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Oral History Interview with June Kaplan

Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations, 2011.019.053

Interview conducted by Charis Shafer on June 24th, 2013 in Tarrytown, New York.

CHARIS SHAFER: [00:00] OK.

JUNE KAPLAN: So, when my dad -- my dad is a physician.

CHARIS SHAFER: Can I just give us the date? So, it's June 24th, 2013, and this is Charis Shafer doing an interview for the Brooklyn Historical Society's *Crossing Borders Bridging Generations* Project. And if you could introduce yourself in your full name, and then launch into whatever part of the story you wanted to start.

JUNE KAPLAN: OK. My name is June Feigenheimer Kaplan. And we grew up in Brooklyn. And my father came here because in Germ-- they're both German, and my dad was a physician, and he could see the handwriting on the wall that Hitler was not going to be very welcoming. So he actually came in '33. And my mom, who's about -- was about six or eight years younger, she stayed until '39 and brought my grandparents over, but my father had already taken a residency here and done his boards over again. And so we -- he bought a small house in Brooklyn -- it was like a two-story house -- and we all lived together, all seven of us.

CHARIS SHAFER: Where in Brooklyn was this?

JUNE KAPLAN: Oh God, I can't pull up the address. It was Covert Street, between Knickerbocker -- can't remember the street up there. It was a mostly Italian neighborhood. One block was Irish, one block was Italian, my father was the neighborhood doctor. So -- and since they got married -- my mother was 32 when she

got married -- they kind of had me rather quickly. Actually, my sisters and I did the math, and we're not sure I'm really legitimate, but who's counting? You know, newly married people, they don't keep track of it. Anyway, I was born in '44, my sister Irene was born two years later, and Aviva was born six years after me. So we're three girls, and we grew up in this very, I would say, it wasn't even middle-class, it was really a working-class neighborhood. There were factories. There was a funeral parlor across the street. There were -- it was really working class, and the neighbors next door fought every Saturday night. I mean, they used to have wild, wild fights and then have sex. And, of course, we could hear -- in Brooklyn there was no air conditioning, and when it was warm -- so anyway, we were the only Jewish kids in the entire neighborhood. And my parents deci-- my parents, my mother especially, was very political. I would say she was a Socialist/Communist, very leftist. My father wasn't so political, but my mother decided that she didn't want us to go to the public schools, because they were pretty awful, and so we were sent to a school down near Pratt. And we commuted every single day to -- it was called the Brooklyn Community Woodward School. A lot of famous people went there. I'm trying to think who was in -- the class ahead of me was Bobby Fisher. My sister Aviva went to school with -- what's his name? The folk singer -- it'll come to me. I'm old. Anyway, it was a very small private school, very progressive, and all my friends went to Catholic school. So it was --

CHARIS SHAFER: This is the friends in your neighborhood?

JUNE KAPLAN: In the neighborhood.

CHARIS SHAFER: OK.

JUNE KAPLAN: So I had neighborhood friends who went to church, and we were, you know, the token Jews in the neighborhood. Growing up, all I wanted to do was have trees. It was not -- it wasn't like Park Slope, or any of those nice Brooklyn places now. And --

CHARIS SHAFER: What did you consider the neigh-- what did you call your neighborhood?

JUNE KAPLAN: I don't know if I called it anything. I know that, because of our schooling situation, I never had -- like, when I went to high school, after we graduated from Brooklyn Community, I decided I didn't want to go to a private school. I was sick of the 12 people that had been my class from day one. You know, if you do something stupid in second grade and you're with the same 12 people until -- [05:00] it sucks. It's not good. So I said I wanted to go to a public high school. And somehow or other we selected Wingate High School, which is near Downstate Hospital. And that was two buses away. And so I always had this split between the neighborhood people and the people who I went to high school with. And I remember being, like, a little embarrassed about where we lived, because it was very spartan there. There were, like, garbage bins all over, it wasn't a very nice place. But, you know, we had a back yard, we had a porch. I think we were pretty independent kids. I don't have really any friends from Brooklyn from that part of my life. I do have high school friends, but they all grew up like on President Street and in that part of Brooklyn -- and I don't even know what they call that area now, but it's not far from Prospect Park.

CHARIS SHAFER: Mm-hmm, so Park Slope. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

JUNE KAPLAN: Maybe it is, but this was -- it was a rough, rough -- Wingate High School was not a, you know, easy school. So I went there. Irene ended up going -- my middle

sister -- to Richmond Hill High School, and Aviva went to -- duh, what high school -- Forest Hills? Richmond? I don't really know. Oh my God. Anyway, Aviva and I ended up graduating from Queens College. Irene went to Hunter for about an hour. She's a dancer, so she never got a bachelor's degree. She's very smart, but couldn't hack it in school. So, to me -- oh, I'm sorry. Thank you.

CHARIS SHAFER: Thank you.

M: Enjoy.

CHARIS SHAFER: We can pause and eat for a minute.

JUNE KAPLAN: Yeah, sure.

CHARIS SHAFER: Let's do that. [07:10]

END OF AUDIO FILE

JUNE KAPLAN: [00:00] And I think there -- that there is a -- you know, when you're the only one of a tribe, and you have all this other stuff -- I'll tell you a funny story. We of course celebrated Chanukah, but we used to sneak off to -- St. Martin of Tours was the church in our neighborhood and we used to sneak in to go to mass with the, you know, our girlfriends, while unbeknownst to my family. So there it is, the eighth night of Chanukah, and we have all the candles, and my grandmother is saying the prayer, and Irene and I get down on our hands, you know, get on our knees, we cross ourselves, and we say the act of contrition. This did not go over well. So the next year I got sent to Hebrew School, which was a real drag, because I was totally not interested -- nor was interested in Catholicism, but I did like the incense and I liked all the -- you know, it was very entertaining to me. But my parents realized that, you know, there were no Jews --

that they had to provide us with some Jewish education. So -- beyond matzo ball soup and Passover. And it's funny, because I don't consider myself an observant Jew, because I certainly cook more pork than the average person should eat, but I would never switch my religion. And interestingly enough, my ex-husband and my current partner are both Jewish. I hate -- calling him a boyfriend is, like, asinine. But anyway, we've lived together for, like, you know, 27 years. It's, like, you know --

CHARIS SHAFER: Oh yeah, he's your partner.

JUNE KAPLAN: -- he's my partner. So, but they're both Jewish, which is not intentional at all. But I think our family was always different. You know, we'd go into other peoples' houses, the TV was always on, whereas my parents were uber-intellectuals. It was all about -- my mother was a writer. She was very, very -- she was really brilliant. Difficult, narcissistic, but brilliant. And books -- like, there were books all over. You know, wherever you looked, they went up to the ceiling, they were all over the place.

CHARIS SHAFER: Does she read in German as well as English?

JUNE KAPLAN: Oh yeah. And let me tell you, she could kill you in Scrabble in English or in German, didn't matter. She beat the pants off of us. So our home was always different. There was nothing similar when we went to other peoples' houses. And it wasn't until I went to high school and went to Wingate that I met families that were more similar -- not necessarily Jewish, but intellectual. And I think more than anything else for me growing up was that there was a dichotomy. And there's a stereotype of German Jews that says they're snotty, well they are. They are, because they look down on all the other Jews, to say nothing of, you know, my neighbors, the Italian couple that fought all the time and then had sex. I mean, my parents were just like, huh. But there was this

intellectual snobbery, and I think -- I mean, I thank God that I grew up that way, because it meant that, you know, I read two or three books a week. I mean, you know, I just have that background. It would be unthinkable to -- like to come to the train station, I wouldn't leave without a book. What if you missed the train? What am I going to do? Yeah, I could look at my phone, I guess, now, but. So we grew up with sort of an awareness that we were different and maybe special? I got to high school, I was terribly not special, but I met other, you know, kind of very intellectual kids that -- so we're all -- you know, we -- in high school was the first time I was ever -- my parents never really took part in anything having to do with school. They said we don't understand the American educational system. So if I said, "Help me with my homework," my mother said, "Oh, I don't know how to do that." Part of this was because my father was an alcoholic. So he was, like, absent. After four o'clock, Irwin was not to be talked to. And I'm sure that's why I'm a social worker. Aviva's a social worker. You know, I think we're still trying to cure him in some ass-backwards way. But so we rea-- when I went to high school, I really had to forge, like, a personality and an independence that I don't think I would have had [05:00] if I'd grown up in those neighborhoods in Brooklyn where I actually went to high school.

And then we moved. I guess our neighborhood was getting really bad. There were a couple of murders. There were drugs. My father was a doctor, his office got broken into. His friends got tied up and -- so my parents decided to move. And we were walking to the subway, and we were three little, cute girls, and they were a little, you know, concerned about that. So we moved, I guess, the year I started Queens Co-- '61, my parents bought a house in Kew Gardens, and my father attempted to have a practice in

Kew Gardens. But what he was able to get away with in this lower-middle class, working-class neighborhood in Brooklyn, didn't fly in Kew Gardens. You know, his patients would pay him in marinated beans, or, you know, make a pot -- a thing of gravy, which is sauce. In Brooklyn it's gravy, where we came from. And nobody cared that he -- he was an alcoholic -- smelled a little, or he -- because he was a good doctor. And they also, because they were working class, they kind of looked up to him. In Kew Gardens, if you got really sick you went to Manhattan, and that was a recurring theme once we moved. He never really got that practice going, but he was also sick, because he was -- had cancer in the throat, and then cancer of the esophagus, and he died in '71. He was, like, 66. So while the move for me was, like, we finally had -- I don't know where I got this desire to have trees around and I wanted a nice house. And, I mean, my family was not materialistic, but I remember as a kid, as a high-schooler, going to some of these old homes on President Street in Brooklyn some of those ni-- oh, that's what I want. So when we got the house in Kew Gardens, I was -- I thought that was the best. Kew Gardens was beautiful. It wasn't Brooklyn. Now, Brooklyn was like -- it's so funny to me that now, you know, half of the restaurants that are really fabulous are in Brooklyn. You know, the real estate in Brooklyn is out of sight, and I'm thinking, "Where?! Are you kidding me?" You know --

CHARIS SHAFER: Can you describe that --

JUNE KAPLAN: -- it's like the Gowanus Canal is going to get hot soon. I mean, you know? But Kew Gardens was very upper-class.

CHARIS SHAFER: Can you talk a little bit more about that? What was the perception -- or your own perception of Brooklyn at that time?

JUNE KAPLAN: I thought it was sort of low-class. And I don't know why I thought of it that way, but I think -- I don't know. I liked it, like, I liked some of the areas that my friends in high school lived in, but until then, I was stuck with the four corners of our block, you know, I mean, and the subway. So we would go to Manhattan. Manhattan was cool, but I never liked where we lived in Brooklyn. It still -- I don't even know whether this neighborhood is -- has gentrified, but everything else is, so it's sort of the Bushwick, Ridgewood -- and it was very ethnic. There was a German area. So we had a (inaudible) guy up on Myrtle Avenue. There were a lot of Germans, not necessarily Jews, but just Germans. There were a whole Irish contingent and, you know, of course an Italian neighborhood. But I don't know why, my whole being wanted not to be in Brooklyn. And now, of course, I go to Brooklyn and I say, "Oh my God. This is so cool. I can't even afford to live in Brooklyn anymore." You know, it's like -- and I don't know what it was based on. Whether it was that we were in a rough neighborhood and my father would get all the knifings and the killings. I mean, I remember seeing one kid knifed under a car, bleeding out, you know, and that wasn't that unusual where we lived. And when my parents finally decided to move, my feeling was, yeah, you should have done this a while ago. But I was going to Queens College, so I sort of moved my identity from Brooklyn to Queens. And Queens, for some reason, seemed cooler to me. I don't know, did it have more trees? I really, you know -- but I know that I was happy to leave Brooklyn. And of course now my two stepdaughters live there, I have a feeling that I'll be spending more and more time in Brooklyn, and it's like, wow, that is so different from my growing up experience [10:00] of it. It was always too many train rides away from Manhattan. And it wasn't pretty where we lived. It was definitely not pretty. And for

some reason, that meant something. And my parents would talk about where they grew in Germany in these little villages. Like, my father was born in Backnang which is south German and near the Black Forest, which is fabulous. And then my mother grew up in Bayreuth which has mountains nearby. She skied -- she claims she skied to school, I don't know. I don't know about that. But, you know, despite the fact that they were forced to leave their homeland, they -- when they talked about it and we were kids, to me all I saw was verdant hills and mountains, snow-capped, little villages. And my -- and when I would say that, my mother would say, "Yeah, full of Nazis." And I would say, "But they can't all be Nazis." So going to Germany in 2004 to, like, live for eight weeks, I was like -- the first week I was, like, looking over my shoulder. It's just not -- it's not the same.

CHARIS SHAFER: Do you have any other stories about -- because it seems like this was really, like, engrained in you that them running away at that time from Germany. Did they tell you anything else about their escape story or --

JUNE KAPLAN: Oh yeah. They -- my mother was -- she was educated in a little school, it's sort of a middle school, it's called gymnasium. And she went to school with Richard Wagner's four boys. And she was the only Jew. And she talked about not getting her diploma because she was Jewish. And she won a prize -- there's a literary prize called the Jean Paul Prize -- not very German actually -- and she won that, and that was like her claim to fame. And actually her writing was the reason that she was able to leave Germany. After my dad came in the 30's-- they were actually engaged in Germany when my mother was 18, and my father said, "oh this is *sehr wunderbar*," you know, "I'll be a country doctor, you'll be my wife, we'll have children." And my mother said, "What are

you talking about? I'm going to Berlin. I'm a photojournalist." She was, actually, at the time. And he said, "Well, maybe we should break off the engagement," which they did. So for many years they were separate. He was in the states -- and judging by the photos we found, he had a very rich cultural life with many beautiful women -- but they always sort of kept in touch and when my mother came, she came on a visa that some guy in San Francisco had read her poetry in an underground, smuggled out vehicle that got to the states, and he sent her the money and a visa and said, "This young Jewish poet should be saved." Or at least that's the story we got. And so she came and then she brought my grandparents. She was an only child and my father was one of 12, only four of whom actually came through the war. The rest were either killed in Germany -- I don't know how many of them were interned in camps. There's a hole, like, hole in the knowledge that we have about the Feigenheimer side of the family. And one of the things I'm going to do when I'm retired is try to go back and patch together, well, what happened to the other 11 brothers and sis-- I know one died, named Julia actually, of leukemia. But there were, you know, a whole bunch more. My parents were the only -- actually, my father was the only one who had kids that we know of and one other brother, so it's a very, very small family. There are Feigenheimers in Pittsburgh. There are some Feigenheimers around, but I would like to know more about what really happened. I mean, I know they left. Neither of my parents were in a camp, but my mother's entire body of work -- her written work, her poetry, her -- she used to perform at Habonim and at college campuses. It's kind of -- Aviva always says Julia is channeling Hilda, because she travels to college campuses. So I really, you know, [15:00] I always feel like that's an unfinished piece of business for me, that I need to really put together what happened to my mother's -- what

happened in Germany that she actually left? My father was very clear. You know, he knew this was a bad thing and he got out. But my mother sort of hung in there, and my grandfather tell-- when he was alive he had a store in Bayreuth, on a little street called-- Richard Wagner Strasse and we actually went and visited the store -- but Hitler came to see him. And I -- my mother said he came home and he said, "Oh, I'm so happy," you know, "Hitler came to the store and he's really a very nice man, and he complimented me on my stock." I mean, this was probably in the, you know, like, '30s, maybe the late '20s. And my grandfather was so more typical of -- he was a German first and sort of a Jew just by religion, but his identity was really mostly tied up with being a German and he never really could acknowledge what was happening to the Jews in all these towns that were disappearing. So when my mother came she was able to get visas and bring my grandparents over. And there was a whole segment of German Jews who sort of met on the Upper West Side, and then dispersed to the boroughs, and my father bought this house in Brooklyn, you know, and it had enough room for my grandparents on one level, and his office on the bottom, and the five of us lived upstairs. So it was a very -- you know, we were very close-knit. It was a very small house, not very big.

CHARIS SHAFER: These were your mother's parents who lived with you?

JUNE KAPLAN: Yes. I never met my fraternal grandparents ever. I think they were dead long before -- I don't even, you know, this is another thing. I don't know, maybe my other sister would remember some of this better, and when the three of us get together I think, even now, we still spend endless hours trying to tease out, you know, what happened then, and who was there. I had a cousin in Germany who -- I mean, in England, who was put on the Kindertransport, and he was very much into the historical thing. Unfortunately

he died, and I don't know, I need to find out all the pieces from his, you know, that he had once tried to help me understand. Unfortunately you get to an age, you know, by the time I was ready to really focus on my family, they were -- all the people with the keys were gone. My grandparents were dead, my father was dead, and my mother died '84 I want to say. And by then I had two kids, I was working, I was in graduate school at the same time, you know. It's like the last thing I could think about was my heritage, but when I worked in Germany, it was so, so confrontive, because it was comforting. The food was comforting. The people I met were lovely. It was just -- I felt I was coming home, which is ridiculous because I had never been there, but that language thread I think is so -- such a commonality. You know, when you can read signs -- of course I was very popular, because I could drive anywhere and get us any place, you know, but -- you want a refill?

CHARIS SHAFER: Sure.

JUNE KAPLAN: You should put it over there and see who -- I think that the thing that most -- I think the three of us all grew up feeling we were special in some funky way, and I think it had to do with being unlike our neighbors. You know, we were just very aware of the differences. I always, you know, Christmas, to this day I hate Christmas, because I remember being -- getting no gifts on Christmas, and our neighbors would make this huge, big deal about it, and it's so funny. It's like a really hard holiday for me to get through. I think it's also because it's so dark, you know, it's, like, I'm very light-sensitive. But we have very few relatives. We have one cousin, first cousin, on my father's side and that's it. You know, there's very few of us. So -- and I think that [20:00] also having a name like Feigenheimer, I mean, I don't know -- this was before

your time -- but when you took Iowa Tests and stuff, there were only a certain number of boxes to put your last name in, and you had to write it in. And you know what it's like when you're six years old to try to memorize a 12 letter name? So I had to sing it. You know, I had to make a cadence out of it. It's actually very easy, but, you know, I think that it made it very -- I think we always felt different, whether it was a religious difference or a cultural difference. In Brooklyn we were clearly different. We didn't celebrate the same holidays, we spoke German, and there was a point I remember when the kids in the neighborhood would say, you know, "You're Nazis. Your family are Nazis." I mean, this is stupid kids talking, but that's when I stopped speaking German. I only spoke English. I only answered -- we spoke German at home, but I never answered in German, because to me, you know, I was sort of absorbing, you know, stupid kids -- they're so horrible, kids. They're critical. So I stopped speaking until, you know, I went to Germany. It was, you know, it was unbelievable. How you doing here?

CHARIS SHAFER: We're good. We still have one bar left. I figure we can keep going until -

JUNE KAPLAN: We can keep going.

CHARIS SHAFER: Until we don't have any bars left. I think it gives me a --

JUNE KAPLAN: A sound?

CHARIS SHAFER: -- message to say you're running out.

JUNE KAPLAN: Where is this lady? She's bullshitting with the group.

CHARIS SHAFER: (laughter) Just chatting.

JUNE KAPLAN: Could we get some tea? I'm such a bad person. Could we get some iced tea? Yeah, thanks.

CHARIS SHAFER: Thank you.

JUNE KAPLAN: But, yeah, I think that our -- we didn't have real peers like other kids have.

There weren't families that were so similar to our background, so there was always this sort of feeling that we were special or unique, not always in a good way, but just different. And, I don't know. I don't know what that means.

CHARIS SHAFER: Did you have any connection to -- you said there were other families on the Upper West Side. Did you maintain any of those connections?

JUNE KAPLAN: We did, but those were -- none of those people had children. One of them was my cousin, Kurt Adler, who was the chorus master at the Met. And he did come -- you know, he came over, and there was a psychiatrist who was a friend of my mother's who's very -- she was a very well-known -- she wrote books on how comic books created violence in children. Like, how far advanced was she? But most of these people had no children, because they came to the states kind of in that time of their lives of late 20s, early 30s, where if they were going to have a family, probably should have had it then. So we were very, like, special. Like, I had two aunts that never had kids, the two sisters of my dad's, and I remember them always showering us with chocolate, because there were no other little kids. So it wasn't -- I always wanted cousins. The cousins that I did have, which were my father's brother's two kids, lived in Port Jervis. And his brother married a woman who was a horse woman. And my mother, oh my God, she was just not moved by my Aunt Sis, who was also sort of very big in the Protestant church up there. And I don't think it was that she was Protestant, so much as that she was so American, you know? And so my cousins -- my cousin Nancy -- I loved horses. I loved animals, but we never went up there, because my mother hated Aunt Sis. And they had a hotel, but I never -- and she died. She died of can-- Nancy, my cousin, died. My Aunt Sis lived

for -- I think she died at the age of 100 or something, and she was, like, a hard-drinking, hard-smoking babe, man. But, you know, it's -- I think the women in a family are the ones who determine the social networking, and my mother hated Aunt Sis, so too bad if you want to see your cousins.

So there were no -- everybody on our block had these big Italian families, and we had nothing like that. You know, we had all these old, musty, old German ladies and an occasional gentleman would come visit. [25:00] And they would have -- one thing we did have that was interesting was that my parents always had, like, a salon, or a coffin, depending on how you look at it, but Sunday afternoon my grandmother would bake. My grandmother was an incredible baker. And they would drink endless pots of coffee and argue politics. But all the couples that would come were childless. So it was like, you know, "*Stand in the sun*, go outside," you know, "go play," but there were no kids for us. It wasn't like, "Oh good," you know, "Gertie is coming and she's going to bring little Sam." There were no kids, because all of these families or couples had been sort of interrupted at a pivotal point in their lives where they really never had children. So we got doted on, I mean, that was nice, but it was pretty boring for us as children. We were really surrounded by adults for the most part. When Aviva was born my parents bought a hotel in Saratoga-- my dad was a doctor and he bought this hotel in Saratoga, which he sort of envisioned as a spa, and of course Saratoga has the waters. And they ran the hotel for ten years, but there were no children that came to the hotel. All the German Jews who knew of my parents through the paper my mother wrote for, which was *Aufbau* would send their elderly parents up to us, because what would be better? There's a doctor on site, and Hilde, you know, Hilde Marks, a famous writer. So we were always surrounded

by adults. And Aviva, it's interesting, she works with kids. I always found kids to be very difficult. I never -- I don't even remember wanting kids particularly, but of course the Vietnam War changed that, so we had Michael to keep my husband out of Vietnam. This is why I laugh when I'm on a base or something. You should only know. But I think that that's one of things that I regret is that we didn't grow up with a big family. And all those nice families around us, which my parents sort of looked down on, I was envious of their, you know, just the tumult and the craziness around the holidays -- you know, there was screaming and yelling, and there was, you know, bad things that happened, but it seemed to me that that's what we were missing. Yeah, we might be smarter than, or have more culture, and know about opera and classical music, but they had cousins. How great is that? You know, I mean, cousins taught you all kinds of things: drinking, smoking, you know, all the -- everything I know about sex, it was from Joanne Melia's cousins. I mean, you know, what do you -- you miss that, you know?

CHARIS SHAFER: What did you -- you say Joanne Melia, did you befriend other families in the area?

JUNE KAPLAN: There was no socialization between my parents and those -- we made friends with the kids, and I'll tell you a funny story. I was -- during the hurricane we lost electricity and we live on a road, a private road with four houses. There's a guy at the bottom of the hill, and because he was at the bottom of the hill he still had water. So we have no water when there's no electricity, because we have a well. So we -- I was, like, losing it. We had no electricity, we couldn't flush a toilet, we had no water, so my neighbor walked up the hill, a guy named Peter Garuba, and he said, "Come on down." He said, "At least we have water. I'll boil a pot of spaghetti and we'll have dinner

together.” I said, “Oh, thank you God.” So we go down and you know how you -- this is a guy we’d pass every day, but we’d never really sat and drank wine and talked. So I said, “Peter, where did you grow up?” “Oh, I grew up in Brooklyn.” “Really? Hmm. Where in Brooklyn did you grow up?” “Oh, kind of Bushwick/Ridgewood.” “Where did you grow up?” And he’s about eight or nine years younger than I am. “Oh, a little street. Covert Street in Brooklyn.” I said, “Covert Street?” I said, “I grew up on Covert Street.” He said, “You did?” He said, “Well, where did you live?” I said, “On the corner of Knickerbocker and Covert.” He said, “Opposite the Bohack’s?” which was the grocery store. I said, “Bohack’s, oh my God, I haven’t heard --” I said, “Wait a minute. Did you know somebody named Laborio Fasulo” [30:00] He said, “You knew Laborio?” I said, “Oh my God, she was like my closest friend.” He said, “Did you know my sister --” what the hell was her name -- “Monica Garuba?” No, it wasn’t Monica, but it was something -- I said -- Claudette. Claudette Garuba. I said, “Yeah.” He said, “That was my sister.” He lived, like, two blocks down, on Covert, in these big brownstones that I used to walk past every day to get the bus on Wilson Avenue to go to school. So here we are, we live a quarter of a mile apart, on a road in Rockland County, and this guy -- we may have passed on the street, and he knew Laborio Fasulo, and when she went into the nunnery, and we had this whole discuss-- and he knew Father Hendle at the church. I mean, it was, like, in the middle of a storm, with no electricity, we’re sitting in this guys house, and we finally -- he said, “Wait, I have to call my sister.” And he had his cell phone, he was charging it in the car. We called her up and he said, “You’re not going to believe who’s sitting here. Remember Dr. Feigenheimer?” She said, “Oh yeah, I was afraid. We used to go to him for shots.” He said, “His oldest daughter is my neighbor

and she's sitting here." I mean, how weird is life? You know, how strange can things get? So now, of course, we're friends with them, and we're going to Shakespeare and up at --

CHARIS SHAFER: I'd love to interview them.

JUNE KAPLAN: Oh, he --

CHARIS SHAFER: That would be amazing.

JUNE KAPLAN: Oh, that would be great!

CHARIS SHAFER: That would be amazing!

JUNE KAPLAN: Because he is now -- well, he was in television, and he was -- and he's now in real estate. But he really is an actor, and he's very active in Elmwood Playhouse. And we just saw a play that he directed. He is charming, and lovely, and from Brooklyn.

CHARIS SHAFER: Perfect.

JUNE KAPLAN: And he's a good -- I will definitely speak to him, because he is -- he's a lovely guy. He married a very interesting woman, who's a chiropractor, and she practices Eastern medicine. She has a doctorate or something in, you know, of course, Warren says it's, like, fru fru, but, you know, whatever gets -- you know, I think there's room in this world for just about anything. But yes, Peter is from Brooklyn. I will definitely -- I will talk to him, and then I'll give you -- or give him your email?

CHARIS SHAFER: Yes.

JUNE KAPLAN: And put you in con-- he's also, he's very -- he's sweet, he's charming, it'll be an excuse to get up here again.

CHARIS SHAFER: Yeah, absolutely.

JUNE KAPLAN: Oh yeah, no, that's such -- I mean, this was in the midst of this horrible storm. I mean, we had so much damage on the whole Hudson River. I don't know if -- you know, you in Brooklyn thought you got it bad, but --

CHARIS SHAFER: We were lucky, because we live in the Heights, so --

JUNE KAPLAN: Nothing, huh?

CHARIS SHAFER: -- we didn't see anything.

JUNE KAPLAN: We had more trees uprooted. And if you ever get to Piermont, that town was decimated. I mean, all the restaurants, there was eight feet of water in houses along the Hudson. I mean, this storm, I still think about it, you know, and it was just -- and my son-in-law came up from Brooklyn, because he wanted to be with us. He didn't want to be alone. I think Molly was away, she was in California on a trip, so he came and stayed with us. And of course, with no water, you can't flush the toilets. And by, like, Wednesday I said, "David, we're taking you back to Brooklyn as long as I can shower." And of course where they live, they had heat, hot water, they had -- you know, all we could think about was a shower. Really after two days I'm not good without a shower.

CHARIS SHAFER: No.

JUNE KAPLAN: No.

CHARIS SHAFER: It's -- you can feel it. (laughter)

JUNE KAPLAN: It's not fun. It's not fun going in and filling up -- I went to work and I got one of those bottles that you turn upside down on a, you know, like a Poland Spring bottle. And we would fill it up at Peter's house and drag it up the hill, because there was a tree over the driveway with live wires in it.

CHARIS SHAFER: Oh no.

JUNE KAPLAN: I tell you, a week without electricity -- and we were lucky. Once they were able to take the tree down we had electricity again. But not fun.

CHARIS SHAFER: Yeah, I've done some interviews with people closer to, like, the Sheep's Head Bay area.

JUNE KAPLAN: Oh, yeah.

CHARIS SHAFER: One guy who's an artist, who lost all of his paintings that he'd stored in his basement. It's really sad.

JUNE KAPLAN: Oh, that's horrible.

CHARIS SHAFER: Yeah, but they feel lucky, because they still have their house and they still have their car, because they left. Their car wasn't flooded.

JUNE KAPLAN: Well, there are people along this -- the Hudson on both -- on this side [35:00] as well as the Rockland side, who just -- everything. In fact, I looked at a house - - I've sort of been thinking about buying a little house in Piermont, on a marsh that is so beautiful, but it's in the flood plane, and it had five feet of water. And every night with high tide the water comes -- in fact, Peter Garuba was the realtor that I called and said, "Peter, I want to look at this house." He said, "You're crazy. Forget about it." You know, but it was -- it just -- the damage was staggering and frightening, you know. And we live on a hill. We're up 600 ft and -- so we had just loss of services, but no actual -- you know, a couple of trees came down, but I'll tell you the -- I do some cri-- I do crisis work so I've been down at Lamont Doherty, which is the geological institute on 9W. And I talked to, what did he say? I'm not a weather person, I'm a meteorologist or some- - he made some distinction, but he said that we will see increasingly devastating storms.

CHARIS SHAFER: I believe it.

JUNE KAPLAN: Yup.

CHARIS SHAFER: I believe it. It's the earth, I think, trying to tell us something.

JUNE KAPLAN: Yes, we have screwed with the earth. And I know Molly and David were thinking about Red Hook. And David wanted to buy some property. He said, "Oh, it's so fabulous. Why don't you come in? Buy it with us." And thank God -- you know, I said, "David, you don't want to still do this do you?" But it would have been -- it was right before that storm, you know. Brooklyn is not -- you know, Brooklyn has a lot of water, you know, around parts of it, and we just, we can't take this stuff for granted. You know, we really -- not in my lifetime, but probably in my grandson's lifetime, they will experience more and more adverse weather, you know, really, really terrible stuff. But, yeah, Brooklyn, we -- I mean, I didn't go to Brooklyn for years. You know, once I was out, that was it.

CHARIS SHAFER: Yeah. Can I take you back?

JUNE KAPLAN: Yeah.

CHARIS SHAFER: I'm just interested, because you said that you did have this best friend that was -- was she part of the Italian-American --

JUNE KAPLAN: Yes, she was.

CHARIS SHAFER: -- contingent? Can you talk a little bit about that relationship and just what you remember?

JUNE KAPLAN: Well, she was my best friend from probably the time I was, like, five, probably until I went to high school. High school, it was like I shifted from these neighborhood -- because they didn't -- they weren't thinking about college. I think Joanne may have gotten married, like, right out of high school. And they went to

Catholic high school, and then I went to this big city school, and I made friends with a whole new group of people. So, but up until that point, I mean, every day, you know, go out the front door -- and we shared -- we had these brick porches, and just across was her porch. But, you know, again, when your parents have nothing to do with the families, it's very hard to maintain a friendship once you've gone out into the big world. And a lot of the girls that I knew were getting married, like, in high school. You know, they did. And I lost track of the Melia girls completely. There was Joanne, Lorraine, who was friends with my sister Irene, was there a third kid? I don't even remember. But it was like as soon as I could travel alone of public transportation, I was, like, out of there. And once I started to go to Wingate I was active in the -- I was the newspaper -- on the newspaper. And all my friends were sort of involved in that stuff. I never really was into sports. Are we dying?

CHARIS SHAFER: Well, I just noticed we're getting close to dying. We should probably pause.

JUNE KAPLAN: OK, you can pause it. [39:21]

END OF AUDIO FILE

CHARIS SHAFER: [00:00] And then also, oh, I think we had started talking about that, and then you had brought something else up and I think I interrupted you, and I can't remember what that was. Oh, maybe you could just talk about the other families that were in that area, in your block area?

JUNE KAPLAN: OK. Well, since we, you know, since there was nothing we did with our families together, it was just what we saw. I mean, the family I knew the best, I think,

was the Melias. And -- because we shared all the walls in the house, and although they were probably cement, the windows in the -- you know, as soon as it got nice, the windows were open. And, you know, they were very -- he drank, and when he drank he was abusive, but he was a good family man. In fact, I don't even know what he does. I remember his name was Tony, Tony Melia. Maybe he did construction. Maybe Peter would remember. And I just remember that that's where I got to eat all these different foods. I got to eat capozzelle, which is lamb's head. It's a very traditional thing that I think -- I forget what holiday Italians eat lamb's head. And I would taste everything, but my grandmother made lung stew, she made tripe, so I got -- and I was like one of those kids who would eat it. And I would say, "Yeah, I'll taste that." And they would make tripe, but it was completely different. It was spicy, red sauce, and my grandmother made, like, a cream sauce with bay leaves and, you know, it was very much European. But I still remember eating capozzelle and he said, "Do you want the eye balls?" And I said, "No, I'll pass on the eye balls." But they ate completely different food. You know, we ate Eastern European food and they had Italian food, and I still feel like that's why I love Italian food so much.

But they were good. I forget who cooked. I guess Joanne's mom was the cook. She never worked. It was such a di-- my mother did -- she went on these lecture tours where she would go to colleges, so she was gone sometimes a week, two weeks, and we had my grandparents, but we also had, like, we had nanny. Not a nanny, it wasn't called a nanny. We had people who would come in and do ironing, and that was totally unheard of in -- you know, none of the neighbors ever did anything like that. So that was part of what

sort of made us different, was that we had baby nurses when -- when Aviva was born we had a baby nurse, and we had somebody who came at least three days a week to -- I don't know what the hell they did -- but they -- you know, that was sort of set us apart as well. And they used to say, "Oh, you have a maid," and I would say, "Oh no, that's just Harriet," or, you know, whoever it was. I mean, the whole concept, I didn't know what a maid was. But there was definitely that difference between, you know, our European family and this -- I think we -- I never felt American. You know, it didn't feel like we were the same as, you know, the people around us. I don't know if I appreciated that until I got older, you know. I think when you're young, you really -- you want to be just like everyone else. And in the setting we were in, that was impossible. You know, we were just never going to be the same as these people.

I think that, thinking back on it, I think the fact they accepted my dad and there was never any judgment on his drinking, which was fine, because I certainly had judgments to make about it, you know. I would have liked a dad who was not drunk all the time. But after 4:00 o'clock, you know, you kind of, that was it, you know. I actually wrote an article for *17 Magazine* when I was, like, 16, 17 that was published. And I got to -- I was interviewed on Mike Wallace and one of those morning shows, I don't even remember. Harry Reasoner, Mary Fickett had a morning show. I mean, the first time I submitted it to *17* they didn't want to hear about it. And the second time I submitted it I wrote, like, a cover letter saying I'm in college now, and I can tell you that many, many of my friends and people that I meet have had, you know, alcoholism in their families, and, you know, girls today -- I mean, *17* was a girls' magazine -- don't want to read about [05:00] buying

sheets and stuff like that. I mean, why don't you talk about something that's really important? And then they -- then I guess an editor had changed, and they got -- they not only bought the piece and published it, but then they got on the bandwagon you see. We're so, you know, we're talking to teens where they really are. And I feel like, in some ways, you know, it was the first reality piece that I had ever seen. And of course I disguised myself, and I said he was -- my dad was a lawyer, but -- and after they put me on TV that night, I went to school the next day -- I was at Queens -- and people kept coming up to me and saying, "You know, do you watch --" what the hell was that show? Was it *The Late Show*? I don't remember what show, I have a recording of it. And people would say, "Did you see, there was this girl on talking about her dad, but she said her dad was a lawyer and he had an alcohol problem, so I know it couldn't be your dad, because your dad's a doctor, but God, it sounded just like you." And my voice is like an imprint. I mean, I hate listening to myself, because it's so -- it's such a dead giveaway. I could never call in and disguise my voice and say, you know, ask a question, because everyone would know I had done it, because people came up to me all day in school. "God, there was this girl on," and, you know, and they got me a wig. They got me a blonde wig and they got me these, like, clear glasses, and my dad actually watched it. And I came home and I said, "So," you know, "what did you think?" He said, "You were so good. You were so --" it was like, eh, right over his head. You know, it's, like, trying to make some impact on the whole thing. And after that I think I had given up on making an impact, you know. It's just, it's a disease that needs specific treatment and, you know, he wasn't up for it. Then he got throat cancer and at the end he couldn't drink. So it was like his last six months of his life he was sober, which was sad, you know. He was a

really good guy and, you know, died so young. I mean, my older son remembers him. David was, like, two and a half, so he really has no memories of my dad at all.

But, yeah, we were very different from our neighbors. There was, you know, there was none of the camaraderie that you think of in a neighborhood today, in terms of a block party -- we didn't even do that, I don't think. But my mother was always somewhat standoffish, so the women -- you know, and she was busy talking about, "Oh, and I just got published. And I wrote a poem." And it was, like, yeah really? I did the laundry. You know, or making gravy, I'm making meatballs today. I still remember running up and down and playing, and the smell of garlic, which is why I use so much garlic. Yes, I'm into garlic. My brother-in-law, Kip, said, "If you could find a way to make oatmeal with garlic, you would. You'd find a way to make it good." But, so there was no real interaction in the families, just the kids. We had friends and nothing lasted. I don't think Irene or Aviva has any contact with anybody. The first time I ever really thought of it was during the storm, and Sandy, when Peter and I discovered we grew up two blocks away from each other. It's so amazing that he was -- you know, to think that we could have crossed paths, and that I knew his sister, Claudette, just blows me away.

CHARIS SHAFER: I know, that's so fascinating. And so how was that group of people different from your high school group of people? Like, where did they come from and culturally --

JUNE KAPLAN: Most of them, I would say, most of my friends -- what I discovered was they were Jewish kids. And although we were not really raised in a Jewish way, I kind of, like, gravitated towards them. So most of my friends from high school, not all, but

most -- my first boyfriend was black. So it was, like, I just gravitated towards these kids, because I was in all their classes, and we were on, you know, we were in Arista, which was the, like, the, whatever, the honor society. And it was just these kids, we had commonalities in terms of school. I don't think I really looked for Jewish friends, and I don't have, in my circle of friends, religion has never been an issue. [10:00] But they were definitely different. Two of my friends had sort of handicapped or disabled parent-- one parent. Like, my best friend in high school was a girl named Susan Kahane, with whom I am still in touch. And Susan's mother, I don't know what was wrong with Susan's mother. I think she was definitely agoraphobic. She never got out of her housecoat, I don't think. We don't even have those things anymore, but it was like this cotton thing. She never went outside. You know, we'd get a call, you know, she would -- Susan would call home from a phone booth and say, "Should I pick up anything?" And we would go to her house and her mother was never dressed. You know, and I'd sleep over at their houses, and I got introduced to real Jewish food, like matzo brei, which I make to this day. But, you know, it was a very different ethnic group. My friend Barbara Bernstein, who I'm also still friends with, is -- her dad had -- I guess he had PTSD from World War II, and he was sort of not functional. He had a real war injury, but he also had some definite damage. I don't know if he landed on the beach at Normandy, I don't remember, but I remember he never went out. So I met people who really -- you know, whose families had -- I guess I was comfortable because I could say to them, well, my dad drinks, and I remember being -- you know, that was a big thing. That's how I knew that I was going to be your friend, if I felt comfortable sharing that piece of information. And when I went to high school I remember going to my guidance counselor, Mrs.

Goldstein, and I remember saying to her, “You know, I think my dad has a drinking problem.” And she said, “Ach, Junola,” she said, “it’s not possible.” And I said, “Why is that?” (phone ringing) Do you want to pause it?

CHARIS SHAFER: Sure.

JUNE KAPLAN: I’ll just see who this is.

BREAK IN AUDIO

CHARIS SHAFER: All right.

JUNE KAPLAN: Oh, the, yes, my guidance counselor.

CHARIS SHAFER: Your guidance counselor, yes.

JUNE KAPLAN: Yes, and she said, “Oh, he cannot be an alcoholic, because --” and I said, “What do you mean?” She said, “Well, first of all, he’s a doctor, and second of all, he’s Jewish.” And I thought, OK, no help there. And it’s so funny to me that, you know, people really believe that stuff. So --

CHARIS SHAFER: So I was going to ask you as you were bringing up other Jewish families that you encountered, did you feel like their expression of Judaism was different from your -- the expression of Judaism in your family?

JUNE KAPLAN: Oh definitely. I mean, the people I met in high school were what I call real Jews. I mean, they -- a couple of them were Shabbos observers, and we never kept Shabbos. My grandmother was really raised Orthodox, and when they came to this country -- you know, the traditional story. They came over with a quarter, and they ate -- I guess they ate pork and beans with the little pieces of pork, and we had ham in our house, and we had bacon, but we never had a pork chop. You know, Judaism is one of those diseases -- one of those religions where you can find every shade of purple and pink

-- or anything -- everybody makes a -- oh, kosher in the house, only, you know, no shellfish, no pork, but they eat everything out. We ate everything out, but never had pork in the house -- except for ham and bacon. Like, how stupid is that? But I met people who had kosher homes, and that was the first time I'd ever, you know, had that experience. Yeah, there was very different -- it was a, what I would call, more traditional Judaism. And my -- other than dragging us to Hebrew School for a year or two, we really, you know, we talked about it, but it was more in the light of the Holocaust. It was more in "we are Jews and we're defined by Judaism, because we were thrown out of our homeland." And I really when -- now, today, I keep Passover, because that's when -- that's the only holiday that all the kids will come to us. Everybody -- Warren's three girls had bat mitzvahs, but the two son-in-laws, but one's Catholic and one is Protestant. I don't know, Wolf is Catholic, I guess, if Lee marries him. So they, you know, we split the other holidays, but [15:00] Passover is ours. I have the dubious honor of cooking for 25 people. But, so I think, you know, I think I met a different group of people in high school and that felt -- I felt much more at home in that group than the people in -- and then there was the -- there was an educational aspect to it, because my little friends from Covert Street were either pregnant, having babies. They were -- I remember when my friend Monica had her first child and it was like, first I had to get over the fact she had sex. It's like, really, huh, what's that about? You know, and then she was having a baby. And it was like, oh my God. You know, I was a very different group of people. You know, my friends in high school, compared to high school today, we were saints. We talked a lot, but we, you know, only a couple of people had boyfriends. Those were the fast girls. I mean, this is what we talked -- I mean, this is the '60s, you know. This was,

well, it was '57 to '61. I know in college a couple people got pregnant. By college, you know, we sort of all caught up, but certainly in high school there were -- we had a couple of gay people in high school. We knew what that was, but they were very -- there was a guy named John, who was in the -- I was also in the chorus and all that stuff. But it wasn't a big deal, because he was always the way he was, but there was certainly not as much of an acceptance in that, you know, it was very middle-class, you know, experience in high school. But I felt much, much more in my element. Also I felt that people accepted the eccentric-ness of our family. They thought it was interesting. Nobody cared that my father drank, they all thought it was cool that my mother was a writer. You know, that was, like, and nobody in Brooklyn, well, we were still in Brooklyn, but --

CHARIS SHAFER: Right, that was a different part of Brooklyn.

JUNE KAPLAN: Yes, very different.

CHARIS SHAFER: I'm interested about the demographics of that school, because you talked a little bit about it, but.

JUNE KAPLAN: Well, the school was in a funny area. I mean, we had a very -- we had a big black population, but those -- the black kids were either basketball players -- and we had a big basketball school -- or they were in gangs. So, like, we -- I was, like, afraid of a lot of these kids. They -- I didn't go to the bathroom -- I mean, I'm sure I did, but for four years I avoided going to a bathroom at Wingate, because there was just so much gang activity. And then the Jewish kids were sort of -- they were in Arista, they were -- and obviously we had non-Jews as well, but it was a real inner-city school. We had a little bit of everything. We had great teachers. We had great teachers. I mean, I had a French teacher who was phenomenal, chemistry, I mean, it was a really, really good

school, city school. And it's funny, I met Mr. Reisner my chemistry teacher, up in Rockland County once in a store. I had my little -- two little boys with me, and I said, "Mr. Reisner?" He said, "Ms. Feigenheimer?" And I said, "Oh my God," it's like, "What are you doing here?" And he said, "Oh, I moved out of the city," and, you know, he -- and he said, "You can call me Charlie." I said, "No, I can't! I can't, I can't call you --" and he said, "Who are these?" I said, "These are my kids," you know. I had kids very young. But it was so amazing to see him out of that environment, like, you know, teachers don't go to the bathroom, they don't go shopping, you know, they don't do any of that stuff. But I guess the -- there's always that piece of me that's Brooklyn, because I just have to open my mouth. When I was -- I was working in Alaska on an air base up in Anchorage and one of the commanders, he would come up to me and say, "What's that brown stuff that people drink in the morning? Coffee?" You know, and they'd always make me say something stupid, because they thought it was funny. But, yeah, I don't think I can really get away from it too much, too quickly.

CHARIS SHAFER: You talked a little bit about it before, but would you -- could you go into your experience in Germany? What brought you to Germany and --

JUNE KAPLAN: Oh, sure. I work for -- worked for a behavioral health care company, and in 2004 the chaplains, the -- all the social work services, [20:00] all the psychological services were overwhelmed with these families that were on bases, and the soldiers -- most of them were men, but there were some women -- were deployed and they kept holding them back. They'd get on the tarmac to fly back and then they'd get recalled. So they were actually deployed for 15 months, and this left, you know, the rear-d is, you know, rear detachment of families on these bases, mostly young, many of them had never

left the United States. A lot of these, the guys who had enlisted had done so in response to 9/11. I want to serve my country, and none of them knew what they were doing in Iraq. I mean, none of them had any idea how bad it was going to be, how difficult, and the families were stuck on these bases in Germany. And most of these young women never wanted to drive, they never wanted to get off the base -- they didn't speak the language. So, you know, an Army base is a self-contained thing, and if you go to the PX and you go to the commissary, you never have to leave the base. You have all these services right there. But there was so much going on with the families that, in its wisdom, somehow, the Department of Defense contacted MHN and said, "Can you get us 20 therapists to come up and just be ancillary services to our chaplains and to mental health?" And I got called to go and it was amazing. It was amazing to be in Germany, it was amazing to ride on the -- on all these nice roads with good cars, on the A4 or the A9, and all these great things -- but it was amazing to -- for me to step out of a plane and understand all the languages and, you know, just be comfortable going to a restaurant. At one point I wrote out a translation menu for people, because there were, you know, we were all deployed to different bases and we'd get together at the beginning and I gave this out and said, "OK, this is what this is, this is --" you know, if I'm a vegetarian, there were a couple of vegetarians. Well, you know, Germany is, like, very into organic, very into, you know, not putting crap in your food, and so it was an amazing experience. And I remember calling Aviva and saying, "Get yourself together. You've got to come out and work with the kids," because I was just doing a lot of marital counseling and working with the families. And so she -- I was on team one, she did team two or three.

And then over the years I tried to go away not more than twice or three times, because what I was experiencing when I was coming home was that I had the same disconnect as the soldiers were having. Like, they'd come home and it was like, and who are you? And then the spouses had been without their husbands, and occasionally a wife, and they had gotten very comfortable taking care of the house. And then the, you know, man of the house would come back and say, "OK, I'm taking over," and there would be, you know, World War III. So it was fascinating. And I am so grateful that I've had that experience, because I was in Italy, and I was in Germany maybe five times. I was in Hawaii. I was in Alaska three times. Where else did I go? All over Germany, Belgium - - I was on a NATO base, one of these things that was in a, like, a building with mirrors. It was a high-secret thing, and people said to me, "Do people really come to talk to you?" They certainly did, because we didn't take notes. There were no -- there's no documentation. So they could come in and other than spousal abuse, child abuse, suicide, or homicide, they could talk about anything. At one point before Don't Ask, Don't Tell was revoked, there was a thing in the Air Force that said we were supposed to report anyone who came out. And of course we had, what, maybe 4,000 consultants by then. Not one person ever reported somebody saying they were gay. And in the Air Force, that's the only branch of the service that had, you know, had that rule. And that's where most of the people came out, was in the Air Force. Not in the Army, I mean, it ha-- you know, but it was so funny. I remember sitting under a tree in Hawaii, way off by the flight line, [25:00] meeting a commander who said, "You know, it really has to be private. You sure it's pri--" I said, "Yes, it's definitely," I said, "I have a license. I'm not willing to blow my license just," you know. And, you know, I just remember looking out

at the water and just trying to comfort this guy and say, "Listen, it's really all right." You know, "There's a world out there that accepts many lifestyles. You happen to be in the military, but, you know, the rest of the world is not having the same kinds of pro--" -- well, maybe that's not 100% true, but certainly my experience of the world is that it's not an issue. But -- so we really had -- there were no defined roles. We sort of created this safe place where people could come and talk about pretty much anything, and the program, which was initially a pilot is now a -- it's an established program. So it's like, it runs under the radar and parallel to mental health services. If you go to mental health, you will create a record, so this gives people an opportunity to talk about issues without having any impact on their career. And there's always, you know, there's always somebody who says, "Well, this isn't really private or confidential," but, I mean, I personally have seen hundreds of people and there's never been breach of confidentiality ever, you know.

So, I mean, I'm so proud that the program was accepted and my understanding of the military, which was like this big -- I still have trouble with rank, for some reason. Unless it's something obvious, like, it's a two-star general, I still, if it's a sergeant, it's an NCO, or any sergeant (inaudible). But it's been, for me it's been, like, a life-changing experience to work, you know, with the military. And I've met some incredibly cool women, strong women, who are just really stepped up to the plate when their soldiers were gone or their airman was gone. I met a couple of idiots too, but I had no idea there was so much diversity, and so much creativity, and people willing to listen, and willing to open up to something. It's almost like, you know, when Tony Soprano, may he rest in peace, talks to his therapist and that whole -- I think that was the gift of

that program, which I think was genius (inaudible) was the concept that, you know, it's OK to talk to a therapist. It's OK to, you know, there are times where everybody needs a listening ear, and I can't think of anything short of the mafia that is less inclined to talk, you know, honestly and openly about issues than the military. And yet -- I actually had an office in the Pentagon when I worked at the Pentagon.

JUNE KAPLAN: That was amazing to work in the Pentagon. You know, I -- that's one of those times I would have loved for my mother to be around, because while she had no use for the military, she would have understood how amazing it was to have, you know, to just have the access to such an important place. It was amazing. Every time I badged in and went through security I kept thinking, "Do they know my mother's, like, a Communist -- was a Communist?" Obviously they didn't or they didn't care, you know, so that was a very exciting posting. I sort of split my time between Bolling Air Force Base and the Pentagon. Yeah, it was very -- you know, people say, "Oh, you're a social worker," and I think, "You don't know shit." You know, there's so much -- you can do so much with that degree. You know, I've worked with handi-- physically handicapped, mentally handicapped, military, you know, retarded people -- not in that order -- a lot of work with companies, [30:00] you know, the employee assistance part of it. Oh, I have -- I've really -- I really feel like I've had a fun job that I enjoy doing, and people should -- you know, when people say, "I'm going to go for a PhD in Psychology," I think, "Wow, it's a lot of years, you know, maybe you want to think about an MSW," because certainly you can make a living at it. More than a living. You know, and it's fun. You know, it's a great privilege to listen to peoples' issues and hopefully give them sort of the tools they

need to do something better with their lives, you know, get themselves together, and --
but I'm sort of mindful of time, only because I have to get down to Jersey, but --

CHARIS SHAFER: Well, I can make this the last question.

JUNE KAPLAN: OK.

CHARIS SHAFER: I was just curious if visited any of your family sites in Germany?

JUNE KAPLAN: Oh, absolutely. Absolute-- one summer Aviva and I did a short program in the schools, and I actually worked in a school -- I don't really have that background. So she was on a base in Schweinfurt and I was on a base in Wurzburg, which was maybe 35 kilometers apart, and on the weekends we went to my mother's birthplace. We didn't go to my father's, I had already done that, but we went to a little museum in Bayreuth and they had my mother's report card. And I also met a guy -- there's several people who've written about Germany -- women from Germany, Jewish poets who wrote about their experience. So there were a couple of people I've met who've done doctoral dissertations including some of my mother's work, so we definitely -- we spent a lot of time in Bayreuth. It's a gorgeous little town. And the building that my grandfather owned is still there. In fact, a friend of mine is there right now, in Bamberg, and I said, "Oh, go look at this house," and, you know. Germany is such a surprise to me in terms of, you know, coming from a background where Hitler was, like, this gray shadow that sort of, you know, was constantly present to going to Germany and seeing what an advanced society, what -- I mean, I've been to Berlin. It's the most phenomenal city. You guys should go. I told Julia, get a gig and go to Berlin. It's an amazing city. The east side -- you know, it's just -- the museums are incredible, the food is to die for, people are friendly and outgoing. You sit outside, cheers, cheers, everybody's -- you don't have

to speak German. It's just, it's a very, I think, a very advanced place and very fun to visit. And if you speak the language it's like, it's 100% more fun. Although I wanted to speak German and practice my German, as soon as they heard me speak in German, they said, "Oh, you're from the United States, let's talk English," you know, which is always a bummer. But it was amazing to visit some of the places that -- I went to the -- we went to the school, which was closed of course, but we walked -- literally walked -- in the footsteps that my mother would have had to take from the house that she lived in to go to school. We went to the place she got her Jean Paul Prize. Yeah, we did, we definitely -- we called it "Googling Hilda." But, you know, it was, like, it was what we needed to do. I mean, it was -- and that I could do it with my sister was, like, oh, it was the best. It was like, you know, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We worked together. We love to do that. We've done several military weekends together and it's just such a fun thing to be able to work with a -- do you have sisters? Brothers?

CHARIS SHAFER: I have one brother.

JUNE KAPLAN: It's nice to have siblings, you know.

CHARIS SHAFER: It is. I wish I were closer.

JUNE KAPLAN: Yeah.

CHARIS SHAFER: Out in LA.

JUNE KAPLAN: Oh, but that's a great place.

CHARIS SHAFER: It's a great place to visit. We're out there a lot.

JUNE KAPLAN: Yeah, no, I like LA. Irene is -- well, she used to live in LA, now she lives in Palm Desert, where I believe it's 118 today. So we're, like, chill here. This is not so bad, you know.

CHARIS SHAFER: (laughter) This is great compared to that.

JUNE KAPLAN: To that, yeah, that's really brutal. I mean, I've been out there when the dog can't walk on the, you know, pavement, [35:00] because it's too hot for her little toesies. But, you know, if you have any questions that come up and stuff --

CHARIS SHAFER: Sure.

JUNE KAPLAN: -- I can always email, and I will definitely ask Peter if he's interested.

CHARIS SHAFER: That would be great.

JUNE KAPLAN: I mean, he's just -- he'd be a natural. He'd be really -- he's very easy to talk to, and he's fun, and he's always doing a million different things, and --

CHARIS SHAFER: That sounds great. I think it would be great to get both sides of that childhood experience.

JUNE KAPLAN: About Covert Street, yes. The illustrious Covert Street.

CHARIS SHAFER: All right, well, thanks so much, June. I'm going to --

JUNE KAPLAN: Oh, you're so welcome.

CHARIS SHAFER: -- turn it off now.

JUNE KAPLAN: Thank -- [35:39]

END OF AUDIO FILE