



An Interview with **Susan Yochelson, June 8, 2008**

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Re: Our Place/ Fishing Club Project

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Interviewed by: Barry Kessler

Transcribed by: Christina Davidson: Oct 2008

Kessler: Q. This is Barry Kessler. Today is Sunday, June 8, 2008 and I'm in Baltimore to interview Susan Yochelson for the Shady Side Rural Heritage Society. Susan, thinking back about your time in Shady Side, could you tell me just... what was Shady Side? What was there? What was it?

Susan Yochelson: A. The first word that comes to mind is "community." It was a fabulous place, in a fabulous setting with people who all inter-related and it was a lot of fun – very, very important place.

Q: Did anybody you know, other than your immediate family and the people who were there – had they anything like Shady Side? Did you know any other place like it when you were growing up?

A: Nobody, no. Nobody that I know had anything like this. I understand that the Brooklyn – the bungalow colonies up there... I've since learned about those, but, no at the time, nobody I knew had anything like that.

Q: Can you describe just the physical setting.

A: Well, it was probably an acre to an acre-and-a-half of land, right on the... at the mouth of the West River, right where it empties into the Chesapeake Bay. We had... there was a small, older house that had this giant addition added on to it and we had a swimming pool that overlooked the water, and we had a pier. And when I was growing up, all the bathrooms were outside. We had a big, long communal kitchen – each family had their own little refrigerator and set of cabinets. And there were a couple of sinks that everybody shared and a couple of burners that everybody shared. We had a big communal living room – they just called the "big room." The girls slept in the girl's dormitory and the boys slept in a boy's dormitory and then the parents all had rooms, but they were really more like cubicles with partitions that were, say maybe ten feet tall, but no ceilings on them. It was just open up to the rafters – so there was no privacy, really, no sound privacy. And everybody can every weekend – from Memorial Day to Labor Day – every weekend, everybody came.

Q: Let's go back and tell me a little bit about your family – your parents – what were they like and what was... can you give me an idea of what it was like growing up in your family?

A: You mean not related to Shady Side?

Q: Right. Just in general.

A: Well, I have a brother, so it was a small family, just the two of us. My brother is seven years older, so I was still pretty young when he was out of the house. So, for much of the time I grew up as a single child -- that would be Junior High and High School. My father owned a small business. He worked real hard... it always seemed like we were comfortable, but money was always an issue. There was no extra money for any extras. My mother worked when I was little – she worked in my father's operation. But then, as soon as there was enough money to hire actual office help, then she stopped. My mother always had sleeping problems, so mornings were very difficult for her, because she never got enough sleep the night before. Working was very difficult for her – having to get up and get somewhere, was tough. Later she was diagnosed with Sleep Apnea.

My father was a quiet man – everyone loved him, he was very sweet. And it was kind of a quiet home in which to grow up. My mother really seemed to run the show – she took charge of everything. And... I'm not sure what else you want to know.

Q: What kinds of activities did your family enjoy, say, in your father's free time?

A: Before Shady Side? Or during the winter?

Q: Yeah, or beyond it... exactly.

A: Okay. I don't know, when I was little we used to go on picnics, we used to go – my Uncle worked at the Smithsonian Museum and we used to go down there all the time. He would take us behind the scenes. So we did get around. We'd go places – we'd go day-tripping. We'd go up to Catoctin State Park in Frederick and that area. We definitely did stuff – never vacations – there was never any money for vacations, so that was not a part of our lives. I think the first vacation that I know of, that my family took, I was in 10th or 11th grade, and they went up to the World's Fair in New York. We did a lot of family stuff – my grandparents lived in Florida and we did go down to visit my grandparents in Florida. And we did connect... my mother's family was from Norfolk, so we'd go to Norfolk and visit down there. So that's about the only traveling that we ever did.

Q: What about the Jewish component of your family's life? Was there any kind of ... what kind of observance or Jewish culture, in terms of your grandparents or family life?

A: When I was a kid, we lived in Washington, DC and then when I went into 6th grade – that's when my family moved out to the suburbs of Silver Spring. The nearest synagogue, when we were in Washington, was a small Orthodox congregation. My parents were always members of a congregation. My mother was a member until the day she died – of a congregation. But they weren't exactly observant. The High Holidays were observed and that was about it. So, when I was a kid, I went off to Hebrew school three times a week, plus Saturday morning services. Then, when we moved, the nearest congregation was a Conservative, which was more in line with their feelings – so that was joined and I went there for Sunday school – got confirmed there and it's the same one that everyone else... the Kamerows, the Sacks, and the Foers – they are all members of that as well. So it was... my parents were very definitely culturally Jewish. It was important. When I was in high

school, I used to date whoever I felt like – it drove my mother crazy. She would say “Jews need to stick together.” Because I would date non-Jewish boys and she didn’t like that. But to me, it didn’t make a difference. So, culturally Jewish: Jewish foods, Jewish traditions, but not a lot of time spent in the synagogue – just on holidays.

Q: Since you mentioned the Sacks and the Kamerows, and the other Shady Side families, can you describe how your family was friendly with them – either in that synagogue that you all belonged to or any other way...?

A: My father ... it was through the Brandeis Club, which was a group of men... when my father was a teenager, these guys used to all hang out at the JCC in Washington, down at 16th and Q, I think that’s where it is located, and this group of guys formed a club, and they named it the “Brandeis Club” after the Justice of the Supreme Court, who was the first Jewish Justice on the Supreme Court. The Brandeis Club stayed together until they all died, basically. They would meet every Tuesday night and they would just play cards and talk ... every Tuesday night. So that’s how we knew them, through the Brandeis Club. My parents were not as affluent as some of the others. The other families had really found a way to make a considerable amount of money, and that just didn’t happen... my father was not that kind of person and that didn’t happen in our family. They would always go off and take trips and cruises and that, again, wasn’t something that happened in our family. Their kids would all go to summer camp and I never did. Shady Side was the “thing” that my family had, with nothing else. Although, we always lived in a comfortable house and there was always enough food and always enough clothes – always a car and things like that. But the “extras” were not available to our family. So the history really goes back to the Brandeis Club.

Q: And so Shady Side was really important to your family?

A: Oh, absolutely, yes. My father worked really hard and there was nothing he loved more than going down there. And they had been approached several times to join, but for some reason ... I was young, I was only eight when they did join... I guess they didn’t want to until there was a swimming pool? So the year when they finally decided to put in a pool, that’s when my family joined. And the first year that we went, the pool wasn’t in yet – it was in the process of being built – so we had to swim off the pier, in the seaweed – which now I know so much about water, I know that the seaweed was a “good” thing, but then it just seemed like a horrible thing – absolutely disgusting.

We were the only family that would go on Friday nights. Everybody else would come down Saturdays. So we had the place to ourselves on Friday nights because my father couldn’t wait to get there – he was “let’s get out of town!” Every Friday night we would pack up and I would be just beside myself, waiting for other people to come on Saturdays, because they wouldn’t get there until noon or one o’clock on Saturday. And I felt like it was an eternity, because I had already been there since six o’clock Friday night. [laughter]. We had the kind of family where my father... we actually ate dinner by six or before six. He left work around four, four thirty, and dinner was on the table, so we were out early.

Q: Early birds. So what did you do in the evening at Shady Side? You got there and you had dinner...

A: We probably had dinner before we left, I’m not sure – that part I don’t remember. I don’t know... read, I guess. There was no TV, so, I don’t know what I did – just amused myself however I could. I do have a very distinct memory of Saturday mornings. I would just go and hang out... go sit in the hammock, sit on the pier, just kind of hang out waiting for people to come. But I don’t remember Friday nights. Probably by the time we got there and got unpacked, it was probably time for bed.

Q: How about when the first people came... can you describe what kind of activity would take place at that point.

A: Oh well, there were so many kids my age and we would just be off. We would live in the pool the entire day, or run around. We had all kinds of little activities that we would do. Several of them had boats, so we would walk over to the boat yard ... there's a path through the woods you could take to go over to the boat yards, and we would do that. We would hang out on the pier and watch the minnows swim by – the water was pretty clear then. If it was a rainy day, we would nag and whine until someone took us to the local grocery store, that was also kind of a general store – and they had this little section that you walked up three steps and there were all kinds of games and general store stuff there – so we'd go and try to wheedle someone into buying us comic books and coloring books and stuff like that. Every now and then we'd go to Annapolis – that was a big trip – we'd go to Annapolis for the day. And that usually was when the weather was bad so we wouldn't want to hang outside. But we were off and running.

One time I remember I was waiting for people to come, and I was so miserable, just ... I must have been ten... and I wrote a poem. I remember sitting there writing it, and I probably still have it somewhere, but it ... I remember the first lines were: "It is a big old rambling place, and yet it knows no disgrace." We would always have fun... underneath the stairwells in the Big Room, there were these cubby-holes with a little door that opened out, so we'd always go in there and try and see what treasures were in there... and there was a pile of old newspapers – I'm sure you've seen them – actually, I suppose they were mock-up newspapers, that when the Fishing Club first opened they created. So we would pull those down and go through those. We always used to make sure we'd look at the cornerstone, which was right underneath the corner on the outside, where they had a fish, and it said "National Masonic Fishing and Country Club."

And, I don't know, we would make ourselves really busy. We'd be on the swings in front – the swings that had the platform and the two seats. We would just be on those swings a lot. We would play train and someone would be the conductor, and that's the person that would stand and make the swing go back and forth, and then decide where we were going to go. We were just all over each other and all over the place – never wanting for anything to do.

Q: Did you do any sports?

A: No.

Q: Nothing organized?

A: No. Occasionally there would be scavenger hunts. Some of the older kids would... we would nag: "make us a scavenger hunt! Make us a scavenger hunt!" [laughter] And they would do that and that was fun. But otherwise, the pool was the major sport. We would be in the pool all day long. On Saturday mornings before everybody came, my father loved taking care of that pool, and that was his thing... became his thing. And he would get out there, and no one was there yet, and at that time, because the pool wasn't used during the week, the water was still and algae would form on the bottom and the sides, and that was a problem. I think now they've learned how to take care of that problem better, but ... so he would vacuum the pool, and skim all the leaves, and make sure everything was working right in the pool house... that was really his baby. So I would just hang out with him -- it was very quiet, nothing but the hum of the pumps for the pool. And he'd be testing the water to make sure the pH level was right and the chlorine level was right... so I remember a lot of quiet time on Saturday mornings just hanging out with my father while he got the pool ready for the weekend.

Q: What do you think your mother and maybe your brother would have been doing at that point?

A: Well, my brother was... I don't remember my brother really there, because I guess I was eight when we joined ... We joined in '56 and he graduated high school and joined the Navy in '59. So, it was a short period and he just wasn't in my radar... I have no idea what he was doing... [laughter] none whatsoever. You know how kids are, very self-absorbed.

Q: But your mother? What was she probably doing at that point?

A: Well, you mean, like Saturday mornings?... waiting for everyone to come?

Q: Yes.

A: She'd be sleeping in because she didn't sleep well at night. Eventually she'd get up and make sure we'd all eaten something. Because she got up late, the morning would probably disappear very quickly for her... what with her little household chores...

Q: Speaking of making sure you've eaten something, what kinds of food did you bring or your mother prepare in that kitchen, or ... for the course of the weekend?

A: She would plan it in advance and we had a cooler and everything would get packed in the cooler, and the ice things put in the cooler... I have no idea. I was so oblivious. I think there was chicken and roast beef and stuff like that... stuff that she could just ... she didn't want to have to cook while she was down there, so she would cook in advance, and then it was just a question of slicing and heating. .. and pulling stuff out of the refrigerator. Seems to me we probably had a lot of cold cuts and eggs and then either chicken that had already been prepared or brisket and stuff like that. And then on Saturday nights, the men would all get crabs. So Saturday nights, pretty much every Saturday night, was crab-eating time. They put out paper on the tablecloths ... the tablecloths were all oil cloth and there wasn't just one oil cloth that covered the whole thing, there was like a flowered pattern here and a checkered pattern there... because the tables were all long, and there was this mish-mash of oil cloths. And then they would get crabs and eat crabs, and my mother was famous for her crab soup, so anything that didn't get eaten would go into her crab soup. She really made a fantastic crab soup. It was a vegetable soup with crabs and spices ... really, really good.

Q: And she did that on Saturday night pretty much every week?

A: Yeah, Saturday night or Sunday ... not every week, but she made it like once a month...

Q: ... during the summer.

A: Yes. It was great.

Q: I just wonder if you can describe for me that scene a little more... I've got the visual with the different tablecloths and the crabs all over the tables... what did that room feel like in other ways? Are we talking about the kitchen?

A: Yes, the kitchen. Well let's see, there would be Arthur Sheinbaum and Bill Goldberg and my father... so it felt very male... it was sort of a male thing. And then the women would sit down and have a couple of crabs, but they just... they weren't crab "feeders" like the men were. [laughter] Mostly, like my mother... she didn't want to pick through crabs, so she would eat claws, that was her thing. And everybody would just be talking and laughing and it felt very communal. Yeah, it was a real communal experience. I would hang around the edges and have somebody.... my father would open up a claw and hand me the claw with a big clump of meat on it, 'til I got older and then I learned, I learned how to eat a crab!! I mean, I can eat a crab... although now, I'm definitely allergic to them. I developed an allergy late in life. It was just really nice...

Another really nice memory I have is that the woman would often hang out on the screened-in porch where the rocking chairs were, and they would just sit and rock and yak... yak, yak, yak... and gossip and we would just sort of hang out behind them, or there was a row of about five rocking

chairs and the door to the screen porch that went to the outside, and then there would be like two more rocking chairs... so we would hang out on the rocking chairs at the far end or hang out behind them, listening to them gossip and picking ... always kind of interesting what was coming up.

And this is crazy, but one of my favorite memories is in the kitchen ... there was no sheetrock, there were no inner walls... the inner walls just looked like this... just the planking, the clapboard of what it was made out of. I just loved that. I loved that you could see the studs and then occasionally there were little... I guess they were smoke-breaks, little planks of wood in between the studs and you could put things on them. I just loved, loved, loved the rustic-ness of it, the fact that the roof was just... there, same thing -- you could see the joists that were holding up the roof. I loved how rustic the place was.

Q: Not finished, fancy...

A: Nope. It broke my heart when they had to re-do it and they had to put sheetrock in. I just hated that. I felt like it just destroyed the whole feel... and they put in matching tablecloths [laughter]. Because the kitchen had three long tables and everybody had their nook... cranny... where they... so, one family was always at this spot on that one table, and another family was always at that spot on that table, and the table down here had this family and that family... The uniformity drove me nuts whenever they did it. Didn't like it.

Q: I don't think you were alone. What about the other kids? What would they be doing during the Saturday night crab feast? Just your memory of it.

A: I don't know. .. we were like puppies... we were in and out and in and out... with each other, and in and out. It was such a great place to be a kid, because the Big Room had two doors from the kitchen to the Big Room... the kitchen was long and narrow, and had a ramp at one point, from where the addition was, so you could run down the kitchen ... and then there was a door that went into the boys' dorm. And the boys' dorm had a door that went out to the porch ... and then the porch had a door that went back into the Big Room. So you could make loops, and it seems to me we did a lot of that, actually. I don't know... we were just playing games, we would run around, we made a lot of noise, we drove everybody out of their minds. They would finally decide they had enough of us and would put us to bed. And then we would lay in bed and we would just giggle and talk and finally they would come upstairs and they would say... they would sit outside the door of the girls' dorm and try to get us to shut up and it was practically impossible. Every week it was the same thing: "____ go to sleep in there. Turn it down!" But we just couldn't... we didn't. It was so much fun. Annette and I would scratch each other's backs and, you know, it was just non-stop fun – it really was.

Q: Tell me about the other girls. You mentioned Annette, who's she, and can you expand it to all the other kids that you remember there.

A: Oh yeah. Well there was Annette Kamerow and Annette was one year older than me. We were great buddies... at some point, every family would go down there for a week, and sometimes the men would take the week off and have their vacation week, and sometimes they would commute back and forth to work... But, Annette's family always invited me to join them on their week. And then there was Bonnie Sheinbaum, who was two years older than me. And Laura Foer, who was one year ahead of me. And then Ellen Freedman was my age exactly. And that was... we were that age group, and then there were the older kids. There was Linda Sacks, Phyllis Kamerow ... and they were older. There were other people in and out ... there were other families that came and went... but these are like from my young days...the ones that I remember the most ... that I have the most memories of.

Q: What was your group's relationship with the older girls – Linda and Phyllis? How did you interact with them?

A: Well, we would tease them when there were boy-related things to tease them about – because there certainly were more boy-related things with them. They would have boys come down. I think we ignored them when we felt like it and got involved with them when it was in our best interest... when we could get some mileage out of it ... and that would be “make us a scavenger hunt” ... We definitely interacted but not at the same level.

Q: Some of the girls talked to me about putting on shows for either the closing-up time or just generally, little performances for the parents in the Great Room. I don't know if that's something that sticks in your memory...

A: No, it doesn't. It might have been before we were there, I don't know.

Q: Can you think of any other times when you interacted with the people of Shady Side... when you got out into the community there?

A: I didn't ... I was so happy there I didn't feel the need to interact at all, but other people did. I know my parents did, like they knew for a long time the people that lived ... as you face the water, that lived on the right hand side... their name was Pitch, and they had a daughter our age too but I didn't have anything to do with her. But my parents always spoke to them. And then the Andersons were right to the left, if you are facing the water, and my parents... the parents... my parents, at any rate, would love to sit by the water, and they would go down to the trees where the hammock was, and there was a bench there, and they would sit on the bench there, because it was in the shade and they could just look out on the water, and they loved that. And that was right next to the Andersons' house, so they would always chat with the Andersons. And then the Dunns were always a big part of everything, and they were on the same piece of property, but further back. And that was it, I knew who these people were but I kind of didn't bother acknowledging their existence... as things moved on through time, and I was still one of the few people who went down there in its last years... Wilbur Dunn – he was taking care of the pool, so I would interact with him, just to see what was happening. But otherwise, I didn't have much use for them. My brother did – he got to know them all really well... the Dunns... but I was just a happy kid, doing my thing.

Q: What about fishing? It was a fishing club...

A: Well my father loved to fish – he lived to fish, I think. He would sit there with his binoculars and see... “Oh, the birds are working. The birds are working!” And at some point he got a boat ... we didn't have a boat when I was little... he and Arthur bought a boat at some point. I don't know how old I was when that happened. He would go out every Saturday morning, when he could, he would go out every Saturday morning and go fishing. I would go once a year with him. I felt like it was a “good daughter” thing to do... not that I loved fishing. But I'll never forget one time when the bluefish were running, and bluefish are very easy to catch ... they just glom on to anything ... and I did not want to be baiting these hooks and taking these fish off the hooks, and the damn bluefish were practically jumping into the boat! I mean, I couldn't even... I'd stick my thing out hoping that nothing would happen and then I'd get a fish right away... non-stop, the whole time... it was driving me crazy. [laughter]

But I do have... my father... trolling for rockfish was something they loved to do ... so, because the Sacks and the Kamerows had a boat and the “Mel-Art”... the Foers and the Sheinbaums had a

boat... and you needed that kind of boat for trolling. So they would go out and go trolling quite a bit, for rockfish... they loved rockfish. My mother could cook a mean rockfish. And then, lots of times they would catch bottom-fish... perch or spot... and my mother would panfry them and that was fabulous. So we had a lot of fresh fish, and I have memories of them bringing the fish in a cooler and taking it back to the fish bench. My father was the one responsible for getting the stainless steel on the fish bench so it would be a nice, cleaner place to operate. He had his knife and he would whack the heads off and get them dressed for cooking. It was very nice having all that fresh fish.

Fishing was a big part of his life. My mother felt like... it was just more work for her – now she has to cook the fish. My mother kinda resented ... I don't know what she told you, but she resented a lot about the Shady Side experience. She felt like it was all for my father. It was his place to relax whereas she had to go down there and do work. She had to bring linens from home and take linens from there back home and wash them. She had to think about what the food was and get the coolers packed up, and get the food down and make the food while we were there. So she felt like... this is not a vacation for me, this is a vacation for him. And she resented it a bit, she definitely did, especially when he would go out fishing and leave her sitting around all day.

Q: Did she ever go out in the boat?

A: Oh yeah. ... when they had one, when they got one. And she also went on the cabin cruisers that the other families had. When I was young, there was a big trip that they took... she went with the Sheinbaums on the Mel-Art to... they ended up getting grounded by a hurricane in Cape May. It's one of the stories that lives on... and they had to pull into Cape May and it was a major hurricane and they got the last two rooms in the entire town. And they had to hire a limousine and a driver to bring them back because there was no way they were going to be able to bring the boats back. But, yeah, she did that quite a bit, actually, when they went on trips on the boats.

Q: What do you think made it... what was the most enjoyable part about Shady Side for your mother, given that she had this resentment and she was... I don't think she mentioned that to me, by the way, but many of the other women did.

A: Oh interesting, because she mentioned it to me. My mother was very difficult to read, so, I think it made her happy to make my father happy. And I think that the beauty of the place... the peace and quiet, and being outdoors and being in nature... I think she liked that. Very relaxing... even though she resented it a bit, I think she found it very relaxing.

Q: And could you describe... you talked about your father's friendships with the Brandeis Club fellows, but what about your mother's relationships with the other families there?

A: I think they were good. I think they were good. I think she enjoyed the other women, even though she didn't have as much affluence as some of them did. And she became friendly with all the women, like Bill Burt's wife she became really friendly with. My mother was very affable, she liked people. Goldie was her best friend – they were very, very close. I think she enjoyed that. Like I said, she was hard to read – hard to tell.

Q: Interesting. Sometimes I've talked to Fishing Club people about whether there was any feeling there, given that there wasn't any Jewish religious observance, of its being a Jewish community in any way, or not?

A: Well... there was definitely a feeling that yeah, we are all Jews... there was an undercurrent. I mean, it would be inconceivable for me to think of anybody who wasn't Jewish being part of that. I

was just an undercurrent... it wasn't something that was spoken, but it was the shorthand that you have when people size each other up and make connections. It was just there. ..

Q: ... and share a common heritage...

A: Yes, exactly. And everyone knows that if the High Holidays are early and close to Labor Day ... Shady Side has to end at Labor Day because the High Holidays are going to be right on the heels of it. It was just those kinds of understandings... was definitely there. And I believe that that whole generation truly believed... they were born... World War II, it was part of their lifetime... and they really believed that Jews have to stick together, so I don't think there was any interest in having any diversity. I think that diversity was antithetical to who they were, so it was just a "given."

Q: How about their connection to the outside world in Shady Side, that was definitely different? How do you think they felt about or reacted to being in that place?

A: Well, I think they really liked being there. My mother had the farm... she would go buy tomatoes, and there was Mrs. So-and-so, who's name I will never remember, but she always had to get someone to drive her down so she could get tomatoes every week. They would always... they knew the names of the people in the grocery stores and the boatyard people and people they got crabs from... there were all these connections and I think that was part of the experience that you had those connections. It wasn't so insular. The only insularity was who was a member. But yeah, there were definitely connections. And that was a good part of it too.

Q: In the later years... because most of my interviews have been about that period...

A: ... and I realize I'm talking about the early time too...

Q: But I want to switch a little bit, because you really stayed there until the very end. And I don't want to talk about the very end yet, but after the renovation, you talked about your feelings about that, is there anything else you can think of about what happened during that renovation period and immediately following?

A: Well it was very sad to me that the Sacks and the Kamerows dropped out. It was very sad to me that they had a big TV set in the Big Room, because one of the things that I thought was great about it was that there was no TV. And I'm sure people have talked to you about every Saturday night they would play cards ... they would pull out the big round table and play cards at the table and play cribbage. And then when a TV arrived, then people would watch TV. They'd even sit there and watch TV during the day. To me it was like "why? why would you do that?" ... I felt like it had lost part of its soul... with the renovation... I thought... I'm so happy they took those sliding doors away and put windows back in... I thought that was just the tackiest thing ever. I mean, my father was one of the chief leaders of getting the whole renovation taken care of but, I'm not partial to sliders onto patios... I thought that was horrible. So I just felt like it had really lost part of its soul.

Q: What about the membership? Obviously some of the ... the Sacks and the Kamerows... what happened with the membership... different people?

A: There were some different people. I'm remembering this young couple... Gene Boyers and his wife, whose name I can't remember... and they were my age. They got along with my parents famously, which to me was totally incomprehensible. I did not understand that at all. [laughter] I didn't get along with my parents so famously, so that was beyond my understanding. I had absolutely

nothing to say to them. We didn't share anything in common. Our values and the way we approached life were so different. So I do remember them and how weird that was. It was a struggle to get members. It was a real struggle to get members. It seems to me that Bert Foer joined for a while but they didn't want to come down all the time ... and it was painful... it was very painful watching it struggle to get members. And then when Bert and Ester did come, they were just on a different plane also... they were very affluent ... they just weren't relaxed... it just wasn't a relaxed kind of atmosphere... it was more high-pressure, a little more high-powered atmosphere. So I felt the whole changes were... they were very sad – made me very sad, really.

Q: How old were you at this point and what were you doing in your life during this era that you're describing?

A: I can't remember how old I was. I was definitely out of my parents' house.... I must have been in my twenties... so I was living in Washington... I didn't have a real straight career track as a professional... I bounced around quite a bit. I just enjoyed my life quite a bit in my twenties. So I didn't come down every weekend... didn't want to be around my parents that much and the atmosphere of the place didn't pull me in as much. When I was 27, I moved to Baltimore, so I was probably living in Baltimore for a good part of it too. I can't remember... it seemed like it died, part of it really died.

Q: But you continued to come...

A: I loved it so much... it was so much my soul, my soul is in that place, it really is. I loved my father so much and he loved it so much and the two of us just really... we didn't have to say a word to each other, we could just sit and look at the water... we could just... I could just watch him clean the pool. I was just so happy there. It broke my heart when they filled in the pool [laughter] because I spent so many happy hours in that pool. It broke my heart when they decided they had to sell it. It broke my heart that there weren't enough of us of our generation that wanted to keep going. That people wanted to put pools in their own houses ... that they didn't want that to be a part of their life anymore... it broke my heart... really did.

Q: You're certainly not the only one who's described it in such very strong terms...

A: I figure Paul Foer and I were the two most connected to it. I could be wrong, but that's my sense... that he and I could have hung on until the bitter end. It was really kind of quiet and sad at the end.

Q: Can you remember talking to Paul or any of the other members of your generation, about what was going on?

A: No. By then we'd all gone on our own separate lives and it just was real clear to me that our lives were really different. It just seemed like, for most of them, there wasn't the time for it. They didn't have time to go some place every weekend... just wasn't part of their lives. I didn't feel empowered to do anything about it and I never did do anything about it.

Q: Paul certainly made a lot of effort to do various things... sometimes catching at straws to try to ...

A: ... yeah, and Paul and I didn't connect either. He was a lot younger than me, so it's not like we grew up together... he was always that nasty little kid... and so we didn't have a connection, really, so I suppose now, when age is completely irrelevant, it would be a really different thing. But then, I was

in Baltimore, I was kind of removed from it, I didn't know Paul that well. I knew that he cared about it as much as I did, but to be honest, it never really occurred to me to make a connection.

Q: Are there any other folks from the later period... any folks that you did kind of become friendly with or hang out with down at Shady Side? That whole group of...

A: Do you mean did I maintain my relationships? Is that what you mean?

Q: Well, that's a good question... why don't we work on that question.

A: The answer to that is no.

Q: The girls that you grew up with there?

A: No, I didn't maintain any relationships. We just kind of went to college, went away... everybody kind of went their own separate direction. I would see Bonnie because her parents and my parents were best friends. And lots of times we had Passover at her house... her parents' house. I felt more connected to Bonnie Sheinbaum than anybody. You know, Annette Kamerow got married right after college and I had my own set of friends after college. We just all had very different lives. Bonnie got married right after college... just really, really different lives. And I always felt somewhat inferior to them. I definitely did. I felt like my job in life was to get married right after college, and I didn't succeed. I felt like that message was very, very clear that that's what my job in life was...and I really didn't succeed. I didn't really want to hang around with people that made me ... that succeeded where I didn't.

Q: Where did that message come from?

A: Oh, my family. Really strong. And my mother actually said to me once, that you go to college to get an M.R.S. degree. She actually said that. And, I didn't succeed. I didn't come out of college with a boyfriend, and didn't have a pink wedding two weeks after I graduated. My mother was horrified that I didn't major in either elementary education – because you can always find a job – or why don't you go and become a dental hygienist and meet lots of dentists... I mean, I didn't succeed...

Q: But... did you spend a lot of time feeling guilty about this? I mean, it sounds as if you had a lot of other things going on in your life...

A: Oh, I had a lot of other things going on in my life. No, guilt, no – never felt guilty about that, no. I never felt guilty about not reaching someone else's desires as opposed to my own [laughter].

Q: But I can understand why you wouldn't choose, as the closest friends, people who had fulfilled ...

A: Yes, and went off to have kids... you know... different worlds, very different worlds. For some reason, that I will never understand, I was always drawn to a much more diverse community. So I always had lots of friends who weren't Jewish and, much to my mother's dismay... I mean, she never stopped it... my best friend in high school ... we lived in Silver Spring right next to a Catholic church and my best friend in high school was Catholic and she would spend the night on Saturday night and roll out of bed and run over to the church. I just wasn't exactly the same ... I didn't fit the mold.

Q: It's interesting, someone who said a very similar thing to me was Ellen Freedman.

A: Yes, Ellen definitely didn't fit the mold, and Ellen and I did connect in our twenties, actually.

Q: And she was there, quite late on in the club...

A: No, I mean, Ellen didn't... I don't think she finished college and she left the area. Then she came back to the area at some point, and she had an apartment in Glover Park. And that's when we connected... I saw her several times. But Ellen had a child very young and she wasn't really around, I don't think – her mother was, but she wasn't.

Q: You mentioned her name, but you didn't really tell me whether she was part of the circle of girls about the same age that played together all the time...

A: Well, when I first came on... when we first joined... there was already a dynamic in place that everyone made fun of Ellen, so she was really the scapegoat for a lot of things. She was the one people picked on and I just kind of... jumped into that environment and didn't take the time to think about what was right or what was wrong. I never picked on Ellen but I also never really went out of my way to be a great friend of hers. I think we got along pretty well. I don't think I ever saw why people were picking on her and I don't think, in retrospect, that people would know why they were picking on her. Maybe it was because her family was so odd(?)... she really had a very difficult family. Her father would... had a cot out on the porch and he would be passed out from having been drinking. Her brother, in retrospect maybe he's got Asperger's ... I mean he had very little social skills and her mother was always reading "Woman's Wear Daily" and was very concerned with how you look... appearances were everything. She was the only one who always looked "decked out" down there. Their food was always a little different... the rest of us would always have these big family meals and they wouldn't have these big family meals because her father would always be passed out somewhere and never said a word to anyone anyway. Her mother would cook little interestingly cooked gourmet things, whereas the rest of us were eating your basic, middle class, Jewish food. But I think Ellen... I don't remember if she was part of things... I think she was ... but I know I didn't connect with her the way I connected with Annette and Bonnie and Laura. I'd be interested to see what her memories are of the whole thing. I'm sure that they are very different.

Q: Is there anything we haven't touched upon... as you look back at Shady Side?

A: Well, one thing that's very funny – with all the reunions and opportunities for us to come together. Turns out that all of us really wished that our mothers were someone else's mother. Which is hysterical because I loved Helen Kamerow. I thought she was... how could anyone have a better mother? And it turns out Annette used to say "Oh God I wish that my mother was more like Lily [Yochelson]." [laughter] That's very funny because we never talked about that then... that was very funny.

No, I think the thing that I'm left with was the camaraderie was just so special. The camaraderie of the women in the rocking chairs, of the kids, of the card games on Saturday night, of the crab feasts, and the beauty of the area. I just... it was so beautiful and I just always felt so lucky that ... to be able to go to such a beautiful place. Really, really beautiful. It was just totally special.

Q: Well thank you very much.

A: Thank you...

[break in video and then continuing...]

Q: Do you feel as though Shady Side had any permanent effect on your life? Any character traits or career choices or anything that as you look back on it now you can trace back to the experience that you had there?

A: I guess the one thing that comes to mind ... I'm guessing that... I'm very environmentally concerned... aware, conscious... Some of my first work out of college was with environmental organizations, and I decided recently to go back to that. And I went and got a certificate in Community Environmental Studies at Tufts and now I'm working for a coastal watershed protection organization. And I think that it's probably because I was so connected to nature there. And growing up in a Jewish family that had never been camping and wouldn't even conceive of it... that was about as rustic as they would go. I think that my love for being outside came from there. I probably never would have gone outside if we hadn't gone there because it wasn't in my family's milieu... wasn't something I was exposed to. So I think my love of the environment comes from there.

And that reminds me of one funny thing, that I'm sure people have talked about... was the slugs in the bathroom? Did anyone talk about the slugs in the bathroom?

Q: No!

A: Well, the bathrooms, as I'm sure were described... were these sheds that were alongside the property. And originally, the ladies' room was three toilets and then at some point, someone got the brilliant idea of putting up shower rods and hanging shower curtains, so at least you could have some visual privacy. But the area was low... apparently had been filled-in marsh or something, and slugs it. And sometimes we'd go out to the bathroom at night and there'd be slugs all over the place, and I think that slugs are the most disgusting thing nature has ever created. And there would be like slugs on the toilet seats and we'd go out screaming our lungs out... we would not go near the bathroom when it had slugs on the toilet seats. It was a riot. That was definitely one of my lasting impressions!

And I didn't talk about the swing at all, but there was a big sycamore tree that made these big sycamore balls right outside the backdoor – which they have taken down, unfortunately – and we had a swing on that. And that was another thing I would do on Saturday mornings – I would sit on that swing and wait for people to drive in – I would just sit there. It had a wooden board and some rope and it was literally just some rope, and I would just sit on this swing, hoping that eventually a car would come in. [She means a sweet-gum, not a sycamore. – BK]

Q: Great, great, thank you...

A: no, just a few minutes, we're wrapped up. Anne, this is Barry Kessler. This is my friend Ann Feldman...

There were so many people in and out that the Bahn family was one of the ones that came in and they weren't real high on my radar, but my mother used to gossip about Anita Bahn all the time – how she did not have any brains – “she's so smart she could go to medical school and she can't even boil water...” That kind of thing – my mother gossiped about that all the time. And she had a... Susan Bahn was in our age group too, but I was a little older when they all came in, and they were all so weird that I never really fully connected. But anyone who passed through that was the right age... we did stuff. The memories are the strongest from when I was the youngest.

Q: Good... all right.

[The End]

55:51

