

INTERVIEW WITH RUTH BURG  
BY ESTELLE ROGERS  
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Ms. Rogers: First, I would like to start with your early background, and if you'll tell me about where you grew up, what your parents were like, where they came from, and siblings.

Ms. Burg: All right, we'll start with my parents. My father came from Vilna [Vilnius, Lithuania] at age 8, settled in Gloversville, New York with his parents, because my grandfather was in the glove business in Vilna; They left there in about 1914 and moved to Philadelphia where my grandfather opened a glove and corset shop at 52<sup>nd</sup> and Walnut which in those days was a very lovely neighborhood. I wouldn't vouch for it today. My father went to the University of Pennsylvania and graduated as an electrical engineer.

Ms. Rogers: What year?

Ms. Burg: 1920. He had really wanted to major in mathematics but was told that a Jewish boy couldn't get a job in mathematics so he went into electrical engineering. My mother was born in Philadelphia. My father was born in 1897. My mother was born in Philadelphia in 1900. Her parents had both come from Russia, independently, and met and married in Philadelphia. My grandfather was a tailor and as I grew up my grandmother used to entertain us with sewing buttons on the clothes. His tailor shop was on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of their house. Mother went through high school, which in those days was no mean accomplishment, and became a hat designer. But her major love was music, and she actually studied voice. As a matter of fact, she studied with the same teacher as Marian Anderson and knew Marian Anderson because they were in the same class together in high school; Mother's name was Applebaum, her name was Anderson. They sat next to each other alphabetically, and mother said she used to hear this gorgeous booming

voice next to her as they would sing in assembly. They knew each other and actually corresponded for most of their lives until Marian Anderson began shaving off some of her age and wasn't as quite as anxious to recognize that they had grown up together. My parents married in 1924 in Philadelphia. Both sets of parents being Orthodox Jews, it was a Orthodox wedding, Men and women were not separated during the wedding and receptions but it took place in one of the very Orthodox synagogues. They met working for Bell Telephone Company. My father continued working there until I guess about 1929 or 1930. He wasn't terribly happy with it and was bored because things weren't moving as quickly as he would have liked. I was born in 1926, first child, and mother always teased me because I was born the night of the first seder and both families who always had major large seders had insisted that they come to them for first seder and to the other family for the second seder. Mother said I got even with them. She ended up in the hospital, I was born and my grandmothers, instead of getting ready for Passover, had to rush to the hospital to see me. My uncle always teased me that I made him break Pesach: - he was so excited, he had an ice cream soda. My sister was born in 1928 and we were the only two children. I think, but for the Depression, there might have been more, but that was hard enough.

Ms. Rogers: Tell me a little bit more about your mother. What was she doing at Bell Telephone?

Ms. Burg: She was a secretary. She also participated-- Bell Telephone Philadelphia in those days had very elaborate, once a year, a very elaborate show where they had dancing. It was in Atlantic City and it was really quite an elaborate, very fancy thing and she was always one of the dancers in the show and for years she had some of the costumes she had worn and that sort of thing.

Ms. Rogers: And she stopped working when you were born?

Ms. Burg: Theoretically, yes, though actually later on, during the Depression, she did work and after the Depression also. My father in 1929 or 30 really was kind of fed up with electrical engineering, might have even been 28, so he thought about going to medical school, it was probably before that. It was before my sister was born. He was accepted to medical school but was told that he needed one more year of Latin and he said no way, so he did not do it. And instead went into the laundry supply business with my uncle, my mother's brother. It was a wholesale laundry supply business which they had, supplying various laundries around Philadelphia and all the way down to Washington, and that continued until the Depression when things became so tight that it could only really support one family. So my father gave the business to my uncle. He tried to get back into engineering but was not successful, of course, in the early '30s, and so he did all sorts of things. He made jigsaw puzzles that were put into shoeboxes and sold, not sold, placed in drugstores and other places, because people were looking for things to do, just to occupy their time. I think they would rent for a penny a day, or something like that. He was always good with his hands. He made irons. I remember a number of these things as a young child. They were very good about insulating my sister and me. We never suffered from the depression at all. But they did, and in later years, we learned some more of those details. Like mother walking us to piano lessons and making a game of it. And then on the way home, stopping at a bakery and buying one piece of pastry for my sister and me to share because she "wasn't hungry." And many years later, she told us how she salivated as she watched us eating it. My father did many things just to occupy his time. Mother helped him count the pieces in the boxes of the puzzles and things of that type. He made my sister and me a gorgeous doll house which was a miniature, wooden very scaled copy of a house that appeared in *Good Housekeeping* or something, and we have it to this day. It was very elaborate. He

ultimately wired it also, it had lights on it, and it's really a remarkable piece of workmanship. It's at my sister's house now because her grandchildren have been playing with it as they have grown up, and it really is quite a spectacular piece. The front and the back came off so we could get to all the rooms. He made a duplicate of their bedroom set for one of the bedrooms. My grandmother crocheted curtains for all the windows. Most of that stuff has been lost but the dollhouse itself still exists. It's quite a big thing. I guess its about three feet wide and two feet deep. My parents lost their home. They had bought a house in suburban Philadelphia when they were married. Actually they bought it before they were married. And my father came one day all excited with a handful of flowers that he had picked from the front lawn for my mother, which turned out to be dandelions. He didn't know one flower from the other. But during the Depression, they actually lost the house and moved to a rental house. Another reason that precipitated the move was for me to get to school, I had to cross a very major street in Philadelphia, Germantown Avenue, and they had guards there but one day, my mother at lunchtime, saw me walking down the street as she was wheeling my sister in a carriage down the street we lived on, which meant I had crossed the street by myself and they were very, very concerned about that. We moved to another area of Philadelphia where they rented a house but ultimately with the Depression, that even became impossible, and we moved into the home that my father's father had. Both grandfathers had died by that time, and my father, and we moved into the home where my grandmother and my uncle who was unmarried lived. He was taking care of her and running the shop, the store, which still existed. As a matter of fact, at that point they had opened a second store next to it which was ladies clothing and we lived with them which was extremely difficult. Again my sister and I didn't realize it, but it was not an easy situation. We were always shushed so we wouldn't wake my uncle who would sleep late, or

things of that type, and my mother was made to feel that she was kind of there for their good graces, and then to answer your question, she did start working in the store at that time and worked part time. My grandmother worked all her life in the store. I mean she was a little lady, I'm built very much like her and very, obviously very bright, and she worked very hard, until ultimately the stores were shut. They weren't sold, they were shut but that was during World War II when my uncle went into service. We lived there until 1938. In about '37, my father, or '36, my father did get a job as a draftsman, not as an engineer, but as a draftsman. In 1938, he was able to get a job for the State of Pennsylvania, up in Selingsgove, Pennsylvania, which is about 50 miles north of Harrisburg, as the head engineer for inspection as they were building a new addition to the mental hospital. He lived there, I guess for about six or seven months while we were still in Philadelphia, and then we went up there for the summer with him. He told us stories about how toward the end of the summer having some politician come in and being shocked that he had gotten this job without going through the appropriate political hoops and was not "contributing to the political party." All the other people were. The man had walked into the office one day, the inspection office on the job, and told my father to get everybody in there and gave them a lecture that they weren't paying enough of their contributions, and then he asked my father "how did you ever get this job and you better start paying or else".

Ms. Rogers: I take it was from the Democratic Party at the time.

Ms. Burg: I'm not sure. I'm not sure. A lot of Pennsylvania was Republican at the time. He didn't know what he was going to do. He really didn't want to get involved with that kind of thing. And while he was worrying about it, just as a heaven opened up as one would say, a telegram arrived that same day offering him a job in Washington for the federal government as an electrical engineer. He went down and was interviewed and he got that job. Which was very

good because my mother had told him she was never going to move back into the house with my grandmother and uncle whom we were very close to but you can imagine family things can get a little bit bad. So we all moved to Washington, DC in 1938. I was in junior high school. I was absolutely shocked to move to a segregated city. I never could really get over it. To me it was just absolutely horrifying. I had friends in Philadelphia of all colors. Not of all colors, because you didn't have quite the rainbow coalition you have today, but certainly the schools were integrated and I was in school with some of them and socialized a little bit with some of them, not a great deal because of where we lived. There was never a question in my mind that anything mattered in terms of color. And so it here it was.

Ms. Rogers: Beyond education, was the segregation obvious in aspects of life in Washington?

Ms. Burg: Oh yes, you'd go into Union Station. We would take a train. There were two different water fountains. There were two different sets of bathrooms. You'd get on a bus and all the blacks would go to the back. You'd go to a movie and they were in the balcony. It was a sleepy southern town in 1938 and a very, very segregated city. So yes, I found it very shocking. As matter a fact a few years later after things had started easing up, I remember a conversation, I guess I was about 14 at the time, with my piano teacher and her mother who were very strong segregationists and thought all of this was terrible and her mother looked at me very haughtily and said would you marry a black truck driver and, I think for a 14 year old, I gave her a very good answer: I said no, because I wouldn't marry a white one either. So, this was difficult for me adjusting in that regard. We lived in an apartment right off of 16<sup>th</sup> and Columbia Road and it was a lovely apartment, except it was small. My father's earnings were not that great as a government employee so my sister and I shared a room, which was really an enclosed porch and connected to my parents' bedroom as a matter of fact. But it was quite a nice experience after

having lived with my grandmother. Oh in the summer in Selinsgrove, we were allowed to have all the pets that we had never been allowed to have in Philadelphia. So we had rabbits, we had a dog, we had cats, when we left, we gave the rabbits to our next door neighbors. A number of retired farmers lived there and professors at the Selinsgrove College. My sister and I cried and cried because when we gave the rabbits to our next door neighbor he thanked us profusely and said now he knew what they'd have for Thanksgiving Dinner. But we returned to Washington, of course, pet less, we couldn't bring the dog or the cats or anything into an apartment but we had had a good experience with it. I guess it was in that apartment my sister first began her activities in terms of her astronomy, and I think I told you I have a sister who is a world-renowned astronomer. She's received the Presidential Medal of Science, she's received just about every possible award short of the Nobel Prize and there are many people who feel that she should have received that had she, if she was not a woman, and maybe she will some day. As a matter of fact, last year, both the *USA Today* and other newspapers speculated that she would be the recipient but, of course, she was not.

Ms. Rogers: So what were you interested in at that time?

Ms. Burg: Medicine. Very much interested in medicine and science. My aunt gave me a chemistry set. I guess I was about ten years old. And I would use the microscope and was, our whole family, was really scientifically oriented and so there was never any question in my mind but that I was going to be a doctor. My parents were wonderful. They devoted most of their life to us and any interests we had, they would pursue and we would vacation together with them and I don't recall them every really going off on their own. In that regard it was always a family affair. I even remember for their anniversary in Philadelphia when we were young kids, they took us with them to a very nice restaurant when they could afford it we all went to some very

famous supper club. I've forgotten now the name of the person who was appearing there and he signed autographs for us but we were included in what they did. Which is what you see a lot today in this generation. But I think in my generation, that was not done, you left your kids at home. So my main interest was science. And that is where I focused all my attention. In high school, we moved to 5th and Tuckerman. For those who know Washington, that was quite a dramatic move. But I had met a group of girls with whom I had become friendly and where everybody lived, and this was a very large Jewish area at the time, and so that was fine. My parents had looked at a house at 16<sup>th</sup> and Rittenhouse, and we objected strongly because it was far too far in the suburbs and we didn't want to be that isolated and so we ended up, we moved into a very small home at 5th and Tuckerman. It was within walking distance, actually it was a half of block from Coolidge High School. I continued on at Powell Junior High School which was near Columbia Road because I was in my last year and would go there everyday.

Ms. Rogers: How did you get there?

Ms. Burg: Walked a lot of the time or else took busses. The bus transportation was very good, I'd take a streetcar or a bus.

Ms. Rogers: And you did that alone?

Ms. Burg: Yeah. It was not considered unsafe or anything of that type. And so I continued. Then I enrolled at Coolidge. It was a brand new high school and ours was the first class that actually went through all three years. There too I primarily focused on science. I had a magnificent biology teacher and he was very helpful and helping. We did a lot of the projections and movies in the auditorium because he was in charge of that and I was on his VIP list so to speak. I had a perfectly normal growing up with my friends. We'd walk all over the place. We'd go to various movies and that sort of thing.

Ms. Rogers: Were things still segregated at that point in your high school years?

Ms. Burg: Yes. And as a matter of fact, growing up I was not the most popular girl on the block. I had lots of girlfriends. Very few boyfriends. I had a couple of boyfriends. But not that much. Normally, things were segregated – not in terms of color. I think there was kind of a bifurcation into groups. We had a large Catholic group, and a large Jewish group and each kind of kept to ourselves, socially, and that sort of thing. We would, of course, have no problems with classes, but there was just kind of a division that I don't think you would find today.

Ms. Rogers: Was there overt anti-Semitism? Did you ever hear slurs of any kind?

Ms. Burg: Not at that point. Heard them when I was much younger in Philadelphia. I was accused of being a Christ-killer by my girlfriend across the street who was also age 5, 6 or 7. So you knew it had to come from the home or something of that kind. It really didn't bother me that much at that point. I think we were aware of it. You've got to remember this was in the late 30's, early 40's when things were going bad in Europe and the beginning of World War II and so certainly we were aware of anti-Semitism being a problem. I never really met it, overtly at least. Whether I met it with some of my teachers and didn't realize it, I don't know. I certainly had no difficulty in terms of high school. I graduated as valedictorian in the class, so I don't think there was a lot of focus that would have impacted on my courses or anything of that type. I just wasn't really aware of it at that juncture. Maybe I was naïve. I don't think it was quite as overt in those days. We knew about Father Coughlin and we knew about and we were concerned about that sort of thing but we were not really involved in worrying about all of that. So high school years were fun years.

Ms. Rogers: Did you still plan to be a doctor at the time you graduated?

Ms. Burg: Oh yes. I had wanted to go to Radcliffe, and I think I would have had no difficulty getting into Radcliffe. I never went through with the application because this was 1943 and there was a great fear, especially in Washington, of being bombed and that sort of thing from the war, from World War II. My father was an air raid warden of the area and he was terribly concerned that his “little girl,” (and I remained his little girl even when I was fifty) might get stuck in Boston if there was problems on the East Coast because of the war and be completely isolated and cut off from the family. Also, as valedictorian I received a full tuition scholarship to George Washington University. In those days George Washington University gave scholarships to the valedictorian of the class of each of the high schools in Washington. So here I had the full tuition scholarship at GW. My father I think was earning \$3,000 a year in those days which was considered a fairly good upper median salary and I knew I wanted to go to medical school and that would be a tremendous expense to him; and so I felt I just couldn’t turn down a full scholarship. So I went to George Washington University, lived at home, went by bus and streetcar every day. If I had night classes, my father would walk the block and a half to where I would get off the bus on my way home and be standing there waiting for me to get home. We had a car, a used car that he bought after the Depression. It was a small car. We had a garage in our house which I said was a very small house and the car was taken out on Sundays for trips. We’d take a ride into the country up to Rockville, going up on Georgia Avenue and back on Wisconsin Avenue or vice versa, being in the country most of the time. Otherwise, anyplace we went by streetcar or by bus. You walked to the grocery store. There was no question that this was the way to do it. It was fine. That was the advantage of growing up in the city. So I went to GW, I majored in chemistry and pre-med. I had a pre-med advisor who kept telling me how I shouldn’t be a doctor. I did what in retrospect was a very foolish thing. Again I was in a hurry.

It was World War II. There was social life because I did join a sorority and I was very active in the sorority. It was known as a Jewish sorority but actually had been founded, and that was why I was interested in it, many years earlier at Hunter College when some of the non-Jewish freshmen had discovered that their Jewish friends could not get into a sorority with them and so they founded a nonsectarian sorority, and this was the first major nonsectarian sorority that ever existed and therefore I found it of interest and was willing to join it and became quite active in it. So I did have social life. But it was a different atmosphere. I remember one of our pledge class songs was “You’re Either Too Young Or Too Old” and it was a parody on a song known at the time, but was about the boys that were around.

Ms. Rogers: Because of the war?

Ms. Burg: We did not have too many of the Army and Navy students, the V-12 or whatever it was called where there were actually people in the military who were being trained in college. Being as short as I am and, since this is on tape, I guess I better say I am proud of being 5 foot and 1/2 inch. It seemed the only boys who were around who were interested in me were well over 6 feet whereas one of my sorority sisters who was 5’ 7”, the only boys who were interested in her were about 5’2”. So we had lots of time joking and laughing about that. We had some social life but I decided to do college in a little over two years because I was anxious to go to medical school and so I did, it was kind of crazy in retrospect. I was a lab assistant in the chemistry department because they learned I could type. I had had a job when I was in high school. In those days the Government was open on Saturdays for half a day. So I got a job as a typist on Saturdays working for the Department of Agriculture which many years later I discovered was still on my record and counted toward retirement. It was kind of strange seeing my handwritten application for the position.

Ms. Rogers: It was part of your federal employment record.

Ms. Burg: I was very impressed. As a matter of fact, when I looked at my records, they even had my application in my handwriting, so when people talk about the mess of the Federal government, some things they manage to apparently keep track of. In any event, I did all of the typing for the GW chemistry department which meant I typed all of the tests and exams and boy was I offered lots of money by people

Ms. Rogers: To preview the exams.

Ms. Burg: To see the exams. Never took any of it. But I had a key to the lab so the reason I was really able to do all my labs was they allowed me to go in off hours and do them. So I was able to do all of that. But my zoology prof came up to me and said had I applied to med school yet. This was the same man who kept telling me I shouldn't go.

Ms. Rogers: And why did he tell you shouldn't go?

Ms. Burg: I don't know whether it was that he was opposed to women, whether he was anti-Semitic, because I did begin to meet it a lot at that point or what the story was. But he just kept saying I would not be a good doctor. I would never get into medical school and so I had figured I would wait a year and apply to a number of medical schools to see what happened. Because I had very good grades. I paid a price, I think, for pushing through as much as I did. I missed *Phi Beta Kappa* by about a thousandth of a point or something like that, part of which was because I didn't cross my legs properly in my logic class and he gave me a C, which I think was the only C I got. You're making faces, but I remember he left school abruptly when I was taking a second logic course because apparently he was having an affair with one of his students whose husband was in the military and came home and found out about it and we suddenly had the President of

the University in there teaching our class. My zoology professor came up to me and he said, have you applied to medical school? And I said no. And he said, Well you know, the cutoff is tomorrow, you better get your application in. Well I took this as a signal that he maybe he had changed his mind and I rushed and got an application. This was an advanced zoology class, he taught comparative anatomy. He bet me a milkshake that I would get into medical school. Since he was the one that had to approve it, I thought this was a pretty good indication I would be admitted. He had previously said to me that he saw I had a great interest in science and if I would like to come up to his office some day, he would be happy to paint all the location of my organs on my body, which, of course, scared me to death. You've got to realize, this is 43, I was what 17 or 18 years old and I didn't want to get anywhere near that man. I was admitted to medical school and that was a fun story because the day I got the letter, I had had my eyes examined, my pupils were dilated and I came home to find the letter there and I could make out that the letter was from the medical school but I of course couldn't read it. I was going crazy until my mother came home and could read it for me. She said, yes I had been admitted to the class.

Ms. Rogers: So this was GW Medical School?

Ms. Burg: This was GW Medical School.

Ms. Rogers: And you at that point had not applied anywhere else?

Ms. Burg: No, no, as I said, I really thought I would wait a year because this was in I guess probably in the fall and I don't really recall, but they would have notified us I guess by the spring whether we were in or not and so, by that time, had not really graduated from college yet. And as a matter of fact, I got my degree after the first year of medical school, during the fall of medical school. As a matter of fact, the University gave me a problem. They said I didn't have

enough non-science courses and I was smart enough to argue with them and tell them, look, I took all the required pre-med, all the required courses I needed for my chemistry major. Where could I have worked those in? So they waived them for me and I got my Bachelor of Science degree, I guess in the fall of '45 having entered in '43, so it was a very foolish thing to have done in retrospect, but I did it. I completed my first year of medical school, George Washington Medical School. I met my first husband in the summer of '45 and entered school in the fall of '45 and so, that was an interesting thing. He was 9 years older than I was, he was from Germany, his parents had sent him out to avoid the holocaust. He had been in school in Switzerland for a number of years and had come here in 1937 and in 1938, had gotten a job working for the Hecht Company and when I met him, he had worked up to be the youngest buyer they had ever had. But he had always wanted to go back to school but couldn't afford it because he was self-supporting. His parents, my father-in-law was in Buchenwald but managed to get out in late '37 because in those days you could get out of Germany if you had a visa to some other country. You could not get it to the United States, but my father-in-law's youngest brother had been here since 1928 working for the federal government, had some good connections and was able to get the family a visa into Luxembourg where they stayed for a year, and then finally their number came up to come to the United States and they were literally on the water four hours when Germany and England declared war or they would have never gotten out. We wanted to get married. There were 10 women in our class of about 170 in my med school class, and I did meet some anti-Semitism there. My anatomy professor who I didn't recognize at the time, but ultimately realized in later years, was gay and very anti-Semitic. That was obvious because the person sitting next to me was another woman who has remained a friend of mine for all these years. Her name was Cohen, but she had been brought up as a Lutheran. Her mother

was not Jewish, and one day when we were getting our exams back, the so-called blue books, and he was calling names, my maiden name being Cooper, I sat next to June Cohen, and he said Cooper and I held out my hand and, it became one of these real Alphonse and Gaston routines. I held out my hand and he pulled the blue book back. I'd hold out my hand. And finally he blurted out, I thought you were Cohen. He tried to bump me out of med school because I was ill one day and we had an exam. He had a rule that if you have an exam and you missed it, he was a real sadist. But if you missed it, you ended up with a "C", but you could take another examination, but you had to have a doctor's excuse. So I did miss the exam. I was running a high fever. I went to the doctor. Got the excuse from the doctor. I brought it in and took it into him. He wasn't even teaching that class, but he was the head of the anatomy department, and he looked at me and he said "there will be no makeup exam given." And I said what? This was one of three exams and I had a zero on one of three exams which can be pretty horrendous in those days or on any day. Everybody was shocked.

Ms. Rogers: He said this in front of the whole .....

Ms. Burg: No, he said this in front of the other professor, the assistant professor who was teaching the course—it was a course in neuro-anatomy--and he really was very adamant about it. And I said to him, what did you say sir? Because in those days you didn't go to the Dean or anything and so everybody was absolutely shocked. Each year, he would move into the rooming house where some of the male students were living, and that night they were all talking about this because the whole class was just horrified and looked up and he was there and the people who were living in the rooming house all flunked their next exam. I tell you, he was a real sadist. He slipped on the ice that winter and broke his arm and everybody said that Max, my first husband, at that point, my boyfriend, must have pushed him because he would walk over every

day and meet me at lunch time and we'd have lunch together. The only other time we would see each other was on the weekends because I was just too busy with my classes. During that year, we became engaged. We wanted to get married and it was very unusual for a woman to go to medical school married, so I asked for a leave of absence. When we went through my father's papers after he died, I found a letter that the med school had sent to him, not to me, but to him, saying that they were granting me a two-year leave of absence even though that was very unusual, but since I was such an outstanding student in the class that they were willing to do it.

Ms. Rogers: Were you still living at home at that time?

Ms. Burg: Yes, we had moved though. We were now living in southeast Washington because after the war, there was a tremendous need for housing and what you found was someone else would buy a house, and those people would have to vacate, then somebody else would buy a house, and they would have to vacate, and our house was sold and my parents did not feel it was something they wanted to or could afford to buy. So we ended up in some housing, in apartments that were being built, in southeast Washington. Mother worked there because my sister knew the daughter of the people who were building so that's how we got in. The woman who was the resident manager asked mother to work as her assistant. You asked if mother worked. She worked there doing bookkeeping and that sort of thing. I took a bus every day to medical school from there. No difficulty. I didn't think that I should have a car and drive or anything of that sort.

Ms. Rogers: And that neighborhood at that time was racially integrated because now it's pretty much all African-American

Ms. Burg: Now it's pretty much all African-American. And in those days it wasn't really wasn't racial, it was a whole new development, and what you found was a lot of young or

middle-aged Jewish people who for some reason seemed to congregate there. There was no objection to racial integration. But it was just not the thing. It was years later before you began to see communities become racially integrated. So this was all white. It was a very safe area. You didn't really see any racial integration there at all. So we married in December of '46 and I spent two years trying to decide what I wanted to do. In the meantime, my husband had gone back to school on the GI bill. We lived on \$110 a month or something like and our rent was \$90. It was an interesting time of our lives. We had been able to get an apartment, again because mother was working there since there was a long waiting list. So we lived down the street from my parents. Mother talked about remembering--she remembered it more than I did--I would watch for sales, when there was a meat sale, I would buy a piece of steak and cut it into certain portions and that was the most we could have that night and the pieces were individually frozen and that sort of thing. My husband had a part-time job. We managed.

Ms. Rogers: But you had no job at that point?

Ms. Burg: No, that's no true. When I left school, I began to work for the Naval Research Laboratory which was in southeast Washington. I got a job in the library, abstracting and indexing the Manhattan Papers which was really a quite an interesting thing.

Ms. Rogers: Did you have to get a security clearance?

Ms. Burg: Yes, I had a security clearance. Not only did I have security clearance, I was one of the two people who was involved with making sure that everything was locked up every night and we had hundreds of file cabinets with four drawers in each one of them and the guards would go through and try each drawer and if, God forbid, you had not caught one of them, the next morning, there would be a notice of security breach on your desk and you would be called on the carpet to account for it. Even though many of these documents by that time had been

declassified. There were some that were still classified but many of them were not, but they weren't stamped so everything had to be treated as very highly classified material. It's what made me hate classified material to a point that when I was on the bench and, of course, faced with many instances where material, facts would be classified, I would make the parties go through every possible extreme before we had to introduce those classified documents into evidence and I tried to avoid it like the plague. I often was successful in doing so, but at times was not. But no, it was not fun. I did that, and then when Max, I guess Max graduated in 1947 or something and finally got a job. It was very difficult in those days. He got a job as a junior accountant and I had always known I wanted to go back to school, and I debated for two years whether I wanted to go to back to med school or not, and it was a decision he said I had to make by myself. He was not going to participate. I finally decided that I would not go back. There was not a university in Washington where I felt there was a good enough department that I could take a graduate degree in biochemistry or physiology, which would have been one of my choices because I liked those. I was not completely thrilled with medicine. Of course, I wasn't really exposed to what would term real medicine, but the little bits I had of it, I found that I didn't enjoy that much. I always said if I couldn't get to medical school, I would go to law school, so I decided to apply to law school. And I applied to law school and I applied to George Washington University Law School because, I guess Catholic would have, but Georgetown did not accept women in those days.

Ms. Rogers: Did you know anybody who was in law school or did you know any lawyers while you were growing up?

Ms. Burg: No.

Ms. Rogers: It came out of nowhere?

Ms. Burg: I guess it was more than out of nowhere. You know Jewish children as they grew up either became a doctor or a lawyer. And I liked some of the social action aspects that some lawyers seemed to be involved in. I had gotten involved. I guess it was later when I became involved with B'nai Brith and the Anti-Defamation League and things of that sort. But I had always been interested in human rights possibly because of the Holocaust and things of that type and law seemed to be a good vehicle in which to get involved in all of that. But, no members of the family had been lawyers. I don't know that we had any family friends who were lawyers. They were mostly scientists and engineers or business people and so I applied to GW Law School and I was accepted. In those days there wasn't such a thing as LCATs or anything of that sort. And I went to school at night. Before I went to law school I did decide I'd better take an exam, a psychological test to see if this was good for me because I had given up medicine and I didn't want to get into another area that I was not going to be happy with. And so I went to GW's Department of Psychology, I guess it was, and took a whole series of aptitude tests.

Ms. Rogers: And I imagine that was pretty unusual at the time too.

Ms. Burg: So really in retrospect, a little foolish because if you're at all intelligent, you can slant the answers anyway you really wanted to. At least the tests I was given, you can slant the answers pretty much anyway you really wanted to, and so I took this whole battery of tests on a number of Saturdays and of course, it came out with law being at the top, science and medicine being quite high. The one that was D--they ranked them A, B, C and D. The one that was D was being a housewife. And that didn't surprise me because there was no doubt in my mind about that. I should say that my parents were very unusual for their time. They brought their daughters up to believe they could do anything they wanted. I mean we did not know there was such a thing that women didn't do this or women didn't do that. Part of it, there was no question but

that we were to go to college, my father had an older sister who had married and her husband had deserted her with a six-month old child. She had had to move home and he said that was never going to happen to his daughters. They would always be able to stand on their own two feet and in later years when my parents said both my sister and I were working too hard, we'd tell them it was their fault. They had brought us up that we should do this, and what did they expect us to do with it? It was all said in a very loving, joking way. And so I went to law school at night. Again, never thought of asking my parents for help for it financially. Just didn't seem the right thing to do. They were not really in a position where that was something they could do very easily. And so we,

Ms. Rogers: Was you father still working at the time at that point though?

Ms. Burg: O yeah, Father was still working. Still for the federal government, Department of the Navy. And so, I. There was one scholarship at GW for which I applied and I did not get it. Nobody got it. I found out subsequently it had not been awarded for a number of years. I always thought if I were ever in a position where I could create a scholarship, it would be mandatory that they find somebody to give it to every year. But I did start working for some of the law school professors when they learned indexing and abstracting was my job. A couple of them were writing textbooks and employed me at \$1.00 an hour to index their books for them. And at the end of the first year, or first semester, I decided that it was just too hard to try to do law school and work full time. And so I at that juncture, I did quit my job and become a full-time student.

Ms. Rogers: And the full time work was all for law professors. So you were basically....

Ms. Burg: Oh no, no, no. That was very part-time.

Ms. Rogers: But the full time work you were doing.

Ms. Burg: Was at the Navy. I still had this job at the Naval Research Lab and so I left that and went back to law school full time. And at the end of my first year, the scholarship again became available, and one of the profs said to me are you applying, and I said I don't think it's worth it. They said I think you should. I think because they had gotten to know me, I was not an unknown quantity. I did get the scholarship. So my last two years at the law school were on scholarship, which made our lives much easier. Books were still terribly expensive, but at least I had the tuition, and I had a few dollars, very few from indexing the books with the profs. I took some graduate courses. In those days you had the choice of an LLB or a JD. Now it's all JD. And in order to get a JD, you had to take some postgraduate courses. So I did that, so I took some in taxation because with my husband now a CPA, I decided that I would like to major in federal taxation and with my interest in math which had always been very strong, I liked all of the cost aspects and that sort of thing working with figures.

Ms. Rogers: So these were graduate courses in the law school?

Ms. Burg: Yes, in the law school. You had to take, I forget whether it was one, two or three graduate courses in order to get a JD. Ultimately now, of course, everybody gets a JD and even those people who got a LLB I think could have it converted to a JD. But in those days, both degrees were given. I was on Law Review, and there I did meet some anti-Semitism, I believe, because I should have been editor of the Law Review. I was first in the class, but through some machinations, the professor who was the faculty advisor, made someone else the editor-in-chief and I was made taxation editor, which was fine. We all worked together so it was okay. It wasn't okay, I was annoyed about it, but there wasn't a lot I could do about it.

Ms. Rogers: Was it ever said why that happened? You surmised that?

Ms. Burg: No. It was never said. Things weren't that overt, but I really feel from that and other things that happened and knowing the man who was involved in it was that, since the other person who was appointed was a woman, so it could not have been anti-feminism.

Ms. Rogers: You mean the editor-in-chief was a woman that year?

Ms. Burg: The editor-in-chief was a woman.

Ms. Rogers: Had that ever happened before?

Ms. Burg: I don't think so. I'm not sure. But, no it was a woman, so it couldn't have been anti-feminine thing, but he looked at certain, he did certain machinations with the grade points and it was all supposed to be done on one's point count. She and I were very close, I mean she and I were good friends. I was very pleased with her doing it. She was from New Mexico and ultimately went to Alaska and everybody lost track of her. We don't really know what happened to her.

Ms. Rogers: What percentage of your class was female?

Ms. Burg: Very little. I guess there were about a dozen of us in the class and it was a very large class. I guess I could find out by asking GW and if you like, I could fill in those figures. It was a large class because it was a class that entered in '48 and this was post World War II so an awful lot of the people who had come back were in the class on the GI Bill and that sort of thing, so it was a huge class.

Ms. Rogers: Huge like 400.

Ms. Burg: Like 300 to 400, some place around there. The women were all really some of the top people in the class. A number of us were law review editors, I mean. Its true today in different ways, but in order to succeed you still have to be a little bit better than the men against

whom you are competing. I made a few friends in law school but I didn't do that much socializing. I was married. A number of us were married, so there were a few friends and some of them I still see to this day or know to this day. Several of the women became judges,.

Ms. Rogers: Of the women, were most of them roughly your contemporaries? If I were to count, it sounds as if by that time you probably were the age that most people were in law school.

Ms. Burg: They were mostly my contemporaries. Maybe even a few years older than I was, because many of them had done other things before they went to law school also. In that regard, it was still a novelty to have women in law school. There were enough that there was a law sorority and it was fairly active and I was asked to join it. I did. I learned several years later the sorority constitution had a discriminatory clause in it. I was absolutely shocked to learn that. It was open to white Christian women, but you could get an exception and apparently they had applied for an exception for me without telling me, and so I wrote a very strong letter of resignation which was not honored because they were still trying to get women to join in later years touting the fact that I had graduated first in the class. So I wrote another very strong letter saying I wanted to no longer be associated in any manner, form, or name with them. I found this all out because one of the women who was active in the sorority had gone to the national meeting and said there had been an effort to remove the discriminatory clause. Of course, my ears immediately perked up, since she said that it had been defeated by one vote. So I asked about it. It turned out afterwards it hadn't been defeated by one vote. She was not very good at counting. If there had been one more, there would have been a third voting for it instead of against it. They asked me to stay in because "next year, we'll see that it goes through and you people always want others fighting your fight for you and you should stay in and fight for yourself". So I

stayed in for one more year. This was all in law school and then the next year when I really found out what the numbers were is when I sent in my letter of resignation because it again did not pass. I suspect today, of course, it has, but who knows. I can't imagine that a discriminatory clause would exist anymore.

Ms. Rogers: Did you see yourself as a vocal advocate in those days? Somebody who really stood up for herself in general. Or did you try to fade into the woodwork, or something in between?

Ms. Burg: I wanted to be one of the boys. Really, you weren't the advocate for feminism that you would see today. You had to get along with your male contemporaries, and you did it by not standing out. I had some experiences subsequently which we will get to when I was clerking where again you didn't push yourself forward. You waited for them to approach you, most of the people who I socialized with in the law school were other women. There were one or two men who I became very friendly with. One of whom I was a year behind him in law school married a woman in my class and I became friendly with both of them. She ultimately became a district court judge here and he died at a relatively young age compared to the rest of us. But, as I say I did very little socializing. First of all you worked awfully hard in law school. You know that. There wasn't a lot of time for socializing and the time that existed, I was married, I wanted to be with my husband. We had our friends, our social group from that type of group and I was still very friendly with some of the girls I had grown up with in Washington. As we all had gotten married, we had been bridesmaids at one another's weddings and we still saw each other and once a month we'd get together and have a splurge and go out to dinner, not to a very expensive restaurant, but it was all any of us could afford at the time and we would go out and do non-expensive things like museums or hiking and that sort of thing.

Ms. Rogers: Did those girls all end up going to college?

Ms. Burg: Yes, all the ones I grew up with and are friendly with today all went to college, but most of them did not go on professionally, their undergraduate degrees were more of an academic nature. Some of them continued to work. One of my closest friends worked until a few years ago but it was more in the teaching end and that sort of thing, counseling and psychology. Many of them took time off when their children were young and then went back to it. Really, we all married very young, we all were extremely young when we married. I admire the women of today who learn to live. I never had an opportunity in my life to live only for me. I went from living with my parents to living with my husband. When my first husband died, I had two young children whom I had to be concerned about. When I remarried, I married a widower, we had four teenage children so I never in my life had the opportunity which I saw that my daughters have, which was to really only be concerned about themselves. To live for themselves. I think it's a wonderful experience. One that I was never able to have. And so, most of them that I am friendly with today all went on for college and that sort of thing. Again there was no question, but again we came from that Jewish group where education was considered very important. I had lunch yesterday with a woman in my field who is very, very good, outstanding, and she came from a different background. She said her father was an immigrant from Greece and the sons all went to college, but the daughters were not educated, and she took it upon herself to contact her congressman and get the application to attend the Air Force Academy and her parents didn't know any of this until after she had been accepted. And that wouldn't have happened in the group that I grew up with, where education was considered very important, regardless of the sex of the child. And so, I think it's just a different type of atmosphere.

Ms. Rogers: So, I diverted you. You were talking about your social life during law school and being a young married.

Ms. Burg: So, we did interesting, we did that type of thing. Along the way, we decided it was time to maybe start considering a family, and I ran into great difficulties on that score. I don't know whether you want to know my whole gory history of that but I did have 14 miscarriages along the line.

Ms. Rogers: Was that all during law school?

Ms. Burg: No, some of them were during law school. You had asked whether my miscarriages were in law school. Some of them were. Some of them we never knew, it was so early. I had purposely gone to a doctor who did not believe in drugs which was just as well because if that had not been the case when I ultimately did have my daughter, it would have been during the days when the drugs had resulted in what is DES. I'm grateful that was not the case. You asked whether it was during when I was in law school. Certainly I was in the midst of a miscarriage in my finals in my final year of law school and it impacted somewhat on my exams. There is no doubt about it because I did not do as well for many reasons in those exams as I had in the others up to that time. While I didn't socialize in law school, there were a lot of people, because of the fact that I was doing well grade-wise, who always wanted to study with me and we spent a lot of time in those days - very few places in those days were air-conditioned - we spent a lot of time at the Library of Congress in the Jefferson Building because it was one of the few air-conditioned places and then we'd go all the way upstairs to the top roof, kind of attic room where we would talk when we weren't studying and we'd discuss the cases that were coming up for the exam and everybody, these were all men, they'd all be quoting case after case and I wouldn't remember case names. To this day, I don't remember case names very well, but

when we'd take the exams, they would get Bs and Cs and I would get the As because I was able to reason as you do in law school from a set of facts to a result. It's not very important to remember the names of the cases, you can always find those out, but it is helpful to be able to use appropriate reasoning. I guess it was in the early spring of my last year, which was the spring of 1950, the Dean called me in and told me I was graduating first in the class and I would receive the John Bell Lerner Award and this was before I took all the exams so I kept saying to my husband, what will happen if I don't do well, and of course the pressure of that plus the fact that I was going through a miscarriage didn't help very much and some of my grades did go down, but not enough to knock me out of first place in the class.

Ms. Rogers: I want to get a sense of the years again. I thought you had said you started in 48.

Ms. Burg: I went through the summer.

Ms. Rogers: So you started part-time in 48.

Ms. Burg: I started one semester at night in 48 and then I don't believe it was the fall of '47, I think it was the spring of '48, but summer classes were still going. Remember this was post-World War II and there were a lot of people who had come back who were anxious to get on with their lives so the classes went through the summer as well as the year and I just took heavy schedules throughout so that I finished in June 1950.

Ms. Rogers: So that erases one of my questions which was, did you do summer clerkships or work at law firms or anything like that?

Ms. Burg: No. That was not quite as popular in those days. No, we were in class the whole time. So then, from a personal aspect, of course, emotionally all of this was extremely difficult for me. But ultimately I did graduate first in the class and I think I told you this story, but I guess

you want it on tape. The Dean called me in and said that normally they would find a good position or a good clerkship for their first in the class graduate, but did I realize that in this case, that was not possible. And as I speak to young women these days, I say I don't know whether to be more shocked that he said it or that I agreed with him but I did agree with him. I understood that. He said they would be very willing and glad to write a letter of recommendation for any position for which I was applying and made no effort whatsoever to find anything for me.

Ms. Rogers: Now you said "in this case," they couldn't do it because you were female.

Ms. Burg: Yes. Because I was a woman. And I, in retrospect, maybe should have been shocked, but I was not. It was just a different time. One of the women college sorority sisters of mine who was older than I and who was an attorney and who had very good political connections because of her family connections, was horrified when she heard this, and so she used some of her connections and, since I was interested in taxation, she inquired or I had inquired and found out that there were three new tax court judges who had just been appointed or confirmed by the Senate and through her political connections, I was instructed to send my CV and my resume and any letters of recommendation to these three judges, which I did. I guess I should back up because, the day before graduation, there was a very elaborate tea at George Washington and I was given the John Bell Lerner Medal for having graduated first in the class. The President of the University, Cloyd Heck Marvin, presented the award and when he looked down and started saying my name, and saw I was a woman, he began stuttering so he could not get it out. After the ceremony, the PR person from GW rushed up to me and said to me, please don't leave, and I was interviewed by a number of newspapers because they had decided it would make a very good story to have an article about the first woman ever to graduate first in the class at GW Law School. Again, in retrospect, I was naïve because when I was interviewed,

they asked me what I was going to do. It didn't occur to me to say I don't know because they haven't helped me find a position, I said I was tired - I didn't tell them I had just undergone a miscarriage - and I was going to take the summer off, then I would study for the Bar and then I would look for something in the fall. The next day, this hit the front page of the local section of the Washington papers and my family rushed out and bought copies, so did I. My photograph was there with the Dean of the Law School and the President of the University, etc. etc. I did include that in the resumes that I sent to these various judges. Then in the fall one of them called me. The other two did not. One of them called me and asked me to come in for an interview and he said he wasn't sure if he had a position or not. In those days, the tax court had, did not have law clerks as such. What they had were attorney-advisors and they stayed on for years. They stayed on sometimes until they were eligible for retirement so that in many ways, some of these men, because it was all men at that point, were more knowledgeable about tax law than the judges who were appointed, so often when the judges were appointed, they would take one of these attorney-advisors as their attorney-advisor and each judge had two of them, with the exception of the chief judge who had three. There was one woman tax court judge in those days, Marion Harron. She was not someone who I think made the life of women following after her easier. She had had a rough time, but she had a terrible reputation as a judge. As a matter fact, tax court judge is a 15-year term, there was a lot of opposition to her reappointment and it became a real feminist thing involving even Eleanor Roosevelt who finally persuaded, took a strong role in it, and she was reappointed. She had interviewed me because she had a vacancy but she did not offer me a position and what I didn't realize until afterwards, when Steve Rice said he didn't know if he had a position, there were two attorney-advisors for the judge whom he was succeeding who had died. And he was not sure whether both of them were going to be

available and if so he had said he would take them. Both of them were men who had many years' experience and had children in college and he had felt that it was not right for them to suddenly be without a position. But what I didn't know until afterwards is that the woman judge had asked for one of these two men because she wanted a senior person and the less senior of the two, you've got to remember neither one of them was young, was the one who was assigned to her which opened up a space for me. My husband and I became friendly with Steve Rice and his wife. He had been the legislative counsel of the Senate and had been an Annapolis graduate and had gone back during World War II to become an officer of the Navy in charge of, he didn't fly any more but he was in charge of the planes on a major aircraft carrier. He was up on the bridge when a Kamikaze plane came in so he ended up with a badly shattered leg. He spent many, many months in the hospital as they reconstructed it. He was fine ultimately, but the pressures of being legislative counsel of the Senate were pretty great and he decided it would be nicer to be a judge so he had contacts. Anyway he was nominated and confirmed as a judge of the tax court and Lee, his wife, used to tell me he walked around the house before he offered me the position saying, "she's got a wonderful record, never had a woman attorney work for me before, she's got a wonderful record, never had a woman attorney work for me before." There had never been a woman I don't think. I have heard more recently there might have been one woman before me but there certainly was not when I got there.

Ms. Rogers: In the attorney-advisor position.

Ms. Burg: In the attorney-advisor position. So he offered it to me. As luck would have it, of course, he kept one of these two very senior people on as his number 1 and I was his number 2 attorney-advisor. And the number 1 one didn't want a woman in his office with him. He had enough seniority that he could have a private office. So as luck would have it, I was put in the

office with the one who had been his number 2 attorney and who was now working for the woman judge. Marian Harron. So I was in the office with him. We shared the office. He never really became very friendly. We talked a little bit, but certainly not roommates in any sense of the word and part of that was because of the fact that shortly after I came to the court, she decided she didn't want him as her attorney-advisor any more and she wanted him to be fired. And here he was with two kids in college and a very soft-spoken quiet man to begin with, but certainly not terribly happy about it, as were none of the other male attorney-advisors there, which there were about twenty-five or thirty and here I am the young kid on the block who's taking his job, which was not true, but that's how it was looked upon because but for the fact that he had been assigned to her, he would have had the job, and so when you asked me earlier did you take kind of a quiet role, I found the best thing to do under the circumstances was to take a very quiet role. And I did. I never went down to have coffee with everybody unless I was asked. I never had lunch with them unless I was asked. I never initiated any of it.

Ms. Rogers: And were you asked?

Ms. Burg: Once in a very rare, rare while. And, fine, I was married, I had my own social group, I had my own activities outside, but it was a very tense situation until one of the other judges decided to take him on as his attorney-advisor which solved that problem but still there was already the ground work plus I am sure a certain amount of on the part of some of them not being happy to see a woman in there. I never became friendly enough with them to really know. I became very friendly with the judge and sometimes we would go to lunch together but only if he had, when we would finish a case, and then it was very interesting. I didn't realize it at the time, he was really an alcoholic. I mean he could drink a bottle of bourbon in an evening and not show any of it. But we would go out for lunch and his lunch would consist of 9 double Gibsons

and a bowl of vichyssoise. He took me up to the Hill a couple of times when he was visiting former colleagues. One of the things the other judges wanted him to do was to get a good retirement system for the tax court judges which didn't exist at the time and so he, with his contacts up there, was ultimately able to get one where they get the same retirement as district court judges which is full salary, etc. after a certain period of time. So he was up lobbying for that. He'd take me up to the Hill and we'd sit around with some of the other people and have, they'd all have their couple of martinis and, of course, big shot me who had never drunk anything in her life, but they'd insist so I would have a martini, and I'd nurse it as carefully as I could and they would all be drinking away and ultimately, they'd insist I have another one, and I'd end up sick as a dog and really for years thereafter, I couldn't look at anything like that. But most of the time, I worked very hard.

Ms. Rogers: So your other counterpart, the other person who worked for him who was much more senior. Did you have much of a relationship with him?

Ms. Burg: Just professionally.

Ms. Rogers: He was the one who didn't want to share office space with you.

Ms. Burg: I don't think he resented me as such, he liked to smoke cigars and so I'm just as happy I was not in his office. Of course, I was a smoker in those days too, but not cigars, and professionally, we got along very well. He taught me a great deal. I mean there was no problems there at all and, all of that was very, very. I mean I was there for 2 1/2 years. It was a very good learning experience.

Ms. Rogers: Were you still having miscarriages?

Ms. Burg: Still having miscarriages. Well, but at that point, I had stopped being able to conceive at all so I was going, a little later than that I was going through all sorts of treatments. And then ultimately, they decided that even surgery wouldn't help me so we began seriously trying to adopt, and I left the court in 1953. As I say it was a marvelous experience. I learned a lot. I don't know whether I should go into the fact because I've already named names, but when I would travel with the judge at times to act as his law clerk you know his clerk of court, once or twice he made very serious sexual advances--not very pleasant. It was after he had had a lot to drink. And again, I kind of had to overlook it, but during the Thomas interviews, I could relive a lot of that a great deal because I could relate to what she was saying. And, he didn't, I mean the fact that I refused the advances did not affect how he, our relationship. You know, from his viewpoint either. I don't know whether I did it right or not, but I played it cool and made it clear I was not at all interested and please just take your hands off.

Ms. Rogers: And then you moved on.

Ms. Burg: And we moved on.

Ms. Rogers: Was that something that played a part in your leaving at 2 1/2 years?

Ms. Burg: No, not at all. The one or two episodes that happened much earlier on. When he knew what the limits were he became very respectful of them. Even when he had a lot to drink.

Ms. Rogers: What did prompt you to decide to move on?

Ms. Burg: Well, I had never thought of it as a lifetime job. I had looked at it more as a clerking thing. The doctor thought maybe if I stopped working under such pressures, I would be able to conceive. So I guess at that point, there was some hope that I could conceive. I think I would have left. I thought it was time to move on. I inquired at the Department of Justice but in

those days, the Tax Division didn't hire women and so I started practicing law on my own. I specialized in tax, I became quite successful in it. It was a local practice.

Ms. Rogers: You rented out the space somewhere?

Ms. Burg: No, first I worked out of home. Remember my husband was a CPA. Ultimately, he went out on his own, so I used to say, I have office space. I would just use his office, and I would jokingly say that he wouldn't evict me if I couldn't pay the rent.. I worked at home or I worked down in his office. I got a lot of referrals from CPAs and I was very good at what I was doing. I did have space with a tax lawyer for a time but that did not work out.

Ms. Rogers: And the situations were generally people called in for audits or what?

Ms. Burg: No, this was advice. In Washington, DC there were two types of tax practices, one would have been a national type of practice and the other was primarily local business people. The local business people who were primarily in need of tax advice were the builders because Washington is not a commercial area as such. Building was quite active in those days. So I ended up working with a number of the builders here in town and, in retrospect, had a nice roster of some of the ones whom I worked with. Often we met in the office of the CPAs because that is where all the records would be, etc. It was always fun to me to see the point where they stopped looking at me as a little girl and suddenly started listening to me and you could sense when this occurred in the course of the meeting. Only once did I use the fact that I was a woman. One day we were at a meeting. We were really at loggerheads. There were hard feelings between some people as to what should be done and I felt we had to break it up and I looked at them and I said, "gentlemen, we had agreed we'd break at such and such a time and we've reached that time, and I'll be glad to come back and meet with you in the morning, but I have a hairdresser's appointment and I have to go now." I could see all their faces, thinking gee

that sounds just like my wife. We broke, and we came back the next morning and in probably 15 minutes, resolved the whole thing, but you know how sometimes you can just reach a stalemate. But most of the time, it was fun to have them realize suddenly that I knew what I was speaking about and started talking to me and asking me what should be done. I was able to come up with a number of very good solutions for the tax problems, not the tax problems, the tax planning, to avoid the types of problems.

Ms. Rogers: So how much did you charge?

Ms. Burg: I don't remember, I think maybe \$35 an hour, something like that. And, of course, it was back in the late 50's so it was more than it would be today.

Ms. Rogers: But still.

Ms. Burg: Then, of course, from that I got into a lot of estate work, estate planning and then ultimately helping in the preparation of estate tax returns. In 1955, we were successful in adopting and we had a wonderful son. And everybody said, now you'll become pregnant. I would explain why physically that was impossible. That my tubes were blocked and I couldn't ovulate, I mean the eggs couldn't get down, etc. etc. and then I became pregnant. I was embarrassed to go to the doctor because he's going to think I'm crazy. I had wanted to adopt for a long time but being in an office one day and home with an infant the next day was quite a tremendous adjustment for me and in those days we couldn't really afford to have full time help. Because as I told you earlier, my "D" on what to do was being a housewife so from day one the first money I made always went into getting somebody to come in and clean the house, By that time, we had bought a small house in Riggs Park which is in northeast Washington where a number of my friends lived. I mean there was a community of young Jewish newlyweds who were there. I had problems with my pregnancy. I spent I guess 7 1/2 months really in bed and

this was not very helpful with a young infant in the house. The two children are 17 months apart, so the neighbors came over and helped a lot. I never picked our son Larry up from that time until after Joan was born, when I was given permission to do so. "Mama" was someone who would lie next to him in his playpen. I was allowed to go downstairs once a day. I wore out the sofa cover lying on the sofa and his playpen was next to me so I would sing with him and play with him but never really touch him. My husband was wonderful in helping, my mother would come in several days a week and the neighbors would come in a play mah jong with me to help me pass the time and feed him if Max was delayed in getting home but it was a difficult time in my life and in a way a wonderful time. After our daughter, Joan, was born, and the doctor said I could pick Larry up, I ran into his bedroom and picked him up out of the crib and the expression on his face, I will never forget because I had never done this in months. Of course, during that time, I was not practicing. I just didn't take anything and put off whatever I had.

Ms. Rogers: So what was the break, all told?

Ms. Burg: He was born in 55 and she was born in 56. I guess by the late fifties I certainly was back in practicing part-time. I would go in twice a week to the office and my mother would come over and take care of the kids. She was wonderful with them and so I went back into practice. I guess by 58, I was back in it, and I thought I was practicing part-time and I guess about in the early 60s, I rented my own office. I rented the rear door at Fried, Frank. They had an office at Connecticut and K, and they had nobody doing tax in their Washington office. They were primarily a New York firm and there was some possible thought that I might ultimately work into the firm and do tax work from here. They had their main office entrance and then there was a rear door and so I rented the rear door where I had my name and an office and a place for

my secretary and the use of their library. Don't ask me what I paid, I don't remember. It was not an exorbitant amount. This all came about because I had become quite active in B'nai Brith Women and I guess before the children were born I had remained very active in the sorority and had ultimately become international president of the sorority.

Ms. Rogers: This was the legal sorority?

Ms. Burg: No, this was not the legal sorority that I had resigned from. Phi Sigma Sigma was my undergraduate sorority and I remained very active in that. I also had become very active in B'nai Brith Women. My mentor was a woman named Irene Konigsberger whose husband had been a DC Tax Court judge and she was a remarkable woman. She was a graduate of Hunter College I guess in the early 20's. She had really wanted to, she majored in chemical engineering but couldn't go to Columbia but she took courses at Columbia and got her degree from Hunter, She had headed the synthetic rubber program at the Bureau of Standards during World War I, and then afterwards because of various things about her feelings about what was going on, she had resigned and started doing real estate and primarily worked in philanthropic activities and was a remarkable, remarkable woman. Her father came from a very interesting line of Jews in the United States. Her grandmother, I think it was, had been one of Mrs. Lee's ladies during the Civil War when the young women of the high aristocratic families were taken under her bailiwick and did volunteer hospital duties with Mrs. Lee. In a hospital in Petersburg, VA she had met a Jewish Yankee soldier who had been injured. They married and the family immediately denounced her and renounced her and they lived in New York. Irene's father had been a professor, I think of pharmacology or something. Anyway she was a remarkable woman. She became my mentor in philanthropic activities and that sort of thing and just a wonderful, wonderful person.

Ms. Rogers: And you were engaged in these philanthropic activities while you were working full time?

Ms. Burg: Well I didn't realize I was full-time because I was doing it at the weirdest hours, when the kids were asleep, and sometimes 2 o'clock in the morning, I'd go down to the office and dictate things for my secretary to transcribe when she came in because I had a full-time secretary and so I thought I was doing a part-time practice and I just never realized, you're young, you have the energy, and so I was doing it. In '64, actually in '61 my first husband underwent cardiac, aortic valve replacement. He was one of the early healthy people to do this. I say healthy in quotes, He had had rheumatic fever as a boy which was aggravated by his military service during World War II and so he was considered a disabled vet. He had surgery at Georgetown and he never fully recovered. He died in 1964. They had used a plastic valve that had gone through all sorts of testing but had not ever been in human bodies and at the time he died I think 85% of the valves had failed and in those days you didn't have a second operation. It was very early when he had surgery. So, I was widowed with an 8 year old and a 9 year old.

Ms. Rogers: I think that's probably a very good place to stop today. We've gone for two hours.

Ms. Burg: Oh really.