UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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J = JULIET
E = ELEANOR

Tape 86.14

J: Eleanor where were you born?

E: I was born in Lowell Massachusetts, in Nobles Court, which is, was off of Broadway Street.

J: And where did your parents come from?

E: My mother was born and brought up, born in Lowell, and father came from (?) in Lebanon.

J: Do you recall them telling you, when did your father come to this country?

E: My father came to this country ah, in the early nineteen hundreds.

J: Um, you don't know the year?

E: I don't remember what year, but it was in the early nineteen hundreds. He was a young man when he came over.

J: Did he share with you his experiences at all? Did he come directly to New York?

E: No. He came, he came to Lowell and then went to Manchester, New Hampshire and then back to Lowell.

J: Did he have anyone in Lowell?

E: No. His brother lived in Manchester, New Hampshire at the time. He had some cousins in Lowell. He had cousins in Lowell, the Forsleys.

J: The Forsleys?

E: The Forsleys were his cousins in Lowell. There were other people that were his relatives in Lowell.

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J: I see. Then there was quite a number of Lebonese already in Lowell when your father came?

E: Oh ya, ya. I believe there was. I think my grandmother was living in Lowell when my father came, because my mother was born in 1900. My grandmother was living in the city, and Ma was. My grandmother was I think twenty some odd years old when my mother was born. But my grandmother had come to this country when she was fourteen right Lou?

L:Ya.

J: Oh and was she married?

E: No not at fourteen. She got married in the old country and they came together here to the United States, and she was sixteen years old when she came. Then she was about twenty when my mother was born. My mother was born in 1900.

J: So your mother was born right here in Lowell?

E: That's right, on Marion Street, and that's in the heart of the Acre too.

J: Okay, did your father share any of his voyage experiences? Did he come to Ellis Island? Did he tell you anything about that?

E: Well the one thing that I can remember about Ellis Island with my father is the fact that our last name was Forsley, and there was some Lebonese people who had the same last name. But they were Forsley, and I can remember my father telling us that the way they heard it the people at Ellis Island was the way they spelled it. We use to laugh because my father would spell wife, that was wife you know. So he says that he learned to spell his name Forsley, and that's why it was that way. That was about the only thing he didn't talk to much about it. He was very concerned when he was in the old country, he didn't, he wasn't educated. He didn't get education. That one of the reason when be came over here, and the kind of thing that he stressed with us that he wanted his children to be educated. There was no place like the United States of America to get that education.

J: From New York to, you said he came to Lowell. From New York to Lowell, do you know how he got to Lowell? Did anyone meet him in New York?

E: I don't know that. I don't know. It is funny and something we never talked about.

J: And you know if he was alone, or if he came with someone?

E: Again I don't. His brother, his brother didn't come with him. Although be had a brother that was living in the United States, but he didn't come, they didn't come together. In fact he was the first one of his family to come over. He was the first one of his family to come over to the United States.

J: Did he ever tell you why he came?

E: Again, for the opportunities of what were here. He felt that the opportunities would be greater for him in this, on this side of the ocean I guess.

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J: Ah when he went to Manchester did he work there?

E: He was a peddler. My father was a peddler by trade. Okay, and that he did peddling. They did ah, when they were in Manchester there was, at one time they owned a store and he worked in the store, but peddling was basically his trade.

J: And so when he came to Lowell did he do peddling?

E: He did peddling and then of course there was a time in the history of the depression and the like that my father couldn't sell anything. He had a family, a growing family. Along came F.D.R. and along came W.P.A. and my father worked in W.P.A. to bring home you know, money for the family.

J: Okay, now prior to the depression, how did he meet your mother?

E: It was very interesting. My mother was, in those days you know, everybody was matched. My mother was schedule to marry someone else, and that the other person in fact that she was schedule to marry, came from a fairly well to do family. However she met my father. We never knew how she met him and her family didn't want her to marry my father at all. This is when she bad moved at Worcester. Ya, he was in Worcester. That he wanted, they met each other and they must have fallen in love, because she wanted to marry him and he wanted to marry her. It was, it was really out of kilter, because in those days the daughters didn't say to their parents no, I'm, I won't do what you told me. She refused to marry the man that was picked out for her and she wanted to marry my father, and they got married.

J: That was very unusual. Um, did they give them a wedding or did they have to elope or ... ?

E: No I don't know. They gave them a wedding. Oh ya, that's when Ma had that black silk beaded dress for the night before. That was for the night before. That was a pretty...

J: Well what's this night before? Tell me about it?

E: Well one of the customs in with our people. I know the orthodox have it but I don't know about the (?), or the Roman Catholics who are Lebonese. (Laughing) The night before see, the old custom was, was that the groom paid for the wedding. It isn't like today where the bride pays for the wedding or the bride and groom share. In those days the groom paid for the wedding. However the bride's family felt that they had to do something, you know, because they were giving their daughter away. And so the night before the wedding, the bride's family had, when in fact was even a bigger thing than the wedding reception. It was where people who were invited to the wedding were invited to come to wherever the bride's family settled on. There was wine and song, and dancing and the whole shmere.

J: What about the wedding itself?

E: The wedding itself, well the wedding itself was you know, the wedding that we had was under the Eastern Orthodox Church. The wedding was performed and it's a very seriour ritual you know. Our weddings are almost one hour in length and our weddings we do use the crowns. The crowns are in exchanged in terms of uniting. The drinking

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of the wine, and the wedding ceremony. I can't tell you much about it. If I had known I would have lived it up.

J: No, no, whatever you remember.

E: But I wasn't at my mother and father's wedding.

J: No. Did they, did they have a honeymoon?

E: Did they, I don't know, I never knew that.

J: What year did they get married?

E: 1922, 1921, in 1921.

J: Was your mother working then?

E: No my mother, my mother was a child, my mother was treated like a princess. My mother never worked until after she got married.

J: How about her parents? What did they do?

E: They were in business, they had a grocery store.

J: Where was it located?

E: In Worcester.

J: In Worcester? How did your father get from Lowell to Worcester and back to Lowell?

E: He was in Manchester, I don't know how he got to Worcester. He never discussed that. I imagine you know, that in those days you know, people would travel to go and visit other people. I don't really know how he got there. That's not giving you very much information,

J: No, that's fine. Tell me about after their marriage? What did your father work at?

E: My father again, after they were married he was a peddler.

J: He was still a peddler?

E: Because basically that was his trade.

J: This was 1921? Okay, and your mother stayed home?

E: My mother stayed home when they first got married. Then my grandmother come and lived with us, with them.

J: Oh, where was your grandmother living prior to ah..?

E: In Worcester.

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J: She was living in Worcester? Why did she come to live with them?

E: Ah, her husband died and my mother was (?) child, and then there was the issue of my grandmother helping her out you know.

J: Because she had babies?

E: Yes. She started, she had my twin brothers, they were born the year after. They were back in Manchester now Lou, because the twins were born in Manchester. Oh, they stayed, okay. So my mother had twins, so like dutiful mother, my grandmother went to help her daughter with twins. Nobody was around to help me. Oh you came right ... (laughed)

J: So now let's get them back to Lowell.

E: Okay they lived, they moved from Manchester cause Richard was born in Lowell, okay. They moved form Manchester. Evidently things weren't going that, as well as they should have been going in Manchester. So they moved from Manchester and they came to Lowell, Massachusetts.

J: Where did they live?

E: They when they first came they must of come and lived at Nobles Court. That's where my brother Richard must of been born and because then I was born there. Then from Nobles Court which was a six, six decker house okay.

J: In the Acre?

E: In the Acre. Then we moved from there to Adams Street in the Acre.

J: Oh then you don't remember Nobles Court at all? How long did you remain at Adams Street?

F: Adams Street, I was there until I was fourteen, fifteen years old. In forty four, forty three.

J: Well the war started in forty one.

E: In 1940.

J: You moved out of the Acre?

E: No, out of Adams Street to another house on Arlington Street in the Acre.

J: Okay tell me about your early life on Adams Street. What do you remember about the street?

E: What do I remember about the street? It was cobblestone. We use to have this big Irish cop, Frank, who every time for Pa was making utter, who would come up the stairs, and knock on the door and say, Mike the smell coming down to the street. (laughing) Frank would get, would get a bottle of utter you know on Adams Street. There were, there is Irishmen, there were Greeks, then there were the Lebonese. You know everybody knew everybody else. As a kid growing up we mingled with everybody

else. We were very concerned. The Lebonese are very proud people. In those days when you walked up Adams Street, and when you walked at the sidewalk, you found us scrubbing the stairs, scrubbing the sidewalks, scrubbing the stairs that went up to each of the tenements. You found everybody being concerned with the way the street looked. You found yourself- leaning over the piazza and calling in Greek, because you learned to speak Greek. Because your elderly neighbors in the next house didn't speak English. So you learned to speak Greek to communicate with them. So that we grew up, and we grew up as part of a culture that had Lebonese, Greeks, Irishmen and Frenchmen. We grew up on a street that was cobblestone, that everybody knew everybody and you had alot of good times. The cop was the friendly man on the beat, and what else can I tell you?

J: Were there any, did you have any problems at all with the neighbors growing up?
E: No. Well there was ... It was funny you know. There was one neighbor that wasn't as clean as the rest of the neighborhood. The rest of the neighbors resented that, because we all tried to be a clean neighborhood. But other than that everybody got along you know. I don't remember we ever fought with neighbors or ah... What it was, if somebody was sick in one house, it didn't matter is they were Greek, or like your mother or your sister was cooking something. You had to take it over to them. I could remember as a nurse, when I started in nursing, my grandmother with some of her old cronies, in that old neighborhood weren't feeling well. My grandmother would give me a can of talcom powder and alcohol so that I could go and rub their backs for them. I mean it was that kind of a spirit. It was a very neighborly kind of thing. It didn't matter if you were Greek, or French, or Irish, or Lebonese. And even Mary was rushing and she lived across the street. It's ... Everybody was very good to everybody else you know. It was, everybody was trying to help everybody. Everybody was in the same streets. Nobody bad anything. There was no money, and there was ah, there was no (afactatatiousness?). Everybody was in the same boat.

J: Tell me about when you started school? Did you make friends with the other ethnic groups?

E: When I started school I went ... Ya, I mean friends, other ethnic groups, we're friends today. I mean I have more Greek friends.

J: How about your own kind, the Lebonese?

E: Well the Lebonese, you have to remember now that most of the Lebonese population settled in the Acre. So that our church settled, you know, is right at the corner of Fletcher and Bowers Street, and that our people went to our church. Therefore we were, we were always very close with our own people, because we're mostly related. (Laughed) Everybody is (?).

J: What does that mean? Cousins huh?

E: They're all cousins, and consequently now even when our church was closed ... Our church was closed for a period of time because there was no money, okay, to run it. We went down to a church in Lowell okay. It was called the Church of All Nations. Well some of our Greek friends were there. So that we had our Greek friends at the Church of All Nations. Then we had our own people who were also at the Church of All Nations. Then when our church opened up, then we went back to our own church. However we were in school. I went to the Bartlet School and fifty percent of the kids in my class were Greek. The other twenty five percent were Irish and French. Some

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of my best friends are Greek. I mean we, we have always, when you say you know, do I still have this ethnic group, I mean this were people I grew up with. They are, they're Greeks, they're Irish, and they're I mean, they're French people and they're people I have known ever since we were kids.

J: Um, how about the teachers?

E: My teachers? Okay, most of the teachers then when I went to school, they were all Irishmen and there were very few non-Irish teachers.

J: Were they helpful?

E: Oh ya, ya. I'll tell you that I think that growing up we had some of the best teachers going in those days. I can remember at the Green School, no at the Morrow School, I had Miss Sullivan, and Miss Green. And Miss Sullivan, she lived in the Acre. She lived in the corner of Fletcher Street and Varney Street, and she was very concerned about our education. But nobody talked in Arabic to us. And nobody talked in Greek to the Greek kids. Everybody spoke in English, and we had to speak in English. We spoke English in our home along and learned Arabic. Many of the Greek kids were taught Greek and then English. I mean they didn't produce another language for us. I mean we had to learn English. Then after that, after the Morrow School I went up to the Cross Street School. And the only reason I got transfer to the Cross Street School, is I thought it would be a quicker way for me to get to the Bartlett School. Because where we lived in the Acre was out of the, out of the Geography of going to the Bartlett School in the grammar years. Because if you lived in this part of the Acre, which we did, on Adams Street, we had to go to the Green School for grammar school.

J: But why did you want to go to the Bartlett? What was wrong with the Green?

E: Because all my Greek friends were going to the Bartlett School.

J: Oh I thought maybe it was a better school.

E: Well no. Alot of my Greek friends were going to the Bartlett School because they happened to live on that side of the Acre. So of course I went to the Cross Street School, bit it didn't work. They caught on. I had to go to the Green School. So I went to the Green School for grades five and six, and I can remember I had Miss Mitchell there, and Miss Farley, fantastic! If they, those teachers at that time, if they knew that you wanted to , to really help yourself and get ahead, they were helping you. The values in our household were that education was primary. That we had to get our education. So that my father and mother didn't tolerate us not doing our best in school. Then when the teachers saw that you were really trying they were doing everything they could to help you. Then from there I went to the seventh grade and I had Miss Lou who was my seventh grade teacher and she was black. That was my first interaction with a black teacher, and alot of us had Miss Lou as a seventh grade teacher. Then we had an eighth and ninth grade (Unclear). Alot of those teachers, everyone of them was as good to us as a teacher could possibly be. And everyone of them was concern with your learning. In fact again, like I said, the values in our household, my father and mother were very, education was a very important value, as well as hard work. The work ethic was very strong. I graduated from the Bartlett School and I was, they had five kids they gave medals to and I was one of the five that got a medal. I had to fight out some of my Greek friends in order to do that, but the teachers were very good teachers in those days. Then I went to Lowell

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School, and I graduated from Lowell High School. And then after that was the war. We weren't supposed to be drafted, but they did get drafted. The red cross had told my parents, that because we were so many kids that they wouldn't be drafted. My brothers would be needed to support the family, but they got drafted. So that in the hopes that anybody had for going to college were shattered. Then I decided I was going to be a nurse and I went to Lowell General. Then I met ah...

J: How many children did your Mom and Dad have?

E: We had, there were nine kids. My mother was a lonely child. Then my mother kept saying that if she could have a dozen, she would have a dozen. Because another, a very other strong value was family. We were a very family orientated kind of thing, and my mother and father's philosophy was that it is fine. Friends are fine, but in times of serious need it's the family that supports people. You support each other. So that as a lonely child, my mother felt cheated somewhat, so that she was determined she would of had a dozen if she could. So we were nine. My oldest brothers were twins, then there is six boys and three girls, and one brother died at age forty-six. So we're five boys and three girls now.

J: That's quite a large family. And your father was the only one that worked?

E: Well no. Then after awhile when times were getting tough my mother was a stitcher. As a girl growing up she didn't have to work, but she knew 'how to sew. So that my mother worked in the

mills. My mother worked in the mills at Suffolk Knitting. And my mother, we use to go down to Jackson Street everyone of us. We would have one of us, each Friday would have a special treat that would be payday. We would go down to Jackson Street to the mills and wait for my mother. And then we would go downtown Lowell. After she got her pay, we would go downtown Lowell and my mother would take us up to the Chinese Restaurant for dinner. Ya, but my mother worked in the mills for a long time.

J: Who took care of the children?

E: My grandmother, ya and it was very common in those days to have you know, (?) living with you. I'll tell you I wish (?) was around to live with my daughter. You know I think that, I think that kids miss something not 'having a (?) around. I really do!

J: Okay I do have to ask you about your mother working in the mills. What was her job?

E: She was a stitcher. My mother was a stitcher. My mother was a stitcher in the mill and she stitched there for alot of years. She stitched piece work sometimes, and steady work other times.

J: Did she stay in one mill, or did she hop around?

E: No she went to, she went to Suffolk Knitting, then to White Hall. The White Hall is 99 Willie Street. And if my mother was going to work all day and wanted lunch, they would take a white piece of cloth and hang it out the window. Because we could see it all the way down to Adams Street, and that meant somebody bring my lunch.

J: Is that right?

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E: They had a signal, ya, and she worked at the White Hall.

J: Well who looked for the signal?

E: We use to look out the kitchen window.

J: All of you? Really?

E: Ma there's the ... (Laughing)

J: There's the white cloth huh? Oh that's great!

E: And never mind that, my brother use to work down the Merrimack Mills. You know we were taking a tour of Lowell and we were taking the historic park tour. And the tour took you on the

canal on the waterways, but it was a walking tour into the mills. They asked me, did I want to go in the mills. I said what, are you crazy! I use to carry my brother's lunches down here when I was a kid.

J: Did you hate it? Did you hate going in there or what?

E: No.

J: How did you feel?

E: To go into the mills to carry my brother's lunch? That's where my brother worked, I didn't hate it. I mean that was giving him, it was giving him a weeks salary.

J: What impression... What impression... I mean did you ever think you would go in and work in the mills?

E: I don't even know that I even thought about that. I don't, because see I wanted to be a doctor, but there was no money to go to college. So I went to work. The war was on then and I went to work at Fort Devens because the family needed money. I had three older brothers who were all in the service. So I went to work at Fort Devens. And I was working overtime and everything else and bringing home a big pay check. My mother had realized that I was not happy. I wasn't happy because I couldn't be a doctor. So it was my mother who said maybe, maybe nursing would be good for you. Would you like to be a nurse? And I said, could I? Well could I leave? My money? She said, they would get along you know, without the money. That she would work and stay working. And at that time the Cadette Corp was out. The Cadette Corp would pay for people to go into nursing, and give them fifteen dollars a month. Out of that fifteen dollars a month I use to give my mother ten dollars. She would have it, I would have five dollars a month for spending.

J: Let me ask you about that? With the nine kids, when you were old enough to go out to work, okay, you would bring the pay home?

E: Let's see. When I was at Fort Devens I was working, I mean like twelve hours a day was nothing. Saturdays and Sundays and somedays...

J: What did you do?

E: Oh I was a mechanic. I use to dismantle engines that they... They would

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have jeeps, okay, that over in Europe the jeeps would have, been battered. They would send these jeeps back to Fort Devens. They would have to be dismantled, cleaned and then

reassembled to go back into combat. That's what I did. I use to dismantle and reassemble jeeps, I use to get the piston, the comp, shaft, the whole damn thing. So anyway, so no matter what I made, I would bring the check home. We were brought up that way. I would sign my name on the check and give it to my mother. I got two and a half dollars a week spending money. I never had to buy anything. That spending money was for a candy bar or to go to the movie. I mean we were the type, if you needed under arm deodorant, when you went into the bathroom under arm deodorant was there. That those kinds of personal needs they were there. That the check just got turned over, no matter whenever. When I was twelve years old and I use to clean house for the Pastor's wife down at the Church of All Nations, I use to scrub what we called the (?) the threshole on my hands and knees. They paid me fifty cents and I ran home with that fifty cents to give to my father, because everything we made we gave into the house. We were very concerned about everybody having what everybody should have. There was no such thing, I made this money and it's mine, you know? I mean, I even feel it's just the way it goes.
J: That's great! When the money was brought in who took care of it? Your mother or your father?

E: My mother primarily. My mother primarily took care of the money. There use to be a jar that sat near the Philco radio I remember, and every extra nickel went in because they wanted to buy a house, remember that? They wanted to buy a house so that when there was an extra nickel or an extra ten cents went into that jar.

J: That was on Adams Street?

E: Ya, that was on Adams Street.

J: Can you describe, was it a tenement?

E: Oh ya. One fifty four rear, one fifty four rear Adams Street. We lived in the back right next to the city barn. Cynthia use to make (Kesch?) on the city barn.

J: She use to make what?

E: (Kesch?)

J: I know what (kesch?) is, she use to make it on the city what?

E: On the city barn roof.

J: Oh well could you describe that for us?

E: (Laughing)

J: You would take what?

E: Sour milk yogurt. What you actually do, this, this is a dish that's common to our ethnic groups. You would take cracked wheat, and you would take sour yogurt and mix them together, okay. Now this is a wet blob okay. Now this has to be pured and dried. It should be dried out in the sun. This use to be a

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gathering alright. Now the city barn had a roof. Well there was a step ladder from the alley behind our house and the old ladies would climb up the step ladder and go on the roof, on the city barn roof. Then you would take your sheets, cotton okay, and lay it on the roof. Then you would take this mixture of sour yogurt and wheat, and you would lay it out on this sheet. You would clump it off on this sheet alright. Then you would sit there and you would rub it until it would dry and sprinkle it and rub it and sprinkle it. This was activity for alot of the, old Lebonese ladies in the neighborhood. That they would climb up, we would have to help them up the ladder. We use to do it, we would make (kesch?) on city barn roof.

J: The kids would help too?

E: Oh absolutely! Now you asked about our tenement. Okay, we lived on one fifty four Adams Street in the rear. The front one fifty four bad six tenements, but our's in the rear, we were pretty classy. We had only three floors. We lived in the middle floor. A Greek family lived on the third floor, and another Lebonese family lived on the first floor. Now we had a stairway and you went up and the first door, you opened the door, you went into the kitchen right. To the right of the kitchen was the parlor, and just beyond that was, beyond that was the bedroom with three beds in it. Then off the kitchen was ...

J: What was off the kitchen Dr. Shalhoup?

E: Was Ma's bedroom right?

J: Ma's bedroom was separate from Pa's bedroom?

E: No. (Laughing) We had a kitchen stove, there was no central heating. We had a bathroom, we had a bathtub, we had a bathtub, real classy.

J: How did you heat the water then?

E: Well you heated it with the big (?) on the stove.

J: No not at all, we're just at the beginning of this interview. I wanted to ask you...

E: You told me an hour we're here two days already.

J: This is only thirty minutes. We have another thirty at least. I have to ask you about the three beds in each bedroom. This was a large tenement I take it, because...?

E: Oh no. It wasn't. It was small. It was only five rooms.

J: But you were nine children plus the mother and the father and the Cynthia. The Cynthia was the grandmother. Can you sort of legistically speaking, how did you all fit into this five room apartment?

E: Ah, very easily. We had a big round table in the kitchen. It was square, I thought it was a round table. Okay, the back bedroom, in the back bedroom, my grandmother and I slept on a double bed. Then my sister Virginia slept in the crib and Lerese slept in a single bed. It use to be the three quarter bed, yes.

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Her Sister: No there were two people, three people and a baby, a small kid in each room.

E: Ya. Well there were three of us and Virginia was a baby.

Her Sister: Where did they sleep?

E: Who?

Her Sister: The boys?

E: The boys? They slept half of ... Victor and Michael slept with Ma and Pa. The living room was Richard and Bobby. Then Eddie and Teddy slept in the other room, one bathroom, ya.

J: You had one bathroom for all of you? How did you all take a bath, just on Saturday nights?

E: Well in those days everybody didn't take a bath everyday in the week. I mean we were, we were very clean people and we took a bath primarily maybe once a week. Sometimes on a very special occasion it may have been twice a week. But I think that you would find that that was very typical of those days. I think that it too in those days there was not the problem. Today I live in a house with just my daughter and I have two full bathrooms. One for each of us, because we couldn't manage. But in those days we were twelve of us, we had one bathroom, and there never had seem to be any problem or any trouble. Even when you know, no matter when it was, it was just, it was just never any problem. So we lived on Adams Street and it was in winter, summer, spring and fall, and ah, we played on the street in the winter with the snow. We walked to school, we ah, shopped, there was an A & P down at the corner of Adams and Fletcher Street. It was A & P and we use to shop there when we were young. I mean when we were kids. It is no

longer there. My mother use to buy her vegetables from the open air market, the fruits and vegetables, and she would wait till Saturday night to shop. Because they were gonna be ready to throw them away, you know, she would buy the stuff that was ripe at a very different price. I mean my mother had to shop. We never knew that mild came in quarts. The only... We always had milk. I mean the one thing my mother and father strongly believed in is that we had to eat well, and we had to have, we had to be clean. I mean you maybe didn't have the fanciest dress or that you couldn't have an evening gown, however you did eat okay. So we always had milk, but we always thought that milk came in five gallon cans. We didn't know that milk came in quarts, because we never knew anything but a five gallon can. My grandmother made her own yogurt, and that we didn't. we didn't know roast beef, because we ate the kinds of dishes that our people cook and they call it the (?). You know, it was dish that would, would stretch meats and vegetables, and the (?). I can remember my kid brother saying, we use to buy crackers from the cracker factory that was on, on one of the streets near St. Joseph's Hospital, Bratt's Crackers. My brother always thought that those were cookies, because we never had money to buy cookies with. We grew up, we were poor. But we were, we didn't know. We knew that we didn't have a brand new dress, or that I couldn't go to a formal, because the kids needed shoes. But we grew up in a family that had a healthy attitude about life and living. We had a grandmother and mother and father that believed in God and believed in each other, and had set values and perimeters for us. That we took on those values, and that we felt that what we had was a-okay. We also felt that the only way we were gonna have anything more, is we had to work for it. And we had to help ourselves to get where we were going. We were very proud. As you see,

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the family has done that. Everybody in the family has, has moved to greater heights and they did it because of, of the value system that our parents left US.

J: I'm gonna reminisce a little more. I love to talk about the old times. Were you all born in the hospital?

E: No. I was born, I was born, we were all born at home. None of us, all of us were born at home, but you have to remember we had a cousin that was a doctor who lived up the street.

J: Oh, then a doctor delivered you? You didn't have a mid-wife or...?

E: No, no. But it was very interesting you know, in those days. When Franklin Deleanor Roosevelt was made President, and that he was concerned about more people having work, many people were hired by the W.P.A., whether males or females. And what happened was that if you were gonna have a baby and you had your baby at home, some women who worked for the W.P.A would come into the house and take care of you, okay. So that, that my mother for two of the kids had post partom care. But up till that time see, my father's cousins were doctors. So that we were very fortunate in that respect, that we had a doctor. My mother had a doctor take care of

her all the way through the pregnancy and delivered us at home. You know, which is more fortunate then at that point and time than alot of people had I guess.

J: Did she go back to work after each pregnancy?

E: Ya. She went back to work and Cynthia was there, and Cynthia brought us up.

J: Mean while, what was your father doing? He couldn't have been peddling? Right into the thirties?

E: Oh my father peddled, no W.P.A. in the thirties.

J: Oh but he peddled up to the depression?
E: Up to the depression, ya.

J: He never opened a store?

E: No, he never opened a store.

J: Cause many Lebonese went ahead and opened?

E: No, no. He ... Because I can remember as kids growing up, we use to help him you know? They would put up their own shoe laces, put up their own elastics. We would have sessions at home at night where we would work with, with nails and pegs and wrap elastic you know, elastics up and put the label on it. Take shoe laces and wrap it up to get my father suitcase ready for him. He did work. He use to sell candy, boxes of candy. He use to sell you know, besides shoe laces and elastics and threads. I can remember we got to the stage at one point in his life that he had a tin Lizzy ford.

J: What year was that do you know?

E: No. I know I broke my teeth on the front of it. It was an old tin Lizzy.

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He use to fill, he use to fill the back of the tin Lizzy with boxes of candies. So he sold candies, so he sold alot of different things. Not the Brooklyn Bridge I don't think.

J: Meanwhile your mother would be at the mills?

E: My mother would be at the mills.

J: And you would come home, you would always find someone at home?

E: Absolutely. We always found Cynthia at home.

J: So you weren't what you would call latch key kids?

E: What was a latch key kid?

J: Ya, right, there is always Cynthia at home.

E: Always Cynthia at home.

J: And who did the cooking? Your mother or Cynthia?

E: Both. My mother was a superb cook. You remember Mary... Didn't you have... No. You had Cynthia.

J: What was a typical Sunday dinner? Did you all sit down and eat on Sunday together?

E: We all sat down to eat. We ate all the time, all together.

J: Was that a rule of the ... ?

E: For supper everybody sat down and ate. Ya. Everybody sat down and you sat at the table and you ate. And then everybody had their job afterwards. I mean now typically with our ethnic group, if there was company, alright the company would sit first and then the boys would sit, and the girls would wait. However, if there was no company, you were all at the table together. Your brothers happened to drink their glass of water and they would want more water. It was the girls that got up and got the pitcher of water. We were brought up that way, where the father and the brothers were primary in the family and that we as females catered to them. We ate all our meals together. You didn't eat one at a time. And you did not eat, well I don't like that, make me something else. You ate what was there. You didn't eat it , that was your tuff luck. But Cynthia primarily did all the cooking. Although my mother was an excellent cook, because now years later, Ma didn't work. Remember Ma stayed home. Ma could bake lemon meringue pie. Ma could bake upside cake. Ma was a, was an excellent cook.

J: She was born in this country. How much of an education did your mom get?

E: My mother went to college. My mother went to business, through business college in Worcester, Mass. Ya, my mother could read and write English. My mother could read and write Arabic.

J: I'm curious, why did she go into the mills with that kind of an education?

E: Well in those days I don't think girls were going any where else. I think that the other kind of thing to, is that with piece work there, the more piece work you did the more money you could make. The money was better doing that, you know? She did work for awhile in bookeeping in Worcester. Ya, before she got married, but then when she came to Lowell the opportunities I guess weren't there, but there was more money with piece work.

J: Her mother and father came here very early on. You wouldn't know what year that was? That must of been before the turn of the century?

E: My grandmother came when she was sixteen years old. She had my mother when she was twenty. My mother was born in 1900. So my grandmother was 1896 or, in the early, 1890's my grandmother came here.

J: I guess some of the earliest Lebonese to come over I would imagine. Do you have relatives in Worcester now?

E: Oh ya. I got my Great Aunt. Gees that's right, that lady, when are we gonna go see her? My grandmother's sister is in Worcester. My grandmother's sister-in-law, my grandmother's nieces and nephews all live in Worcester.

J: Alright, let's bring you up to the depression. Did you feel it at all? Were you very, very, poor?

E: Yes, very poor. In fact we were to the point where ah, I can remember my brother's wanted to quit high school to go to work. At that point and time ... And I will never forget it. I can hear my father hollering and yelling and saying to them, we will eat bread and water before anybody quits school. At that time ya, we had to go down to Appleton Street with the shopping bags because they had to give us food. We did not have, we didn't have food at points and time. I can remember carrying the shopping bag over the railroad tracks. They would put fruits, they would put not butter, but oleo you know, in it. They would put can, corn beef ya. We were Door, we were very poor. We were fortunate that in terms of having a doctor come to the house, we never paid a doctor's bill, because they never charged Pa or Ma. We had no money. We had nothing.

J: What did you do for leisure time?

E: For leisure we use to play, we use to play marbles down the street. We went to the Church of All Nations, and they would have a gym. We ah, we ah, essentially played games on the streets is right.

J: Were you restricted because you were a girl in anyway? Were you allowed to date as you got older?

E: It was very strange. My father and mother drilled into our house, into our heads, that our house was a place for us to bring all of our friends. That if anybody wanted to see us they could come to our house. So that it wasn't a sense of dating, but whether it was boys or girls they were in your house you know? We weren't allowed to wear lipstick. I couldn't wear lipstick when I was in high school. I mean I was a senior in high school, I couldn't wear lipstick, because my father was dead set against that. We weren't allowed to wear nailpolish. There were very strict rules. You had to be home at a certain time. And I missed that by a half hour and I got locked out of the house. But there were very strict rules. We were brought up I think, fairly strictly. However

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our home and our house was always opened. I can remember my father saw me talking to a boy at the street corner one day. And when I knew my father saw me, I was very scared. I was very frightened. My father stopped and he looked at the young man. He says, you will come to our house, because my father didn't believe in us standing on the street corner. That was not right. So we didn't do that.

J: Did he encourage you to marry in your own nationality?

E: I don't think there was. There wasn't a sense of encouragement, it was just that that's what it was going to be. I mean nobody thought that you were going to marry outside your nationality. I mean that was a (?). You didn't even marry. First of all you couldn't even of married if they went to St. Anthony's. They were outside the book.

J: What does that mean? Tell me?

E: That means number one, is primarily the kind of, the way you were brought up. And an Eastern Orthodox is that you married a Lebonese boy who was Eastern Orthodox. You didn't marry a Lebonese boy who was Roman Catholic. It may be alright to marry a Lebonese boy who was Melchite. That could be alright. But if they were Roman Catholic, forget it. In those days that was ...

J: Ya, but Melchites are Catholics?

E: Ya. However, but Melchites in terms of their religious services are identical to the Eastern Orthodox services. Because at the time of the split way back in 400 A.D. when we were moving, when the issue was to move out of Constantinople, this one group said that they would go to Rome only if the Pope at that time would give them permission to maintain the rights of the Eastern Orthodox Church. So with us as a kid growing up, okay you met, you took for granted that you were going to marry a Lebonese boy. He had to be Eastern Orthodox, but you never would, you know, like if a Roman Catholic and Lebonese boy proposed to you, well you might end up marrying him. But you would have a hell of a time with the family first, but today that's all different. My sister said my legs are showing.

Sister: I didn't say anything.

E: Oh I thought you went like this.

J: Okay, will get you right up to the war and through high school. Tell me about high school?

E: Oh high school was alot of fun.

J: Where did you go?

E: I went to Lowell High, and I went there as a sophomore from the Bartlett Junior High School.

J: I was gonna ask you, were you still on Adams Street by this time?

E: No we had just moved. No I was still on Adams Street, still on Adams Street, because I ... Let me see.

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Sister: No we were on Arlington Street in forty three Eleanor.

E: But forty three I graduated from high school Laurice. Ya, but I'm saying when I went to Bartlett School, I was on Adams Street. We were on Adams Street when I went to Bartlett, because I can remember walking home in the hurricane.

J: Oh which year?

E: In 1938.

J: Oh do you remember that vividly?

E: Oh ya. Walking through it. The trees are falling, the wires are falling and we're hop skipping down from the Bartlett School down Butterfield Street, standing in the middle of the common wondering what the hell was going on, you know? I went to Junior High School and we were still living on Adams Street. When I went to High School we were living on Arlington Street.

E: On Arlington Street, ya.

J: Oh then they did buy the house? Tell me about that?

E: Ah, their house on Arlington Street was a two family, and there were ten rooms on each side.

J: Huge!

E: And we lived in ten rooms, and we rented the other side.

J: How did they eventually buy, Dr. Shalhoup? Did they mortgage it?

E: Ya. They mortgaged it. Those days that house cost three thousand dollars. They were able to mortgage it and meet the payments. That's what they did. And we had a living room, we had a den, a dining room and a kitchen, and we had four bedrooms. We had a full bath upstairs, five rooms and a small bedroom downstairs. That was Cynthia's bedroom.

J: What year did they buy?

E: It had to be 1941 Lou huh? Ya, 1941.

J: Well tell me, you were very poor during depression, but they still managed to save enough?

E: We use to save, we use to work. Let me tell you something. You know I laugh at kids today with the five cents off the cans. In those days, in those days there were a lot of carnivals in Lowell, and Fourth of July was a big carnival. We use to take a burlap bag and go to the carnival grounds and pick coca cola bottles up. You know shy? because we could get two cents on every bottle. Okay, and we would go with the burlap bags. See we weren't ashamed of doing those things. And in fact, there is still a hangover today with me, because I go around school and if somebody leaves the can and it's a five cent deposit, I pick it up. I cannot let that go. I and I'm gased to think of how people flaunt that whole five cents that's coming back from that can. We use to

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do those kinds of things. We would do each one of us would do some kind of work in order for us to get some money to buy a house. And we did it. We weren't ashamed. I will never be ashamed of it. I stand to this day and tell people I picked up bottles and turned them in and got two cents for them. I worked as a waitress when I was in nursing, and when we had a month off, I worked as a waitress because I wanted the tips and I wanted the pay. We, we all worked because we had goals in mind, that we weren't gonna stay poor. We were no way gonna stay poor. The only way you could do that is to work.

J: Now the motivation was there from the parents?

E: Absolutely. The whole value system was laid out by the parents. The value system is what I said to you, is that they believed very strongly in the work ethic. Believed very strongly in education. Believed very strongly in helping one self and I'll tell you we came from a background of, as most people of our arabic heritage, we're very proud people. Very proud. We

have a heritage to be proud of and my mother and father you know, that was the kind of thing that gave us ... That's what I hope I have instilled in my daughter.

J: You did marry then, a Lebonese?

E: Oh ya. I married a Lebonese boy who went to the same church and who in fact everybody figures were we an (?), because everybody was concerned.

J: Related are you, are you related to your husband?

E: No. Well my grandmother was related to his mother. But according to the church we were enough far remove, so that it didn't count.

J: Now was it arranged through the families?

E: No, no. Well it wasn't in the sense that they were ah, ah you know, that they had it all set up. That he was gonna marry me. It was in the sense in the final analysis that this girl would make a good wife for you because she is a nurse and she knows every (laughing) ....

J: That was important then?

E: Oh ya, well it was. But talk about being a nurse. They didn't want me to be a nurse.

J: Why is that?

E: Oh that was a disgrace. I mean, in those days nice Lebonese Arabic speaking girls didn't go into that because that was a dirty profession. That was a profession for not nice girls.

J: My cousin told me the same thing.

E: Ya and that my father, ya my father had (?) who came in the door screeching that she heard that my father was gonna let me go to nursing school. Because this was a dirty kind of job, you did not do that. If you look around, you see very few Arabic speaking girls in this country who were nurses at that point and time, ya.

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J: What were they encouraging their daughters to do then?

E: To go get married or work in the (?)

J: To work in the mills?

E: Ya.

J: That was better than being a nurse?

E: Oh yes!

J: Oh my God!

E: But again the Lebonese, well you had that or you could be a school teacher. A school teacher was better than being a nurse to.
J: Now out of the nine children can you tell me ah, the professions?

E: Okay my oldest brother one of the twins is now retired. My brother Richard is an (?). He was in business for himself, but he retired from his business. Now he is a horse breeder. I have a brother who is a clinical psychologist, another brother who is a lawyer, another brother who is a, he works for the state, but he is also a restaurant (?). Is that how you say it, a restaurant (?) ? My sister Laurice is married and my sister Virginia is married. Laurice and Virginia, well Laurice works at Raytheon as a systems (?). What do they call it, quality control person? Then my sister Virginia and her husband are in business for themselves in (?) Florida. And me, I work.

J: That's marvelous. I am curious to know if your parents ever kept in touch with the old country?

E: Ah, my father did ya. My father would write to, my father would write to his family in the old country. As things would get better with us, he would try to send them some money.

J: That was gonna be my next question. Did he send money back?

E: He would try. Even I can remember one envelope had three one dollars bills in it.

J: He sent back three dollars?

E: Ya. I mean there were times you know, I mean ten dollars was alot to send. But he did whatever he could and would send back money. One of my biggest regrets is that, that my father does have family there, and that you know, when it was a healthy time to go to Lebanon we could not afford to go. Although I have a brother who's been there, two brothers who have been there, and when it was good to go, I couldn't afford it. Now things are better, I could afford to go, but it is not safe to go. My father still has two sisters who are alive in Lebanon.

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J: Do you keep in touch?

E: No, but however their daughters, their children have kept in touch with us periodically.

J: Sometime back in the interview you mentioned in the old days they use to make their own booze?

E: Oh ya. They use to make their own utter.

J: Can you tell me about that? Do you remember?

E: Do I remember? They use to buy the wooden boxes of raisins, right Lou? Grapes, no raisins and down in our cellar, in our dirt cellar we had this still. It was made of copper and that they would...

J: This was on which street?

E: On Adams Street.

J: On Adams Street, this is going way back.

E: And you would bring the still upstairs and then you, with water and the grapes and then you would ferment it and distill it and make (?), which is very similar to the Greek oozo. You would do that and make your own liquor. I said Frank the cop would smell it down on Adams Street, come running up and knocking, Mike.

J: Do you know if your father sold it?

E: No he never sold it.

J: It was for his own consumption?

E: No. My father gave it to everybody. You didn't make it to sell, you made it to have it in the house. And you made it to give it to your friends. You did it to give, I mean you did it so that, that you could go over to your relatives house and bring him a bottle of utter, you know?

J: What kind of food does utter go good with? What did they, when they drank it what did they use to eat with it?

E: Well, (maza?), you're talking about maza. Now that, see again the Lebonese and Arabic people drink very wisely. They don't believe in drinking unless they accompany it with eating. This way it tends not to make you. drunk. So there are certain kinds of foods that one prepares in order to be enjoyed with a drink. Alot of people refer to them as hors d'oeuvres. However we refer to them as maza. This maza could be olives and cheese. It could be what we call (?). It could be (?). There's a whole lot of things, and with Syrian, we call it Syrian bread. It's not pita,

pita is a Jewish name for the bread that they copy, but it is Syrian bread that looks very much like pita.

J: Very, very good. Ah, this is the type of food you grew up on then?

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E: Ah ya.

J: Did your mother ever attempt making American food? Did she have American friends?

E: Oh my mother had all, my mother had more friends than you could shake a stick at. Everybody loved my mother. Everybody loved my Cynthia and mother. You know, in terms of when you look at American food, what's American food? We use to eat (?) crackers. (?) crackers, you know what that is?

J: No what is that?

E: That's like breaded cutlets, but what it was is lamb leg. Now remember in those days lamb was not expensive. Well you would take a leg-of lamb and you would slice the lamb into a thin cutlet. Then you would bread it, and then you would fry it, and you would serve it with mashed potatoes. But that was (?) crackers. Now that could have been an American dish, but we didn't know it, okay?

J: Oh that's great. I'm glad you gave me the recipe.

E: Oh that's absolutely delightful.

J: Do you still do it?

E: Laurice does it. My sister does it. I have a brother who rolls his up special. You know in those days you bought lamb and you paid nineteen cents, twenty-five cents a pound for a leg of lamb. You didn't pay a dollar sixty-nine, a dollar ninety-nine for lamb. Then what other kinds of things? Well we use to eat.-- mashed potatoes and my mother made the best baked beans going. My father for Sunday mornings, my father would do Sunday morning breakfast and he would make golden rod eggs.

J: What's golden rod eggs?

E: Golden rod eggs is, you make a white sauce. You get toast and you take boiled eggs and you separate the whites and the yokes and you put the whites in the white sauce and then you put the white sauce over the diced toast. Then you sprinkle the egg yokes over it. Those are golden rod

eggs. My father, my father use to make our breakfast on Sundays, and it use to be golden rod eggs.

J: And you all sat down at that?

E: Absolutely!

J: That round table?

E: On Arlington Street. It was round. Ya, we always ate together. It was round on Arlington Street, that wasn't round. That's right on Arlington Street. Laurice, that was a round table?

J: Where did your parents go to shop for their furniture when they moved? Do you remember the stores that they frequented?

E: It was just there.

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J: It was just there? You never shopped for your furniture?

E: No, no, never.

J: This hag got to be the best interview I've ever ever had. You don't remember your parents going out? Did they buy on credit or did they pay cash for everything?

E: Well, philosophically they never bought anything they couldn't afford, okay. They bought very limited things on credit. However, that if when they wanted something big, they would try and save for it, because they didn't believe in owing. See, none of us believe in owing money. Ya, none of us believe in owing money because my father and mother didn't believe in owing. My father also believed if you can't afford it, then you shouldn't have until you could afford it. So you know as far as furniture goes, like Laurice says, it was always there. I do remember the refrigerator. It came in the day Ma died. It was going to be a surprise, but what happened is they asked for some money, okay. We just pulled our bank books at that time. We had been saving our own bank books. Remember each one of us had a bank book and we threw it on the table to see about making up the cost of that refrigerator?

END OF TAPE

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End of Interview