Marsha Aaronson
Interviewed by Erin Barry
March 10, 1998
At South Kingstown High School

Erin Barry: Where and when were you born?

Marsha Aaronson: I was born July 11, 1946, in Greenville, Rhode Island. Actually in Centerdale, Rhode Island.

EB: Is that where you grew up?

MA: I grew up in Centerdale until I was 9 and then my family moved to Greenville and I went to school in Greenville until I went to high school. Then they didn't have a high school in Greenville so I went to Hope High School in Providence, but still commuted by bus as most people did or they just went to a another high school in the state.

EB: Can you briefly describe you family?

MA: Yup. I`m the oldest of three children. My sister Betty is 3 years younger than I am and she's married and lives in Charlestown on a farm. She's a teacher also and my younger brother, Jim, is about 10 years younger than I am, and he's an actor in new York.

EB: What was it like growing up with them?

MA: We had a great family a great mom and dad, kind of your quintessential, American family, everyone got along great. we had great cousins did lots of things together. It was a happy family.

EB: Were you very religious?

MA: We were, a, all went to the Episcopal Church. I went to the Episcopal Conference Center. I was a camper, then a counselor all through high school and even part of college. Church was a very central part of our lives growing up.

EB : What were your parents occupations?

MA: My father was a postman and my mother was a dress maker. She worked out of the home and then for a period of time she owned a dry cleaning store. It was a dry cleaning store that she used to do alterations for. Then the person was older and wanted to sell it and my mother bought it and owned it for a while.

EB: Did she work all the time you grew up?

MA: Yup. She used to make costumes for, but she worked out of the home most of the time, she made costumes for dance recitals, and she was always knitting or doing a lot of handicrafts, things. so we had. when ever she made a dress for us she made dresses for our dolls and she knitted us a sweater, our dolls had the same kind of sweater.

EB: How were the household chores and duties allocated in your family?

MA: We, I always did more than my sister. I think first born often does more. My sister always had a lot of activities and I would always do those. We always, everybody pitched in and worked around the house. Up until I was 9 years old we lived in what they called a "cold water flat", we lived in a tenement, 3 families. There was no hot water, they would heat the water on the stove in the kitchen and a you would take your baths on Saturday night, the oldest to the youngest to the oldest, no! The oldest to the youngest. So I would take it, then my sister would get in, then my brother who was only a baby, he didn't know any better. He would just take a dip, in there too. The second floor, lived a woman whom I came to call my nanna. She was as close to a grandmother as I ever knew. As a matter of fact this is her wedding ring (shows the ring). A. she didn't have any grandchildren and when I got a married I got her wedding ring. The third floor there was another family, so it was all, you know, the milk bottles and the ice boxes were out in the platforms. My granddad lived next door. My mother and her sister were the only ones born in America; everybody else was born in England.

My granddad came over here and bought a couple of tenements where he lived and brought over one or two children over at a time. And a when he was bringing the last of the babies over when his wife his wife got TB [tuberculosis] and died on the boat so then he was here in America with all the children. So he married someone else who was on the boat that had lived in the same village and with her, he had my mother and my aunt Olive, who is, still lives in South Kingston.

EB: How many children did he have to bring over?

MA: He brought 5 over.

EB: We re your parents very political?

MA: My mother was not political at all. My mother was much more conservative. My father, though, it always nurtured in all three of us; the enthusiasm for trying different things, he encouraged us. No matter what we wanted to do he always encourage us. And he enjoyed political conversations. I remember, certainly not in `68, but a number of years after that, when they had the moratoriums, my bro, my father decided to wear a black arm band also because it was something my brother wanted to do. My sister and her, now husband, they have been married for over 25 years, did go off to Canada to avoid the draft. It was a different, that didn't happen until `71, but my father could always be supportive. It was a difficult time for families as well, you can imagine with people avoiding the draft, or going to Vietnam, or whatever they were doing it was a difficult time for the country it was a difficult time for families but I always felt very close to my father that he would accept many, many points of view on many things.

EB: Right

MA: People avoiding the draft or going to Vietnam, or what ever they were doing, it was a difficult time for the country, it was a difficult time for families. But I always felt very close to my father and that he would accept many points of view on many things.

EB: Where did he get his political information?

MA: He was a self-educated man. My father loved to read he was one.he was the youngest of 8 children and a he never knew his father, so it was not a time when they could easily. people could go to college at that age but he loved learning and loved discussions and he was a self taught man and he was very open minded.

EB: Did you have any TVs or did you read the newspaper daily?

MA: Actually we had one of the first television sets on the street when we were little and everybody used to come. All the kids used to come to see it. It had a round screen and kids used to come and see the cartoons in the morning on Saturday, and all the men used to come to the house on Friday nights to see the Friday Night Fights. But it looked kind of like a washing machine, know what I mean?

EB: Yeah.

MA: Have you seen those old TVs? Yeah, not exactly what it was like now but.

EB: Where you aware of any discrimination against people in your family or neighborhood?

MA: I lived, no I was not aware of that growing up as a child. I lived basically in an area where there were all white people and I lived really kind of in a English ghetto. People that had just. kind of. many of them first or certainly second generation from England but a lot of them just kind of off the boat from England so it was not I didn't; even know as many Italians, knew some French, there were more French on my street.

EB: How do you think your education shaped you as a person?

MA: Well my college education certainly going to school from the, backing up, when I went to high school when I went to Hope High School, certainly Providence, and going to a high school where there were 2300 students was quite a bit different than growing up in Centerdale or Greenville, Rhode Island where there was no high school and there was still apple orchards. So, I went from a very a parochial kind of situation into a much more cosmopolitan. There were a lot of minority students at Hope, a lot of Jewish students at Hope. I was in the accelerated track at Hope and a I met, you know, lots of lots of Jewish kids. Those were my friends in that track. There were probably only 3 or 4 of us that were not Jewish. So, I in high school I was exposed to a lot for me I was the first generation going on to college.

Going to the University of Rhode Island was probably were I was going to end up because of money and although my father told me to apply where ever I wanted to go. We didn't have a lot of money and the University of Rhode Island was exciting enough for my mother and for all of us. Where as many of my other friends that I was in the honors track with in Providence, their parents were college educated, and they were going off to Tufts or Dartmouth or UPenn or a lot of places like that. So I think it opened my eyes to different kinds of people and different kinds of expectations. I went to the University of Rhode Island one hand feeling kind of bad for myself because all my other friends, that I was in class with, were going off to Dartmouth or Colby or other schools. But I had a great four years at URI. I made good friends, you know as I showed you. I met friends that remain to this day best friends; that I wouldn't trade for anything. So your education is what you make of it.

EB: Wh at did you want to be when you grew up, when you were little and how did that change over the years?

MA: Well it's different because really when I went to school, even though it just seems like yesterday, there were not as many opportunities for women. That came a little bit later. I thought I wanted to be a teacher or a guidance counselor. I kind of knew that. Part of that came from my work at the Episcopal Conference Center, the camp where we worked with a lot of inner city kids. And I enjoyed working with kids. I enjoyed working with troubled kids and that's what I thought I wanted to do. There weren't, it's only recently that women are in the Senate or in the House of Representatives so politics, business those kind of things came a little bit later with the women's movement. And I'm not saying people didn't do that because my husband's aunt never married and was the first women admitted to the Bar in California. She just decided she knew what she wanted to do. Her father said, "What are you crazy? Women don't become lawyers become teachers or nurses!" And she said, "The heck with you. I'm going to become a lawyer," she said she didn't really want to be one, until he told me I couldn't be one. So there certainly were pioneers, but that was it . And I guess, I wasn't in a pioneering stage and I guess I didn't like blood as much so I decided I would go into education, which a lot of women did.

EB: Did you do any other things besides track in extra-curricular activities?

MA: O.K. I didn't do track. When I said it was track, it was the honors track.

EB: Oh.

MA: That's what I meant.

EB: Sorry.

MA: That's O.K. I was.. when I was in high school I was not as much as of a joiner. I was in certain clubs, more academic types of clubs, National Honors Society, Physics Club, if you can believe it, and things like that. And because we lived out of town, a lot of us had to catch the bus home afterwards. And I was friendly, and my best friend now Joy Worton who I went to high school with and then on to college and then she married one of the 3 guys my husband and those other three. Charlie and Joy are married. And she was a

cheer leader and she lived in the city. Used to love going to all the hockey games. Hockey was a big sport for Hope High school and a lot of us went to the old arena everybody who played hockey played in one place. There was only one arena that people played at. I was very involved in a lot of the church things, the youth groups and the Episcopal Conference Center in my summer took up the whole summer. It was great. It was a wonderful way to grow up and spend the summer, going to camp.

EB: Were your friends and yourself into the social aspect and dating and stuff?

MA: We were a large group of friends in high school that commuted from in Harmony, Rhode Island and Greenville. And 2 of them had cars so we would be in large groups and it was kind of in the sticks and we did a lot of things in large groups. My best friend Elise, who went off to Colby. But we did, we didn't date one on one as much but we did lots of things with guys and there was this group of 4 or 5 girls and we did everything together. We'd got to the games you know. A couple of car loads of people would go to the games and a we had a lot of fun that time. but I can't oh I snuck off to movies and had my boyfriends here and there you know but dating, my first real love came a year after I graduated from high school and that was he was a counselor at the Episcopal Conference Center. And we both went to URI and we dated for the first 3 years. He was a great, great friend. We had great times and it was a great first relationship. Everybody should have a boyfriend as nice as him. He was a nice person.

EB: What has he gone on to do, do you know?

MA: I haven't kept track of him. But what is he doing now? He was a business major. But I think he got into forestry or something. I haven't really been in touch with him. I bump into his brother now and again. I think he lives in Florida now.

EB: Oh. Did you feel there was a huge generation gap between you and your parents and older?

MA: Well I think everybody always feels that there is a generation gap and there always is, some type of a gap you know. The issues that were on the table in the late Sixties, mid and late Sixties, were very controversial. They were controversial to the nation. They were controversial, as I said with in families, and I think that those, those make the differences sometimes of the generation gap even more, prominent. In the Fifties, my brother-in-law who grew up in the Fifties, there weren't those major political issues that were out there. You weren't talking about, you know, free love and peace and avoiding the draft and running off to Canada and going to see, wearing your hair. Everybody was growing there hair really long. My bother's hair was down below his waist, you know, in ponytails. It was, you know, it was kind of a free and easy time, and it was a difficult time for, there was a lot more drugs coming on the scene so there were a lot more issues. That could under score the generation gap.

EB: Could you describe your wardrobe?

MA: I had bell bottom pants, hip huggers, I wish I kept them, because my niece now wishes she had them at the high school. I gave some of them away, but through the years as you move a lot, because I have lived over seas now and I've moved a lot and you lose a lot of those things. But it was kind of loose and free and easy I remember really long, long skirts and kind of those high boots people wear under the skirts. You see a lot of people at the high school now, wearing clothes that you wore back then.

EB: Do you think it's kind of funny that it has returned?

MA: Yeah I guess everything is cyclical, nobody invents anything new, I suppose. Everybody thinks they do, but it's kind of re-treads. I have realized that more as I get older that I see things that happened in the Twenties, I realize that things that happened in the Sixties, you know, were not so original. People go through these changes, but, you know, but it's kind of interesting.

EB: Was there a counter-culture?

MA: Well like I said, I mean it was kind of in your face a lot of it. You know, there was a lot , you certainly had your conservatives. Especially when you start thinking more my college years than my high school years. You were developing the people, who were the ROTC, you know, the ROTC. To tell you the difference, when I went to college, as a freshman the curfew for freshman was 9 o'clock. When I was a sophomore the fresh, the curfew in the dorms for freshman was 11 o'clock. When I was a junior, the curfew was 1 o'clock. And when I was a senior and my sister was a freshman everybody had keys to the dorm. That's how fast things changed. But we had to be in our dorm by 9 o' clock. You know, in 1964. And in 1968, people have keys to the dorms. So you had a conservative element, in the people that were in ROTC, and the people that were starting to develop more conservative views. But you also have a lot of people, than you had people growing their hair. People changing their the way they dressed. People being much more vocal, about the war. A lot more drugs, a lot more "flower power" and "flower children" and all of that. And so I don't know what did you call it a counter-culture? People were kind of all over the place. There were a lot, it was a time of high emotion.

EB: Did you view this change as a positive or a negative?

MA: Well, I think that television probably heightened a lot of , I'm not answering your question directly.

EB: That's O.K.

MA: A positive or a negative. I don't know. Things happened in the Sixties, that couldn't of happened in the Forties. Just because of communication. Communication changed so much, you know, when Kennedy ran, in the early Sixties. That was, you know, that televised debate changed the way things were and when you could start seeing everything on television. You could see the pictures of the moon. You could see demonstrations happening in Chicago. You could see body counts in Vietnam. It changed it so much, so it's difficult, you don't have the advantage of being able to reflect, hearing something then talking about it and reflecting. Instantaneous. So some of the things were positive and some of the things weren't so positive.

EB: What was your favorite musical group, when you were growing up?

MA: Oh, I loved the Beatles. I love the Beatles. I remember the Beatles, you know, when they first, and they were on the Ed Sullivan

Show, when they first came. I remember Elvis Presley when he was on the first Elvis Presley, I mean Ed Sullivan Show. People would watch that. Stay home on a Saturday nights at 8 o'clock just to see. He was the most boring guy, Ed Sullivan. But he brought on some acts. But I listened to all, I loved Yes, you know. I loved, we had Crosby, Stills, Nash, & Young, all of those. We still have these. Its funny my sister, who kept most of the records when I moved around, I lost a lot. My niece and nephew now have the CD's of the same 33's, she still has the old albums. And they've got identical ones, but they got the CD's.

EB: Right.

MA: And you have to remember we went from, I remember buying 78 records of Elvis Presley. Then it went to 45's, then it went to 33 and a thirds, and then it went to the loop tapes, the big ones the, I forgot what they even called them. Then they went to the CD's, cassette tapes and now CD's. You know, it all moves so quickly.

EB: What was your favorite movie or book, when you were in the Sixties?

MA: I didn't take notes on that. Well *[A] Clockwork Orange* was quite a movie. No that didn't come out right did it? *2001: A Space Odyssey* , who couldn't have loved *2001* ? That was a big one to see.

EB: Did you see The Graduate?

MA: Oh yes of course. Thank you for reminding me.

EB: Your welcome.

MA: "Mrs. Robinson", yes we all saw *The Graduate* . Everybody could sing all the songs and everybody knew Dustin Hoffman and remember him saying hearing about plastics. And that was kind of a interesting one just because of the way it ended, you know, with the wedding. Who would have ever thought you would've left the wedding right at the altar. And then I ended up leaving a wedding, I had a wedding dress, but I left before it,I'm in a good marriage now. I'm glad I got out of that one. But *The Graduate* , how could I forget.

EB: In college did you watch a lot of TV?

MA: No. I don't even remember if there was,well you never had all that stuff in your dorm rooms. I mean we just had one TV at home, and now people have three and four and five Tvs or you have little portables, but they weren't as portable then. So, that wasn't anything I thought about bringing off to school, I didn't. I might not even brought a record player off to school, a stereo. I had a roommate who had one so.

EB: Through all your education did you ever have an instructor that really, gave you great views of, or stood out in your mind?

MA: Yup. Defiantly, Dr. Nancy Potter. She is still at the University of Rhode Island. One of the best professors I ever had.

EB: What did she teach?

MA: She taught English literature. She taught me [William] Faulkner, a course in Faulkner. She taught another literature class I had. She remains one of the all time greats.

EB: And that was in college?

MA: Yes.

EB: W as the curriculum relevant to your life or to the political interests when you were in college that they taught you?

MA: Yes of course, especially in your social studies classes, I was an English major and a history minor. And what a time to be talking about history and what was going on. Especially current, why the United States got involved with Vietnam. And everything was happening in Indochina and learning about that part of the world. And there were a lot of political discussions that continued, in The Ram Stand or at tables. It happened at churches it happened every place, it was very alive that everybody had an opinion on everything that was going on, because there were so many major things going on every month.

EB: Right

MA: You know you had race relations that were heating up with the assassination of Martin Luther King, assassination of Kennedy. Anyone of those events, and then the summers that were just on fire with people coming out, not literally on fire, but it just seemed for many summers in a row, many cities burned, and there was just riots in cities over Vietnam, over race relations. You had race relations increasing becoming important, because the vast majority of soldiers especially in the front ranks were young black men who then coming back to the United States and realizing that they had very limited civil rights. And they were angry, they came back, my husband came back from Vietnam angry and he was white and college educated, because of the reception a lot of the veterans got. So it was an adjustment for the best of them coming back from Vietnam and add other layers of race relations on top of it. It was even more volatile.

EB: Do you recall understanding the Cold War?

MA: Yes, I was a lot younger, you know, the Cold War. I was born in `46. So you know, through the Fifties, you know, I was up through junior high school. So 14 years old, you sometimes have an awareness. I basically, you know that whole time, I don't have a big awareness. Probably my awareness of the Cold War came later. I do remember hiding under desks, when we had to do the air raid drills. You know, in case there was a bomb that was dropped. You know, we did fire drills and they had air raid drills. As if hiding under desk was going to help anything if a bomb was dropped on you, but I remember that vividly. Lining up in school house and

hiding under desks. Those were kind of interesting. Fire drill you just went out in the yard. The bomb drill you would hide under your desk so wouldn't get hit with glass. It's just kind of silly.

EB: Did you understand the Vietnam War during it ?

MA: I guess as well as anyone did then. We didn't have the whole truth during Vietnam. A lot of lies were told, some of which we are just learning now. But I think we know a lot more now about Indochina and the French efforts there and our involvement and then the importance of the kind of the military machine. How increasingly we got more and more sucked into it. I don't think, I don't think it's a war that Johnson, I know its a war that Johnson didn't want and yet he was, that was his albatross. He could solve, he passed more civil rights legislation than any other president. He was very skilled in getting legislation through Congress. He one thing he couldn't solve was Vietnam and that was his down fall. That's why he choose not to run again. He couldn't get up from under it .

EB : What do think about the nuclear war, or the theory if nuclear war?

MA: Now?

EB: And earlier?

MA: Well I do think, it was always there and we had dropped the first bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. So it was always there and as newer powers come along that had nuclear, or other weapons of mass destruction think its really important that people remain vigilant, you know, because its exactly what it is a weapon of mass destruction; which can create devastation that we can't even dream of. Whether that's biological, you know, with what they're trying to carry out with Saddam Hussain. Everybody needs to be vigilant.

EB: Did you agree with the bombing of Hiroshima?

MA: I was 2.

EB: Oh the now .

MA: Well.

EB: .To end the war?

MA: That's a hard one and I don't want to, I have heard both sides of it. It certainly ended the war, but it also caused pain and devastation, that people are still paying for now. People are still suffering, but there is no easy solution; once you get into a big confrontation such as World War II was. I don't know.

EB: In the 1960, or 1961 election of JFK, when that happened, did that effect you?

MA: I remember it, I mean it was an exciting time, because he was so young and Jackie was so charming. You know, your just coming off Eisenhower, who was a great World War II war hero, not particularly charismatic, in my eyes. Looked over his wife was kind of doubty with a funny hat, on all the time. Not a great, not great in public appearances or as a public speaker. And then you have the couple from "Camelot". You know, you have two young, good looking people. She spoke languages, she spoke French, she spoke. She charmed them and they had two little children running around the White House. So it was an exciting time and it was an empowering time. It was a time when he said "pass the mantle to a new generation." It was that feeling that maybe we are the new generation and we can change things. We can change race relations. We can change people into being more environmentally concerned. A lot of people my age now are the, and I think there was a look to see, are these the people who don't go into business and they go into making the world a better place. Peace, Love. Peace, Love. You know, is it going to be a better place? So it was a time of optimism, anything was possible in the early Sixties and it just looked like everything was going to be great. So, yeah I remember it vividly, I remember that time vividly.

EB: How did you respond to his assassination?

MA: Well, when he was assassinated was the only day in my life that I ever skipped school. And I was in all the honors courses, I was a senior at Hope High School. And my girlfriend and I hadn't done the assignment in English and we decided not to go. So we went to the library at Brown University to work on a paper and then we decided to go to the movies and then we took the regular school bus home. We took the regular city bus home and when I got home my mother asked me " Where were you?" and I said, "We were at school." and she said "No, they let school out early today. The president was killed." And so I was caught from skipping school, but I remember it vividly. Everything shut down, everything shut down. And everybody just sat and watched the television for 4 or 5 days in a row and nobody left the television. You just watched everything, you watched the play, the replay. The killing, the capture of Lee Harvey Oswald and then the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald. The whole, I can picture the drum beat, the cortege coming down the street. Those pictures that you have probably seen over and over again of little John Kennedy saluting his fathers coffin. Jackie Kennedy draped in those veils following the cortege. The pictures that are riveted in everybody's mind. Everyone just sat there, in silence and just watched television.

We just, it was seemed like it was going to be the end of an era, because everything seemed perfect. Now in retrospect , as you know, the involvement in Vietnam and things like that. I don't know how Kennedy would have handled it or if he could have handled it better. And Bill Clinton gets slammed for all his alleged extra-marital affairs, certainly Jack Kennedy had many of them also that were not as pronounced. So in many ways he was the golden boy, the golden child and we didn't see any of his warts. Some of his warts have come out later. But certainly his assassination was a major change. However Johnson was finally, when he came in he had such good workings with Congress that, he was probably able to do more than Kennedy ever could have done on civil rights. Civil rights was initiated by Kennedy. I don't know if he could have got through some of the things that Johnson got through.

EB: W hen you were watching the TV when Kennedy was shot? Was everyone at your house or did they have TVs by then?

MA: Oh most people had TVs by then. And we didn't have a round screen. Still in black and white though. I think there might have been color TVs but we had black and white. A lot of that footage is still in black and white. I don't think any of that footage that you see is in color.

EB: By the time you were in college did you think that discrimination against colored people was a problem?

MA: You would have had to be deaf, dumb, and blind not to know there were gross inequities. And they became heightened as the whole Vietnam and they needed more, you know, war soldiers and more fodder there. And certainly with Martin Luther King, and his efforts in the south with voter registration. With Rosa Parks and breaking up the segregation on the buses, the segregation in the lunch rooms. All of those boycotts were happening throughout the south and throughout the area. So you know that there were gross inequities between the races. It was in your face everyday. Even if you didn't know about it before hand, you certainly knew about it through the efforts of Dr. King and organizing the things that he did, The Poor Peoples March and, which he was not able to participate in, because of his assassination, but the huge Poor Peoples March in Washington in 1968. So all through college you had a heightened awareness of all of those.

EB: Did any of that personally effect you?

MA: Not personally. I wouldn't say that personally it effected me. Certainly there were issues in debates in college and certainly some of the platforms. By the time you got `68 you certainly had all the racial issues that were there, but everything its hard to tell which issues, because everything is so dominated by Vietnam. In the Democratic National Convention a lot of the protest was trying to get the platform against Vietnam, on the as one of the platforms. McGovern ran as peace candidate. So those issues were intermeshed, but they were separate and they were both in the news all the time.

EB : Did you follow the political and social issues when you were in college?

MA: Yes. It was hard to avoid every month something was happening. And it was happening in a very major way. I mean picture, I mean just picture now. If people were being assassinated, if Kennedy , you know, if Clinton were assassinated and then Jesse Jackson was assassinated or. You also have Wallace running in the `68 election. Wallace was running as an Independent candidate, from the south who wanted to defeat the Democrats and their Democratic platform and he succeeded in doing that. He got 10 million votes and he accomplished what he said he wanted to do. He took the race away from the Democrats and that's how Nixon got in, in 1968. So you had all kinds of things happening that had never happened before. And it was happening on a monthly basis and they were major, they were earth shaking things that were happening. In all counts, whether it be music, the war, arts, politics. They were all very pivotal counts. 1968, obviously since your doing the report was one of those.

EB: Right. Where there any rallies, teach-ins, or demonstrations on your campus that you were involved in or that were there?

MA: They were starting. A lot of them, there were some. There were increasing numbers of them in the, `69, `70, and `71. Many colleges just shut down in `71. I know my friend graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and there were sit-ins at so many buildings they just canceled graduation at most colleges across the country. There were just, there were no college graduations. Many, many places just because, that might have been after Kent State. And I can't remember Kent State, but that might have been 1970 or `71. And after that many colleges shut down so you had wide spread demonstrations right around `70, `71, but there were still some then. I was not involved in them. I was certainly involved in the one at the Democratic National Convention in August. Couldn't walk down the street with out being part of it .

EB: O.K. Can you describe your work experience after college?

MA: I have worked everyday, since after college, except for a few sick days. I went to work right away as a teacher at Smithfield High School for one year. And then I went to graduate school , and had an assistantship at the University of Connecticut. And then I went to work for two years at the Vocational Technical School at Corless Park in Providence. Took 6 months off in between and I traveled around Europe. I took one year off and I just traveled by myself. I took the semester off , came back and sometimes when I think about making a decision it seems like a big one, that second year which was. 1971. I just decided I had to do something different. Here my sister had been to Europe, my brother had already been to Europe, and I was 10 years older than him and I hadn't been to Europe, yet. And I wasn't sure what I was going to do, but I decided I had to do something different. So I gave up my job in September, so I guess I haven't worked everyday. And I flew to Paris and I traveled around Europe for 4 months and then I came home and the day I got home, the person they had hired to take my place, quit. So I went right back into my exact same job, my exact same chair. So that kind of said to me, in life you got to do what you really want to do and I didn't miss a step.

I've also, then I went to Greece. I went to Connecticut to work for a couple of years at a drug rehab facility and then I went to the American Community School of Athens for 2 years; as a guidance counselor. Came back, because my mother was dying of cancer. During that year I married Phil. Then we decided that we wanted to go back over seas. So in `77, after my mother died, we went back over seas to Iran. That was before the revolution and we were there for 2 years and then we were evacuated from Iran. We were right there during the revolution and we moved in with my sister, in `79, in Charlestown. And I have been in South Kingstown ever since. As a guidance counselor at the high school for about 9 years and then as an assistant principal at the high school for 9 years, and then over here as a principal at the junior high.

EB: What did you and your husband do in Iran?

MA: I was a guidance counselor and he taught English at Community School.

EB: Did you know how to speak.?

MA: Farsi? Nope. It was, we learned some.

EB: Right.

MA: But it was an international school, but it was an English curriculum. There were lots of those schools, lots of people grow up overseas and if you want to know a small world. Mrs. Bennet's daughter, you know Mrs. Bennet the guidance counselor at the high school, her daughter decided to go to Greece and she's teaching in the same school that I taught in, from `74 to `76 I taught in Greece and she's in my same school.

EB: Is she teaching the same thing?

MA: No I was a guidance counselor and she's teaching history.

EB: Is she teaching American History?

MA: I don't know what she's teaching. It's an American school also. So she's, but here we teach many kinds of history too. So I don't know what history she's teaching.

EB: H ow would you describe the relationship between men and women in the Sixties?

MA: We had, in the early Sixties we had certainly more clearly defined roles. I gave you the example of my freshmen year in college in 1964: women had to be in their dorms, men could not come into the dorms. You had to be invited, you had a house mother even in the dorms. By the time you were a senior guys could come into the dorm. You had keys to the dorm. It was much freer and that happened quickly. So in the early Sixties it was still, I would say more traditional roles. And as all barriers started to brake down, later in the Sixties. And I mean the freedom of speech, the political barriers the difference of opinion. A lot of the barriers between men and women broke down and there were ushered in "free love" and a different kind of morality. That had not existed in that, to that extent in prior to that.

EB: Was women discontent becoming an issue in your relationship or surroundings or your friends?

MA: No. That really came later. That came later in the Seventies, maybe even later.

EB: Did you have children by then?

MA: No and I still don't. We don't have any children. Not that we didn't want to, but you don't always get everything you want, in life. We had foster children. We've had foster children. And we've always got, when your in school with over a thousand kids you've always got a lot of kids at your house. Although, so there is plenty out there.

EB: Right. Can you tell us the story of how you got to the Convention in Chicago?

MA: When I graduated from, now I told you earlier.

EB: It wasn't on the recording.

MA: O.K. In my senior year I had 3 best friends, they were male friends. I had 3 very good friends, they are my, they are a core of my friends today. My now husband Phil, his best friend Charlie, who is married to Joy, still married, 35 years later. And Joy and I were friendly and Cole. And Cole was the one I dated in college. They all graduated in `67. Phil went to Vietnam, Cole went into the Peace Corps, and Charlie was married to Joy and they had a child; so he was exempt. So all 3 of them had very different experiences. I was dating Cole at the time and he went off to the Peace Corps and sometimes when your twenty or twenty-one, 2 years seems forever. You don't realize that it goes by in a blink of an eye. And he went off to the Peace Corps and I was in a wedding in October. And my partner at the wedding, we had a great time. There is no other way of saying it. And we started dating. Only he was in California, and I was here.

On January 23, of my senior year, in 1968; the [USS] Pueblo was captured, in North Korea. It was a major incident. You almost thought that a war would be started over that. The North Koreans held that ship for almost a year and all the people on it. He called me from California on the 23 rd , and he was in the Marines at that point. He was a college graduate who had been to Vietnam, and was about to get out, but they froze everyone's discharge orders. He said I might have to go over to Korea because the Pueblo had been captured. I'd like to go off engaged, would you marry me and I said yes. Probably the next morning I knew that probably it was a mistake. We didn't know each other well enough. I have only seen him for a short period of time. I was engaged all the way up until my graduation day which was June 10. which was, I was graduating from URI, and my father just had a massive heart attack. So I didn't go to my college graduation. That was the vehicle for me to break off the engagement. What was the question?

EB: How you got to the Chicago Convention?

MA: So I went, then having being engaged for the whole spring semester and feeling like I was in a situation that I didn't want to be in, but I didn't really know how to tell anybody. After June 10 I felt very free. And I was free with my time and I could do whatever I wanted. So I had a professor, a graduate teaching assistant, in a speech course that I took, which I loved, who didn't have his driver's license, lived in Chicago, got his driver's license here in South County, by driving around the bowling alley, the same way as everybody still does it to this day. And then the first trip he ever took was to drive to Chicago. And he freaked out. He just wasn't used to driving on highways. And he called me and said, "if you know anybody who could fly out to Chicago and drive home with me, at the end of the summer to get back to URI otherwise I don't know how I'm, going to get back with a car. I can't drive by myself." Well, the Democratic National Convention was August 29, which was the end of the summer. And I had another friend, my friend Elise from high school, who was at Colby College. And one of her friends were working at the Democratic National Convention and got her press passes that he gave to her and she wasn't going to go and she said, "You wanna go to Chicago? I'll give you a press pass." and I said, "I might have to got to Chicago." And that solidified it for me. The fact that I could get in to the Democratic National Convention.

So I flew out and I stayed with the teaching assistant and I should remember his name but I don't. And he was very friendly with Connie Chancellor, who was the ex-wife of John Chancellor, the television corespondent. Jules Pfifer came into their apartment, who was that

cartoonist. I stayed at his parents apartment or his sister's apartment and I had this press pass to go. I was there on the Tuesday, when Abraham Ribicoff entered McGovern's name as a candidate. And by then the riots, the demonstrations in Chicago were all over the place. They disrupted the convention and that was the purpose to disrupt the convention and they did. And Mayor Daley brought out the police force and the National Guard in such numbers and there were, there were investigations about his excessive force during the demonstrations for years to follow. The chanting that the crowds would have would be "the whole world is watching, the whole world is watching." So as things were going on in the convention, the Chicago police were out in the streets clubbing and beating protester; most of whom were young anti-war demonstrators, college students who were about my same age.

Tear gas was evident in the city every single night. Ribicoff got up on the stand with Mayor Daley sitting in front of him. And I was sitting right behind Ribicoff, because I was in a press section with my press pass, and he said, "With George McGovern, as president you wouldn't have police on the streets as Nazis with their Gestapo tactics." And Mayor Daley, very clear, cause they had the television camera on him, muttered some expletives that I don't want to put on the tape. But there were a lot of finger pointing, and Daley had his cadre of men around him. Dan Rather was a young reporter there. He was on the floor. I saw him get knocked to the floor at the convention.

It was a unruly place because the crowds, because it was on television and would be chanting "the whole world is watching, the whole world is watching." The nomination went to Humphrey. He won out over McGovern, because of everything going on in the streets. It was a bittersweet victory for him. Hubert Humphrey, who was a very fine man, and was really looking for his time in the sun. It was totally over- shadowed by everything that was going on in Grant Park and in the streets of Chicago. And he was narrowly defeated in the November election. and I think both the nomination should have been the high point in his life, even for just that night, was not. It was a convention unlike any other convention. Most of the conventions you see now are very well orchestrated with the balloons coming down at the right time. That convention was out of control, both inside and out. And people would take the floor and talk about what was going on in the street. It was a very interesting time. Not unlike being in Tehran during the revolution, when I was there later in 1979. But in `68 it was being there when you knew that something very, very different things happen.

EB: Were you in support of Humphrey?

MA: Well, I was a McGovern person. Although I wasn't sure McGovern could win. You also have to remember after the assassination of Robert Kennedy who, there was some efforts to have Edward Kennedy run, but that then subsided. McGovern was really a pioneer, who went out on his own, and Robert Kennedy let him test the waters to see how it was going to fly. And then when it did fly, it was four days later that Robert Kennedy announced his intent to run; which he got a lot of flack for. That happened in March; he got a lot of flack for that, because McGovern really went out as a peace candidate and put his neck out on the line. And I think Robert Kennedy waited to see how it would go. And when he threw his hat out in to the ring, he had much more money and probably political machine behind him. So he started to gain speed and momentum. and then up until the time of winning in California, on June 6 when he was assassinated, 4 days before my college graduation, which I didn't end up going to anyway.

But a lot of, everything changed so fast. If you were for McGovern then in comes for Kennedy. If you were for Kennedy, then he's assassinated. Then you talk about Edward Kennedy. Then is McGovern going to do it. Should it go to him? What about Humphrey? Is he the old guard? It was kind of all over the place. Wallace was the spoiler. He didn't want. he made it clear he didn't want the Democrats to win. And he accomplished that. It was a very narrow victory between Humphrey and Nixon which is probably why the whole Watergate thing happened in '72. Because it was a narrow victory and Nixon wanted to ensure that he got a second term and probably why all the dirty tricks happened in `72.

EB: Outside the convention, with all the riots and everything, were you ever outside when on of them happened or take part in them or anything?

MA: I wasn't part of an organized, but you were walking there, and you were there in crowds, and you were there at Grant Park. There were police every place. There was tear gas every place, you just wanted to stay out of harm's way. I wasn't in Grant Park in the middle of a riot. As the same way it was when I was in Tehran, it was a siege mentality. It was an occupation force mentality in Chicago the same as it was in Tehran at that time. So if you were on the street, there were tanks and trucks going up and down the street. It was difficult to avoid unless you just stayed in the apartment, and I wanted to go to the convention. So you try to stay out of where you don't , you go out of your way not to get arrested or hit. It was evident to see it wherever you went.

EB: This is kind of jumping away but, how were you affected by Martin Luther King's assassination or Robert Kennedy's

MA: Well, again, it was on of those things that you just didn't believe. It had been five years since the assassination of Robert.JFK, the president. And then to see Martin Luther King fall and then Kennedy fall you started to wonder if the whole world was falling apart, if there was going to be anarchy, if anybody was going to be able to be in charge. With the summer's burning, who was going to able to solve this problem? [tape interrupted] Martin Luther King was a great hope for all of us; for white and black. He was a wonderful orator. It was wonderful to hear him speak. He was a magical speaker. He captivated the hearts and the minds and he could lead in a positive direction, black people, white people, all people. And when he died, it was, you wondered how can we go on without, a resource, I don't want to call him a resource, but without a person with his magnitude and importance. It just seemed with both of those deaths and with everything else that was happening that the world was moving so quickly. Who was going to be able to guide us? Who is going to be a leader and come forward that could unite people on many diverse issues.

EB: Was that the same feeling with Robert Kennedy? Was he very.?

MA: Well, he did not have the stature of Martin Luther King, in my opinion. But because he was part of that Kennedy legacy, and he had worked so closely with his brother, I think some people had the hope. Without knowing, I mean it was so quick, you know, him putting his hat in the ring in March and him being dead by June. Who knows what he could have accomplished?