so much that you could walk out a mile and it was maybe up to your knees; and the jellyfish were horrible, so we stopped doing that. And they decided to build a pool; and that was the first thing that was done that was just an incredible, incredible thing for us. The renovations were done...oh, the first renovations, I guess, were done...no it was all at one time...when they did the rooms...I was already married and older, and I had kids already by that time. I wasn't really too involved in it. You know, we certainly went down a lot. My kids would take their naps in their room, you know. It was really very nice. I mean they finally had an indoor bathroom, they had a shower inside, which I never ever used. Well, we never used the shower outside either. Maybe some of the other families did. We always felt like if we were in the water, we would swim before bed, we were clean. The chlorine smelled good...we were clean.

So the renovations weren't a big part of my life. I thought it was kind of sad myself. I wasn't that happy that they were doing it. It's like you're taking away the history of Shady Side by doing this. But I understand. They were in their 50's, and they wanted a little more of the creature comforts. And their bedrooms before were little matchboxes with no roof on it, and I understand they needed their privacy. So...but I kind of felt sad that the old Shady Side was no longer what it was. It was going to be history."

Qt: "Is there anything else that you wanted to tell us about your experience at Shady Side? Anything else at all?"

BG: "Probably the only thing that I can say is what it did for me was give me a love of water, to this day, which I still have. And I can say we go to this lake, and I can just sit

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by the lake or in my boat, and just sit there for hours and hours, doing nothing and just watching the water. So it did give me a feeling of peace and kind of like a Zen-like thing. And I'll never...I think that Shady Side gave that to me, and for that I'm really, really thankful. It gave me a part of my life I would have never had...that it gave me a sense of peace."

Qt: "Wonderful."

BG: “And I still go back every year. I go back and I sit on the benches over looking the water, and I...my husband just...you know, he just kind of goes along with it, and I just sit there and I kind of reminisce, every year, the same thing. ‘Oh, I remember when I did this.’ It’s kind of weird now, going back. There’s no pool there. You know, kind of going back to when it was...and kind of weird seeing the house now. It’s not the same house. Only if you look at it from the water, it looks the same, but I miss what was there. I forgot your question.” [Laughs.]

Qt: “I just said is there anything else that you wanted to share about your experience at Shady Side?”

BG: “No, I think that’s it. I think it always will be with me. I always talk about it, even now, to people I don’t know if they bring up or talk about childhood, that always does come up. So it is a huge, huge part of my life.”

Qt: “Wonderful. Well, thank you so much for sharing.”

BG: “Oh, you’re welcome. Nice to bring my memories back to me.”

Qt: “Good.”

[Interview ends.]
