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AN INTERVIEW WITH

NINA HYDE

Interviewed by:

Mildred Finger

May 18, 1990
Q. This is an interview with Nina Hyde, the date is May 18, 1989, the interviewer is Mildred Finger. American Jewish Women of Achievement collection, William E. Wiener Oral History Library of the American Jewish Committee. Nina, let's start to talk about you and your life from the very beginning. You were born in New York and your mother and father were New Yorkers, right?
A. That's right.
Q. Would you tell us a little about each of them?
A. Right. My father was a physician, he grew up in Philadelphia, went to medical school straight from high school, couldn't afford to go to college.
Q. Really?
A. Yes.
Q. They could do that.
A. You could do that then. He went to NYU Bellevue at a time not many Jewish doctors...not a big Jewish constituency in medical school.
Q. About what year was all this?
A. Oh boy!
Q. Approximately.
A. I would say he was born in 1900, so he was nineteen; teens he was going to medical school. Grew up one of a large family, a very, very religious father, who did nothing but pray is what he remembers, while the boys were out on the street selling newspapers, doing whatever they could to
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raise money to support the family. My mother's family, quite in contrast to that, was a very wealthy family, originally from Russia, in the fur-skin trade internationally, very big business, in China, white foxes. A grandfather who traveled a lot, lived in a big white house in Mount Vernon, a family with lots of daughters. What I remember most about the house in Mount Vernon is that it had a room with gold furniture in it, and I don't remember my grandfather, but my grandmother would always tease that that was the room that suitors for the daughters would be brought into. My mother and father were married in a huge wedding. Actually, all the daughters had very big weddings, except for the one sister that eloped, but she was the one where it was a successful marriage in terms of economically successful and so she... My father was always very generous in supporting everybody on all sides of the family. My father became a most respected internist, heart specialist and a professor at NYU Bellevue, and chief of medicine at Beth David in New York, associated with Doctors Hospital and other hospitals in New York. What I remember most is sort of his full-time commitment to learning and teaching and his patients. He wasn't around the house too much. He would come in at five or six o'clock at night, take a shnaps and a nap, and then he would go off to the Academy of Medicine in the evening and study and, before I was off to school in the morning practically, he was making rounds at the hospital. One of the things that he enjoyed doing, he was a doctor for the Department of
Sanitation, and every once in a while he would let me go with him on Saturday mornings and we would go off to Queens and he would make his calls on the men of the Department of Sanitation.

Q. And your mother.
A. My mother was home, very much being the supportive wife. What I remember about her in the early days of being home, I remember two things. Number one, that she would fill in at my father's office. In my father's office, he was very big on hiring mishpocheh, and it was his sister who was the receptionist, it was a niece who was this, it was a nephew who was the young doctor in the office; there was a lot of that. And my mother would fill in when somebody couldn't... for some reason wasn't there, she was always getting sandwiches for everybody every day. I do have one fashion recollection of her: that's walking along the street with her when she was wearing a black Persian lamb jacket and she told me not to take her arm because I might wear out the jacket.

Q. [laugh]
A. That was the world's sturdiest fur, you couldn't possibly wear it out. But anyway, she was a --

Q. Tell me about you and your siblings.
A. Right. I'm the youngest of three children.

Q. Born when?
A. I was born in 1932. I have a brother who's a year and a half older and a sister five years older. Really, my life
was very much apart from my sister's. I mean I was aware of her being around and very pretty and very bright and a very good student, but five years as you're growing up is a very big distance, a very great time span. Also, she was...

When I say bright, she really was the all-A student, she graduated from Friends Seminary at age sixteen -- that was 1944 -- she was pushed through college in three years, so she was out of college at nineteen and married that year to Danny Cardozo, who was nephew of the Supreme Court justice. My brother, on the other hand, much more lackadaisical, a perfectly okay student. We would walk together to the El to go down to Friends Seminary, the school that fortunately we all went to.

Q. Where did you all live?
A. We lived on Ninety-third and Park Avenue, 1175. We grew up in 1150 Fifth Avenue, moved to 1175. I was young enough to remember skating in the lobby, so I must have been very young when we lived there. My father's office was next door at 1165. And my brother and I would go to school together on the Third Avenue El that stopped at Eighty-ninth and Third Avenue, and he would always walk on the other side of the street, [both laugh] as all boys do. And I don't remember being a particular pal, but I remember liking him and we certainly got along. But my sister was --

Q. What was your Jewish life like in all this?
A. Well, we went to Park Avenue Synagogue, the Conservative synagogue, and I remember Rabbi Zimet and the confirma-
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tion classes. Rabbi Zimet was my brother's instructor for his bar mitzva. I don't recall my sister ever going to Sunday school. She may have, but I don't think that really was part of her life. And then I do remember the extraordinary experience of when it came to be my finishing confirmation and post-confirmation class, Milton Steinberg was the rabbi, and we would go and meet at his house, and he would always be very provocative and fun and help me think through things relating Quakerism to Judaism, because I was very caught up with everything that was going on in the Quaker world at that time. My children --

Q. Do you have any recollections of such things as Passover seder?

A. Not really, they weren't big events at our house. I do remember my parents fasting for Yom Kippur, I do remember being out of school for Yom Kippur and walking with my parents on Fifth Avenue; I don't remember more than that. I don't remember particularly my fasting, nor do I remember a big event breaking the fast. I don't remember ever having a menorah in the house. I do remember once using lots of silver salt and pepper shakers and standing candles in them, small candles, but I don't remember any formalized service, nor do I remember going up to my grandmother's for the service or anything like that. I certainly remember... Ah, I should take it back. I do remember changing the dishes. I mean I can picture exactly.

Q. At Passover.
A. At Passover time. I remember just where those dishes were kept, over the refrigerator, and I do remember that they came down at Passover time, and that there was lots of matzoh in the house. But I don't recall a particular service that...I don't remember the seder particularly.

Q. So you don't know if you had it at your house or somebody else's house.

A. No.

Q. Was there any Yiddish spoken near you or around you?

A. There was Yiddish spoken when -- there was German spoken, I think it probably was a combination of German and Yiddish -- when my folks didn't want us to understand something. Suddenly the numbers would all be in Yiddish or German. But it was not a concentration. I was certainly aware of the fact that all of my parents' friends were Jewish. Maybe I became particularly aware of that as I got older, at Friends Seminary, where I went to high school, because a lot of my friends weren't Jewish at that point. And my parents' friends were all professional colleagues, were all doctors as well.

Q. All right, we've talked about your family; now let's talk about you, because --

A. Okay.

Q. -- I'm interested about that. You were born in?

A. 1932, in New York. We lived at 1150 Fifth Avenue at the time. I was raised by... We always had an Irish house-keeper by the name of Margaret or Maggie and she was my pal
and defender, really more so than for my brother and sister, and she came when I was like eight months old and stayed... was with the family until I was twenty-seven. I remember going to...I did go to P.S. 6 through the seventh grade. I also remember that if I didn't finish my cereal in the morning -- and I was a terrible eater -- I was left home from the leaving for school in the morning. It didn't happen all that often, but I certainly have a recollection of it.

Q. So you went to P.S. 6 and then?
A. Then, I believe it was in the seventh grade, I switched to Friends Seminary. Sue had gone to...my sister had gone to the Calhoun School and it was a very progressive Jewish girls' school and was just not her style, and how my parents heard about Friends, I don't know, but that's where we all went and flourished.

Q. You didn't go to Calhoun, you went to Friends.
A. No, I went directly to Friends. But Sue, sort of breaking the way, had started with Calhoun.

Q. Right. And then from Friends did you go off to college?
A. From Friends...yes. Sue had gone to Vassar and it was sort of expected that I would go to Vassar, but I just decided to take an independent twist and went to Smith, where I majored in political science. Was not an outstanding student but was very much involved as a school leader and did lots of things, from being president of glee club and traveling to Europe every summer with the glee club, and captain of a lot of the sports teams, and did well enough so that I won sort of the all-around-camper award, which included academics.
And then when I got out, my father was pushing me to go to graduate school, he would have liked me to go to medical school. I had an uncle, named Louis Solomon, who was a lawyer and professor of law at NYU, and he was pushing me to go to law school. So I decided that law was the lesser of the evils and so I went to NYU but very briefly. And I remember going in to see the dean and saying, you know, I really think I should think this thing through a little. He said, Goody, he said, if you leave we will cut the female enrollment in half in your class.

Q. Heavens!
A. You know, there were two women in the law school class at that time. So I left, really not being sure what I wanted to do, but I sort of followed in my sister's tracks and went into marketing and economic research at McCann-Erickson, a job that I got through an employment agency. I just wandered into an employment agency and it turned out that they needed somebody...McCann needed somebody in their marketing research department.

Q. Did you go to Tobq, or is it just that you've worked --
A. No, that was much later. I worked for McCann for four years. You know, in those days, if you were a woman, you worked on women's products, you did marketing research on women's products. The men were doing Buick and Esso and Coca-Cola; I was doing Lane & Fink Foot Powder, you know. I also worked with somebody on a study for a new product that was being pitched by McCann, which was for Jantzen bathing
suits, and one of the things I learned was that the...one of the things that came out of that study was that women in those days, which was the late 1950s, were buying bathing suits by the fit of the bra. And Maidenform heard about that study and asked me to come over and...because they were beginning to sense the need for changes in the bra business. So I went over as assistant market research director at Maidenform, doing studies on everything, from changing the product, product development, to... It was just the begin­ning of the time that bras were beginning to be sold at... thinking about being sold in outpost departments, not just a little lady taking you into a fitting room with a...you know, the lady with the tape measure around her. And I can recall hiding behind a pillar in a Westchester department store, watching to see if women would have to break the boxes and go into them, or whether they could buy things by just the look of the packaging on the outside. That was wonderful because I would work on product changes and then would go out to the factory to see if they could make those changes, and then would be in New York and do the testing of the products to see if women really liked them. I was there about a year and a half when Smith College called and said, How would you like to go to Europe for four months being the liaison between the glee club and the...several music festivals in Europe? And because I was so --

Q. How nice!

A. -- mature and committed to my job, I couldn't resist and
took off. And that was wonderful, because I also got a chance to go back and sing with the glee club while I was there. I'm not sure I was a very good press person, but I had a good time. And then I came back and I started looking for a job and I wondered... You know, I knew the difference between a long-line and a short-line bra, but I really didn't know much else. And sure enough, Womens Wear was looking for a corset and brassiere editor to succeed Bernadine [Morris].

Q. Oh yes?
A. Yes. So I did that, and then eventually moved over into general fashion, working with Etta Frei and others, doing sportswear. And then Marjorie Dean offered me a job at the Tobe office, which I really thought would take better advantage of my research talent than Womens Wear.

Q. The Tobe services for the --
A. For the stores.
Q. For the stores.
A. Stores and magazines and the like. And really, I liked it a lot; Tobe was really quite a character. And what I did was the sportswear market with Joan Harwood. I had cheap blouses, she had good blouses; I had cheap pants, she had good pants. You know, eventually I got to do a little more of it though. And then I married and moved to Washington, so I gave up the Tobe office.

Q. Now, what sort of a man did you marry?
A. I married somebody who I had known since I was a child.
His parents were in the retailing business and would spend their summers in Atlantic Beach, where we spent our summers.

Q. Were they in retailing in New York?
A. No, in Washington.

Q. In Washington. He was a Washingtonian.
A. He was a Washingtonian, but he was never in the family business. What he did was to buy declining businesses and try to improve them and sell them, and it was everything from background music systems to girdles, to food --

Q. He was ahead of his time really --
A. Yes.

Q. -- because that's become a much more active area.
A. It's true. It's true. And it's what he still does, but he does it mostly related to real estate now and small strip shopping centers, and does it... Really, he can't afford to do it in Washington anymore, so he does it mostly in Charlottesville, Virginia. Anyway, so our families knew each other and we grew up knowing each other, but not seeing each other very much. He was spending a bit of time in New York because he was thinking of going off and spending a long period of time in Europe, and we decided to get married and he felt, well, the best thing to do would be to move back to Washington. We moved to Washington and I started looking for --

Q. Was this at a point which you had not much choice about it?
A. No. There was just no question about it.
Q. Did you have any children by then?
A. No. No. By the time we actually got to Washington, I was pregnant with Jennifer.
Q. Yes. Who's your elder.
A. My elder, yes. And let's see --
Q. Before we leave that part of your life, how old were you when you married?
A. I was twenty-nine. I was married and had a child at thirty.
Q. Yes, right. And what kind of a wedding did you have, do you remember?
A. We were married at home by... I think Rabbi Steinberg had passed away at this time, so I think it was Rabbi Zimet who married us. A small wedding with just the immediate family, and I insisted that Margaret, the Irish maid, who was now no longer working for us, come. And then we all had lunch, or dinner, I don't remember what it was, in my parents' dining room. I also remember that my father gave the wedding cake a push and it was all bashed in. (both laugh) But, you know, it was strictly a family affair, and then there was a reception at the St. Regis. My mother still tells me that my friend's brother's band that played, played too loud. But there was a reception at the St. Regis Room. And then a couple of us later... We stayed in New York for a while and then it just seemed that it was going to work better for Lloyd in Washington, so we took off. And I piddled with a couple of things when I first came down here, working for Sach's Furs that was a little shop on Twelfth
Street that was trying to bring in French ready-to-wear—

Captain Molyneux, that ilk, from Mendes — and I was doing their press and PR. And I was also helping the Hecht Company put on their college shows; those were the days still of college shows. And then the Scripps Howard paper in town, the tabloid, the number-three paper in town, asked me if I didn't want to do a page of fashion a week, and I did that and that eventually grew into a very big kind of assignment, in the sense that it could be as big as I wanted it to be. You know, if I decided to do a fur section, it could go up to thirty pages that week or... And I really got my newspaper start at the Washington Daily News. And it was fabulous because it was a small paper, we all knew each other, everybody'd come and encourage and help each other.

Q. Who was the fashion editor then?
A. Well, they didn't have a fashion editor, I went in as the fashion editor. And it started with one, basically, picture page and it went on to... But I could really do anything and I could appear any place in the paper. You know, I could do a story on... God, I remember doing a story on Judy Agnew getting a free wardrobe from DuPont and it was page one, and I held page one for a number of days on it. I really had total freedom of, you know, getting sketches. More space was devoted to fashion in the Washington Daily News than in anything else. I had nibbles from the Washington Post to see if I wanted to come over, but they wanted me to come over full time and that was out of the question for me; the chil-
children, of course, were small. I worked at the Washington Daily News for ten years. The children were small, and even though it meant that I was being paid like a part-timer and sometimes working full time, I had the flexibility to say, I can't come in tomorrow. I've got the school play or I don't have help tomorrow or whatever. It just gave me that kind of freedom, at a cost of not getting the insurance, not getting vacation, not getting all those kinds of things, which is what happens with part-timers.

Q. Does it still?

A. It's changing. It's changing. But it's a big disadvantage for part-timers, and of course most part-timers are women. Women who need those benefits particularly because they're at home raising children, often alone, and... But it certainly has changed at the Post; I don't know whether it's changed everywhere. So I stayed on at the Daily News until the Daily News folded in 1972. And we had just bought our big house; the contract came through on the day that the Daily News folded. There had been a strike, the Guild was pushing for higher wages and Scripps Howard just couldn't afford higher wages and decided to close down the paper, which simplified all that. Then, fortunately, I was offered a job by both the Post and the Star, which were two strong papers at that time. The Star had a fashion editor named Eleni Epstein and it seemed like it was really...

Although they were offering me the magazine, it seemed like the Star was really her turf, and so I decided to go to the
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Post. I was very nervous about it, but decided to go to the Post. They had a fashion editor, but they were not very happy with him.

Q. This was what year?
A. 1972. And so in September of '72, I went to the Post. And it was hard for me. I had had such incredible freedom at the Daily News to really do anything, you know. I was the fashion department and sometimes I was the social department, you know, I covered the White House and I did all sorts of things. There were four of us who did the...between social and fashion and food, we did what was then known as the women's pages. I got to the --

Q. Did you have staff?
A. I had an assistant, yes, but she also filled in as an assistant occasionally for somebody else. I got to the Post and there were something like sixty people in the style department, where we had had four. You know, at the Daily News I'd written my own copy, written my own heads, edited them and, you know, sent them downstairs, and in the middle of the night, if I got worried about what I had said, if I'd said a million and I really should have said ten million, I'd go racing down, literally, into the press room and get a press man to make that change for me right on the type. You know, now I was at the Post and it was a totally different organization, and all my copy went through three people and all this. It was hard, you know. And I could suggest stories, but it would have to go into a meeting, that I would not attend, and see whether or not they were interested in
that particular story.
Q. Do you still have that kind of
A. No, not anymore, not anymore. But when I started there, I had it for a long time.
Q. How does it work now?
A. I really have total, total freedom to do what I want, and when I don't feel up to doing something that I think should be done, I simply recommend that somebody else...and can even suggest who might be the best person for doing it.
Q. But can you count on a certain number of pages?
A. The only thing that I can count on is that I will have my Sunday column, which is a column, in a sense, set up like the Eye column in Women's Wear. It's not that it's so much a gossip column, but it's lots of small items. It's a very heavily read section of the... And to be the advertiser on that page is a premium spot. But it may be something on a young designer, something that will include Bill's visit here, it might include Mark Jacobs talking about how he feels...what kids should do about going to fashion school or should they get out and work, and it's just a range of... really a big range of things. I try to include men's, women's, consumer stuff, all the rest. I used to write...I used to do all the magazine's fashions. I used to write for the Star Plus, which was the consumer pages, I would occasionally appear in sports, I would appear in the editorial pages, I would do all that sort of thing. That's curbed a lot by my health now.
Q. Right.
A. I mean I can do any of that, but --
Q. Nina, in a general way, I mean stop to think, how did you develop all the contacts in the market that you did, so that you know all the designers now, so that they all think of you? There had to have been... I mean was there any kind of plan in your head to become important to the people who were important to you, whom you liked? I mean how did that work?
A. No. I never thought of it that way. You know, first of all, I was always coming from the third paper in town. I never thought --
Q. The Washington Post was the third --
A. No, no, the Washington Daily News, where I worked for ten years; I developed all these relationships at that time. I always felt it was -- and it was -- the lesser, the least important paper in this town. I had the flexibility of a lot of space that other people didn't have. I always felt that I had to do double the... It was the way at college, it's the way I've always been, that the stuff is really not good enough. I'm always working to overresearch everything, to try and talk to designers in advance, to be able to quote them intelligently about what they're doing, because I know that I won't get to them at the time of the show and I have to write the same day as the show. I was always interested in answering the question why and finding out. You know, I never felt, and I don't feel to this day, that my judgment
on clothing is so important. You know, I think of myself as a reporter. Obviously I'm doing editing because you're making a choice. You decide what you're going to cover or who you're going to talk to, so you're making a choice that way. But I don't think... You know, I know my eye is trained because I've seen so much in thirty years, but I don't claim to be the expert, I don't claim to be able to look at a collection and say, Oh, that's the (?) that's the dress that's really going to take off and it's going to... they're going to sell ten thousand of those and they... You know, pushed, I probably could do it and would come up with the right answer, but I don't really feel confident about doing things like that. What I do feel confident in is being able to...having done my homework, being able to sit down and talk to somebody and get from them the essense of what they're all about. Whether it's Claude Montana -- I just had a wonderful evening with him the other evening -- talking about his suffering and how he suffers as he not only creates the collection but after the collection is over and his suffering on a day-to-day basis. Or whether it's getting at some aspect of Bill Blass. And I think what I've developed is a respect from the designers and a trust from the designers. I'm not out to be smarter than they are, I only want to reflect what is the essense of them, and that seems to have developed into my reputation, you know, that I'm doing the best job that I possibly can.

Q. But, you know, your interest in making a contribution
overall has to go back a long way. I remember, a very long time ago, your great activity was fashion news, when you were very young in the business, very young in the business, and you say that was really not conscious, that was just something that was part of your whole life.

A. Yes, and it also ties together because I... I remember that I was doing this...you know, doing all sorts of things when...I mean Emmanuel Ungaro's first year and I was in Paris. I really felt that there were no limits to what I could do to... Well, I loved Washington and I wanted to do things for Washington, and I found that if I did things in a very gentlemanly way that I could talk to the French ambassador or the ambassador's wife about bringing Ungaro to Washington and their doing a reception for him; that I could talk to the Smithsonian about setting up something that looked like his atelier and bringing him over. Not that we had the money to do that, but he had the interest in doing it and... It was his first trip to the United States that he came to Washington to do that. And to do a... Bill and I were laughing...Bill Blass and I were laughing the other night about this lecture series that I did at the Smithsonian in the 1960s. I mean nobody was coming to Washington at the time, and here we had the National Museum, and I knew... And I deeply knew that these black kids that I had started to get to know because of...for lots of reasons, including the fact that I was on the board of something called Freedmen's Hospital. I just could see their tremendous interest in clothes and fashion and that
they had no exposure to any of these people. And so, you know, twenty years ago I got Calvin to come down and Bill to come down. Bill and I were laughing because I was saying that, you know, we did, in a sense, a little bit of a Bill Blass retrospective; filled up the major auditorium at the Smithsonian for this series. And Bill started, and I was standing in the back of the auditorium talking to someone named Richard Howlett, who was one of the directors of the auditorium, and I remember (?) just arriving from Bethesda, maybe twenty minutes late, and hearing Bill say, Well, I guess that's all I have to say, (both laugh) and Howlett turning to me and saying, Oh, do you think he can start all over again? (laugh) You know. And then I got up onstage and we did a sort of a Q.-and-A. thing, just chatting together. It was almost the best part of the thing, and questions from the audience. But, I mean, it was a fabulous showcase for designers. I remember Calvin coming down and Kasper coming down and, you know, a range of people. I felt it was... At that time it was the Daily News. I thought it was good for the Daily News, I thought it was good for the city. I loved doing it, it gave me a chance to do things with the designers. The Smithsonian loved it, it became one of their most successful series for years and years and years. Then I started to, you know, play around and do other things. I would lead tours up to New York and have everyone from Mrs. Wayne Morse in her eighties on the bus for two days.

Q. By now were you at the Post?
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A. No, I was still at the Daily News.

Q. Still over there? They really gave you a lot of freedom.

A. Yes, they gave total freedom. Total, total freedom. Total freedom, so that when the... I had gotten to know, because you did social things... When there are only four of you, you do social things as well. I had once gone to a luncheon at the Indian Embassy and met the Begum Jung, who was thinking about bringing a collection of Indian clothes to the United States, and then she --

Q. Begum is B-e-g-u-m?

A. Yes.

Q. What is --

A. Jung, J-u-n-g. Wife of the ambassador from India at that time, let's say in the mid-sixties. They went back to India, he became governor of Maharashtra, and I became very good friends of their successor, Mekala Jah, the wife --

Q. Spell that, please?

A. J-a-h. And Mekala is M-e-k-a-l-a. Ambassador L. K. Jah, he was the economic minister. And one day she invited me to lunch and we talked about bringing...she wanted to bring a collection of Indian clothes to the United States and I encouraged her to bring museum-quality clothes along with the things that were being produced at the time. Which she did in 1971, and I was still at the Daily News. And when Boeing delivered a 747 to Air India, the ambassador was given ten tickets to take friends back to India, and he
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said, Mekala, take a friend, and she invited me to go with them back to India, and it was... No, I couldn't have done that at the Washington Post, but the Daily News said, you know, Listen, we can't afford to send you to India. You know, if you don't know how to behave, you shouldn't be at this paper in the first place. So go. So... I mean that was the beginning of really stretching my head in such a way, and also being able to write for the editorial pages of the Daily News as well as just on fashion. But god, was I ever... I mean I knew really so very little. And I remember the ambassador was sitting up in first class and Mekala and I were in the back in tourist class, and I remember the ambassador coming back and saying, Okay, Nina, what do you want to see in India? and I said, Well, you know, I have to see all sorts of things related to fashion and textiles and food and... I said, I'd love to see how curry is grown. Of course he burst out laughing: You don't grow curry; you grow all the condiments that make up curry. But it was just a fabulous experience. It led to my meeting Pupul Jayakar -- P-u-p-u-l J-a-y-a-k-a-r -- who became the minister of culture, the head of the Festival of India. A great textile expert, who, when I was asked to do stories for the National Geographic, was probably the most important source for me then. In return, when she said to me, Nina, I dream that Isei Nayaki could once come to India, he understands about wrapping the body, he understands about textiles, I could call Isei and say, Isei, I want you to do
me a big favor. And Isei went to India and became a consultant to the government of India for four years, went out and worked with the looms in the most remote regions of India and created a...I mean just moved India into a whole new world of textiles, and went on to an exhibition at the Louvre and, you know, all sorts of things. So I mean that's the joy for me, is really bringing people together that way. Whether it's a kid, a black kid who I happen to see dancing out on Anacostia that I just think has real potential as a model and getting her off to New York, or just a designer. Pulling together, like I did this week, with Bill Blass sitting in on that session, when I, you know, let these kids come to see me every Wednesday morning, and having Bill there offering something to them that gives them that special boost. It's just terrific.

Q. Before we go on to the Washington Post, can you tell us a little bit about how you were raising your children during this very active period?

A. Yes. You know, quite honestly, it was not the world's most wonderful home life. Though working was a very important part of my life, because I have a very unsocial husband, it worked greatly to my advantage in the sense that... In the beginning when I was covering things at the White House for the Daily News, I would encourage him, really push him very hard to come along with me, or covering something at the French Embassy or whatever. He did it; not very happily, but he did it. Then I soon realized that, you know, that's
pretty dumb. I'm spending more than half my time worrying whether he's having a good time, he doesn't want to be here, there's no reason why he has to be here. He'd rather be home with the girls; why doesn't he just do that when I go off, and go off alone? And so the job really became my social life as well as my business life. And there was always help at home of questionable quality. You know, you could get young black women to come and I would put ads in the paper and get a hundred and ten phone calls and then about fifteen of them would show up.
The saving grace was the fact that my husband's parents, his stepfather and mother, had retired and there was nothing that gave them greater pleasure than to be around the children. So if a housekeeper didn't come in, if I was worried about our housekeeper, whatever, if I couldn't get to the car pool or if I couldn't do any of that, my father-in-law was there on the spot. He couldn't get there fast enough.
Q. Yes, that was wonderful.
A. Oh, it made all the difference in the world. If you don't have the confidence that the children are being well taken care of, you might as well stay home.
Q. Yes. I am strongly of the opinion that grandparents play a tremendous role in the life of a working woman.
A. Absolutely. Absolutely. But, you know, a lot of grandparents are not in the same city.
Q. Sure, of course.
A. These happened to be in the same city, happened to be retired. My father-in-law retired at fifty, so, you know, he
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was looking for something to do.

Q.  Right.
A.  His big event was going to the corner and buying a fresh loaf of bread at the bakery, so this really gave him --
Q.  Were you ever able to do such things as go to the girls' schools when they had something that --
A.  Oh sure.  I mean that's why I worked part time.  That's why, the whole time I was at the Daily News, I considered myself part time.
Q.  Well now, at the point when they went out of business, you found yourself this situation at the Post.
A.  As I said, both the Post and the Star called and, with some trepidation, I did go to the Post.  And it was hard for me in the beginning.
Q.  What year was this and what was life like --
A.  1972.
Q.  And what was life like at the Post?
A.  Well, it was just, you know, a very big, bureaucratic organization.  I had --
Q.  Much more structured.
A.  Much, much, much more structured.  I had an editor who knew nothing about fashion, nor was he in any way interested in fashion.  That switched and I had a woman who really was anti-fashion and anti-me, made it very, very difficult for me.  So much that I finally said to one of the editors at the Post, I said, God, you know, when I drive in in the morning I really hope that I have an accident and maybe I can be in
the hospital two weeks and not have to work for this woman.
Q. [laugh]
A. And he said, you know, I think it's time to change your editor.
Q. Right. It sounds like a good idea. I'm just --
A. Checking the... How are we doing?
Q. Fine. I'm just going to turn it over.

[End of Side One of tape -- beginning of Side Two]

A. So it was very hard. With all my insecurities, they just flourished.
Q. You had insecurities?
A. Oh yes. I mean, as I said to you, always... It was true in college too. Always overresearching everything, always reluctant to give my own opinion about things, always wanting to make sure that I had covered all the bases. I mean I remember doing a story, my first story for the Post was, Oscar came down with his wigs. I mean I knew more about the wig business, for this ten-inch story: what was happening with the wig business, where the volume was, the sources of wigs and all the rest. I just wanted to make sure that I knew...you know, that I had something to put into that story.
Q. And how did the Post change for you as time went on? I assume it did.
A. Yes. It had a lot to do with the different editors. Just to go back to this insecurity, I remember the first time I went to Europe for the Post. I had gone for the Daily News
but partially paying my own way, doing all sorts of things to get myself there. And then in, I guess, 1972-73 I went for the Post and I was really very nervous about it. First of all, it was the first time I was doing ready-to-wear, I had done couture before that. And I remember seeing some collections and going to the office and sitting at a typewriter to write and I remember that it just...I was having a very hard time of it. My editor was this woman who was really so down on me, I couldn't do anything right for her. And I remember finally saying, I know. The Post was then in the Herald-Tribune building on the Rue du Bari, and I remember that in one of those malls, walk-through malls on the Champs Elysee, there was something called Astro-flash and they would tell you your future, and I decided, well, I was going to go down there and they would tell me next year at this time I'd be working in another business, and then I would be fine, I'd come back and write my story and everything would be okay. So I go downstairs and I put my ten francs down for Astro-flash and I fill out the form as best I can, and the machine starts going and it's typing away and they get all through and the guy hands me the thing when it gets all through, and I open this thing up and ninety-nine percent of it is blank --

Q. [laugh]
A. -- because I didn't know the hour I was born. You know, so all the elements couldn't go into the computer. So I remember I went across the street, bought a big bag of Gummy Bears and went back and wrote the story. [both laugh] I
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figured that was the way it was going to be, I was just going to do it. And so I struggled at the Post at the beginning. I did some things that they really liked a lot. I remember walking along Kings Road in London behind a woman in fishnet hose and a plastic skirt in '76, did the first story on punk. There were a lot of things that I did that I was on top of before other people got to them. Partly it was because of this research and wanting to know and wanting to find out and being able to develop a story. Not a genius in writing at all, because I don't write... I write in a clear way, but I'm not a great writer at all. But, you know, when I was doing the punk story, I got into the music scene, the this scene, the that scene, you know, to fill out the story, to do that sort of almost overresearching. I mean I was every night at different punk clubs, I was talking to people during the day, I was nonstop and I was just eating it up, I just loved it. So the Post was happy with what I was doing, but I was still having a hard time of it. And then, I think, as my editors changed and as I, you know, got more encouragement and got to people who liked what I was doing, it got easier and easier for me. I can recall when I first got to the Post, the first major story I did -- it was in '73 -- was with Saint Laurent, and I remember when I asked them about doing Saint Laurent, going up to New York to do Saint Laurent, they said, Couldn't Saint Laurent come to Washington?

Q. [laugh]

A. You know. I mean they had no sense of any of that. No
sense of the importance of it, no sense of what role these people played, no sense of anything. They only knew about the clout of the Washington Post. Here was a dress designer, he could come to Washington. But now, you know, I don't ask anybody if I want to go off and see somebody in New York or if I decide that Mizrahi is a big story or if I... Anything that I decide to do, they're game to listen to. I've got an editor now who, you know, every once in a while says, Oh... I did a story the other day on using real people as models in the Gap ads, the Barney's ads, the (?) ads, all that. And, What's so important about that? We always have that kind of thing. I said, Yes, and we'll look at the history of it. You know, I really think it's very revealing. It's revealing about clothes today needing the personality of the person in those ads. Says something about the photographer, the this, the that, the next thing. You know, finally the story was a great success, but not until my editor, you know, just piddled with it for a while and then, you know, said he wasn't sure it was, you know, an important story. But for the most part, you know -- and even it worked out in that case -- they really take total guidance from me.

Q. Without asking you to pinpoint somebody to the exclusion of everybody else, among the designers and the experiences you've had in dealing with them and helping them and describing them and so on, can you think of two or three who were really specially rewarding to work with, to talk to?
A. Hard to say because, you know, I really started when a lot of them started. You know, I think that's part of my success, is that Calvin and I were upstarts together.
Q. Right. In '68, really.
A. In '68. You know. I tell you the reason I have a special feeling for Bill. I probably did the meanest thing that I ever did to anybody to Bill. Professionally it was absolutely the right thing to do, but he never once has mentioned it to me.
Q. You're driving me crazy. What was it?
A. Okay, I'll tell you. Yes, I'll tell you what it was. I told you that I often go to see designers before collections. I do it for two reasons: number one, during the shows I have to rely on the wire services for pictures. It means that I have to rely on the wire's photographer's choice of pictures and it comes down looking like mush by the time it goes through the wire. So I go up in advance and I get a photographer for the Post for a day or two and we run around the market and talk to people, but I also get quotes from the designers. I got to Bill's at three o'clock on a Friday afternoon, and we were talking and he was saying, God, Nina, straight skirt. I really feel strongly about it, that the item was the short... But this is the year of the short straight skirt, he says, everything's got to have a short straight black skirt. I don't know... I can't promise you that that's what he was saying, but there was something that was very definitive, that he felt very strongly about: that women feel this, the legs
are the last to go, all the kind of stuff that Bill says, and a lot of it is very quotable and very easy to use.

Four o'clock I leave; in walks John Fairchild. Hello, John. How are you? I leave. I get to the show, Bill Blass's show on Monday morning, and the entire collection is built on gray pants.

Q. Oh God! [laugh]

A. And I said to Bill, Ha-ha-ha, I guess you had a conversation with John Fairchild after I left. He said, Yep. I said, I bet you had people in there all weekend sewing up gray flannel pants. He said, Yep. And I wrote my story and I said that on Friday afternoon at three o'clock the whole story with Bill was short black skirts and by Monday morning ...and the reason for it was that John Fairchild had been there in between. Now, I really didn't think I was doing Bill any harm when I wrote that story because I really felt that I was telling the reader, who is the person I always think about, how the system works. You know, that's the reality of this business. That if John Fairchild says, Gray flannel pants, boy, do you hop and make gray flannel pants, if you want to be in Womens Wear, and then talking a little bit about why it's important to be in Womens Wear. But that really was very destructive to Bill. To this day, he has not once said anything about that to me, and that was a tough one. Others that I'm critical of... You know, I said that I don't have a very strong point of view, but if something seems so unrealistic, so out of place in price, so whatever,
I do speak out. Sometimes I simply just leave people out, but if I've got space to put it in and the like, I feel I may be critical. But in terms of... You know, it's really very hard because... Who have I learned the most from? Who have I... You know, Ralph...

There was a dinner for me --

Q. Yes. Yes. Let's talk about Ralph a little bit.

A. I will talk about Ralph, yes. But Ralph was saying the other night at dinner -- and said it in front of Ben Bradlee and everybody else -- he said, I know Nina fairly well, I've really gotten to know her better in the past couple of years since a summer that my son was down here, but Nina is everybody's friend. We talk a lot, we talk a lot in business terms, we don't dawdle on the phone unless she has time or I have time, but, you know, she's respected and considered a friend of many, many, many, many, many designers. And I think it's hard to be a friend of designers because, you know, as I said, my first responsibility is to the reader of the Post, not to the industry. It was interesting, I was in Paris in October... No, actually it was more recent than that. Paris in March, and I was really worried about this business of having a tilt towards designers, which is something we'll get into. With my cancer now, there has been established a Nina Hyde Breast Cancer Center that the designers have all contributed to; it was particularly instigated by Ralph Lauren. But I thought to myself, I'm covering collections. Can I cover col-
lections knowing that these people have given some money to the Breast Cancer Center? Can I be honest about it? And one day I was sitting in my room, sitting over my computer, and I was writing about Sonia Rykiel's drooping crotches, and I thought, You know, if I can write about her drooping crotch, knowing that she had just sent ten thousand dollars to the Breast Cancer Center, I think I'm okay. You know, I mean I have to be able to do that, and I was really worried that I was not. At any rate, I do have this very special relationship with Ralph Lauren, which is very recent. About three years ago, his son David came down here to work for one of the Democratic candidates, for three weeks one summer. Ralph called and said he was coming down and would I like to have lunch on a Saturday, I said absolutely and actually met him at Georgetown, where David was settling in, and Andrew, his son, and Dylan, his daughter --

Q. Delan?
A. Dylan. It's the daughter.

Q. Can you spell it?
A. D-y-l-a-n. And Ricky, his wife, were with him. And we had a wonderful time together. I could show them where to get a few things for his room, you know, I became very fond of David and I think it was a great relief to Ralph and Ricky to know that there was somebody here that David could call and I could call him and, you know, we went off to tennis matches and we did all sorts of things together. And by the time Ralph came back, my cancer had progressed to the
point that it had gone to my spine, that was the first spasm. In that period I had gone through some surgery and radiation. And when Ralph came back, he said to me, Nina, why don't you come out to the ranch? You know, we really don't invite people out there, but I really think the sky and the this and the that would really be wonderful for you.

Q. Where is the ranch?
A. The ranch is in Colorado. And I said, God, that's the last thing in the world the Post is going to let me do. But I went in to see Ben Bradlee, because I really felt that just to be sort of totally alone, walking around on a ranch, in a place that I had never been to; you know, he said the weather would be absolutely ideal. And Ben said go. You know, I said, It's not a story, it's not anything. He said, Go. So I flew out to the ranch, and while I was out there --

Q. This is when? 1986? About?
A. About. Ralph said to me... One day we were bouncing around on a truck; little did I know that I wasn't supposed to be bouncing around on a truck. But anyway. We were sitting in the back of the truck and he said to me, Would you ever think of working for a designer? What could I do for a designer? I don't know any kind of a contribution that I could make that somebody couldn't do better. He said, You know, he said, for about three years I've had in mind that... You know, I don't know you very well, but I just think you would be absolutely perfect for a job that I would like to
offer you. He said, I would like you to come to my company and I would like you to set up a foundation and I would like you to help me... I've made so much money, I would like to give it back. I need you to help me give it back. You know, the dreams I've had. Imagine, ending your career in the fashion business that way, you know. Anyway, I never became well enough to work in New York to do that. But talking that weekend, I certainly got to know Ralph and Ricky a little bit better, and in time, just in talking to Ralph when he would call and ask how I'm doing, at one point I said to him, You know, tell me if you think this is a crazy idea. I really think that now that ten percent...we know that ten percent of all women have breast cancer, will get breast cancer, and that number is growing and the population is getting younger. I said, Don't you think it's appropriate for the fashion industry to be doing something about it? I said, You know, it's women who make the clothes, women who sell the clothes, buy the clothes, write about the clothes. He said, You're absolutely right. He said, Tell me what you think we should be doing about it, and I said, Well, I've got some ideas. And actually what I had done is, I had called one designer that I was much closer to than Ralph and said... No, I guess I'd gone to lunch with him in New York and I told him how I felt about this and I said, If there was a way for you to send a letter around to designers and... You and know, if you could get together Ralph, Geoffrey and Calvin and Donna and some of the people who have known me for a long
time and just explain the situation to them and, under your signature, not on mine, and leaving my name out, write to designers and ask them to, you know, contribute, I really felt, to the breast cancer research that was being done down here. When you research those things, you get to the best people. I really thought the money should go to that. And anyway, this designer that I asked, who is a very powerful designer in New York, said, Yes, yes, yes, and then said, Well, no, maybe I think CFDA should take it over, it should be done by the Council of Fashion Designers of America, not be just us, and it should be from a very big thing, and there's a meeting in November and then there's a this and then there's a that. Well, anyway, Ralph called up last November, this past November, and said to me, Nina what are you doing? What's happening with your thoughts on breast cancer? Now, this was after he had had a brain tumor and had been out of the hospital

I said, You know, I put all my thoughts down in a letter to this one designer. He said, Well, this designer hasn't called me. I'd told all these others that they might be getting a phone call from... He said, This designer hasn't called me. I said, Maybe I wrote a klutzy letter. Can I send you this letter? This was the end of November. On a Wednesday I sent Ralph a Fed-Ex copy of the letter with a full-page handwritten note, just one of those... He got it on Thursday. On Friday he called me and said, I'm taking over. He said, I don't know whether I'm going to make the...
You know, you're talking about five hundred thousand dollars needed immediately to bring a new scientist and a new lab into this thing. He said, Maybe I'll do it all myself or maybe I'll get the others together and do it. We talked the first week of December. He said, Nina, I've decided to do it with the other designers, he said, But I think it's a mistake ... It's now the seventh of December or the tenth of December. He said, I think it's a mistake to do it before Christmas, a lot of them are already away. He said, On the eighth of January, he said, I'm going to do a party at the Plaza and invite all the designers and the key retailers. He did and ninety of them came. And I spoke and he spoke and Dr. Lipman spoke, and in four months we raised over five hundred thousand dollars.

Q. My gracious!

A. And, I mean, it was thrilling for me.

Q. Four months of this year, or --

A. Four months of this year. I mean it's incredible when you consider that, you know, designers in countries with no traditions are giving this kind of thing. Like East India.

Q. Yes, right.

A. Christian Lafaux has his share of problems. All the European designers. I mean it's just --

Q. It's fantastic.

A. -- really, really, really extraordinary. And Bill's given twenty-five thousand dollars. Ralph gave a hundred thousand dollars. This week Don Graham, the publisher of the Post, just told me that the Post has just given a hundred
thousand dollars.

Q. Terrific!
A. Yes. It is terrific. It's an extension of the things that I care most about. I mean I sort of have a new profession, a new subject to talk about. You know, I will talk about it at Smith this weekend. It took me a long, long, long, long time before I could talk about it.

Q. Sure. I know.
A. Now I can talk about it. It has changed my life dramatically. One of the wonderful things that developed out of my work at the Post was to be able to work for the National Geographic. I approached them, they didn't approach me. I had heard that they were looking for a writer on the story of silk. I took the editor, who I had met, to lunch, the most expensive lunch I've ever taken anybody to, and said... He didn't know why I was taking him to lunch. [laugh] I said, What do you think? [laugh] I want to write the silk story. He said, Everybody wants to write the silk story, he said, because you can go anyplace in the world to write about silk. And, you know, as I read more and more Geographic stuff and talked to people over there, I realized it was the kind of thing that I can do, that I can do best for the Geographic in a funny kind of way. You know, to really probe.

Q. During what year?
A. This was in 1982, I started in '82. You know, what you write for the Geographic is, you're not writing a business story, you're writing the history and tradition and super-
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statement, you know. Once I got the story... Oh, it was very funny. He said, Write a proposal, you can write a proposal, and I did and, you know, I talked to everybody, I mean whether it was Diana Vreeland or Pupul Jayakar or...designers, Isseye Miyake, whatever, to get... And I did a lot of research and I was given the assignment, which Ben Bradlee then said I could not do.

Q. Really!
A. Yes. It was just at the time of the Bill Breider piece on David Stockman that appeared in the Atlantic Monthly, and he said, I just can't have our best pieces appear in the, you know, other magazines. You know, the Geographic, there's no way. Anyway, he caved in and he came to me five days later, sat on the edge of my desk and said, I can't do this to you, Nina. It's something that we're all going to benefit from. And so I took off for China. But the becoming ill, of course, curbed that as well. The Post and the Geographic... When the cancer came back in my spine and it was clear it was starting to spread, I called Bill Garrett, the editor of the Geographic, and told him that -- I was now on my second story, the wool story -- I'm now going to bow out of the wool story. He said, Listen, Nina, wool's been around for more than two thousand years. Your story can wait a year or two or three. When you're ready to write it, we'll take the story. Now, you know, I should be doing the third part of that, which is the story of cotton, which is the one that I really go to and want to do most, again because of the kinds of places you can...
the things that you can do. When I was writing silk, I traveled all over China and Japan, India, Thailand, spent time in Lyons. Ate silkworms along the way because I figured that was part of the experience. For wool, I traveled to incredible places, in the Soviet Union as well as western China and stuff. But now that I'm not well... One of the things that chemotherapy does is to depress your immune system, so I can't go to Third World countries, unless there are dramatic changes.

Q. Right.

A. Anyway, the Post has just been fabulous. As I get on different chemotherapy protocols and my health bounces from my being totally out of commission two weeks each month to my being out of commission two days a month, they just let me do what I have to do and --

Q. Great. Nina, talk a little bit about your interrelationships, if any, with the other departments of the paper: the news department or any of... I mean--

A. Yes. Yes. I'm involved a lot, because somebody is always looking for a way to describe, a way to... You know, I think my role at the paper is a couple of things. My role at the paper is to help people understand why fashion is taking the turn that it's taking. To me the most important thing about the fashion business is that it gives us another way of looking at ourselves, by what we wear; it's just another clue to this time, this generation, this individual. We make a choice about clothes, so we are expressing ourself
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in some way. What I try and do is to help understand what that is, what the elements are that we're choosing from and why we're choosing them. Why they're being offered, why the designer has put them out there, why people have accepted them. Why it works or why it doesn't work. So that I'm constantly responding to what's going on in the other parts of the paper, whether it's what black kids are wearing in some remote neighborhood, why they're wearing seven earrings or why they're shaving their heads the way they are or what they're doing, or why President Bush is wearing what he's doing or Mrs. Agnew was wearing what she was wearing or the whole life-style of a Nancy Reagan and Betsy Bloomingdale and why clothes are so important to them and how they go about getting clothes and all of that. Another important goal for me at the paper is to bring people into reading about fashion who aren't interested in clothes. I know I can get all the fashion (?), I know I can get all the people who are really committed, people who are in the business and all of that, but I want to go beyond that, and in order to do that I have to write much broader stories. Somebody came up to me, somebody in a congressional office came up to me the other day and said, Look at me. Would you ever think that I read fashion stories in the Post? He said, I don't miss a one. Well, then I'm doing my job. Then I'm doing my job, and that's, you know, to try and broaden it in that way. The Post has let me write for other sections; as I said, I've written for sports, I've written for the editorial
section, I've written for the business section. I'm constantly in touch with the business people, the financial side, because I know all the players.

Q. Sure.

A. I mean not just the players who are the designers, but all the retailers. You know, I have a very good relationship with the retailers, who say, This is what's official and this is what's not official, and they trust me to deal with it in the way that they've asked me to deal with it. So it works both ways. There's always somebody from the financial desk sitting on the edge of my desk. And there are people who will come in and say, This guy was wearing this funny-looking thing. Somebody will come from the television section, say, What do you call this hat, or, you know, Do you remember other people wearing these kinds of clothes, or --

Q. So it's very strong and very specific about a particular item to a much more broad philosophical --

A. Absolutely.

Q. -- question. Let's go away just a little bit from journalism. If I were to ask you what you thought were the three most important events in your life, whether they're events in the world or events within yourself... We know one, obviously, is the onset of cancer, okay. There are other things that have happened in the world. What kinds of things have been of meaning to you?

A. The birth of my children is on the top of the list. Much more so than marriage, the children.
Q. Your life has been so busy with other things than family, but you still feel that about the birth of your children.
A. No question. I mean I can recall one day when I was going off to cover something at the White House and I was all dressed in a Jeanne Marie Armond, the first piano dress; it looked like a penguin. I remember the dress. I remember the evening, I remember the whole thing. And Andrea came running out to give me a hug before leaving, with hands and face so full of chocolate that...you know, of course it went right into this black-and-white dress, and we just howled. You know, and it just helps me keep my head on straight. It makes me realize that all this is just not so important. It's important, but beyond anything, it's --
Q. How much time do you feel you were able to spend with them?
A. Well, you know, I think I paid a big price in not spending as much time as I should have. There's no question about that in my mind, that I wish I had spent more. And it was interesting. Somebody asked me recently how my children felt about that. I said, Ask them, and somebody called Jennifer and apparently the answer was, you know, I never knew it any other way. It never occurred to me that my mother was spending less time with me than any other mother. But I do know that sometimes I would come home and I would be short with them because...particularly when I first went to the Post because I was nervous about the Post. I do know, on
the other hand, that I probably was better with them when I came home as things went well at the Post and certainly things at the Daily News, you know, that my head was really in a better place, that I'd had a... It wasn't so much that it was a fulfilling... Well, it was a fulfilling day in lots...fulfilling professionally and socially, and then I was ready to devote a hundred percent to the kids when I was home.

Q. How has your illness affected them, do you think?
A. Very differently. Andrea, who's my younger daughter, who's in New York, can sit and cry with me. Very sympathetic --

Q. How old is she? Nineteen?
A. She was born in '64, so she's twenty-five. About to be twenty-five. She is very sympathetic. You know, when I was in the hospital, it was cards every day, phone calls every day. You know, out of the hospital, she still calls me every day to see how I am. Jennifer, when I got ill, was in the Peace Corps. I wrote to her. She came home --

Q. How old is she now?
A. She's three years older than --

Q. Twenty-eight.
A. She'll be twenty-eight. It's been much harder for her. She finds it very hard to deal with a damaged mother, somebody that she has always thought of so whole and so strong. Not that we were particularly better friends. We always had a tenser relationship than I did with Andrea, and I think it's partly first child. My own
nervousness about dealing with a first child. It's interesting: I've always been very worried about Jennifer and my illness. She would walk into the house and I'd be upstairs just in miserable shape from the chemo, but in miserable shape. And she would yell, Hi, Mom, and would go in and talk with Lloyd and not come upstairs for two hours, and then before she left she'd run in my room. That's changing, and I have learned from her friends that all that was... a lot of that was, you know, an act with her, that she really was in great pain, but she just couldn't cope and that her crying was with her friends.

Q. Right.

A. But she has changed a lot. She can talk about it more, and now I know... I mean I really do know, because I've heard what she has said to others, that she really is very admiring of what I'm doing between the Breast Cancer Center and the just pushing on by myself.

Q. Is there a third event or a third happening in the world that has meant something to you? Not necessarily in the personal sphere.

A. You know --

Q. Although it can be.

A. Yes. I think the whole developmental thing of being at the Post, I mean I think that has been very important in my life, giving me the --

Q. Let me ask you a leading question. Would something like the Holocaust have had any meaning to you?
Nina Hyde

A. The Holocaust has great meaning to me; it's my husband's number-one interest for all his reading, all his writing, all of that. But it's a part of my life, it's not an event of my life. My Jewishness is an extremely important part of my life.

Q. How?

A. There's never a time that I... It's interesting because I talked about this with a black friend the other day. I said to Bill Raspberry, who's a black columnist at the Post... I don't remember what the story was in the Post. I said to him, you know, I don't read a story in the Post that it doesn't make me look at it and say...if it's a criminal or anything else, I say, God, I hope he isn't Jewish! I said, And you must say, God, I hope he isn't black. He said, That's absolutely true. But it's a total awareness with me. You know, there was a kid at the Post getting married. She happens to be Jewish, she's marrying somebody Catholic, and I had to say to her, Mazel tov. You know, not Congratulations. You know, even though they're going to get married in a Catholic ceremony, etcetera, etcetera. I mean I just...I have a sensitivity to it. My being Jewish is extremely important to me. It's not that I go to services very much. The place where we belong is so much, as my husband's grandfather used to say, a hocus-pocus temple, with everything push buttons and all that; it's really not what makes me happy. I haven't ever been to Israel, but I have a feeling of attachment to people who are Jewish, I have such a world
of respect for... You know, I feel better that my doctor is Jewish; I feel he's a better doctor for being Jewish. Dumb? He isn't necessarily a better doctor because he's Jewish. I feel better for it. My Jewishness is very much a part of my life. It disappoints me tremendously that it's not a part of one daughter's life and it's a huge part of the other daughter's life. They both were brought up exactly the same way, both went for classes at...both were confirmed at a Reform temple. Andrea didn't have one Jewish friend at Duke. Had them in high school, but didn't have them at college. Jennifer started studying Hebrew on her own when she was in the Peace Corps in Africa and is very much involved with Jewish studies, Jewish friends. I mean has a lot of Zairian friends, all that, but, you know, is really self-taught as well as going and taking classes. And Judaism is a very important part of my husband's life. But again, not in a formal way, but in terms of quality of life, relationships with others, he feels very involved.

Q. Well, I think this has really been fascinating.
A. Good. Do you think it's okay?
Q. I love it. Is there anything we haven't talked about that means something to you, that you'd like to talk about?
A. No, I think we've really touched on...I really think we've touched on most things. Not necessarily in chronological order, but, you know, never does. But, no, I just... You know, the reward has been huge. I've really never thought of it in terms of an investment of time to develop
these relationships or anything else. I mean in the last year... And I know that some of these things have happened because of my illness and people...you know, who knows how long I'm going to be around? But, you know, in the last year I've been given -- and it will officially be presented next week -- the Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Artistes et Lettres by the French government.

Q. Oh!

A. Yes. Pretty terrific. The other night at a dinner at Vida Blair's house, at this dinner Father Healy, my neighbor in New York, stood up -- I had no idea this was going to happen -- and gave me the Georgetown Bicentennial Medal for Public Service. There are a number of other things that have happened that have been pretty fabulous. And, you know, that's nice!

Q. Yes, that's fabulous.

A. That's right! And this Breast Cancer Center is... I mean I never, in a million years, expected that when this money would be raised that it would go to a Nina Hyde Breast Cancer Center. It's not important that it is, except that it's working to raise money.

Q. Nina, I think one of the really nice things about the medals and so on is that it's all happening while you're alive.

A. Yes, it's true.

Q. That's great.

A. Yes. It's true. I mean, you know, I was invited to a
breakfast of young female executives in Virginia, the Virginia Association of Female Executives. I didn't even know it, suddenly I was their Woman of the Year and they came up with seven hundred fifty dollars for the Breast Cancer Center. You know, it's been very exciting. I think it's been tough on my brother and sister. I think my sister, who was very busy playing Madame la Marquise, you know, as she has seen over the years my relationship with designers and the role that I play, and I have no question in my mind that a lot of the role I play and the reason I am where I am, that I could do what I was doing was... It may have started with the Daily News, but there is a big Washington Post written across my forehead, you know, that's an entrée and a clout and a respectability that, you know, is very, very strong.

Q. Is very special.
A. Yes.

Q. And carried as far as it can go in your case, it really is. I mean you have gone, you're the one who's really caused it to be that much the open door too. I mean it just relates --
A. Well, the two things have gone together. But it's made it...you know, the fact that it is the Washington... You know, I'm in the front row, not because of Nina Hyde; I'm in the front row because I'm the Washington Post.

Q. You're Nina Hyde on the Washington Post.
A. No, but even if I was a shlump on the Washington Post,
Nina Hyde

I would have a front-row seat.

Q. But it has really been special, I have no doubt, that it is Nina Hyde of the Washington Post.

A. Yes.

Q. Yes, right.

A. Okay. I have got to go back to the other room.

Q. Okay.

A. I've got to do a shoot before I --

Q. I thank you very much for taking the time on a day like this.

A. Listen, I thank you!

[End of Interview]
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