This interview is being conducted with Professor Mildred Berman on December 8, 1999, at Salem State College. The interview is one in a series being conducted as part of the project documenting the history of Salem State College. The interviewer is Professor John J. Fox, Professor Emeritus, Department of History, Salem State College. Dr. Berman will discuss her years as a member of the Geography Department. By the way I know that you are a professor emeritus, but I just simply called you professor. We both are.

Mildred, give me a brief biographical background, bring me up to when you came to Salem State. You were born in Boston I know that.

MB: That’s right. And then…

JF: What year were you born?

MB: Oh, dear, that’s very personal. Ah, 1926.

JF: You’ve got it on your form here.

MB: That’s right and I went to Chelsea High School. I lived in Chelsea. And I enrolled at Salem State in the fall of 1944. And it was a wonderful beginning to a college career that I never really thought too much about. I’m glad I did it. I enjoyed, not only coming to Salem, but traveling on the train with lots of others from Boston and Everett and Chelsea and so on. So we didn’t have parking problems then. We didn’t have cars. We also (laugh) well we did some physical education and activity, walking up from the station as part of our course work. We got points for that. And that was great fun. And the other interesting thing that I remember rather vividly was the fact that we took gym, physical education, and the sports were conducted out on the field where there is now, well, a lawn and a parking lot. The part between the training school, the Horace Mann School, and where the first library was.

JF: Where the Administrative Building was.

MB: Right, and we all had these little gym suits that we had bought in Boston. I mean it was a big deal. I enjoyed that a lot. But perhaps the thing that I remember most vividly about my first year was the fact that it was ’44, the Second World War was just sort of winding down, but it was still on. And there was a sale of war bonds going on around the Commonwealth and so on. And at Salem State there was going to be an auction of various things, if you bought so many war bonds. And one of the things that was going to be auctioned was the presidency of the college. I bid on it, I had talked to my father the night before and he gave me a figure. And he said if you could get up this figure, I will give you the money. And so I got the presidency of the college for one day. And I remember that very well, because then I had to think well, what am I going to do? People would say - well don’t just close up school and classes and so on. So I had a program and the program was to change roles and have all of the faculty members become students and all of my friends who were the students become administrators. A dean, a head of a department and so forth. So it was a very, very funny day. We had the English teachers dancing on the
lawn, and we had…I was sitting in the president’s office for the first and last time and that was very nice, I must say.

JF: (laughing)

MB: The president was very gracious and just sort of went out for that day.

JF: Who was the president?

MB: Ah, the white hair…

JF: Edward Sullivan?

MB: Edward A. Sullivan, yes indeed. Yes and his friend, of course, was Mrs. King one of the gym teachers. They eventually got married. She took the whole thing in great stride. We had her doing exercises on the lawn too. It was very, very nice. I enjoyed that year, I enjoyed my classes. I thought I had excellent instruction. I had no idea that I would ever go into geography, because there was no geography in that first year.

JF: Can I stop you for a moment? Can we back up a little bit so we don’t go too far. I’m going to interview you forever and ever and ever because you’re exciting. You’re interesting. Let me back up, you went to Chelsea High did you say?

MB: I did.

JF: What made you choose coming to Salem.

MB: Well it’s not, shall we say a very logical choice in the sense that it was a plan. It was not a plan. I had the business course, the commercial course at Chelsea High School. I’d had no thought of going to college.

JF: Why?

MB: Well, I was the girl in the family and my brother was in college and you know after all in those days that was more important than sending your daughter to college. But then I did fairly well in high school and I said to my parents. - I would like to go to college. They said – well, if you want to go we’ll help you. And my question was – well where will I go? And this was late you know. And one place was Boston University, the School of Arts and Letters. Basically sort of a commercial course kind of environment. And somebody, who was a friend of my brothers, said – You know you should look at Salem State College, the State Teachers College. He had gone there and he said - it’s a lot of fun and you’ll learn a lot and you will be fitted for a profession. And at that time I didn’t think about professions, I didn’t think I wanted to teach. But when I looked at the catalog and saw what they offered I said – Gee I like these things. So I sent applications to both places, got into both places and just sort of you know, flipped a coin and I came here. And I never regretted it for one minute.
JF: What was the tuition when you first came, do you remember?

MB: (Laughing) Seventy-five dollars a year. And we used to sing this song for the semester for thirty-seven fifty you could get an education. That's half a year. And you know that was like nothing at all. And I worked as a waitress summers with a classmate of mine, Charlotte Bekin, who became the president of the student council. And we went up to upper New York State and waited on tables.

JF: Where about in New York?

MB: Windale, New York right over the Connecticut border. And we made more than enough for our books and seriously, for our tuition. And we did that two years in a row, because it was such fun. A lot of times there were not enough guests at the hotel we were at so we went swimming and hiking and things like that. It was very wonderful. They were very carefree days when you think about it. And then of course the teaching, the practice teaching came in the junior year and in the senior year. I mean we had two different segments of that. And we taught in the lab school, what is now the lab school, the Horace Mann. And I thought well, it was elementary that I taught, and I thought well this is ok, but I decided it was not what I wanted to do. And what sort of sparked my interest more than teaching in the elementary grades was the work that I did in the Geography Department with Miss Flanders, Verna B. Flanders, who was on the faculty then. And she said to me well you know if you want to go on in geography there are two places that you should consider. One was the University of Chicago, because that's where she went.

JF: (laughing) Good school.

MB: Yeah, well, excellent school. And the other place, Clark University. Now at the time that she had gone, she couldn't go the Clark University because she was female. They didn't let women in until the mid forties.

JF: Oh it wasn't co-educational?

MB: No it was not. Well I thought about it and I said well I don't want to go to Chicago, it's too far from home. (Laughing) Which was a very parochial attitude. So I thought well, I'll write a letter to Clark with all the application material. And I went out one gray March day, if you ever take the bus to Worcester in March, I mean it's the most unprepossessing scene that you could see. It was very dull. And when we got to the building where the geography school was located, the Graduate School of Geography, I said boy it makes Salem State look like a palace. I mean it was old, it was not an interesting building. But there was one huge workroom where all the students had desks and upstairs there was one big classroom, a great many maps and so on, where the lectures took place. And the director of the school and the graduate students took me around and showed me things and told me a little bit about what they were doing and everybody was just extremely cordial and I thought – this sounds pretty good. And what was even better was that they offered a scholarship. Tuition free. So my master's degree didn't cost me – oh wait a minute, I had to take one course in the summer in cartography, because we had no cartography in Salem State. And that cost, not a lot of money, it was less than a hundred dollars. But the rest
of my master's degree didn't cost anything, except room and board of course. So that was pretty good.

JF: Almost as good as me. I had the GI bill (laughing).

MB: Yeah, I liked that a lot. Worcester was, as I said, not a wonderful town. It was gray and snowy; the people were marvelous. There was an international graduate student body because the war had just been over and they came from all over. They came from England and they came from Burma, they came from China, they came from the Middle East. And there were very few women. I never realized that at the time, I mean I was just so busy doing my work and learning about these other people. My best friend, during those years, was an Indian woman whose last name was also Berman. But she was married to a Bengali gentleman and that’s where the name came from. And she got a Ph.D. in climatology. But we used to walk downtown and she used to cook Indian meals and it was a lot of fun. And the instruction was excellent. I was scared out of my wits when I saw all these people from all these foreign countries, some already had master's degrees and I was just starting out. But it really didn’t matter, I mean you know you came, you did your work and people helped one another out in the library and we spent a lot of time in the library. More than I’d ever spent here. But then it was a different thing. It was a different milieu. Oh we had field camp in the fall, which made a lot of bonding take place. For three weeks we camped out in the Connecticut Valley. And what we did was we mapped the land use patterns, tobacco, apples and so on. We did it in pairs and we had these large maps and so on. And then we mapped the physical geography of the glaciated tureen. What caused it and so on. And we were out in the field all day long and at night we repaired to the local pub. And that’s when we began to get to know people. That was very nice. And at the end you wrote a paper with your partner from field camp. And then you got launched into the work of graduate school.

JF: I’m going to back you up again, let’s go back to Salem State. I want to talk a little bit about Salem State, because I know very little about Salem State in the years that you were here. In fact there’s not very much recorded about this college. As you know, we haven’t done a decent history. We’ve done some history that praises people that don’t deserve to be praised.

MB: Yes.

JF: (Laughing) Anyway, I shouldn’t be putting this stuff on tape, of course I should, doesn’t bother me a lot. So you came here in 1944, how large was the student body?

MB: Well my graduating class was seventy-three. It was a little larger to begin with; there’s always some attrition. Some people don’t finish. And our classes, well, maybe twenty, maybe fifteen. We never really had a large class. There weren’t enough students. The faculty was small and the faculty people taught many different courses. I mean they had no choice. This is what the school was organized around. And, I will say that, the level of instruction varied a lot. I mean there would be English and history professors who were wonderful. Because most of us had never had that kind of teaching, that was just a little beyond the high school level and so on. And these were very qualified, experienced people. We had lecturers come from time to time. There was some kind of a fund that was available for getting either historians or English literature
people. And occasionally some musical talent that was really good. And the different classes freshman, sophomores, junior and seniors had their own little groups and they would put on a performance, usually in the spring. My class was big into minstrel shows. And we did that. Of course it was politically not correct. We didn’t do black face per se, but we did everything else, I mean we had the outfits. And the songs, and there was nothing that I can think of that was wrong or insulting in anyway shape or form. These were the songs “Way down on the Levee”, you know Mississippi. You know that sort of thing. And we’d have a chorus and we had fun. We were a commuting school. And we’d stay late to rehearse, you know there’d be one person who played the piano. And we’d raise a little money for the class. And our parents would come to see their burgeoning stars.

JF: (laughing)

MB: And it was a lot of fun. And now as far as other aspects of the way the school was run. We didn’t really know what was going on. I mean we had President Sullivan and he had a registrar, Ann Clark who literally ran the place. She was the bookkeeper and took care of the tuition and the things like that and she also took care of programs. And there was one secretary in the office and that was Mary O’Keeffe who a lot of us still remember very fondly.

JF: Why do you remember her very fondly?

MB: Well first of all she was very pleasant. Miss Clark was a little grumpy from time to time, if you didn’t do what she wanted like immediately.

JF: (Laughing)

MB: And so you know you sort of paced yourself to see who was in the office when you needed to go pay a bill or something like that. But it was very clear that Miss Clark ran, not only the school, but she ran the president too. He was a very sweet gentlemanly individual. But I think she’s the one who made administrative decisions. Well, I mean she had the money so…not that there was that much, there really wasn’t. We took some odd courses as I think about it. Like handwriting.

JF: Who taught handwriting at that time?

MB: Harrigan. Dan Harrigan - we used to sing songs to him.

JF: (Laughing) What do you mean you used to sing songs to him?

MB: “H A double R I”.

JF: Oh yes.

MB: I mean we would do that at banquets and so on. And it was the lowest grade I ever got.

JF: Is that right?
MB: Blackboard writing.

JF: What was that? What was the grade?

MB: C –, blackboard writing. You know my life has not changed very much because of that. I managed to overcome that handicap.

JF: I took blackboard writing at North Adams. I had to do a one-credit course.

MB: Yeah, one credit.

JF: And I got so frightened when I had to go up because I was intimidated by college when I first went. I couldn’t move my hand hardly. And I wrote my name very, very small. Teacher looked at me and in an insulting way said – sit down, you’ll never make a teacher. I never forgot that. And much of that influenced the way I would deal with my students.

MB: Yes.

JF: I would never treat them that way, I said I would never treat somebody like that. But I remember that course and I joke with my students when I would write on the board – well, remember I can’t write on the blackboard.

MB: (Laughing)

JF: So I, like you, I think I got a C-.

MB: Wow, well we’re in the same club. In the same club.

JF: Yes.

MB: And before Harrigan there was Donner. A Mr. Donner who was a very slight, elderly man, and he wrote like an artist on the board. And you know we didn’t know whether to be frightened of him or what. But he was so much a perfectionist that you know we said – well, if we have to do this we’ll do it. But nobody really enjoyed it. And well, they had more blackboards then (laughing) and more chalk I think.

JF: Yes right. (Laughing)

MB: All in all as far as physical ed. was concerned, you know we did a lot of trips to other schools to play hockey, field hockey, soccer, basket ball.

JF: Did you have to play on a team or was this voluntary?

MB: No, this is extracurricular. There was a team that was chosen you know to go for the special trips and so on. But extracurricular you could play as a volunteer. And I loved it. I was a terrible
athlete, but it was such fun. You know. And for girl's rules, at that time, were very different. You could only go up and dribble up half a court. You couldn't go all the way. So that made it a little easier. But I never made my mark in athletics.

JF: (laughing) You did other places though…

MB: Well maybe, ah I'm just trying to think oh, it was Mrs. King and Miss Wallace, they were the phys. ed. instructors. Two very different individuals. Miss Wallace was the rough and ready one you know, told you what you had to do and when you had to do it. And Mrs. King was very gentile, very much wanted us to be lady like at all times. Which wasn't easy when you're playing ball.

JF: Yeah right.

MB: I'm trying to think... As I said we had these extracurricular lectures, every so often. There was a wonderful political one, because you know it was after the war and there were people who would come. And my friends and I would talk about it afterwards on the train and we didn't have to write papers or anything like that. It was a good part of the education. And it wasn't that much of it. I mean the lectures like that. But what they had was good. I enjoyed that. What else?

JF: Who were some of the other professors you remember? Who'd you have for English?

MB: Miss Burnham. Gertrude Burnham.

JF: Gertrude Burnham.

MB: Oh yeah, I mean she was the quintessential prototype of an English professor with these little glasses. And she would sit at her desk, she didn't walk around or anything like that, and talk about these books. We had this reading list, Victorian literature and all the way up to modern literature. And you would be assigned these books and told there would be a quiz on such and such a date, what ever it was and there were these little, teeny questions like what color was the woman's dress on the day she did something wonderful or terrible or something like that. There were miniscule questions, so that when we were reading, we didn't read for continuity, we read – Uh that's a question.

JF: Ahh.

MB: And that was some of it and the rest of it however, was good and she would comment on the style of the writing and where the writing stood in the history of you know early, not American, but you know English literature. We all did – oh well she started with the classics. I'm just thinking back, I don't remember them doing the Iliad and the Odyssey. They probably did it in another class. I did not have it. Because I think those are the greatest novels, in a sense, that have been written. Because I've been doing a lot of work on that now, now that I'm no longer a student, or a professor. Then we had Dr. McGlynn and we were all very happy with Dr. McGlynn, because we were given to understand she had two Ph.D.'s. I'm not sure that's correct, but in any case…
JF: She did.

MB: She was one of the few on the faculty who had one Ph.D., let alone two. And she did world history and we all had to do that. And then eventually she did American government and history. And we all had her for that, because there weren’t any other people teaching it. And we thought the two of them, Burnham and McGlynn, were superior to the others. We had a music teacher, C. Francis Woods. I don’t know if you remember that name.

JF: Yeah, I do remember the name.

MB: Very tall, striking gentleman, bald with gray hair, and a booming voice. He played the piano and directed the choir. He was good. There wasn’t a lot of sophisticated musical talent in the student body. He did the best he could with us. He taught all the music and as I say directed the choir. He was good. And then we had the psychology professor, white hair, can’t remember his name, I can see him. And he would sit in his chair and say – Well now I don’t mean to be pedantic but…and then he would go into something that was the most pedantic thing you ever heard. Ah, I don’t remember his name, I think his picture is in the yearbook. Let’s see who else was there. And then we got Larry Lowrey.

JF: So the tape will know what you’re doing, I’ll just mention that you are looking at the 1948 yearbook.

MB: Here he is, it’s Leon H. Rockwell. Does that name mean anything.

JF: No, I reacted only because I thought of the name Rockett. But it’s Rockwell. Oh..

MB: Richard, he was a French teacher.

JF: You’re making a face on that one.

MB: That’s correct, he was a very nice gentleman. There were a couple of us in the class who’d occasionally be called on to recite the lesson because he hadn’t done it. And he was a nice enough man.

JF: (Laughing) Are you suggesting he wasn’t prepared?

MB: Well, that would be one way of interpreting it. Yeah, I would think so.

JF: (Laughing)

MB: Now there are some people here in the Business Department we did not have, who were very good. And we had…

JF: You’re smiling.
MB: Earle Collins. Now Earle Collins was the science teacher. And he too was a quintessential representation of a science professor. I mean he was very knowledgeable. But when he stood in front of a class and talked he used so much I mean, he knew so much, I mean he would stutter from time to time, and it wasn’t, not a funny stutter but he would be groping for more words and different words and so on. And he, you know if it had been the days of television he would have been perfect. Not the mad scientist but the informed scientist who sort of couldn't quite get it across. Very nice man. Wonderful man. I liked him a lot. But I didn’t major in science. Then business people. Jim Sullivan came along just as we left. He had just been in the Navy, came out and he was young and so all of us – Oh a young professor. He taught biology. Oh, he replaced Miss Goldsmith.

JF: Oh, yes.

MB: Now Gertrude Goldsmith is not in this book. I don’t know if she retired, no Gertrude Goldsmith lived to be a hundred and something.

JF: That’s right.

MB: Four, six something like that. She had us scared silly. I mean you know because she talked biology and you better learn that and do the dissections and the drawings and so forth. And a lot of us hadn't had any of that before. She was very strict. But she was good. I mean let’s face it there was no real lab equipment. I remember the little scalpels for dissecting earthworms. It was not exactly my favorite type of thing to do.

JF: (Laughing)

MB: But we did that and she … she was the one that taught the classes that were eventually taken over by Jim Sullivan. And they were two very different kinds of teachers. I mean he was sort of pragmatic about his presentations, and she had us running around and doing things. I read before she got into the forties when she was teaching here, I mean not her forties, 1940’s, they had a garden where she had students plant things

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Tape One, side two.

JF: Ok, we were talking about your experience here as a student and we were remembering some of the faculty member and you were talking about various things. Where do you want to go with it now? What else do I need to know about Salem State in 1944 to 48?

MB: Oh, well perhaps the other thing that might be mentioned is that in that interim period my junior and senior year the student body changed because the boys were coming back from the war.

JF: Oh.
MB: And well we had two men in our class in the class of ’48. In fact one of them came to be a professor at Salem State. That was Arnold Checchi. And the other one was Bill, I can’t remember his last name, I can just see him tall, bent over with little silver rimmed glasses and he spoke like a true New Englander you know. He looked like he was forty when he was twenty. But anyway he was nice. And then in our junior year we had people coming into the Commercial Department, that is business. And not many in Elementary, but several in Junior High. They wanted to be teachers. And they were all older than we were because they had been in the service and so on. And this made everybody very happy, I mean it was the beginning of a number of romances, which eventually culminated in marriage. I think of one couple, Joan Mulvihill and Gordon McRae. And I hesitate to say whether they’re still living, so I’ll have to let that go. But you know it was nice and it gave the whole place a slightly different aura. And they kept saying – Well maybe we’ll have a football team. Well we didn’t have a football team. They eventually had a basketball team, but that took a long time. And I think they kept getting after Larry Lowrey to do something about it. Well he was the football player, Larry Lowrey, as I recall – a good one. And if he had had, I think, a little bit more support from the front office maybe they would have done something. But there weren’t enough…I mean the student enrollment, yes it increased, but it didn’t get up to more than maybe a couple of hundred while I was still here. So that was interesting. And at the moment I can’t think of anything else of that period.

JF: Outside of the show that you would put on in the spring, was there any social life on campus? I mean did they have dances?

MB: Yes, they did have dances. They didn’t have a lot of the type parties that they have now because those are kind of wild. The problem was that most of the student body was a commuting student body and we didn’t have cars. So the ones that were as I say, boarding students, and the boarding students lived somewhere in Salem in a room or something, and most of them were the business students or the commercials as we called them. And they would have little get togethers, and there would be dances from time to time. Or one of the clubs, the social clubs would have a dance let’s say in March or St. Patrick’s Day. Something or other. Something before Christmas. They were reasonably attended but they weren’t big, I mean you know just a small group of people.

JF: If you had a dance on campus, did you have to have a chaperone? One of the faculty members chaperoning?

MB: Yes, there were no problems then, there was no liquor. Or if there was we didn’t know about it. And there were not out-and-out incidents. There was one incident, as I recall which had nothing to do with that. But we had a student council, a student government, and we found those officers of the student government were elected and one year, I think it was my senior year, we found out that the treasurer was stealing. And that was big news and very difficult news for a lot of us to handle. I mean here are our friends. How could this happen? Well he eventually gave back the money, but it was not a pleasant time. And also the president we had at the time, you know he was such a gentle soul it was very hard for him to get into this and get it straightened out. Miss Clark, I think, straightened out most of it.

JF: When you say president, you mean student council president?
MB: Oh no, no I mean the president of the college.

JF: Ok.

MB: I’m sorry, the student council president was, as I recall, was somebody I knew very well and was devastated by the whole thing, because she didn’t know how to handle it. I mean here’s this guy, who’s a veteran, who seems to be competent handling this money. And all of a sudden this thing blows up. But I mean they handled it well. It didn’t get into the papers or anything like that. But when I heard about it, my friend was devastated, the council president. And but I guess that’s the way you learn about the world and this was a good place to start to learn.

JF: Describe the campus to me in 1944-1948.

MB: It was certainly one of the smallest campuses that you would find anywhere in this area. The campus consisted of one building, the Sullivan Building, at the corner of Lafayette and Loring Avenue.

JF: You are a geographer, thank god! (Laughing) You’re putting it in perspective so they can listen to it on the tape.

MB: Absolutely! And there was a bus that would come up Lafayette Street and drop students off right where the college was. One bus went, I think, to Marblehead. There were two buses to Marblehead and one bus turned the corner to Loring Avenue and went up Loring to various parts of Salem. And that was oh, and one bus, the one that went up Loring Avenue went to Boston. So that students from the Boston area could commute. They just had to remember when the bus was. That was always a question. Well, I don’t know if I’m going to make my bus or my train. A lot of us were on the train too. I loved the train. I walked to the station in Chelsea, took the 8:32 with my friends, the ones in Everett had gotten on four minutes before and then we would go to Swampscott and Lynn and then get off at that wonderful railroad station which they tore down. Which was right in the vicinity of where Salem’s present post office is. I mean that was a horrible intersection traffic wise, but the building was like a Norman castle. It was wonderful. And so the campus then was tied together by these transportation lines. If you want to call it that. The pride and joy of the grounds people were the rhododendron bushes in the front.

JF: Which are still there aren’t they? Yeah there’re still there.

MB: Yes, they’ve been replanted and everything because I guess there were some bad winters and they lost some. And they were always in bloom during graduation. And that was always – oh, will we have flowers for graduation? That was nice. The rest of the campus, well we hesitated to call it a campus. I mean there was a place to sit and eat your lunch on the grass if you wanted to, but it wasn’t landscaped well. Except for the front. In the back well, it was parking place I think for about ten cars. And then all of a sudden the parking lot sort of sloped downward and that’s where you went down to the gym field to play soccer or hockey. That was fun, because you changed in the basement of the Sullivan Building into your little shorts that you
bought when you were a freshman. Oh, I'll never forget them. My class had this sort of bluish, light bluish short set, pleated shorts and a nice top and the next class had yellow ones.

JF: Oh.

MB: The ones who came before us they had the yellow ones and then the others they, we all had different colors so if you saw somebody running down the field in their gym suit you knew who was a freshman or a junior or senior or whatever. And that was fun. But then we'd take them home and starch them, and put on our letter. An orange S for the orange team or brown one, we used to have colors for the school that were orange and brown. And we were very unhappy when we found out a few years ago that the present administration decided the orange and brown was not really, well I don't know, something they liked and they changed it to blue. Blue and gray? Is that what it is? Well, however, there are a number of us who remember the orange and brown.

JF: Yeah right.

MB: It's diminishing but they still talk about it. And the competitions, the intramural competitions were orange teams, brown teams and so on. You would see people running with an orange pinney or a brown pinney or something like that. Yeah, but the campus there was one little driveway right here where they have lilac bushes, or they had them, I don't know if they are still there. The first right when you come down Lafayette Street past the corner and then there is the little driveway.

JF: Going into the Sullivan Building?

MB: Yes, they tell you not to drive up there.

JF: Yeah, they tell you not to drive up there.

MB: It used to be lilacs, gorgeous lilacs.

JF: I think they pulled them out and replanted some of them.

MB: Yeah, landscaping was not their strong suit. We liked it.

JF: Was it a five-day schedule for you? Did you have to…

MB: Yes, no classes on Saturday. Never. Occasionally there might be a conference. But that was very occasionally. For, you know, one of the clubs or so on. Or else a field trip. You know the John Burroughs Society.

JF: John Burroughs Society.
MB: And there was no geography society, there weren’t enough of us. There was no geography major. That just sort of you picked it up by the way. Now of course, geography is well established here.

JF: That’s right.

MB: It wasn’t then, it wasn’t then.

JF: Now when you said you were here five days a week. Did you have to stay on campus all day or could you go off campus like our students, I mean in terms of classes if you had classes at twelve o’clock did you have to be here before twelve o’clock?

MB: Oh, you’d come when the train or bus got you here.

JF: Ok.

MB: And then if the weather was nice and you didn’t have a class you might go down to Forest River Park or even if you had a class you might go down …

JF: (Laughing) You mean they cut class in those days too?

MB: They did, they did it was fun. But most of the time we hung around. There weren’t many places to hang around. There was a smoker in the boiler room, I mean everybody would go down there and smoke. I didn’t smoke, thank God. But yuck, the friends I had that did, you knew where they were when they came upstairs. And there was, I think, a little coffee shop somewhere. And a cafeteria, which undoubtedly had some of the worst food in the world. Jell-O was one of their prime offerings. Well I guess you couldn’t blame them they had no real kitchen equipment, I think there was a stove and ah, willing people preparing the sandwiches. Which were very slim sandwiches. And milk and I don’t know if there was soda, yeah I think that there was soda. Maybe Coca-Cola. But we didn’t have coke machines then. But most of, a lot of us, brought our lunch. It was a lot easier. A little pastry or two.

JF: I would imagine. Let me ask you about Miss Flanders. Seeing that you mentioned that she had some influence on you. Was there a Geography Department, or was she part of the Social Science Department?

MB: Well you know, we didn’t have departments, we didn’t have a dean, we didn’t have you know, this compartmentalization we have now. We talk about it as the Geography Department, there were two people in it. Miss Ware and Miss Flanders. Miss Ware took care of the business or the commercial students; Miss Flanders took the elementary and junior high. Two very different personalities but two very competent women, extremely. Miss Flanders with a degree from Chicago and Miss Ware she had gone to, oh, Columbia. These women were well prepared and they were interested in what they did and they did field trips and had students do field studies. Miss Flanders was well…a lot of the students were very unhappy with her. She was very strict. And she would call on you in class, she had little calling cards with your name on them and she’d say – Well, Mr. Fox could you please tell us what the main agricultural crop is in
Cuba today? It may have been in the reading we were supposed to do. And I mean Mr. Fox would stand up, maybe being a little jittery or something, or else she’d ask the student to go to the map and point out the place that they had mentioned. There were some points on the map that had holes in them because you had a pointer and they were so nervous they poked holes in the map. That was interesting. She would spring pop quizzes from time to time, and you better be prepared, because for the first time in my life I flunked the course in geography. I mean I flunked a quiz. And it was one of hers. And I said – Ohhh, this will never do. So we prepared. She was, as I said, she would sometimes make remarks that could be interpreted as, not exactly sarcastic, but on the verge you know. Like – you weren’t able to prepare this before hand or something. I happened to like her because she had a very good sense of humor also. And when it came time to finish the two years that I had her for Eurasia, I think South America. I had her for two courses that was it. And then she started telling me about what a graduate school might be like if I wanted to apply. And I did. No she was extremely supportive. And she was one of the few professors I knew who used to invite students to her house. I mean she’d invite a group, she lived in Swampscott, on the beach. She would invite the section she advised for an ice cream social or something on the beach, when it was a nice day or in the spring or something. She used to invite me and a student whose name was Marion Nahorvic. I don’t know what ever happened to Marion, but she was a good geography student. She wasn’t in my class, she was in another group. And she would invite us for dinner. And I mean that was sort of an unusual thing because the social life after hours at this school was like zilch, nothing. And when this happened, woah, you know. There’s life beyond the classroom, and that was very, very nice. Yes she was quite an influence on me. And I kept in touch with her when I went to Clark I came back to see her. And it was nice; she was always very cordial. She was a mentor there’s no question. She didn’t do the type of geography I was doing at Clark.

JF: Yeah.

MB: Because that, you know that, got into another level. But she certainly knew it. And I was very pleased to have her.

JF: What turned you onto geography? When you came here you had no background or nothing; you were out of high school and stuff like that.

MB: Well, it was Miss Flanders. We had done a little traveling in my family. We’d been to Canada, we’d been to Cuba, my father had a brother there who couldn’t get into the United States because of quotas and so on. So we went to see him and his family. And that was great fun.

JF: I’m going to stop for a moment. I’m not going to let you go on that one. When you said he had a brother who couldn’t get in because of quotas, was this somebody, was this your uncle who was trying to get in during the World War.

MB: No it was even before the World War.

JF: Did it have anything to do with the situation in Germany or anything like that?
MB: No. Thank God. I thought hey they were out by then but they were in Cuba because there was no way for them to get here.

JF: OK.

MB: But we’d done this traveling, we’d done traveling in the United States. My father worked six days a week. But he loved to drive and so we’d pack up the car with us and we’d go someplace. And so there was this sort of interesting, different places and stuff I was learning about in school. And when it came to geography of course I hadn’t been anywhere, except to Cuba, nobody else had been to Cuba.

JF: I would imagine.

MB: So that made me different. But the way Miss Flanders taught. I mean we learned about Europe, she’d talk about the villages as well as the towns, and a little bit of the history. But she always had the map up there so you could see how close places were together. And I thought to myself – well now this is very interesting. And the more I learned, the more I liked. And then, you know, she’d mention a few books, you could read this you could, you know you didn’t have to. I went out and got them and I read them and I still do. Because they just make things come alive. A lot of the students hated it, they didn’t like maps, they didn’t like the way she taught or anything. But I didn’t have that opinion at all. I thought she was one of the best people here. Oh and there was another very good professor, whom I did not take a lot of courses with, but who was also excellent in her presentation, Miss Stone. Mildred Stone.

JF: Mildred Stone.

MB: Yeah, really excellent and cordial and very nice to students.

JF: What do you think of your education that you got out of Salem State?

MB: As I look back on it now, for the time, I thought it was the bargain of the century. I mean it cost very little. I wish I had had more courses in Social Studies type things. Courses in say Russian history, Latin American history. But they weren’t doing that then. I would have liked more music. And you know what? Talking about the arts, Miss – Dr. McGlynn did Renaissance art when she did history. And that was a whole new world. I said – I need more of this. I mean she couldn’t do it all, she did a lot of it. My first trip to Europe I said – Oh man this is what she was talking about.

JF: Yeah.

MB: So I would have liked more of that. But for the size of the school and for the nature of the faculty, I think it was really quite good. I mean geography was terrific. The history, I learned a little later on, it was a little on the conservative side. I didn’t understand that until much later.

JF: Of course.
MB: But that is the way it is. And as far as Miss Burnham and her English was concerned that was a whole different world. Reading the older literary classics. *Tom Jones, Pamela*, I remember those. And then later on... Oh then I took courses – they had extension courses if you wanted to get credits while you were teaching here, extra credits. Before I finished...Oh I already had a masters degree, why did I have to do that? Because I wanted the courses. Miss Burnham taught European literature, various periods in European literature. You know, as an extension course or a graduate course. So say you wrote a paper and you read the books. That was a lot of fun. I read books I never would have read otherwise. Oh yeah, it was a good education.

JF: When you went on to grad school and we’re going to talk about grad school next, but when you went on the grad school you mentioned in that article that you were a little nervous. You were nervous in fact.

MB: I was.

JF: Were you concerned about whether you were properly trained coming out of Salem State to compete with the other students.

MB: Well yes I was; not only seeing the gentlemen who’d come back from the war who were older. People who already had their masters and were going for their Ph.D. But I will have to tell you this, the director of the graduate school at Clark, Dr. Van [????], big, tall Dutchman with a cigar in his mouth all the time except, he’s gone unfortunately. When he interviewed me, you know he looked at my grades and he said – Oh, these are good grades he said, but if you were at Bates, if you were a student at Bates these grades would all be lower. In other words what he was telling me is that my teachers college grading system or my education was not quite as rigid as the private schools. Now I find that very interesting as I think about it and a good question because at the time I thought – well maybe I’m not going to get in, or something like that. But a lot of his students who came in with a masters level, and even at the Ph.D. level, had originally started in teachers colleges all over the country, the Midwest, not only New England. Not so the far West at that time but a lot of Midwesterners who’d been at the agricultural schools. And a lot of geography there. But, I mean, he didn’t mean it to put me down in a way that I felt, because, after I’d been there, well it was two semesters, no it was two years to do the masters. I could have done it in one but they keep saying take this. And I’m glad that I did because when I went for the Ph.D., I think that I had to take two courses that were just pieces of cake because I had them all. He’s the one who said to me, when it came time for the Ph.D. - why don’t you come back? He knew that I was here and I thought –well that’s a thought, yeah but why should I get a Ph.D.? Because at that time, well there weren’t too many around here.

JF: That’s right there weren’t.

MB: And would it make me a better teacher? I loved teaching. Well I think it did make me a better teacher. At the time I never would have admitted it, just said Oh no, oh, no. Just do my work. I had that impression but then I also know that a lot of the people I was with at Clark had gone through the system, the state college system, the teachers college system. And even now you find... there was this big conference in Boston the first week in November that Dick Anderson chaired. I don’t know if you saw it he got a great award for it. And it was for teachers of
geography from K-12 and, you know, there were some from the university level. They came from all over the country. The meeting was in Boston. We started our first session in the State House; it was a wonderful open meeting. And then the rest of the sessions were in the Park Plaza Hotel. But I went and I saw a lot of my friends who had been at Clark and are still out there teaching. I thought it was wonderful. So as I told you the teachers colleges had an important role. And still do. You don’t want to call it a teachers college anymore, ok. But the kind of program that you get in a teacher training institution is very valuable.

JF: Why I asked you that question was for a couple reasons. One because I wanted to know what your reaction was when you went to grad school. But when I went to grad school coming out of North Adams, which had a much smaller class than you graduated with, I only graduated with forty-three.

MB: (Laughing)

JF: When I went down to Lehigh University, a private university, a private school with a very good history department although it is an engineering school, I was frightened to death. I didn’t think I could compete with ah…

MB: That’s exactly the way I felt.

JF: And found that when I got down there that there were some areas that I did not have the background that I needed, but I could quickly get that background. And I have very good people to work with me.

MB: Absolutely.

JF: And it amazed me how well I did. I did better in graduate school then I did as an undergraduate.

MB: That’s right.

JF: And so I’ve always had a strong sense that these colleges, ah the State Teachers Colleges, are much better than they are recognized. For those who want to be students.

MB: That’s right, that’s right.

JF: That’s true at a university also. But that’s why I asked you because when I went there God I was frightened to death. I can’t compete with these people because I’d come out of this little, dinky community college.

MB: Oh, I remember that first semesters exams. Ohhhh, I went to bed petrified I remember that night and I said - I’m going to go to bed early because otherwise I’ll be nervous. And you know, I did all right. No one was more surprised than I was. And from that time on, I mean, nobody - you didn’t have advisors. I mean if you wanted to go talk to a professor, you did. But your best advisors were your colleagues. The ones that had already been through it. And everybody was
helpful. No, as a matter of fact, that Clark experience was, well when I went back with a Ph.D., I mean it grew in stature for me. Because I knew a lot of the people there and it still has you know…they are so far ahead now in the field. On the cutting edge of various types of research you know, the geographic information systems and a program called Idrisi, you know he was a cartographer back in the, I don’t know what century, but it was a long time ago, so they gave the name to the program that they now use to Idrisi. He was a Sicilian as I recall.

Tape #2

JF: This interview is being conducted with Professor Mildred Berman on December 15, 1999 at Salem State College. The interview is one in a series as part of a project documenting the history of Salem State College. The interviewer is Professor John J. Fox, Professor Emeritus, Department of History, Salem State College. The second interview with Professor Emeritus Berman will continue her discussion of her years as a member of the Geography Department.

When we ended our interview last week, our shortened interview last week, we were talking about your experiences at Clark as an MA candidate. So you come out of Salem and you go to Clark based on the fact the Flanders had, Professor Flanders, had kind of suggested it to you. Were there any other schools in the area teaching geography at all when you began looking?

MB: Not that I know of, certainly not on a graduate level. I think that BU had some geography but certainly not a graduate program. New England in general does not do well in the beginning of graduate training of geography. Well, there’s Dartmouth for instance always had a good program, but the graduate program didn’t evolve until much later than the time that I was going. The same is true of UConn. They have a very good program now, but at that time that I was looking around they didn’t have a graduate program. So all I can say is that was it. I hoped I would get in. I figured well if I didn’t, I wasn’t exactly sure what I would do. But I got in. And that was a very important stepping stone in my life because I was really cordially welcomed and the students there were particularly nice and bright and well interested. We got to be good friends all of us because we went on field camps. Did I talk about field camps before?

JF: Yes you did.

MB: But in any case that created a bond. Even though I didn’t spend as much time in Worcester as some of the others, because I lived at home. During the week, of course, I lived in Worcester, but on the weekends, when there were no classes I would take the bus. The BMW bus line on route 9 and go home. At that time my family was living in Malden and let’s face it the food was better.

JF: (Laughing)

MB: Worcester was certainly no gastronomic capital. But the work was fascinating. It opened a whole new world to me. I didn’t even know that geography did such things. For instance we dealt with economic theory of various industries of agriculture and so on. And we also dealt with
what constitutes research and good research in any one of the fields. I had political geography and economic geography. I had to do a course in cartography, because Salem didn’t offer that. And that meant hours and hours of drawing maps, pen and ink then. And spending a lot of time waiting for the ink to dry. Which is something that doesn’t occur anymore. But the courses were fascinating. And we had one professor who’s basically a geologist and he taught physiography, which is a little different in that you deal with the surface features of the world. And we did it by region. Eastern Hemisphere, Western Hemisphere and then we subdivided and so on. When we got to the New England area we went on field trips. We saw what the glacier did and where the good soil was and what the land use patterns were. So that was wonderful then because it wasn’t so highly built up and going down into the Connecticut Valley there used to be tobacco farms. Now there are shopping malls. And I must say I much prefer the tobacco landscape. Although I suppose that’s politically incorrect because of what’s happening with tobacco these days. No, that was part of my memory and I was there actually for two years if I had been politically more astute, I could have done it in one. But there were different courses being offered and they said – well why don’t you stay here and take this course and that course. And I thought – well I really did like it and I’m glad I did, because after taking almost everything they offered and it was a small faculty. Five faculty people. And they didn’t teach that many different courses, but they were basic physical geography, economic geography, political and then the techniques. The techniques had to do with mathematical, ah, quantitative geography. How to measure certain economic factors, how to plot then on a map and how to interpret that and so forth. A lot of things. So I stayed and it turned out to be a blessing in disguise because when I left Clark with my MA in hand, and that was fun, by the way, I did a thesis on the neighborhoods of Boston.

JF: Oh is that right!

MB: Yup I did. You know, every graduate student knows that they have to write a thesis of some kind. And I didn’t have a clue; I mean I just knew I was going to do something and the summer between the two years that I was there, I worked for Stop & Shop in market research. They were doing a lot in mapping, well the trading area of various stores. In other words, where do you place a Stop and Shop market, and then they were much smaller, in regard to traffic, in regard to income level, in regard to real estate costs, and so on. And so I did some of the mapping and the gathering of information, and the fellow I worked for, who was not a geographer, he knew I was looking for a thesis topic. He said – well why don’t you do a paper on neighborhoods of Boston, measuring by different criteria, whether it be social economic, in other words income. Whether it be political, whether it be fire districts, police districts. Or wards and precinct for voting, and so on. So I collected all of those different breakdowns of the city by different agencies. In other words, why they do it that way? And then I came up with a breakdown of my own which was geared to what Stop and Shop wanted. They wanted to know where to put a public health portable unit to measure TB incidents in the city. And they figured if they knew the traffic, if they knew the income levels, really the density of residential population…where would be the best place to put one of these mobile units to test the population? And so I picked out certain places, the political map of Boston, not metropolitan Boston. And that was my thesis. And I brought it in, I remember, to my advisor and he looked at it and looked at it – very interesting – and fortunately then a masters thesis didn’t go through a very rigorous defense. They saw that I had a lot of maps, that I had interpretation of all of them and I had a good time. I went to city hall a lot. I noticed a lot of free loaders hanging around and not doing much. And I thought to myself – is this
what Boston politics is like? And it was, then. And I just found out a lot about civic agencies and municipal agencies. So it really turned out to be a very thin thesis, I mean because it was mostly maps. But I learned a lot.

JF: Do you have a copy on donation here?

MB: It’s upstairs.

JF: Oh ok. Then that should be in the collection. I mean at least in the research collection.

MB: I just gave it to them, as a matter of fact, about a month ago.

JF: What an interesting piece of historical documentation for somebody who might want to look at the neighborhoods today and make a comparison of change.

MB: And the one thing I remember right away that I learned. You know the original map of Boston was the downtown area sort of like there’s a peninsula that connected it to what’s now the downtown…

JF: Right.

MB: …area and we had that wonderful map exhibit at the Boston Public Library. It showed that. And that was one of the first things I learned. I was unfamiliar with that and affiliated the Back Bay. And for me it was a great learning experience. As far as the value of the public service mobile unit testing activity, I’m not sure that it did anything that was really too wonderful but (laughing) I learned more, of course, than anybody reading it.

JF: Now you said you were there two years, how many courses did you take? How many graduate hours?

MB: That was the beauty of Clark, they didn’t have…you have to have so many hours in this and so many in…all the courses were geography. It depended on which professors were giving what courses. If you were a graduate student you took their course. So I wish I could tell you exactly, I have the transcripts at home. It was a heavy enough load, because the courses were in depth, I mean tons of reading - journal articles in the library, which I’d never done before. While we had a library here at Salem State, we didn’t have most of the journals. We had to report on them, and then we started going into what, I think, was one of the most valuable things at Clark, and that is what constitutes good research and how is it done. Is this merely descriptive? Is this analytical? Is this a groundbreaking type of research? Or is it something factual that could be in the newspaper. So there are all kinds of things there. Then of course it depended on the professor. Our political geography professor had lived all over the world. He was Dutch, he had worked in Indonesia, he worked for the OSS during the war, even though he was Dutch, he was not an American citizen until afterwards. And he had experiences everywhere. So when we talked about boundaries and shifts and ethnic differences within the European region particularly we hung on his every word. It was wonderful. And then he was one of these people who ask you pointed questions about where a certain place was and so on. There was always a performance.
He was over six feet tall and in those days you could smoke in the classroom and he had these big Dutch cigars, that I think most of us were about to pass out from, but you couldn’t say anything. And the course was still fascinating. Oh and then he did climatology. See climatology wasn’t offered every semester. And that drove everybody crazy, they said you had to take it three times to understand it. Climatology consisted of learning about, first of all, what are the major controls of climate? But then he’s the same professor, the Dutch professor; he would pass out these sheets of the temperature and the rainfall statistics for the twelve months of the year for different locations. And we had to learn how to classify those into an A climate, a B climate, that’s a classification that we use in climatology. And then when the exams came he would give you a set of stations, not identifying the location and ask you to put it, I mean where is it on the map and what are the things that make you say that? I mean you could go crazy because there were dozens of stations.

JF: Sure.

MB: And in-between studying this we all had these huge climate maps, with the climate boundaries and the classifications and so on. No it was, two people are still here who had that course, Bob Arnold and Ted Pikora, and they can tell you about it. I had it the first time for credit and the second time when I came back for the Ph.D., I figured I wouldn’t have to do anything, but the professor says – well why don’t you sit in on this, he said, and I want you to take the exams for the second time.

JF: (Laughing)

MB: At which point I said – oh it’s all over, let’s forget it. But I you know, I guess I did retain something from before and I obviously passed. I can’t remember what kind of grade I got. But when you ask about the course load, how many credits they never did that. And then they said – when it’s time for you to take your orals we’ll tell you. It’s not when you’d completed so many credits.

JF: Ok.

MB: Because they know you and you couldn’t get away with too much. So, as I say, it was a unique experience, a unique school. It still is a unique school. But of course it’s progressed in various ways. I think I mentioned they increased the Cartography Department. And the environmental school, the George Marsh School. They don’t call it geography, but environmental something. Anyway the people from that faculty, and it’s a much bigger faculty now, they spend time in Washington, they spend time in other countries depending upon what the project is. They’re developing international development studies now, more than before, they had it before, but it seems to be going in a new direction. Particularly third world directions. We’re sort of out of the MA period.

JF: That’s all right. Let me – you still feel very close to it obviously.

MF: I do, and I’ll tell you why. It’s unusual, and again I’m very lucky. When it came time to have a sabbatical from here, I thought - well what will I do? Well I have to get myself retreaded as it
were because the geography I learned was ok, but it wasn’t as sophisticated as it had become. They talk about the geographical revolution of the sixties where the quantitative measurements became the cutting edge of the discipline. So I think because this was after the sixties, it was the seventies I guess, I had my first sabbatical; it had to be delayed one semester because of illness at home. But once that problem was resolved I went to Clark and they gave me a little office and the run of the place. I could sit in on any class that I wanted to, I went to all the special seminars and the lectures and so on. I played tennis with a couple of the people who worked in the cartography lab. And they asked me to give a seminar to the graduate students and so on. And so little by little there are all these connections that are just beginning to bubble up and one of the faculty people, in historical geography, lived in Boston, he commuted. And we used to talk a lot about what was going on at Clark and he saw to it that I had the privileges of a visiting professor even though I wasn’t teaching. I did do, as I say, a seminar once in a while. I found the community so cordial, graduate student community. And the faculty too, but mostly the graduate students, I hung around with them. And that’s very revealing. You know what they’re doing for research; you know what they’re thinking. And then I don’t know, what else happened here is that I maintained that connection, because I would get invited to special talks and seminars. The Wallace W. Atwood Memorial Lecture. Wally Atwood was, or Senior Wally Atwood was, the president of Clark in the twenties, early thirties. And so they had these special affairs and so on and I would get invited because my friend who was on the faculty made sure my name was on the list. And it stayed on the list, they never dropped me. And so I would go, and I always had a good time. I mean Worcester is one of the most unprepossessing communities you could ever want to visit. And Clark was this great oasis. It really was. I just went to something from Clark in the fall. They had the Jones Clark Legacy Society. You can figure what that is. They want your money.

JF: Right, right.

MB: And so I figure, you get along in years, you have to put your money where your mouth is. And they contacted me and would I come and well I had the best time it was wonderful. So I’m on their list as they say.

JF: (Laughing) A long time connection. It’s great to have that type of a feeling for an institution.

MB: I really do, I really do. The people – of course the President is changing, ah Traina, I didn’t even know him. I was introduced to him once. But the presidents there have not changed that frequently as they have at Salem State. I mean we went through a period of revolving presidents here. Well it’s a much smaller school. When I was there it was about two thousand.

JF: You say when you were there –

MB: As a masters candidate, and then when I went for the Ph.D. it was a little bigger. Well it’s still under five thousand. So you either get that feeling or you’re totally alienated, that happens.

JF: Yes right.
MB: I didn’t feel that way. I mean they have a good Music Department, they had a pretty good one before. But they put on these concerts and things of that nature. And seminars, they’re always inviting people from other parts of the world for lectures. I get notices of them, I don’t go anymore. Because I don’t want to drive to Worcester, it’s as simple as that.

JF: Yes.

MB: If they were in Boston I certainly would go. And I still have friends there, and when I go to national meetings, you know we’re all friends and talk and have lunch and things like that.

JF: In your MA program at the time you were there, how many students in the MA in the graduate program?

MB: There again, each class is different. They would probably have a number for you but the classes mixed MA and Ph.D. students, so when you took a course there was no secret. So and so is studying for the Ph.D. he already has a masters but he didn’t have this course before. And I came in sort of fresh and green and so on and I didn’t have it before either. So we were not on the same level, but as far as the course was concerned we were. We never counted. When I first came back to Clark for the MA I would say there were probably more Ph.D. candidates because they were coming back from the war. And the European students were now free to travel. British, European, Asian and so on. So that’s a question I guess that could be answered, but they’re very vague about those things.

JF: When you approached finishing up, what were you going to do? Did you have any idea what you were going to do for a job?

MB: No I did not. And when you’re young you sort of don’t think too far ahead.

JF: (Laughing)

MB: Well, what am I going to do now. And you know being a student is wonderful you don’t have to think too much further beyond the next exam or term paper. Most people were going into teaching. Some – college teaching. And some were doing government work in Washington. And there was this small nucleus that was doing work in market research like I did at Stop & Shop. And what would happen was that the head of the graduate department would find out where the jobs were and then recommend students. But then it was always, well we need a good man for this department up in Maine or someplace like that. And at the time most of us were so unsophisticated about that whole terminology that we didn’t even give it a thought. I was told there was a job up in Maine, in Gorham I think it was, that somebody was leaving and it might be a good place because there would be teaching the kinds of things that I had already had courses in. Well it turned out the person didn’t leave and there was no job. So I got out with a Masters degree and no job and started looking around at elementary school teaching, which I did not want to do. But I figured – well I’ll have to do something. And I got offered a couple of jobs. And I said - well I don’t want them. I thought about it and decided this is not what I want to do. So you know lightning strikes every so often and I had gone for an interview to Ginn Company, a geographical and historical text book publisher that was in business for a long time. They published a lot of
geography books by Wallace Atwood, who was president of Clark. And at the time I called and said do you need anybody blah, blah and so on. They said - well no we’re sort of full up. Well two weeks later they called me and said one of our map editors is resigning, she’s pregnant and she’s going to leave the job, would you come in for an interview. Well I flew into Park Square because that’s where the offices were and they interview me and lo and behold I had a job. This was in June and I stayed there for two years. I edited maps and text for maps and history and geography books. And the offices were right in the heart of town a wonderful group of people working in the music department and in the art department and so forth. And so there were always people to talk to, the cartography that was being done in the office was wonderful. I didn’t do it, I contracted it out. I would find somebody who could do a finished product and I would edit it. And that was a lot of fun. We went ice skating on Frog Pond in the Commons in the winter. And we would run up to Filenes’s basement at lunchtime. And there was nothing wrong with that job except that it was very repetitious and it didn’t pay anything. I mean you think teaching was ill paid, this was not well paid, and two years into the job I got a call from Edward A. Sullivan, President of Salem Teachers College. And it seemed it was kind of late in the hiring year and he said they didn’t have anybody in geography. They had been interviewing people and nothing had been working out and would I consider coming in for an interview. And I said right out – well I’ll come but you know I don’t have any teaching experience. Why don’t you just come. So I came and they said – well if things work out, and we hope they will you can get your experience here. We’ll hire you on a temporary basis and if it works out those temporary years will count toward experience. Teaching experience. And that’s what they did. I mean and it just sort of fell in, I thought I really had lucked out. I really did because I still knew the faculty. I’d been out, let’s see, four years and Miss Flanders was just finishing her last year teaching, so you know my mentor was there. And the classes were small; the teaching load was very heavy. But I didn’t notice that, you know, it’s one of those things, and everybody was cordial and it was fun. I think it was a much better introduction to teaching than going to a place that I knew nothing about. I mean here I knew Salem, I always loved Salem, the town, the whole historical ambience and so on. And that was the beginning.

JF: Do you remember what you started at?

MB: The amount of money? Well it turned out to be I think it was thirty seven hundred dollars a year. That could be wrong, but not by much.

JF: Not by much yes. That sounds right.

MB: Well I was living at home, you know so I didn’t have great expenses. Of course that’s not the point, I mean, there were very few men on the faculty. And I’m sure there was a differential between men and women. But at that time we didn’t know that. We didn’t find that out until the sixties, when there was revolution in the wings here. No, that was the beginning and I loved it. And after three years of teaching they gave me tenure and then I got offered a job a Stop & Shop Market Research.

JF: Based on your past experience of working for them?

MB: Well, also I knew a couple of people in the department.
JF: Ok.

MB: Because they'd gone to Clark. And they said why don't you think about it. And it meant more money, it also meant traveling. Now I thought about it, well first of all I was flattered.

JF: Of course, yes.

MB: And I liked the people who were interviewing me because I knew them and you know it was a very nice rapport there. Then I thought and I said no and one of them said this to me. He said you're a single woman and the kind of job you would be doing, you would be traveling to various places in New England, you know dealing with the store managers and locational aspects, etc. There would be a lot of people who would resent you, particularly the wives. And I never thought of that.

JF: Yes

MB: I mean it was the last thing in the world. And then I thought to myself, well did I really like teaching that much? And I did. And I said well I probably would make more money if I went to work for Stop & Shop but it would be a totally different kind of life. And as I look back on it I really think I did make the right decision. Because you know business activities and meetings and travel and so on, they weren't as intense as they are now. But I said I like this sort of almost homey atmosphere here. I mean let's face it you know there was no great scholarly activity going, you teach it, as we all know. And the classes were getting bigger. But taken all together I didn't regret for a minute that I didn't take the business job. You know I talked it over with my family, with friends who were out in the world so to speak. And that's what happened, I mean I just sort of stayed.

JF: Now you would have been about twenty-six when you started here?

MB: Well twenty-four, let's see 1952...yeah, yeah about, see my mathematical skills were never very good. Anyway that's how old I was and there were some students who were older than I was. You know because there were still people coming back who had been in the service or working or something like that. But it was great fun, it really was.

JF: How did they … why did Salem College, Salem Teacher College contact you? There had to be more to it then just the fact that, I mean how did they know that you were available? Why did your name come up? Any idea?

MB: One, I had a masters degree in geography and I think they knew a little bit about Clark and that it was a good school. I guess I had been back to one or two things on the campus. But I didn't make contact with anybody.

JF: You didn't apply for anything?
MB: No, there was no advertisement that I knew of. I didn’t know they were hiring. And I didn’t even think of coming here. I got a telephone call from Mary O’Keeffe, who was the wonderful secretary who worked for Edward A. Sullivan and Miss Clark. And they found me at Ginn & Company. I know what they did, they had my home address so they called my home to see where I was and my mother gave them the phone number at the office where I was. I’ll never forget it; I almost fell off the chair. It was a summer morning and here was Salem State College, the president’s secretary wants to speak with you. And they said – could you come up for an interview and they explained they needed somebody and they knew that I had a degree, an advanced degree in geography and I said right off – but I don’t have any experience. Would you please come for the interview? So I came.

JF: How was your first day here?

MB: Frightening.

JF: (laughing)

MB: Frightening, the first class was at 9:30 and I obviously was here at 8 o’clock. I don’t now what I was doing, not much of anything (laughing) talk a little bit about what I was going to teach. And I was pacing the floor and pacing and then all of a sudden all these young people appeared in the classroom. And I guess I stuttered my way through it and you know with a new teacher, particularly at this level, they were quiet. I didn’t expect any real problems, but you just don’t know. And then it was three times a week for the course you know Monday, Wednesday and Friday. What’d I do on Tuesday and Thursday? There were other courses the way it worked out. Well I can tell you I worked harder than any of those students did. Getting the textbook outlines properly, trying to work out the assignments and trying to see how much they knew at the beginning. Because I was thinking - oh they know all this and I have to be on my toes. Well of course they didn’t know all this. And even today very few Americans know any geography.

JF: Yes.

MB: But they were good, they were cooperative. I had only one student that I ever had sort of a little friction develop between us. He had been in the seminary, he was older, he was one of these who just sat back, never took a note because he knew everything. He thought. And when the exam came and it showed that he didn’t know anything he was very unhappy. And he let me know he was very unhappy, and he thought it was my fault. But I didn’t give him any slack. I said – you know this is what the exam is and your answers are not adequate. I still remember him. He softened later on. The students told me that. But other than that there was no problem. I recall also one unusual thing. There was one African American in my class; I think one of those first years, because it was an all white student body. And I think he commuted from Boston, very nice quiet fellow. And to tell you the truth after I was talking about white settlement in the tropics and some of the problems with the climate, I said oh – I’m forgetting that I have this individual here you know who we could talk to about the – but he never said anything and I never said anything and the course went on without any interaction on that level. But I thought about it later when we started to get a more mixed group of students. And you know I was color blind, just didn’t see it. Of course that’s different now.
JF: How big were the classes when you first started?

MB: It varied, a big class would be over thirty, most of them were between twenty and twenty-five.

JF: And you would teach five days a week?

MB: Oh yes. No days off! No days to do your studying, to do your library work, to do anything like that. No. Five days a week and they were long days. One semester I had eighteen semester hours. Oh, you know, somebody quit and you had to fill in here and there and there was none of this specific teaching load level. So it was a learning experience. And as I thought back on it later on, well much later on when I started doing lectures close to retirement you know, on cruises and things of that nature. I said all that work I did; it’s bearing fruit. I know where the material is that I have to check on. I already know a lot of this material, so I don’t have to work so hard. And I finally saw that the work was not done in vain.

JF: (Laughing)

MB: The students may not have learned much, but I did. Well I think they learned something.

JF: How did the College change between 1948 and 1952?

MB: Oh there’s very little that I could tell you about that because I wasn’t here.

JF: But when you came back in ’52 you must have noticed some changes from ’48 when you graduated.

MB: Not many. The total population of the students was bigger. There were a couple of new faculty, but not many, not many. Some of my old professors were still here. And there was some change in the Music Department and phys ed, oh there was one person added who was very good in geology. But she didn’t stay long; she went to Washington where the money was better. I don’t remember a lot of change; we had the same president. The same organization in the office, Miss Clark ran the office. As a matter of fact, it was fun because well I sort of knew what was going on. Miss Burnam was still here, Dr. McGlynn was still here, Miss Stone was still here. And then, oh and there was no parking problem then. You could park on the street. There were about ten cars parked in the yard in back of the Sullivan Building. I never thought much about that either, you know I had a car, just came, it was wonderful.

JF: Where was the president’s office located?

MB: In the Sullivan Building on the second floor as you came up, let’s see. As you face the Sullivan Building from the corner of Lafayette and Loring Avenue, the left hand wing in the corner. The office where Miss Clark sat and Miss O’Keeffe sat and where all the records were kept. And there is sort of a little narrow corridor which really wasn’t a corridor a little bigger than that was the president’s office. It was not luxurious. I was in it for the first time when I bought the presidency for a day as a freshman and I thought well, it’s ok but it certainly isn’t luxurious in any way shape
or form. He had his own washroom by the way. And I thought – well rank hath its privilege. And there were some Greek statues out in the hall. I still remember the one that was outside the president’s office a statue of Laocoon writhing with the serpents. And somebody put something in the Log, the newspaper, about Laocoon not writhing in the corridor but they misspelled it and they spelled it writing. So he was not exactly writing but anyway. I don’t know what happened to that statue.

JF: No, they’re all gone.

MB: Yeah that was nice. No there wasn’t. The building was you know old, stairs were wooden as were most of the floors. And oh yeah the central part of that floor where the president’s office was now of course, (there were something like four classrooms there) it was all one great big hall, Chapel Hall. And we’d go every morning.

JF: Did they have chapel every morning?

MB: Yes, they did and every morning somebody would read a passage from the bible and then somebody would give a talk. And the talks were for speech class or students had to take speech. It was a one-credit course as I recall then. When I was a student and when I came back. And some of the speeches had been vetted by Miss Hoff, who was the speech professor. They were pretty good. And they only had to be seven minutes long. So that was not a big worrisome bore or anything like that. And somebody would read the notices of the day. There will be a meeting of the John Burroughs Club at such and such a time there will be gathering for the field trip, there will be a basketball game, there will be whatever it was. And so that’s how you found out what was going on. In Chapel Hall.

JF: What time would chapel be?

MB: 9:30.

JF: 9:30 – so did classes start before that though?

MB: No, because most of the students were commuting by train or bus and it was very difficult to have early classes. So we’d get through at about quarter of ten and then the classes would start. I mean I think you’d have about five or ten minutes to talk to your pals for a little bit and then go to class. And they were fifty-minute classes. And there were bells. There was a warning bell and then there was an another bell. They stopped that after a very short time, because they were a pain, they really were. I mean you’re trying to teach a class and all of a sudden ding. So they stopped that and that was good. And they even had an intercom system put in, which didn’t always work. But at least the idea was good.

Tape Two
Side Two

JF: Did you as a professor have other responsibilities other than teaching your classes?
MB: Not really, the business of advising students really didn’t come until quite a bit later. You couldn’t really give students too much advice for the simple reason that Miss Clark had the programs all mapped out and there were very few electives available. So if you didn’t like a course or didn’t want to take it I suppose you could drop it. But they didn’t have the drop and add system that came in to be later on. You took the course or you didn’t take the course. You didn’t get credit for it and therefore your credits toward your Bachelor of Science in education would be compromised. There was attrition then as there is now and everywhere. I know sometimes because people didn’t like the traveling or else they didn’t like the courses they decided, oh well, they didn’t want this. It was as simple as that. Like it’s always been.

JF: Were there any other administrators besides the president? I mean were there Deans of Education or Deans of…

MB: There was no dean of anything. There was no department chair or head or anything. I think the president must have talked with various people in the departments, not departments there weren’t any departments. But say the English professors or the history professors or so on. That didn’t come until much later. I mean my office up on the third floor of the Sullivan Building was where the so-called Geography Department was. But it wasn’t a department we were three individuals teaching there, and sharing an office. When I first came to Salem State there were two, Miss Ware and Miss Flanders, I mean, well yes when I was a student. And then Miss Ware retired and within a short time after I came Miss Flanders retired. So a couple of other people were hired, but we were in that little corner of the room and nobody said you teach this, you teach that. We were told this is what we were going to be teaching. It may not have been Miss Clark entirely. Somewhere along the line somebody made those decisions but there was no title of dean or – the only title I remember is registrar and president, there was no vice president. If there was such a person it had to be somebody, I have no idea who it was. You’d get your program and it would tell you where you were on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. You would know ahead of time what you were teaching. Which wasn’t always the case sometimes people would be handed a course, I know later on, that they were not aware of that they were going to get. In fact the only people I talked to about my courses were my colleagues. We discussed them you know. But it didn’t change anything.

JF: Any evaluation? Did anyone evaluate you?

MB: Oh no. I think there was there must have been, as they call, incidental evaluation. A term which came much later on. Via the students, via other faculty. You know there had to be something. I mean why did they keep us all? Well they kept us all because I guess we were doing the job, how well I think was never really evaluated. I don’t remember that. Always students sort of, not gossiped, but in a sense some of it was, evaluating. Oh Miss so and so or Mr. so and so they give a great course or that course is so boring, I don’t know how we stand it. Things like that. And the testing – no it was something that just happened. It’s like it dropped from heaven and here it was.

JF: Did ethnicity play a role here? Did ethnic background or religion?
MB: Well that was something that did play a role with some of us. Because they prayed at chapel and did the Lord’s Prayer. State schools, and religion and the state is supposed to be not together. But in all some people finished the Lord’s Prayer and some didn’t and I learned cause some were Catholic and some were not and so on. But nobody seemed to think that was a problem. It was part of the chapel service. And I think they said Mass on Sunday. No, they couldn’t have because school wasn’t open on Sunday. Later on it was. But basically most of the students were local, most of them were Catholic. The great majority were Catholic. And I learned a little bit about that. And being Jewish, I and a couple of my friends were in a distinct minority. But that didn’t make any difference. What happened was of course on Jewish holidays, we would miss the work. That never happened when I went to Chelsea High School. Because most of the students then were Jewish, so you didn’t miss anything. The students who came you know, did some project and so on. It wasn’t any heavy-duty stuff. But that was an introduction to the world. That the world is not Jewish. (Laughing)

JF: You didn’t know that?

MB: I did not know that. My little world at home. There was a lot of ethnicity there in many ways. And here there wasn’t any. That I could see. Because I wasn’t part of it. There obviously was ethnicity. But you know it was sort of a gentle way to take another look at the world from a different cultural standpoint.

JF: Now when you were teaching here in your earlier, and you took off the holidays for religious. Were you docked a days pay?

MB: No, not that I know of. I was docked later on by some people in my department for reasons known only to them. When they had agreed not to do that. And there was some little flap in the union and they went to bat for me but that didn’t work. That was just a few days. But the principle of the thing really bothered me. Because it says in black and white in one of the state documents, that religious holidays may be observed without any docking or loss of pay. But it didn't bother me I just went ahead and did it.

JF: Before the Meier years, when you were here, were there any signs of anti-Semitism that you felt?

MB: None. If they were there they were certainly not voiced in my hearing. I don’t think so, I don’t think there could have been, there were so few of us. We didn’t do anything.

JF: (Laughing)

MB: (Laughing) I mean – there was one little group affiliated not with Hillel, but with another group in Boston, that we would go to meetings to sometimes and holiday festivals. But it was so miniscule that nobody would even know we did that. It didn’t bother me too much. Missing the work bothered me more than anything else. Because it never happened before. Oh dear, I’m going to flunk the next test.

JF: This was when you were a student.
MB: Yes, oh and as a professor or so I mixed that up. But as a professor I would tell the students – I won’t be here. And nobody blinked an eye, you know they were happy.

JF: (Laughing)

MB: I don’t know what the people in the office felt. I guess you were allowed so many days off. I don’t know if they called them sick days. But I never had any static from anybody about that. If I had, if there was static I still would take the day off.

JF: Do you think that they may have docked you, when they weren’t docking you before you had that situation that they may have been taking it out of your sick time?

MB: I don’t think so. Because I was never out sick.

JF: Ok.

MB: And the record keeping, let’s face it, may not have been all that accurate. It still isn’t.

JF: Yeah tell me.

MB: We don’t have to belabor that point. In almost any institution. But the state institutions, they’re always short handed. I mean I can’t blame anybody for any of that. But believe me if I had felt there was a slight somewhere I would remember it. And I don’t.

JF: You mention it in Antipode. You mentioned in that article that you did feel that there was some anti-Semitism in a remark that a graduate professor at Clark…

MB: Yes, yes the article is from a radical journal of geography published at Clark University. And I was asked to write this article on what it was like to be a woman in American geography. And this, was it the seventies?

JF: ’84, I think.

MB: ’84? All right whenever. The article had to do with my various experiences in different institutions. And the only thing at Clark that could have put, not put my nose out of joint, but sort of shocked me was when my professor who was the head of the Geography Department, no he was the director of the Graduate School of Geography, that was his title, said to me when it came time to look around for a job for me. When I finished my MA, and this was about that time when the job in Maine we thought was opening up and he said – well you know I’ll probably have a more difficult time finding a job for you. And I looked at him because I couldn’t see that I was any better or worse than anybody else. And he said – well some places would probably rather not hire somebody who was Jewish. I could have fainted when he said that. Because I never heard that kind of talk. And I think he was telling me the reality that I had never seen before. And I obviously, what am I going to say to him? How can they do that or so on? I said – well lets see
how it works out. Well of course it didn’t work out because the job was not there. And I found my own job. I went to Ginn Company then I came here. And there was never any talk about that.

JF: In the long professional life you’ve had have you suffered anti-Semitism?

MB: No. In a word no. Let me think of... let’s see where else have I been. No, I taught at BU and I taught at Southern Connecticut and New Haven nope, nope. You know every so often people make remarks or that they think are funny or little phrases and so on that I do remember. But they were not in a professional context. Some people are ignorant, let’s put it this way, of what toleration and understanding and knowledge of faiths and traditions other than their own. And so unless it’s something so blatant and so overt you let it go. And there was nothing that really affected my career in any way. You know chance remarks happen to everybody, maybe you’re too short, maybe you’re too tall...

JF: Maybe you’re too fat.

MB: Well I... (Laughing)

JF: Not you, me!

MB: (Laughing) No there was not any of that. Well you see in between... going for the Ph.D. at Clark was something that again was something I never would have thought – I just sort of fell into that. I remember it like yesterday. I was teaching, on the third floor of the Sullivan Building, one day and it was late fifties – fifty-seven or fifty-eight. And at the end of the period Tom Ryan, who was in the Biology Department, which was right next to – I say a department it wasn’t a department it was a classroom - was teaching in the room next to me and came in and said – “hey have you seen this notice you might be interested in it.” And what it was a notice from the National Science Foundation about fellowships to do research in one of the sciences or take graduate training, there were a number of items listed there. And I had already been to Israel and had worked in the Department of Labor, the national survey that was mapping the country and so on and putting out the first national atlas. Tom knew that and he said – “you know everybody’s saying we have to get our science programs up to snuff, you know the Russians are upstaging us with this Sputnik and all this. Why don’t you apply for one of these fellowships? “ And I sort of looked at him because I hadn’t seen any of that and I didn’t know anything. Well sure enough I got the blanks and I looked at it and I said you know and I thought well maybe I could apply for one of these and I went out to Clark to talk to one of my professors and I said “you know geography would qualify as a science in this program don’t you think?” And he said yes, I would like somebody to do something on the Negev of Israel. You know that’s the desert area in the south.

JF: Yes, that they made bloom.

MB: Yes that they did. And I thought well you know that’s very appealing to me and I said well it’s a chance, one in a million. So I wrote out the application in that little room between the two classrooms in the Sullivan Building on a real beat up typewriter. I remember it like yesterday. And one of my colleagues was looking over my shoulder and he said – “you’re not giving yourself
enough credit say it this way.” When I told what I wanted to do and so on. So I rewrote the application, sent it off and forgot about it. And as luck would have it, I was very lucky, I got a notice from the NSF people – we are going to give you...was it a year stipend? Tuition free at a graduate program of your choice, and living expenses. It was gold from heaven. So I took a leave of absence, unpaid obviously, because the NSF was paying me, and I went back to Clark for a year. Well in that year I had to fulfill all the requirements for the Ph.D. That meant proficiency in two languages. Now in the past it was French and German that most people did. I said, I am not going to learn German, I don't know German and it will do me no good, because my project has nothing to do with Germany. You know this was after the war and I had certain feelings about it. I knew a tiny bit of Hebrew from my first visit to Israel, so I sat down with a professor and did some translation and got that up to snuff. I repolished my French skills because I said to the people at Clark – listen, will you take Hebrew as a language instead of German. They said – yes, if you can get somebody to give you an exam in it. Because they didn't teach it.

JF: Sure.

MB: They found somebody at Harvard. A very distinguished professor. And I remember because it was within one week I passed both exams. The French was a piece of cake because French, geography, well I knew the geography so I could figure out the French. And then as far as the Hebrew was concerned the Harvard professor was as good as his word. He sent a text to be translated and I looked at it and I said – oh no. Hebrew was not an easy language. But then I began to see what it was. It was a description of the physical geography of the Sinai Peninsula. Well the tenses are all in the past. I mean this happened here and this happened here and this rock is this and the mountain is this and the climate as so on. So I sat down, and they allowed me to use a dictionary. In Hebrew, of course, your tenses are very difficult to translate. But I didn't have that problem. So I wrote it out, I sent it into Professor Twersky, I still remember his name.

JF: Professor what?

MB: Twersky, it was a well know rabbinical family and scholarly family.

JF: Can you spell it?

MB: T-w-e-r-s-k-y.

JF: Ok.

MB: I don't remember the first name, there were a bunch of Twersky's at the time. But obviously a very fine fellow because he passed me. And I got the notice of the passing in a week. I mean I didn't have to wait or anything. So that was good. And then I had to take a couple of written exams, there were two new professors at Clark and you know I went and I sat in all the classes for a year. Not quite a year, a little less than that and I took the climatology class again.

JF: (laugh).
MB: But not for credit. It was the easiest program that I can describe. I’m almost embarrassed it was so easy. But they couldn’t say to me – you have to take this for credit or that for credit because I’d already had it. And then I had to go through the orals. And that was – the orals were not bad. I think the worst part of it came after I did my dissertation and the dissertation again was something that nobody really directed me on it. Because nobody at Clark really knew anything about Israel. I went to Israel and did a paper on Beersheba. Beersheba is the bottom of the holy land. It was the gateway to the Negev, the area that Dr. Van Valkenburg, the Clark professor, wanted me to write about. It was also a Turkish outpost during the time before the First World War. It was a Bedouin marketing center. It was a fascinating place. But it was suppose to grow as the industrial, economic gateway to the Negev, which had to be developed. The Negev took up sixty percent of the area of Israel then. And besides the Bedouin’s and a few kibbutzim in there, there was not much in the way of development. So I went and I had a lot of trouble gathering data because there weren’t any. And even the Hebrew stuff, which I translated with difficulty, didn’t give me a lot of information. But I collected everything I could. I remember bringing all the stuff back in a great big carton box on a ship that went from Haifa to New York. That was great fun. But I kept that box in my stateroom. I said nobody’s going to touch this.

JF: (laughing).

MF: If this is lost, I am lost. I got the stuff home and I went to my professor and he said – well, give me your outline and we’ll talk about it. Of course I gave him my outline and he didn’t have any problem with it, because as I say he had no knowledge of the area. So I wrote up what came to be the evolution of Beersheba as a regional center in the new country of Israel. I wrote it in ’62 and I had maps, I had the history, I started with the biblical and went through the Turkish and then I went through the British mandate period and World War I and then the creation of the state of Israel, what they were trying to do. So there was a chronological framework. I got a number of maps made for me because there weren’t any available that I could use. There were road maps put out by one of the old companies in Israel. But that’s not exactly what I needed. You know development areas, transportation lines, other than the paved roads and so on. So I put that together, wrote it up, and it wasn’t a very long document. And I guess the worst part of the Ph.D. program for me was defending the dissertation. Because all the men were sitting around the table and there’re asking me questions. And most of them are fairly easy to answer except for one professor, a visitor from the Chemistry Department of Clark, and he wanted to know what I knew about the development of radioactive isotopes in the Negev. And my immediate reaction was huh? Because all of that was top secret. If indeed there was such a thing. And the professor, I think, knew that. But maybe he was trying to trip me up. And I said – I’m sorry I don’t know anything about that. Well, meanwhile the other men around the table started to get in on the act and ask questions. You know, what are they doing there, what does this mean and why did the Chemistry professor ask this. And they went chatting away for quite a while. And I’m looking at the clock and I’m saying – isn’t this great, you know the time is going. Then there was one other question. Why didn’t I put in material about all of the settlements around Beersheba - Ashkelon, Eilat, Dimona, Arad, Omer, Shoval, Kfar Yeruham? In other words what kind of infrastructure was there between the outlying settlements? And my answer was very simple, I tried but I couldn’t get anything out of them because that was a military area and security said when people come around asking questions they better be with the government for some reason.
They didn’t know who I was. And they said no, you can’t do this, you can’t do that, and they did not give me information. And one of the questioners during the orals said – well she should have had that or she should have written that that was attempted but did not work out. I mean it’s like trying out a new theory and why it didn’t work and so forth. So I did that. And they said provided I put in a few new maps of one of the outlying settlements and made a few statements about central place theory, which was big then in geography. That is why certain settlements develop outside of the bigger settlement. In other words there is a hierarchy. First your big settlement and then your smaller settlements depending upon the goods and services that our offered there. There’s usually a pattern. And I didn’t have a pattern because there wasn’t one.

JF: Oh yes.

MB: And I put that in and I put in the new maps. And the next thing I knew my professor is coming up to me with his hand outstretched – congratulations. You know I had to wait as little while before this happened. And again, that was it. It was a piece of cake again because I enjoyed doing what I did and for a while I said – oh, I’m never going to make it, I don’t have enough material, this is not going to work out. Nobody would tell me things. They were suspicious, what can I say? Here’s this American coming out of nowhere. But you know I did get some cooperation from people in some of the government offices who understood about maps and geography and so on. Because geography in Israel was just beginning and today it’s very big.

JF: I would imagine for a whole host of reasons.

MB: Lots of reasons. Yeah, but they have good people and they put out good articles. So that was good and then I came back to Salem with a Ph.D. in my hand. Did not cost the state of Massachusetts one penny for my degree. My advanced degree. Nobody else in the department had a Ph.D.

JF: May I stop you there a moment?

MB: Yes.

JF: Let me move back, you said one thing that caught my attention. You mentioned you did some work for the Israeli government?

MB: Oh yeah, that was before I was a graduate student. That was when I visited Israel – I just took a year off from my teaching here because I was teaching all the regions of the world. And I’d never been anywhere. I taught Europe and I taught Asia and South America and Australia, Africa. And I said you know, I like this but it’s nice to teach about places you’ve seen or you know some first hand material about. So I took a year off without pay and I went to Israel.

JF: When would that be?

JF: Just before, ok.

MB: I checked it all out beforehand to see, I said - well if I go there, there are two things I want to do. Start learning the language, because you know a new country, it’s building up the knowledge of Hebrew, which nobody had. All these new immigrants coming in, their language is from Eastern Europe and all that. They didn’t know Hebrew except maybe some of the religious scholars. So the government had set up a series of intensive language training in Hebrew with new immigrants and particularly with people in the military. Because if a young man say from Romania comes and goes into the army, he’s not going to understand the commands unless he knows Hebrew. So they put together a very interesting program. They had some in the big cities you know little classrooms, in the army camps and so on. And then I said I wanted to go to Israel and learn a little Hebrew and maybe get a job for a while, just to see what it was like. There was an agency in Boston that took care of, what they call, professional and technical workers agency. I talked to them at some length and they said – well we can set you up at an ulpan, that’s the language training institution. And then after you finish that there would be several opportunities in government agencies. You’d work you see, either permanently or temporarily. So I went to Haifa, in Israel where there was this language-training center. We lived there; we lived with other new immigrants. I had an Australian roommate and it was good, so we could talk. Otherwise you’re supposed to speak in Hebrew and we didn’t know any. But Poland, Romania and a bunch of other nationalities. And for five months we studied, every morning from eight to twelve thirty. Every day. And there was homework and writing eventually some reading, not much because it was very hard at the beginning. And then our afternoons were free to do as we wished. Either to travel or do your homework, so to speak. And when I got through with that program there were two jobs that they thought I could work at. One was the Central Bureau of Statistics, which is basically the census bureau. And the other was the national survey, which was a cartographic agency and as, I think, I mentioned before, they were just beginning to do the work for the first atlas of Israel. And they wanted somebody to help with the maps; you know rough work, not finish work and so on. With locations and so on. And it involved getting information to plot on the maps at the national library in Jerusalem. Well to make a long story short, I didn’t want to work with the statistics, so I went to work for the National Survey. And they were wonderful to me. It was a good job. For Israel it was good pay. I lived in sort of a hostel, a youth hostel, in the area. And I could have stayed there forever. But the money was barely enough to get me from pay check to pay check and I decided I liked teaching geography, I wanted to stay in geography and this was off to one side, doing the maps. I think I really want to go back to teaching. I knew I couldn’t teach geography in Israel, my Hebrew wasn’t good enough. I mean I could put together a few sentences but I certainly couldn’t lecture in it. So I left and I came back here. They said the job was open, I hadn’t resigned. And it was just the academic year. And that’s when I decided well I will eventually go back and get the Ph.D. Got the Ph.D. I was still here. And I went to see Fred Meier, who was the new president, well he wasn’t so new, I don’t know when he became president. After President Sullivan, Fred Meier became the president.

JF: ‘54.

MB: ‘54, thank you. He was an interesting man.

JF: Yes? Tell me about him
MB: (laughing) For women particularly. He was what they call a brick and mortar president. Interested in buildings and saw to it that a number of them got built. And I have to give him credit for that. But he was not easy to talk to or get along with. And I think he thought women should know their place - which means if he wanted to promote anybody who was female that would be his prerogative. But if I were to ask for promotion I was really out of line. See I went into see him with my degree in hand and said - look you know I have this degree, I am an Assistant Professor and I have all the qualifications for an associate. Well he said – well if you have an opportunity for a teaching job at another institution, say Harvard, I think you should take it. At which point, of course, I kept my temper. But I got very upset and I went right outside, there was a pay phone on Lafayette, I don’t know if it’s still there, it was there up until recently. And I called a colleague in Connecticut who had been asking me to come teach with them. And I had said – no I’m fine at Salem, I like it. And I called him, and they had offered me an Associate Professorship at more money, considerably more money. And I said – do you still want me? And they said – yes we do. And I said – all right I’ll come. So I went down for the interview and I went to teach as an Associate Professor at Southern Connecticut College, then, it’s now Southern Connecticut State University, New Haven. I loved that place, gorgeous campus, it had a football team, it had a wonderful Art Department, and it had a museum. The Geography Department was not a department, it was a Social Science Department, it had anthropologists, economists, historians, geographers, all fit in a big department. And I had a friend there who I had gone to graduate school with. So that was nice. I stayed there for three years, liking it a lot because it was close to New York, close to Boston. And one day I got a call from George Lewis from Boston University, he...

JF: I’m going to stop you, I want to back up a little. OK. You’re racing through this and I don’t want to race.

MB: Well, it’s a lot of years.

JF: It is. Let’s go back – you pick up your Ph.D. Before you pick up your Ph.D. You come in ’52; you leave here in ’58 to go to graduate school.

MB: No, graduate school was actually ’61. I think I misspoke earlier.

JF: Right it is.

MB: I had a year just to be in Israel. And then I went to Graduate School under the NSF in ’61. And the degree I got in ’63.

JF: Ok. So that’s why I want to back up here for a moment. Because there’s something that happened here that helps to put also what your leaving for Southern Connecticut into perspective too. I’m looking at some notes I took here. In 1954 right after Fred comes, one of the first people he brings in, or one of the people he does bring in. Well let me stop…

MB: Yeah, yeah.
JF: Well you know what I’m going to say, let me stop for a minute. By the time that Meier comes in. And that’s not being disrespectful; I’m not going to be saying Fred Meier. By the time that Meier comes in is there a Geography Department or is there still not a structure to it as such?

MB: There is no real structure, but there is a department and the person who was put in charge was Paul Salley.

JF: Ok, who had been brought down from Southern Maine? Or what…

MB: Gorham.

JF: Gorham, right. Now you had been here by this time five years. Am I right? Did you have a feeling about that?

MB: No, I think because the whole idea of department structure, prestige, responsibilities and so on went right over my head. I was teaching, I was interested in what I was teaching, I was interested in the development of geography now because you know I had been to Clark and there were a lot of things that were in my professional, on my professional screen, let’s put it that way. And when Paul came, all right he knew Fred Meier because he had had him as a professor at Bridgewater. That’s where that came from.

JF: Ok, that’d put something into perspective.

MB: That’s right.

JF: See this is where interviews become important.

MB: Yeah, yeah and you know Paul was you know a nice, amiable guy then before he became crotchety like we all do as we get older. Actually there were some problems…

JF: I never did (laughing).

MB: Well I noticed that. But anyway, he, I mean, he really didn’t do much, a head of a department, they didn’t even get more money.

JF: Yeah right, they didn’t.

MB: That was a big problem for most of them. And they had more responsibilities I think about making out programs. You know it wasn’t a real department we didn’t have meetings, or if we did there was something very miniscule. We didn’t really have a choice of what we were going to teach. You’re going to teach this, you’re going to teach that and so forth and so on. I didn’t mind that too much because I didn’t realize I might be able to have a say in what I was teaching then. And lets see John George came in after that, oh and Dick Riess, Jim Centorino, I mean I don’t know the dates of when they came.

JF: Yeah, I already have those.
MB: That was the department. And that’s when I thought to myself – well, when I got the Ph.D. in ’63 you know, my department chair who was, for a long time it was Paul Salley, did not have an advanced degree. Did not have any publications. Assigned Time Magazine for reading in his classes. Never an academic journal. And I didn’t realize that till much later. That you know, of course, this was part of a court case that developed between men and women faculty at Salem State in the 70’s.

JF: Which we’ll talk about later.

MB: Yeah right. So I’m jumping the gun a little. But Paul being a nice fellow and so on and a well liked teacher, very well liked. So he was the chair. And I mean it was no skin off my nose. He wasn’t depriving me of anything really. Because most of us had so few sort of privileges, there weren’t any privileges. And the money was very difficult to figure out. Some years the legislature would appropriate and some years they wouldn’t. I had tenure from the time even before I had the Ph.D. so I didn’t have to worry about a job. And then when I got the Ph.D. I still was not worried about a job, but I was thinking – well if people get promoted for certain reasons like advanced degrees and research and various activities in the field, that I was eligible for that. Very eligible.

JF: But you had to go, before you got to that point didn’t you have a problem with promotion earlier too? You were … in 1956 you noted in your article in 1956 that you were promoted to an Assistant Professor.

MB: Oh that’s right yes.

JF: But in the article you note that it was a little over a year after you were eligible. And you said that the delay was because they favored men. If I remember a promotion was given to a man whose wife had just given birth to a child. If I remember correctly…

MB: Yes.

JF: Tell me a little bit about that. How did you feel about that?

MB: Shoved aside as being unworthy of promotion. I mean the person whose wife had a child I mean, God Bless them they had a nice family and so on. Nothing to do with his teaching. I mean lovely family. But I didn’t see why I had to be put aside; it didn’t make any sense to me at all. And I had done what I was supposed to do, I had the credits, I had the teaching experience. And it was kind of a shock. I mean I didn’t feel as angry as I might have been say maybe ten, fifteen years later, you know, when things began to percolate with the problems facing women in higher education. And a lot of it was economic, based on salaries. And that of course eventually lead to almost a lawsuit, but that’s another story. But as far as this is concerned, you are right, I was upset but not angry upset. And of course I got it a little bit later on. But I didn’t see why it had to be that way. It made no sense to me.

JF: At that time Paul was department chair at that time right?
MB: Yes.

JF: Did Paul make the recommendation or did he send both your names in?

MB: Oh, I don’t know exactly what happened. I was told after the fact.

JF: Huh.

MB: So that was even a little worse. But then, as you know, as the way things were going, I wasn't too surprised. Because one never knew what went on behind closed doors. I never knew about shall we say protocol, or system, or not exactly rules but the promotions were sort of haphazard. They really were. People who had not done any work in the field, who did not have advanced degrees, who well, evidently who curried favor with some of the people in administration did better than those who were simply doing their work. So it's very hard to look back on that now and sort of reconstitute the feeling. But I mean eventually it all worked out, but it wasn't easy.

JF: Yeah, so even at that point in time there was a big difference between the way women were being treated and men were being treated?

MB: Well, at that time I wasn't aware of that. I was the only woman in the department and I was for a long time. As it was growing particularly. And I didn’t know that many women in the College at that time. I only began to know a lot of them when I came back here in the early 70’s. I went away for a while that’s another story but there weren’t any people even to talk to about that. The senior faculty people like in English and history were people that I didn’t confide in and they had been my professors and that was very good. What was happening to me was all new. I was you know a young Instructor/Assistant Professor eventually and I loved teaching. I liked being here because I like what I was teaching. And I didn't really have a confidant in regard to that type of thing. And I figured, well you know, I knew that I was doing what I was suppose to be doing as far as my work was concerned. And I would just wait and see. Maybe I was a little too complacent; I mean I wasn’t sure of anything.

JF: Hmm.

MB: But in those times I mean the climate of, not exactly discrimination, but shall we say, lesser treatment for women, economically and as far as well, just the power here in the College. It escaped me. I mean I wasn’t anxious for an administration job; I wasn’t looking for power. I was looking to be a good geographer.

JF: Were you researching and writing at that point? In ’56?

MB: I was doing a little of that because, first of all, the course load was really heavy. I taught three and sometimes four different courses, and I was young and new and I was teaching courses with material I had never studied before. For instance my first semester at Salem State I was all imbued with enthusiasm because I had just come back from Europe. So what did they
put on my program? The geography of Southern Continents. So it was Africa, Australia, South America. So I had to get very, very busy and look up a lot of material for that. No, I - and then I joined the New England St. Lawrence Valley Geographical Society and became active there. Became a secretary; it’s a New England organization. And did some writing but I didn’t, actually I think I did publish something for somebody at Stop & Shop whom I had known when I did my masters. But the real publishing didn’t come until later.

JF: When you said your course load was heavy, were you teaching eighteen hours or fifteen hours?

MB: Well, it was fifteen most of the time and one semester I had eighteen. A professor had left and all of a sudden they said - well somebody’s got to teach this course. And they handed it to me. So it was a little extra preparation. But you know I think when you’re young and energetic, you think - oh well I can do this. But it was a little galling to see that a lot of people weren’t subject to that. I mean they took their courses that they taught period. And they didn’t get these little extras at the last minute. But that happens today, it happens all the time. They tell you the week before the semester’s starting - well you’re teaching a new course or something like that. But it was all right.

JF: So the problem that you would have had if you were teaching fifteen hours could have been five courses. You could have had five different preparations in the course of an academic…

MB: Yeah, but during that time the classes were very small and what you would get was like two sections of, say, the introductory course. So it wasn’t all that bad. Although you always had to remember where you left off with which class. And it was very possible sometimes to omit a few things.

JF: (Laughing)

MB: But you know after you’ve been at it a while you learn.

JF: You had that problem too.

MB: Well, we all did I guess. I mean the people who assigned the course didn’t seem to know anything about teaching.

JF: Yeah, yeah. Where was the department located?

MB: Ok, the department was in - and it really wasn’t a department - where the professors had desks and chairs in a little hallway, it was on the third floor of the Sullivan Building as you were facing downtown Salem, Lafayette Street on the right hand wing. And it was nice because you could see water out of one window and let you know you were in a maritime area. Looking down Lafayette Street, you know, a very historic street. Because that was the main connecting road between Salem and Marblehead from colonial times. The fact that they named it for Lafayette the general who actually came here when Washington was president. You know I liked that. But I didn’t have time to look out the window very much.
JF: Who were your colleagues in those days?

MB: Well my colleagues were, Paul Salley and Jim Centorino and Jimmy Jones, who was here for a very short time. He went to Boston State very soon because he lived in Boston and decided that would be better. And for a year my very first year I had as my colleague my mentor, Verna B. Flanders. She retired the first year that I came. But it was very nice because she would give me material and talk to me about certain things and really made me feel as much at home as you could at home in a classroom of commuters, I mean in a college of commuters. You see there wasn’t much what you’d say collegiate life going on. We played sports and so on but that was part of our gym requirement. And I loved that, that was good because well, it wasn’t built up in back of the Sullivan Building and that’s where the playing fields were and sometimes we’d go on a little trip to Lowell or Fitchburg or some far away place like that. But it was, you know, come in the morning and meet your classes, do your work and then go home. There was very little afterwards. Except maybe for the people who were taking the business courses. They called it commercial then, business. They usually were boarding students and would have a room somewhere. And they probably got together and did things. But there weren’t many of them, very small school.

JF: In terms of your colleagues there was no getting together or socializing…

MB: Zero, minus zero. There was none of that and later on there wasn’t any either. I don’t know what the blame, I shouldn’t say blame, the nature of the institution was such that it didn’t foster that. And the fact that I didn’t live near any of my colleagues was another thing. And then the other thing was they all were married and all had families. And they were doing whatever they were doing on time away from school. Either they were busy with family, you know taking care of the children. Shopping, doing the grocery shopping, I’d hear somebody on the phone – now what else do you want me to bring home, besides the cranberry juice? I mean it was that way. And to tell you the truth, I don’t think there was much collegiality between the men who were in the department. I mean everybody went their separate ways. And I’ve never been in a place where it was that way. Because I’ve taught at other schools and, you know, you don’t have great, you know, togetherness in a lot of these schools, but there’s something. I could see nothing. Now it may have been because I was female. And I quote unquote didn’t fit in. And I will say one thing, a little bit later on as the department grew a little bit more, one of the younger members of the faculty was engaged to be married and he was feted at the bunny [Playboy] club in Boston and all the members of the department were invited. Except me. Now that has nothing to do with salary, it has something to do with decency. And I thought, well, I mean I really didn’t care about going to the bunny club. But the acknowledgement that I too was a member of the department. It wasn’t there, it just wasn’t there.

JF: And it still isn’t by the way at this time.

MB: Absolutely.

JF: I have, ah, over the years I have a Christmas party and I have invited only those that I wanted, but in some years I would invite new faculty members because it was a way help bring
them into a larger society. My wife and I have often said that either we are the worst people in the world because no one seems to reciprocate. Not that I’m passing judgement but my God I mean social graces seem not to be present here. Social …

MB: Absolutely, you know sometimes I think it isn’t because they didn’t want to, but they didn’t realize that this was something that you did in an institution of higher learning. Randall Jarell wrote this book “Pictures from an Institution.” I don’t know if you know the book? It’s really funny and really wonderful, I don’t know if I still have a copy of it, but it takes the small school and an English department and it talks about the relationships and the jealousies, the parties and the things that you were mentioning.

JF: It also always amazed me and I always judged it on the fact that so many of the people who were teaching here came out of a very parochial background educationally. And were not exposed to that type of thing. I had more social life at Lehigh as a TA with the professors than I have with my colleagues here at Salem State. And I’m glad that you informed me because I thought maybe it was only me.

MB: No, no and it hasn’t changed that much.

JF: No it hasn’t, it really hasn’t. No anyway, I just wanted to get back to that point because you had made mention that you had been passed over. And then you go on and you earn your Ph.D., which we had talked about in a previous interview. And again you ran into that problem with Fred Meier that you told me on tape. You said Meier basically was not responsive to your getting the Ph.D. And you decided that was the time to leave Salem State.

MB: Yes, I had been approached before I got the degree and I said – well let’s see what happens and when what happened was so unpleasant I said - well there’s no reason for me to stay here. So, and I hadn’t not quite a hardened offer to go the Connecticut and I called them up. I think I told you I walked right outside, that phone booth is still there by the way. And I called them and they said yes come down. And they straightened out all the details and it was a piece of cake. They were so nice, they were great.

JF: I mean it did not… Dr. Meier was not at all upset that…?

MB: He was very upset. As a matter of fact somebody that was working in the office then told me on the QT that he told the girls in the office that if there were any requests for my records that came from Southern Connecticut or any other college, not to send them. That is a fact. The person who told me that is unfortunately not living any longer. But frankly I was very amused. Because it was so in character.

JF: Seeing that the person is not living, would you mind putting it on tape?

MB: It was Mary O’Keeffe.

JF: Was who I suspected.
MB: After all she was one of the pillars of the institution. As the secretary to at least two presidents. Sullivan and Fred Meier. She knew everything that was going on and she was as diplomatic as could come. As you could imagine. I appreciated that when she told me, but it was quite a while afterwards. And…

JF: In other words he wasn’t going to promote you.

MB: That’s right.

JF: And at the same time he did not want you to go someplace else.

MB: Well, he was going to make it difficult for me. I mean I don’t think he would have cared if I left, I really don’t think so. He made no indication in anything he said that I was either competent or worth keeping. But you see this is the way it was with a lot of people. Particularly women. And everyone I spoke with later on said – well he couldn’t deal with women. He just could not.

JF: I don’t think that’s true though.

MB: No?

JF: I think that he could not deal with anyone who would challenge his authority. I think he was an authoritarian.

MB: Yes.

JF: To the degree. Because I ran into problems with him, other people ran into problems with him who were males. Who were challenging his authority and things of this nature. I mean he told you at one point that if you could find another job go to it. Told me the same thing. So I think what he… Now I think women were easier for him to do that to because there were so few of them and he could dismiss them easier.

MB: Right.

JF: But he would do that to anybody that challenged him.

MB: I agree with that.

JF: So you must have been angry as hell when you were turned down and you went down to make that phone call.

MB: I wouldn’t say that, I wouldn’t say that because I’d been thinking – well maybe it’s time for a change and the people at Connecticut I knew, it was nice, it was a gorgeous physical plant. They had acres of green grass; they had a football team that was practicing when I came down for my interview.
They did that for you (laughing)?

Just for me, just for me. And they had an Art Department and a special building where students really were turning out these wonderful things paintings and sculptures and all other kinds of media. And a new multimedia auditorium I mean with all the bells and whistles and so on for large sections of classes and so on which I taught for a couple of years. And people invited me, there would be a party, there would be something, and I mean talk about collegiality. I mean I thought I had blundered into a movie set. It was wonderful. And you know there were people also from Yale who were in the academic mix there. A lot of the wives taught at Southern Connecticut and a lot of those wives had Yale teaching husbands. And sometimes somebody from Yale would teach a course at Southern. I mean the level of the conversation in the lunchroom was several notches above what we had here. Except there was no lunchroom here. I mean there was, let's just say that I found it inspirational and wonderful. And the only reason I left was that...

That was going to be my next question.

Yeah, I knew it would. Well, why didn’t you stay? Because it was near New York, the theatre and drive back to Boston and my parents were still living and I was a very busy person, it was wonderful. And the people I’d gone to Clark with were teaching at Southern. That was good, sometimes as guests, sometimes as permanent. I mean there were two different groups of people. I got an offer from George Lewis at Boston University, who was chair of the Geography Department there and it was growing. And he said – “well why don’t you come and teach with us you know we can offer you this, this, this and this.” What he was saying different courses I wanted to teach like Middle East and so on. And then I thought – well as much as I like Southern, it was a very big department, it was social science, it wasn’t just geography it was sociology, economics, geography, geology was separate they didn’t put them together. And there was no place to go, administratively that I wanted to go. I didn’t want to go into administration, but the head of the Social Science Department had been there for a long time and I didn’t even aspire to that. But when George Lewis said – come with us, I said – you know it’s time I think to go back to Boston. My parents are not getting younger. And as it turned out it was great in that regard. I was able to fulfill responsibilities toward my parents that I wouldn’t have been able to do if I had stayed in Connecticut. So that was good except that I didn’t like BU at all. It was too big. The Geography Department was housed in an old automobile showroom. (laughing) And it was a small department, but people were doing a little bit more academic work. Some research. And I was able to get some time to do my own research. But then all of a sudden the place began to shall we say ferment - or was in ferment because John Silber was on the way to BU. And then there was the feeling, it wasn’t stated, that he wanted to dispose of or dissolve the Geography Department. Well, he didn’t do that, he brought in one of his friends from Texas who nobody knew and nobody really cared for. I mean it got to be such a snake pit that I decided - well my responsibilities at home required I be home a little bit more than I thought I would have to be. And I thought – I’m not going to stay here because I’m going to tear myself into little pieces. And John George said to me one day at a meeting, because we’d see one another, and also John George was my student when I was at BU. He was getting his PhD there and I was his second advisor, second reader. The head of the department was the first reader. And Dick Anderson was there also and I was his teacher. A teacher here at Salem State and also at BU, the same
with John George. And one day John wandered into my office and said – Why don’t you come back to Salem. Fred Meier is gone, the department’s getting bigger, we’re doing bigger and better things. And I, you know, we’ll try and get you in, we’ll try and promote you if you want to come back. And I thought – well you know it might be a good idea because I’m a known quantity, number one. Number two, well this is not too complimentary but I will say anyway. There was no pressure to publish, to do research, to be very active in the field, because this was a teaching institution, teaching loads were heavy. Our library resources were minimal, let’s put it that way. So I thought – well it will make me a calmer person and I won’t have that much to worry about. Although, on the other hand, I wasn’t exactly sure that I would like the whole situation as far as teaching was concerned. But those fears were never realized when I came back. I could do whatever I wanted, well not exactly whatever I wanted, but I had no trouble at the beginning trying to adapt because I’d been here, I knew what to expect. Of course a little later on I didn’t always get the courses that I wanted but I took time off. From the beginning of my teaching career, every so often, I’d say - you know I’m running around the world teaching these courses and I’m teaching about places I’ve never seen and I know nothing about. I’m going to stop, take some time off, on my financial account not … there were no sabbaticals then. I’ll just take a leave without pay. To do certain work in certain places and so on. And in the fifties, as I think I may have told you, I took a year and went to Israel, and that was just to see what it was like. Because I traveled on the way. I went through the Mediterranean, I stopped in Spain. First the Azores, then Spain, than Italy, than I sailed up to Trieste then took the train, I guess, to Vienna, then took another boat down the Dalmatian Coast. The three places on the Yugoslavia coast, it was Yugoslavia then. Then through the Corinth canal to Athens, and Athens to Crete, then back to Athens, then to Cyprus, to Israel. So you know I mapped it out. And I was happy as could be. I mean for a geographer it was wonderful. And I stayed in Israel five months and Tel Aviv where I was working for the National Survey. Then I decided not to stay. It was financially; it’s not only that is wasn’t remunerative. I knew I wasn’t going to make a lot of money. I couldn’t really live on the salary they gave me. And there was very little geography in the universities then; there were few universities then. So I decided to come back, and I came back here. And I thought – Oh boy, people are going to want to hear what I did. Not a question, not a thing.

JF: (laughing)

MB: Nobody said – well where did you go, what did you do? Not anything. And of course when I came in I guess for that first department meeting, such as it was. - well we’re going to discuss the Junior High curriculum today. And I thought – Oh, and I thought well that’s nice except I had no idea what the Junior High curriculum was. But that’s the way it was. And I’m glad I went I was absolutely delighted. And then I think I told you on my other tape that a couple years later Tom Ryan told me about the National Science Foundation. That was the beginning really of my entrance into the more rarified atmosphere of academe in geography where research was being done, or people were meeting or discussing things.

JF: That was always one of the problems at Salem State. The faculty, once they got here, was so isolated from the larger world that we were supposed to be part of. I used to tell people that they were in class D ball which was the lowest division of baseball. And since we were isolated, it’s too bad because we kept people from being, from wanting to really be professors. We really
made them into teachers. And very few people here understand the distinction between being a teacher and being a professor.

MB: That’s right. That’s it; they think they’re the same.

JF: I know.

MB: And they don’t understand what graduate training instills in you. And I found, this is one of the problems I found in my department. From the minute I entered Clark, there was this atmosphere of the importance of doing research in the field and the importance of keeping up with the literature and discussing new articles and techniques and where the field was going. Particularly because most people had no idea what it was. They thought it was something they learned in the fourth grade. And some people still think that. But once you began what the research was like and people would discuss different ideas and why they thought this type of research was more valuable than that type and the quantitative revolution was just on the cusp of being developed as so on. That I thought was wonderful when I remember when I left Clark after the masters, I did write one article as I recall based on some work as I said from Stop & Shop. And I said well, it’s an article, not big research but it was a compilation of some bibliographical material I’d gotten together for one of the bigwigs at Stop & Shop. Nobody in the department ever talked about doing anything like that. As a matter of fact one person, who shall be nameless, not only did not belong to any of the geographical societies, local or national, I don’t think he ever read, I know he never read an academic journal after he got out of graduate school. And that was just with a masters. And really didn’t care about doing that. The literature that was quoted in his classes, and the students liked his classes. At lot, Time Magazine.

JF: You’ve already named him by the way on the other tape. So it doesn’t matter.

MB: Well it doesn’t matter. But I was appalled.

JF: Yes.

MB: But and the others may have read journal articles from time to time. It would be very hard to sort of get them here because the library didn’t take a lot of the journals. But they began to more and more and there was a little bit of interchange or sort of realm. But I felt if I really wanted to discuss something I wouldn’t discuss it here at Salem. It would be at some of the regional meetings. And in fact some of the most rewarding things I’ve done have been with people from other schools. Where they say would you like to collaborate with us on this, that or the other? And I was excited when someone said they’d like me to work with them. I said – fine you know, not just teach another class because somebody else wanted to go away for a semester or something. No, it was a very odd situation. I’m glad I came back however, because I could do pretty much what I wanted academically. They didn’t say - oh you have to publish or you have to do this or you have to do that. And there were some courses I had to teach that eventually drove me right up the wall. And that was teaching Weather and Climate. When I wanted to teach Geography of the Mediterranean, Geography of the Middle East, the Mediterranean course I got all passed through academic policies and all the screening committees. But they never ran it
because they said I had to teach the weather requirement. So that was when I decided it was time to retire. There was a lot of stuff in between that I haven’t…

JF: We’ll come back. Let me back up for a moment. Let me go back to BU because I’ve got a couple of questions. George Lewis obviously was the department chair.

MB: Yes.

JF: How did you know him?

MB: Ok, George was one of the officers in the New England Saint Lawrence Valley Geographical Society. And you know, as I said, our group was small and we would meet up in New Hampshire or Vermont or sometimes in Massachusetts at a school that had a Geography Department. And I don’t remember the actual sort of interchanges that we had, but oh, I became an officer. Oh, I remember I used to send him dues notices. You haven’t paid your dues. And he’d laugh because he never let me forget that. But then you know I was at Salem and he was at BU and wasn’t so far away and occasionally there’d be a meeting at BU. He was a Harvard trained geographer and Sol Cohen was there at the same time. Sol was one of the greats in American geography. And he went from BU to Clark to teach and administer. So he had a marvelous career track. But we’re not talking about him. He was there at the time though. So these were, you know, two very competent people and I would see them and talk to them. And it was nice because they published, they published a lot of stuff about – well, George was a very good writer and he did a lot of stuff on New England. On early geography, on historic aspects of Boston and neighborhoods and so on. He had his students do field projects that were really very interesting. And Sol of course, was a Middle East specialist so I liked talking with him. But I didn’t stay there that long. I stayed I think it was five years. And when the specter of John Silber loomed above the horizon there was a lot of dissatisfaction. And, as I said, my home situation was deteriorating because of illness and I had to be home.

JF: In your 1986 article, you also mentioned that there was some indication at BU that your research interests were not where they were going.

MB: Oh exactly, exactly that’s one of the things they said. And I couldn’t figure out whether they just wanted to get rid of me. Oh it was… other people felt the beginning of the way to dissolve the Geography Department. They wanted to get rid of people one by one. And they would interview us and I was the first one who went up there for the interview. It was with the Vice President, a very strange man. Totally misunderstood what geography was all about you know. As so many people do today. Very difficult to sort of get through to him what I was doing. And he said – well what you’re doing is not in the long-range plan for the university. So I said – plan? Plan? What plan? And everybody in my geography said we don’t have a long-range plan. What the heck is that?

JF: Oh.

MB: What is he talking about? And we went round and round in this. We had a letter writing campaign and everything. And I might just as well have been writing or talking to the wall. As did
my friends. It was really an interesting thing. But I said – I don’t want to stay in a place like this. They don’t want me.

JF: Well, what is interesting to me is the fact that BU, even at that time, even before John Silber shows up, not one of my heroes in life. It had a major reputation in the area. In the region, it was a major regional college. And they take you from Southern Connecticut, I mean obviously, somebody saw some qualities there of scholarship. That was kind of a high honor.

MB: Yeah, they gave me a semester of, what was it, a semester? No, I can’t remember a semester or whatever. I got a research grant.

JF: Oh, is that right? Another research...

MB: Well from BU, a small one and I got very interested in the diamond trade traditionally. Because when I was in Israel one of the things I noticed was that the Israelis were building up the diamond cutting business. Because a lot of the people from the camps and so on were from Belgium or Holland and they brought their skills with them. And the Israelis began to get themselves a reputation for cutting small stones. The big ones were still in New York and being cut in New York and other capitals. And even India was getting in on the act. And I thought – wow this is an interesting topic. If the diamond cutting trade and business something that is inherently not filled with but populated very largely by Jews because of the tradition of cutting in Northern Europe. Or is it because the Israelis realize – well look here is an industry that doesn’t require raw material. I mean very small raw material. You don’t have to mine it, somebody else mines it. And the value of business depends on the skill of the people that cut the stones. And I thought – well you know I want to trace this. So I outlined the research project starting with where the diamonds came from in Africa. And the DeBeers Corporation, which was a monopoly, an international one. And then where the diamond cutting centers were. And by doing a lot of writing of letters and research and what I could find. And I even went to a jeweler in the jewelers building here in Boston, who became a good friend. Who was Belgian by origin and his family had come over later after the war and so on and told me a little bit about what the business was like. And I said - well I’m going to go to these places. So, as you probably know, in the diamond trade every month there is something they call the sites where dealers come from all over to Antwerp. Well it used to be Amsterdam but during the war diamond cutters were deported. But Antwerp became the big center for a while. People would be invited to the sites, and they would be presented with diamonds of various sizes, quality, color and so on in the Bourse, I mean it was a very special building with guards and all kinds of things there. And they would make an offer on the packet of diamonds. And the offer was either accepted or rejected. Not much bargaining there. This was the way it was. And they never did any of this buying and selling on paper. I mean there were no contracts or anything it was all a handshake, with a few Yiddish words which meant good luck and blessing. It was mazel and brach those were the two words. And I said, well I want to find out about it. So I did what ever I could at home, set up interviews, I went to the London Trading Company in London talked to somebody there about the material. And then somebody told me I should go see Lewis Asher in Amsterdam, who was a member of a long time diamond cutting family. Jewish family. He’s still alive. And I went to see him and we had a very nice talk and I told him what I was interested in, the Jewish aspect of the diamond trades. Because now of course, other countries were getting into it. So he gave me some insights on
what he knew and so on. But the best thing was he gave me entrée to see somebody in Antwerp. And I got to the Bourse in Antwerp. I went in as a guest and I saw the diamond-trading going on. And what happens is the people sit, the buyer and the seller sit at these long tables, ok, near a window and the window is always facing north, they don’t want east or west because light on diamonds will change depending on where the sun is. But in the north window you don’t have that. And so the little packets are being opened and they’re looking at it. And this one is looking with his loop, you know the glass, and so on. And I didn’t stay there too long because obviously I wasn’t going to participate in the bargaining. It was very busy. And then this wonderful gentleman who took me into the cafeteria, it had a strictly kosher cafeteria, and bought me lunch. The order was given in Yiddish and, oh my goodness this is a lot more interesting than I thought it was going to be. And then from there I went to Israel.

Tape Two
Side Two

I forgot the name of it, I have the picture of it in my dissertation. But they were dedicating the building and they had diamond dealers there, they had diamond cutters, jewelry showrooms and so on. And I went there to see what they were doing and I talked to a few people and what I had known before I found to be absolutely true. There were very small stones, this was not a big part of the worldwide trade and so on. But they were trying to make it, and I think they were doing pretty well. A lot of the diamond cutters now who were being trained were not from Europe. Some of them were the North African Jews who immigrated to Israel when there were some problems in places like Morocco and so on. And they became very good diamond cutters and so on. They were not the business people but they were beginning to work their way up. Today they are the business people. And they were a little worried about the Indian competition, because the Indian labor was so cheap.

JF: Cheap, yes.

MB: And I did get to India after that come to think of it. But I never thought that it was a diamond center. Diamond center was around Bombay; it was the same trip. And I got to New Delhi because that’s where I had friends and so on. And I didn’t have a connection in Bombay. I wish I had. On the other hand it wouldn’t have made much difference to the article I wrote. What I did was, I didn’t put in all this material I’m telling you. But I wrote the article, which said essentially that diamond cutting had been traditionally Jewish occupation in Europe particularly, but in Israel it came about more as an economic measure. What you do in a country that doesn’t have a lot of resources? Its major resource was its people. They didn’t have oil, they didn’t have any other minerals, the climate was not that wonderful, water was always a problem for agricultural products. I mean for a long time the chief product was oranges and it’s still a product, but you know that isn’t a way to support an economy for a long time. The Israeli economy right now, by the way, is booming. I mean they’ve computerized everything. That’s another whole story. But with the diamonds my conclusion was that it was an industry that would be helpful to the economy and the government was supporting some of it. But a lot of it, as time went on, was supported by private investment. And so far as I know it still is. But that was a fun thing to do, because it meant that I went to different places. I wrote it up and I got it into, it’s very interesting, the flagship journal of the Association of American Geographers, The Annals. I had tried
somewhere else, the American Geographical Society which I came to be very close with later on when I was doing my lecturing. And for a reason that I never found out, they told me they loved the article, but they would not publish it. And I couldn’t figure out why. I never found out why. And I said – well I like this article and they don’t want to publish it that’s their prerogative. So I took the manuscript and I shipped it off in another envelope to The Annals of the Association of the American Geographers, which is a higher-ranking journal. And they took it immediately. They said we like this article. Well, you know, it’s one of those things, you just cannot judge who will perhaps accept your...

JF: Sure.

MB: And people still tell me about that article. Of course the other article that I didn’t mention. I didn’t talk about my dissertation did I?

JF: Only in terms of what it was.

MB: Beersheba. Oh, well because I had my article on Beersheba in The Annals also. That came soon after I got my Ph.D. As far as publishing was concerned, I got three articles out of that dissertation. One was on Bedouins, was in a sociological journal. That was fun to do. The other one was on the economy of the Negev, which one of the professors at Clark wanted me to do at the beginning. He wanted that to be my whole dissertation. But it was too big an area and it was not that well developed. And the third one was my major focus, the development of the city of Beersheba. And that one you know had lots of maps and I had illustrations. But that wasn’t the main thing. It was a documentation of a city that was already there since biblical times and you know a settlement and then became a Turkish railroad stop and so on. And when Israel became a nation they decided that Beersheba would be the gateway to the Negev, the gateway to the most undeveloped part of the country, the desert. They are going to make the desert bloom. Which they did here and there. But Beersheba would be the administrative jump off point, as well as the transportation jump off point. Well that is not exactly what happened, I mean the center of all the activities and so on in Israel is still Tel Aviv and the metropolitan area. But I wrote that article and The Annals took it right away. And I must say, on my subsequent visits to Israel, and there were many of them, there were about a dozen later on and so on, I would go back to Beersheba where there was now a university and where the head of the department, who eventually became a dean, was my very good friend because he used my dissertation when he was writing his doctorate. And so we’re friends you know, every time he sees me I get this great big hello. And he had some visiting urban geographers from Jerusalem, I think it was, and we were looking at a new housing development one afternoon. We’re walking along, and one of those visitors said to me he said – Oh, you’re the one who wrote that article on Beersheba, it was the first thing in English in the geographic literature. And so all of a sudden I felt well you know nobody here ever noticed that I wrote anything. (Laughing).

JF: (Laughing)

MB: And I thought – well, that’s very nice. Even I think that same visit I had another sort of wonderful, you know these little things that happen that make you feel good. I went down to the archives at the Negev University which was established in ’63 you know right after I had done my
work and so on. I went down to the archives to see what they had you know. Any new material that had been put aside for Beersheba as town and urban growth and all the rest of that. And the archivist was a very nice young man, who had studied at the University of Chicago. I think he was an American who had immigrated to Israel. And I said to him, well you know I’m interested to know what you have, some recent publication perhaps on the development of the city of Beersheba. He looked at me and he said – well we have this one work, which is very often used for reference, and it’s by someone named Berman. And I said to myself - Oh, I did not tell him who I was. And I said – that sounds interesting. I did not ask him to see it because I knew what it was.

JF: (Laughing)

MB: And then later on I told him who I was and so on. I still get New Year cards from him. Come see us, come see us. Well I haven’t been there for awhile. The university, by the way, is beautiful, it is big, it is modern, the buildings are architecturally extremely interesting. And there’s a great big plaza in the front of the main part of the campus where Sadat came you know after they had signed the peace with Israel. Menachem Begin, was it Menachem Begin? Yes I think so.

JF: Yes.

MB: My memory is failing me. And they had a swimming pool. And they had a great library, a great library! In fact some afternoons, when I wasn’t looking in the journals and breaking my head over the Hebrew language, I would go over to the English fiction part and just take something out and sit in the sunshine and read. And it was a great time. I’m getting away from the diamonds and everything.

JF: Right. Let me… I just want to establish for the record here. The Annals, where you published both those articles. That’s a refereed journal right?

MB: Oh, it definitely is. Definitely, yes. The Annals, and the other magazine was a social organization, or sociological journal that I never saw after I sent my article on the Bedouins. But I think that was refereed too. And then there was the Journal of Geography, which is for teachers, and that’s refereed. There were no problems.

JF: How did you feel when you were first published?

MB: Wow, I’m doing what Dr. Murphy, my advisor, wanted me to do! Well, now I know what he was driving at. But at the same time I really felt good about it. I’m looking around at my colleagues, and I don’t know what they’re doing, but they’re not writing articles.

JF: And you’re talking about your colleagues here at Salem.

MB: Yeah, and a lot of colleagues elsewhere. People who were in graduate school, who were good.
JF: Uh huh.

MB: You know wonderful to share ideas with, you know, drink coffee with and have lunch and dinner whatever. They either had other responsibilities or else, some how or other, were not inclined to write. But you knew what they were doing, what they were teaching, what kind of projects they were initiating and that I thought was important too. You see because they were doing something, I mean their minds were working geographically.

JF: Did you ever serve as a reviewer for the National Endowment for the Humanities or something of that nature?

MB: No.

JF: That's a great experience.

MB: Oh, you've done that?

JF: Yeah.

MB: No, the NSFP people have you know, been in touch with me off and on. I get asked to review manuscripts by publishers.

JF: Yes.

MB: And, I don’t do that anymore because, well I mean they pile the stuff on and usually I have something else I’d rather do. I mean it doesn’t get much, the pay, the compensation was minimal, and I was not concerned about that too much anyway. No, I did a lot of, well, maybe advising. I was going to say advising and consenting, no.

JF: (Laughing)

MB: There are lots of things that came up, you know, as I’d go to national meetings. I started getting put on committees, and invited to do a number of things. For instance, one of the surprises I got, not too long ago while I was still working, was to participate in the Ellen Churchill Semple Symposium at Vassar. Now Ellen Churchill Semple was perhaps the first really celebrated women geographer, she died in the thirties, she was a Vassar graduate, there was no geography at Vassar at the time. She majored in history and languages, but she was interested in anthropological aspects of geography and so on. She went to Germany to study because there was no advanced geography in the United States at the time. And she studied with a geographer named Ratzel. I was going to say Munich, it wasn't Munich, I've forgotten the, I should know the name of the university, it will come to me. The legend was that they wouldn’t allow her to matriculate. She was female, this was Germany. And she went anyway and sat outside the door and listened to the lecture...

JF: Oh, my god!
MB: …of Professor Ratzel. That is nowhere documented in any of her papers. A lot of people have quoted this, it’s been printed and reprinted over and over again. They say that she didn’t want to make anything out of it, because she did not consider that important. The importance was that she was able to study with the master, as she called him. And this was anthropogeography. It was actually the kind of geography that delved into environmental determinism. The idea that a lot of places in the world are the way they are because of their geography. We’re coming back to that by the way. Then it was discredited, they said – no, no, no, no people are free agents, they do what they want with the environment, the environment doesn’t influence them. Well there’s a whole literature on that, which I won’t get into. Semple wrote several books, which were pretty well received, on her theories, articles. She taught at Clark and Chicago and alternate semesters. Had a fantastic reputation. And she, well one thing about her, her attitude toward the people she worked for, particularly at Clark, that I think I should tell you. In her will she had a codicil appended to it, after she learned that the men in the geography department at Clark made a lot more money then she did. She found out what the differential was and she got very upset because in the codicil she wrote, she said, she had left a lot of money to Clark. Well in those days what was a lot of money I guess. And she said – I do not see why I should leave my money to Clark when I publish more than anyone else in the department and I teach more and I make a lot less money, and she quoted the figures. And she said that when she questioned them about it, they said, well, she was a single woman without dependents and that she didn’t need it. And in the codicil there’s this one little quote – “a mid Victorian view by a bunch of modern capitalists.” And what she said was she was leaving her money to her nieces. And they need it more than the university. That has been quoted elsewhere, I wrote an article on that. But as a result of this and the fact, I think, it was the hundredth anniversary of her, I guess her, matriculation at Vassar. They organized a symposium, the geographers in Vassar at the time, there were no geographers when she was there, decided they would honor her memory and they would invite people to present papers. She came from Kentucky, and the University of Kentucky had some of her papers and so on. So they invited people from Kentucky. People who had been at Chicago, because Semple had taught at Chicago. People from Clark, who were good friends of mine. And, oh, and then other people had written about her. Several whose connection was a little less direct but who had written very good articles. And they invited me. And I thought – oh my, isn’t that wonderful.

JF: They invited you for what reason now?

MB: To present the paper.

JF: No, but why did they invite you?

MB: Because I published a lot on her.

JF: Ok, I just wanted to get that recorded.

MB: And also she had been a Clark woman. And I had an article in the Clark journal called Clark Now. Not a refereed journal. But I talked about her work in the Mediterranean and you know the fact that she stood up to the men salary wise and so on. It was a nice little article. I think I have it. I don’t know if it’s upstairs or not. I mean in the archives, but I’ll check it out. And they didn’t
tell me what they wanted me to talk about. They said - we're going to have so and so talk about this, that, and the other thing about her early years, her latter years, her publications and so on. But tell us what you think you would like to do. So I said - well I'd like to talk about the way she was perceived in the discipline as a woman. Because she was the only one, in fact she got to be president of the Association of American Geographers. I mean you had to be sort of divine almost to get that honor. So what happened at the conference, I had this paper you know and it was ready. They never published any of these things because the fellow in charge was one of those who didn't publish. But I had the paper and I was on the program I think the first morning. I was the last paper before lunch. Now as you know if you go to meetings people don't always stick to the time allotted to them.

JF: Tell me about it.

MB: And they go on and on. In fact the people who were scheduled to talk before me didn’t have a paper. I mean they just talked. There were two of them from the University of Kentucky, they knew her work and they just went on and on, and I'm looking at my watch and at the clock because we are supposed to break at noon or whenever it happened to be.

JF: Sure.

MB: And my time is being chewed up bit by bit. And (laughing) sitting next to me was Cathy Braden. Cathy Braden was one of the finest students I ever had from BU. She’s written a lot on many things, she's a Russian expert. She’s written on forestry but she’s also written on Semple’s work in her regard to the development of the field. And Cathy’s sitting next to me, and she’s poking me with her elbow and she said – boy she said - are you going to look good. Because the fellows who were speaking before me were just wandering off into the forest somewhere, they were not dealing with the subject at hand. And I laughed too and I said – I don't think I'm going to get a chance to look good.

JF: (laughing)

MB: Anyway, my time finally came and I had to sort of telescope the whole thing, and what I did was to disagree with everything that the fellows before me had said. I said – I don't think that’s right because… and I think also people who say that she sat outside the door to listen to Professor Ratzel and so on. I’m not so sure that’s true either. It makes a wonderful story; it’s in the folklore of geography. But this is what I think about her work and why I think it’s still important in many ways even though the principles of environmental determinism have been largely discredited. I mean this woman contributed a great deal. I finished on time and we broke for lunch and the director of the American Geographical Society was in the audience, as an invited guest. And she came down to me and said – you going to lunch? I said – yes. She said – well come with me, I’d like to talk to you. And that conversation had to do with her asking me where I traveled and what I considered to be my areas of expertise and so on. And I’m looking at her because she does not run a school or anything like that. She runs this research organization that publishes magazines. I’d written several book reviews for them and so on because I knew the book review editor and he kept asking me to do things. And I would do them. Then she said – do you know about the geographical society lecture series, people we send on trips to do lectures on
the geography of the places we visit? And I said – well I’ve heard a little bit. Actually I’d heard quite a lot, and I thought - oh I’d give my eye teeth to do this, but I figured, oh, I would never get to do it because I had not published a lot of books. I had a lot of articles and so forth, but no books. For a good reason, I never thought there was a market for them. And I said - well I know a little bit. And she said – well let me tell you a few things. And she did and she outlined one of the trips that was going to be given that spring to the Mediterranean and it was, well the places are kind of a jumble in my mind, but we went to Malta to Sicily and then over to Greece and a number of the islands there. Obviously I went. She told me about this and would you be interested in presenting a series of lectures? I said – well, I might, I might. (laughing) I’m dying here. And she said – before we can finalize this you have to be interviewed by the head of the travel agency, because, you see, he books the passengers, these are very expensive trips on a very small, luxurious ship. I think the number of passengers, at full capacity, would be about eighty. You know that’s a very small ship, of course you have the crew, which would be more than eighty. But he not only will interview you but he will take you to lunch. In other words, and she said – I would come too. And what will happen is he will see how well you comport yourself. In other words it’s a question of are you a congenial companion, can you talk about anything outside of geography? It was just basically a personality interview. And I thought – Ohhhh. I said ok, so they flew me down to New York and I meet Mr. Watson, who owns the travel agency. It was Raymond and Whitcomb by the way, the oldest travel agency in America. They started on School Street in Boston. But now they’re in New York, on Madison Avenue. They ran a lot of different trips. For the luxury trade. The people who’ve been everywhere else and want something different. And he takes me to lunch, he takes me and the Director of the AGS, the American Geographical Society, to this men’s club, well it was a businessmen’s club. All right, so they were not discriminating against women then, maybe they were before. But you walk in and there are all these gray suits and very sort of formal type of dining room. We sit down, we have lunch. And I don’t know what we started to talk about, but it went ok. I thought gee, I’m hoping the food will be terrific. It wasn’t. I mean it cost a fortune of course, I guess, I didn’t look at the cost. And then of course we have our little lunch you know. And then I said to my self – I’m still hungry I said – I’d like to have dessert. Usually people are very serious. All right so I had dessert.

JF/MB: (laughing)

MB: And we went back to his office just to talk about a few other things and I went home. And I got a phone call the next day from the director of the AGS and she said - you passed. And they booked me on that first trip. Which was heaven. And it led to more and more trips and the writing of more and more lectures. Now the assumption was that I knew about these places. I hadn’t been to all of them. I hadn’t been to Malta, I hadn’t been to Majorca and then as far as the Greek Isles were concerned, Santorini, some of the old places in the Peloponnese you know where the great amphitheatres were and so on. Besides so you go to Athens and you go to the Acropolis, ok. But that was something you just had to do, then you went out and you sailed to this island and that island and so on. And as far as the lectures were concerned they had like a little lounge theatre where there was a screen and they had overhead projectors so that you could make transparencies and bring your slides. And I had a lot of slides because I’d done a lot of traveling. And the topics that you lectured on were not necessarily about the places you were going to. Anything you wanted. Nobody said – You can’t do this lecture, it doesn’t fit this trip. I did what
ever I wanted. And it had to be forty-five, fifty minutes. And then you’d get questions, sometimes you wouldn’t get questions. They’d talk to you afterwards because you’re on the boat with them. Well it was like I’d died and gone to heaven. It’s a geographer’s dream. Going to these wonderful places, you’re treated like royalty, after all you’re the lecturer. They think you know everything. Of course which is…I took careful pains not to let on that I didn’t. And you know you’d see them on the tour when you’d be walking around. I didn’t have to do anything on land. There were always guides and buses and you know museum people who would take you here, there and so on. And I think I learned a lot more than the passengers did. It was just wonderful. I took more pictures and more pictures. And she kept asking me. As a matter of fact up until this past September I was supposed to go to Turkey. There was a trip called the Eurasia/Turkey Trip. That we were supposed to fly into Istanbul and you know…and get over our jet lag, because you know that’s a long trip. And then get on the ship, this was a different ship, a little bigger, not much. And sail on the Black Sea to Bulgaria, Romania, Russian ports to the south to Odessa to the rest of the Crimea and then we’d turn around and come back along the north Turkish coast. And the rest of the time was spent, after going through the Dardanelles and Bosporus and all that. To do the Aegean Islands and places like Kos which is where Hippocrates was born. And we went to – well we didn’t go, we were supposed to go… the upshot of it all is the earthquake came, a lot of people withdrew. At first you know the travel agency was going to run the trip it had so many people signed on. And I called up and I said – well aren’t people withdrawing? Oh no, the trip is going, the trip is going. Then a second earthquake came. The earthquake in Athens came, because we were supposed to fly home from Athens. And so they cancelled everything. And I must say I breathed a sign of relief. Even though I had all the lectures prepared, I had all the transparencies here. The folks here in this Library have been fabulous to me. Renee upstairs, who works in the children’s library. And Martha Jane and the ILL people. I mean they got me whatever I wanted in the way of research materials. So I was set. But I didn’t go.

JF: When did you start these lectures?

MB: 1992 or 3. I think it was 92. I can only tell by looking at the dates on my slides.

JF: Yeah.

MB: Because I went to quite a few of them. I did Northern Europe, St. Petersburg in Russia, and Scandinavia, you know Finland, Estonia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark. I did before that Belgium, Holland and France. I did France several times. And I must say that perhaps the lecture that I liked the most, I did a few that I really liked. One I’m sorry I didn’t give was the one that was going to be on the Turkish trip called “Hippocrates Made House Calls”. It was the beginning of modern medicine, comes out of the Aegean Sea. Hippocrates was there, Galen seven hundred years later was there, and there were lots of people in between. And of course there was the legend in mythology of Asclepius. I had a wonderful time researching that. And figuring out where we were going to go and talk about. And what the operations were like and the dream theories of treating people. You know you fall asleep and they wake you up and you tell them your dreams and they would tell you what they would treat you with because of your dreams and so on. I found that to be fun. In fact I told my doctors about it today. Not today a couple weeks ago at the Mass
General. They seemed very interested. But my best lecture, I think, was on D-Day. We were in Normandy at the 50th anniversary.

JF: Oh, were you?

MB: Yes, it wasn’t 1944, it was 1994 and my focus in the article was to talk about the weather as a determinator as to what the date of the invasion would be. There’s a lot of stuff out there. It’s not only, oh, I’ve got the weather maps. Then they had this meteorological committee of Brits and Americans and a few other people. It was the British meteorologist who gave the best advice. The one from MIT had a lot more statistical data, but he was dead wrong on the date. I mean he was one day off. If they had gone when he said a day early it would have swamped the whole operation. But I read the stuff by Eisenhower, Bradley, a little by Churchill, not much about the preparations. About the material they had about where the landing should be because they wanted to keep it secret from the Germans. The Germans were expecting that the invasion would be through Calais and France because it’s the closest to the British coastline. Meanwhile they were very busy on the QT sending the frogmen along the coast in Normandy to see how solid the beach was. I mean would the tanks get mired down in the sand and so on. And they made several trips in the dead of night to do the research of taking corings of the sand to see how solid it was. Because they had found some old maps in Paris that showed the coastline different than what it is now. And you know, well, if the coastline has changed - will the solidity of the earth change also and make it rather difficult for the landings? Well, it’s a wonderful story about the frogmen going in on News Years Eve. They came in on these boats that have no motors, you know, and they got their stuff with them and they wait until they hear the Germans singing as they’re getting drunk on New Years Eve. So there is plenty of noise and they can go about their business and do this and that. That kind of stuff just enthralled me. And then there were lots of other things about Eisenhower’s doubts about it all. He was a wonderful commander-in-chief and a little known fact is that on the date that he said go, I mean he made up his mind like two hours before the boats and the planes and all. The planes had gotten up a little bit earlier waiting for the sun to rise. He had sat in his headquarters with a yellow pad and was writing his resignation. In case the invasion failed he was taking full responsibility. And that’s documented by William Ambrose, who I’m sure you know, as he wrote several books on that. And I thought what character this man had. And then of course the beginning was carnage. It was just awful. But what I did, all the weather stuff before all the preparation, the state of meteorology at the time, and so forth. And how poor it actually was. I did not get beyond the landings. I said – then the landings took place, the mine sweepers had to go in and the people who disarm the mines and so on. And I never said how many got killed or all the rest of it. Because there were people on the ship who had been in the invasion. And there were many who knew those who didn’t make it. And I thought – I don’t want to get into that. Well, I tell you the people who were in the invasion they told me they really liked what I did. Because I had no personal experience with that very obviously. 1944, I was entering Salem State College. (laughing) So I published that. That’s in the Geographical Review.

JF: See where your weather and climate did come in handy.

MB: Yes it did, it did. I never used it in the class because you can’t talk to these kids about 1944. That’s the Neolithic period.
JF: That’s right, that’s the day after the world was founded.

MB: (laughing) Yeah who founded it now.

JF: I’m convinced you know, that’s one of the things that always bothered me. Students have no sense of historical time. And we do very little in our courses trying to get them to understand historical time. I’ve pointed out, you know, you can think three generations can cover a period almost one hundred and fifty or longer years. All of a sudden when you start talking in terms of this. But we don’t really give them any sense of the past. I joke with my students I say – you know the American Revolution you’re aware of came the day before the Civil War, which came a half a day before World War I.

MB: (Laughing)

JF: And in their mind it basically falls into…

MB: Yes right.

JF: They may have World War I before the Civil War.

MB: (Laughing) You see you get that with time, I get that with places. They don’t know where anything is. I was at a banquet, it was a WAA banquet – Woman’s Athletic Association.

JF: Right, thank you.

MB: And I’m sitting next to a student, that was Fred Meier I think, Oh God that was… oh well listen we all have our problems. (Laughing) But anyway he was there the student was there. And I was talking about a trip to Europe and the student said to me – How did you get there? He said – Did you take a bus? And I said – Well no, I took a boat. And there were some other things like that.

JF: It truly is amazing the lack of knowledge that people have today of the world that is so much needed to have. I was reading the New York Times; I read the New York Times everyday. Of course they still use maps and stuff of this nature and I find it so handy to understand what’s happening.

MB: The Globe is good with maps too.

JF: Yeah, but our students have no, not just our students, because I hear my colleagues throughout the country when I go to conventions, basically stories that are quite reflective of what is happening here at Salem.

MB: Well we…well one of the things that was happening…
I sort of jumped over my time as an officer in the regional organization and then the national organization.
JF: Well, let's save that because we're going to have to come back to anyway. Let me ask some questions back on this lecture tour. I told you this was not going to be an easy project for you. I mean that we are going to have to interview you more.

MB: And CASE, right, I didn't do anything with that.

JF: Oh don't worry about it we got, as long as you don't mind the interviews, I don't mind.

MB: No, it makes me feel like I'm part of this institution.

JF: Oh, well, I'm glad that you say that. Make sure you talk to people like Charlotte. I told Charlotte the other day I want to interview her.

MB: Oh, she'll be wonderful.

JF: Yes she will be. Listen, when they introduced you when you're on that grand boat and that grand tour. I wish we were videotaping this. But anyway and then you could have done that little dance you just did. When you were on the tour, how did they introduce you?

MB: Oh, that's very interesting. I only got introduced once at the podium, but what happens is the group meets at the very first day or evening of the trip, either in the hotel or on the boat or whatever it is. And the lectures, of which there are usually two sometimes three, are introduced and they ask us to tell the people a little bit about who we are. Where we come from, what our training is and the type of things we're going to talk about. They try and make them feel they're going to learn something or something might be of interest to them. And the first couple of times it was Dr. Berman and after that everything was on a first name basis. Which I liked a lot better. Because it's a small group.

JF: Right.

MB: And the people, first of all, are incredibly interested and curious. They're very well read, very well traveled. This is not their first trip. And so some of the places they've seen before and some of them are new. And the questions are always interesting. They're interested in having a good time, but there's nothing about you know a trained dog act as Charlie Kiefer used to say. Charlie was in the History department before your time.

JF: No, he was my department chairman for a year.

MB: Oh, well you know Charlie. And there was dancing in the evening for most of the people who didn't dance. I mean because they were older, when I say older - 80's and we had some 90's. I don't think I ever saw anybody a hundred. The people were fascinating, absolutely fascinating. One of them was the retired head of surgery at one of the New York hospitals; he was in his 90's. And he had turned to hybridizing irises as a hobby. Has a place up in Maine and another place in New York. And I sat at his table a couple of times. The man was fascinating. In fact I went up to Maine to see the irises. Because it was in the Boston Globe, they wrote a big article about him.
So we talked about that. And then there were people who had been to these areas before and had experiences they would share with us. But you know...

Tape Three - January 12, 2000
Side One

JF: Mildred as I mentioned to you what I’d like to begin with, so we make sure we get it covered, is the salary equity suit that develops here at Salem State College. What was the background of that salary equity suit?

MB: Oh ah.

JF: Now you’re very good on the tape, by the way.

MB: Oh ok. The background was, a number of women faculty members had discovered and investigated the fact that the salaries of state employees, particularly those in higher ed, was public information. And they got the figures for the entire faculty at Salem State and were particularly interested in comparing the salaries of the women and the men within their departments. And the departments involved were English, History, eventually Geography. I came into this a little late because I wasn’t on the faculty when they started this investigation. And perhaps the most egregious differences were found in the Physical Education Department. Particularly between the men and the women coaches and teachers and so on. And this was brought to the attention of the administration who tried very hard to simply down play it.

JF: Who was the president at the time? Do you remember?

MB: At the time that I came, it was Keegan [ed. Note – President, 1970-1974]. But I think they had started this before. I guess before it was Meier [ed. Note – President, 1954-1970]. And he certainly was not too sympathetic to that sort of thing. And Keegan, for all his liberal views in regards to race and politics in general, wasn’t much of a help in this. But he didn’t last long, as we know there were some problems with his administrative talents. And he left and we got a new president, in fact we got a lot of temporary presidents along the line. Vincent Mara was the acting president after Keegan. And what happened was the women had a committee, decided what we were going to do, or tried to decide. And the first step was of course to talk to the dean and the president, I mean the administrative offices to see what could be done about it and could it be explained. Well, of course, the administration did all kinds of things about trying to explain. Years of experience and background and so forth and so on. It really didn’t get anywhere as far as the women were concerned. Until finally we contacted the Department of Health, Education and Welfare which had an affirmative action kind of policy.

JF: Federal? Was it the federal office?

MB: Federal yes. Actually when you come right down to it I am a little hazy on what we did first, because as I said I wasn’t here. There were several, state and federal. The one that I think eventually had the most clout, even though it took a long time even with that clout, to redress any grievances, MCAD, the Mass Commission Against Discrimination, and if you notice today’s
Globe, there was a very interesting article about the number of cases backlogged in that office has begun to diminish somewhat. But there are thousands of them. And when we started our complaint they didn’t have enough offices really to handle the complaints or to analyze what was wrong. In any case MCAD was one of the places we went and we talked to people and Health, Education and Welfare. The Health, Education and Welfare Department was under the aegis of, well I mean was dealing with, the affirmative action legislation that had been passed in Washington. And they eventually sent some people out here to examine the figures and talk to the administration and the women. And to make a long story short…

JF: Don’t make a long story short.

MB: Don’t? Well anyway there was a great deal of time (laugh) that lapsed between their findings and the investigation. I mean you know it was government bureaucracy at work. Took a long time. But they found probable cause. Which was good news for us. We said – well what do we do now? We looked around and found there were several agencies we could go to, to help understand the nature of the situation, statistically and generally. The other department was the Department of Labor. They had rules against discrimination in salary and if indeed there were going to be any kind of complaints or court cases organized around this there was a statute of limitations. How far back could you go and so on? As I recall the Department of Labor said you could only go as far back as ’63 something like that. That may be wrong, I will not take an oath on that. But whatever the case was we went through every possible governmental agency. We got some satisfaction from the fact that people did say - yes it does look like there is some discrimination here. But nothing was done about it. The administration here at Salem State was not what we call, well, not too interested in the case too much, but the principals kept changing. Vincent Mara [ed. Note – President, 1974-1975] was temporary and then the following was…I don’t know if the next one was Penson. Was it? Edward Penson [ed. Note – President, 1975-1978]. They kept hiring different deans and every time a new administrator came on board, you know, they would look at it and find reasons why there was no discrimination and say that we really ought to drop the whole thing. Well, let’s face it the women at Salem State were not what we call the compliant type with suggestions that they drop the investigation. And we had a couple meetings, by this time I was here. And the meetings centered around the fact of hiring lawyers, because we weren’t getting anywhere with the administration. As I said it kept changing. For one thing they were very much against what we were trying to do. That is redress the salary grievances. So we went, I was not one of the committee that went to the lawyers, but we did consult a couple of lawyers and some of the big firms in Boston, one was Choate, Hall and Stewart.

JF: Hmm.

MB: And it turned out that one of the women, Ruth Budd I believe, was one of the people we spoke with and she sounded as if this was really a good case and it might work out to something. But we had to talk over all kinds of technicalities. Well, it turned out of course that Ruth Budd left the firm and went into another office and so that sort of fell apart. Then finally we got in touch with the firm of Homans, Hamilton, Damon and Marshall.

JF: Good memory.
MB: Well, Bill Homans, I remember, was one of the great civil rights lawyers in the sixties, very prominent man. But he wasn’t the one we went for. We wanted a woman lawyer.

JF: Right.

MB: And we eventually did, we got somebody by the name of Pat Randall. But you know this going to the lawyers started, well, I think in ’75. And we had filed complaints as I said Department of Labor. And I didn’t mention EEOC, Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. And then the decision after discussing what we would do next was to organize ourselves as named plaintiffs. A named plaintiff meant, for instance, I would be a named plaintiff for the Geography Department and the idea was to find the comparator in your department. And of course we had all the salaries so we knew who was making what. And compare the women’s salaries with those of the men they wished to be their comparators. Now another thing I have to say here is that not all women wanted to participate in…

JF: Is that right?

MB: What happened was we did not want to do a class action suit because a number of people thought well, they didn’t want to get involved in this. It was the idea of legalisms and so on. And remember this is after the 60’s and there were some people who let’s say were a little bit more conservative in their views than we were. I said we, you know there weren’t that many of us all together. Because women were a minority number one in the number of faculty and two in the ones who were very concerned about redressing this salary and equity.

JF: Could you share with me some of the women who did not want to get involved?

MB: Well, people in the history department, Joan Maloney, and one of the reasons was she and some of the others, their salaries were pretty good when they were hired. So they really didn’t have a grievance. And then there was somebody like Margo Simon who was not interested in getting involved in anything like this. I just remember this off the top of my head.

JF: Sure fine.

MB: I am not casting aspersions on anybody because you know everybody had different ideas about what was right. And let’s face it, if you look at women’s salaries in higher ed or even in the public sector, they are always lower than the men. And it sometimes had to do with the nature of the duties but most of the time it didn’t. And it was just women always worked for less. I mean that’s why there are so many elementary school teachers who are women way back when. Anyway we did all the legalisms we thought we had to. At least filed, I won’t say filed suit, but did the investigation. The agreement with our lawyers was an interesting one; we were each going to be named plaintiffs. And the idea was that if indeed we won the case, obviously, the money would be divided up equitably amongst those who were named plaintiffs. Our initial expenditure I think was a thousand dollars. We were not going to be paying the lawyers consulting fees that are so large because they knew we couldn’t afford it, we wouldn’t do it anyway it was impossible.
And so the idea was that if we won then, of course, they would get the money that they deserved for taking the case and carrying it through.

JF: So they were on a contingency fee.

MB: That’s the idea. It was on a contingency fee basis. Well, as I said, I can’t tell you how frustrating it was because when we decided, ok, some of us will be named plaintiffs then we would have the comparators and I had chosen Paul Salley and John George as my comparators, and I did this for several reasons. Number one, I mean Paul was senior to me in years of service but qualification was really quite different. John George had been my student.

JF: For purposes of the tape, how did his [ed. Note – P. Salley’s] qualifications differ from yours?

MB: He had no Ph.D. He had no publications; he was very well liked by the students. I think he was probably a very good teacher. But his teaching did not sort of involve, well, let’s say some of the more advanced ideas in geography. He got his masters at Clark; I think the year before I did. And then had gone up to Gorham, Maine to teach, then eventually got the offer down here and he came and Fred Meier made him sort of a senior person. Which I guess he was at that time. And other than that I mean the academic career that Paul followed was not, shall we say, a heavyweight one.

JF: Ok.

MB: So I considered myself a good comparator.

JF: Ok, how about John George?

MB: John had been my student twice. When I first came to Salem State in 1952, John was in one of the first classes I taught. And I don’t know whether it was Southern Continents or Economic Geography but one of them, very good student, fine. And he told me before he graduated that he wanted to go to Clark to do graduate work and I was very supportive and I wrote a letter of recommendation. And he went. And then I guess he went into the Army for a while. Eventually came out, taught here for a while, and then enrolled at BU for a Ph.D. Now by that time I was on the faculty at BU and John became my student again. And that was kind of fun in a sense because we knew each other for a long time. In fact I knew John’s wife. John’s wife had been my student. So when it came to his work at BU he wrote a dissertation on the changes in retail trade and so on. The effect of the North Shore Shopping Center on downtown shopping centers and the decrease in business and so on. It was a very interesting dissertation. I was his second reader, his second advisor. The chairman of the department at BU, who was then George Lewis, was John’s primary advisor. Ok, so he would confer mostly with Lewis but it was a very slow process and then he would come to see me. And I told him – well do this, this, and this, you know to sort of push it along because he didn’t have time to waste, he had a family, he was teaching full time while he was finishing the dissertation. And I wanted to help him. Well, finally he did get through and I was the second reader on his dissertation and I signed it with great joy as a matter of fact. In fact he told me later on, quite a bit later on, he said – if it hadn’t been for you I never would have finished because you kept pushing. And I thought that’s what I was
supposed to do. But the department at BU at the time was you know just sort of meandering along. They had just instituted a Ph.D. program and I think they were just sort of feeling their way. But in any case, John, who had been my student twice, was on the faculty here at Salem State when I came back, and he was making at least five or six thousand dollars more a year than was offered to me. And I said — well I think that’s a pretty good comparison. I had more experience, I had the degree earlier, I had publications and a few other things. And I mean it was nothing, there was no acrimony between us. I wouldn’t say the same as far as my other comparator. I mean there were never words or anything like that. It wasn’t said - well you shouldn’t be doing this. Maybe there were words like that, but I didn’t hear them.

JF: Nor did I.

MB: Yeah well, well there was that. I’ll try not to string this out too long because it was seventeen years before some action was finally taken. Because as the new presidents came and went at Salem State, the lawyers would immediately put in some kind of a motion to the court to drop this entire line of legal complaint. And sometimes the court threw it out; sometimes they put it on hold. There’s a legal term there but I forget what that is. Our lawyers, of course, weren’t pushing too hard either, after all they weren’t getting paid. And I mean they were getting paid on a contingency basis. And they had more pressing, perhaps more lucrative cases on the docket. Well finally Pat Randall said, well first of all we need some money from you for xeroxing cost. They decided to xerox the entire file of every faculty person at Salem State to see what the salaries were, and what the qualifications were. And so the xeroxing went on for months. I mean they got permission from the court to do this and we had to pay for some of that. A good deal, it cost a lot of money. I think they put it on microfilm, maybe not xeroxing. Yeah, it was microfilm, sorry. Well so they had all that data and then…

JF: Now let me stop you here for a moment. You originally put up a thousand dollars.

MB: A piece.

JF: A thousand dollars a piece, wow! So that came out of your pocket at that point in time? There was no guarantee you were going to get anything back?

MB: That is correct.

JF: Now they come back to you for some more money to do documents. Ok, which of course in any legal situation you are held responsible for.

MB: Yeah.

JF: Well.

MB: Yeah, it's something called discovery. I learned a lot of terms that are used and you sometimes have to have them explained. We would meet with the lawyers occasionally, periodically. It was frustrating in a sense because all of us were busy people, we had a heavy course load and so on, but still wanting to push this thing through because there really was an
injustice being done. And it wasn’t just here. It was happening at Framingham, it was happening at Bridgewater, and so on. But they were doing it in different ways. As a matter of fact, somewhere along the line the Framingham people had different lawyers and filed as a class action suit, salary discrimination. And they got a settlement within a few years. Which was a very hefty settlement. But it was divided amongst all women faculty, there didn’t have to be any particular named plaintiffs. But ours was quite different, however others at the state colleges took notice of what we were doing. Not that we were making any progress, we didn’t and it just went on and on and motions to dismiss were constantly being filed by the administration here and by the trustees. Finally what happened was Pat Randall said – I think we’ve got to sort of cut bait on this and we’ll go to court and bring this to maybe some kind of a resolution. Well there were some interrogatories that had to be answered that the lawyers presented to the administration. It took them forever to answer and so on. And then they said, ok, now we have to have depositions. And each one of us who had comparators was deposed by the lawyers for the trustees. And then our lawyers.

JF: When you say trustees are you talking about the trustees of Salem State College or are you talking about the Board of Higher Education?

MB: Excuse me, it’s the Board of Higher Education.

JF: Ok.

MB: Because those are different people with different power. In fact much less power. I forgot about that. Anyway the depositions went on for quite some time. I found mine extremely interesting. The lawyer, let’s see it was Morris Golding’s firm as I recall. And he had one of his co-lawyers depose me. I was going to say interview but it was a deposition. Trying to get me to say that I really didn’t get the degree when I said I did, and that I had done research well before the dates that I had given. And all kinds of things to indicate that really there was no prejudice against me here. And I refused to fall into his trap and I said…you know when he asked me that, when he couched the question in several different ways. And he blew up and he said – Professor Berman, he said, you will answer any question that I ask you. And you’re not to comment on whether it’s right or wrong or anything like that. I was totally flabbergasted. I wasn’t upset because I knew I was not in court. My lawyer was in the room.

JF: Where were the depositions being taken?

MB: In the office of the lawyer.

JF: Ok.

MB: And I thought, I think she thought that I was upset, the lawyer was sitting there, I didn’t even look at her. I figured I don’t want to listen to what he’s trying to say, I don’t agree with it. And she had told me before – you don’t have to answer everything exactly, you can say either yes or no, or I don’t remember. And it’s a good idea not to elaborate on your answers unnecessarily. Because immediately they can seize on some little detail and there could be a problem. Well I remembered what she said and I tried to be as monosyllabic as possible. And after I got through
I thought – (laughing) well you know this was fun in a way. It wasn’t going to get me any money but it infuriated him. Maybe that’s not a nice thing to say, but I was glad I did.

JF: I’m sure that was fine.

MB: So this went on for sometime. We were looking to file suit in a federal court. The date had already been set, it had been moved up a couple of times, you know how lawyers are they keep moving the date. Until finally there was a date and the lawyers are meanwhile negotiating with the Board of Trustees lawyer.

JF: Let me stop you for a moment. This is going to go to a federal court. Why not a state court to begin with?

MB: Well it says here a federal court against the Board of Regents on behalf of all...Oh wait a minute. Maybe it was the state court. No, it says MSCA attorneys prepared to file suit in federal court.

JF: Ok.

MB: Against the Board of Regents.

JF: No, I'm just, I think you're right. If I remember correctly you may well be right in federal court. I just trying to figure out why in federal court and not in the state court.

MB: I think they had gone that route and found as far as what they were going to protest was a violation of...

JF: Of a federal law.

MB: Yes, that this was probably more powerful.

JF: Right.

MB: By this time we had started with a small number of women and I think at the time they were going to do this, go to court, there were nineteen women plaintiffs. And some dropped out. One or two dropped out before the settlement came about. The settlement came about within a month or two of the setting of the court date. And it’s like saying – they settled on the steps of the courthouse or something like that. And what happened was that Pat Randall came to the home of one of the named plaintiffs, Charlotte Ettinger, one morning at the crack of dawn and we were all assembled and she told us what the offer had been to settle, and what they had decided to do in regard to dispersing the amount of the settlement. You know taking their fee and so on. Because not all of us were going to get the same amount. Some of us had better cases than others. It turned out (laughing) that I was the one that supposedly had the best case from the point of view of money and qualifications and so on. And so they gave us individually a little note, a piece of paper, with the amount of money that they thought we should get. Each person as a division of that total amount.
MB: Yes. The total amount was a little less than half a million dollars. But that was to be divided up. And most of us, we’re talking in the 1980’s now. 1988-89 all this was happening. And we started talking about this in the 70’s. And we were just sick of it. We wanted to get it over with. I mean nobody was looking to get rich, because we knew we wouldn’t. We hadn’t by this time anyway. And everybody looked at their little piece of paper with how much they were going to get. Nobody complained, and I mean nobody knew what the other person was going to be getting unless they asked. I mean we shared it, we did, everybody shared it. Well, it took I think another couple years before the money came and so there was interest. We all got a little bit more. And the money did come. It wasn’t a lot. I would like to leave that there as far as amounts were concerned. But at least it was off the docket. By this time the other women in the state colleges had salary equity complaints addressed. And they were doing better. As I say, Framingham had done a lot better than we did. Bridgewater had done pretty well, and then the next MSCA board agreement for the state colleges in general addressed salary inequities, not only amongst the women but amongst the men. There were men who had been hired at lower rates for whatever reason. And there was an attempt to bring some justice into this selection of who brought what. So the going back and forth with the lawyers, the microfilming, depositions all this. It was all sort of vague. I will say, however, the Salem State Log did itself proud and they published an article that says – “Flagrant Discrimination Surfaces at SSC.”

MB: Let’s see, it says 1972. That’s the beginning. That’s the beginning. And it’s true, because if you look at what the women were making and for instance that case that…Elizabeth Malloy’s name was at the beginning. Malloy vs. the Board of Regents and so on. And her salary was extremely low. She’d been a nun and I don’t know if that had something to do with the way they set her salary. But anyway she was one of the named plaintiffs. And there was Pat Gozemba, Mary Devine, and Pat Parker and Claire Keyes. There were some people who opted out along the lines. A long wait you know. Nancy Clifford in Phys Ed and Joan Duda, Bonnie Schreck. I think there was another one I’ve forgotten. Not every department was represented. It was a hard time for us in a sense because along the line the people who had done the initial ground work were saying well we got to go get some lawyers and so on. They got sick of it and they didn’t sort of keep in touch with what the lawyers were doing. I was the point person, so I’d call the lawyers, the lawyers would call me, do you have such and such a figure for so and so. They had people who misplaced papers a lot. Lawyers do it too. So I would find out the information and then the lawyers would tell me what was going on and I would notify all the people here. So it was an extracurricular job, which I didn’t mind doing. But I was frustrated, everybody was frustrated and nobody was nagging at me - oh let’s get some action, let’s do… because they knew what they were dealing with. They were dealing with the state bureaucracy which was going to drag its feet as slowly as it could. And they did. But we got something, and it was salary equity somewhat. I mean the years that we were underpaid were just few in number that they just put into the package as to how they figured out how much money we were going to get.

JF: The money you got, did they add that to your base salary?
MB: No.

JF: So you got, excuse the expression I use here…you got screwed in the sense that your base salary was never adjusted for the inequity?

MB: Well, it was all the way along the line with everybody, with everybody else. But the money that we got was a separate…

JF: Yeah, but what I’m saying, if you had been paid the right, quote, the right amount, ok. If you had been paid fairly, your retirement income…

MB: Oh, yes would have been a lot more. And as I said there was some, there was a statute of limitations on back pay. I remember we talked about that a lot. But we figured by this time it didn’t matter, we were fighting a cause.

JF: How did the men react?

MB: Well that’s, I think, a very interesting question. I think there were some men who felt that we had just cause. Paul Salley did not. He was very vocal about that. In the English Department I think there were a lot of men. I hesitate to name names, there’s only one person that I know of who was not too sympathetic to the women.

JF: Openly?

MB: Yes, yes. It’s I think something that had carried on to the present day. In History I don’t know. I don’t remember. You and Vinnie McGrath were the only people I think I knew in the department. Vinnie had been my student and so had Marilyn, his wife. So I had no problem with them. I disagree with Vinnie on a number of things politically, internationally, but nothing here. I mean it was a nice kind of exchange we would have from time to time. I don’t know about Phys Ed. I mean they make so much more money than the women.

JF: That’s right huh?

MB: I don’t think, they probably didn’t blame them. I didn’t know too many of them. Let’s see, Math, I don’t think there were any women in Math at that time. In Modern Language there were women, one had dropped out because you were never going to get the money…

JF: When you say Modern Language do you mean Foreign Language?

MB: Yeah, French, Spanish whatever.

JF: Ok.

MB: One of them said - we’re never going to get the money anyway so… She didn’t want to deal with it because we had made a couple of other minimal payments to the lawyers. But you know I
figured you go so far you might just as well try and see it through. And a lot of us were saying – well, we'll be retired by the time this thing comes to court, or maybe it won't ever come to court.

JF: What was the role of the union in this?

MB: They tried very hard. The union had a lawyer who was on our side. And eventually helped the salary equity clause in the MSCA agreement. But they didn't really do much for us as the named plaintiffs. Remember, just a small number of us sort of whistling in the dark for a long time. The union wasn't really that strong, they were beginning to get strength then. And I think the contracts that came out a little later reflected their sympathy for the women. The woman lawyer for the union - that helped. So I can't say much more about that. A lot of that is very vague now. Because then all of us all of a sudden we went our separate ways, in regard to what our work was, what our salary was, and the faculty was growing. The faculty was growing by leaps and bounds. We had different presidents still coming and going. And I think by the time that Nancy Harrington took the reins [ed. Note – President, 1990 – 2007] things were a lot better and she was very sympathetic. In fact I think she still is. Hired more women, that's one of the things along the way that was, I think, an offshoot, or shall we say an effect of the case. We practically had no women administrators. And there were some departments who had very few women. But bit by bit there are lots more now. And if you, I don't know what the ratio is now I haven't kept up to date on that. But it is better and Nancy Harrington hired more women administrators. Which in general makes somebody whose salary way back when was not very high feel a lot better and there is somebody to talk to. So...

JF: Why is it important for women to have women administrators?

MB: Well, because the administrators who were in power, if you want to call that in quotes, in the institution when we were trying to file suit and to get redress of our grievances, they were all men. And they didn't want to deal with us, they just didn’t. There was one, Marvin LaHood, who I think a number of us remember, who just danced around this problem. I mean he was ridiculous in his attempts to get us to stop doing this that it really wasn’t, we really didn't have a case and so forth. He was not what we would call one of the strongest administrators I have ever met. And he eventually, of course, left. I don’t know was he hired by Keegan? Or somebody like that. So he left.

JF: He was gone before he came here.

MB: More or less, Yeah I think that’s true. We had, oh, an Affirmative Action Officer who was hired. Janet Bryant was the first one.

JF: Oh yes.

MB: And she wasn’t as strong as we would have liked. And I guess she went on to a job in Boston I think. She may have made some connections for us but not many results. And then Natalie Miller came along. Now Natalie Miller was hired as an Affirmative Action Officer and this is somebody who had good credentials in regard to women’s movement. She had been active in, oh, what’s the women’s group that’s sort of national?
JF: NOW?

MB: Well it was NOW and it was also, oh it will come to me. There are groups they do discussion of issues they’re non-partisan, they help during elections and so on.

JF: The League of Women Voters?

MB: Yes, yes. She had been a member of the League. She was hired as Affirmative Action Officer. And then somehow or other along the line they decided, well, they really didn’t need an Affirmative Action Officer here. There really wasn’t that much for her to do. And so they changed her job description and she became the person who headed up the job search, oh they were in the house on Loring Avenue. She did all kinds of surveys on what students did when they left here, what kind of jobs they got. The name of the position escapes me, but I think…

JF: Yeah, it escapes me too.

MB: But she did a very good job at that. And she had facts and figures about what students in different majors did when they left here. What kind of work they did. And tried to keep a running file of those who would answer her questionnaires and so on. That was very good, as a matter of fact. But all of a sudden there’s no Affirmative Action Officer. Because administration thought we didn’t need it. In fact they just wanted to shut us up. Which was a very difficult thing to do, because there were numbers of people who were not interested in being quiet. And I’m just trying to think of the name of that office. It was like employment as well as job search. I think they probably still have that office.

JF: The Placement Office?

MB: Yeah it was Placement.

JF: That’s what it was called, Placement.

MB: Yeah, that’s a very broad word, but she did a lot more than that. And then of course when she retired, they changed it around. She retired about five years ago and went to climb Mt. Kilamanjaro. I must say I’m very, very impressed by that.

JF: Oh, I didn’t know that.

MB: Oh yeah, there were pictures and there’s an article in the Salem State Sextant. You may not have seen it, but she took photographs. She’s a good photographer.

JF: I’m very interested in mountain climbing.

MB: You are or you’re not.

JF: I am.
MB: Oh you are.

JF: I don’t do it, but I’m very interested in it.

MB: Well, she did it. It’s a very interesting story and one of the photographs is just mindboggling. And who’s the fellow in Art who did that also? Raudzens, Mark Raudzens.

JF: Mark Raudzens. Yeah, that doesn’t surprise me about Mark.

MB: Well there was also a big article in the Sextant. I mean everybody got into the mountain climbing act. No, but Natalie’s article was interesting, it was well illustrated. I mean what a great thing to do when you retire.

JF: Mary Miller was she, and I’m talking about Mary Miller, the Human Resource person.

MB: Affirmative Action Officer.

JF: Yes.

MB: She became Affirmative Action?

JF: Yes.

MB: She did not participate in any of this. She was in History, as I recall.

JF: No, no, no.

MB: Or was it English?

JF: No, Mary Miller, the Affirmative Action Officer, the one that’s still here.

MB: Oh that one, oh that’s right sorry.

JF: Human Resources, I think she’s in.

MB: Yeah, yeah I was on the committee that hired her. She sounded really, really good, you know ready to make the administration tow the mark and so on. But somehow or other that office didn’t have a lot of power as far as I could see. And now I guess it’s the Office of Human Resources?

JF: No it’s not the Office of Human Resources, that’s the hiring office. Maybe Affirmative Action, I don’t know. I’ve lost contact with the titles; I never paid attention to them when I was here. I knew who did what. Well, you knew who did what and you didn’t need to know the title of the office.
MB: I think that, oh, Mary Miller was the one who received all the applications for hiring.

JF: Yeah that’s right.

MB: And she was over all of that and then would give the applications to the department chair. Oh yeah, they had to establish a pool of applicants which was diverse. Racially, sexually, whatever.

JF: This is… I think it is maybe the Affirmative Action.

MB: It is yeah. I have no idea. Her office used to be top floor of the Administration Building.

JF: Well she’s located in one of those trailers up there now.

MB: Oh right.

JF: At least when they were renovating. But back to the men’s reaction because I heard during all of this and after the settlement I obviously heard quite a deal. And a number of men were not happy.

MB: You mean because they didn’t get more.

JF: Well, I think they were unhappy by the fact that they didn’t think there was a legitimate case. No, I think that was…

MB: Numbers don’t lie.

JF: No, I’m not arguing that point. That was not one of my positions. I’ve never had a problem with Salem. But it was always very interesting to hear comments. Talk to Jim MacIntire, you talk to an Ed Sweeney, you talk to Paul Salley, you talk to others. Less vocal, and there was always some – well, I don’t know about this.

MB: Oh, I think there was a lot of undercurrent that maybe never even saw a great deal of vocal complaints. But there was some who it doesn’t matter who you were or what I mean and they would be against it. These were the conservatives and any change that might have made things a little bit better. Oh they probably had lots of things to say about the hiring of minorities and in case…

JF: Why do you think the conservatives were in opposition to the settlement? Or in opposition to what you were doing, forget just the settlement alone?

MB: Well I think some men are born with what you call the jock syndrome. That there’re just interested in you know male supremacy.

JF: (Laughing) Ok.
MB: In almost everything. Yeah, everything. And the men needed it more because they had families. I don’t know, I’m not sure they talked about that in a rational manner. But I’m sure they said many, many insulting things about the women. And we had quite a number of women who were very vocal. And the feminist movement, I mean they couldn’t stand feminists. So are we finishing or…

JF: No, and I don’t like what I see.

MB: We may have lost some.

JF: No, we didn’t lose anything except I’m going to have to transcribe this in a different way. But there is a low speed and a high speed and I’m looking down and it slipped down to the low speed and it’s going very slow and I’ll have to take it to Dick Walsh later and say here, put this on and make an adjustment.

MB: Speed it up.

JF: That’s fine because it will give us more tape to talk on. (Laughing).

MB: Well, you know I don’t want to even give time to those attitudes and so on. First of all, it’s all past, secondly, it’s a type of attitude that is inherent in a lot of American society. I mean I was listening to this talk show on public radio yesterday in the car and there’s a new program on I think MTV or something called Man. And what it tries to do is simply make fun of all the feminist rhetoric, poems and so on that have been around for a long time and have tried to raise the consciousness of people. And they’re doing it, there’re just turning the clock backward and going into the fact that you know it’s the male who is, of course obviously, superior in every way shape and form. And they have songs and commentary and so on. I was outraged driving in traffic when I was listening to it. And people say – well if you really are comfortable with yourself in your orientation vis-a-vis the sexes, you just laugh at it. And I thought to myself – I don’t agree with that. There are lots of young people coming along and what they hear in this regard is something which is obviously going to influence them later on. I think we have come a fairly long way in regard to, oh, women in higher education, women teams, and athletic teams. I think that doesn’t sit well with some men, saying – you shouldn’t have women doing these things, that’s a man’s role. But I do think the pendulum is beginning to go the other way. Well, that’s the way society moves.

JF: Back to Paul Salley, you said he was in opposition to it.

MB: Ahhh.

JF: How did he express that opposition?

MB: He was very insulting every time he spoke to me or to some of the others. He would make very cutting remarks. As a matter of fact (laugh), I know this sounds ridiculous, but it’s true. The department of geography, like all the departments, is in very close quarters. You know the offices are small and room where we run in to do the duplicating when we did duplicating and so on was
very small. And I was in there one day getting some stuff ready for my classes. He came in and just sort of shoved me. Sort of trying to make it look accidental. I think this was at the time that the money had just come through or was going to come through. And he said, well I don’t know what he said exactly but it was sort of equivalent to – well are you happy now? And the men in the department told me he had been very belligerent about the whole thing and he’d been belligerent to some of the men too. He gave Dick Riess a very hard time. Dick Riess, of course, was a difficult person to handle. But Dick was on our side, I know that. And he was one of the ones who was underpaid. I don’t know how much but he was somebody that Paul didn’t like. And, of course, Paul made all these remarks that were not physical in anyway, shape or form. I mean that did not involve any physical contact. About the professionals, I think I’ve mentioned this, it’s not just me but people like John, and Dick Anderson who were doing things. You know they’d gone ahead and they’d gotten their Ph.D.’s and they were participating in the national associations, there are several of them. And he would sneer – well this is what the professionals are doing. With that kind of an accent. And I mean I disregarded him because he really couldn’t do anything. Well no, he could plan your program so that it was miserable. But then he wasn’t chair anymore and than there were more reasonable chair people. That’s about the only thing I found chair people could really do is give you a schedule that you liked. I mean that happened very late in all my years here. I hardly ever had a schedule that I liked. But then finally, I mean when you had a day free. Oh, that was wonderful. Then I could do some research. Then I could do some traveling to the library. And then for a while I did something that’s not mentioned here at all. It was in the late 70’s early 80’s, I became chair of the Massachusetts Consumers Council. It was a voluntary position, unpaid, and I was chosen to do this because I had a friend, a fellow geographer, a female geographer, not from here, who had gotten her degree from BU, her PhD. She had become Governor King’s Secretary for Consumer Affairs. She was the only woman. And she needed somebody to become the chair of the Consumers Council because the person who had been doing it was a hold over from Dukakis and we couldn’t have that. So I said to Eileen, who was my friend at the time, and who said to me – would you do it? And I said well listen you know, I’m a Dukakis person. But she said – I know I can trust you. So I said – what does it involve? So she told me and my work, I would have somebody in the office doing you know the running around to the legislature and seeing that some of our causes in regard to keeping prices low, in regard to medicines and so on and checking what was going on with the attempt to put in a commercial blood bank in the state and so on. Somebody doing some of the footwork on what the legislation was. And I thought – well you know I can get some stuff out of this to put in geography. The blood bank thing had to do with health. Hepatitis and so on. And I wrote a little article on that. Dealing with somebody in state government, namely the governor at the time, had a friend who wanted to put commercial blood banking into Massachusetts. Now there’s a danger of hepatitis. A very real danger. And it had to be monitored very closely. And if it’s a private person and there’s some legislation I mean there’s a lot of room for hanky panky here. We did that and then I got very busy with trying to make daylight savings time, move it back so we could have a little bit more daylight, in both spring and fall. And I got that passed, I can’t believe I actually did something. But then the person who said I can trust you started doing things that I found not to my liking. It was trying to get some votes through my council that would go along with what the governor wanted. And I said – I’m not going to do this. This is not the way I feel, I mean I don’t think it’s right, and I resigned. And within six months the whole council was dissolved. The governor didn’t want it, asking the questions and so forth. And I lost my
friendship as a result of that. I’m very sorry about that because I liked her very much. She’s a good geographer and applied geographer and had been a good friend. But anyway that’s…

JF: I didn’t know that, it must be in there.

MB: I don’t think it’s in there. I think that probably it’s in my resume somewhere. It says public service but you didn’t know I was doing that.

JF: And what’s interesting is that I would have done it here on campus and I just - obviously it didn’t register. Maybe it’s because I would never have been supportive of anybody working for Ed King.

MB: Well right, I had problems myself. But she had been a particularly good friend to me when I was fighting a tenure battle at BU. She had been to BU, and she just knocked herself out writing letters to the vice president and the president and they would write her back all the time, like the same letters back word for word. They’d forgotten they’d written to her. No she was a really good friend. She’s not in the area anymore, I think she lives in Arizona.

JF: Let’s turn away from the salary equity suit. I’m going to talk to Charlotte at some point.

MB: Oh yes, you will get sort of a slightly different view you know because she, well she did great things in her department. Oh yeah, Myrna Finn was a member of that group. (Laughing)

JF: The unique piece of work Myrna Finn?

MB: Isn’t she.

JF: She is.

MB: The fact that she, I think she’s still here. I saw her in the fall. She’s fun, she is so much fun.

JF: But she doesn’t spend as much time on campus anymore.

MB: Oh.

JF: She had disappeared, I forgot for a long time she was on campus and I just ran into her one day myself.

MB: I should ask Charlotte, because Charlotte never mentions her. We talk about Wiz White and David George. They’re great people.

JF: Yeah.

MB: And they would have supported the women’s case.

JF: Was Pat Zaido involved in the case, by the way.
MB: No, absolutely not. You know I don’t know what she was hired at salary wise and it’s interesting because Pat you know connected herself with Pat Gozemba. I don’t know, with Alice Stadthaus maybe? With a number of people, but she didn’t, you know her father was a friend I think of…was it Fred Meier? That’s how she got the job.

JF: May have been.

MB: And I think she was.

JF: She was a union leader.

MB: Oh.

JF: Her father grew up in the leather union if I remember correctly.

MB: Oh, yeah well anyway there was money there.

JF: Yes.

MB: And of course she was interested in the arts and she was interested… I had lunch with her several times. She was in the same department, wait a minute, Marge M. Parker, was not a member of the suit because I think she was being paid well. She was education?

JF: Education.

MB: Yeah, but Zaido…

JF: Zaido was in the Theatre Department.

MB: Right, I’m just trying to think, they had lunch together a lot and they invited me several times and I said no, it’s not my type you know.

JF: (Laughing)

MB: Not interested, I mean she would dress to the nines all the time and that’s nice, that’s nice but actually she’s a very pleasant person in a lot of ways, but …

JF: Well, the reason I asked was because she was so much involved in the union at one point in time.

MB: Oh yeah, it’s a contradiction in a lot of things.

JF: Yes, she and somebody else takes credit for establishing the union on campus and I have a hard time with that. They were not the creators of the union.
MB: They were not the creators of the union.

JF: They were not the creators, they take credit for…

MB: Oh yeah, there was a lot of hanky panky there about who did what and so on. I think you probably have a good union leader now?

JF: Yeah, I'm interviewing now, I'll talk to you off tape. Only because I'm interviewing and it's not because I care what I say. But I'm not the subject of the interview. Anyway let's turn away from that. Let's talk about your department. When you come back here from BU, you had tenure when you left Salem. Did you get back your tenure when you came back here?

MB: Nothing, I got a full professorship ranking without tenure. And I said – well what's going on here? I had tenure, I'm a known commodity, I've been doing my job right along academically. I'd been doing research, participating in meetings and so forth and so on. And then I was told by the chairman at the time – well we can only give tenure to so many people each year and I'm worried more about, it was Dick Anderson, you'll get it anyway, but I'm a little, he didn't say I'm worried about him, I want him to have it. It was very strange. And I said – well what do you mean what difference does it make? Of course he should have it; he was my student too. But he got tenure before I did. Here the second time around and his rank was lower. It was one of the weirdest things. I tell people this because I say you really want to understand what kind of a place I have been teaching at. This is an illustration that I find absolutely untenable. Not at all based on what academics should be like.

JF: Who was president when you came back?

MB: Frank Keegan.

JF: Ok.

MB: And he did whatever Paul said. Paul was chair at the time. And I went to the interview, which was like five minutes. And I guess Keegan had asked Paul and you know about me, and at the time he wasn't too angry. And he said you know she's been here before and so forth and so on. And Keegan said - well full professorship and I said - oh that's fine and then he said - without tenure. And I don't think we even discussed it very much, he's a very – that's the way it's going to be. And afterwards Paul said to me – Oh you'll get it later anyway.

JF: Why did you come back without tenure?

MB: Oh, I didn't know that was going to happen. I was at BU and things were going from bad to worse.

JF: Oh right I remember…

MB: Silber was there or was just coming, and there had been a tenure review committee for me just at the time when the powers that be at BU were considering dropping or getting rid of the
Geography Department. Because the enrollments were low. And I was the first one to come up for tenure. And what they did was simply say was, I think I told you, I did not fit into the long range plans of the department. And my friend Eileen Shell, the person who was Secretary for Consumer Affairs under King, had said – she’s produced more publications than her chairman. And there’s no reason to deny tenure and so forth. But they did. And after I came, I think some of the other people who they didn’t even bother to spend time on appointing a tenure review committee. They just let them go. And then immediately when that happened, I was having a very hard time at home. Both parents were sick. Really sick. They both came out of it after a little while, but that threw my priorities off. So I didn’t do too much about it I said – ok if they’re going to let me go they’re going to let me go. And immediately I started getting offers from people in New England Saint Lawrence Valley division of the Association of American Geographers and then I got offers from Pittsburgh and then I got an offer from Rhode Island. And I said to myself – I don’t want to move. I had been to Connecticut, I enjoyed that a lot, but I didn’t want to go back down there. My goal was to be here close to where I would be needed. I was needed. And then John George, who was my dissertation student, came in and said - you know why don’t you come back to Salem, it’s better now. It’s bigger. We have new buildings, we have new faculty, the Geography Department had expanded. And I said – well I don’t know Paul had still been chairman. He said - I’ll talk to Paul. And I said – well that’ll be good. Because I had no desire to call Paul up or anything like that. But we set up an interview and I came to see Paul and he said – I don’t have any trouble with you, that was then, and if you want to come back well go see Frank Keegan. But then I was told about that afterwards. See I was sort of on the horns of a dilemma. I could have gotten a job elsewhere which would have recognized tenure. But here was Salem, I knew it very well, I didn’t dislike it. I didn’t like the idea of coming back and being a professor under somebody whose credentials I deemed less academic then mine. But that was not a problem at the time, some people, well look at some important people in life never got the terminal degrees. I knew I said to myself – it’s a step down academically, there’s no question, to come back here after being at a big university. I will say I wasn’t crazy about the big university, the library they had was a joke. It finally got to be that the Mugar Library came along just as I was leaving. And my colleagues were kind of interesting people. But they weren’t doing all that much. You know a pleasant department, but our offices were in a former automobile showroom and my view from my office was …

JF: Is that where you were located?

MB: On Cummington Street.

JF: Oh ok.

MB: Yes it used to be an automobile showroom. And my view out the window was the parking garage. And you know it was on Commonwealth Avenue. And I lived in Brookline. I liked that a lot. But you know the collegiality that I hoped would develop never developed. I mean it was a little bit more than here. Here there was none. But I figured all right I will do it, because I want to teach geography. And the opportunity was there. I didn’t know what was going to happen, I didn’t even think about the future. I know a lot of people do, I mean you get a job you go and you do it. And that’s what happened. Bit by bit I realized, it took me two years, I did get tenure. Well, now I am going to write what I want, I am going to do research, not here, and I’m not going to get
involved in campus politics. They said – ok you should run for chairman. I said – no. That would put me into a bureaucratic position I didn’t want. I’d be shuffling papers; I’d be fighting city hall all the time. There’s never enough money, they promise you this and you don’t get it. They said – oh you’ll get more money. I said – No, the amount of money I’d get would be so minimal. It was not something that I was concerned about. So I did my work again, I took a leave of absence. Actually, when the money from the case came I took a semester off without pay. I was ready. And I went to Israel and I went to India to Nepal to Kashmir and Kashmir was just beginning to erupt. Fortunately one of my friends from graduate school was in New Delhi at the time and she arranged some of my travel plans. So that was good. And I stayed with Indians in Srinagar and Kashmir and then took a bus trip through the beautiful vale of the Kashmir. It was really nice. When I came back to teach the regular Weather and Climate which I had taught many time before. And then I started teaching Cultural Geography which I loved because I could do what ever I wanted there. I had a lot of slides, religion, language and so on. And then I developed a theme of architecture as cultural landscape. Because I wasn’t going to be traveling much and I wasn’t going to be doing research in foreign lands. Because I was pretty well glued to home because of illness at home. But you know I’m interested in architecture - Salem, and Marblehead, and Boston have these fantastic buildings, which are the signatures, shall we say, of our history, of the importance of the new country. The magnificent Federal style architectural design by Maclntire with Chestnut Street as this magnificent street. I used to tell my students the most beautiful street in the world from the point of view of Federal style, Colonial Period architecture is right here. And they said – where is it. And so I developed a unit whereby I taught the students what the different forms of architecture here were. The seventeenth century, like the kind you get down the House of Seven Gables that area along the water where the shipyards were and the rope walks and so on. And the Georgian style which is a little bigger, very common in Marblehead, very beautiful. And then the Federalist styles and then into the Victorian linked by Greek revival. And wonderful Victorian houses, walk right down Lafayette Street there are some fantastic ones. And what you call those elements of architecture and what they stood for. The country was growing; the houses were growing bigger. And who designed them and so on. And they thought, I think, this was interesting to a point I said now the paper you’re going to write for me is going to be about the architectural designs in your community. What does it tell about the growth of that city? The economy, not only the amount of money people were making, but what they considered to be buildings that were prestigious and that represented what was going on in the town. Then we got to people like Richardson, Olmsted and Richardson. Richardson who designed, of course, the Trinity Church in Boston. But a lot of libraries. The Woburn Public Library, The Cambridge Public Library, The Quincy Public Library, Malden Public Library. And I had all pictures, you know, and I said after a while you could tell - oh this is a Richardson building, it’s the dark stone, look at the windows, look at this. And what did it tell you? It tells you there’s money around for this, the people valued education, reading and so forth these libraries. What about the city halls? Public buildings, the neo-classical forms that were coming in. And they learned the names of Doric, Ionic, Corinthian and so forth. And look at the State House. I mean that’s a hodgepodge and so on. But Bulfinch designed the first part you see with the dome and look around at the columns and the style and so on. And it tells you something important is going on here. What is it? And sometimes the students came back with really good papers. Sometimes they didn’t know what I was driving at. I had a student who said, she was a foreign student, she said – I live in Boston she said – near Copley Square she says – there ain’t no architecture there. Well you know sometimes it didn’t take. But it got, what I thought, better and
better because then I said to them – now we're going to do residential areas, new developments, old developments. What happens when you tear down an old area of the city and try to modernize it? Is that good for the town or isn't it? And what caused it. And we got into some of the modern stuff. And I had some fun with modern architecture and some of the houses out in Concord. Some out here in Marblehead looked like they were designed by the same people who studied at MIT. And why are people building things like that? Cause there’s more money around? There’s change of style. There’s the setting that you deal with. People just don’t build houses to be protected from the elements.

JF: Yeah.

MB: There’s a whole cultural thing.

JF: Cultural, yeah.

MB: And then I had students from Lowell and Lawrence and so on. I said – you know you've got some interesting buildings there. The Lowell National Park and so on. And Lawrence. I mean you go there and it’s mind boggling. So that’s what I did for the last years I was here. And then I was trying very hard to develop a course on the Mediterranean geography. Because there were courses in Europe and Asia that weren't always given, usually the people that got to teach them were different from me. I didn’t get to teach them. So I said – I’ll do my own, I’ll do Mediterranean. And I got that through Academic Policies Committees and so on. And I was all set to teach it; they put it in the course outline that the students get when they come to registration. And it didn’t run. Because in the department they pushed other courses. So I think I had like five people register. And I said the time has come for me to leave. I can’t do what I want and I know I could do a good job. It’s all right; I’m certainly old enough. And there are other areas I would like to explore in geography. And I did.

JF: May I ask you a personal question here? How old were you when you retired?

MB: When I retired? Sixty-eight. I think, yes, that's right. And I retired in December; I didn’t even wait ‘till June. Because you know I would have a semester of teaching Weather and Climate all over again. Which I had grown not to like too much because it was such a bore. I did like teaching The History of Geographic Thought, no one else in the Department wanted to teach it. So they gave it to me. And I didn’t want to teach it either. But that was way back when, and little by little you know it's like anything else, you find things. You say you know this is very interesting. And it is. You realize that Emanuel Kant was one of the first people in science who said that geography is the basis of all science because you’re dealing with the atmosphere. And then of course he went on to talk about physics and various studies and so on. And there were some new books coming out that I thought the students should read. Not necessarily the textbooks, the textbooks were dry as dishwater. But I got them to read like Daniel Boorstin’s The Discoverers. You want to learn about the calendar, about time, about the voyages of discovery. What was Magellan like? Poor guy who got killed in the Philippines. Columbus, what a hard time he had. Basically, of course, he died a broken man thinking he had found the Indies, but of course he hadn’t. And then the beginning of mapping. Because the discoverers, the navigators they needed charts, they needed maps. And that’s a whole other thing. Of course they were teaching
computer cartography here. And that’s fine. They had originally been teaching cartography where you used a pen and so forth. But that’s all gone. However if you look at the maps, and we’ve got some really good ones down at the Peabody Museum, the maritime history museum, so of course you had maps. So I would take them down there and talk about the difficulties in measuring, particularly the case of longitude. And I think read this wonderful book by Dava Sobel called Longitude. It’s a little paperback. And it deals with how the man discovered or developed the chronometer, a timepiece that would keep accurate time on ships that were crossing the ocean. And so you could measure your longitude if you knew the time at Greenwich, where you were in relationship to Greenwich by your timepiece. And that I mean it was just a fabulous thing. Years and years went by before people could develop this. And there was a man by the name of John Harrison, an Englishman. And that type of chronometer is on exhibit downtown here. So there’s so many things to show the students, and they liked it. And then I had them do, as we got into modern geography, papers on the work of geographers who changed the nature of the discipline. The regionalists, the quantitative types, and so on. The books that they wrote. And then I said to them – ok I want you to study Carl Sauer. Carl Sauer was a cultural geographer out in Berkeley. Actually had taught one semester here in the Normal School when he finished his PhD at Chicago. But he developed a form of cultural geography that dealt with history as the basis of it. And had written several books about historical exploration, the Spanish Main. He wrote a kid’s book on geography, the first geographer I knew to do it. Of the American Indian and how they related to the environment in the arid Southwest and so on. And of course, he died in ’75 I guess. But for some of the other geographers who were quite well known I told the students to write to these people and find out what they had done, what they had published. They all had vitas and so on. And ask them what they thought the most important features were. And just try to get out of them their feeling toward the discipline. We got some nice letters back, really nice letters, from bigwigs.

MB: So I mean I can’t say that I disliked the teaching, I mean let’s face it, that was a course that took a lot of pushing. But there was always one or two students who were right with me all the time. And that made it worth all the Traurigkeit shall we say, all the difficulty. It was a seminar for one semester. And it was hard because you had to do a lot of exams and a seminar. That was the only way to find out if they were doing the reading.

JF: Right.

MB: It turned out, I think, one person took the course three times. But she made it. Well it was different; she had a language problem and so on. But I will say I actually enjoyed teaching. I liked the kind of thing I was doing and what I’m finding out that the opportunities for lecturing on the topics that I like came about when I got invited to do the cruises. And as an offshoot of that now I have two people who’ve asked me to come and lecture to them. One up at St.Anselm’s, one of the librarian’s husband’s is a professor of classics up there. I said I don’t know anything about Greece, the geography. I know the literature and philosophy and so on. But the geography is so important. And I’ve been invited to come up there and give a talk on pretty much what I want. So I think I’ll deal with Homer first because I think that’s good. And when I was doing the lectures for a cruise to Turkey this past fall, which never came off because of the earthquakes. I happened to mention it to a nurse in the hospital, where I’ve been going off and on, that I was doing on the history of medicine because there are people like Hippocrates and
Galen who are well known in development of the modern concept of medicine lived in that area. Hippocrates was born on an island called Kos and then eventually he moved out of there to mainland Greece and so on. But I tried to find out everything I could about his philosophy and so on, he had a lot to do with the environment. And later Hippocrate’s ideas were enlarged upon by Galen seven hundred years later. And Galen lived in Pergamon which is in Turkey and a great big theatre and wonderful ruins that indicated a great civilization there at sometime. And oh we’re going to both those places; I’ll do my talk on medicine. And I’ll start with the Greek idea, the early Greek idea of Asklepius the founder of, he was the central figure of the places where people would come to be cured. And they would come to be cured in places in parts of Greece, Epidauros was one place that I had been to where the people would come and tell what their problems were to people who weren’t really doctors but people who would interpret the dreams of the people who came. They would stay overnight, they would take long walks, they would eat certain foods, vegetables and so on. And once they had gotten through some of this, they told what their dreams were to the people who were going to be the forerunners of doctors. Doctors interpreting what that was and they prescribed things. A lot of it was mumbo jumbo; a lot of it was some magic and so on. There is one story about a woman who came to one of these sanctuaries. These were the sanctuaries where there was always water for them to bathe and so on. And she told the people who were running it that she had been trying to become pregnant for sometime, she wanted a baby. And they said well all right, this is what you do. You stay here for a while, you eat this food, you pray, and you sleep on these blankets or these skins of animals, and when you dream you will tell us the next day what you dream. So she did that and it turned out that she eventually became pregnant. And that was just wonderful. Five years later she comes back and she’s still pregnant. And they said to her – well what’s going on here? And she said – well I said I wanted to become pregnant and I did, but I haven’t produced a child. Well they said you didn’t tell us you wanted to have a baby. So all right now lie down on the skins and do this and do that and the next morning she woke up and a five-year old boy appeared next to her. So I mean this was some of the mythology of Asklepius. Then it got better of course. But reading a lot of the material, and there’s a fair amount of it, the history of medicine is very vague. And there is a lot of the mumbo jumbo in it. But I thought it would make a very interesting talk for people on the ship because they were going to be going to these places. You know I didn’t do a lot with the art people, they had art lectures on board too. So I wrote the paper and of course I never went. So I happened to tell the nurse in the hospital what I had done. I told her the story about the pregnant woman, she thought it was very funny. She said you know you could give that lecture here. The beginnings of medicine and that area and I think there’s a group of people who meet periodically administrators, nurses, maybe some doctors, who would probably be interested. So I took the paper and I gussied it up and made it a little bit more articulate and so on. I have some transparencies made from…

End of Tape Three