Oral History Center
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Malca Chall

Wage Rate Analyst for the War Labor Board, World War II
East Bay Community Activist
Interviewer/Editor for the Regional Oral History Office, 1967-2000

Rosie the Riveter
WWII American Home Front Oral History Project

This interview series was funded in part by a contract with the National Park Service, and with the support of individual donors.

Interview conducted by
Ann Lage
in 2015

Since 1954 the Oral History Center has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the nation. Oral History is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is bound with photographs and illustrative materials and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

****

It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Malca Chall, “Wage Rate Analyst for the War Labor Board, World War II; East Bay Community Activist;Interviewer/Editor for the Regional Oral History Office, 1967-2000. Rosie the Riveter WWII American Home Front Oral History Project” conducted by Ann Lage in 2015, Oral History Center, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2017.

Malca Chall, December 1965

Malca on left, sister Josephine, brother Herman Kleiner.
Photo taken for parents' 25th wedding anniversary, 1944

Wage rate analysts and secretarial staff , National War Labor Board 12th Region
Malca Chall seated holding telephone. Mary Roberts right front

Office of the wage rate analysts

Malca Chall and Elizabeth Brown striding the streets of New York City, 1946

BRYANT PUPILS ...ACEL IN SPELLING

...Bryant school children did ...iss a word in spelling during ...rst quarter's work. Those at...ng this distinction are Barbara ...one, Marcella Carbone, Cath...e Copeland, Carl Dial, Charlotte ...n, Betty Hubbell, Malca Kleiner, ...h Rindero and Jaunit Sides.

...A nurse?—Malca Kleiner, 10, 5-A Bryant student.

"Although I don't know for sure," she replies in addition. "Ever since I was small I have wanted to be a nurse. Maybe a teacher. That seems nice. You'd get to travel, and I like traveling. I've been to Montreal." Malca is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Morris Kleiner, 1508 North 6th street.

Malca Kleiner Wins Trophy

The Council of Jewish Juniors is pleased to announce that the winner of the essay contest is Malca Kleiner, ten-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Morris Kleiner, 1508 North 6th street. Miss Malca was presented with a handsomely engraved cup at the joint meeting of the junior and senior sections on Tuesday evening, May 5.

MISS MALCA KLEINER

Miss Malca Kleiner, Tacoma senior at Reed college, was elected president of Anna Mann house this week.

Miss Kleiner, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Morris Kleiner, 1508 North 6th, is a member of the student council at Reed. She is also winner of the Armitage Fund competition in Oregon history which was held last spring. Her essay, "A Comparison of the Oregon Provisional Government With the Other Provisional Governments of the West," placed first in the undergraduate division.

TACOMANS IN DANCE PROGRAM

Miss Barbara English, daughter of F. J. English, and Miss Malca Kleiner, daughter of Mr. and Morris Kleiner, 1508 North 6th, appeared in a modern dance program at Reed college, Wednesday. Miss English demonstrated the fundamentals of modern dance technique. Miss Kleiner was featured in "Election Campaign" and "Bargain Counter," two original class compositions.

MISS MALCA KLEINER GIVES TEA

Miss Malca Kleiner entertained 30 members of her graduating class of Stadium high school for tea Saturday afternoon at her home, 1508 North 6th. She was assisted by Misses Peggy Jean Binns, Gladys Brodsky, Griselda Lyon and Hazel Roti.

ROOMER RUMOR

We've just met a woman wonder—in the city of roomless roomers. She's Malca Kleiner, who arrived in Seattle last week to take a job as a junior economist with the WLB. She wasn't in Seattle more than three hours when four separate persons offered her a room. It wasn't even a case of coercion—it must have been the Kleiner personality. Right now she is vacillating. Wonder what kindhearted soul she will honor?

From the *Tacoma News Tribune*, 1930-1943

Malca Chall in 1969 leading a delegation of parents from Castro Valley school district, protesting diminished school funding. Malca shown here speaking on capitol steps, with Assemblyman Carlos Bee at her side. At one point in her speech, Malca cited a recent article criticizing how Governor Reagan spent his time and then spontaneously declared that the parents would not leave until Governor Reagan came out to meet with them.

In the second photo, Reagan appears.

They 'interview notables for history'

By BARI BRENNER

Two Castro Valley women are among a small select group of dedicated people in this area working to preserve history that potentially could escape recording as each day passes.

Mrs. Hilary G. Fry and Mrs. Harold Chall work for the Regional Oral History Office of the Bancroft Library at the University of California. They conduct interviews — some of which are years-long — with senior citizens who have made significant contributions to western history.

In addition to the tape-recorded interviews, they edit and index the tapes and compile illustrative materials on the individual and subject. References are bound into a volume, copies of which are made available to libraries and research institutes around the world.

* * *

THE IMPORTANCE OF preserving this history is emphasized by Mrs. Fry. "We can't tell from papers and documents of the time alone, just how (important) decisions were made and how certain things came about. We need to actually talk to persons involved to get the full story."

The best historical writers pride themselves on their ability to recreate events or eras, but nothing can compare in tone, feeling, or authenticity to the spoken words of those who experienced the events themselves, she pointed out. And many fail to write their memoirs, either from a sense of modesty, the press of other activities, or lack of inclination to write.

Noted Mrs. Chall, "In the year 2000, there's going to be some pretty interesting things revealed." Interviewees occasionally may ask that their interviews be sealed for stipulated lengths of time. They feel some of their disclosures may be too sensitive in nature to be released now.

* * *

MOST INTERVIEWS are conducted as part of a series on a particular subject. Mrs. Chall has been working on one series of interviews with old-time sanitation engineers, for example, which was commissioned by the Water Resources Center at University of California, Los Angeles. Other interviews take place because of an individual's role in a time or place. Mrs. Fry talked to Sara Bard Field, a leading California poet, for instance, who was also extremely active in the Suffragette movement in the early part of this century.

Mrs. Fry also has written an article about Mrs. Field's 1914 speaking tour in which she criss-crossed the United States by automobile, urging that women be given the vote. She met the governors of each state and mayors of nearly all the cities along the way.

The interviews cannot be conducted unless they are funded by some source. The university provides a budgetary stipend only or minimum basic expenses. There are some individuals who need to be interviewed before they die, Mrs. Fry feels, lest their knowledge and experience in matters of historical significance is lost forever.

* * *

"PEOPLE ARE JUST learning—with the search for resources on such things as the place of women in history and the history of minority groups — that this kind of data is invaluable," Mrs. Fry noted. In these cases, the women hunt for some foundation, "friend of the library" or educational institution which might be interested in funding the research.

Mrs. Fry is the current chairman of a study on "The Earl Warren Years in California," for which the Oral History Office searches for funding for some six years. She will oversee the interviewing, editing and catalaguing of material from 80 individuals, important in relationship to Earl Warren from the time he was an Oakland district attorney to his Supreme Court appointment. The project is being funded by a grant from the National Endowment for Humanities in Washington D.C., with a conditional offer to add to the grant on a matching basis, so the women are always "on the look-out" for potential contributors.

* * *

MRS. CHALL IS ONE of the women in the 11-staff member office who will be assisting Mrs. Fry in the study.

Amelia (Chita) Fry became associated with the office 12 years ago when she and her family moved to California from Chicago. Her husband is a professor in public administration at Cal State, Hayward. He has just been named director of the National Drug Abuse Training Center for the western United States. She had taught English, writing and research techniques at the college level after earning her bachelor's degree in English from the University of Oklahoma and a master's degree in the same field from the University of Illinois. She admitted she "wasn't very big in history in college. I thought it was boring and avoided history courses as much as I could." Now she finds the subject "absolutely fascinating."

One of her favorite projects was a five-year study on the History of Conservation, sponsored by a grant from Resources for the Future in Washington D.C. and the Forest History Society.

"I loved talking to those old forestry people," she said. "They were so energetic and so terribly committed. They frequently would do research and look things up themselves between interview sessions with me."

* * *

MRS. FRY TALKED to 22 leaders in the field of conservation for that study. "We got into the history of ecology before the big fad for it started," she noted.

Mrs. Chall's husband is an engineer with Friden Corporation in San Leandro. It was through her acquaintance with Mrs. Fry that Malca Chall became involved with the program in 1967. A political science major at Reed College in Oregon where she earned a bachelor's degree, she also attended the University of Iowa where she received her master's degree. She is a long-time active member in the Hayward League of Women Voters. She was a wage rate analyst during World War II for the War Labor Board in Seattle, Wash.; worked with a public relations firm in New York City and did research work for the Oakland Area Council of Social Agencies and Community Chest.

* * *

HER FIRST INTERVIEW was with noted conservationist Walter Clay Lowdermilk, when he was 79. It was the largest interview the Berkeley Office had ever done. Mrs. Chall interviewed him weekly for an entire year. This is unusual. Most interviews average five sessions. She spent another entire year editing it.

"It was memorable because this is a man who started out in pioneer times, decided that someday he was going to be a Rhodes Scholar, worked toward that goal and became one," she said. "He worked as a forester and became one of the greatest land conservationists in the world. In addition to studying as a Rhodes Scholar, he went to China and the Mediterranean prior to World War II and was a consultant in Israel and Africa. His wife was a fascinating woman too, with a great deal of personal impact and intelligence. She wrote an introduction for each chapter." The finished Lowdermilk information filled two volumes with 800 pages of illustrative material.

Occasionally the interviewers may be involved with more than one subject at the same time. Handling this requires a great deal of organization.

* * *

"YOU HAVE TO do enough research to be able to ask good questions. These oral interviews are not considered definitive. They are considered as another resource, but you don't want to let the good moments go by," said Mrs. Chall.

"You must find out something about the field to which the person contributed. If he was a professor for instance, you might read his list of publications and talk to his colleagues to find out what they remember him for. Then you have to decide how many times you are going to interview the person. I prepare an outline and then decide how to proceed," she said.

"Some people are reluctant to be candid. Others don't relax, open up to you. You have to win their support and confidence. You must be able to make them feel they are interesting and what they have to say is important."

After the transcript has been edited, the interviewees are given the opportunity to delete material or make changes. At this point they may ask that the interview be sealed until a later date.

THERE'LL BE SOME INTERESTING THINGS REVEALED BY YEAR 2000
Mrs. Harold Chall edis oral interviews, which may be sealed

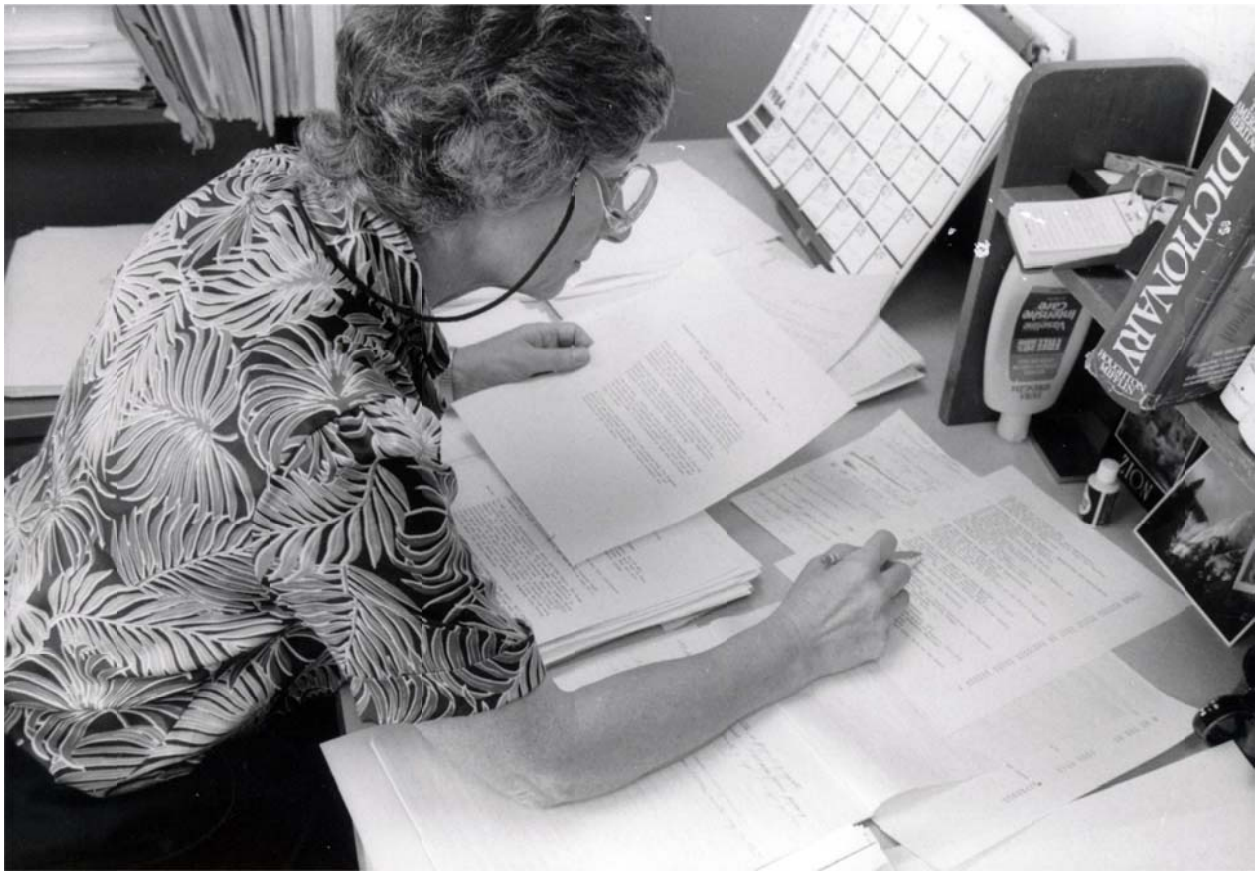
Staff Photos

INTERVIEWING ELDERLY WAY TO PRESERVE HISTORY
Mrs. Hilary Fry works for Oral History Office at the University of California

Malca Chall and Amelia "Chita" Fry, featured in Hayward *Daily Review* article, 1/26/1971

ROHO staff photo taken for East Bay Express feature article, mid-1980s.

Left to right, Nora Cody, Ann Lage, Suzanne Riess, Elizabeth Eshleman, Laurie Dunlap, Malca Chall, Julie Shearer, Gaby Morris. In front, Willa Baum



Malca Chall at her desk, mid-1980s

View of Willa Baum's desk, taken from Malca's desk.

Willa with her grandchild, 2000.

Malca and Hope Mendoza Schechter, an interviewee from the California Women in Politics project, taken at a ROHO reception in the Bancroft Library, 11/3/1991

Malca and fellow ROHO interviewer and
director of the Western Mining Project, Eleanor Swent, 1990.

Table of Contents — Malca Chall

Interview History—Malca Chall

Malca Chall is well known to the Oral History Center (formerly the Regional Oral History Office, ROHO) as a key staff member from 1967 to 2000 and the interviewer for an impressive collection of oft-consulted oral histories, most prominently in the fields of California water policy and California politics and government. Few of her former colleagues were aware, however, of an earlier chapter in her life, her tenure with the National War Labor Board during World War II. Once we learned of her work as a wage rate analyst in the Seattle area for the War Labor Board, we realized that her story would add a unique perspective to our Rosie the Riveter, World War II American Homefront Project. Recognizing an opportunity to also document some important history of the Regional Oral History Office, where I was her colleague for many years, I offered to record Malca's wartime experiences as the first topic in a longer oral history encompassing her thirty-three years with ROHO. Only after meeting with Malca to plan her oral history did I realize the importance of also discussing her extensive civic activism in the Hayward area. In many ways, her volunteer activities with the League of Women Voters and other citizen groups, as well as her wartime service, informed her pursuits as an interviewer and project director at ROHO.

Malca Kleiner Chall was born in 1920 in Tacoma, Washington, to a family active in business, in civic affairs, and in the Jewish community. The oral history Malca recorded with her father, Morris Kleiner, in 1972 documenting family history, the Model Lumber Company, and his community activities, including his efforts to assist Jewish refugees, is available in the Bancroft Library and the University of Washington library. Malca graduated from Reed College and received a master's degree in political science at the University of Iowa. In 1943, she accepted an offer from George Bernard Noble, her major professor at Reed who had been appointed head of the War Labor Board, Twelfth Region, to join his staff in Seattle. At age twenty-three, with minimal formal training, she stepped into the ticklish job of analyzing requests for wage increases from both labor and industry, as the WLB sought to dampen inflationary pressures in the midst of critical labor shortages. She visited potato fields, apple orchards, and fisheries, as well as banks, aluminum factories, shipping companies, and other work sites, conducting research and making determinations on acceptable wage rates. In the oral history she also discusses social and political life for a young professional woman in wartime Seattle. An amusing highlight of this topic is her account of a bike trip with a friend and colleague, during which the two young women spent a night in a jail cell, arranged by the police of Everett, Washington, when the friends found themselves without a safe place to stay.

Following the war, Malca moved to New York City in search of a job in labor relations. She found work instead with the Edward Bernays public relations firm and in time met and married her husband, Harold Chall. After they moved west to California, settling south of Oakland in San Leandro and then Hayward and Castro Valley, Malca launched her second career as a civic activist, or as she puts it "a pioneer of controversy in the community." She worked for the Community Welfare Council in Oakland until the birth of the first of her two sons, David and Barry. As a young mother, she joined the League of Women Voters and was soon a leader in its Eden Unit, spearheading a study of the Hayward city government and helping to draft and secure voter approval for substantial charter revisions. She was active in campaigns for local political

figures, including March Fong Eu's election to the State Assembly as the second woman and first Asian American in the California legislature. She was also prominent in numerous battles to counter right-wing/John Birch Society/McCarthyite pressures in the Hayward area.

In 1967, Malca was hired by Willa Baum, long-time director of the Regional Oral History Office. Her academic background in political science and on-the-ground working relationships with women active in the arena of local and statewide government soon led to the development of a major ROHO project, California Women Political Leaders. Malca describes focusing the project on elected officials, political party officers, and community leaders from 1920 to 1970 and her efforts to represent racial and ethnic diversity. She helped secure project funding from multiple sources, including the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Rockefeller Foundation, building an essential survival skill in an office that was funded almost solely by grants and gifts. Malca was eventually tapped to conduct interviews in a variety of other subject areas, from banking to education to health care, even as she became the primary interviewer on California water issues for many years. Her wide-ranging interviewing on water—from sanitary engineers to the founders of Save-the-Bay, from Governor Pat Brown and an array of state water resource managers to the architects of the historic federal Central Valley Project Improvement Act—has made the Oral History Center's collection an essential source for researchers on water issues.

Willa Baum soon recognized Malca's organizational skills, work ethic, and attention to detail and enlisted her for key tasks in office management. Malca describes preparing style and indexing guidelines for several of her projects, which became templates for others. She researched average times to complete each aspect of the oral history process, an essential budgeting tool. Most impressive was the multi-page comprehensive production manual, outlining each task in the oral history process, whose responsibility it was, and in which file drawer each stage of the evolving transcript should be placed, an essential document for an office primarily staffed by a shifting array of part-time workers, as many as thirty people sharing desks in a four-room space. Malca also discusses her contributions to outreach, including performing with Amelia Fry a play based on ROHO's interviews with suffragists. Throughout the oral history she recalls many of the ROHO women (almost all staff members were women) and the leadership qualities of Willa Baum, as well as friendships, fun, and challenges of her three-decade career with the Regional Oral History Office.

From January to May 2015, Malca and I met for seven sessions at her Hayward home to record her oral history. After receiving the lightly edited transcript, she undertook her characteristically careful review, did further research to check her facts, and added names and details she had overlooked. Any substantial additions are in brackets. She did not edit her words beyond a few clarifying changes. As we finished the review, Malca was packing up her house for a move to a retirement community nearby. As she sifted through files, she gathered historically significant papers and placed them with the Hayward Area Historical Society or the Bancroft Library, as appropriate. Her research files relating to water issues went to the Water Resources Center Archives (now the Water Resources Collection and Archives at UC Riverside) when she retired.

Nearly all of the oral histories Malca Chall conducted during her ROHO career are available on line through the Oral History Center website, where also can be found the oral history with former director Willa K. Baum, conducted in part by Malca. The Oral History Center is a division of the Bancroft Library and is under the direction of Martin Meeker. Special thanks are due to David Dunham, who directs the World War II Homefront project; he first tapped Malca Chall as a Rosie interviewee and has shepherded this oral history throughout the process.

Ann Lage
Interviewer Emeritus
Berkeley, California
June 2016

Interview 1: January 30, 2015
Audiofile 1

Lage: Hello, Malca.

01-00:00:07
Chall: Hello.

Lage: I am interviewing Malca Chall, for the World War II Home Front project, and also to get oral history on the oral history office at Berkeley. So we have many irons in the fire here.

01-00:00:24
Chall: Right.

Lage: Today is January 30, 2015. I'm Ann Lage, with Malca Chall. Malca, we're going to start with the usual, something about your family background, just in brief, to get a sense of how you were shaped.

01-00:00:40
Chall: Well, my father came from Poland, which was then part of Austria, when he was about eighteen. He went into the forests, as it were, around Calgary, because he had been preceded by an uncle and his five daughters, my father's cousins.[1]

Lage: When was this?

01-00:01:09
Chall: I would have to fill in that date. It was prior to World War I [1907].

Lage: Do you know why he came? And all the family came?

01-00:01:18
Chall: Yes, I do. His parents and his grandparents—or at least his father and his grandfather—were what you would call nowadays—. They were Jewish. And they were educated Jews. They could figure, they did languages a bit—mostly Polish, with a little German. So they were able to be hired by landowners, and to be able to lease land, like sixty-four acres or so. They were all in small villages, but they weren't what would be called shtetls. They were villages in and around Tarnopol, which is a major city. The grandfather did some farming, but mostly it was forest. The forest was simply to cut down wood, as it was needed, for fires in your stoves.

Lage: Oh, I see, firewood.

[1] See Malca Chall's oral history with her father Morris Kleiner, "Recollections," 1974, in the Bancroft Library.

01-00:02:22
Chall: That was it. My father's father did not have a forest; he had a large piece of land. They had cattle and they had chickens, they had oats, buckwheat, corn, you name it; and a large group of workers, who worked in the house and out of the house, did the threshing, did the planting, all of that.

Lage: But they didn't own the land?

01-00:02:51
Chall: No. It was owned by a landlord.

Lage: Who was not Jewish, I'm assuming.

01-00:02:55
Chall: No, he was not Jewish. Jews did not own land. Then my father's older brother got a piece of land, and they were all close together in this little set of communities near Tarnopol. What they raised would be sent, brought by horse and buggy, to Tarnopol, and at the markets, sometimes, some of that was traded. My father said that butter was traded for his haircuts. Things like that. He left because it was just understood that Jews, if they could avoid it, didn't go into the army. So he was able to get away, with his uncle.

Lage: So at his age, he—.

01-00:03:53
Chall: You just can go. They came across nicely in boats, in ships. That's where he got his start in the lumber business and in mills and all of that.

Lage: So that's why they ended up in an area that was forested here.

01-00:04:12
Chall: Right. Then he came to Tacoma and Shelton and Olympia, to help his—. His uncle was spreading out with his business, and my father got there to help him and found it was a nice place to live. So he bought a place in Tacoma and built a lumberyard, and that was it.

Lage: So was that his business throughout?

01-00:04:37
Chall: Throughout. He was a very prosperous lumber businessman.

Lage: Lumber merchant. Is that what you'd call it?

01-00:04:46
Chall: Yes, he built a couple of—. Eventually, one very large lumberyard. It sold everything. All kinds of lumber, all kinds of nails, you name it. For a time, he even had an architect on the premises. He had workers who stayed with him

for years and years. It was very prosperous, and we lived a very nice, more or less, I would say, upper-middle-class life. Had a nice home, no problems.

Lage: What was your father's name?

01-00:05:27
Chall: His name was Morris. It was M-O-R-I-T-Z, when he came over. Then here he was Morris Kleiner.

Lage: Before we go into your own upbringing, let's go back to your mother.

01-00:05:40
Chall: My mother was Canadian also. Her older brother, who was a pharmacist in Montreal—. That was, again, an unusual progression for Jews, but in Montreal, it wasn't too bad. He was able to go to McGill.

Lage: And that was her brother?

01-00:06:02
Chall: Her brother.

Lage: Had her parents come over from—?

01-00:06:05
Chall: Her parents had come over from probably the same part of Europe as my father, years and years before, because all of her older siblings were born in Europe. Her father was a sort of salesman, who would go from one part of Canada to the other; and then he'd come home, my mother said, just enough time so that they could have another baby. My mother's brother, the one who was the pharmacist, had married one of those five daughters that my father had come over with, his cousins. Therefore, there was this relationship. My mother was already twenty-six by the time she got married.

Lage: But did she live in the East?

01-00:06:52
Chall: Montreal. Grew up in Montreal. Had some schooling, in music and art and things of that sort. So she met my father, because they decided it was time. My father was now about thirty years old; it was time he met somebody and got married. It wasn't going to be his first cousins. So that was it.

Lage: This was a bit of an arranged—.

01-00:07:17
Chall: Yes. [Probably. I never heard of it in those terms.—MC] Then my mother had to go from Montreal to Tacoma, Washington, which was quite a trip. Everybody thought she was going into the area of wild Indians.

Lage: What was your mother's name?

01-00:07:30
Chall: Pauline.

Lage: Pauline—?

01-00:07:32
Chall: Pauline Weinfield. W-E-I-N-F-I-E-L-D.

Lage: So they were compatible, I'm assuming? Was it really an arranged marriage, or did they just meet and—?

01-00:07:47
Chall: Well, it was arranged that they meet, but it was not arranged that they be married. I don't know how long they knew each other. But it was sort of expected. My mother had grown up in a very Orthodox home. She came out to the West, and my father had grown up in a pretty secular Jewish life. So eating pork, eating whatever it was, drinking milk when you were eating meat for dinner. My mother had to get over that.

Lage: Was that difficult? Did she tell you about it?

01-00:08:30
Chall: Yes. My mother wrote to her mother every week. Phones didn't exist in those days, long distance. My mother wrote in a beautiful hand. She wrote Yiddish. The cursive writing is really quite handsome. And she wrote very well. Her mother would say, "Look, he's your husband. You just do what he wants and don't worry about it."

Lage: That's interesting, from an Orthodox—.

01-00:09:01
Chall: But when my grandmother came to visit us in her eighties—and she did from time to time—she always brought her own pots and pans.

Lage: Oh, how interesting.

01-00:09:13
Chall: Yes. So I grew up in a nice—. In a house.

Lage: Prosperous and—.

01-00:09:22
Chall: Yes. My father and mother were both committed Jews. So we grew up with the temple, it was called, a Reform synagogue, while there also was an Orthodox community in Tacoma. My father paid membership for both.

Lage: Oh, he did?

01-00:09:47
Chall: Oh, yes. My mother could attend both.

Lage: Did your mother keep her connections with the Orthodox?

01-00:09:51
Chall: Well, my mother told me that when she first arrived, she was used to going maybe to a shul in the morning on Saturdays, like her mother would have done, and praying. So she did. She found out where it was and she—. It was a little house or something. She knocked on the door and a man came out and said, "What are you doing here?" She explained. No women were allowed in the minyan. No women in the minyan.

Lage: Oh. But they were allowed back in Montreal?

01-00:10:22
Chall: I doubt it. My mother just thought it was time to pray.

Lage: I see, I see.

01-00:10:28
Chall: It's taken years. I'm not even sure—. Well, in some more current synagogues, the women can come in. The minyan is for men only. You have to have ten. Well, even my mother, if she had been the tenth, wouldn't have been allowed in.

Lage: Oh, my. Well, that might have made her more friendly towards the Reform.

01-00:10:52
Chall: She just fit it in. My mother fit it in. She had a lovely voice; she sang in the choir for years. We all went to Sunday school, even when it wasn't much of a Sunday school.

Lage: Was it a small community in Tacoma, the Jewish community?

01-00:11:09
Chall: Yes. My father said there might've been sixty Jewish families when he arrived in about 1912, '13. Then when I was growing up, there might've been a hundred.

Lage: Now, we didn't get your birth date. You don't have to give the whole date if you don't want, but it'd be good to place you in time.

01-00:11:31
Chall: Right. Oh. Oh, I was born in 1920.

Lage: 1920.

01-00:11:37
Chall: Yes. July 16, 1920.

Lage: Were you the first in the family?

01-00:11:43
Chall: I was the first. I was named after my father's mother, who died when she was young and he was young. Her name was Malca. Families carry their names down through the ages, with families who've been deceased. So Malca was—. My sister Josephine was named after my father's older brother Joseph, who did go into World War I, and disappeared. They think in Siberia. So she was named Josephine.

Lage: And other siblings?

01-00:12:30
Chall: My brother Herman, who is just one year younger than I am. I've forgotten why he was named Herman, but it must've had something to do with either my mother's family or my father's.

Lage: Right. Did your mother ever work outside the home?

01-00:12:51
Chall: No. She didn't work outside the home until World War II, when my father needed help in his office. We all helped. I helped in the office when I was around. And my mother loved it. She was so unhappy when the war ended and she wasn't needed anymore.

Lage: Oh, that's interesting.

01-00:13:09
Chall: She really loved working outside. Of course, by this time, she was in her sixties or seventies. Sixties, I guess.

Lage: So she waited a long time.

01-00:13:21
Chall: Well, it wasn't done. It wasn't done. None of the Jewish women in our circle worked outside the home. One of them helped her husband, who had a women's ready-to-wear store. But other than that, most of the women didn't, unless they helped in the store. If it was women's ready-to-wear, they helped there, because they could help women find the right clothes and all that. But other than that, no.

Lage: Just wasn't done.

01-00:13:52
Chall: No. No.

Lage: And by the time the war was over and she'd kind of broken through that—.

01-00:13:57
Chall: Yes. That was different. By this time, her own children could work outside the home.

Lage: Right. Well, as you were raised, what kind of expectations did they have for you?

01-00:14:10
Chall: Well, being the first, there were expectations.

Lage: Yes.

01-00:14:18
Chall: It was just that you followed the rules, kind of, that you did what was expected. You went to Sunday school, you made good grades in school, you were a good student, you behaved well. You just became a part of the community, and that was the expectation.

Lage: Was education important?

01-00:14:50
Chall: Oh, yes. Yes, it was important.

Lage: Was it taken for granted that you would go on to college?

01-00:14:57
Chall: Well, in my earliest years, I'm sure probably nobody thought about it. When I was in elementary school, it was just that you were a good student and that was it. You got along with your teachers. Teachers all liked us. I think we were the only Jewish children that probably any of them had ever met.

Lage: Really?

01-00:15:16
Chall: It was a very nice part of Tacoma, Washington. We were able to walk to school. There were children from all around, some of whom were not in the same economic strata as we were; but they were all there together.

Lage: It was a public school.

01-00:15:36
Chall: It was a public school. It was small, and it was good.

Lage: Did you feel prejudice at all?

01-00:15:42
Chall: None. I remember my first grade teacher asked me one day, when I was leaving the class—they stand in front of the door and they [the children] all go out—"Why do you have blue eyes?" That seems now—. I think about it. Why would she ask that question? Well, here you are, you're this little brunette Jewish girl, and maybe I don't expect your eyes to be blue. So I had no idea why I had blue eyes either.

Lage: What a question!

01-00:16:15
Chall: Nobody else in my family had blue eyes, except my Uncle Simon. So I told her that I got my blue eyes from my Uncle Simon, and she told my parents. They just thought it was so funny.

Lage: Well, in some respect, it was true. Some of those genes, at least.

01-00:16:35
Chall: That's right. That's right. So the only time there was any concern that I remember is because in the fifth grade [more likely the eighth grade—MC], we were going to read Shakespeare, I guess, get introduced. What was the play that they chose?

Lage: The one about—. I'm not sure of my own memory here. [*The Merchant of Venice*]

01-00:17:06
Chall: Yes. The one about the Jewish—.

Lage: The Jewish moneylender, and he has a daughter and—.

01-00:17:11
Chall: We'll have to go back and get it, because I've lost it. Shylock. It was the story of Shylock.

Lage: Yes. Yes, Shylock, right. Interesting choice, that they would—.

01-00:17:18
Chall: Well, I told my father that we were reading Shylock, but I didn't really know much about Shylock at that time at all. He knew Shylock. So he immediately went to, not only the teachers, he just went to the powers that be and said, "This is not the book."

Lage: Did they change it?

01-00:17:44
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Oh, interesting.

01-00:17:46
Chall: My father was a leader in the community. Not just the Jewish community, but in the whole community. They respected him.

Lage: Oh, Yes. Tell me more about that, because it's interesting.

01-00:17:55
Chall: Yes, they respected him. Well, he was a lumberman. He had a big and a good business, so he was part of the many lumber companies. Tacoma was considered the lumber capital of the world. So there were these mills all around. There were all of the retail lumberyards of various kinds all around. So my father had good relationships with all of them. And he had good relationships with the bank, because at one time, some bank that he had his money in, in the earliest days of his career, failed. And he had a big payroll to pay. An employee was going out with lumber, into the neighboring communities. He had to pay that bill. He went to one bank and they said, "Let us think about it." They knew what had happened, of course. He went to another one, they said, "Let us—." These two bankers saw each other at lunch the following day and they said, "I just was told by Morris Kleiner that he would need funding." And the other one said the same thing. In those days, my father said, "I didn't know that you would not go from one bank to another, asking questions like that." So whatever bank gave him the money, he stayed with that bank all the way through his whole career. I asked him whether they met, these lumbermen would meet, for anything outside of business, social. He said no. The Jewish people stayed mostly, in social life, among themselves.

Lage: I see.

01-00:19:46
Chall: The others, of course, didn't mingle. But there was no anti-Semitism. He said there was no problem.

Lage: Was it mainly, do you think, your family's choice to stay within the Jewish community?

01-00:19:58
Chall: Yes. Although both of them worked very hard for the Community Chest. My father was on boards of Goodwill, Boys Club, Kiwanis. He was a very active member of the community. And I think he was just because not only was he a businessman and all of that, but I think he himself felt that he was representing a community that needed to be seen as people that could mingle.

Lage: Right. And contribute.

01-00:20:30
Chall: And he did it. And he did it with ease.

Lage: Yes. Well, I can see where you get some of your civic engagement.

01-00:20:37:
Chall: We certainly learned that, every one of us. Each of us, the three of us, in our own ways, have spent a lot of time in our communities, a lot of time and energy.

Lage: Now, tell me about you as a child. What were your pastimes and interests?

01-00:20:57
Chall: I liked to read whatever there was around. As I grew up, my mother and I guess father, too, saw to it that when musicians came into Tacoma—music, pianists, violinists—we went very often. Sometimes I remember as a teenager, going with my brother by myself. I don't know how we got down there. Sometimes we would take the streetcar; but I think at night, somebody must've taken us. My mother drove, my father drove. But we were introduced to music. When I was eleven years old, a young couple in the Jewish community who had just married, but they were part of the older community like my father and his friends—. This was one of the next generation; they were older than I was. They decided that I should be introduced to the symphony. They had tickets. I think it was the last row of the theater in Tacoma, where the symphony was, probably the Seattle Symphony. They bought a ticket and they asked my parents if they could take me, and I did go with them. I sat there and I had my first view of a symphony orchestra. I think they did Beethoven's Fifth, as I recall. That was really interesting, that these people were a young couple—I don't think they'd been married maybe a year or so—and they were ready to help somebody else.

Lage: Isn't that interesting?

01-00:22:29
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Did you ever play a musical instrument?

01-00:22:53
Chall: I played the piano. I tried. I was never very good. My mother had a niece in Montreal who was a gifted pianist. This was about the only time that something was placed on me. As you know, parents will do that for—. So I was expected.

Lage: Expected to take lessons and play?

01-00:23:16
Chall: Expected to play the piano. I did relatively well for a number of years, till I hit Chopin, which I couldn't deal with at all, really. Then I was already in high school, but that sort of ended it. This cousin, I met when I was living in New York and she was living in New York. She was a concert pianist. She decided to go back to school and study something else—I forget what—in New York. At that time I was about twenty-four, and I was living in New York. "Malca, do you think it's all right if, at my age, I go back to school?" [She must have been well into her forties.—MC] I thought this was the most wonderful idea. Surely, you should go back to school—which she did.

Lage: Wow.

01-00:24:07
Chall: I'm digressing a lot.

Lage: No, no, that's good.

01-00:24:11
Chall: I had an uncle, my father's younger brother, who also came over a number of years later. He immediately came to Tacoma. After he'd also had some background in Calgary, in the woods, he came to Tacoma and set up his own lumber business. He married and had a couple of children. His wife was a gifted needlework person. She was a good knitter. Well, she came from Canada also. She taught me how to knit. My mother didn't knit. My mother did very nice petit point work, but she didn't knit. So my aunt taught me to knit. If I decided I wanted certain colors, to make a sweater with a certain kind of design and colors, she figured it out and I made it. So that was good. I really enjoyed that a lot. I enjoyed being with her.

Lage: Is that something you kept with?

01-00:25:16
Chall: For years. For years and years, I knit clothes. I even wore them to the office.

Lage: A lot of things I didn't know about you.

01-00:25:25
Chall: Right.

Lage: As you were growing up, where there different expectations for you and your brother, for instance? Was there a role that you were expected to fulfill as a woman?

01-00:25:37
Chall: No, I don't think so. Nor with my sister. Although my sister's three years younger than I am, and she was considered the spoiled baby.

Lage: Josephine.

01-00:25:47
Chall: Josephine. I think expectations were all the same.

Lage: Good student, go to college. Yes.

01-00:25:56
Chall: Oh, yes. I think by the time I was in high school, there was no question about it.

Lage: What about the Depression? We didn't talk about the Depression.

01-00:26:04
Chall: Oh, yes.

Lage: The crash happened; you were about ten.

01-00:26:06
Chall: Yes. That happened. We had the crash. My father did feel it. There were certain things that he cut back on.

Lage: Was that bank failure that you mentioned before—?

01-00:26:19
Chall: Oh, yes, that bank failure was probably in 1920 or something like that, not the 1929-1930 Depression. It wasn't one of the Tacoma banks; it was a bank that I believe had its roots in Scandinavia, I think. My father mentioned it. When I read his book last night, my [oral history] interview with him—. So it really wasn't a local bank. See, in Tacoma, the people who came in were Norwegians and Swedish people. They were fisher people. Some of them went into the lumber business or worked in my father's place. But basically, they were fishermen. So I think this bank probably helped with part of that group of people, those immigrants.

Lage: Yes. I would think the Depression would've had quite an impact on the community and on your family.

01-00:27:20
Chall: It didn't really hit that hard in the family. I know my father cut back on some things. We had house, a summer place, off of Vashon Island for a long time, where we went every summer. Spent the summer there on the water—Puget Sound—with my mother always worrying about whether we were going to drown. But it had acres of trees and berries and all that. Belonged to a rather well-known Tacoma family. It was a great old house. So my mother would be canning all summer, over the woodstove.

Lage: And what would you be doing all summer?

01-00:28:05
Chall: Playing. Playing. I was ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen years old. Yes. We did help in the house. All the years that I was growing up, we did have hired help. They were young women, who lived in. Sometimes they didn't live in, but we always had help. Nevertheless, we were expected to help with the dishes. I dried dishes for many, many years, or helped in other ways, when the help wasn't there. I ironed my middies, I ironed a lot of my own clothes. So we were expected not to just sit around and let somebody else do all the work. These women would help my mother with the ironing, the washing, and some cooking. But it was a help. With three kids all the same age, these things were a help.

So the Depression didn't—. I'm sure that my father felt it. I'm sure he did something in his business. But he was remarkably—. How shall I put it? He was able to ride it out. That's when he hired the architect. It was a young Jewish fellow who went into the field of architecture, which was unusual, and he hired him. They built little cottages right on the ground, no basements. I think it had a living room and a dining room, a kitchen, and two bedrooms and a bathroom, and I believe—I'm not sure—a one-car garage. Those things sold. So you see, my father was able to take advantage of whatever was going around. [A few years ago my sister showed me one still standing.—MC]

Lage: He was a good businessman.

01-00:30:01
Chall: He was a good businessman.

Lage: So did he buy land?

01-00:30:04
Chall: Yes, he bought.

Lage: He was a developer, in a sense.

01-00:30:07
Chall: This is, I think, an old country—. My Chinese friends do the same. They buy land. They own property. So my father was always buying pieces of land. He would buy them thirty miles from Tacoma, around a lake, Spanaway Lake. This lake, that lake.

Lage: Do you think it was something of a reaction to not having been able to own land in the old country?

01-00:30:34
Chall: Possibly. It was just one of those things. He would sell it. Finally, he realized that—. One time he bought an apartment house, in the early days, and it didn't work out. He said, "I didn't realize that when you buy apartments, it's a

different kind of sale. It's a different way of dealing than land." Ultimately, he did buy an apartment. Paying that mortgage was supposed to last all the way through my mother's life, and was part of my sister's legacy. My mother lived right beyond it, until my brother and I were paying the bills. It was really interesting. My sister didn't get a bit of that. Of course, you don't know how long you're going to live. My mother lived to be almost one hundred. That piece of property, that big apartment house, that mortgage lasted almost through her life, but not quite.

Lage: Now, when you say the mortgage, you mean what you had to pay each month to the bank?

01-00:31:49
Chall: Yes. Well, this man had bought the property and he was gradually having to pay back my father.

Lage: Oh, the person who bought it *from* your father.

01-00:31:55
Chall: Yes, right.

Lage: I see. So he was paying the family, I get it.

01-00:31:58
Chall: Right, he was paying it back all these years. Yes, my father did own property. Once he bought a very fine old house that had beautiful old furniture in it. You're looking at one right behind you, that chair is a piece of it. We all have pieces of it. The Nelson Bennett house, as it was. Yes. He was active.

Lage: How long did your father live?

01-00:32:24
Chall: He was ninety-five when he died.

Lage: Oh my goodness. Malca, we'll have you for many years. I'm so glad! It helps to have this long-lived heritage.

01-00:32:33
Chall: Yes, I have it in my genes, and I do take care of them.

Lage: Yes. Good. Good, good, good.

01-00:32:40
Chall: So yes, I was expected to go to college. We all went to college.

Lage: Anything to say about high school, mentors or people who shaped you in any way?

01-00:32:51
Chall: No. I noticed you had the question about mentors. I don't remember having mentors. But I was a typical teenager. I did not follow what my mother wanted me to follow, as a young teenager.

Lage: Give me an example.

01-00:33:18
Chall: I did not want to have a tea. All graduating female seniors had teas, tea parties.

Lage: Everybody, or people in your social group?

01-00:33:30
Chall: People in that group in school. They had teas. You had a nice dining room, you'd put out your best tea service. Your teapots, your teacups, little petit fours and things like this. In the middle of the afternoon, three o'clock or so, two, you invited your friends and you had a tea party.

Lage: Your own age group?

01-00:34:20
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Just women, would this be?

01-00:34:23
Chall: From school. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Well, I just didn't want one of those things.

Lage: You must've gone to others.

01-00:34:32
Chall: I did. My mother finally persuaded me. I did have one.

Lage: Oh, you did?

01-00:34:37
Chall: I did have a tea. But I also was very active in the Bluebirds.

Lage: Oh, Camp Fire Girls? As you get older, [Bluebirds fly up to] Camp Fire Girls.

01-00:34:48
Chall: Yes, Camp Fire Girls. We had a leader, most of the time. Sometimes somebody else; they would vary. I went to Camp Fire camp. I was active and eventually, sort of had a little group of young kids who just wanted to be with me, and they would come from heaven knows where. They would come to my house.

Lage: Younger children?

01-00:35:17
Chall: Yes. My mother was just appalled at this. You're spending so much time with this. But I did it anyway. So I know that as I was a teenager, that I was batting against the rules, as it were. I think I gave my mother a lot of trouble. As I look back on it, I really realize I did.

Lage: Did they have restrictions about dating and things like that?

01-00:35:45
Chall: No, because I was sort of—. Well, you'd call them nerds now. I was not making myself attractive to men. It wasn't anything that I really gave much thought to. I'm not even sure that I went to a junior prom. I don't think I did. I don't think I did.

Lage: But you don't remember being troubled about it.

01-00:36:09
Chall: No. No, I really wasn't. Even later on, I remember, when I was still working in Seattle during the war, a cousin of mine from Montreal was out there. He was somehow brought out there in the area from Montreal—he was a doctor—to Tacoma. I don't know what he was supposed to be doing there, for the Canadian Army. Or maybe it was just a time when he could visit, because nobody from Montreal ever visited anybody in Tacoma, except my grandmother. I came down for breakfast, and my cousin Albert, who had been staying with us, was there for breakfast. My mother said, "You should be wearing lipstick? Why aren't you wearing lipstick?" I said, "I don't want to wear lipstick." She was just appalled. My cousin just looked at me as if, good for her!

Lage: Oh, that's funny. It's also funny the things that you remember, these little incidents.

01-00:37:18
Chall: I do. Every now and then, I've been remembering these things. I remember the fact that I was knitting so much and was with my aunt so much. Sisters-in-law, I discovered, don't always get along too well. So I think this was a sort of problem with my mother, to some extent. I would walk miles—we just did that—from my home to my aunt's home, and spend an afternoon with her. She was also a great cook, and so I learned things to cook; but I never did any cooking at home, except when I had cooking class. We all had cooking classes in high school.

Lage: Home economics.

01-00:37:59
Chall: Home economics, that's right. So I think I had to learn how to do eggs and maybe hot cereal. I would ask my mother if I could make the food this morning or this evening, and she would let me.

Lage: Yes, but it wasn't standard.

01-00:38:17
Chall: That was about it.

Lage: One thing you skipped is politics, around your family or around your own development, in those early years.

01-00:38:25
Chall: Well, my father was a Democrat—although he had issues in his business with the Teamsters, because every now and then the Teamsters would go on strike all over Tacoma. They were the drivers, they were the people in the lumberyards who helped you get your lumber and your nails and all of that sort of thing. He never really liked it when the Teamsters went on strike, but they did. Otherwise, he was a Democrat. He voted for Roosevelt and the Democrats who preceded him. I noticed in his oral history last night, that he was a Democrat, he said, "for what it means." He was eighty-seven when he was interviewed.

I was always a Democrat. But I do remember that one time—. This must've been in the twenties, when we were living also in the country. My father bought a huge piece of property on Steilacoom Lake, and he built little cottages around it, that they rented out. It was, I think, the time when the New York governor was running for president. But he was a Catholic. You remember that?

Lage: Right, right, right. Al Smith.

01-00:39:56
Chall: Al Smith. I remember sitting on the floor in the living room. My mother, I think, was resting. Maybe we had the radio on then. So I said, "Are you going to vote for Al Smith?" I think she probably, by this time, had her citizenship. I think she said she was. So that indicated, also, that she was going to probably vote on the Democratic side. I don't think she thought one thing about whether he was Catholic or not. She'd grown up in Montreal; it was either [you were] Catholic or you weren't Catholic, probably most of the time. So I remember that part of the political spectrum.

Lage: Was there talk about politics in the family, or about how the government was handling the Depression or things like that?

01-00:41:00
Chall: No, I don't really recall much of that. But I do remember that—I think it was in high school—I had a teacher who was very much interested in—. We were studying government. She was interested. I became very much interested in government and the history, and for a time during my senior year in high school, the NRA, the—.

Lage: National Recovery Act, was it?

01-00:41:31
Chall: The National Recovery Act would pay children, or maybe high school children, if they did certain chores around school. I got a job with the NRA in the library. The librarian was a great—. She was a tough librarian. We had to accession books at that time, all by hand, printing. I was a terrible printer; I still am. But I had to do that, and shelve books. There were books about American history, the early, early, old ones. I used to take them home and I would read them. My father, for some reason, had bought a whole set of *The Federalist Papers*.

Lage: Oh, really?

01-00:42:20
Chall: I guess somebody had come around and introduced him to *The Federalist Papers* and he bought them. They were beautiful, beautiful covers on them. There was a whole set of them. I would dip into some of those. I realize, as I look back, that I was interested in American history a long time ago.

Lage: And government.

01-00:42:42
Chall: And government. Very much interested in government.

Lage: Interesting. Well, let's get you into—. If you're okay. Do you need a break or anything?

01-00:42:50
Chall: Not yet, but I can have a little more tea.

Lage: Okay, well, I can put it on pause here. [interview interruption] We've had a little break for tea.

01-00:43:01
Chall: I think I should tell you that my very closest friend in high school—and maybe even before high school, in grade school—was a young woman who was very bright. She played the piano, she was very bright, and she was a fan of football. Her parents were serious, deeply committed Christians. But I never realized that until much later. I would go to her church with her to the Christmas programs, when they were doing the usual Christmas story. She

would come to our bar mitzvahs. We were very, very close friends. She really needed to get a scholarship to go to college, the local college. We had a very good college, College of Puget Sound, in Tacoma. She got one B, and I got lots of B's. She got one B, and so she didn't get the scholarship. [They could not afford college at that time. She probably stayed out a year and worked.—MC]

Lage: She did go eventually?

01-00:44:35
Chall: Yes. All four years. She had an older brother and a younger brother, and she was the only girl. She was expected to work at home, as a girl. So I just wanted you to know that, because we were such good friends until college, when we separated.

Lage: What was her name?

01-00:45:11
Chall: Virginia Lantz, L-A-N-T-Z.

Lage: Did you keep in touch after college?

01-00:45:17
Chall: We kept in touch a bit. She and her husband and Harold and I had an evening together, when Harold and I came to Tacoma, after we moved out west. I always contacted my close friends first. I know we spent a whole evening together. By this time—she was a tiny woman—she had several children already. She ended up with five.

Lage: Now, here you were in the late thirties, were you hearing things about the treatment of Jews in Europe?

01-00:45:58
Chall: Yes. Yes, my father, by this time, and his uncle, with whom he came over, those cousins, many of them were now living in Seattle. They were very busy bringing in anybody from the family that they could, bringing them out of Czechoslovakia, out of Romania, I think.

Lage: What about Poland?

01-00:46:27
Chall: Out of Poland. Well, my father, his younger sister—. I think there were five boys; he [my father] was one of five. By World War II, of course, there were four of them left. One of them was still in Poland. He was a pharmacist, I believe. My father's younger sister—. After his mother died, his father remarried, and the second wife died. She was young. The third young wife—they were all cousins or sisters—she had a child whose name was Antonia;

they called her Toncia. My father never knew her, because she was barely—. I don't think she was born, of course, when he left. My uncle knew her. Toncia was married to an attorney in Tarnopol. My father's youngest brother, Bruno, who was, I think, a pharmacist, he was living in Warsaw. My father could not get his sister to leave. No, she was living a very fine, easy life, and she wasn't about to leave. I think my father was, by this time, trying to get Bruno to come to Tacoma. He was ready to come. He had one daughter. Within that year, he drowned, trying to save his daughter from drowning. So he was dead. His wife and daughter did die in the Holocaust, in Warsaw. But the sister, Toncia, lived in Tarnopol with her husband and son. I found out recently—and I won't go into all that—that Tarnopol was right on the border of the Ukraine, which of course was in the Soviet Union. So when the Nazis and the Russians had their pact in 1939—that was it, I think—the Nazis came in and took over one part of Poland. The Russians came in and took over the other, near the border.

Lage: They took part of Poland?

01-00:49:14
Chall: They took the people who were right on the edge, including my aunt and her husband and their ten-year-old child, and they spent the war years in Siberia.

Lage: Oh, my gosh. They took them and sent them to Siberia?

01-00:49:29
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Because they were Jewish?

01-00:49:32
Chall: [Not necessarily. Because they were there along with others. Some Jewish, some not.—MC] The Russians, until later on—. At one point, the Russians did line up all the Jews and kill them, in some places. But somehow, they sent Toncia and her child and her husband into Siberia. So she lived the war out. And it was terrible. It was really terrible; but they lived. I didn't understand this at all.

Lage: Did you hear about it in the family?

01-00:49:59
Chall: I knew that she was there. My father seemed to know something, because he was bringing in people. People were being brought out of Germany, in the earliest days, before they started to gas them. You could get them out, in some way or other. The major Jewish organization, sort of the umbrella in New York, would bring these people in and find out what they could do, and send them off, to the Northwest or wherever they felt they might fit in. So my father did have those people.

Lage: So did your father kind of make it known he could give people jobs?

01-00:50:43
Chall: Well, he did the best he could. My uncle would try to help. Or they had places—. There were a lot of Jews in Seattle who were able to find some work for them. He explained this very well in his oral history. I knew these people. Some of them would come to Tacoma. There were some women who had learned how to make very fine chocolate candy. I remember Johanna [Lowenstein], when she came to Tacoma, she immediately started to make candy. It was absolutely outrageously good. You could get good chocolate; she knew how to do it. She did a good business. Eventually, her husband, Louis, found work. He worked for a while with my father; then there was a brewery in Tacoma, and he worked there. Eventually, he worked himself up so he could do some special work in the brewery. So lots of help was being given all over.

Relatives that we had—not in Poland, but in other parts of Europe—eventually were in Israel. They went to Israel, probably before 1948, or certainly afterwards. When Harold and I went to Israel on a two-week tour, we met two of them there. My father was sending money to one of them for years, to help pay for her apartment, after her husband died. I would carry that on, until she died. When she moved into an assisted-living residence, rents would go up. I then wrote a letter to my brother and various cousins, all of whom lived in Seattle, and said, "This is our cousin. She now needs more money than I can handle. Would you all chip in?"

Lage: And they did?

01-00:52:59
Chall: Yep.

Lage: Yes. Well, that's great.

01-00:53:05
Chall: There was a considerable concern.

Lage: A lot of concern and reaching out.

01-00:53:10
Chall: And reaching out and doing whatever you could possibly do. Yes, we had relatives who came to Tacoma, weren't satisfied, went back to New York. Found a way to make a life there. That was later. Actually, one couple, a man and a wife, were in prison camps, in different prison camps, and were not gassed. They found each other when they came out, and together they came to New York. I remember going—I don't know how I got there—to some way down part of Manhattan that I would never have ever been in. Got on the subway and went down there, because this couple, this man and woman—

related to our cousins. I don't know how they were related to me; I'm not sure. Quite simply I was told that these particular cousins who had found each other, had come out of the camps, were now going to arrive in New York at a certain time of night, and would I be there? I think my father must've told me that. So I did go and I met these people. It was very exciting, when they arrived at the house.

Lage: Did you have a place for them to live?

01-00:54:34
Chall: Oh, these people, they must've stayed there overnight. I went home. I was living in New York City then.

Lage: But were they just fresh out of the camps, or had they been somewhere—?

01-00:54:46
Chall: Practically. Within maybe six, eight months or something like that. I don't remember now.

Lage: Were you able to speak Yiddish or whatever language they spoke?

01-00:54:56
Chall: No. I couldn't speak to them. My father said, as he always did, "Come to Tacoma, we'll take care of you." Now, she was a masseuse, and I don't know what he could do. The fact of food, I guess, made such a difference. He was huge already. They were absolutely out of their social sphere in Tacoma. Whatever it was, Tacoma was beyond them; they could not live there.

Lage: Too Wild West?

01-00:55:35
Chall: No, not in the forties. It was just not exciting. It wasn't like Europe. They had come from Europe, they had lived through it. They wanted to go to New York. Now, in a certain part of New York City, on the West Side, there was a very large group of German Jewish refugees. I lived close enough to them, at one time, to know that. They had a really good life going. They were all managing. That's where these cousins went. They just went.

Lage: They wanted a more European—.

01-00:56:13
Chall: They went right back to New York. He got a job, I think, mending sewing machines, as a sewing machine mechanic; she did whatever she did, and they were among the people that they felt comfortable with.

Lage: Yes. Now, just one other question, then we should move on. What happened to Toncia and her family?

01-00:56:34
Chall: Ah, Toncia managed to be freed, at a certain point. Her husband, I don't know how he got into England. There was a time when—. There was a Polish army of liberation. And the Russians must've decided that that was a good idea, because they would fight the Germans. I don't know exactly how this happened, but he ended up in England, in London. Of course, that army of liberation never left London. But he was there. Toncia was let out, and from what I can remember that she told us, without any shoes at all; just something that she would put, newspapers and things, on her feet. Took her little boy, who was about ten or twelve, thirteen, fourteen then, and they ended up first in Iran.

Lage: My goodness.

01-00:57:38
Chall: She was sort of governess there for a while. She told me that she was absolutely afraid all the time, because she felt that the Iranians would take her son, that there was homosexuality or something like that in Iran. I don't know where she got all that; but she got out and went to Israel as fast as she could. I think it was still Palestine. Then eventually, she met a German, whose family had been almost all destroyed. They moved to London and she married him. [Divorced her husband.] And she built herself a lovely life. There again, mostly among Polish, among the Polish Jews. Although German, too, because he was German. She was the same lady that she was in Poland, I guess. She dressed beautifully. She was handsome. She was Toncia.

Lage: So you did know her well, it sounds like.

01-00:58:52
Chall: Oh, yes.

Lage: Would she come and visit?

01-00:58:55
Chall: She came to Tacoma and there was a major family reunion. That's written up in the newspapers, which is in my father's oral history. Then she came down to California; she stayed with us for a while. She would talk. I hadn't a job then; I didn't know about recording. I can't remember all of what she said. She talked all night, practically. My husband, who was an engineer working with Friden calculators, and needed his sleep so badly, he would call out, "Please, go to bed." Yes, she came several times. Her son eventually moved to the United States. He got a job with the government in Sacramento, and he would show up at the doorstep once in a while and visit. But when they went to Israel first, he was old enough to be put in the Israeli army right away. When he got to the United States, he was old enough to be put into the American army in—. What were we fighting in those days?

Lage: Korea or Vietnam?

01-01:00:07
Chall: No. Korea.

Lage: Yes. I'm going to have to stop this because we're running out of space here.

Audiofile 2

Lage: Okay, here we are on tape two, continuing the interview with Malca, on January 30. Okay, Malca, we thought now we would go on to your education, college level. You started at the University of Washington, I understand.

02-00:00:21
Chall: I started at the University of Washington, which was the right thing to do.

Lage: Why? Why did you do that?

02-00:00:28
Chall: Because it was the university that—. I could've gone to the College of Puget Sound, which is right in Tacoma, where my brother did go. He went all through school there. And one of his first cousins went to school there. Now it's called University [of Puget Sound]. But it is a good school; it was a good school. But the University of Washington is where I went. I joined a Jewish sorority, AEPhi. I don't remember now what it stands for. That's where I met many—. Well, I had already some good friends in Seattle, that I had met when I was a teenager, and they remained my good friends all my life. It was fine, because it was a nice house, it was good, and I had a place to stay.

Lage: Was it a big school, at that time?

02-00:01:36
Chall: The University of Washington was a big school. That was a big school. We had large classes. Small classes and large classes. It was on a nice campus. It is a very nice campus, still. So that was good. I think in my second year there, as a sophomore, one of my very close friends was not—. She was blackballed; that's the only way to put it. She wasn't permitted to be in there.

Lage: In the sorority?

02-00:02:16
Chall: In the sorority. She wouldn't have fitted in anyway, but she was—. Despite that, you see, I had friends who didn't fit the mold.

Lage: Were they friends that you made before college, were you saying?

02-00:02:27
Chall: Close friends. Yes, this was a close friend. Because I had cousins, you see. My father's first cousins from Poland were in Seattle.

Lage: I see, so you had a lot of ties.

02-00:02:41
Chall: They had children, and those were my contacts. I spent sometimes overnight with them on weekends, they invited me to dinner. They were very close. We were a very close-knit family. But this particular woman, who ultimately went on to be the—. She was the editorial editor—I forget now what you call these—of I think it was the *Post-Intelligencer* or the *Seattle Times*. She was a brilliant, able, go-to, active person. Very, very bright.

Lage: And she was blackballed for what reason?

02-00:03:28
Chall: She wouldn't fit in. Just she didn't have the—.

Lage: The social skills or—?

02-00:03:34
Chall: Social skills, whatever it was. They didn't feel that she'd fit in. And there was another person who didn't fit in, another person from Tacoma, one of my good friends in Tacoma in the Jewish community. There were quite a few of us, five or six of us about the same age. She wasn't accepted at the same time I was. She was smart. She organized another Jewish sorority, and that was also very good. There were two Jewish fraternities, two Jewish sororities, and the social mixes were just a little bit different. Just a little.

Lage: In these two groups?

02-00:04:15
Chall: Yes.

Lage: You mean income levels?

02-00:04:19
Chall: Well, no. This other person probably had the same income level as I did. Not the one who was blackballed when I was a sophomore, the editor, but the other one. Her family had been in Tacoma in business when my father got there. So it goes back a long way. Just different attitudes, whatever it is that—. This was very disturbing to me and I didn't take well to this, but I was there.

As far as school went, I was put into a class, a small class. I think it had to do with people who were learning how to read and write, because one of my great failings was writing. I was never at ease writing anything. I needed a lot of help, even at ROHO, especially. I'm better now, but I was not good. This

was a small class. I think they must've put us in there, maybe, with grades that we came with from high school. But it was select. It was a selected group of students. I'm not sure that there were any men in it. Then I just took all the other classes that were necessary.

Lage: The kind of breadth requirements for the college.

02-00:05:53
Chall: Yes, because I knew that you have to take certain classes in history, certain classes in science. None of it was difficult. I took science classes. I took one that was for, I think, med students, and it had to do with all your bones and your muscles. We had a cat. My teammate and I had a cat. It was in—.

Lage: Formaldehyde?

02-00:06:24
Chall: Formaldehyde. We would come in—

Lage: Dissect it.

02-00:06:26
Chall: —take the cat out and cut it up and all of that. I would get very good grades on the tests, but I cannot—could not, cannot—draw. I could not draw the muscles; I could not draw the bones. I could not do that. Got bad grades on that. So I think I ended up with maybe a B. I also took a class in bacteriology. So I took what was necessary, but I tried to make them interesting. I didn't want lecture classes in science, so I took always a lab class.

Lage: When did you think about transferring?

02-00:07:12
Chall: I thought about transfer because in this sorority, during my sophomore year, came, I think, four women from Reed.

Lage: They came *from* Reed to Washington?

02-00:07:29
Chall: They came from Reed. Reed required juniors to take a qualifying exam, which was like the Graduate Record Exam. Actually, they used Graduate Record Exams. If you qualified, you could become a senior. If you didn't then you have to maybe take a year over, or you might just as well go somewhere else. I think these women did probably qualify. They were very bright. They didn't want to be at Reed any longer. They were from Portland. Two of them were from Portland; one, I think, from Seattle. Reed is a very special kind of school. They wanted more social life, they wanted to meet men, they wanted to date. It was at a time when, when you finished college, you were supposed to get married. So they came. It sounded so interesting to me.

Lage: When they told you about Reed?

02-00:08:47
Chall: It was intellectual. It was just exactly what I wasn't getting at the University of Washington, which I really didn't realize that I wanted.

Lage: I see. Oh, it's only in talking to them, you realized there was something different?

02-00:09:00
Chall: Yes. So I decided that I would try to go to Reed. I checked on how much it would cost. My father had three of us in college now. I realized that I could get a part-time job there. So I induced my parents—my father, especially—to say, "That's all right. It's in Portland, not that far away." So I transferred. Now, you transfer as a junior, you have not had the background that the classes had when they were freshmen, because the freshmen are required to take certain classes for a whole year, in ancient history. That goes on. Mainly ancient history. It goes on to today. Intellectual thought; I didn't have that. I didn't have a special class in math, which they were required to take. The math got into Boolean algebra—things that were very, very up there—and they had to learn it, because you had to learn everything about math. Well, I hadn't had math since I was a junior, I think, in high school, and it was never easy to me then. I struggled all the way through that math.

Lage: Did you have to take those courses again?

02-00:10:38
Chall: Of course. Yes, I had to take it, because I missed it as a freshman. Now I'm a junior. You have to take that class.

Lage: Also the world civilization.

02-00:10:49
Chall: No, no, you didn't have to take that. You just started in history where we were. American history, I think. Then you had to decide what you wanted to major in, right then and there. Well, there was sociology; there were the sciences, which I knew I'd never be able to manage, even though one of my close friends was doing science; there was political science. The person that I was given to, to sort of advise me as I came in, was the head of the political science department. There were just two professors.

Lage: But one was head.

02-00:11:36
Chall: He was the head. He said, "Why don't you just take political science?" So I did. Because I figured that sociology was social work. I did not want to be a social worker, so I didn't take it.

Lage: And you'd always enjoyed government.

02-00:11:52
Chall: Yes. Afraid as I was of having made a commitment now, I made the commitment. But when it came to the qualifying examination, first of all, the professors had some questions in there, and then you had the qualifying exams.

Lage: Was this the qualifying exam after your junior year?

02-00:12:18
Chall: At the end of your junior year.

Lage: End of your junior year. So you had a year to catch up.

02-00:12:22
Chall: Yes. I had the math. I had had no science at Reed. No science classes at Reed. I'd had no background in sociology. The question that I failed on, totally, was, during the Depression, did people—and I forget how it was stated—who came from the country who were in the cities, did they stay in the cities? Or did they return to the farm? Now, my friend Virginia Lantz was I figured-- a part of that group—.

Lage: That migration, kind of?

02-00:13:19
Chall: That group. They were in the city. I had no idea anything about their background. But they certainly didn't move back to the farm—assuming that that's where they had somehow started. So I said that they all stayed in the city. But that was not true. Then I did alarmingly well in the Graduate Record. Somehow or another, I did so well in the chemistry section, even though all I'd had was high school chemistry—. I just remembered enough about it to do it, to do well. So the GDA or whatever—.

Lage: GRE?

02-00:14:06
Chall: GRE was way up high on the scale—way up there—even though I'd missed the essential question from the faculty.

Lage: Was that an oral exam?

02-00:14:17
Chall: No. You get an oral at the end.

Lage: Oh, at the end.

02-00:14:20
Chall: So that was all written. So they—.

Lage: They passed you.

02-00:14:23
Chall: They said I could stay. Yes, I could say.

Lage: Oh, this must've been trying.

02-00:14:28
Chall: Of course, some of my very close friends there, and some that became close, they were all sure that—. Reed never gave grades.

Lage: Oh, you didn't have grades?

02-00:14:40
Chall: Didn't know a grade until the end.

Lage: So this was kind of in lieu of grades, to see how much you retained and—?

02-00:14:47
Chall: Yes. Well, *they* knew my grades. It was in the office. But as a student, you never knew your grades until you graduated. So you never knew whether you were doing well. Of course, I knew that I had done poorly in math. Also in the senior year, I took a class in statistics. Well, I learned a *lot*. I used statistics when I got a job here in California. But I think I got a C in statistics, even though I learned so much. So it was a very demanding school.

Lage: Rigorous, Yes. It sounds like it.

02-00:15:30
Chall: I did enjoy it. I made friends.

Lage: Yes, what was the social life like? You entered in 1940, was it?

02-00:15:45
Chall: I went into Reed in '40, and graduated in '42.

Lage: Okay. So you were there when the war broke out.

02-00:15:53
Chall: Yes, I was. I remember how affected and afraid the few Japanese women were, whom I knew. I remember what fear they expressed, when they told me and a few others what was going to happen to them.

Lage: Because the Executive Order came about.

02-00:16:16
Chall: They were going to be put into camps. At the same time, my father and brother, who were in Tacoma, were trying to take care of some Japanese. My

father took care of some Japanese family businesses, throughout the time of the war.

Lage: Oh, really?

02-00:16:34
Chall: So when they came back, they got started again. I think my father gave the kids dolls and things that were around the house. My brother was a pacifist, in a way. And in a way, so was that college.

Lage: So was the—?

02-00:16:57
Chall: The College of Puget Sound.

Lage: Oh, Puget Sound.

02-00:17:02
Chall: At Reed, there was a real struggle among the—. I don't know about the faculty, but certainly, among the students.

Lage: About whether we should join the war?

02-00:17:13
Chall: Yes, yes.

Lage: Even after Pearl Harbor? Or was this leading up?

02-00:17:16
Chall: No, this was before Pearl Harbor. After Pearl Harbor, I don't think there was much of a discussion.

Lage: How did you feel, as someone who was aware of what was happening to the Jews?

02-00:17:27
Chall: To me, it seemed that no matter how we all felt about it, that we really had to get into that war. But basically, I always tended to be on the left. That was where the division was.

Lage: When you say the division—?

02-00:17:49
Chall: The division between whether you believed in the Soviet system, to some extent—. But after the Soviets and the Germans had a pact, they went their own way into the war, there shouldn't have been any discussion, and there wasn't much.

Lage: The people who were on the left were deeply affected by that pact, did you find?

02-00:18:14
Chall: I think they were. But Nazis were—. It was just awful, what was going on.

Lage: You wrote your thesis on opposition to the president's foreign policy, 1939 to 1941.

02-00:18:32
Chall: Yes.

Lage: That was very timely.

02-00:18:34
Chall: It was timely; but you have to remember that my—. No, you didn't know it. My major professor, George Bernard Noble, had been in France during the First World War, and was wounded. He had a wound on his hand, and you could see it, down on the wrist. And he had some little pin that he wore in his suit. I think it was the Croix de Guerre. I think it was given to him by the French. I've always thought that was what it was. He had a student who graduated in 1940, two years before me, Elizabeth Brown, who turned out to be a very close friend of mine for a couple of years, when we were together. She was gone from Reed now. You always had to write a senior thesis. She had written a senior thesis on the war, or the lead up to the war, at that time, because that's what Dr. Noble had probably wanted her to do. So my thesis was a follow-up, in a way, of Elizabeth's initial one. They both had to do with the war, the coming of the war, and the politics of it.

Lage: But you focused on the opposition.

02-00:19:58
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Both on the right and on the left? Were you talking about—?

02-00:20:02
Chall: I think both of them. But I was not a very good writer. I looked at this thesis one day and I just thought, oh. Oh, no. No, no, no, no. But at least it passed. So I got through all the classes. I also was taking a French class, and I was induced by the French teacher to take it for credit, which is what I shouldn't have done, because I got a C in that. I just didn't have time to practice French. I took French at the University of Washington and didn't do very well because when you're taking a foreign language, it doesn't matter how much you have to read in your history book, you still have to practice, and I couldn't. I just couldn't do it all. It was hard, at Reed, for me to keep up. My social life there, there wasn't a lot of it. But there were dances occasionally, and I always had

some kind of a date there, with some fellow student or other. Some of my classmates were nerdy like me, I guess.

Lage: I can't imagine, really, you being nerdy.

02-00:21:31
Chall: The women that I lived with in a dorm—. Well, it was a big old house called Anna Mann. It was just a great big three-story house. We women lived in that. There were probably ten or twelve of us.

Lage: And a cook who prepared meals?

02-00:21:49
Chall: No, no. We all ate in the major dining room. That's where we had three meals a day, and where I worked. I carried a tray around. I learned to carry a tray, and I also helped in the little coffee shop, from time to time. So that was my little earning. But I do remember that we didn't have any way to do laundry in those days. So now, the way we did it—and I remembered about this only recently—we had a suitcase of some kind, made of very, very heavy cardboard, I think it was. We would put our laundry into the suitcase and mail it.

Lage: I've heard of this.

02-00:22:36
Chall: I mailed my laundry every week or two weeks to my mother, and then I would get the clean clothes back. And that's what I did when I was at the University of Iowa, too, the suitcase came back and forth.

Lage: All the way from Iowa?

02-00:22:53
Chall: That's what I remember.

Lage: Oh my goodness .

02-00:22:55
Chall: I can't believe it, but I do remember that. Suddenly I remembered that little suitcase that would go back and forth.

Lage: I've heard about that, mainly from men.

02-00:23:06
Chall: Uh-huh. No, there was no place to do it. Well, let's see. I won't dwell on Reed. Reed was an intellectual opening.

Lage: Well, that's the important kind of thing I want to get.

02-00:23:19
Chall: We had Bartok. Bartok was there once, over a weekend, and he played the piano and he lectured. Some of the fellows, really smart young men, they said, "He's not a very good pianist." They knew, or thought they did. Another time, one of the first conductors of the San Francisco Symphony was there. I don't remember his name [Sir Thomas Beecham]. He lectured a couple of times. One night he was lecturing to us in one of the big rooms. We all sat around, and I remember being there, wearing a very nice dress—because most of us didn't wear nice dresses, in those days. There were a lot of hippies, long before hippie time. I was sitting in front of him, and he was extolling on Mozart's— I think it's the 40th Symphony. Well, I didn't know the 40th Symphony at all. Now, we'd had music, and I told you I had gone to concerts; but I didn't know the 40th Symphony or maybe most others. He asked a question about it. Nobody answered. All these smart kids around, they didn't answer the question. So he said, "Let me look around and see if I can find one intelligent face in this group." He looked down and he saw me, and he asked the question. I couldn't answer it, so I didn't; I stayed absolutely silent. It's embarrassing. I don't know how we all got out of that one. But I remember the 40th Symphony. When I hear it now, I know it.

Lage: You could probably answer the question now. Oh, that's wonderful. My ears perked up when you mentioned hippies before there were hippies.

02-00:25:15
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Was there kind of a Reedy type back then, around 1940?

02-00:25:19
Chall: Yes, even then. Even then, I think that's true.

Lage: And what was the Reedy type?

02-00:25:27
Chall: Well, they were very solidly into books and study.

Lage: Intellectual.

02-00:25:34
Chall: Intellectual. Now, there were times beyond that—when I was in Seattle during my first two years—I had the interest and the liberty of buying a concert ticket. Maybe I could get somebody to go with me. I bought a concert ticket to one of the first—we'll fill this in when I'm through—modern dancers in the world, at that time.

Lage: Martha Graham?

02-00:26:16
Chall: Martha Graham. I went to a Martha Graham concert, and I was just absolutely entranced. So I found out that although we always had to take PE in college, right straight through college—. It wasn't mandated at Reed, but it was expected. So at the University of Washington, one of the professors who dealt with the gymnasium taught modern dance. So from that time until past graduate school, when I went to work in Seattle, I took all the courses that I could in modern dance. And I did that at Reed.

Lage: So they offered it there, too.

02-00:27:15
Chall: Yes. We had a woman, I think a young woman who was just learning it, but she was beyond learning it. I think she was related to somebody in the college. I'm not sure whether she did that for money or whether she did it as a volunteer, but she taught. We had the opportunity of making up our own dances. I read recently somewhere—maybe it was the yearbook—that I had been a part of the modern dance, doing some—. I think it had to do with politics.

Lage: A modern dance about politics?

02-00:27:51
Chall: Yes. So that, and then the occasional dances. Also, I'm not sure just why, but I did get on the council. What was it?

Lage: Student council?

02-00:28:10
Chall: Student council. I was on the student council. At one point, some of the students decided to set up their own literary magazine, and I was put on the editorial board of the magazine. I didn't know a thing about it. I didn't know anything. But somehow, I was on that one, too. So I really got around in Reed, and got to know a lot of people, and enjoyed it, because there was a certain amount of activity that was beyond the books.

Lage: Now, I want to ask you. You mentioned at University of Washington, that of course, the girls were expecting that they would marry—

02-00:28:54
Chall: And they did.

Lage: —when they graduated. Now, what about Reed? Was there that same expectation? What was expected of women?

02-00:29:00
Chall: No. No, there wasn't. Although a few of them did, and they married their fellow classmates, men. A couple of them—although it was not permitted, but

it did happen—they would meet, men and women, at a time when we were allowed. I think it was Sundays, we could have men in our rooms. It was supposed to be just a social life. Well, those doors were closed. We found out later that they were really enjoying one another. I think ultimately they did marry. There was one couple at Reed at the time. They were going together. There was something that went on at Reed at that time that was trying to break them up. But the professors decided that they shouldn't break up. I think they allowed this couple to stay together.

Lage: So there seemed to be a lot of parental—

02-00:30:14
Chall: Yes. Yes, there was.

Lage: —monitoring of the students.

02-00:30:15
Chall: Oh, that's true. There was one very, very active young woman at Reed, at the time that I was on the council. She was causing a lot of difficulties, so they asked me, would you go and speak to her? But actually, the dean of women was very proper and strict about things. Reed has had an oral history project.

Lage: Right, I know.

02-00:30:46
Chall: It's about like this. [gestures the large size]

Lage: And you didn't get interviewed for it. It's one reason I want to go into—.

02-00:30:50
Chall: I refused. I refused.

Lage: Why did you refuse?

02-00:30:53
Chall: I just felt that I didn't really have the kind of memory about Reed that they probably wanted. I would be telling other kinds of stories. I just didn't want to do it. But I did help them with—.

Lage: Help them organize it.

02-00:31:10
Chall: Yes, organize it. There was an essay contest while I was at Reed, and I did win it.

Lage: Someone who thought she couldn't write wins the essay contest.

02-00:31:23
Chall: I couldn't. Well, I won it and I did get the fifty dollars. There were articles in the newspaper about it.

Lage: The Portland newspaper?

02-00:31:36
Chall: The Oregon paper. [*The Oregonian*] Not only were we supposed to get the fifty dollars, but it was supposed to be published. Mine was never published.

Lage: What was it about?

02-00:31:49
Chall: It was about the history of pioneers coming into Oregon. At that time, my history teacher, a woman—terrific lady—she always—. I could hardly keep up with the history that we were reading. It required so much reading and it was so much beyond where I had been.

Lage: It sounds more demanding than the University of Washington.

02-00:32:25
Chall: Indeed it was. It was also very interesting. There were only five or six of us around the table, with Dorothy Johansen being the instructor. She would say to me, "You're so quiet." Of course, I was quiet; I couldn't even understand where they were half the time. Some of these people were very smart. Some of these young men and women just knew what they were talking about, and they were articulate. Dorothy Johansen decided that she was going to see that I got into that essay contest. She drove me to the public library, where they had the Bancroft books.

Lage: Oh really? The "Bancroft Dictations"?

02-00:33:11
Chall: Bancroft Dictations. In Oregon. So she showed me where I could get it, and I read it and I took notes. And then I think she took me back another time, and I read it and I took notes. I wrote the essay. I won.

Lage: My goodness.

02-00:33:29
Chall: But it was never published. [It was poorly written. I was asked to revise it, but I never did –MC]. After that I was put into a class with one of my classmates. He and his wife became good friends of ours in the Bay Area, when all four of us were living out here. He also wrote the essay, but he didn't come in first. The two of us and a couple of other people were put into a special class that met—I think it was during a lunch hour or something. The instructor [in economics, Robert Terrill, I think], also had the chorus. I was in the chorus. I

loved to sing. We were given words, given things to write. It was as if he was now teaching us to write. I realized how utterly ridiculous the whole thing was.

Lage: But wasn't it helpful to your writing, or no?

02-00:34:42
Chall: No, of course not. I learned how to write by doing it, when I was in the League of Women Voters. I was responsible for a number of years, for the little newsletter that we wrote, or for things that I had to write. But they were never that good. They were never good, even though I thought some of them were better. In graduate school, I had to write, and I did write a thesis in graduate school.

Lage: This was at University of Iowa.

02-00:35:18
Chall: Yes, at University of Iowa. So I really only learned how to write when I was at the Regional Oral History Office, because if I didn't do it well, I had all these other good writers; I would turn it over [for their review]. They were very, very nice about it. They would help me. So I learned a lot.

Lage: That's interesting.

02-00:35:46
Chall: I can edit now. I can even write better. I know I can. But somewhere along in high school, I didn't get it; didn't get it in college. No one paid any attention. I was never put to the test.

Lage: That's interesting, with all the work you did do.

02-00:36:03
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Now, let's see. I want to move us along here. Just one quick question. Do you remember the impact of Pearl Harbor on the campus?

02-00:36:16
Chall: Yes.

Lage: The West Coast felt threatened, I think.

02-00:36:18
Chall: Mm-hm, mm-hm. I don't remember the great shock of it. I remember hearing about it. Of course, in those days, it was all radio. I think I remember hearing about it—and it happened, I believe, on a Sunday; I don't remember—I think I was on the stairs or something. I heard about it. Then after that—.

Lage: Did things change with the outbreak of war?

02-00:36:43
Chall: Yes, it changed, because by this time, the fellows would be going. Now, they didn't take many of the Reed students, young men, at that time.

Lage: Because you were just there for like six months, after the outbreak.

02-00:36:58
Chall: Yes, probably that's true. I remember the Japanese expulsion. I remember that.

Lage: Right, you do.

02-00:37:07
Chall: Some of the fellows, I think, were beginning to think about war. Where it really hit was in graduate school, when there were no men in the graduate school. My school was political science. There were two men in the class, graduates. One of them had been in Spain, and he was wounded, seriously wounded. He walked with a cane.

Lage: He'd fought in the Spanish Civil War?

02-00:37:45
Chall: Right. He walked with a cane; he had a problem with one arm. He was one of my colleagues. Nice, well, smart and concerned. The other one was a young man who may very well have been 4-F; I have no idea. He was young. He looked pretty hale and hearty, but he was not wounded and he was never anyplace else. Otherwise, the campus had few men on it. There was a large class of—. I think they were naval cadets. They would put all these groups of men on campuses all over the country. I think maybe Reed even had some.

Lage: Reed had a meteorological program, I understand.

02-00:38:33
Chall: Yes, that's right. So that's where the men were, there was really no social life as such, for me, of that kind at the University of Iowa.

Lage: How did you happen, first of all, to go on for graduate work, and secondly, in Iowa?

02-00:38:54
Chall: Well, first of all, to go on to graduate work was just expected.

Lage: It was?

02-00:38:58
Chall: Yes.

Lage: By whom?

02-00:38:59
Chall: Well, it was expected of the Reed people.

Lage: So they didn't expect women just to marry out of college.

02-00:39:05
Chall: No. I don't know about all the men and women. They all went on.

Lage: Yes, everybody went on. That's interesting.

02-00:39:13
Chall: Everybody went on.

Lage: Did your family expect it?

02-00:39:16
Chall: No, I think not. I think this was a surprise to them. But I cushioned that by getting a scholarship. I checked out to get scholarships, so that they wouldn't have to be—. Although they certainly had to pay to get me back and forth on trains and things like that, and the laundry. But they didn't have to pay any tuition. It was a very interesting time for me.

Lage: Were you always thinking of just completing the masters, or did you have thoughts of going on?

02-00:39:53
Chall: I never thought about going on. Although my professors at the University of Iowa, particularly my major professor [John Ely Briggs], he almost pleaded with me to go on. Because he said, "Women can go on." He said, Look at—." Now, I'm not sure whether it was New Hampshire or where it was. There was a well-known woman who was the president of the college. All we have to do is look up that in Google and you'll know it. He said, "Look, she's the president of a college. So if you get your PhD, there will be a place." He just couldn't accept the fact that I said no. But I did say no, because being at the university and—. My desk there was in a large room that held the professors of political science and history. There were two or three of them there.

Lage: All men, I'm assuming.

02-00:41:06
Chall: Yes, all men. There was the professor of history—. Well, I took classes in history, and they were all men. I just didn't want the academic life. I just felt, I don't want this. I wanted to get back to the West Coast. I just didn't know what I was going to do. Marriage was not my plan. But being in academia was not my desire. I'd had enough. I'd had enough. So I said no and I went off. Now, there, I had to write a thesis, also, and there were oral exams. But I got through all that.

Lage: And the thesis was, "Administration of Local Relief in Iowa." How did you happen upon that one?

02-00:42:07
Chall: That's interesting. Probably because I had lived through the Depression. Somewhere along the line, I was aware of the fact that major changes were made, in terms of relief and all this. Somehow, I knew it. There might've been some classes that I had at Iowa that I don't remember. But whatever it was, even at Reed and my own life in Tacoma, when things happened, I don't know. The material was all there, because Iowa has ninety-nine counties, in that small state. I think the university had all of the old stuff.

Lage: All the records.

02-00:43:00
Chall: All the records. It was no problem, so I just took it—

Lage: And did it.

02-00:43:04
Chall: —and I went with it. I guess it was all right.

Lage: I'm winding up now, because we're going to move into your work in the war. But at this time in Iowa, were you thinking about what you were going to do as a woman, in the war?

02-00:43:25
Chall: No. No, I had no idea. The reason that I managed to get into the War Labor Board was because I was getting information—I guess little pamphlets and things, information—from Reed College, that they were sending out about what was going on, their bulletins. I saw in one that my major professor, Professor George Bernard Noble, had been selected to be the head of the office of the War Labor Board in Seattle. I just wrote him a note and said congratulations, or that was nice. He immediately wrote back to me, and he said, "I would like you to come and be on my staff." Then I really had a problem, because I had some close friends, by this time, who were in graduate school.

Lage: In Iowa?

02-00:44:32
Chall: In Iowa. I was in a rooming house. Also, in the morning I went off down the street somewhere and served breakfast. I worked as a breakfast waitress. But I had friends, and one of them was a close friend. She was working on her masters also. I said, "No, I'm not going to do this. I'm not going to give up this degree in the middle of the year."

Lage: Oh, he wanted you to leave in the middle of the year?

02-00:45:05
Chall: Yes. Come. I said, "I won't do this." So I finally worked it out in my mind, and I wrote to him and I said, "No, I don't want to give up. I want to go through the year and get my degree, and I'll check with you when I come home, when I'm out." So that's what I did. He was still—.

Lage: Still looking for people.

02-00:45:28
Chall: Yes. Also working with him, and living in his home with his wife—they had no children—was Elizabeth Brown, who had been in the year ahead of me at Reed, had written the first thesis about the war.

Lage: Oh, yes.

02-00:45:47
Chall: She was living with them. So I got back to Tacoma, and within about five days, I went over to Seattle and I saw Dr. Noble. He hired me right away.

Lage: Okay. Now, we're not going to get into that too much now, but I just want to know—.

02-00:46:05
Chall: How it happened?

Lage: Was it expected that young women needed to get into the workplace during the war? Or could you have gone home and lived with your parents and had a social life only?

02-00:46:18
Chall: I could have. I think so. But I think most of us—. I'm not sure about all—. Well, my close friends from Seattle were getting their degrees somewhere else—Washington DC, wherever they were. They were getting their degrees, advanced. Then they married, eventually, as I did. But I don't know what the expectation was. I don't think so. I'm not sure my father expected me to do what I did, because he always told my husband that, "When Malca went off to college, she was different. She just changed."

Lage: Oh, he did? Oh, how interesting. Do you feel that you just changed, also?

02-00:47:17
Chall: Oh, surely.

Lage: Yes? Of course, everyone does.

02-00:47:19
Chall: That's right. I did change. I changed a lot.

Lage: Well, could you say, just as we wrap this up, how did you change?

02-00:47:30
Chall: Well, politically, I was somewhat on the left.

Lage: More so than your parents?

02-00:47:35
Chall: Yes. I was independent. See, I was an independent person. I was intellectual—more intellectual than they, although I had all this good background. *The Federalist Papers* were in the house. My father took a magazine that came every week, a little four-page thing, just a page like this, called *In Fact*. Now, *In Fact*, as I recall it, is probably very much like *The Harrington Report*.

Lage: The online—?

02-00:48:24
Chall: No, not online.

Lage: *Huntington*? No. I'm not sure what you're getting at.

02-00:48:30
Chall: There's a fellow who also has a magazine. I hear him on KALW in the morning. His name, I think, is—I'll have to get it for you—Jim Harrington or something like that [Jim Hightower, the *Hightower Lowdown*]. Just goes right to the point of what's happening in this country. Very well done. That was pretty much like *In Fact*. In fact, *In Fact* was a very good little paper.

Lage: Was it liberally oriented?

02-00:49:01
Chall: Yes, yes. It was like an environmental paper, or like anything that would point out to you where the mistakes were being made in the government.

Lage: But that was something in your home, and seeing that was so—.

02-00:49:14
Chall: Yes, my father—. It came into the home every week.

Lage: So you had the background from home, too.

02-00:49:20
Chall: I did. I did.

Lage: I wonder what he was expecting of you.

02-00:49:25
Chall: He probably was expecting of me—. Or it was more that he *wasn't* expecting. Wasn't expecting. Because the expectations, I fulfilled all those expectations. But I think where he was not expecting it is that I would be so independent.

Lage: I see.

02-00:49:48
Chall: That I would move away from the family. That's probably what was not expected. That I would go to New York and meet somebody, bring him home, who was just not going to fit in, totally.

Lage: Oh, that's interesting. This is going to be another story, because I think we should stop for now.

02-00:50:05
Chall: All right.

Lage: But that will be fun to explore.

02-00:50:07
Chall: All right.

Interview 2: February 5, 2015
Audiofile 3

Lage: This is interview number two with Malca Chall, February 5, 2015, and I'm Ann Lage for the Regional Oral History Office, now called the Center for Oral History, at the Bancroft Library.

03-00:00:25
Chall: Very good.

Lage: Okay. Now Malca, last time we talked about upbringing, education, your graduate work, and we had you right on the verge of going out to Seattle to be with the Regional War Labor Board.

03-00:00:43
Chall: That's right.

Lage: Before you took that job—I know your professor had written to you and asked you to come—did you consider other options?

03-00:00:52
Chall: No. No, there were no other options at that time, that I knew of.

Lage: Other women that you knew from Tacoma or from Reed, what kinds of things were they doing during the war? Do you remember?

03-00:01:14
Chall: Elizabeth Brown—I told you about her, who had written the preceding thesis under Dr. Noble, about the opposition to the war—she was one of his top assistants there.

Lage: At the War Labor Board.

03-00:01:39
Chall: She was there, and she was living with the Nobles. The Nobles always had a student or somebody living with them; they didn't have children. It was a way—. Even at Reed, professors would often have a student helping them if they had a lot of children, some way to help them. Elizabeth was now living in Seattle—she was from Portland—with Dr. Noble and his wife Mathilda.

Lage: So he'd recruited from his students at Reed.

03-00:02:09
Chall: He did, he did. We were the only two that I think of. Other women, I really don't know. One of them already was a teacher. She was a close friend of mine at Reed. [Joanne Amspoker] She was now teaching school somewhere in Oregon.

Lage: So everybody didn't feel they had to get into war-related work.

03-00:02:34
Chall: No. Nor did I; just fell into it.

Lage: Yes. Okay, well, that's important, I think. So where did you live when you went to Seattle?

03-00:02:45
Chall: I lived with the mother of close friends of mine, whom I had met when I was about fourteen years old, in Seattle. I think I may have told you that a cousin of mine, one of these close cousins of my father's who happened to live in Seattle, felt when I was a teenager, that I should get to know other teenagers in Seattle, because there weren't too many my age in Tacoma. The teenagers seemed to be about my brother and sister's ages, a few years younger.

Lage: Are you talking about within the Jewish community?

03-00:03:21
Chall: Yes, I am. She introduced me to two daughters of a close friend of hers, and they became my friends for life. Only one of whom is still living, and she's my age.

Lage: So you had a little social network.

03-00:03:42
Chall: I had a home, because Rebecca Waxman, which was the mother's name, she had a big house, with three big bedrooms. It was a big house in Seattle, and her two daughters were away. Shirley, the younger one, who was always my closest friend, was in the East. She was getting a graduate degree in social welfare, social work. I forget where she was. She wasn't at Harvard, but she was in one of the East Coast colleges. The other daughter, Muriel, had married soon after she graduated from college. She married a young man who was in the army, and she was with him, so I had one bedroom. I contacted Rebecca, knowing that she was—. I just checked, and she was happy to take me. I was a good part of the family by then. So I moved there within about a week. I came home, I traveled by train from Iowa to Seattle-Tacoma. [interview interruption]

Lage: Now we're back on.

03-00:05:27
Chall: All right. About three or four days after I arrived back in Tacoma—. I had come, as I said, by train. I think I should tell you that the first train that I was put on—people were coming from the South now, going north, to the war industries—the car was absolutely all black men.

Lage: My goodness.

03-00:05:52
Chall: So that was the car that I had been assigned. Well, the conductor came through, took a look, and he said, "I'll put you in a different car." And he did, which I thought was very interesting, because obviously I didn't belong there. I would've been totally out of place.

Lage: But did you feel threatened?

03-00:06:16
Chall: No, I didn't. I just thought, this is—. I was very naïve about things like that. This is where I was put. Now, of course, I wasn't exactly comfortable, but that's where I was. But I thought he was understanding. So he put me in a car that was an ordinary car. It's one of those that you sit up in all night. Several nights sitting up. So I got home and in a couple of days, I went over to Seattle. I forget how I got there, because I don't think I was driving. I went to see Dr. Noble. He said, "Well, could you start work Monday?" or whatever a couple of days later would be. I said, "I guess I can." "I want you to be a—

Lage: A wage rate analyst.

03-00:07:13
Chall: A wage analyst, wage rate analyst. I went home and I told my mother that I'm going to start work on Monday. She was just appalled. She said, "You just came home!" Of course, she wanted me around for a while. But then I got in touch with Rebecca Waxman, and I moved into the house. And that's where I stayed all those years. After a while, another young woman whom I knew and whom Rebecca knew—. I think she probably had been a sorority sister. I don't know what kind of job she had, but she had just graduated, also, and she had a job in Seattle. She needed a place to stay, so she had the other bedroom. Until a couple of years later Muriel's husband was reassigned. He was reassigned to learn the Japanese language, apparently ready to go to Japan, when that was going to be necessary. Muriel was pregnant. She came home. The other young woman had to leave, and Muriel took the bedroom. The first several nights, she cried all night. It was so sad. But eventually, nine months later, about that, little Bobby was born.

Lage: Oh, how fun. While you were there?

03-00:08:38
Chall: It was great. Yes, it was great for me, for Muriel and for Rebecca, the grandmother. So that's where I lived, quite happy. Quite happily.

Lage: In really a family atmosphere.

03-00:08:50
Chall: Very much so.

Lage: Was Seattle very changed by the war? Was there a lot of war work? Did you see a lot of these, I'll call them immigrants, from other parts of the country?

03-00:09:04
Chall: I didn't see them; I saw a lot of soldiers. Soldiers and sailors.

Lage: It must've been a port.

03-00:09:12
Chall: It was, yes.

Lage: Well, Tacoma, also.

03-00:09:14
Chall: Yes, Fort Lewis. Right near Seattle, I forget the name of the port that was there [Bremerton]. I don't know that it was a seaport, but it was for sailors. Yes, it was a seaport. Merchant Marines, all that. Elizabeth Brown was a close friend. She and I went around together a lot.

Lage: Is she the one who also worked at the war board?

03-00:09:44
Chall: Yes, she worked with Dr. Noble, and lived with him. She and I and Dr. Noble, one night a week or so, we would go and play badminton, because the high schools were open to us, to anybody, at night. It was such a good idea. We struggle now with kids who don't know what to do with themselves at night. Just leave the doors open. So the doors were open and we would play badminton at least once a week. Then I had other friends whom I met.

Lage: Through work?

03-00:10:21
Chall: Through work and—. Remember the friend I told you about who had been blackballed at the sorority?

Lage: Yes, yes.

03-00:10:31
Chall: She was working as a reporter [Ruth Livingston Howell]. She was married and working as a reporter for one of the papers. It might've been the *Post-Intelligencer*, which was the major paper in Seattle, a Hearst paper. I forget the name of the other paper [*Seattle Times*], but they were two daily papers, one in the morning, *P-I*, and one in the afternoon. She was, I think, working for the *P-I*; I'm not sure. We would have lunch together once in a while, and I would tell her sometimes something that was interesting going on in the office. One day it appeared in the newspaper.

Lage: Something that shouldn't have appeared?

03-00:11:11
Chall: Well, it was a bit of a gossipy sort of thing. Not too bad, but on the whole, nothing that I should've told Ruth. That was a lesson to me: never say anything to a reporter, because you never know where it will go.

Lage: Right. Did that come back to haunt you?

03-00:11:28
Chall: It came back maybe this next day, after it appeared in the press. Clark Kerr stood in front of me. Now, I knew who he was, by this time; he knew who I was. We knew everybody on the staff—the attorneys, all of them. He came right in front of me at the desk, and he stood up in front of me and he said, "Malca, what am I going to do with you?" Or something like that.

Lage: He knew what the source was.

03-00:12:01
Chall: *Of course*, he knew the source. In fact, it was printed in the paper.

Lage: Oh, Malca Chall said.

03-00:12:07
Chall: Yes, "Malca Chall, working for the Regional War Labor Board"—or something like that, I've forgotten. So that was it. Then after that, I was very—.

Lage: You learned that lesson.

03-00:12:19
Chall: I learned that lesson. Ruth and I stayed friends for years and years and years. That's how I met Clark Kerr [who became chancellor of UC Berkeley and then president of the UC system].

Lage: Through the War Labor Board. So he was a member of the board, like Dr. Noble was.

03-00:12:37
Chall: Yes. Whatever Dr. Noble's title was, his was the next title.

Lage: Vice chair, I think. Vice chairman of the board.

03-00:12:52
Chall: Yes. Yes. As vice chairman, his responsibility was with the attorneys on the staff. He was the head.

Lage: I see. So you wouldn't necessarily take your problems to him.

03-00:13:09
Chall: No. If we didn't solve something satisfactorily and the petitioners were dissatisfied, they could take it up beyond my level. It would go sometimes, not to the court, but to the attorneys for the next level.

Lage: Okay. Probably before we get into all this, we have to get a little overview of what you were doing. But did you have training?

03-00:13:42
Chall: No.

Lage: Because I read in the report that a lot of people were trained in San Francisco. But you didn't get sent to San Francisco for training?

03-00:13:49
Chall: No, I had Los Angeles. I'm not sure that I was ever trained.

Lage: Maybe because you came on a few months late.

03-00:13:58
Chall: Well, I came and I was just put into the job. I learned on the job. There was a period when we went to Los Angeles, but I think that was because they needed help. They were behind. So we had a time in Los Angeles.

Lage: I see. Okay. Just give a very brief overview of what the board did, and then what your job was.

03-00:14:25
Chall: One of my first examples was I was put into, oh, retail or something that had to do with just ordinary kind of problems. Then I went from there to some very complicated ones. But the one that I remember from the early period was the bank. Now, they had tellers in the bank, and they used to pay them a certain amount of money. They were all men. Women were not tellers.

Lage: Prewar, or during the war?

03-00:15:14
Chall: Prewar. The men were gone, and now they had women, some women there, and maybe some men who couldn't go to war or didn't. But things were heating up and the bank needed to give tellers some extra money. The wage rate had to go up, and it was our job to determine—. Now, there was a kind of period where you could raise the wages beyond a certain percentage for this group or that group or the other group—maybe it was fisheries or a farm—so that you had some latitude.

Lage: You had brackets—.

03-00:15:57
Chall: Yes, that's right.

Lage: The report mentions brackets.[2]

03-00:15:59
Chall: That's right. I questioned the banker who was sitting in front of me. Why weren't there any women as tellers before? He said, "We just felt that they wouldn't be able to handle it. They would get too emotional. Suppose something came out a penny or so short, it didn't quite add up; they would get emotional. So we felt we couldn't hire them." So here they were hiring, now, women. I always felt that was one of the interesting little bits of information that you'd pick up along the way.

Lage: When they hired these women, did they pay them the same as the men?

03-00:16:48
Chall: Well, yes, they were paying them the same as the men. I guess there was a flat rate that they were all being paid, as far as I know. Then they'd asked for a raise, and I guess whatever we gave them, the women got, too. But they were mostly women, by this time. We also had radio, some of the announcers and others who worked on the radio. Eventually, I had other—.

But first of all, I'll explain to you that we had a suite of offices in one of the big buildings downtown. I used to go there on the bus, because Seattle always had good transportation. The attorneys were in one room, a big room. Dr. Noble had a nice office, and close to him was Elizabeth, in the office. Dr. Kerr, I think, was in the big room with the attorneys. The wage rate analysts were also in a big room, and our desks were one behind the other. On the side of us in the room were secretaries, who took our correspondence. Now, this was totally new to me, to have to dictate my letters, because the person who was going to take my dictation happened to be somebody that I knew from olden days at the sorority. Or at least she had come in later; I knew her brother.

Behind us in this room was one large office. Muriel Drew, I think her name was, was in charge of the wage rate analysts [assistant director of the Wage Stabilization Division]. Well, if you had a problem, you took it to her. She would help you iron it out and decide what you might decide, how to help you, so that you didn't have to take it immediately beyond. You tried to keep it within the sphere of the office, your job. Remember now, she had a very important position here. I don't remember what her antecedents were, but it must've been something also important, because Mrs. Drew was on the same level as Clark Kerr. She was a splendid woman. Clark Kerr, when I saw him

[2] National War Labor Board, Twelfth Region, "Termination Report" by George Bernard Noble, Chairman.

from time to time when I was with the Oral History Office, would tell me the latest news about her, because he kept in touch. So I had a group of friends.

Lage: Were the wage rate analysts primarily women?

03-00:20:02
Chall: Yes. I think maybe one man, probably a 4-F, I would guess. Otherwise, we were all women.

Lage: And the secretaries?

03-00:20:15
Chall: Secretaries, too, were all women.

Lage: So did you learn to give dictation to your former sorority—?

03-00:20:23
Chall: I think I did. Though of course, sometimes it might be another one there. But yes, I did. I'm trying to remember whether I finally—. I don't know that I had a typewriter, so that I finally, I think, would write it out and give it to her. I just was never comfortable dictating.

Lage: It sounds as if it was a place where women were treated professionally.

03-00:20:46
Chall: Oh, yes. Well, it came down from the government, what we were going to be paid.

Lage: You didn't negotiate your salary.

03-00:20:57
Chall: No. Not in those days. But that was the way it was set up.

Lage: Was it mainly white women?

03-00:21:07
Chall: Yes. Yes.

Lage: Mainly college educated, in this wage rate analyst position?

03-00:21:14
Chall: Yes. We were all at about the same level.

Lage: About the same age?

03-00:21:20
Chall: Yes.

Lage: So you relatively young women were going out to the businessmen in the community—

03-00:21:31
Chall: Yes, we were.

Lage: —and telling them how much they could pay their workers. How did that work?

03-00:21:35
Chall: Yes, we were. They had to listen to us. There was no way out. We were in control. [See appendix 2, p. 278, for an employer's perspective.]

Lage: Interesting. Do you remember any encounters besides the man in the bank?

03-00:21:51
Chall: Oh, yes. I used to have to speak to groups of businessmen and in their conferences, about the War Labor Board and what we were doing. I remember one. I think it was in Portland or someplace; I had to travel to it. (I'll explain to you travel in those days.) There was a certain amount of levity and drinking and all. But I stood at a podium and explained the whole thing to this group of men. Then I had to stay overnight. I remember one of the men, he would come to the door and he would knock on the door. "Miss Kleiner, Miss Kleiner." It was really disturbing. So I told the man—I think he was the head of it, who had sort of taken me over, in a way, because he had introduced me and taken me from the airport or wherever it was—I told him, and he was very upset with this, too. He told this man that he had been out of control. But he did keep an eye on me. Now, in terms of—. Yes, I did quite a bit of this kind of speaking. I did it in the orchards. And the fishing industry.

Lage: Oh, you did fishing and agriculture, too.

03-00:23:21
Chall: Yes. So I would go from one kind of thing to another.

Lage: Did you have to learn about each industry?

03-00:23:28
Chall: You learned whatever you could. You learned it, really, from them. They would come, they would talk to you. Yes, I went down to somewhere in Oregon and watched the—. It was all women, gutting fish and getting them ready for the fish market. It was awfully difficult work. Cold, and their hands were cold. All the fish were just coming out of the water. They needed a raise.

Lage: Were they pushing for the raise, or their union?

03-00:24:02
Chall: Yes, sometimes it was a union. Sometimes it was.

Lage: So they would apply for their workers?

03-00:24:08
Chall: Yes, they would. They used to have to apply, I think, through the head of their office or their business. But yes, with respect to the unions, yes. I did fishery. I went into the orchards, where they were picking apples, out of Yakima, sometimes in the spring, and it was just gorgeous! The apples were blossoming. They're close to the eastern part of Washington, where the mountains are just beautiful. They're on the other side of the Cascades. At that time, I think I had won a contest of some kind and had one of these little old movie cameras, a little eight-point movie camera. So I remember taking pictures, moving pictures, when I had the time, in the orchards. So I dealt with the pickers in the industry. I also dealt with the people who dug potatoes.

Lage: Oh my goodness, I didn't realize this.

03-00:25:22
Chall: Yes, we did everything. I did the fisheries, I did potatoes, because I must've been dealing with agriculture at that time. Potatoes, I remember, apples.

Lage: Was any of the pressure to raise the wages coming from the employers, because they needed to attract workers?

03-00:25:44
Chall: Yes. Yes, they did. They needed that. In terms of the Merchant Marines, with whom I had wonderful altercations—.

Lage: Oh, were they also under the wage stabilization program?

03-00:26:01
Chall: Yes. There, you had very decided problems. You had the head of the companies that owned these ships, you had the ship owners, and you had the people who worked, and they were—. Seattle, particularly.

Lage: They must have had a strong union.

03-00:26:24
Chall: And seafarers were very—. That was a union town. In fact, the whole coast was heavily union, when it came to sea people, to people who worked in the water and ships, longshoremen. That's all history; we all know that. One of the union people was a graduate of Reed College [Roger Randall]. I didn't really realize that. I think he'd graduated some years before me [class of 1942]. He was strongly on the union side, strongly on the left. And this was a real problem, so of course that went to the attorneys.

Lage: Well, you said you had quite an encounter. Tell me how it went, if you remember.

03-00:27:08
Chall: Well, because they just were at loggerheads.

Lage: The ship owners didn't want to raise the wages?

03-00:27:16
Chall: Oh, no. Well, or as much as the union wanted.

Lage: And you had the task of keeping it within the brackets.

03-00:27:23
Chall: Yes, we had our boundaries. The only way you could go beyond those was through the attorneys. They would make the final decisions. So of course, that was one that went to the attorneys. I used to see Roger from time to time.

Lage: Is this the Reed—?

03-00:27:47
Chall: Yes.

Lage: The union man.

03-00:27:47
Chall: Right. One day many years later—it had to be many years later, when I had my two young sons—Harold and I—now, Harold is my husband and I'll speak of him as Harold—Harold and I took our boys to Lake Merritt, to the children's park there. I forget what it's called [Fairyland]. There was this really good, also, friend of mine, who represented the marine owners. There he was with his children. We had quite a fine reunion. I don't remember what he was doing at that time, but he had a good job. Maybe in a bank; I don't know what it was.

Then from there, I did work in manufacturing. I do remember it was with . . . [thinking of word] Aluminum. The aluminum industry in Washington was very major. I don't think it is now, but it was then. There again, we had the company versus the union, the workers. I did not go to an aluminum factory to see how it was made, but I dealt with the aluminum industry.

Lage: Which was easier to deal with, the company or the labor representatives?

03-00:29:39
Chall: Well, they were both difficult because each of them had a good proposition, each of them had a problem, and you had to decide. Of course, very often I would be siding with the workers, because they were the ones who hadn't really had anything during the Depression, and here all of a sudden they were getting some pay.

Lage: And they were needed.

03-00:30:03
Chall: And they were needed. The industry people were just about what they always were. So there was always a clash.

Lage: Was there any general feeling on the War Labor Board, from Noble or Clark Kerr, that was favorable towards the labor interests?

03-00:30:25
Chall: I don't think so. I think they were really quite neutral. We all had to be neutral. We could understand problems, but we had our formula. While you may, of course, feel that probably they deserved a little more—and sometimes you might've even given them a little more—but you always had a little—. There was a little elasticity, but not much. So it seems to me that I sort of roamed around quite a few industries—

Lage: I should say!

03-00:30:59
Chall: —and learned a lot about them. I don't remember having retail clerks.

Lage: You mentioned beauty parlor—

03-00:31:10
Chall: Well, I don't remember them.

Lage: —as being one of the fields you worked with.

03-00:31:13
Chall: It may've been. I don't remember them.

Lage: Building maintenance, do you remember that?

03-00:31:18
Chall: No.

Lage: I would think, just naïvely, that there'd be difficulty finding workers for a lot of these nonessential—.

03-00:31:22
Chall: Yes. Well, of course, that was really the problem. That's why you needed to raise wages, because this was the only way you could get them. But even so, they were hard to get. The men were at war, and some of these industries just weren't employing women. That Rosie the Riveter area was probably one of the places where they did.

Lage: But you wouldn't be—.

03-00:31:51
Chall: No, we weren't involved in that.

Lage: You weren't doing that kind of thing. Were there people who immigrated or migrated from the South in many of these industries that you worked with?

03-00:32:02
Chall: Not that I was aware of.

Lage: Were you aware of any racial issues?

03-00:32:07
Chall: No, because in the fisheries, they were the women who had always been there. I don't remember anything about the workers in the aluminum industry.

Lage: What about in agriculture? Were they minority—?

03-00:32:24
Chall: No. I don't know. They may have been, but I wasn't aware of that. I'm not sure if we were bringing in the braceros at that time, as they called them. I think these were people who had always lived there. Women, many women.

Lage: Yes, women who may not have worked before.

03-00:32:47
Chall: Women were digging the potatoes. There was a lot of women working as labor, in those days. So I don't remember any—. Other people might. There were many other people working for the War Labor Board, and for the other one having to do with price. It was called—.

Lage: Price stabilization?

03-00:33:17
Chall: Price stabilization. They were in Seattle, too.

Lage: Oh, that was a separate board?

03-00:33:22
Chall: Yes, it was separate.

Lage: They're so closely related.

03-00:33:23
Chall: But many of us became well acquainted with each other. We all did. We became good friends. So I had many good friends who worked in the price stabilization area. They were mostly men then, I think. Very smart. Or at least the ones I remember. Very smart. One of them became a very close friend of Clark Kerr's, and went to the University of California with him, when Clark Kerr went there.

Lage: Were they older?

03-00:33:55
Chall: Some were older—

Lage: A little bit too old for the military?

03-00:33:56
Chall: —and I think they were married already. They were married or became married. I think these men were probably 4-F.

Lage: Did you kind of assume that most men who weren't in the war were 4-F?

03-00:34:10
Chall: I never thought about that assumption, I just took it. Now, my brother was in the war. He was a navigator bombardier. He was in the war and he was first, somewhere in Nevada, I believe. Tonopah, I believe it was called. Then he went, I think, overseas.

Lage: How about your sister? Did she have a job during those years?

03-00:34:39
Chall: My sister was in college at that time. She went to UCLA. She had a year or two, maybe a year, at the University of Washington, and then she went to UCLA, with friends of hers who also went down there. So she was in school. She was also—

Lage: A little bit younger.

03-00:34:56
Chall: —three years behind me. That makes a difference.

Lage: Big difference, right.

03-00:35:01
Chall: You can ask me other questions, but as I think about it, that was—.

Lage: That's what you recall.

03-00:35:08
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Was there a typical day? Was it at your desk or were you out in the field most of the time?

03-00:35:19
Chall: No. I was at a desk almost all the time. When it came time to do a field job, then you would do it. Now, most of the time, to get to Portland or to the fishing industry, other places, you would fly. Now, there was only one place to fly and one airline, and that was Boeing. Boeing was building its planes, and they had an airport right alongside of where they were building planes.

The first time I went on a plane, I didn't know that I was supposed to make a reservation ahead of time; I just showed up. They said, "Well, you should've made some kind of reservation." I said, "I didn't know that, but," wherever it was, "I have to be there by X time." Those were very small planes. They probably didn't hold more than thirty people, if that, and they were propeller, of course. Now, I could be wrong, but I have a distinct memory that another person was also going somewhere in the same place, and he was with the—. What did you call it?

Lage: Price stabilization.

03-00:35:49
Chall: The price stabilization. He was a good friend by this time. Price stabilization. They gave me a seat, and he stood up all the way to where we were going. Now, I remember this so clearly, but it could be a myth.

Lage: Isn't that funny how memory—?

03-00:37:11
Chall: Yes. But I do remember how strange this was. I flew to Portland. I flew across, east of the mountains, to Yakima. Going to Portland, you're going near the mountains, going across the mountains. Either way, you didn't fly very high. You'd get close to the mountains and it would be horrible.

Lage: Horrible.

03-00:37:42
Chall: The plane would just go—. It would be jumping. Your whole body would—. I used to just dread, just *dread* those flights.

Lage: I can see why.

03-00:37:53
Chall: Eventually, when I moved to New York and I had to cross the country, at a time when they still didn't have any other planes except the propeller planes, crossing those mountains was very difficult. I never got sick, but other people on the plane did.

Lage: Which also makes it unpleasant.

03-00:38:13
Chall: Yes, that's right. So most of the time I traveled by air, sometimes by train. A lot by train. But that was the way we traveled, and that's the way I traveled when I did field work. Otherwise, I was at a desk.

Lage: All this travel was on your own? They didn't send you out in pairs?

03-00:38:33
Chall: No, they never did.

Lage: You were already very independent, but this must've reinforced it.

03-00:38:38
Chall: Yes, but sometimes I just realize what it all meant, because I was a young woman, I guess attractive enough. Now, there was an attorney who came from Portland. He was a nice, tall, handsome man, and he would come in as an attorney, for various—. I don't know what they were that he was representing. A couple of times when he was staying overnight, he would ask me if I would go out with him. We had a nice dinner and we danced, in the Olympic Hotel. It was very, very nice. Then he would just put me in a taxi and send me home. This was lovely. Other times, men were ready for something else, and you had to be really careful. But they would invite you out.

Lage: But did they think because you were so independent that you were ready for something else, too?

03-00:39:38
Chall: Probably so. Other than that, I became acquainted over the years with some young men who were in the army, and I would go out with them. So I did have occasional dates. In fact, it was a very independent time. Mrs. Waxman, Rebecca, used to wonder. Now, Malca, you must be careful. Because I was her daughter, in every sense of the word. She didn't know what Shirley was doing on the East Coast, but she could keep in touch with me because I lived with her. So they were interesting experiences. It was a growing-up period.

Lage: Yes, very interesting experiences. Okay, I have a couple more questions, and what were they? Anything more to say about Clark Kerr, his role and how you observed him, got to know him?

03-00:40:36
Chall: Well, he was highly respected. He was a nice man. He was very, very pleasant, very nice. But other than that, I didn't have much to do with him. It was just later, when we connected again at Berkeley that it was a good connection.

Lage: Yes, you had that past. You mentioned that he was Quaker and a pacifist.

03-00:41:05
Chall: Yes, he was. Yes.

Lage: Was that a known thing in the War Labor Board, or something you learned later?

03-00:41:11
Chall: I think it was probably something I learned later. I may have known it then, but I don't remember. See, all the attorneys also were men. Well, all these

people were relatively young. They were attorneys, so they were all older than I was. Why they were there, I don't know. I didn't ever question it. They probably had important jobs, which is what they had.

Lage: Right, as a substitute for—.

03-00:41:45
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Oh, I know. I want to go back to equal pay for equal work. I know that was a mandated War Labor Board standard. But I saw in this lengthy report, some examples from the canneries—

03-00:42:08
Chall: Oh, yes.

Lage: —where the men and the women were paid differently. Can you talk about that a little bit?

03-00:42:13
Chall: I can't. I can't remember that. If you saw this in Dr. Noble's report—.

Lage: He didn't even comment on it. He just gave these examples of how wages were raised, and they listed men, women as separate categories.

03-00:42:28
Chall: So probably what they were is raised from where they were, I suspect.

Lage: Right, they were, but why were the men and women not paid the same? Was that an issue on any of your—?

03-00:42:39
Chall: No. I don't remember that. I just do not remember that. See, that kind of thing came much later, with the feminist movement.

Lage: But there was, I read in another report, that there was a general order in November '42, establishing equal pay for equal work, for women replacing men in the same job.

03-00:43:07
Chall: Very good, then it probably—. He claims that it didn't always work?

Lage: Well, he's not addressing that.

03-00:42:14
Chall: I see.

Lage: He just lists the wages as being different. Now, maybe these weren't women replacing men in the same work, but—

03-00:43:22
Chall: Well, my guess is that when it came to the tellers, they got their raises. If there were any men there, the women were getting the—.

Lage: But you don't remember this as a big issue that you had to deal with, seeing that the women were paid the same.

03-00:43:34
Chall: I don't remember it. I don't remember it. It may have not been in my own radar. I don't remember it.

Lage: I think you would've remembered it.

03-00:43:42
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Since you remembered the comment of the teller.

03-00:43:46
Chall: The teller.

Lage: The banker.

03-00:43:47
Chall: That's right. I think that this may have been the kind of problem that was dealt with by attorneys, big businesses.

Lage: I see. Okay.

03-00:43:59
Chall: Unions.

Lage: Now, another question. We hear so much about anti-government feeling now. Did you hear a lot of grousing about the government regulating wages, from either side? Did they make comments about government?

03-00:44:24
Chall: They might have; I don't remember that.

Lage: Were they welcoming to you when you came to do your studies?

03-00:44:31
Chall: They had to be. Yes, they were. I'm sure that they objected to it. But I don't remember this. Maybe it was because it was just not something I took issue with, but I don't remember it.

Lage: Right. Okay, well, it wasn't a big issue. Then the other thing, beyond your job, one of the things that the project is interested in, the feelings at the time in your community, among the people you knew. Were there strong senses of patriotism and unity during that war period?

03-00:45:13
Chall: I think so. I remember—well, this was all in Seattle, so I had to be still working, during the war—I would go out and speak on the streets, as it were, almost, trying to sell war bonds.

Lage: Oh, you did?

03-00:45:35
Chall: Mm-hm. I remember doing that a few times.

Lage: War bonds, just war bonds?

03-00:45:40
Chall: Yes, war bonds.

Lage: So that was sort of volunteer community work?

03-00:45:47
Chall: Yes, right. I had become a part of a group of people—one of them was related to me by marriage—who were quite concerned. They were basically, I think, socialists, because that was Seattle. But they had a small group of their own friends, and they used to meet, well, sometimes in the afternoons , lunch time, and I would go meet with them. I do remember that one of their concerns, of course, might've been—. That's maybe why I was trying to sell bonds; maybe they had some of us going out and doing that. I remember another time—.

Lage: But what were their concerns, this group?

03-00:46:42
Chall: They were concerned with, I think, the end of the war. They were looking ahead. One of the interesting times when I was with them, there were a couple of women running for the school board, Seattle school board. One of them was a close member of this group, a very exceptional woman. I just can't say enough about her. She was going to run for the school board. So at that time, I just went out the way. I've always—. That's how I learned to work for a candidate. You have your little neighborhood that you're assigned to. I would knock on the door and say that I've come here in favor of Frances—I can't remember her last name—who's running for school board. What I found out was that most—. They'd invite you into their home. It seemed almost always, that the women would defer to the men. They would wait until the man said, well, I'm for so-and-so. My friend didn't get on that school board. But the following time, as I recall, a woman did get on the school board.

Lage: So that was unusual, to have a woman on the school board?

03-00:48:17
Chall: Yes.

Lage: And then also within the marriage, the husband had authority. That must have struck you at the time.

03-00:48:23
Chall: Yes, I remember one of these homes particularly, it seemed to me that—. And that has been borne out by all kinds of studies since then. But I did get my feeling for that. Of course, Dr. Noble, when I was at Reed, had taken me once or twice to places where there were voting booths, to watch people voting, coming in and voting. He took me once or twice to places like that, so I could become acquainted with that kind of work or activity, in terms of civic affairs.

Lage: But just observing.

03-00:49:14
Chall: Observing.

Lage: Yes, yes. So tell me more about this group. Was it a political party, like?

03-00:49:19
Chall: It was political.

Lage: It did have a socialist agenda?

03-00:49:24
Chall: Not that you would say so, but one of their very important interests was looking ahead on health issues. There was something going on in one of the Middle West states—and I don't remember which one it was—where they were trying a health plan, which was very much like what ultimately became Kaiser. Or in Seattle, it is called Group Health.

03-00:50:11
Chall: They brought this man in to talk to us about what he was working on. From that time on, a few of these people in this group worked very hard to establish that kind of medical program in Seattle, and did.

Lage: Really?

03-00:50:30
Chall: Yes, and did. As I recall, this cousin of mine and his family, they all had very early numbers, very early numbers.

Lage: In that group?

03-00:50:46
Chall: In that group, when they affiliated—. Now, of course, that whole organization, medical organization, was treated by the medical—

Lage: Establishment.

03-00:51:00
Chall: —establishment exactly the way Kaiser-Permanente was treated. It was all about the same time, because Kaiser-Permanente came along during the war, also. But the Group Health institution came after the war.

Lage: Oh, this is so interesting, yes.

03-00:51:15
Chall: So these were interesting times that I had when I was in Seattle, with the badminton groups and the other people.

Lage: The school board. And the selling war bonds. I don't see quite how that—.

03-00:51:31
Chall: I don't either, but I was doing it. But I did it.

Lage: Yes. Do you have any remembrances of—? You say you really were out on the street selling bonds?

03-00:51:39
Chall: Yes, I remember being on the street. Now, I was on the street. That is not exactly the way it looks. I think that we were in some kind of an automobile, and we were in—.

Lage: Or a booth type of thing.

03-00:51:58
Chall: We just weren't street people; we were part of the organization, of whatever it was, to sell war bonds. So you were part of that group, and you were just one who was speaking.

Lage: Right, right. Well, you did a lot of different things.

03-00:52:15
Chall: Yes. I should tell you, also that having come out of the University of Iowa, and all the years I told you I was studying modern dance, that I took modern dance in the evening, at Cornish [College of the Arts], which is still a special art school.

Lage: Oh, in Seattle?

03-00:52:33
Chall: In Seattle. There was a young woman teaching modern dance there, who had done some programs in New York. She had on her [bulletin] board, some of the critiques. She was teaching at Cornish. I was doing a little bit better than usual. I'm not really a dancer by nature, but I was getting better. I realized in time, that she was trying to build up a group that she could then take to New York or wherever she was going, and at this point, I decided, this is not my career.

Lage: Oh, she was thinking professionally.

03-00:53:18
Chall: I could see that, and I didn't want any more of it anyway. I had reached sort of my pinnacle. I was more interested in the political side of what I was already involved in, and so I left Cornish.

Lage: That was something you did in the evening?

03-00:53:37
Chall: That was in the evening. So I gave up modern dance, and what I do now with modern dance, I go and see them.

Lage: Oh, yes.

03-00:53:45
Chall: At Zellerbach. That's it.

Lage: Right, right. Okay. Do you remember in the community there, any expressions of dissent or racial tensions or anything going on? We mainly hear about, in retrospect, the feelings of unity and patriotism, but was there other stuff going on?

03-00:54:12
Chall: In Seattle, there was a lot going on. What I remember in Seattle—and I remember when I came here a number of years later, to Oakland—I don't know that it was racial, but it was certainly the battle going on between the Marxist Communists and the other wing of the—.

Lage: The Trotskyites?

03-00:54:52
Chall: The Trotskyites. There was this clash between the Marxists and the Trotskyites, and they were bitter. So there would be big evenings in Seattle, and it might be over—. I don't know what it was then. Here, I think in Oakland, it might've been housing. But whatever it was there, it was there.

Lage: They would be fighting over a particular issue.

03-00:55:22
Chall: Yes, they would. There were meetings, let's say, huge meetings in Seattle, where both groups would be speaking on behalf of whatever it was. I can only use my hands, because this is the way it was.

Lage: Oh, yes? And you went to the meetings and observed all this?

03-00:55:52
Chall: I did. Yes, I did. Sometimes I did go, not always.

Lage: Because you were interested in the issue or the politics?

03-00:55:57
Chall: Yes. I was just interested. This is the thing that you do; you just go find out what's happening here. It may have been an issue that I was interested in, but I don't remember what it was. I don't think it was racial. Somehow or another, there weren't that many—. I wasn't aware of a black issue in Seattle, at that time.

Lage: It may not have been something that was in existence.

03-00:56:29
Chall: You see, at that time, I think most black people were employed, but they were employed by the railroads. They were conductors or they were the people who put you on the train and took your tickets.

Lage: Well, here in the Bay Area, though, so many were war industry workers.

03-00:56:51
Chall: Yes. They were. Also they worked the dining cars. We did a lot of going back and forth on the train, these days, so they were probably employed, very largely. They were also employed now in the war industries.

Lage: But it wasn't something that you had contact with.

03-00:57:13
Chall: No. And in terms of the soldiers, the people in the army and the navy whom I would meet—. The reason I would meet them is because there was a—. I've forgotten how—. The other day, I remembered how to tell you about it. But the Jewish men were more or less able, like black people were not able, to be a part of the whole army and the navy. But these were Jewish men, and there many of them in the service. There was a special organization that took care of all men and women in the service, their social agenda. And there was a part of that group that was taking care of the Jewish men and women—mostly men. It was part of the USO. One of my cousins in Seattle was in charge of the Seattle area—which would be Tacoma and Seattle—of this group. [The Jewish Welfare Board, I think it was.—MC] So as a result of that, I did meet many of the young Jewish men who were in the service, because they had

dances and parties and picnics and whatnot. So there was another place to meet men, because otherwise there weren't any places to meet.

Lage: Were you mainly interested in dating Jewish men at this time?

03-00:59:03
Chall: I didn't really care, but it was so much easier. I wasn't meeting any men on my job. However, one of my friends, a close friend among the wage analysts, [Mary Roberts] did meet a fellow on the WLB staff whom she married, who was then, after the war, working for the state. He [Ray Jewell] was the [UC Berkeley] class of—. Maybe it was '31 or '32, I've forgotten now. But I would see him when I was with the Oral History Office and we would be having special lunches for this class, because we—.

Lage: Class of '31.

03-00:59:58
Chall: Yes, we had that class [the Class of 1931 raised an endowment fund for the Regional Oral History Office as its 50th reunion class gift]. He was there, and so was Mary, who was his wife.

Lage: Oh, fun.

03-01:00:03
Chall: We had stayed friends for many years after, because I reconnected. I connected again with them when we moved to California. Harold then had met them, also, and we were good friends for many years. They were living in Berkeley.

Lage: I'm going to stop now because we're running out of tape.

Audiofile 4

Lage: Okay, we're on tape four now, with the interview with Malca Chall, on February 5, 2015. Let's see, Malca. I was going to ask you what you recalled about celebrations at V-E Day and then V-J Day.

04-00:00:30
Chall: I don't remember. I just don't remember. I remember it was exciting. I think I was in the office. I remember writing a letter to my brother, hailing the end of the war. But I should tell you another story that just occurred to me, about my friends in Seattle when I was there. During the war, the United Nations met in Seattle. Was it Seattle?

Lage: I thought it was San Francisco—

04-00:01:12
Chall: San Francisco.

Lage: —when they first met.

04-00:01:14
Chall: Met in San Francisco, to discuss, I think it was, the beginning of the United Nations. This woman who was a long-time good, close friend of mine, and who had run the first time for the Seattle board, the school board, was going down to be a part of that, in San Francisco. And another young woman who was among the group—and I don't remember much about her, except that she was very independent and very active, and an interesting young woman—decided to go with her. The two of them went together. I thought this was really very brave. Not exactly brave, but special, that they would go down, because I wouldn't have done it. I wasn't that free-spirited.

Lage: To—?

04-00:02:21
Chall: To go down and be a part of something that was just taking place. I don't know that they knew where they were going to stay or anything about it; they were just going to be a part of all that. Just the way, during the civil rights [movement], so many people went down to the South. They just went; they didn't know what would happen to them.

Lage: I see, and it was a similar feeling.

04-00:02:45
Chall: They just wanted to be a part of it. So these two women, one much older than the other one, went together. I always thought that was—.

Lage: You were impressed.

04-00:02:56
Chall: I was impressed. I was impressed. Of course, we were all concerned about what was going on, but this was another piece of the war that was very important, and was a part of my experience. I just wanted to get that one recorded, because I think it was interesting to know that these things were going on at that time.

Lage: Right. What it made me think of was Eleanor Roosevelt. Was she a model or someone you looked up to, or your friends looked up to? Or how do you remember her?

04-00:03:29
Chall: I remember looking up to her. But I remember not much else, at that time.

Lage: She was herself quite an independent woman.

04-00:03:37
Chall: Yes, she was. Yes, she was.

Lage: And very concerned about the United Nations, I know.

04-00:03:41
Chall: Yes, yes, she was. But that was a little bit after.

Lage: You didn't think of her during those years.

04-00:03:47
Chall: No.

Lage: Yes. Well, what about the dropping of the bomb? How did you and your friends react to that, do you remember?

04-00:04:01
Chall: There was not much reaction, at that time that I recall. It was a little bit later that some of my friends here in Hayward began to assess that. They were, many of them, very opposed at this time. We shouldn't have done it; we should have done it. At that time, I don't remember much of any agonizing over it. I think Muriel's husband may have been on his way to Japan. I think he did spend some time in Japan after the war. No, I think we were just glad to have the war end, horrible as it was. I don't think we understood the horror of it until later. I don't think we were told what the horror meant.

Lage: That makes me think of the Japanese who were interned that you'd talked about, and how your father helped some of them.

04-00:05:00
Chall: Yes, he did.

Lage: Could you tell me more about that? Did you have any resolution after the war? Did you reconnect with anybody?

04-00:05:10
Chall: My father, of course, reconnected with the people who he'd helped. Mary—I don't know her last name—and her family either set up or set up again, I'm not sure how they left it, a cleaning establishment. I remember when I was visiting in Tacoma and I needed something cleaned, the family always took all their cleaning to her place. Of course, because my brother and my father were concerned about the people who left and were there, I think, at the train station when they boarded. I remember when I interviewed Kimi Fujii [Kimiko Fujii Kitayama] for the Oral History Office, when I was doing women political leaders. Now, Kimi was a good friend of mine in Hayward. I asked her how she felt when she was going off on the train; how she felt about the people, the Caucasians and others, who were concerned about them and came and watched them. She wasn't the least bit impressed by any of that. I always felt that was really interesting. Really interesting.

Lage: Maybe more important to the people who, like your father—.

04-00:06:31
Chall: Yes. Yes. Well, my father, of course, did save—. A lot of people did, of course. They did help. They saved whatever they could of the Japanese businesses. They just kept them so that they weren't sold. Otherwise they might've been sold or given away or whatever happened. Some Japanese came home and found nothing.

Lage: Yes. Well, that's very interesting. And Kimi's reaction, also.

04-00:06:59
Chall: It was. It was.

Lage: Okay. Now let's see. Tell me how your job ended. Right away? Or how soon after the war ended?

04-00:07:12
Chall: It was almost immediate. It couldn't have been, certainly, not more than a month, and maybe less. We were just told, this is the end of the War Labor Board. You just got rid of your papers or you gave them away—they belonged to the War Labor Board—and you left.

Lage: Yet they still were worried about wage and price stabilization.

04-00:07:36
Chall: That kept going for a number of years. They did keep price stabilization. Otherwise they were afraid of serious inflation. Of course, there would've been serious inflation. We kept it down to some degree, because we didn't allow wages to go very high.

Lage: Okay, so your job just ended.

04-00:07:58
Chall: It just ended. So I left Rebecca and little Bobby, the baby, and Muriel, and I went to Tacoma. I went back.

Lage: To your family.

04-00:08:16
Chall: To my family. I was going back often, during the war. I spent a lot of time in Tacoma. So the next issue was, okay, now what? Well, I decided I would just go to New York.

Lage: That seems very brave.

04-00:08:38
Chall: It seemed like the thing to do. I wasn't just going there on a whim, exactly. One of my colleagues, one of my friends at the University of Iowa, who was also a graduate student, had been living in an apartment there [in Iowa City] with another young woman, who went off after the—. I think she went off and got married or whatever she did. And Sara Shuman, S-H-U-M-A-N, had this lovely, large apartment. It was the first floor of a home there, that was rented out. It had a kitchen, it had a large living room, it had bedrooms, and it also had, I think, a laundry, a place for laundry. Sara, by this time, she needed somebody to stay with her, and she and I had become very close friends. She was Jewish. She was from Newark, New Jersey. I had been living in a rooming house, really. Very, very good.

Lage: In Iowa?

04-00:10:01
Chall: In Iowa, in Iowa City. So I spent the last of the summer period with Sara.

Lage: After your job ended?

04-00:10:14
Chall: No, this was in university.

Lage: Oh, in Iowa.

04-00:10:17
Chall: In Iowa.

Lage: When you were at the university.

04-00:10:18
Chall: Yes. We hadn't graduated yet; we were still writing our theses or whatever we were doing. Of course, we got along very well. She was exceptionally bright. She was *exceptionally* bright. I think she may have been there on scholarship also, I'm not sure, because she came from a family that didn't have an awful lot. I think they had four or five children, and this was a long way off from New Jersey. I thought, all right, I know Sara and I'll just go to her house—and I let her know that I was coming to New Jersey—and I'm sure she'll find something for me.

Lage: Find a job?

04-00:11:02
Chall: I won't be alone. I won't be alone. So I told my parents.

Lage: They weren't happy, I bet.

04-00:11:10
Chall: No. I decided I'm going to New York.

Lage: Was this a contentious discussion?

04-00:11:16
Chall: No, no. I think my parents, by this time, had sort of understood—I'm not sure, but I think they did—Malca was going her own way, and so she did. My brother had come back from the service; he was well.

Lage: Did he continue to work with your father?

04-00:11:35
Chall: Yes. My brother had majored in—. Well, it was probably American history. But he always intended to do social work. He came back, as so many of them did, unable to decide what they were going to do with their lives. My father wanted him in the business. He explained to my brother that he could do social work on the side, and he could still be in the business—which he decided to do. As soon as he got out, or within a certain time, he and a friend of his went off—I think they drove—across the country, and just got the war out of their system, in a way. When he came back, shortly thereafter, he married. My father had also bought a big piece of land at Steilacoom Lake. I told you he was very entrepreneurial.

Lage: Yes, he was.

04-00:12:46
Chall: He bought a large unused—. It wasn't a bus, it was a railroad—. A train that wasn't being used.

Lage: A railroad car?

04-00:13:00
Chall: Yes, a railroad car, with the seats and all that. All removed, of course. That could become a home. I think maybe he put the bedrooms in it. I don't remember. They used to go out, my father and mother would go out and do a little work around it, because it was right on the lake. Steilacoom Lake was right there. So my brother and his wife moved into that. And little by little, my father built it up so that it looked first, like a little tipi. It was like this [gestures]. Because my father had been building houses. So they started their life, and their three children, in the tipi. Then they would add onto it, and then add onto it here, and put a roof over it here, and that's where they lived until they were in their sixties and decided it was time to leave and go into Tacoma.

Lage: How interesting.

04-00:14:00
Chall: So that's what my brother did, and he was very—. He did his social work. I told you that my father had taken care of German refugees during the war. In my brother's period, there was an opportunity, because of some bill in Congress that Senator [Henry] Jackson had put in, that would allow Russian Jews to leave Russia. Otherwise they weren't allowed to leave. So many of them did come out. Many of them went to Israel. Many of them came here or they went to Canada. Some umbrella Jewish agency, probably almost the same one that would take the Germans out and in, would take a look at where they might go, what were their qualifications, and they would send them to Seattle or Tacoma. Other places, too. When they came to Tacoma, my brother and sister-in-law were in charge of finding them an apartment, finding them doctors, getting them on Social Security, doing all that. Not just getting them the apartment, but furnishing it, going to any of the agencies that took in a lot of old furniture. They got them ready to live in Tacoma.

Lage: And jobs?

04-00:15:32
Chall: Eventually, they might find them jobs. Sometimes they couldn't and sometimes they could. They might eventually find work in Seattle or San Francisco. One woman who had some experience with a computer went to work in the administration of the College of Puget Sound.

Lage: So this was over a number of years.

04-00:15:51
Chall: Yes, for a number of years. And that was my brother and sister-in-law's principal work, was to get these Russians out of Russia and into the United States.

Lage: Now, you say his principal work, but was he still running your father's business?

04-00:16:09
Chall: Oh, yes. I mean it was his social work.

Lage: His social work.

04-00:16:12
Chall: It was his social work. Oh, yes, he worked with my father until they stopped the business. That's a whole other story, which is not in here, but it's in the oral history with my father.

Lage: Oh, okay. Okay. Now I took you off the track, because you were going to New York.

04-00:16:30
Chall: Yes. Yes.

Lage: I just wanted to see what happened with your brother.

04-00:16:33
Chall: Okay. So I did go to New York, and I did stay with Sara for some time, and her family. Not very long. Sara had a fraternal twin sister, who was now living in New York City. She was living with a number of other women, maybe three or four, in the apartment of a doctor, who had gone to war. Now, doctors, in those days—and they may still—always had the ground floor of apartments. And they had large apartments, because one room might've been where they practiced medicine and had their office; and then there were other parts of this ground floor where they had their families, if they had families. This doctor had sublet his apartment. It was on the East Side of New York, in an area which was primarily Czechoslovakian, at that time. He was coming home. This was 1946. He was coming home; we had to find—. I was there probably for maybe a month. There wasn't a bedroom for me, but I slept in one of those recliners. It wasn't a recliner, in those days; it was something that you used outdoors. It had a pad, and that was where I slept.

Lage: Yes, a chaise lounge.

04-00:18:07
Chall: A chaise, yes. That's what I slept on. Now, the other women found other ways of finding a place to live. There was one left, and her name was Julia. Her maiden name was Zlabovsky. She was Russian. Her parents and she came from El Paso, Texas, where her father was a butcher. She had an older sister [Esther], who had already come to New York and was soon married, and Julia followed her. Julia eventually became Julia Stuart, in order to find a job.

Lage: Oh my goodness.

04-00:18:48
Chall: It was hard to find a job, with the name Zlabovsky. More difficult. So Julia and I had become friends, by this time. She was very—she'd lived in New York for a long time—very knowledgeable about how to find another apartment, how to look in the *New York Times* at the end of the day, all of this. And she knew her way around New York on the subway and all of that, which I was just learning. Julia and I set off together, and we were roommates until we were married. I married first; she married after that. We roomed together wherever we were. We went from one sublet to another.

Lage: It was hard to find a place.

04-00:19:31
Chall: Yes.

Lage: As it is today, I believe.

04-00:19:33
Chall: Everybody was coming home. It was difficult.

Lage: So you were getting sublets from people who hadn't quite come home yet?

04-00:19:41
Chall: That's right. So we went from the East Side all the way over to the West Side, Riverside Drive. We had a little apartment, the downstairs of a house. It was small—one big bedroom in it, a little kitchen.

Lage: Was it exciting living there?

04-00:20:05
Chall: I liked it. It was interesting. You see, I had got quite used to the Czechoslovakian neighborhood on the East Side. I had got used to that. Then the Riverside Drive was totally different. But not very far from it was Harlem; and of course, the neighborhood where all the German Jews had settled, not very far north of that. So it was easy just to get on a subway or just walk.

Lage: You had some relatives there, did you not?

04-00:20:36
Chall: Eventually, I did. That was later on.

Lage: Oh, later.

04-00:20:39
Chall: So I became well acquainted with that part. Then from there, we found a sublet in the Bronx. That was with a lady who was working for Lerner's. She needed help in her apartment. It was a very new and very nice apartment in the Bronx. She was a divorced woman. She had a young son, who was in a boarding school. I think he was ten or something. It was really kind of sad. He would come home on weekends. She slept on the couch in the living room, and Julia and I had the bedroom, the one bedroom. She would go off to work in the morning and come back in the evening. I learned what it was like to be a person at the low, low end of the retail trade. I learned a lot from that poor woman and how she struggled. You don't forget things like that.

Lage: Right.

04-00:21:45
Chall: But this was a lovely apartment. By this time, I'd met Harold and Julia had her boyfriend [Lee Weissman], who was now out of the army. So we were a nice group, and occasionally we would have a party, in this apartment, with the few friends that we knew.

Lage: So the woman really opened up her apartment to you.

04-00:22:06
Chall: Yes, because she needed the rent. She needed our money, in order to keep her—. Her little boy used to come home on weekends, and they would be in the living room, and we would still have the bedroom.

Lage: Yes, so interesting.

04-00:22:20
Chall: So that's how I managed to get along in New York.

Lage: And what about your job? Do you want to talk about that now?

04-00:22:25
Chall: Yes, I can tell you.

Lage: How you got the job and what you did.

04-00:22:29
Chall: Took me a while to find a job. I had other friends in New York who knew New York quite well. Oh, I did apply for work; didn't get anywhere. But one of them said—. I don't know how he knew about it; he may have been in the publishing business. He knew about Edward L. Bernays. Edward L. Bernays was a well-known—. There's a name for the kind of business.

Lage: Public relations, perhaps?

04-00:23:09
Chall: Public relations.

Lage: Yes.

04-00:23:11
Chall: Bernays felt he had been the first public relations person in the West, and that's how he thought about himself. He had a wife, who worked with him. They had a business in one of the houses, brownstones, in New York City, and I did go there. Called him up one day and said, "I understand that you are interested in hiring young women for work." "Oh," he said, "All right, come in." I came in. He and his wife sat there and they interviewed me, and he said I could be hired, and I was.

Lage: Yes. As you were applying around, did you encounter any prejudice, either against Jews or against women?

04-00:24:10
Chall: I'll tell you what I just remember now. I was interested, because of the work that I had been doing in Seattle, working with unions, or working with people

who were dealing with public affairs. There were some people who had jobs in working in public affairs, either for or with—. Well, they weren't unions, necessarily, but they were—. Can't really figure out now how to describe what they were doing. Some of them were very well-known.

Lage: Like a think tank, sort of?

04-00:24:53
Chall: No, no. No. I don't think they were attorneys, but they did represent different classes of people. Maybe the one that I tried to get work with was representing—. May have been unions. It was very interesting, because when I came to be interviewed, she was sitting in her office, but she was wearing a hat. She interviewed me. But I didn't have the background that they wanted. I just didn't have it. I didn't have the background for a lot of things that were available in those days. The War Labor Board didn't give it to me.

Lage: But you had such, I would think, good preparation.

04-00:25:35
Chall: Yes, but it wasn't enough. It just wasn't enough. So that, and I'm not sure about whether it was young women or what it was that was difficult. But I remember after I was fired, as I was, from—

Lage: Bernays?

04-00:25:57
Chall: —from Bernays, that I tried to get work, and ended up being interviewed by somebody who was the head of—. It wasn't Safeway; it was one of the major markets in the New York area. He was, I think, the vice president. He had a very important job. He was important. He interviewed me a couple of times, and he got so excited about hiring me. And I was hired. I came to the office to start work, and he told me, "Now, you'll be here, and I'll dictate to you." I said, "Are you planning to dictate so that I would be using shorthand?" "Yes." I said, "I don't take shorthand."

Lage: He didn't do a very good job interviewing.

04-00:27:02
Chall: I don't do this kind of work. His whole demeanor was just crushed. He thought he had a really great person in his office. But he didn't. I lost that opportunity. Those were two, at two different times, while I was in New York. I wasn't in New York that long. I was hired to be his secretary.

Lage: Isn't that interesting?

04-00:27:34
Chall: But I didn't know that. Not his administrative assistant, which is what I thought I was going to be, and what he thought I was going to be, also; but I was also his secretary.

Lage: Right. What about the job with the public relations firm?

04-00:27:52
Chall: Oh, that was most interesting.

Lage: Yes. How did you describe it? Junior account expediter.

04-00:28:00
Chall: Whatever it was.

Lage: That's the way you describe it in your résumé.

04-00:28:04
Chall: I see. All right. He was a very interesting person. He was a dictator, in a way. But he had some of the major industries, like Procter & Gamble and few others like that, who were his clients. He had in his office, people who were—. One of them became one of my closest friends. This was an older woman, who was responsible for everything having to do with the banana—. I call it the banana republic, but it *was* the banana republic.

Lage: Like Dole banana or something like that?

04-00:28:55
Chall: All the bananas, the banana industry. Her job was to write up pieces that would go into the paper, about the banana. What we were doing was making everything great. So these would go into publications, they would go into their advertising, things of kind. She was responsible for that area.

Lage: I see.

04-00:29:20
Chall: Another woman was responsible for anything that went into the papers about fashion. All kinds of things that had to do with fashion. Soaps, dresses, whatever it was that had to do with fashion, she did that.

Lage: What were you responsible for?

04-00:29:40
Chall: Well, I'll get to that.

Lage: Okay.

04-00:29:42
Chall: They were all responsible for pieces of the business. Promoting it, and promoting the business or industry they were responsible for. One of my friends on the staff was Bill Dorais. Now, Bill Dorais, I forget what his responsibility was, but he ultimately came out here, during the time when KQED was—. There was a newspaper strike, and Bill was then working, I think, for one of the newspapers, and he was on—. Well, you don't remember, probably.

Lage: I do. *Newsroom*.

04-00:30:25
Chall: You remember?

Lage: When they started *Newsroom*.

04-00:30:27
Chall: When they started *Newsroom*, Bill Dorais was on that panel. So he had come from New York. They were loyal. There was another woman who was responsible for I forget what. But they had been with Bernays for a long time, and they were loyal to him, even though they saw his failings. He was tough. Now, people like me worked in one big room, with Mr. Cutler, who was his side man, those of us who were doing research, and his secretary. Mr. Bernays would call for her and she would go and take dictation. She worked for him for years. She adored him. I did not. I always thought he was somebody I really didn't have a great deal—.

Lage: You described him as a dictator.

04-00:31:17
Chall: Yes. I didn't have a great deal of respect for him. I think as articles and books have been written about him and his wife, the authors have come to the same conclusion. She [Mrs. Bernays] was lovely. And he had two daughters, one of whom does work in the field of publications. I forget the names of his daughters, but they grew up in the field and they've done well. One of them is an author, I think. I really failed him. This was a great learning experience. He gave me various kinds of research to do. One of the researches was for—. It wasn't Procter & Gamble. Well, it might've been; I forget. But it had to do with how many bathrooms were available, in terms of, I guess, population. Bathrooms and this kind of thing. And I did my research, just as I did at Reed, but I came out with the wrong answer. I really hadn't analyzed my own figures that well. I did a good job, but I analyzed them wrong. He handed this thing to the powers that be. They were in his office. They were the heads of Procter & Gamble or whoever they were. They looked at it, and it was wrong. I got a call, "Miss Kleiner, will you come in?"

Lage: Oh, dear.

04-00:32:56
Chall: I was so embarrassed. It was really embarrassing. Now, he could've fired me, but he didn't—which is very interesting. He took me off of that kind of work, because he didn't trust it anymore, and I don't blame him. He asked me to go upstairs and reorganize his library, which in effect, did need redoing. He had a lot of books, a lot of material having to do with advertising and public relations, and they weren't just in any kind of order. Now, I was not a trained librarian, but I could alphabetize and I could make decisions, and so I did. That was the work that he gave me to do. Then he told me to start working with the woman who was in charge of the women's page, to start writing for that. And I did. Those things, she accepted them and he accepted them, and that worked out very well. Then he decided that I would be taught how to use the phone, the inter—. Now, we did it in the old way, the only way it was done in those days.

Lage: Switchboard.

04-00:34:16
Chall: You had a switchboard. So I learned the switchboard. When he was calling, when Mr. Cutler was calling, when you got a phone call, whatever it was. I would do that in the afternoons. Late afternoons, that was my job, come down and do that [handle the switchboard]. So he didn't fire me, he just—. This was good. I got a lot of interesting experience out of this. One late afternoon, when I was on the switchboard, Mr. Cutler was in charge; he was in Mr. Bernays' room.

Lage: He had left for the day.

04-00:34:52
Chall: He left for the day. Mr. Cutler was in Mr. Bernays' office, and was in charge now. "Miss Kleiner, will you send in so-and-so?" So I called so-and-so from his office, and when he went in and he came out, he'd been fired. So it went. Then, "Miss Kleiner, will you come into the office?" I went into the office and I was fired.

Lage: Was Mr. Bernays—?

04-00:35:24
Chall: Mr. Bernays, of course—.

Lage: Had made that decision?

04-00:35:26
Chall: Yes. Oh, of course. Mr. Cutler did everything that Mr. Bernays wanted. He was sort of a meek person. He'd been with Mr. Bernays for many, many years, and he just followed. So had his secretary, who just adored him. She was with him for many, many years. Many of these people were.

Lage: Was he cutting back, do you think?

04-00:35:51
Chall: No, he would probably—.

Lage: Why was he firing all these people?

04-00:35:54
Chall: Well, these were people, he just didn't want them around anymore. He could find somebody like me, probably even better, and pay them a wage of some kind. That was no problem to Mr. Bernays. He could hire and fire anybody. So he did.

Lage: Was that devastating?

04-00:36:13
Chall: No, but I was going with Harold at that time, and out of a job. The people in the office, these other women and the men, they all liked me. I did have another close friend there. I don't know what she did. She didn't do my kind of work. She and I were good friends. So were some of the older women, one of whom was a close, close friend for years. They were appalled. Oh, he shouldn't have fired you. Well, I think they just liked me. One of them told me, "He's now going to need some kind of research done, and he'll call on you. You ask for the most money you can get. Ask for a really high rate." And he did.

Lage: Really?

04-00:37:09
Chall: Yes, he did.

Lage: To do something sort of on contract?

04-00:37:13
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Not hiring you back?

04-00:37:14
Chall: No, no, no. No, he did just what they knew he was going to do, because they'd worked with him a long time. They knew his—.

Lage: It happened before, probably.

04-00:37:22
Chall: It had happened before. He was interested in rope. Now, I don't know why he was interested in rope. Hemp and rope and anything that had to do with rope.

So I went to the New York Public Library and I got out everything that I could find out about rope, and I wrote it, and it was accepted, and I got my fee.

Lage: Oh, that's hilarious.

04-00:37:48
Chall: He never asked me to do anything again. But that was my relationship with Mr. Bernays. At that time, there was one of these little things, like birds, that would dip down into some kind of water, like this, and then go up like this—

Lage: Yes, a dipper.

04-00:38:08
Chall: —and then go up. Mr. Bernays had a birthday, and I decided that I was going to get one of these little birds and wish him a happy birthday.

Lage: Was this while you were still working there?

04-00:38:24
Chall: With a little note. Yes. I may not have been the only one who signed that card. It said, "May you and the bird go on forever."

Lage: Oh, that's very funny, Malca.

04-00:38:34
Chall: We filled the cup. No wonder he fired me, eventually.

Lage: That's very funny. Well, we're going to wrap up, and next time we'll talk more about Harold.

04-00:38:48
Chall: Yes, and other little ways that I tried to get work.

Lage: Yes. Or—?

04-00:38:53
Chall: No, that's all right.

Lage: I just wondered if you wanted to reflect at all on how the wartime work sort of affected your trajectory. Did it make a difference in how you went about living your life after?

04-00:39:11
Chall: Well, probably it made me feel independent—yes, that, for sure—and probably gave me a pretty good idea about life in general, as among working people. Which is the reason that I asked for my first interview job that dealt with working people. I think I did. I had a better idea about the country and community, workers. And I also grew up. I grew.

Lage: Yes. Which you might've done anyway.

04-00:39:49
Chall: Well, it was a growing-up experience. I did other things, which I haven't talked to you about while working for the War Labor Board. A bicycle ride, twenty miles on a bicycle, which I'd never done before, with my WLB friend, Elizabeth Brown , and then getting someplace at night and not realizing, we don't even know where we're going to stay overnight. So I decided, why don't we just go to a police station and say, where is a park where we can spend the night and be safe? So we went to the police department.

Lage: Was this a work-related thing or recreational?

04-00:40:25
Chall: No, it was recreation, but I was with one of my colleagues. We were meeting friends later on.[3]

Lage: But then you kind of needed a place to camp?

04-00:40:41
Chall: Yes, well, we thought we'd just—. We must've taken sleeping bags with us, because we were going into somebody's cabin when we got there, which was beyond Seattle. We left later in the afternoon, in the evening. I don't think we had any idea how long it would take us to get there. I had never ridden very far on a bike before. So we did stop at the police station. They looked at these two women in their early twenties, and they talked to each other, and they said, "We have a couple of empty cells, and you can stay here overnight." So they put her in one cell, they put me in another, and that's where we spent the night. Now, somebody was probably drunk, and he was screaming all night.

Lage: Oh my goodness!

04-00:41:32
Chall: In the morning, they got us out of our cell.

Lage: They didn't lock you in, I hope.

04-00:41:37
Chall: Yes, I think they locked us in, of course. Probably so we'd be safe. They locked us in our cells; we spent the night. We slept well—I did—except for this man who was yelling all night. Then in the morning, they cooked us hotcakes, bacon, and coffee, and sent us on our way.

---

[3] In the course of reviewing this transcript, Malca found letters from September 1945 to and from the police officers who settled them in Cell 3 for the night, and also an account of their adventure in the Seattle newspaper. Based on the letters, she corrected a few details in the transcript. See appendix 1, p.275.

Lage: A wonderful story! Oh, that's great.

04-00:42:02
Chall: Okay, so that ends Seattle.

Lage: I think that's a good place to finish off, on that note.

Interview 3: February 26, 2015
Audiofile 5

Lage: Hello, Malca. I think we're on now, after a few technical difficulties. Today is February 26, 2015. This is our third interview with Malca Chall, for the Regional Oral History Office, now called the Oral History Center, at the Bancroft Library at Berkeley. I think it's a good change of name. Do you?

05-00:00:26
Chall: I do. I like the name. It makes it very official.

Lage: Right. Right. So this is our third interview, as I said. I'm Ann Lage, just to get all the facts down. We're going to start today by just reflecting back on our last session, about your wartime work and whether some other thoughts had come to you since we met.

05-00:00:51
Chall: Yes, that's right. You had asked me about whether I had been in touch with the—. Now I don't know whether to say the Negro or the black American community. At that time, we called them Negroes, and that was it.

Lage: And it wasn't considered a slur.

05-00:01:09
Chall: No, that was what—. Yes. Now, at the time I talked about it, I couldn't remember the question. I mean I couldn't remember how to answer it. As I reflected, I remember that in fact, we—. Now, this is the group that was interested in women being on the school board and building up the medical hospital that ultimately turned into something like Kaiser Permanente. This group was in touch with a black family. Now, I only remember it as one family, but I'm sure there were others. How we made this connection, I don't remember, except that they were very young, about my age. Those of us who were participating in their activities were not just all the young ones; but we were a pretty small group. We did things together. I remember being in an automobile together, going somewhere.

Lage: Were they professionals or working class or what, do you remember?

05-00:02:23
Chall: They were certainly middle class. There was a mother that was always with us, and her daughter, who was probably in her early twenties, and her daughter's very close boyfriend—he was with us all the time, and with her—and maybe with a few others. There may have been one son in the service; I'm not sure.

Lage: Did you get the sense they were long-time residents?

05-00:02:51
Chall: They had been in Seattle, I think, for quite a while. Their connection with us, I just don't remember, except it was close. We did things together. I don't remember going to a black church together, but I do remember going other places.

Lage: Did this group work at all on racial issues?

05-00:03:11
Chall: We may have been doing this. I remember mainly that the young daughter was ill with something, and I remember her mother calling me and being very upset, because I think she was going into the hospital, the daughter. But this is about all I remember, except that we did have a lot of activity together in a short time. That's all I remember. I know that there were some African Americans in Seattle; but there was not much—as there is never—activity together.

Lage: Right.

05-00:03:50
Chall: So we must've been on the same page politically, I would guess.

Lage: Yes, Yes. Okay, well, that's an important—. You didn't have of a sense of a migration, of a large group of African Americans coming in?

05-00:04:04
Chall: No, not except here.

Lage: Maybe it didn't happen so much in Seattle.

05-00:04:09
Chall: Well, it may have been happening during—. This was World War II. Certainly, in the armed services, it was happening. There were war industries in the Seattle area; it must've been happening. It just wasn't anything—.

Lage: Wasn't on your radar.

05-00:04:30
Chall: No, and it didn't seem to come into the War Labor Board.

Lage: You didn't have issues where there was some discrimination of wages?

05-00:04:42
Chall: Not that I recall.

Lage: Okay, well, that's good. Now, I may have asked you this last time, but I think an important question that's asked of women who worked during the war was about the impact of this wartime employment on their future. A lot of women

never thought they'd have a job, and they went to work during the war and it changed them. Now, was that the case with you? Or were you always on the same career line?

05-00:05:15
Chall: I really wasn't sure about the career line, but I seem to think that I had one in mind, because when I did leave Seattle and I did go to New York, as I told you, I tried to get work with some organizations or people having to do with labor issues.

Lage: But do you think if you hadn't had the experience of the wartime work, where you had quite an important job, do you think you might've just settled down in Tacoma and been—

05-00:05:51
Chall: Oh, I see.

Lage: —more the housewife, married? Or did the wartime work encourage you to go on to New York? I'm not trying to put ideas in your head.

05-00:06:01
Chall: No. I think it's hard to say because I recall that when I was at the University of Iowa, that my major professor kept wanting me to go on, remember?

Lage: Right.

05-00:06:15
Chall: At that time, there was a woman who was the president of a college. I believe it was New Hampshire, but I'm not sure. She was the one and only, and I probably could find it in Google easily. So he felt that since she had reached this pinnacle, there was no reason why I couldn't just go on and get into the academic work. So I suppose that while I didn't want to become an academic, I suppose that being in the work field probably was in my mind.

Lage: Right. Even before the war. Okay, that's enough of—.

05-00:06:51
Chall: Or during the war. Now, this would be during the war, when I was at school. So it's hard to know when it came about.

Lage: When the idea that women could do more in the work world came about. It's interesting that your professor encouraged you.

05-00:07:08
Chall: Yes. I'm not sure I thought about *women* in the work force, as much as maybe I would've thought about *me*.

Lage: Right, it wasn't as much of a class or group thing.

05-00:07:17
Chall: Yes. It certainly wasn't in my background.

Lage: Yes. Very interesting. Okay, well, we talked about New York last time, and a couple of your jobs and your interesting living arrangements.

05-00:07:34
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Let's talk a little bit, if you think it's time to move into that, to how you met Harold and eventually—.

05-00:07:42
Chall: Yes, I can do that. When I did meet Harold, it was at a time when I was still living with my friend in the Bronx, in this apartment with the lady who worked at Lerner's. One of my colleagues in the War Labor Board, who had grown up in Montana, she was a wage rate analyst, too—. When she realized that I had gone to New York, she decided, without my knowing it, that she would do the same thing. She contacted me—I guess we must've been in touch in some way—told me that she was in New York. Now, I had a place to go when I was in New York; I had my friend Sara Shuman. She introduced me to her sister and I got my apartment and I started to live with Julia. But this gal didn't. She just must've found—through ads, I don't know how—somebody to live with, a young woman, and she ended up in Greenwich Village. She was not happy. But they had a New Year's Eve party. I guess by this time, her friend who'd been living there—I mean the woman with whom my friend was living, had the apartment in Greenwich Village—she must've known a lot of people.

I was invited. So I went. I'm not sure whether Julia went with me or not, but I went. It was a very small apartment, a couple of rooms. In one room was a group of people—men, women; they seemed to be having a jolly time. The other room had probably the kitchen in it. I didn't know anybody except my friend. I looked into the room where the jolly people were, and there was a nice-looking young man, who was quite jovial and all of that when I looked in. But I just didn't feel I was going to fit in there, so I spent the rest of the time in the other room. But I found out that he was—and most of these people were—a part of a craft class that took place in Greenwich Village. He was in that class, and maybe my friend was, too, at that time. So I decided, oh, I'll join that craft class. Now, I was living way up in the Bronx.

Lage: That's a long trip.

05-00:10:20
Chall: It's a long trip.

Lage: On the subway, I assume.

05-00:10:23
Chall: Oh, yes, of course. So I went there. It was fun. I really stayed there. I enjoyed the craft.

Lage: Had you done something like that before?

05-00:10:33
Chall: Oh, some, something. I'm not really a great artist or craftsperson. But they were doing things with leather and all kinds of interesting things. The teachers were a man and wife, who did this during the winter. In the summer, they taught their crafts in the Catskills. In the Catskills during the summer, many, many Jewish people came up from Brooklyn and wherever they were, to get out of the heat, and spent some weeks there or their summers there. I had relatives who did that, Harold's family. So I went there to the class for a couple of times, and Harold wasn't there. Then one night he did show up.

Lage: But you did have your eye on him, from that party.

05-00:11:25
Chall: I had my eye on him. He didn't show up. There was nothing I could do about that. One night he did. He said, "What's your name?" And I told him. Then later on, he told me that these teachers—. He knew them. He had been in the class because he did know them. He may have known them from the Catskills, who knows? But he did know them. They told him, "Now, there's a nice young woman who's been coming to class, and you're not there. I think you should meet her." So he came.

Lage: How interesting.

05-00:12:01
Chall: I was that nice young woman. We started to go out together. Now, a nice thing about Harold is that he had a car and he could take me back to the Bronx. So we did things together. As you can see by looking around here, he was a good craftsman.

Lage: Right.

05-00:12:21
Chall: We did things with leather. I did. First we were making bookends. Well, I've always loved materials.

Lage: Fibers like?

05-00:12:40
Chall: Fibers. And leather was just absolutely stunning, there in the shops, the leather shops. I just couldn't get enough of it. So I decided to design purses. I got a design that was pretty good. Harold could always help me getting it right. Then we would go out and we would buy leather and I would make these

purses and I would give them away to friends. One day I was looking at some old pictures, and I saw myself with one of my children in tow—I think at Stanford University—and I was wearing one of my purses. So that was how we met. We went together for, well, about eight or nine months. My friend Julia had her friend Lee Weissman, who was just coming out of the army, so we were a foursome.

Lage: Had Harold been in the army?

05-00:13:42
Chall: No. Harold had polio when he was three or four years old, and he had a definite limp. He wore a brace. But he could ride a bicycle, and he taught himself how to drive with a stick shift. But he used a different leg for whatever he needed to do. So he was pretty able to get around. He, by this time, of course, was out of college. It had taken him almost ten years to go through college, work his way through college, CCNY [City College of New York], because his father had died just as he was eighteen and starting college. So he worked his way all through college and helped support his mother and all of that.

Lage: Were they from New York?

05-00:14:31
Chall: Yes, everybody lived in Brooklyn, at that time.

Lage: He was born in Brooklyn.

05-00:14:33
Chall: Everybody. His mother had died in 1945, and of course, this was 1946, when I was there, or ’47. At this particular time, Julia had decided we have got to get out of this apartment. So she went on her way, as she always had, to find another apartment. And we found one, and it was our very own. This was the first time we weren’t subletting it. It was a third-floor walkup on the East Side, as far east as you can get, on 92nd Street. I don’t remember if we were Second Avenue or—. It was in what had been known as Germantown, or something close to it, because it was the place where the Germans lived. Most of these old places were cold-water flats, as they called them.

Lage: No hot water, that means.

05-00:15:31
Chall: That’s right. Ours was not. There was a coal bin in the basement.

Lage: Did yours have hot water?

05-00:15:37
Chall: Yes, we did. We had one large bedroom, a pretty good sized kitchen—a kitchen with a little bathroom off of it, a nice kitchen—and a living room and this bedroom. We didn't mind being on the third floor. I will tell you an interesting story about why we got that apartment. I think I told you that Julia's name was Julia Slabovsky. But she had changed it to Julia Stuart, so that she could get a job. And she did have a good job. And I was Malca Kleiner. She wrote a letter about who we were, what we needed, all of this, and signed it Julia Stuart and Malca Kleiner. The couple who owned the apartment—now, they owned this apartment house, the whole thing, and I think another one next door to it—they were probably middle aged, in their late fifties, early sixties, a man and a wife, Jewish. How they happened to get this after the war, buy these apartments, I don't know.

Lage: Were they immigrants from—?

05-00:16:51
Chall: No. No, they were not.

Lage: They weren't refugees or anything like that.

05-00:16:55
Chall: No, they were just people who'd spent their lives in probably Brooklyn or Manhattan—this was Manhattan—and they managed to buy these. How they did it, I don't know. Of course, I wasn't working at that time. They asked me if I would help them with their bookkeeping. Now, it was very simple. I couldn't do bookkeeping. But they took in the money from the rent and they banked it, and I kept always adding and subtracting; that was about it. But they told me that the reason that we did get that apartment is because they saw the letter, they looked at it and they said to one another, "Now, we don't know anything about Julia Stuart, but Malca Kleiner, that's definitely Jewish." This was a Jewish couple. So they felt secure, I guess, and they gave us that apartment. So isn't that interesting?

Lage: Isn't that interesting?

05-00:17:57
Chall: Yes, it is interesting.

Lage: Germantown, as they called it, I guess, were there still a lot of people of German heritage there?

05-00:18:06
Chall: I couldn't tell. There may have been. Of course, it was considered sort of a Nazi enclave during the war.

Lage: Oh, it was? Did you hear that some Germans had been put in camps or anything?

05-00:18:19

Chall: I had not. I just didn't know anything about it. There was a woman who lived beneath us, who I think was—. Well, I don't know that she was a prostitute, but there were people coming and going. I think it was the night before our wedding, when Harold was in the house and we had our clothes and all of that, and all of a sudden Harold smelled smoke. He opened the door that goes downstairs, and there was smoke coming up. So he yelled, "Fire." Of course, we were on the third floor, but we could crawl out a window and go down the fire escape. But in no time flat, the fire engines were there, because we were very close to a firehouse. That was very exciting.

Lage: And it was a fire in this woman's apartment?

05-00:19:08

Chall: Yes. But it hadn't touched us, at that point. So that was our apartment. Julia and her husband, who she married shortly after we were married, stayed there. [After her marriage to Lee Weissman (1946), as Julia Weissman she became well known as a lecturer and author on primitive (outsider) art. She remained a close friend. We were sharing a hotel suite in Manhattan on Sept. 11, 2001. She died in October 2015.– MC]

Now, Harold and I, when we did talk about marriage, I told him that I really didn't want to live in the New York area anymore. He was working for Remington Rand at that time, designing adding machines and things like that, and they were moving their whole outfit to a small town in Connecticut. Harold wanted to go there, because his mentor, the person who had helped him learn this whole trade with calculators and adding machines, the machines of that era, was going there, and he wanted to stay with him. But he agreed that he would move west.

Lage: Had he been to the West Coast?

05-00:20:15

Chall: No, he hadn't. Didn't know anything about it. But he was willing to do it. And he didn't have a very close attachment to his family, so it was all right with him; he was willing to try it. We were married in '47. We were married in the home of a friend, an old Tacoma friend who lived in, I think it was East Orange. She had a lovely home. She had a table that would seat ten, so that's all we could have.

Lage: Did your family come back?

05-00:20:57

Chall: No.

Lage: Were they unhappy with this, or was this okay?

05-00:21:00
Chall: They had met Harold.

Lage: Oh, they had?

05-00:21:02
Chall: They had. My parents had been to New York and they had met him. They weren't really sure, because [chuckles] first of all, "You couldn't dance." That was all right with me. My father said, "But you'll never be able to do much dancing." And I had. So I said, "I don't think that matters," because we had so—.

Lage: So they were concerned about his disability?

05-00:21:22
Chall: Well, physical. And also he was very outspoken. He was a strong personality. He could be overpowering, and we all could be overpowered. But we had so much in common, in terms of what we read, what we liked in the museums, music.

Lage: How about politics?

05-00:21:46
Chall: And politics, yes, definitely.

Lage: But were your parents disapproving, or just not fully—?

05-00:21:53
Chall: No, they just weren't sure. But other than that, this is Malca.

Lage: Right, they trusted you, probably.

05-00:22:00
Chall: Yes—She's off in New York. So they had met him. We got, in early summer, into his 1938 Pontiac and headed west. Slowly and carefully, we drove all over. We were in the mountains in Colorado, we were in Iowa. Wherever you went in those days, with a 1938 automobile you were always overheating your car. But we also had with us a little gas camp stove, so we ate our meals, frequently, in the parks, and made coffee in a little coffee pot. That's what we did. We sort of partially camped all the way across, and we did as much as we possibly could.

Lage: So did you zig-zag, so you'd see more of the country?

05-00:23:04
Chall: Somewhat zigging, because—. I can't remember. I know we were in Colorado—well, southern, probably—and I know we were in Iowa. We hit some terrible rainstorms. We had to stop and have the car looked at every now and then. [We were in Navaho and Pueblo country, at the Grand Canyon, all over the Southwest.—MC] We ended up in Los Angeles. That was the first work stop. It was very hard to find a place to stay, and it seemed to me that we were living in like a boardinghouse. It was almost like a—.

Lage: Was this a stop to see where you wanted to live?

05-00:23:41
Chall: Yes. Well, Harold was looking for work, remember. He hadn't given up his job with Remington Rand, but he was going to look for work in the West Coast. So he knew where these places were. In Los Angeles, there was a company that was from Italy. There was a major Italian calculator company. Made adding machines, whatever they made in those days. It was Italian. I can't remember the name of it, but that could easily be found again [Olivetti]. It was well known, very well respected. It was unusual to have a foreign company doing that much and that well here. They were in Los Angeles; he went there and they offered him a job. So he said, "I can work here." So I said, "Well, let's just go on up the coast," because he knew that there was a place in San Leandro, Friden. So we did go all the way up, but we went on the coast route.

Lage: On Highway 1.

05-00:24:53
Chall: Yes. We stopped in one place on the Oregon coast, because I had been there and knew what it was like.

Lage: Oh, you went *all* the way up.

05-00:25:01
Chall: Yes, we did it. Of course, there weren't any freeways in those days; it was just two-lane roads. I wanted the coast, and so did he. When we got into the Oregon coast, that's where I knew, because I'd been a counselor at a camp in Oregon, B'nai B'rith Camp, and on days off, we went to the coast, by bus. Well, you could get crab, cooked fresh right there, and just sit down on the beach and eat it. Well, that was a treat, and I wanted Harold to have this treat, and I wanted to have it again, and we did that. Then we got to Tacoma, Washington, and met the whole family. My mother had a big reception. It was very nice, very nice to be with the family and all. My father, as I may have mentioned before, did the right thing as a father; he asked Harold to join him in the lumberyard.

Lage: Oh. No, you didn't mention that.

05-00:26:07
Chall: Oh, I didn't tell you that?

Lage: No.

05-00:26:09
Chall: Yes, he did. He asked Harold if he would like to stay in Tacoma and work with him in the lumberyard. My brother was already working in the lumberyard.

Lage: That's kind of a tricky proposition.

05-00:26:26
Chall: So Harold thought about that. He said, "This is a nice place." Well, all the good things were here. "And your father has asked me to stay here." I refused. I said, "No. It just wouldn't work. It's not your business, it's nothing that you're—." It wouldn't have—. Harold was a designer. He was a person who designed machines. Well, he was a mechanical engineer, is what he trained for.

Lage: I see, that was his training.

05-00:27:14
Chall: Which, by the way—I may have told you this—his mother just cried when he said, "I'm going into engineering," because she said, "You'll never make a living. Nobody hires Jews as engineers." Which they did not, and Harold did not get the first job he tried to get as an engineer in a major company. And he was pretty sure why he didn't get it. So his mother was terribly disappointed, and Harold went through with it anyway. You're taking ten years out of your life and working so hard for it, this is what you do. [Harold worked in the Brooklyn Navy Yard during World War II.--MC]

Lage: Right. So you didn't want him to give that up.

05-00:27:56
Chall: No. And I really had no desire to live in Tacoma either, so I said, "No, we'll just go back down." I guess actually, we had stopped en route; we had gone interior. We stopped in San Leandro, and he had gone to Friden Calculators and asked for a job, and they hired him. For the same amount of money as the Italian company was hiring. It's my recollection that it was $400 a month. I said, "We could live in the Bay Area," which I didn't know very much about. But, "That's very good, so let's just go down there and take that job." So that's what we did.

Lage: Very interesting. You were a smart young woman, who knew her own mind.

05-00:28:45
Chall: Yes, I guess I did. They tell me I still do.

Lage: Good, good, I'm sure you do. So that's how you ended up in the East Bay.

05-00:28:55
Chall: Yes, that's right, and in San Leandro.

Lage: Did you live in San Leandro, at first?

05-00:28:59
Chall: Yes, we did. First, we had a tiny little house that had been built there maybe a month before. It was built and owned by a Portuguese lady. San Leandro was mainly a city of Portuguese. She'd built this. So we were the first renters. We had a little living room, a little bit smaller than this room, and one bedroom, and a kitchen and a bathroom. It was right on a corner. It was very nice. By this time, Harold had some friends from Friden. Our bedding and all that hadn't come through yet, so they lent us blankets and sheets. One Friden couple lived up the street. Mainly, Harold was hired as an advanced machine designer. The people who had come into Friden—Carl Friden had come from Marchant, and had learned as much as he could and then felt he could do better, so he left Marchant. He was financed by a man who was a major lumber person, I think. His family and Friden's family became—. Even though they had not been trained as engineers, they were in the engineering department. I think Harold was the only true engineer in that little place, which was manufacturing really good machines.

Lage: It's a pretty important, key person.

05-00:30:45
Chall: Yes. These fellows—workers and engineers—were very, very nice to us. Very nice. They were always hospitable. No matter how many years we were there, they were hospitable, and friends.

Lage: Yes. So that's one way you made contacts.

05-00:31:07
Chall: It was a nice connection, very close, and San Leandro was a very nice little town to be in. Eventually, when we had one child, when we were pregnant—Harold was always looking for something a little bit better—we moved up into the hills. A few blocks away, actually, but up in the hills. The hills were just being developed in San Leandro.

Lage: Did you ever feel discrimination as Jewish in San Leandro?

05-00:31:32
Chall: No, and Harold asked me that. That was a question he asked me.

Lage: About?

05-00:31:37
Chall: Whether we would have trouble. Never.

Lage: The Portuguese person?

05-00:31:43
Chall: No, no. No trouble at all. We could be anywhere. We could be anywhere.

Lage: Was Harold a practicing Jew? Did he go to temple?

05-00:31:55
Chall: No, he was more of an agnostic Jew, but he was Jewish; no question about that, in his mind. His background was Orthodox, and he'd sort of given up Orthodoxy, but at least he knew. There was no problem.

Lage: But did you join a synagogue?

05-00:32:19
Chall: We did, eventually, for a while, when the kids were young, and we put them in Sunday school. Many of our friends were Jewish. Some connections came as a result of my job, but I can talk about that when I get to the job. So that was why we moved into San Leandro. The house that we moved into in the hills, they were still on septic tanks. By the time I had two children in diapers, it was a little difficult with a septic tank. We were on the first hill, there were hills above us, so that the waters from some streets that had houses on them, their waters would come down, and our septic tank would fill up and go down the hill into some of the lower houses' tanks. But the city insisted that we would have to put in sewers. The people who lived across the street from us, on a corner, didn't want to pay for the sewers. It would cost them more, because when you're on a corner, there are more pipes to go around your property. So that didn't work. We felt we had to leave. Harold found us another house that had just been finished, that was in Castro Valley. Things were just moving, building, building, building.

Lage: Oh, I'll bet.

05-00:33:50
Chall: Wherever there were the cherry trees, the peach trees, and the chickens, they all disappeared.

Lage: So when you first got here, there were the cherry trees and the peach trees?

05-00:34:01
Chall: Castro Valley was full of apricot trees and chicken farms. Even the cherry trees in San Leandro—. They still had a cherry tree festival, but there weren't many cherry trees there, by that time. San Leandro had become a real hub for business and manufacturing. Then it was supposed to go on down to Hayward, according to the plans that Hayward had, which I found out when I was doing

work for the League of Women Voters. It skipped and went off; it skipped Hayward. That was a surprise.

Lage: It skipped Hayward and went further south?

05-00:34:36
Chall: Yes, into the Fremont area. But San Leandro was always very good. San Leandro was an old town, and so it had a lot of stores. The camera club was there and a few other things, good night school classes. Harold immediately joined the camera club. Soon as we put down roots, he went to adult classes and studied carpentry, so that he could make tables and things of this kind.

Lage: Did he make this table?

05-00:35:08
Chall: Not that table. He made one behind you and a few other things, over the years. So he always was taking a class and always doing something like that, and in this club and that club. So he was an active person.

Lage: He was an active guy.

05-00:35:24
Chall: But he was also working. For a while, he was not very happy with the Friden people, and he wanted to go back. I told him, "Go ahead. Go back and check it out." So he did go back and he looked over what was going on in this Remington Rand Connecticut plant. He decided that probably, in a sense, you couldn't go home again. So he decided that we would just stay where we were. So that was done.

Lage: Did he stay with Friden then?

05-00:35:59
Chall: Oh, yes, he did. He stayed with Friden. He designed some of their very advanced machines.

Lage: Mainly, were these office machines?

05-00:36:10
Chall: These were office, but designed a machine that took square root. Add, subtract, multiply, divide, and took square root. Then they were designing a machine that not only did that, but it printed. I forget how the paper came out of it. Those were very advanced. Very advanced machines. A mechanical machine like that, it was all built with pieces of metal, and you had to have the tolerances exactly right or it wouldn't work. That was very, very difficult to get, so he was always in the machine shop. Then when you did that, you also had the people who wrote the advertising. They wanted it to look a certain way and they wanted to advertise it in a certain way. Harold would have to tell

them that it wouldn't work. "I can't build it to look like that; can't build it to behave like that." I remember one of them was, "Just put your finger on the…." That was the advertisement, "Just put your finger on it." I can't recall the rest of it.

Lage: And you'll have your calculation.

05-00:37:36
Chall: What the ad meant was how easy it was to use. You watch them doing it now, with the—. He was always in trouble with the advertising, that business end of it. And Harold was a scrapper, so it was always very interesting. But yes, he was there. Friden, finally, they sold it to Singer. The people who had started Friden were now getting much older. This was after twenty-five, thirty years; they were getting kind of tired. And we had the computer with the chip coming in, and this was a problem already. So I guess they finally decided, well, we'll try something else. Singer, the Singer sewing machine company, was interested in getting into this work, so they took over Friden. Harold was always concerned that he was going to lose his job. He didn't lose his job but he decided that he might, so he decided to teach engineering. So he went to Chabot College, and they hired him, two evenings a week, to teach young students who didn't have any background in— .

Lage: Mechanical engineering.

05-00:39:06
Chall: Mechanical. Just basic skills. Some of them literally couldn't read a ruler. Now, this was a long time ago, but they didn't even know what a ruler was and how to use a ruler. So there was work to be done—

Lage: Yes!

05-00:39:22
Chall: —those days, too. Well, he did teach there a couple times a week, for a number of years even after he retired from industry. Then he decided, because I had been working with pottery for a while, that he would build pottery wheels. So in the garage, he was building pottery wheels and selling them to the local art—.

Lage: Oh, interesting. Yes, he was entrepreneurial.

05-00:39:53
Chall: Yes. He was always afraid that he might lose his job, because he lived through the really terrible Depression.

Lage: Right, right.

05-00:40:01
Chall: He wanted to be sure that he always had something that was on hand.

Lage: But did Singer keep him on?

05-00:40:08
Chall: Yes, Singer kept him on, and then Singer sent him to—. Maybe it was even before Singer. Friden was outsourcing. So they were outsourcing to, oh, South Carolina, Virginia. I remember he was going south.

Lage: This is interesting, so early on.

05-00:40:30
Chall: That's where some of the northern mills that made fabrics—. They were all going south. Then Singer also decided that they would maybe build some of these machines, some of them, in Belgium and in Holland. So Harold went abroad. He saw the Singer factories in Germany. He even saw how they made needles. He went to Belgium and he went to Holland and he went to England. That's where they were trying to outsource this work on the machine.

Lage: It sounds like his job expanded, and maybe got more interesting.

05-00:41:15
Chall: Well, I think they were also trying to make things for the post office. They never were able to get the postal ones good. Now, of course, you can do all this in the post office. But it was an early outsourcing kind of thing. Then Singer, at one point, decided it was going to close up. By this time, they had let off Harold. I don't remember what the date was. A couple times, I came back from Los Angeles, where I was doing some interviewing, and Harold would pick me up at the airport and he would say, "I just lost my job." Now, he had several other jobs that came along right after that, with other companies. [One of these jobs was with Cartridge Television in San Leandro, 1972-1973. –MC] One of them was making the new tapes. You could put in a tape and see it through the television.

Lage: Like VHS tapes? Video?

05-00:42:37
Chall: Yes, something like that, in the early days. They were trying to have their tapes machines made in Japan. I guess the tolerances—. It was so difficult to do it that way, their engineers had planned it, that that particular—. I can't remember. They were major companies that involved. They just threw that one away. So he lost that job. Then there was another one building something that looked like the real VHS, which you looked at on the television. We walked through, I think it was Montgomery Ward, one night, and they were showing this thing in the—.

Lage: In the TV section?

05-00:43:25
Chall: In a TV set. TVs were pretty small, in those days.

Lage: So he was on the cutting edge of those—.

05-00:43:31
Chall: He was on the cutting edge of that. That didn't work. We were going through a different depression, at that time. Every fifteen years or so, things would sort of fold up. So we folded on that one. By this time, we had moved. We were here in Hayward. So that was Harold's adventures into business. But he was a very good machine designer at Friden. It was really nice. It was good.

Lage: It worked well. It sounds like he was a victim of technological advances.

05-00:44:16
Chall: Oh! At one point, they sent him off to Stanford. I think it's still existing. It was a special research—.

Lage: Stanford Research Institute or something like that?

05-00:44:35
Chall: Yes. He went over there to learn how they made the chips. So he was there to learn about making chips, so that maybe he could then come back and maybe they could start working on that, the computer era. That, of course, didn't work out. But I used to worry every time he'd cross the bridge, in those days. It was awful.

Lage: Now, why did you worry?

05-00:45:13
Chall: Because it was really dangerous crossings, in part, from here across the bay, and getting into the Stanford area. You can still hear about accidents in certain areas.

Lage: Right. Oh, you hear it every day.

05-00:45:33
Chall: Yes. So he would come back and tell me maybe there was something close, a close call here and there. No, I worried about it all the time.

Lage: Oh, dear.

05-00:45:43
Chall: But that didn't last long. Then pretty soon he was out of that. The last job he had—. I might as well just let you know. By that time, we were living here, in 1973. One of his students at Chabot College, at night, one of his night students,

was an older young fellow; he was probably in his thirties [Fred Cimperman]. He seemed to have had a lot of experience already; but he didn't have a lot of proper schooling in certain areas, and that's what Harold was teaching. He came to Harold one night and said, "I'm working for a company which needs an engineer to do a job project that nobody can work on. We have nobody in there to do it, and I think you're just the man for it." It was a little company in San Leandro. [Ashlock, a division of Vistan Corp.] Little, tiny company, in the East. They were a pitting machine company.

Lage: Pitting?

05-00:46:46
Chall: Pitting, P-I-T-T-I-N-G. They had different kinds of pitting machines. When the dates needed to be pitted in California, they went and pitted dates. When cherries need pitting, they pitted cherries. What else needs pitting? Olives. Olive pitter. Now, I'm not exactly sure what was going on in California at the time. It may have been because of the new water bill, whatever. More olives were on the market. But this little company wanted to build a machine that would pit olives, which they had already done, but would pit and stuff them automatically. That's what the industry needed. So they hired Harold to design this pitting machine.

Lage: To pit and stuff.

05-00:47:41
Chall: Pit and stuff. Now, pitting was one thing; stuffing was another. What do you stuff it with? Now, they used to be stuffed only in Spain, and they were stuffed with a little pin or needle. You would just take this piece of pimiento and you'd stuff it. It was all done by hand. So Harold had to figure out the pimiento. He would get some of it and he would try cooking it on the stove, to see what it would do. Then he got in touch with people who had pimientos, down in the valley, and worked with them to design a pimiento that would be on a ribbon.

Lage: Oh, like a strip?

05-00:48:24
Chall: A strip. Then he designed a little machine; it wasn't much bigger than this. It would pit and stuff automatically. I went down with him once and watched the prototype. You couldn't see it happening, it was so fast. That was his last job with industry. He retired.

Lage: He retired?

05-00:48:48
Chall: He retired from industry, and then he taught at night, at Chabot, as he had been doing for a number of years.

Lage: When did he retire? What year was that?

05-00:48:53
Chall: He taught at Ohlone College, during the day, a few days a week.

Lage: Oh, at Ohlone. So he taught a lot.

05-00:48:59
Chall: Yes, he just continued to teach. Then he worked on jewelry and he did his hobbies.

Lage: He enjoyed his retirement.

05-00:49:09
Chall: He did. Yes, he did. Then we traveled.

Lage: Yes, you traveled quite a lot. When did he retire? Do you remember?

05-00:49:17
Chall: Well, it must've been about 1975-1976.

Lage: Oh, early on in your career with ROHO.

05-00:49:24
Chall: Oh, yes. I'd started in ROHO in '67, I think.

Lage: Yes, Yes. Well, that's a nice story.

05-00:49:32
Chall: Yes, it is.

Lage: He passed away when you were traveling, did he not?

05-00:49:36
Chall: Yes. He died the evening of the first day we arrived in Lisbon, for a month's trip around Portugal. Yes. Well, he'd had some little heart problem and thought it was under care. The doctor, he had seen the day before he left, or two days before, he said, "You're fine." But he began to have a heart attack while we were on the plane, I think.

Lage: Oh, Malca, that must've been awful.

05-00:50:00
Chall: Of course, he just decided it was probably indigestion, which considering all that he knew, he should've known better.

Lage: Yes, Yes. What year was that?

05-00:50:15
Chall: 1983. Yes. He was just seventy, just past seventy; I was seven years his junior.

Lage: Well, that couldn't have been easy.

05-00:50:29
Chall: Except that the embassy official in charge of people like me, who might've had an accident, any American, he was on duty that day. But that's a whole story about how Harold fell in a store and was taken to a hospital, and all that goes with that. But the embassy official, when we finally connected, told me that I would have to be there in Lisbon over the weekend, probably not be able to leave until a couple days later. I had all kinds of arrangements to make. He said, "I'm not leaving you here in this little apartment over the weekend or any time. I'm going to pick you up on Saturday; you come home with me."

Lage: Oh, my goodness.

05-00:51:23
Chall: He took me home. Had a wonderful wife and three teenage kids, a beautiful home, just on the outskirts of a major city.

Lage: Lisbon, was it?

05-00:51:38
Chall: Lisbon, mm-hm. They had traveled a lot, as Foreign Service people do, had beautiful paintings on the wall. They never left me. Just for a while, they went out and I stayed with the kids. Otherwise, they were with me all the time.

Lage: That's wonderful.

05-00:51:55
Chall: Yes, they were great.

Lage: Beyond the call of duty.

05-00:52:00
Chall: Yes. He said he'd never had anything like this happen, but he knew what to do. He was just a great person [Wallace Keiderling]. His wife, Charo, had relatives—she was from Bolivia—had relatives in San Jose, and they would come here to visit the relatives and friends, from time to time. Whenever they came, they would also check on me. We would see each other, even if it was at a flower show or whatever it might be. Interestingly enough, they were close friends of Caroline Crawford [on staff of ROHO] and her husband.

Lage: Oh, you're kidding! Isn't that interesting? So somehow, you figured that out with Caroline.

05-00:52:42
Chall: It was through Caroline he found me, because I had told him where I worked. I may have given him a little card that I happened to have. When he and his wife came to visit here, they went to the Crawfords, where they always stayed. He said to her, "I met a woman when I was in Portugal, who had this problem. She told me that worked for something called the Regional Oral History Office, in Berkeley." Caroline had just started working there. She said, "I'm working there now and I know who she is. I know her." Willa always had my emergency phone number. I was then with my mother in Tacoma. Every few months, I would go to Tacoma, stay with my mother—and father, if he was still alive. Take care of them for a while—cook, put things in the freezer and all of that. So I was there with my mother, in her apartment in the senior living residence in Tacoma. She got this phone call from somebody that knows Malca Chall. She couldn't understand what this man was saying, so she handed the phone over to me. It turns out to be this man, Wallace, from the—

Lage: Embassy.

05-00:54:23
Chall: —embassy. So I saw him every couple of years, when they would come up here. And every Christmas, I got a letter, a handwritten letter from him. The last few years, I didn't get a letter. The last time I saw Caroline, I said, "I haven't heard from Wallace." She said, "He died a few years ago. That's the reason you haven't heard from him."

Lage: Oh my goodness. What a story, Malca.

05-00:54:53
Chall: I know.

Lage: I'm going to stop this right now and take a little break.

05-00:54:57
Chall: All right.

Audiofile 6

Lage: Okay, Malca, we're back on. Tape six, still on February 26, 2015. We talked about your marriage and Harold's career, and we thought we'd go to what you did when you first came out to the Bay Area.

06-00:00:21
Chall: All right.

Lage: Had you always thought you wanted to work when you got settled on the West Coast?

06-00:00:28
Chall: Well, when I was in New York and I had met Harold—and of course, by this time, I wasn't working—I had started to learn how to use a stenotype machine. You know the kind of machines that are used in courts, where you have a little machine? It's shorthand, but it's a shorthand with letters.

Lage: With a sort of a typewriter.

06-00:01:01
Chall: It's a typewriter.

Lage: But you don't type every letter?

06-00:01:04
Chall: No, there are certain letters put together, which would mean "the" or "and" or any kind of words .

Lage: I see.

06-00:01:13
Chall: You know what they are; you learn them, just as you learn shorthand.

Lage: Right. But you didn't know shorthand.

06-00:01:20
Chall: I knew the shorthand that you could do with your pen and pencil.

Lage: Oh, oh. See, I thought you hadn't learned that.

06-00:01:26
Chall: I studied that once and I knew a little bit of it, but I wasn't in a position to be somebody's secretary, as I explained to you. So the stenotype seemed like a good occupation. Harold bought it for me, a stenotype machine, and I went to classes. It was so boring.

Lage: [laughs] I'm surprised you even thought of it as a potential job, because you weren't trained to be a secretary.

06-00:01:56
Chall: No, but that was what was in the picture, obviously.

Lage: For women.

06-00:02:02
Chall: Yes. So okay, I was ready to learn it. When we came to San Leandro, it's, "I'm not going to do this." Eventually, we sold it. But in some part of my career in New York, when I wasn't working, I volunteered to work in an office. I think it was with maybe Jewish Welfare Federation or something, in New York. One of my friends from the Edward L. Bernays, the one who was

responsible for all the work having to do with the bananas in Guatemala, I guess it was, she was employed there. So that's where I ended up, just doing volunteer work. Because she remained a close friend for years. In fact, when she and her husband went to Mexico—that's where they lived after they retired—I spent some time with them in Mexico. And when she and her husband would come here every year or so—because you have to, in order to keep your American citizenship, I think it is—they'd sometimes stay with us, wherever we were living. So she knew the boys and all of that.

So I thought, all right, I'll just find out something where I can volunteer around here, until I get used to living in San Leandro and know what it's all about. I looked in the yellow pages, and there was a volunteer office in San Leandro. I think it was a volunteer office for the Community Chest; I'm not sure. But they needed volunteers. So I went. I had an appointment and I went and I talked to the person who was in charge. She said, "You're much too over-qualified for anything we have to offer you here to volunteer. But for the Community Chest, there's an office in Oakland that just lost an employee. It's a one-woman office. They need somebody who can work statistics and things of this kind, and I think that's exactly what you can do. Let me check." So she did, and she told me to go down and be interviewed, and I did, and I was hired.

Lage: Wow, that was a fortuitous connection.

06-00:04:41
Chall: I know. That office was in Oakland, and we were in San Leandro, and there was no freeway. We had one car, and Harold took that to work. So it was a question. I'd just go down on a bus, that's it. Just get down and go on a bus. Our office was the Community Welfare Council, a part of the Community Chest. The Community Chest offices, I guess, were in the same building; I've forgotten. [The Community Chest is now known as United Way. –MC]

Lage: Do you remember where it was in Oakland?

06-00:05:17
Chall: Yes, more or less. It was down near one of the Capwell stores.

Lage: Right in downtown, probably.

06-00:05:23
Chall: Downtown, mm-hm.

Lage: Capwell's was about 20th, I think, and Broadway.

06-00:05:27
Chall: It was not that far down. So we were in that general area. I guess it was near what became City Center. My office was in one large room. It was a big room. Off of this big room were two small rooms, one for the woman who was in

charge of social welfare and one for the woman who was in charge of group work. Group work was Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, all of these.

Lage: Oh, I see, like community groups.

06-00:06:51
Chall: Yes, the groups. That's called group work. Those were the two, and then there was this big space, and then there was another office across from them, and that was my office. It had two desks in it, and a big window, and that was it. Now, my job was to gather statistics from social welfare people and the group work people, and keep them together and arrange them and do something with them. That basically was it, although I will give you the synopsis of what I was supposed to be doing.

Lage: That job description you showed me.

06-00:07:40
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Which was four or five pages long.

06-00:07:43
Chall: Right. Every organization attached to welfare and group work were supposed to send in, every month, the statistics—how many people you took care of in this way, in another way.

Lage: People who were funded, basically, by Community Chest.

06-00:08:03
Chall: Yes, they were all funded by the Community Chest and they had to report back. I was taking those reports. Well, it wasn't so hard with the group work people; it wasn't difficult with everything else. The statistical report was very standardized. One of the women, one of the members of a group who had to return a statistic every month, was the executive of the adoption agency. A very strong woman, who became a very close friend, over the years. She would come in—and she was very strong—and she would say, "Now, look, you cannot determine what happens in an adoption agency with this kind of a statistic, with this kind of a form. It doesn't work." I would have to say, "I agree with you, but this is it." Well, she just refused to deal with it. So she must've been difficult with the person who came before me, who left—she also was a young woman. This executive from the Oakland Children's Agency, her name was Beatrice Palmer, and she and her husband, Howard, were, ultimately, very close friends. She's the one who got me into the League of Women Voters. So that was my job. We had statistics from the Catholic youth agency, we had statistics from the Jewish welfare agency, which did social work. They had clients who needed help. Either financial help, but mainly it was psychological help.

Lage: But do you recall what the statistics showed?

06-00:10:04
Chall: How many people you—.

Lage: You served?

06-00:10:06
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Did they break it down into ethnicity or race?

06-00:10:11
Chall: No, not that I recall. No. I think mainly, it was just—.

Lage: How many people.

06-00:10:17
Chall: How many people, what were their ages, something like this. I don't remember much about it at all.

Lage: So then the Community Chest could report, we've served, in total, this many.

06-00:10:26
Chall: Yes, that's exactly right, that's exactly right.

Lage: You were a collator, it sounds like.

06-00:10:31
Chall: That was what it was. Now, the woman who had had the office before me had set up a project dealing with—I think it was juvenile delinquents. I believe it was. She had set it up so that she could get answers to certain kinds of questions that the department had raised. At that time, the police department had put into their department one of these new calculating machines. Or no, they weren't called that. They were like the ones in the Bank of America, which were room-size, full of globes and hot wires and all this kind of thing. But that's how you did—.

Lage: Was it like a computer, a primitive computer?

06-00:11:32
Chall: A primitive computer, yes. The police department had it, and of course, the Bank of America had one, and this was the going thing. But they were the size of rooms.

Lage: Right, right. With the punch cards, maybe?

06-00:11:46
Chall: No. No, that was not yet. So they had one in the police department, and this is where you put your statistics. I can't remember now how you got them out. I just know that the framework for this had been set up. They had worked it out with the police department.

Lage: That you could use this machine?

06-00:12:08
Chall: I went down there to put in the questions and the answers, and some of them had already been started. Got them more or less done. Maybe I was down there twice. Then I began to look at what I was getting out of it, and I realized it didn't make any sense. It didn't make sense. The answers, the questions, what it was you were looking for on a grid, none of it—. You have your vertical, you have your horizontal, and it's supposed to go somewhere.

Lage: Oh, you mean a chart?

06-00:12:49
Chall: The chart. None of the questions made sense to what—. The answers didn't—.

Lage: It didn't tell you anything, it sounds like.

06-00:12:57
Chall: Nothing worked. Yes, it didn't work. So I just went back to my persons in charge. I think this was maybe the woman in the welfare department. I said, "These questions and these answers—. We're not going to get it. We're just not going to get what you wanted, so you'll have to scrap this thing. It just doesn't take anybody with just a few brains to see that this won't work." I'm sure that they wanted answers. They had questions, they wanted answers. Nothing made sense. So we scrapped that one. But then a little bit later, they wanted one on group work. What kids are getting the group work? Who is benefitting by the Girl Scouts and the Boy Scouts and the Camp Fire Girls? I don't even think we had Boys Clubs then. They may be on that chart. Who's benefitting? Where do they live? How old are they? What are their races, the racial differences? So we designed a questionnaire and set it out to the Girl Scouts, the Boy Scouts, et cetera.

Lage: This was a different kind of questionnaire than they were used to, it sounds like.

06-00:14:22
Chall: Well, it wasn't the standard thing that they sent to me every month. Now, the woman in charge of group work, she was a real help [Mary Cady]. We were not getting answers from some of them. They didn't want to answer these questions. They didn't want to show, actually, where things weren't doing—.

Lage: Where they weren't serving.

06-00:14:47
Chall: Where they weren't serving. Certain areas of Oakland were not being served. They just didn't want to show this. Well, she said, "Oh, come on now. You have those statistics. You can get them," she said to them. She was a strong woman. "You could get them." I remember her telling this to the head of the Camp Fire Girls." Well, we did get them. We did finally get them. Then it was up to me to put this into some kind of order. Well, I did write the report. It's very complicated. By this time, there was somebody hired in the office to work with me, for a while. She was a PhD candidate in, I guess, social—. Not social work. There's another word for this, in academia.

Lage: Social welfare?

06-00:15:45
Chall: It's not called that. Sociology is the word.

Lage: Oh, sociology, yes.

06-00:15:49
Chall: She was a PhD candidate in sociology. She was very smart. She was about my age, maybe a little older, married, with a small child. It was fun to have her in the office and we enjoyed each other, and she could help me. But this took quite a while. In the meantime, of course, as you probably would note, I had to keep all the statistics for everybody. When I went into the office, I did not have an adding machine. If I needed to add anything, I went across and I got it from one of the other women who had one in her office, and then I would bring it back and I would do my math. When it came to calculations, I didn't have a calculator. I didn't have anything. So I got a slide rule—I guess my husband taught me how to use it—and for a couple of years, I did everything on the slide rule. Now, my husband was working for Friden calculators.

Lage: Right, this is ironic.

06-00:17:03
Chall: Friden had learned all that he learned from Marchant. When I was at Reed, I had a year of statistics, and I learned my statistics on a Marchant. So I thought to myself, why can't I have a calculator in my office? Now, in those days, there was nothing in the tax code that had anything to do with a company giving something and getting something off its taxes. I don't think that was even there yet. So I asked Harold, "Do you think that they would give me a calculator, for the work that I'm doing?" Well, he wasn't sure. But he did get one.

Lage: So donated to the Community Chest.

06-00:17:55
Chall: They donated it to the Community Chest, and I was so pleased to have that machine! Then I also needed a light, and so I managed to get a lamp in the room. So within several months—maybe it took a half a year or more—I got my calculator, I got an adding machine, and I got a lamp.

Lage: A lamp! The basics.

06-00:18:20
Chall: Well, there was a nice window behind me, but so what?

Lage: Right.

06-00:18:26
Chall: I did this major report on the group work, with maps.

06-00:18:46
Chall: That was all hand labor. You got a map—. It was all by census tracts, by the way. So it was all done by census tracts. I learned about census tracts on the job, probably from a report done a few years earlier. You learn about these kinds of things. So this is a census tract analysis, really. Yes. The head of the Community Chest was very pleased with it. And a young attorney [Evelio Grillo], who is now a superior court judge in Alameda County, was very pleased. He said, "It's about time. It's about time. We really needed this."

Lage: So can you kind of summarize what this report revealed?[4]

06-00:19:57
Chall: It revealed that if you lived in upper-middle-class neighborhoods in Oakland, in Piedmont, in San Leandro, from the time you were young—because this was done by ages—you were in the Boy Scouts, you could be in the Girl Scouts, you could be in the Camp Fire Girls. When you got into the lower income neighborhoods, the report says in these, the houses are not as well kept up, the yards aren't kept up; but most people do have indoor plumbing, that sort of thing. It's all done by census tracts. Then you have not quite as many kids—. At different stages. Maybe they did a little bit better when they're from seven to eleven years old, but not as well as they got older. It's all broken down by age and by census tract. When you got into the lower part of Oakland, in the census tracts in the flatlands, as we would call it now, that's where you saw almost nothing going on.

Lage: They didn't get services from these Community Chest groups.

[4] This report will be deposited in the Hayward Area Historical Society.

06-00:21:16
Chall: Yes, because you see, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and Camp Fire Girls are all volunteer. Those are volunteer mothers and fathers. They're not paid. Who are the volunteers? You've got the same problems today with schools, don't you?

Lage: Right.

06-00:21:33
Chall: Who are in the PTA? Who are doing this, who are doing that? It's the same. There's no way to say, we must have volunteers. Now, of course, you get kids, children in high school and college, who are asked to take positions like that as volunteers. As you can see from the report, the census tracts, the Oakland census tracts, are all covered in certain kinds of legend—black or little polka dots or whatever they might be; gray, less gray, black—colors to show what—.

Lage: How deep the service is.

06-00:22:18
Chall: Yes. Then you have the charts, which show very, very closely. Then you also have all the information about what is in those census tracts. So it's very complete. I can't believe I did it, frankly.

Lage: Well, I took a look at it before our interview, and it was very impressive. What impact might it have had, do you know? Did you have a sense it had an impact, at least on your own organization, if not broader?

06-00:22:46
Chall: No, I don't really know. You never really know what these things mean when they get put on the shelf.

Lage: Well, did you feel like the Community Chest said, we have to make a change, or we have to require a change?

06-00:23:00
Chall: I'm sure they did. Now, the Community Chest was one of the vital organizations in America, at that time. There was nothing else where money—. Money came into the Community Chest. It was the only one. There weren't a thousand organizations or—. Let's see, what do we call the now?

Lage: The philanthropic organizations?

06-00:23:32
Chall: Philanthropic organizations, foundations, places like this, which you see all over the place. You watch your television, you see them all listed for programs.

Lage: But the Community Chest was kind of the main—.

06-00:23:46
Chall: The Community Chest was the one agency which took money in from everyplace. Mostly from businesses. Let's say Capwell's. Somebody would be in charge, in the Capwell's, to see that everybody got a little envelope from the Community Chest.

Lage: The people who worked there, yes.

06-00:24:11
Chall: Yes. Then you would be expected to fill it out. This would be true in the banks—

Lage: In the universities.

06-00:24:18
Chall: —in the universities, everyplace. You all got your envelopes. A lot of the work was done by volunteers. My mother and father volunteered. You had the Kiwanis Club, the Rotary Club. Everyplace you could go, everyplace you could think of, you would go and ask for money. The League of Women Voters used that system. When I first was in the League of Women Voters, we were asked to raise a certain amount of money [for the League's activities].

Lage: So this was really important, in terms of who's getting service.

06-00:24:46
Chall: Right. The organization writes a letter, a proposal. Now, with that money, a certain amount was supposed to go to the Boy Scouts, to the Camp Fire Girls, to the Jewish Welfare Federation, to the Catholic Charities. These decisions were made by members of the board of the Community Chest, with help from the women who were getting monthly statistics. They would get their statistics; they would know. That's how the money was doled out. I remember a very interesting time, when the Community Chest decided to—. They were asked by the Planned Parenthood Federation to be a part of the Community Chest and to get some funding, because of the work that they did. Catholic Charities said, absolutely not. I just sat in on these meetings. It was fought over for months and months. Catholic Charities said that they would leave the organization, walk out of the Community Chest, if they took in Planned Parenthood. There were some very, very strong advocates on both sides. I remember particularly—.

Lage: Who were the advocates on the pro side?

06-00:26:25
Chall: The pro side was Miss Helen Grant, the head of the YWCA. A sterling person, with an ability to phrase language perfectly. These were the people who were on the side of bringing Planned Parenthood into the Community Chest. The only opponent—strong opponent, of course—was the Catholic Charities. I

remember when the vote came in to accept Planned Parenthood. I don't remember his name, but the father walked right out of the meeting. He walked out. Now, I don't know how long that lasted, because Catholic Charities needed the Community Chest.

Lage: Right. Actually, they were on the receiving end of funds.

06-00:27:12
Chall: Yes. That's right, exactly. So I don't know how long that lasted. But just to go ahead some fifteen, twenty years, I guess it is, I was active in what we'd call South County—Hayward, San Leandro. I was a very active citizen, in the League of Women Voters and election campaigns. I was well-known. They asked me to be on the board of the Community Chest. It was still in existence. There were two kinds of boards. I went on a simple board of some kind once, and then I went on the major board. That year—several years—the contest was whether to accept into the Community Chest an organization that was—. I don't remember the name of it, but it had to do with gays and lesbians. That organization asked to be in the Community Chest.

Lage: Do you remember the years, the decade?

06-00:28:25
Chall: Well, I'll tell you when it has to be. I know that I was a widow. I know that Harold died in '83, so I guess it was between '87, '88, somewhere in that line, between the late eighties, early nineties. Which makes sense, because by that time, the Castro area was a big one in San Francisco. So that's when it was all coming to a head. It was on the radio; there was a lot of discussion about it. I don't remember if that AIDS was in the picture yet. Well, they set up a committee, of course, to study this. One of the major members on that committee was a young attorney. Do you know that he had to say to everybody, "I am not a homosexual. I'm on this committee. I'm an attorney, I'm well-known." You had to be clean and you weren't going to favor this group that wanted in. It was rough. I remember some of those meetings, and I remember there was a young man who would sit next to me often. He knew my opinion was that they belonged in and I would vote yes. But it was—.

Lage: Was there any Catholic Charities presence?

06-00:30:00
Chall: I don't remember that. I don't remember what the opinion was, because at that time, it was a much—. I was on the board of the Chest itself.

Lage: Right.

06-00:30:11
Chall: Of course, we all had a vote, but we were just the people who were representing little groups here and there. The people who made the final

decisions were the other board members and staff. They were the ones who had to make it go.

Lage: What was the outcome?

06-00:30:34
Chall: They voted them in. That was the outcome, but oh, mercy me.

Lage: So it was very controversial.

06-00:30:41
Chall: *Very* controversial. I'm a pioneer of controversy in the community. Yes, that was memorable. If I hadn't been digging out all this material, I would've forgotten that.

Lage: Right, right. We didn't actually say that on the tape, that you'd been digging in your files and finding a lot of things. And giving some of it to the Hayward Area Historical Society.

06-00:32:05
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Right. So that's important.

06-00:31:06
Chall: So that was part of—. Well, but back to my job. Eventually, they moved into a much bigger, better facility—the whole organization, the Community Chest—into a different part of downtown Oakland. About that time, I was ready to leave, but I could leave my calculator there. I probably should fill in here, that one afternoon, Beatrice Palmer, who was now—. I don't know whether she had retired from the adoption agency or not. She came with a friend of hers, and they asked me if I would come to lunch, and come into a little meeting room that we had, and I said yes. They told me about this organization called the League of Women Voters in Oakland, and what it was. They wanted me to join the League of Women Voters. Well, I had never heard of the League of Women Voters. Didn't know anything about it. I liked Bea Palmer, I liked her friend, Vivian Peoples, who was a nurse. So I said all right. I may have given it a thought for a day or two, and then I joined. So that was my introduction to the League of Women Voters, and it goes on in a most interesting way, after that.

Lage: That'll be our next topic.

06-00:32:44
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Let's just talk about why you left. Did you leave the Community Chest?

06-00:32:49
Chall: I left the Community Chest because I was pregnant. From some other colleagues in the office, the secretarial staff, I found out about a doctor in Oakland, because I didn't know anything about doctors. Particularly doctors for pregnant women. So I did get my doctor in Oakland. David was born in March 1951. I think I left in maybe November. October, November, 1950.

Lage: Was that kind of standard then, that women would leave their jobs when pregnant?

06-00:33:28
Chall: I think so, Yes. I thought that that was good for me. They had a new office. Although I was in the new office for a while. It just seemed to be like the right thing to do, just to go home.

Lage: Did you have any regrets about giving up a job that you liked?

06-00:33:44
Chall: No.

Lage: Or you were ready?

06-00:33:46
Chall: No, I was ready.

Lage: Okay, that's a good place—

06-00:33:51
Chall: Good stopping point.

Lage: —to stop, and we'll pick up next time.

Interview 4: March 26, 2015

Audiofile 7

Lage: Okay, Malca. Greetings.

07-00:00:08
Chall: Greetings.

Lage: Today is March 26, 2015, and this is our fourth session of the interview with Malca Chall. And I'm Ann Lage, for the Oral History Center of Bancroft Library. Between our last two meetings, we realized we had to kind of get a grip on all of your community activities. So I asked you three questions, and asked you to think about the questions and decide which activities we'll focus on. They were, which of the civic affairs had the most long-term impact on your community? [See appendices 3 and 4 for more on Malca's civic activities.] Which was most relevant to major social issues, like gender, race, social justice? And then, what was more important to your later career at ROHO? So you thought about that and came up with what you wanted to discuss. So do you want to start by describing how you came about your thinking on this?

07-00:01:21
Chall: Well, I've chosen two. One is the League of Women Voters. We'll start there. Have I given some background already, in my joining the league?

Lage: Yes, you talked last time about how you happened to join the league. And Beatrice Palmer, who invited you to join.

07-00:01:42:
Chall: I was part of the Oakland league.

Lage: Right. You joined just as your first child came along, it seemed.

07-00:01:51
Chall: Yes. Well, I suppose that my activities with the Oakland league really helped whatever I did with ROHO. But I can give you two examples of work that I did in the community that were part of the League of Women Voters, and part when I was off the board of the league, just doing community service. I think that I've chosen two of them with respect to the long-range value, if you will, to the community. Whether it had anything much to do with racial issues or gender issues, I don't know.

Lage: Well, when you say League of Women Voters, I do think gender. I don't know if you thought about it in that way.

07-00:03:12
Chall: Yes. Well, this is true, and I can probably elaborate on that a little bit later, or now, even. When the ERA came along—

Lage: The Equal Rights Amendment.

07-00:03:30
Chall: —the Equal Rights Amendment—the League of Women Voters did not participate in that movement. It took them quite a while before they were ready to admit men in the league. Now we have men in the league; we have for a long, long time. In fact, the president of the League of Women Voters of the Eden Area now is a man. Very active in social affairs. But it was a long time. That was definitely League of Women Voters.

Lage: What type of women did you find in the league when you joined?

07-00:04:10
Chall: Well, when I started with the league, we were all young with children, little children.

Lage: In this area.

07-00:04:19
Chall: In this area. But I think as I pointed out in the talk that I gave for the league, which you will have, that after the war, the area around Hayward, San Lorenzo Village, all began to be full of little houses with small families with small children. They were all new. These were all new people, from anywhere and elsewhere—teachers, workers—and they wanted to know about their own community, which was just beginning to be built up. I came out here and lived in one of those communities. But there was only one League of Women Voters, as such, and that was in Oakland. That had been a league for a long time, probably since the twenties or thirties. The women were all mature; their children had all grown. These little communities south of Oakland were all new. There wasn't a Fremont, at that time. That city didn't even exist. As a result of that, these little groups of women formed their own communities and called themselves—. I didn't know whether they called themselves a league or not. But it began to be obvious to the national and the state leagues that these were league people. So they formed, nationally, a way of bringing them into the league, calling them units. So we were a unit of the Oakland league, and we were a provisional unit, and we had to go through certain steps.

Lage: You kind of had to prove yourself.

07-00:06:18
Chall: To prove ourselves. Several of us were on the board of the Oakland league, eventually, as members from the unit out there.

Lage: The Eden unit, it was called, right?

07-00:06:34
Chall: The Hayward unit. The Hayward unit hadn't even been formed then, as far as I knew. [It was the Hayward Area LWV (1957-1989) until the twenty-four-year-old San Leandro LWV (1965-89) merged with the Hayward league, and the name was changed to Eden Area. –MC]

There were a couple of us on the board. Now, these women in the Oakland league said, "How can we allow them to be on the board? They have little children, babies."

Lage: So interesting.

07-00:06:56
Chall: And Beatrice Palmer, who is the one who had introduced me to the league, lived in Alameda. So she was generally a part of the League of Women Voters of Oakland. There was a kind of a connection there for a long time. She brought us young women on the board. There were young women from Oakland, several young women, with young children, who were all on that board. We became a good board. We became good friends, whether we were from out here or whether we were from Oakland. At least many of them became my good friends. We used to have picnics and things with our children, all that sort of thing.

Lage: Politically, where did most of these younger Eden unit people stand?

07-00:07:48
Chall: Well, most of us, I think, were young Democrats. There were a few Republicans, and later on, we did get more Republican women on the board. In fact, one of them was the president for a number of years. In fact, there were others who were Republicans and conservative. It didn't seem to matter because in those days; we weren't that far apart, in terms of how we felt about government, how we felt about candidates. Maybe candidates, to some degree; but the difference between Earl Warren and whoever it was he was running against, that didn't matter that much. Today, it matters. And during the sixties, when the Birch Society arose, it mattered a lot, in those days. The women I can remember, there were schoolteachers—their husbands. Now, we're talking about the fact that we were all women at home. The husbands, some were teachers, some had stores. One had a liquor store. I don't remember all of them.

Lage: They weren't wealthy, it sounds like.

07-00:09:18
Chall: Oh, no, no. Most of them living in small houses in San Lorenzo Village or in Hayward. No, they weren't wealthy, they were all living on small salaries.

Even Harold, who was an engineer, didn't make a lot of money. Made a little more, maybe, than the schoolteachers.

Lage+: Did you get a sense, looking back on it—maybe you didn't think at the time—that these were women who, in a later era, would've gone into the job market? Were they trying to fulfill themselves with some stimulating activity? Or did you talk about that?

07-00:10:12
Chall: At that time, we never talked about it; but later on, they all did move on into state government, into city government boards and commissions, local mostly. I think there's a list, in this League of Women Voters fiftieth anniversary, of all the presidents of the league over the years, and some who were not president, and their social activities.[5] Now, some of them were never in the job market. These were all volunteer activities. So I think that there were only a few. I remember as the league got older—not that much older, but our children were maybe in grade school—there were a couple of women who had never finished college. One of whom hadn't. She was already married; her children were growing up. She decided she would go back to Berkeley and get a degree. She became pregnant. The other one was going to do the same thing; she was going to go to graduate school, because she had—. She was already working with her husband, who was an attorney, and she became pregnant. So these two women had little children, babies, after their last child probably was in maybe elementary school. One of them became very active in state government, on commissions, in elected office. She's probably one of the brightest people I've ever known. Still around. [Katherine McKinney Shea]

Lage: Did they stop their plans to—?

07-00:12:29
Chall: They did, indeed. No, I cannot remember that any of them thought about going into the job market. I just don't think they did.

Lage: I don't want to get us off our track, but when there was a woman candidate arising, did people say, oh, let's get some women into politics?

07-00:13:03
Chall: Well, some women did go onto the school board. They were not members—. Yes, there were some that were members of the league, but the women that I remember were already high up in state league, and then went into political—. One of them became a member of the board of education of the junior college in Oakland.

Lage: It's kind of a transitional period, very interesting.

---

[5] Souvenir Program, 50th Anniversary. 1957-2007 Eden Area League of Women Voters

07-00:13:43
Chall: By this time, there was quite a transition. There were a number of women. The only one I knew who moved on into state government was March Fong [later, California Secretary of State March Fong Eu].

Lage: Yes.

07-00:13:57
Chall: When March called me and asked me if I would help on her campaign, I knew her, because I had seen her around at meetings or something. She lived in Oakland, actually. She was not somebody I knew well, but she knew who I was, and she called me. She said she was going to run for the state assembly.

Lage: Did that surprise you?

07-00:14:22
Chall: I don't know that it did. But she wanted to know whether I would help on her campaign. I must have just—. What's the word that I'm thinking of? I didn't answer her promptly. I was—

Lage: You hesitated?

07-00:14:44
Chall: —hesitating. She said, "Malca, this is an opportunity to get a woman elected, and I think you should be helping," or words to that effect. I realized, yes, I should. But I was not caught up in the ERA, at that time. I agreed, and so I did.

Lage: You did help out.

07-00:15:11
Chall: Yes, I helped her with her first two campaigns for the assembly. I'm not sure that I helped her when she ran for secretary of state. But I did interview her, initially, when we did a few sample interviews for ROHO, when we thought we would do women political leaders.

Lage: Oh, and this was sort of a—?

07-00:15:40
Chall: It was a sample that Willa [Willa Baum, then director of the Regional Oral History Office] and I worked out. I said, "I'll just go around to the women that I know and I'll interview them, and see how this would work out," if we wanted to really make a particular real project out of it. And I did, with no legal agreement, nothing, because those tapes have all been basically destroyed. But I knew women who were mainly on school boards. One in Castro Valley. I knew Margaret Hayes, who had been on the state league board. When we were a provisional league, she was responsible for watching over us. Then as I said, she went on into elected office, and I interviewed her.

I interviewed a woman on the Hayward school board, whom I did not know, and a woman in Union City.

Lage: You did a lot of these, not just—.

07-00:16:55
Chall: I didn't know them; I knew they were on the school boards. I just called them and they said yes. I also knew the woman who had run against Ed Newman, who we'll talk about. She was a candidate against him, when he was being forced off the board, or an election off the board. I knew who she was, and I interviewed her. This was a very interesting interview, because it showed me that not all people who were connected with the election to get Ed Newman off the board were really Birch Society people. They were behind it, but she wasn't. And I thought it was really an interesting—. She was concerned about schools, in a way that many of us are now. So that was the beginning. And all of these women on the school boards were just that. As I think, none of them ever went into paid positions.

Lage: They weren't thinking of it as a stepping stone.

07-00:18:15
Chall: They weren't.

Lage: Now it's so much seen as a stepping stone, I think.

07-00:18:22
Chall: Well, yes. And the women's movement, Emily's List, Women's Forum, that's where they start. They say in their material, we start with their local positions—the school board, the assembly, maybe—and so this is true. However, a former League of Women Voters president, Ilene Weinreb, did go into elected office, on the Hayward city council. And she says in one of her comments respecting her career, in this League of Women Voters fiftieth anniversary edition, that because the league spent so much time studying the city council and the county and getting acquainted with all the government officials, she began to think, I ought to be able to do this; they don't know it all. And so she did. She was the first woman mayor. In those days, they weren't elected. She was the first elected woman mayor of Hayward.

Lage: And you say they weren't elected; they were chosen by the city council?

07-00:19:50
Chall: They were chosen by the city council. They weren't elected until we changed the charter.

Lage: Now, I think we should move and talk about that, and some more insights will come out about women.

07-00:19:59
Chall: I just want to finish up a moment about Ilene?

Lage: Oh, pardon me. Yes.

07-00:20:03
Chall: She was a very good mayor. She was a very good political person, very sharp, very smart. People tried to interest her into going into the state assembly, and she did not. The reason that she didn't was because she was afraid that it would make it difficult, with a family. And this is exactly what I would ask women who had moved on or hadn't. This was a concern. It was never a concern of men, to leave their families, go into state, go into national government. It was not thought about. We just allowed the men to do that, but not the women.

Lage: So when you say, "This is what I would ask," you mean when you were doing the women in politics project at ROHO?

07-00:21:00
Chall: Mm-hm. This is what I would ask some of them who had already gone up into office. We won't go into that, because women in politics, I did a lot of other kinds of women.

Lage: Right, and we're going to talk about this later.

07-00:21:15
Chall: Yes, that's next time.

Lage: Right. So let's talk about what you said was maybe the most significant thing you did with the league, and that was the city charter related activities.

07-00:21:29
Chall: Yes. Before that, I had had to deal with the city officials, because in order to become a league and get out of being a provisional league, you had to do a study of your city. As a result, you go around and you interview the mayor and all of the city officials and find out what they do—planning commission, et cetera—and then you write this little booklet ["Know Your Town"]. That's disappeared, the initial booklet. These officials were so intrigued by—. They had to come in front of the league and they had to talk about what they did. As a result of that, we would sometimes get other people in the community to come and listen, too. And they, the city officials and staff, liked that so much that they began, on their own, to have know-your-town meetings for several years—

07-00:22:34
Chall: They would have a public meeting, and they would all talk about what they did. So that was one of the things that the league, fortunately, did, at least in our community. I think it's because they did become well acquainted with the

league. In the meantime, between 1956, 1957, when we were provisional, and 1960, when the city council asked the league to study the charter and recommend changes, we had had two public meetings dealing with—required by the national league. The first dealt with the McCarthy era—the Bill of Rights; the second, dealt with the use of the United Nations in preventing serious international wars, which were going on in the Middle East, and Europe.

Lage: Was this what you referred to somewhere as the Freedom Agenda?

07-00:23:43
Chall: Yes.

Lage: That was from national?

07-00:23:45
Chall: That's when I was still in Oakland. We had to study the Bill of Rights. National required it. Now, the McCarthy era was in full swing. The *Oakland Tribune*, the *Hayward Daily Review*, and the veterans, and Fulton Lewis, Jr. and all, the radio folks, they were opposed to the league. They just felt that we were probably more communist than we were liberal, and there was a—. For the two big meetings that we held on both issues, at different times, the veterans were there. We didn't have anybody standing outside, the way they do now, with opposition banners and all of that; they just were watching us. They were in the audience.

Lage: You mentioned, I think in your speech to the league, how nervous you were.

07-00:24:47
Chall: Yes. When you know that, first of all, you're getting not very pleasant editorials and all of this, the league is under attack nationally all the way around. The "Let Freedom Ring" agenda provided league members with exceptionally fine little papers, a number of little essays, from some of the best scholars about the Bill of Rights and American government that you could find, that *they* could find. We were supposed to study them, and we did. We discussed them seriously in our unit meetings.

Lage: When you had these public meetings—?

07-00:25:27
Chall: Yes, one for each topic. The public meetings were pretty good.

Lage: Was the purpose to educate?

07-00:25:31
Chall: Well, the public meeting, at that time, was to have a major speaker. I don't remember who it was for the Freedom Agenda. I knew Mrs. Alexander

Meiklejohn, because of a committee that I was on, and I thought I would like to ask her husband. But I think he didn't want to; I think he refused. I don't recall who this final speaker was, but he was somebody who you really couldn't pinpoint as being probably close to the Communist party. I think even the veterans had to accept him.

Lage: You had to be careful in your choice.

07-00:26:12
Chall: Oh, yes, you had to be careful. And those were good. Well, those were very difficult meetings, but we did it. Now, let's assume that in terms of time, for the purposes of this interview, the League of Women Voters is finally okay.

Lage: It's been cleared from it's—.

07-00:26:35
Chall: We were cleared. They accepted us as a league. We continued our unit meetings. Now, the meetings were at night, of course, because our husbands were our babysitters. We were all with children during the day, so your unit meetings were at night. They were the kind of meetings where you discussed and you had discussion leaders and you did lots of studying. The committee chairmen would present all the information on paper and type it, roll it out, whatever we used to do in those days. Then we would eventually, after several study sessions, come to consensus.

Lage: Would this be about election issues?

07-00:27:16
Chall: No, they would be about, let's say, mental health in Alameda County, the Bill of Rights. I don't recall, whatever they were. The state had its own agenda. We participated in the state agenda; we studied that [as well as our local agenda, and the national agenda—all different important subjects agreed upon, for study, after conferences all over state and national meetings and conventions. Every member of the league had a voice in the selection of the agendas. We still do.—MC]

Lage: I see.

07-00:27:35
Chall: We always had a local agenda; we studied that. I think by this time, of course, regardless of how the newspapers and others, between 1946 and 1960, felt about us, the Hayward City Council knew us by this time. So they had been trying for some years to decide whether they should have an elected mayor and whether their whole charter needed to be revised, and they couldn't come to any conclusion at all. Finally, it may have been Mayor Oakes, George Oakes, who was a good friend of the league, as it happened, at that time. He said, "Well, why not ask these women of the League of Women Voters?

They're smart, they understand. Let's ask them." They agreed, because it got it off their agenda. So they contacted the league president. The league president at that time was Joan Webber. She was our Republican. She called me and said, "Would you take this on?" Now, I think I had been an officer, even when I wasn't president, doing everything you could expect of the league, taken on the duties. In 1960, I think, I was off the board and I said, "Yes, I will do it, Joan, if I don't have to be on the board." And she said, "That's all right."

That gave me carte blanche to pick my own committee. I picked about, I guess, maybe three or four women. I knew them and I thought they would do a good job, even though one of them had never been on a league study committee before. I just knew that she would do it. This is the way we worked. We first got about every city charter, from an organization that deals—and I can't remember the name of that organization; it still exists—with city government throughout the state. It has a name and it has a president, it has an office. We got all the charters that we could find—charter cities, non-charter cities, charters with elected mayors, charters without elected mayors, charters that would elect their city attorneys and charters that didn't—and we just parceled it out and decided what we're going to concentrate on. So this committee of mine went to one of the homes of one of the women once a week and we studied the charters. After we'd made a certain number of decisions about the charters that we were studying, we would take it to the units and we would explain to them what we were studying and let them think and discuss it. This went on for a couple of years.

Lage: Did you contact any of these cities to see how they felt it worked?

07-00:31:16
Chall: I don't remember doing that. But I do remember that we—. At least I did. I went to the executive director of this organization, this city—

Lage: We'll find the name. [The League of California Cities.]

07-00:31:36
Chall: I don't remember where it was; I think in Sacramento. I talked to him. But first, after the city council had accepted the idea of our study, they had called Joan Webber and she okayed it. Then I went to visit, to see the mayor, who was George Oakes. He was very receptive, very nice, and he promised me that he would give whatever help he could. I don't think he gave any money, so that we could collect all this information or not, but I knew he was behind us; he wanted this done. I think it took a couple of years. Eventually, my committee presented this to the whole league and they agreed. There was a consensus that we would have an elected mayor, that we would not elect the city clerk, that we would change the entire charter, bring it up to date.

Hayward had been just a little farming town until about 1960, when suddenly there were homes built up in the hills and all over. Chicken farms were turned into homes in Castro Valley, and orchards torn down. Everything was different, so we were bringing the charter up to date. We brought it, with our changes, to the city council. They had looked it over, as had their attorneys. There was a meeting one night and we were presented with it, a series of ballot measures, and how they were going to be listed on the ballot. I took one look at that and I thought, we've lost the election already. I think it was the city attorney. He had turned our recommendations into ballot measures that were legalese. The election of the mayor was somewhere in the middle of all this. None of it made any sense whatsoever. Nobody could look at that ballot and agree with anything. There was no way there'd be a yes or a no.

Lage: Did it sound like he was deliberately trying to obfuscate?

07-00:34:26

Chall: I really don't know, but what it did was exactly that. It was so legalese, full of obfuscation. Well, the league, on the state level, has worked for years to be sure that ballot measures were clarified. We're still working on it and they're *still* working on it. That was the beginning here. I got up—and I must've had a few league people with me, of course—I got up and I explained, fervently, that this was not going to work, that we were going to lose. I couldn't accept these. I guess the mayor—I think it was George Oakes at that time, still; I'm not sure—said finally, after this went on for a while, "Why don't we just let Mrs. Chall have an appointment with the city attorney and come to some decision about how the ballot measure should work?" He agreed, council agreed, I agreed.

Lage: My goodness.

07-00:35:41

Chall: So I took it home and I thought about it a lot. Clarify the language, make it yes or no, think about it that way. Then I called my friend Bob Coate. Bob Coate lived in Castro Valley. His wife was a good friend of mine. She was an artist and I used her for deciding on paint colors and things like that when we were building our house in Castro Valley. Our children were the same age; they did things together, even though we weren't in the same school district. Or we were in the same school district, but the kids weren't in the same school. Bob was a government official in some capacity; I can't remember what. Really a smart man. I called him and I said, "Bob, come over and help me with this." So we looked it over carefully, and what we decided together was—. Now, I'm only remembering this because of what I've read in the league's outline here.

Lage: In the fiftieth anniversary souvenir remembrance.

07-00:36:58
Chall: Yes. Because what I do remember is that Bob and I came up with a slogan. No on 1, yes on all the others. Which meant that number 1 was to retain an appointed mayor, their current plan. Yes on all the others meant those items that we thought were important, including an elected mayor that we had studied and agreed to as necessary changes. [edited and clarified during narrator's review.] There's one little item in what I have been reading that said something about city clerk. At that time, the city clerk was elected. Now, you have to remember that at this particular time, even the coroner of Alameda County was an elected official. And we had to do away with—we meaning the people, and I think the League of Women Voters may have had something to do with that, at one time—these elected people. Well, that's the way it used to be. Everyone elected. So that must've been what we did. So that was our slogan. No on 1, yes on all the others. Then Harold even made little signs that we'd put up on—. Because we didn't have any money. There was no money for signs, there was no money for anything. I don't think we even had advertisements. There was nothing.

Lage: Well, in between, did you meet with the attorney and have things changed?

07-00:38:47
Chall: Yes, indeed I did. I did. Excuse me for forgetting that. I did meet with the attorney. I took him what Bob and I had worked out, and he accepted it. Well, that was a coup. So it went on the ballot that way. No changes, except the arrangement on the ballot. Now, we had about eighty members of the league, at that time. At that time, if you were working any election—. Nowadays, the precincts, they're all digitalized. Not in those days. In those days, you'd go and you'd find out what the precinct is and whose names and addresses are on it, and you'd put it all on three-by-five cards. That's the way it worked for a long time. So I gathered my league friends together, and some who were members. I did not know and I said at some meeting—I guess it was a major meeting—"All of you have to take a precinct. You have to go out. We're going to cover every precinct in Hayward." Well, some of them were way down, like the waterfront. Quite a number of members in Castro Valley said, "We don't live in Hayward. We shouldn't have to do this." I said, "You do have to do this. You do. Every precinct has to be covered."

Lage: Does that mean going to every door of every voter?

07-00:40:29
Chall: Just about. Just about. And they did it.

Lage: That's what you did.

07-00:40:33
Chall: Yes, they did it.

Mayor Job For 4-Year Term OK'd

APR 15 1964

The job of being mayor of Hayward will become a four-year one starting in 1966, Hayward voters decided yesterday.

Voters gave the charter amendment proposal for a four-year elected mayor approval by a 5 to 1 margin and approved nine other charter changes at the same time.

An 11th proposal that city councilmen could select their mayor for two years was overwhelmingly rejected.

The popularly elected mayorship will mean that the city's present method of rotating the office among the councilmen will end with the next municipal election in 1966.

The system has been under attack for several years by a council-appointed citizens charter committee and the Hayward League of Women Voters, which campaigned extensively this spring for the proposed charter changes.

Aside from altering the mayor's office, the changes approved yesterday will mean that:

—City councilmen will be able to vote themselves a salary.

—The existence of the city airport, public services, library, parks and industrial commissions will depend on the council's choice, rather than charter provisions.

The two proposals passed by 3-2 and 3-1 margins respectively; only 50 per cent approval was required.

Other, less discussed amendments call for:

—Extension of the vice-mayor's term of office from one to two years.

—Permission for municipal employes other than department heads to negotiate with the city in matters where their own property is subject to condemnation, rather than enter required eminent domain proceedings.

—Minor charter alterations to make it conform with state laws pertaining to referendum proceedings and claims against the city.

—Allowance for councilmen to vote by an electric device in their city hall chambers rather than by a required voice vote.

All of the amendments are subject to a technical ratification by the state legislature be-

Report on the election to revise the Hayward City Charter, Hayward *Daily Review*, 4/15/1964

Lage: Did you have something to hand people?

07-00:40:37
Chall: We must've had something then. Maybe it just said, "No on 1 and yes on the rest." But we must've had all the other ballot measures. I forget how many the rest were. There must've been seven or eight of them.

Lage: All to do with the charter?

07-00:40:49
Chall: I think this was the only election. It may have been, at that time. I'm not positive about that either; you have to go to the newspapers. All I can say is that we won. We did win.

Lage: Do you remember the year of that? We can add that in. [1964, all ten of the league's ballot recommendations passed.]

07-00:41: 17
Chall: Well, here in the chronology of league accomplishments in the Eden area League of Women Voters—this is the fiftieth anniversary—it says, "1960-61, at the request of the city council, the league starts a review, chaired by Malca Chall, of the four-year-old city charter, and drafts recommended changes." And, "In 1963, the league reports that the city council, recommending direct election of mayor," et cetera. "In 1964, the league conducts citywide meetings to advocate for ten of eleven charter amendments on the ballot." So this must've been a four-year study.

Lage: Okay.

07-00:42:15
Chall: It was a very, very thorough study. Now, since then, they had to change the charter, for various reasons that make sense, because we didn't notice all of the little problems that would come up.

Lage: And the city's grown, once again.

07-00:42:36
Chall: Yes, and they've revised their charter since, too. But they do have an elected mayor, they do have an administrator, they do have all the same—. And they don't elect them all, either. They elect only the mayor, and city council. The rest are appointed.

Lage: Okay. Well, that was a very big accomplishment.

07-00:43:09
Chall: Yes, it was.

Lage: And very time-consuming. That was a full-time job.

07-00:43:13
Chall: That's correct. It was a full-time job. The meetings with these four other women—I think it was—on my committee weekly, it's a big job.

Lage: But mainly in the evening or on weekends, so your husbands can babysit?

07-00:43:34
Chall: No. The committee meetings that we held were in the morning. I think by 1960, I think our children were—.

Lage: In school.

07-00:43:46
Chall: The unit meetings for members studying the agendas were at night.

Lage: When were your two boys born?

07-00:44:00
Chall: David was born in 1951, and twenty-two months later, Barry was born, in December, 1952.

Lage: Okay. Baby-boom babies.

07-00:44:18
Chall: Yes, yes. I was older than most of the other women. I was about seven, eight years or more older than Maryly Moore, the first league president. She had three small children; she never left the home during the day. So all of the meetings between us, in the early provisional days, were in Maryly's house. So that takes care of the league.

Lage: Yes. Could I ask you one other thing that might—?

07-00:44:51
Chall: Oh, yes, surely.

Lage: I've characterized this part of your history as sort of the women's issues, although it's way beyond women issues, but it is women in government. Then, there is the Emergency Shelter Program, did that grow out of the league, also?

07-00:45:06
Chall: No.

Lage: I don't, if it's—.

07-00:45:1
Chall: No, I can give you that quickly. The Emergency Shelter Program had been already created to take care of women who were abused, with their children. Only, I think, children under the age of teenage. They had a director and they

were moving along. They had to be supported by the city and whoever else could support them. Ilene Weinreb by this time was the mayor of Hayward.

Lage: So this was in the later sixties or seventies?

07-00:46:05
Chall: This was later. No, I have a bit of information about it. I have a press release upstairs that I haven't brought down, that I looked at yesterday, so it's in the early sixties. Ilene called me and she said, "Malca, this little organization called the Emergency Shelter Program has just got started, and is struggling along. They need people on the board who understand something about administration and how to work as a board in the community. They're very, very good." And they were; they were really nice. "But they need this kind of help. Since we are supporting them, the city, I just feel that I have a right, in a way, to put somebody on the board." So she did. She said, "Would you accept this?" And I said yes. I think I wasn't the only one; I think she put Rita Vandenberg on this board too. Rita Vandenberg's husband was an administrator. He was in the administration of what we then called Hayward State College [now, California State University, East Bay] that was up here on the hill. So the two of us went on that board.

The director was JoAnne LeFils. She was really very good. But it was so difficult, because you had to have a house. You might get somebody to rent you a house, and then that renter would find somebody else he'd rather have in the house, and you'd have to move. Or you wanted more room and you'd move. But it required a certain kind of administrative ability, a certain way of working things out. JoAnne LeFils, was a good administrator, executive. She *loved* this kind of work. Moving from one place to another didn't bother her, but it would have just killed me to do this kind of thing. But I could do this other. I had to set up bylaws. We didn't have any bylaws, so I wrote bylaws, or I helped write bylaws. I helped get things up so that we had, in fact, an organization that you could work with. We had a secretary, a treasurer and we had—. They had a good little board there; we needed to bring in other people that we knew. One who knew me very well, once she wrote about a meeting: the meeting was chaired by Marc Chagall. [they laugh]

Lage: What did she call you?

07-00:49:15
Chall: Marc Chagall. Of course, I read this and I thought, this is so amusing.

Lage: Oh, how funny.

07-00:49:23
Chall: Because Malca Chall and Marc Chagall just rang in her head.

Lage: It rhymes. Yes, Yes.

07-00:49:29
Chall: They were euphonious words.

Lage: Right.

07-00:49:34
Chall: I stayed on that board for several years.

Lage: Was there tension between the older members and you more organized, new members?

07-00:49:40
Chall: No. No, because one of the early founders—whose picture I had clipped out of a newspaper— just a beautiful young woman, sincere as all get-out, she got it going. She stayed on for a while, and then she went on to other things. It was just a problem that had nothing to do with who was on the board and who wasn't. It was a very compatible. It was board structure. Eventually, JoAnne moved away and we had to find a new administrator. And we did, Arlette Merritt, and we moved into a bigger place.

I remember we had to raise money. This was a real problem. The city could give us just so much. I tried to get money from the city of San Leandro. Talked to the mayor there. He refused. In San Leandro, if you had problems, you took care of them within your own family. A few years later, they provided funds. Other organizations have stepped up to help in many different ways. I spent a long time trying to find a place where we could raise money. I tried old theaters that were closed and had special movies. I finally worked out a plan to have a potluck dinner, prior to one of the plays that would be given in a newly-organized Hayward Little Theatre. That worked. So for several years when I was off the board they used to raise money in the theatre lobby. Now they raise it by big meetings. Now the Emergency Shelter Program has a fine large house in Hayward—well, they've had it for many years—a good place. They have all kinds of volunteer organizations, from the banks, from women in—. Wherever there are a lot of women, they come and they paint, and the men paint. They do all kinds of work around—.

Lage: So they rely a great deal on volunteers.

07-00:52:19
Chall: Yes, volunteers and money that's available now from all kinds of places. The money is available.

Lage: It seems like maybe a more visible problem now.

07-00:52:31
Chall: Oh, yes. There are houses away from their office, but it's still ongoing. They changed the name a few years ago from Emergency Shelter Program to

Ruby's Place. I don't have anything to do with it whatsoever. I haven't for years. But I do send them a contribution every year. [I have placed my files on ESP in the Hayward Area Historical Society.—MC]

Lage: Okay. Well, that's another interesting component of your community service.

07-00:52:57
Chall: Yes.

Lage: This might be a good time for a break. Or is there anything else you want to say about the League of Women Voters?

07-00:53:06
Chall: I think that's about it. [See appendix 5, p. 286, for more on league history.]

Lage: Okay, we'll take a break now.

Audiofile 8

Lage: Okay, Malca, we're starting up again, with tape eight, still session four, March 26, 2015. We're going to move to the second area of your civic affairs, which I characterized as issues of civil liberties and civil rights. We thought we'd focus on the school board election.

08-00:00:30
Chall: Yes, all right.

Lage: But as a backdrop, you were also involved in the campaign, in 1964, against Proposition 14.

08-00:00:40
Chall: Right.

Lage: Which was a proposition to recall the Rumford Fair Housing Act. So you were in favor of the Rumford Fair Housing Act [which prohibited racial discrimination in housing in California, 1963].

08-00:00:51
Chall: I was.

Lage: So you were telling me off the tape, that it was really very trying and upsetting.

08-00:01:01
Chall: Yes. Well, it was upsetting because it was just a carryover from 1946, 1957, those early years of the league, when we were fighting the McCarthy era and all. The next step was the Birch Society. The Rumford Act, as we all know,

was for fair housing, equal housing. That just seemed like a no-brainer. But it wasn't a no-brainer, and there was a ballot measure opposing it.

Lage: Just to give background, because I realize that that was so long ago, people might not even know what we're talking about, fair housing. It was simply you could not discriminate on the basis of—

08-00:01:56
Chall: Race.

Lage: I think they excluded single-family homes. Somehow, they excluded people who were renting a room in their home or—.

08-00:02:12
Chall: Mm-hm. And I think it wasn't just racial. At one point, I think even homosexuals weren't allowed housing, but that may have been later.

Lage: But that didn't come to the fore in 1964.

08-00:02:26
Chall: However, basically, this was racial.

Lage: Right, it was race.

08-00:02:32
Chall: I was asked by, I don't know, the people who were responsible—. There were committees who were responsible for fighting this ballot measure, because the naysayers put the measure on ballot to repeal the Rumford Act. I was supposed to train precinct walkers. As I explained before, your precinct was—You had to go to city hall, get your precincts and party registrations, and then write them out on three-by-five cards, so you knew which houses to go to or with whom you were talking. Usually, a precinct may have had forty people in it, so you'd get a big stack of cards. I would go to a meeting place in Hayward, and people would be gathering on a Saturday morning, and I would train them how to do it.

Lage: How to talk to the homeowners?

08-00:03:35
Chall: How to talk to people about it, what to say about it. I don't remember all of that, but you know what it would be like.

Lage: Right.

08-00:03:45
Chall: That was usually a Saturday morning. I also had my own precinct in Castro Valley, and I had some friends and neighbors who had agreed to do this. One finally disagreed, so I took that precinct. The other, I trained some new people

who had just moved in, who were part of the college community. Well, I came home one day from a training session, and one of my close friends was at the house. She probably had come to visit me, but she was talking to Harold. On the back of her car was a Goldwater label. To tell you the truth, I was ill. I was just sick.

Lage: Because ’64 was the time when the more conservative wing took control of the Republican party.

08-00:04:51
Chall: Yes, that’s right. Goldwater was running. I forget. Of course, he didn’t win. Oh, he was running against—

Lage: Johnson.

08-00:05:02
Chall: —Johnson.

Lage: Yes. Did you talk to your friend about it?

08-00:05:09
Chall: Yes, I did. It was unfortunate, really, that as one of my friends once pointed out, it’s too bad to lose a friend over something political. And I’ve realized, maybe it was. She did go on to run for the Chabot College board, and won. She was one of the staunch conservative members of that board. But as close friends, it had just never—. We had our children; our Weimaraner dog came from her litter of dogs. It was a very good friendship.

Lage: You were surprised that she had these feelings, it sounds like.

08-00:05:59
Chall: I had walked with her a couple of weeks before, when Goldwater had said defense—. I cannot remember how—.

Lage: I’m trying to think, too. Defense in the name of liberty. The idea was, there’s no compromise.

08-00:06:22
Chall: Yes. She and I had different points of view on what he meant, because it was not exactly exact, what he meant. You could paraphrase it somewhere; you could think about it in different ways. She found it in his way, and I thought it was extreme. Extremism is what he said.

Lage: Yes, extremism in the defense of liberty is no sin, or whatever. [“Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice.”]

08-00:06:56
Chall: That's right. I thought that was dangerous, and she did not. It was just a little discussion we had as we were walking our kids, I think, and the dogs. But a couple of weeks later, she had the bumper sticker.

Lage: Yes. Well, those were trying times.

08-00:07:15
Chall: They were trying times. Of course, you know we lost that election and the Rumford Act came about, in fact, by law, because I think it was the California Supreme Court who found that being opposed to it was unconstitutional.

Lage: Yes, they found Prop 14 unconstitutional.

08-00:07:39
Chall: Yes. So that we did get—. But then a friend of mine went right on with this, and she would call me from time to time and say, "Will you check on this apartment?" I would call and say, "I'd like to come and see the apartment," and I would go and the landlord would show me around and I'd say, "This is really very nice." Then I would go back and I would call my friend and I'd say, "Now, this is fine." And she would send a black person out, and of course, that black person did not get the apartment or the house or whatever it was. This went on for a long, long time. Then another friend, Sara Conner, went into working for senior housing. The whole senior housing that we have around Hayward and Castro Valley, much of that is due to a lot of her work and the work of, Bill Vandenberg. Because they were state college people, so it was—.

Lage: Yes, Yes, so the college made a difference in the community.

08-00:08:43
Chall: The college made a difference, particularly the state college. Those were good people on committees.

Lage: Interesting. Okay, well, why don't we move, then, to the topic we were going to look at most carefully? Which had to do with working against the recall of a Castro Valley school board member.

08-00:09:03
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Tell me about that. That was 1966, I think you said.

08-00:09:08
Chall: I think that was it. 1966 through '68 . That was Edward Newman. Edward Newman was an attorney in Hayward. He lived in Castro Valley. I knew him, I knew his wife, I knew the five children. They were all good friends. He was

a member of the attorney organization called—. I made a note of it somewhere. National Lawyers Guild.

Lage: Yes.

08-00:09:44
Chall: Now, the Lawyers Guild were left wingers. There were quite a few of them in the area; he was one. This time, everybody who was opposed to Ed Newman, I don't know that they were all members of the Birch Society; but the Birch Society was definitely a part of all of this. They had a movie called *Let Freedom Ring*, I think it was. It was kind of diabolical, the issue.

Lage: Was it mainly accusing people of being Communists?

08-00:10:27
Chall: Communists. It was opposed—. Oh, my. It was worse than the vilification now that you have of Obama, that he's a Muslim, whatever he is. The United States was due to fall; there was no question about it.

Lage: Right, in their minds.

08-00:10:49
Chall: So they were all around.

Lage: Did they have an office here in Hayward?

08-00:10:55
Chall: I don't think so. They put out a magazine, a little four-page magazine—well, it was not just for Ed Newman; it might've been other things in the community—called *Tocsin*, T-O-C-S-I-N. Ringing an alarm bell.

Lage: Mm-hm.

08-00:11:18
Chall: We realized that what it really meant was toxin, T-O-X-I-N, because this was really poison.

Lage: Right.

08-00:11:28
Chall: Now they got hold of Ed Newman and decided that if he wasn't now a Communist, he must have been a Communist, and he was a danger on the school board. He *was not* a danger on the school board.

Lage: Had he voted on any issues that they disagreed with?

08-00:11:48
Chall: I don't recall. Most of their issues had to do with children who graduate and they don't know anything. This is high school. Books, they were—. We had problems with the library.

Lage: Trying to censor books?

08-00:12:03
Chall: Censoring books, school problems, just—.

Lage: But they thought Lawyers Guild equaled Communist, it sounds like.

08-00:12:13
Chall: Well, they got on Ed Newman. Now, in Hayward, they were dealing with not just the school board, they were dealing with the libraries, with the Castro Valley Library. It was the books. Somewhere I think I may have given you—you may have it—a letter to the editor, about the books. Also, it was a feature in the Ed Newman election.

Lage: Right, I do.

08-00:12:40
Chall: I think I gave you that one. I haven't given everything to the Hayward Area Historical Society yet. So we dealt with that. All right. Now he was running; it was his time to run again for the school board, and so they were going to get him off. Now, I don't think this was a recall. I'm not sure that they were recalling him. That, I don't remember. I just remember that he was going off the school board. A woman dentist, whose name I remembered all day yesterday but I can't remember it today, was his opponent [Mary Castle]. We, a committee of us, many of us all over Castro Valley, fought this election. And we lost.

Lage: Oh, you did lose. So Edward Newman lost.

08-00:13:37
Chall: Oh, yes, he was off and the woman was on. We decided, some of us, that two years from now there would be an election, and we were going to get her off the board and put our own person on. During the No on 14 campaign and a few others, I'd found that there were wonderful people around Castro Valley and Hayward—particularly Castro Valley, where I lived—who one wouldn't even come across them in any way of life. They were businessmen, they were, I don't know, lawyers, doctors, whoever they were. When you needed them, they were there. I don't know how it was.

Lage: They were active in their society, it sounds like.

08-00:14:39
Chall: They were active. You may have found them when they were ready to walk a precinct; you may have found them doing something else, but they were there. So a few of us decided we'd set up a committee, and we did. It was called CEE, the Committee for Enlightened Education.

Lage: Ah. Excellent name.

08-00:15:17
Chall: Yes. Before I sent my papers to the Hayward Area Historical Society, I saw my CEE papers—I was the secretary—and I looked at it to see who was the president. Who were some of the active people? Names that I'd completely forgotten. Just wonderful citizens. We had this committee and we contacted, I remember, the Anti-Defamation League and the ACLU for papers. What kind of papers can we use? How we argue. Because there was anti-Semitism, there was anti-communism. It was hot and it was toxic. It was.

Lage: Now, this is the first time you've mentioned anti-Semitism. Was that connected with the Birch Society?

08-00:16:17
Chall: No, not really. But the Anti-Defamation League basically fought anti-Semitism. Of course, they had lots of papers that fought anti-social problems and things of this kind too, as did the ACLU. So it was from them that we got papers, aids in combatting this serious social problem.

Lage: I see.

08-00:16:39
Chall: We got them, but this was not a League of Women Voters project.

Lage: No.

08-00:16:44
Chall: So we studied the papers and we had public meetings.

Lage: Guess what? I think the battery has run out.

08-00:17:00
Chall: Okay, we'll do it next week.

Lage: I'm going to turn off the recorder now.

Interview 5: April 2, 2015

Audiofile 9

Lage: Okay, Malca. We are on once again, April 2, 2015. This is our fifth interview with Malca Chall. Now, last time we had some battery problems; we cut off in the middle of a discussion about the school board election. I determined, over the last couple weeks, that it was a recall election, if his obituary is correct, that Newman was recalled in 1966.

09-00:00:31
Chall: Right.

Lage: And he was president of the Castro Valley School District board, at that time. That's a big deal. You wanted to say something about, sort of, the atmosphere.

09-00:00:44
Chall: Yes. I'm glad you checked it, because when I put a lot of my papers into the Hayward Area Historical Society, this Newman article was among them. Somebody'd sent it to me. I just looked at it and I didn't pay that much attention. So I'd forgotten that it was a recall. I think it's very important that I now know that it's a recall, and thank you for checking it. If it had not been a recall, there wouldn't have been this intense battle, as you could call it, over the election. Because if he'd just been ready and decided, because of problems, not to run again, that's just the way we run our country. But it was a recall, and it was a recall that was—. As I said, it was poisonous. The word *Tocsin* was their paper.

Now, their candidate was Dr. Mary Castle, who was a dentist. Years later, I did interview Dr. Mary Castle in this little project that we had with the women political leaders, when Willa had suggested that I just go out and interview people and see how this kind of a project would work.

Lage: Sort of pilot interviews.

09-00:02:25
Chall: Yes. There was no legal agreement, so that they never went anywhere, unless the transcripts go back to the person who had been interviewed, and only a couple of those did. When I interviewed her, she wasn't one of these anti-Communist people, like the organizers were. She just didn't like the way the school was run, and for a lot of reasons that you and I might not agree with, but that was her point. So it was contentious.

Lage: You were telling me about the Committee on Enlightened Education.

09-00:03:13
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Was it your group who tried to defeat Mary Castle in the next election?

09-00:03:18
Chall: Yes. That was at the next election, when she would be running again. I think I told you that we did find a candidate. He was a banker in the community, a very upstanding man, and he agreed to run. So we had a committee that ran that campaign. And the Committee for Enlightened Education came during that period, so that we could enlighten the community about our educational system. What these people who were so opposed—. They were really members of the Birch Society. Now, not everybody who was conservative at that time was a member of the Birch Society, but these folks, I think, were. They put on movies for us all to see in the community, and they were violently anti-Communist kind of things. I remember one scene where you see the world and the United States, and suddenly it just becomes red, red, red. It was frightening, in many ways.

Lage: Yes, yes. They were sort of seeing Communists under the bed.

09-00:04:40
Chall: All over. Of course, Ed Newman was a Communist, they believed, and he didn't belong on the school board. I remember one night there was a meeting in some little room. I think it belonged to the Castro Valley community. I don't know where it was, probably one of the parks. They were having a meeting having to do, I think, with schools. I went and I think there were several of us along. They were getting ready for their meeting, and suddenly one of them looked around the room and said, "There's no flag in here." We got up and we saluted the flag that was not there. Now that, I think, is an indication of how really wrapped up they were in their cause.

Lage: Did you find that some of these same people were Goldwater supporters? Or what was the connection?

09-00:05:46
Chall: No, I think they were—. I wasn't paying attention to them, at that time.

Lage: Because the time period is pretty—.

09-00:05:56
Chall: Yes, the time. It's all that part of the time period, yes. As I said, we had an election, when the time came—probably within a year or so, when it was time for an election—and we did win it.

Lage: Oh, you did win.

09-00:06:14
Chall: Yes, Mary Castle went off the board. So we won that one. It was nice.

Lage: Well, that's interesting. With a lot of organizing, it sounds like.

09-00:06:21
Chall: Oh, yes. This is what you do.

Lage: But Dr. Newman didn't try to get back on the board?

09-00:06:29
Chall: He wasn't a doctor.

Lage: Oh, yes, Mr. Newman.

09-00:06:31
Chall: Ed was an attorney. Yes, that was it. Now, one of these men who was very active against the school, a few years later, we had to build a new high school in Castro Valley. They were building it up in the hills, where there was a small independent elementary school. There were people who were living up in the hills, and particularly the people who lived in Greenridge, most of whom were there because they were either part of the local colleges or they were engineers and scientists at the Livermore Lab. This was as close as you could get to the Livermore Lab. So those Eichler houses were really full of these folks. Let's see [pause].

Lage: So you were saying they were going to build a new high school.

09-00:07:40
Chall: Oh, yes. So we needed a new high school. The idea was, what kind of a high school should it be? Now, at that time, there was a very important idea about schools, particularly high schools, that was just going all over the country. I don't remember what it was called, but I remember that the essential core of it was: "and no bells shall ring." That meant that you had a high school that would have classes, maybe small classes or they could be large, but eventually, they would break up into small discussion groups. A class and a discussion should not be interfered with by a bell at 11:55 or something like this. So that was the idea. No bells shall ring; you just continue whatever you were doing and you go on. There would be, naturally, some kind of organization to it. That was the idea. It just seemed like such a good idea, why not try it? So a couple of us, who were the people who were sort of busy—.

Lage: The Committee for Enlightened Education people?

09-00:09:06
Chall: Yes. Well, we were very active, also with schools, of course. One of these naysayers, as I call him, he was opposed to the school system right now, because the kids were graduating, they didn't know math, they didn't know how to even spell, they couldn't write a sentence. Now we're hearing the same thing today out of the high schools. So this seemed like a good idea, so it

was built. By this time, my older son was out of high school, and Barry, I think, was a junior about this time, or a sophomore. We transferred him to this new high school—in Castro Valley. We drove him over. I don't remember how we got him back, but we drove him over every morning. He was *totally* dissatisfied with this. Totally. And so were the teachers. The teachers weren't aware. Nobody was taught how to deal with this.

Lage: Was it the idea of "no bells shall ring"? Was that what they were opposed to?

09-00:10:17
Chall: Yes. The small discussion groups. It's a wholly different environment, a wholly different way of teaching. It's done in some colleges. Reed College does it that way, and so do a lot of small colleges all over the country, but this was a high school idea.

Lage: So it was instituted there.

09-00:10:38
Chall: It was. It didn't last more than a couple of years. Eventually, I don't remember how many years went by, but it is now a junior high school. Castro Valley High School, I think, was expanded down in Castro Valley, so that it takes a very large number of students. But up there, it's a thriving junior high school or middle school.

Lage: Well, that's an interesting sidelight.

09-00:11:09
Chall: Yes.

Lage: And kind of relates to today, as you say. You said you wanted to talk about work on a school committee—

09-00:11:19
Chall: That was it.

Lage: —with one of the opponents. Oh, that was the—.

09-00:11:21
Chall: That was it. That was a school committee. There were maybe five of us, five or six of us.

Lage: From both sides of the spectrum, it sounds like.

09-00:11:31
Chall: Yes. I don't know how I was selected, I just remember this one person because we had been locking horns for so long.

Lage: Did it work, to be on the committee with him?

09-00:11:41
Chall: Yes. Yes. You see, we were focused on the same project, the same subject. I may have disagreed with some of his ideas about how students were graduating from high school and all of that. But we knew it was true. We have a junior college here and we knew, even at that time, that kids going into the junior college were not prepared, even then, let alone now.

Lage: Interesting. Do you want to talk at all about *Spectrum*?

09-00:12:15
Chall: Well, *Spectrum* came later, and *Spectrum* was a newspaper.

Lage: I think it was around ’69. You gave me a few copies.

09-00:12:21
Chall: ’69. Yes. We—. I used that word we; that included my husband and a lot of other people.

Lage: One of them being Chita [Amelia Fry, a stalwart of the Regional Oral History Office].

09-00:12:36
Chall: And Chita.

Lage: Chita Fry, who we’ll be talking about.

09-00:12:38
Chall: Chita Fry and her then husband, Hillary. There were many of us. Of course, we’d gone through this difficult problem with the school board and the two newspapers—one of them the *Oakland Tribune*, and one of them was the *Hayward Daily Review*. Both of them, their editorials were really opposed to almost anything we agreed with. They were opposed to the League of Women Voters in the fifties and our activities, in terms of wanting to broaden the scope of study. If anybody goes back into those old papers, they can see the articles, and even the editorials. So in San Leandro, there was a very small paper. It was a daily. I do not now remember the name of it [*The Morning News*]. Its editor and publisher was a very liberal person. So Harold and others would go to him and say, “Why don’t you bring your paper here?” We could all take the paper; they delivered it here. “But why wouldn’t you just buy up the *Hayward Review*, do something, bring your paper in here, more of it?” Of course, he wasn’t going to do that. So we decided, all right, let’s see if we can publish a little newspaper and find out what we can do with that. So Chita and Hillary and a few other people—.

Lage: It looked like Cogswell. Maybe he just wrote for it.

09-00:14:30
Chall: Oh, no, it wasn’t Dr. Cogswell, no.

Lage: He did write an article in one of them, on environmental matters.

09-00:14:33
Chall: He did. I think it's the first—. The first issue is missing. I'm very sorry about that. But the first one, I think, may very well be in the Hayward Area Historical Society, because in that one, there's a list of the people who were on the editorial board. There was somebody whom I don't remember much of, but he remembered me when one of the old league ROHO people said that she knew him. He lived in Berkeley. It was a very small group, maybe five or six of us.

Now, Chita, she was a newspaper person. She was a journalist. She wrote articles occasionally for this San Leandro paper. So Chita wrote an article. I think Dr. Cogswell, this may have been what he wrote himself. Now, Dr. Cogswell was a teacher. He was a biology professor at Cal State Hayward. He was the person who taught all of the people who were Audubon folk. The leaders, the young leaders in the Audubon Society, the young teachers of birds and nature, who were in schools all over, he was their teacher. He used to lead Audubon hikes. I knew him well, because once I had to go on an Audubon hike with him, and he was a close neighbor.

Lage: *Spectrum* had a short life.

09-00:16:26
Chall: Yes. You will see that we did have some advertising; we had little editorials. We wanted, I think, five dollars apiece from people who would subscribe. We put out one, two, I think two issues.

Lage: These were mimeographed papers, it looks like.

09-00:16:50
Chall: Well, they may have been mimeographed. They look a little better than that. But they looked like a newspaper. They were about five or six pages, I think. Had a headline and a heading and all of that. By the time the third came—it was a monthly—by the time that came, it was gone.

Lage: It was gone?

09-00:17:14
Chall: We closed it. The last issue is a history of why we started and how it ended. We were very sorry that people didn't subscribe.

Lage: Yes, the little article I saw sounded very discouraged that you hadn't found the kind of support that you—.

09-00:17:32
Chall: Yes. Well, there just wasn't that much interest in it. It certainly was important, and we could've had a lot of interesting little articles in it. But who wanted it? Nobody wanted it.

Lage: That's too bad.

09-00:17:45
Chall: But we did try. Those are available in—wherever. They're available in the Hayward Area Historical Society, and I have copies around, which I can donate to the Bancroft Library.

Lage: In general, the kind of things that the Committee on Enlightened Education did and the fight for the school board, you think this had a long-term impact on your community? Did Hayward and Castro Valley move away from that sort of John Birch orientation, or is it still an active split in the community?

09-00:18:24
Chall: At some point or other, both newspapers have moved away.

Lage: But what about the feeling in the community? Are there still these rather energetic—?

09-00:18:39
Chall: Well, now you're talking about something like, what, forty years or more past.

Lage: I know. But did you see, after the school board election and you got your candidate back in, was it sort of settled then, or—

09-00:18:55
Chall: No.

Lage: —did it continue to be a right-left battle for years?

09-00:18:58
Chall: I think it continued for a while, because there was opposition to the libraries and what books they were choosing. I think I may have given you a couple of those letters that we wrote to the newspaper about that. I think that times just changed. Goldwater was not elected. We switched, in thinking, to the Great Society. Now, that didn't mean that the *Daily Review* was for it, because I think they were not. Nor was the *Oakland Tribune.* I think their editorials were always in favor of the Republicans, at that time. And those Republicans at that time were conservative, as they are now. Now, it's changed. The *Daily Review* is much more liberal in its—. And so is the *Oakland Tribune*. It's surprising.

Lage: They've probably changed ownership.

09-00:20:02
Chall: They have.

Lage: At least once.

09-00:20:04
Chall: That's right. The same people are no longer involved. It's very different. It's a much easier climate in this area now. They're not after the schools. Except for the problems that we have with schools, which is the fact that we don't have enough money. Now, that's the conservative slant on enough money to put into education and the problems with the environment and all of that; that's still here. But it's not the same. Probably, it's not the same because I think anything that had to do with anti-communism was quite poisonous, let's put it that way. I know you and I talked about it the other day, about whether it's still poison. I suppose if you were a member of the gay community, you might feel it, or abortion. Certainly, today, we do feel it. We did talk the other day about the proposition to end segregated housing.

Lage: Yes.

09-00:21:23
Chall: I came across a paper the other day, which indicates that that issue is now before the Supreme Court, or will be. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. I put it aside here, just for you. "Will the Supreme Court uphold key protections of the Fair Housing Act?"

Lage: Of *our* Fair Housing Act?

09-00:21:52
Chall: United States.

Lage: Oh, yes, the federal act.

09-00:22:00
Chall: So it is still with us.

Lage: This is the NAACP paper you have here.

09-00:22:05
Chall: Yes, it's the NAACP-Legal Defense Fund paper.

Lage: Right. Well, maybe this is a good spot to end our discussion on your community activities. I'm just going to pause here for a minute. [interview interruption] Okay, we're back on, and we're switching topics to our major topic for this session, which is your career at the Regional Oral History Office, and what you observed and what you accomplished and all of that. I thought the easiest way to start is simply, how did you get hired at ROHO?

09-00:22:46
Chall: An interesting story it is. Chita Fry and I and my husband, and other people, I'm sure, were standing around in—it may have been Hayward or Castro Valley—waiting for a bus to bring our children home from a summer camp experience. Chita was there.

Lage: Did you know Chita well at this time?

09-00:23:15
Chall: She was a neighbor. I'm trying to remember if our children were in the same school, but at least she was a neighbor and I did know her. This was somewhere in the—. Well, let's see. I was hired in 1967?

Lage: Right.

09-00:23:36
Chall: So I'm assuming this was about 1965 or '66. Chita had been on the staff since what, '59?

Lage: I think so, yes.

09-00:23:46
Chall: All right. So Chita was an early member of the ROHO staff. And there weren't many of them.

Lage: Right.

09-00:23:55
Chall: Chita always, her major topic was her job. She just loved that job. At that time, I think she was interviewing the Knowlands, who were the publishers of the *Oakland Tribune*. That was one of her early interviews. Well, by this time, it was not that early; she'd been there a long time. So she was talking about her job, and my husband said, "Where do you work? What kind of work is it?" And she explained it to him. He said, "Oh," he said, "Malca's looking for a part-time job." Because she always explained that it was part-time and all of that. "Malca's looking for a part-time job." Well, at that time, I didn't know that I was, but in truth, I probably was. But there was nothing available; I wasn't moving on it. Chita said, "Well, it's very difficult. We always have to get money," et cetera, et cetera. She must've told Willa [Baum]. I think in the Bancroft Library, wherever it would be, there are the letters between Willa and me. Or maybe you have them.

Lage: I have seen them in the files.

09-00:25:14
Chall: You have them. So Willa contacted me and told me how difficult it was and all the rest, and she'd keep me in mind. Then not too much later, she told me that there was, I think it was $1,000, available to do a great conservationist.

Now, I had only known about one great conservationist, and that was Dr. Walter Lowdermilk.

Lage: Oh, you did know about him?

09-00:25:44
Chall: I did know the name, and I associated the name with somebody renowned. Well, she felt, all right, you know Dr. Lowdermilk. Now, the reason that I knew about Dr. Lowdermilk is because when he returned from his major trip through Europe and the Middle East—Iraq, Egypt, and got into then Palestine; this was in 1948, earlier—he was very impressed by this entire trip. Particularly at that time, he was impressed with the work that pioneer Jews were doing in Palestine, because they were building what is known as the kibbutz. They were planting trees and they were building agricultural resources, which of course, was not going on in Egypt and elsewhere he was traveling. Here was the same desert, and they were reclaiming it.

Now, to Dr. Lowdermilk, who was a conservationist and a forestry man, this was just great stuff. He went back to his work with the government, and then he went around talking about his trip and what it meant, in terms of conservation and water and all the—. I must've got onto one of his talks. I think I was in Tacoma, and I think I was with my parents. Now, the reason that we were there, probably, because he was talking about Palestine and we were interested in this whole subject. That's how I knew Dr. Lowdermilk.

It was always interesting about Willa, because if you knew anything about a subject, you were tapped to do the interviews. That's how I was tapped to do a number of interviews. "Oh, I know who Ralph Tyler is." She would always discuss something with me. "We have some money from a foundation, to do an interview with somebody called Ralph Tyler, a great educator." I said, "I know who Ralph Tyler is. His son went to Reed College." "Oh," she said, "You know Ralph Tyler?" I got the interview.

Lage: Right.

09-00:28:33
Chall: I didn't know anything—.

Lage: And then you learned.

09-00:28:35
Chall: And then I learned. So we got some money to do—. I don't know his first name; Browne was his last name. He was one of the great bond salesman. [Alan K. Browne, *"Mr. Municipal Bond": Bond Investment Management, Bank of America, 1929-1971*, 1990] The bank, I think, was the Bank of America, I'm not sure. I said—just as casual as between us; she's standing up at her desk or she's looking around like this, at me—"Well, I do have some

stocks, and I have some bonds in my trust." "Oh. Then you can do Mr. Browne." I didn't know a thing about this subject. This is how I did get some of my interviews.

Lage: This is interesting, I think.

09-00:29:31
Chall: Yes. Well, at that time—.

Lage: She was trusting that the people she hired could do the research and get the background.

09-00:29:40
Chall: That's true. By this time, of course, she did. But that was one of the ways that I did get a number of interviews. So when it comes to women political leaders, that was a no-brainer.

Lage: That was more up your alley.

09-00:29:58
Chall: So back to how I was hired. It came from waiting—.

Lage: At the bus stop.

09-00:30:07
Chall: Yes, at the curb, for our kids to come home. And Chita's excitement, always, about her job.

Lage: Did you go in and talk to Willa and learn about how you'd be paid and—?

09-00:30:23
Chall: I don't think so. I don't think that was even discussed. What was discussed was how you do an interview. So she wanted me to see a couple of interviews, look them over. She also told me that I would need to do transcribing. That was one of her earliest requirements, that every editor needed to transcribe her interviews.

Lage: Do all the transcribing of your own interviews, or to transcribe someone else's?

09-00:30:57
Chall: No, I think your own. Remember, there were only four of us in the office, and one secretary, one person who did all the typing, Kay [Keiko] Sugimoto. The reason for that is because this is the way Willa had started, by interviewing, by transcribing, when there was nobody there except Willa and one other person.

Lage: And you do learn by listening to your interviews.

09-00:31:31
Chall: That's the way you learn. However, when it came to transcribing, by the time she hired me, nobody was transcribing her interviews anymore, I'm almost sure. I certainly wasn't asked to do that.

Lage: I think Suzanne started as a transcriber.

09-00:31:51
Chall: I'm sure she did. Suzanne started before I did.

Lage: Suzanne Riess.

09-00:31:57
Chall: Yes, that is right.

Lage: Hired in 1960.

09-00:31:59
Chall: I'm sure she did. I'm sure that Suzanne will have other stories about interviews and how she got them, than I have.

Lage: But it is in the paperwork that I looked into when you retired, that you were hired at three dollars an hour.

09-00:32:21
Chall: Yes. And I have some of those very old papers here that show how I was hired. Now, that was less than 50 percent time, and I was hired as an editor 1, I think. But that's all there. I was hired to do Dr. Lowdermilk. $1,000, of course, wasn't ever going to do that. Within a short time, because of the length and strength of this interview, we had to go out and raise money. Now, Willa and I went together. This is how I learned about going to—. Willa knew people who were on the faculty, who had dealt with her on other things. The forest interviews were all going at that time. [She had also interviewed…? We'll have to go back to get that name.—MC]

Lage: Was he a forester? I'm going to put it on pause to get the name you are trying to think of. [interview interruption] We're back on. Willa had interviewed—?

09-00:33:41
Chall: Willa had been interviewing for many years, as had Chita, people in the forestry and environmental issues. Mr. Packard was a—. I forget if he was in water, but he had something to do with the environment. It was either forestry or water. [Walter E. Packard, *Land and Power Development in California, Greece, and Latin America*, 1970.] And Willa had done quite a few interviews having to do with water, at that time. She was doing mostly water and agricultural.

Lage: That was kind of her issue, agriculture.

09-00:34:19
Chall: That's where they were. She had, I think, been also transcribing those. But by the time I came along, that just was not going to work, and so she was hiring transcribers. Now, what was I talking about?

Lage: You were talking about how you raised money for Lowdermilk.

09-00:34:47
Chall: Yes. Thank you for helping me get this. She knew the people on the faculty who were involved in her issues, where she had probably been raising money. Her interview that I did goes way back to how the Oral History Office came about.[6] It was through the concerns and the committees of the faculty who worked on these. These were the people that we went to. So we did manage to get the money that we needed, little by little. You have to work on it. Get $1,000 here and a couple here, and pretty soon you've got it. And pretty soon you're in debt and you work it out somehow.

Lage: But this really brought you in as a working member of the office.

09-00:35:48
Chall: Oh, yes.

Lage: I think it's important to see that you're involved in the nuts and bolts each time—how to get the money and the transcribing and—.

09-00:35:58
Chall: That's right. That's right. I think also at that time, at the time that I came on, so did Marjorie Prince. I don't know what they called her, administrator—.

Lage: Probably administrative assistant, I would guess.

09-00:36:18
Chall: The administrative assistant. Once she said to me, "Malca, if you worked more than fifteen hours a week you would be able to get these—."

Lage: The career status.

09-00:36:45
Chall: Career status. "Then you would be making more money. All of these things would help you. It would worthwhile." I don't even know what I was on. I really didn't know. She said, "You just have to work more than fifteen hours a week." Well, that was no problem. I would do something maybe at home. It never occurred to me—as you explained a little while ago, it didn't occur to you. So I did. I just upped my hours in the office. Of course, that was no

[6] *Conversations with Willa Baum, Director of the Regional Oral History Office, UC Berkeley, 1958-2000*.2006

problem, because you had to use a timer, get clicked in with your card, as an old union member.

Lage: And Willa did that also.

09-00:37:31
Chall: Yes, we all did that.

Lage: Punched in with the time clock downstairs.

09-00:37:33
Chall: Yes, we had a time clock. We were all on the time clock.

Lage: But we could add our home hours.

09-00:37:41
Chall: Yes. So that's how I became career, and it went on from there. Now, I was hired to do Walter Lowdermilk, and so I did it. Within a short time—we'd have to look at the time line, because I'm not going to remember all that—Chita Fry had already been interviewing women who were suffragists. I do not know how she happened to do that. But Willa and Chita had their antennae out all the time. If they got an idea, they would go for it. Of course, Chita was very personable, very bright. Just ideal for this kind of thing. She did some of these early suffragists. There was no place to put them anywhere, but that's what she did.

Lage: What do you mean by "there was no place to put them"? It was a new area, a new topic?

09-00:39:05
Chall: Yes, and no funding. They just started. I think Willa wrote some articles about them. I don't even know whether they [those interviews] are bound in blue and gold.

Lage: Oh, yes. Oh, they are.

09-00:39:25
Chall: Oh, they are? Those early ones?

Lage: They were actually the very first group that was put on the Internet.

09-00:39:32
Chall: Oh, is that so?

Lage: Thanks to Merrilee [Proffitt]. Before anybody, anyplace in the country, was putting oral histories on the Internet—

09-00:39:39
Chall: I see.

Lage: —Merrilee learned how to—

09-00:39:42
Chall: Yes. Oh, good for her.

Lage: —write the program or whatever.

09-00:39:43
Chall: She knows that.

Lage: Those [the suffragists] were the ones she put up first.

09-00:39:47
Chall: I see. So Chita had already done something in the field of women.

Lage: I think it's important to point out this was early on in all the academic interest in women's history, very early. [First suffragist interview was with Sara Bard Field, *Poet and Suffragist*, interviewed 1961-1963.]

09-00:40:01
Chall: Yes. This was very early. Chita did it because they were interesting and sort of exciting stories, about going from one end of the country to the other in an old car. That's interesting material. Now, it wasn't necessarily going to lead anywhere, but she had done it. For years, that was just an ongoing thing. I think that out of that grew the idea to have a project on suffragists. So the suffragists were the main idea. Out of that seemed to come, as she and I and Willa would discuss this, the women political leaders. That was the next step, really.

Lage: Right. It's of note that you were active in the League of Women Voters. Was Chita, also?

09-00:41:18
Chall: No, Chita was not.

Lage: But you were so tied in to some of the women who'd—

09-00:41:24
Chall: Yes.

Lage: —had various smallish leadership roles.

09-00:41:28
Chall: Yes. Well, what women were in politics, in those days, were women on the school boards. That was the first link, as it were, step. I knew these women. I

knew many of them. So it was decided, well, let's do some women political leaders. But first, Willa wanted me to go out and try it out, see if it works.

Lage: Now, I wonder why she thought it had to be tried out.

09-00:42:05
Chall: I don't really know. I really don't know. I think it was Willa who just decided—. Because she didn't want a legal agreement, necessarily. Maybe it was cost. Maybe she was thinking of the cost.

Lage: She just wanted some pilot interviews.

09-00:42:29
Chall: Just go out and see if you can interview women and see if—with questions—it fits.

Lage: Were you supposed to be developing the type of questions?

09-00:42:43
Chall: Yes, I did have to develop the questions. And I did. I went around to—I think I explained this before—

Lage: You did.

09-00:42:51
Chall: —to women I knew on the school board, to women who had gone beyond the school board. They were around. So I did that and it seemed to work. So we decided, all right, let's see if we can put women political leaders on the next rung, with suffragists. So we were trying to get money for both of them at the same time. Now, getting money, at that time, from the National Endowment for the Humanities and there was one other major funder. It was the National Endowment for the Humanities and one other one.

Lage: Was it the Rockefeller Foundation?

09-00:43:58
Chall: No. It's a federal—. Eventually, it will come to us. But it is the one that vice president Cheney's wife was ahead of—

Lage: Well, we can check into the record on that. [Lynne Cheney headed NEH 1986-1993.][7]

09-00:44:20
Chall: Yes, all right.

---

[7] Rockefeller Foundation funded the Suffragist project, and NEH funded Women Political Leaders, with matching grants on individual interviews from various sources, mostly Rockefeller, Columbia, and Fairtree Foundations.

Lage: Did you start by writing a grant proposal, after you'd done these pilot interviews?

09-00:44:31
Chall: Yes. We did write a grant proposal. And grant proposal writing, in those days, was *very, very* difficult.

Lage: It still is.

09-00:44:41
Chall: Maybe so. They required mathematical ability, to parse costs and this and that and the other thing. I never could figure it out. Now, I can do arithmetic pretty fast, and I can do some mathematical things, in time. I was doing statistics for a while. I was absolutely unable to figure out these things. And Willa couldn't figure them out and we didn't know—.

Lage: So who did them?

09-00:45:26
Chall: Willa finally figured out one of those mathematical equations. Eventually, we didn't have to do that. Eventually, all we had to do was indicate the money and how much it would cost per interview and all of that. The first one that we sent out came back, because I think at this time, also Harriet Nathan, who was an active member of the League of Women Voters in Berkeley, she sat in on one of our committees on this subject.

Lage: She was hired just before you, in '66.

09-00:46:02
Chall: Yes. And she didn't work for us. She just worked with the oral history, occasionally would have a project. But otherwise, she was with the—.

Lage: The IGS, Institute for Governmental Studies.

09-00:46:14
Chall: IGS. She was a very important cog on the staff of IGS, so she didn't do much with us then.

Lage: But she also had this League of Women Voters background.

09-00:46:28
Chall: She had the background. Chita came up with a snappy little title for this. It was kind of snappy and it was kind of cute. But my recollection is it had something in it that dealt with failure, something that was not just forward-looking. The organization—.

Lage: Who you were applying to?

09-00:47:05
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Was it National Endowment for the Humanities?

09-00:47:06
Chall: National Endowment. They turned it down. They said they didn't like the title. It just didn't fit what we were trying to accomplish. So we came up with a title which was just like "California Women Political Leaders"—straightforward—and we did get some money for that. Eventually, we had to get additional money. Because I felt that not only did we have the women political leaders—and I found them all over; you find them because you know what you're looking for—but that we needed minority women in there, too. We needed a few black women. One of my close friends lived out here, and she was Japanese. Hope Schecter was my Latino, Mexican. I didn't know Hope. You find out about things as you work on things.

Lage: Did you find that one woman would suggest another woman? Or how did you decide who to interview? You went to Southern California.

09-00:48:25
Chall: I did.

Lage: You had Republicans and Democrats.

09-00:48:27
Chall: Yes, I did. You just look around. You just ask questions, and very soon you get the answers. Now, I don't remember how I did it, I just know that I did.

Lage: I don't want to distract you, but I noticed that early on, you had the connection with [William] Knox Mellon, at Immaculate Heart College.

09-00:48:53
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Were you involved with that?

09-00:48:56
Chall: Yes. We were now successfully working on this project with the women political leaders. Knox Mellon, who was very active in the Oral History Association; he was an officer. He and Willa and a few others had founded this Oral History Association here. Knox was teaching in Immaculate Heart College, I think, in Los Angeles, and he had young women in his class. It was a women's college. Somehow he knew about this project, and he thought he would like to try it out. For two reasons. One, it was an interesting project. And secondly, this was a way to teach oral history to students.

Lage: And teach about women political leaders.

09-00:49:58
Chall: Yes, and use that, yes. So I was asked to go down and teach how to do it, and so I did. I think I spent maybe one day down there. Maybe I spent more than one time down there. I taught these young women about what oral history is. Of course, Knox could carry on on that one, too; you didn't have to depend on me. Then they chose their women. Now, this was going to be a ROHO project. They found judges and a few people of note who'd gone beyond the school board. I don't know how many women they did.

Lage: It was three volumes, so it was a significant number.

09-00:50:51
Chall: That was good. So they also had to learn how to edit and all the rest of it. I think when it came to finally putting it all together, I think that was one of my projects. But that was the reason for Knox Mellon's—. Yes. That came through our office.

Lage: Yes. Oh, and let's mention the Helen Gahagan Douglas project, which was part of this collection. How did that come about?

09-00:51:20
Chall: Well, let me finish with just the women political leaders.

Lage: Okay. Okay.

09-00:51:27
Chall: And keeping the funding coming in. You asked me about getting the minorities. We did get a good sampling. Now, with the Republicans, I think maybe it helped that Gaby [Morris] and others were also doing—. So that when I wanted some very right-wing Republican women, I did get one. She was really wonderful, because she was a great follower of Ronald Reagan.

Lage: Do you remember her name? I have the list.

09-00:52:07
Chall: You have all that. You have that list.

Lage: Well, go ahead and tell me more, and I might look up the list while we're—.

09-00:52:15
Chall: She was a close associate with Phyllis Schlafly. I don't have to explain all this to you. I used to interview her in her home in, I believe it was Oakland. At that time, I believe that we were having the 200th anniversary of the founding of the United States.

Lage: Yes, the bicentennial.

09-00:52:43
Chall: The bicentennial. She had cups and saucers and everything that you could have, that was either important or trifling, that related in some way to this. She would bring it out—we'd have a cup of tea—bring the teapot out, bring little saucers out, where you put your teabag. Everything had these bicentennial emblems As soon as she brought it out, we would both have a hearty laugh.

Lage: Oh, she would laugh, too!

09-00:53:19
Chall: Oh, she was such fun. She was *fun*!

Lage: Now I'm trying to think who she might've been. Lucile Hosmer, *A Conservative Republican in the Mainstream of Party Politics*? That was one of your Republican party leaders.

09-00:53:39
Chall: It may have been her.

Lage: This is a by the way, but did interviewing people from a broad spectrum of beliefs affect you, in how you looked at politics or the world?

09-00:54:03
Chall: No, I don't think it did. Not only did I interview this woman who was on the right of the spectrum, I interviewed somebody who was on the left of the spectrum, in Los Angeles. I did enjoy these women.

Lage: It wasn't Mildred Younger?

09-00:54:27
Chall: No, so it must've been Lucile Hosmer, I'm pretty sure. She was fun. She was very interesting, because she felt strongly about how she felt. She knew that I wasn't in the same place in politics, but it didn't matter to her at all. She was there to be interviewed, and she really enjoyed it. Now, in the course of my interviewing her, she became very ill. There was a time when she had to just stop the interview and go in and lie down. Then I would quit. And there were times when I just stayed there. Ultimately, she did die. We had finished the interviewing, I think, but I'm not sure that she ever saw it. She thought she had food poisoning, but it was not food poisoning, I'm pretty sure. I've forgotten, but I'm sure that my interview history will tell all that. So she was fun. She was really an interesting interview. I also interviewed people who were active in the Democratic party and in the Republican party. Now, at this stage in politics, in both parties, they had a special place for women. I don't remember now what it was called, but there was a place for women who were in the Democratic party and one in the Republican party.

Lage: You mean if you were a woman, you were sort of in a category?

09-00:56:15
Chall: Yes, that's right.

Lage: You had a position.

09-00:56:16
Chall: Right. You had a position, and it was a very important position in the party. [as Women's Division, California State Central Committee, or national committeewoman. Throughout the country.—MC] It was still a man's world, but they would allow these women in there to do what they were doing—raising money and all of the things that they would do at that time.

Lage: Were these women chafing then, under this sort of glass ceiling?

09-00:56:50
Chall: I think in a way, they were. Particularly one in the Democratic party, Elizabeth Snyder. She was a strong woman. I really enjoyed working with her. Subsequently, one of the young women who was working her way through a PhD and did—. Her name will have to come to me, eventually. [Jacqueline Parker Braitman]. She wrote an article about Elizabeth Snyder.

She worked her way up to be a professor, specializing in not just women's studies, but in government. She and I would meet each from time to time. If she came up here, we'd have dinner. She, not so long ago, had an article using our background on politics. You'll find the Democratic party leader there, I'm sure.

Lage: There's also Ann Eliaser.

09-00:58:18
Chall: Eliaser, she was in the Democratic party.

Lage: A Democratic party leader, Elizabeth Gatov.

09-00:58:25
Chall: Elizabeth Gatov was very important in the Democratic party.

Lage: Elizabeth Snyder—

09-00:58:32
Chall: Elizabeth Snyder.

Lage: —*California's First Woman State Party Chairman*.

09-00:58:33
Chall: Yes, that's right. She was the first Democratic party chairman.

Lage: So she moved into the top leadership.

09-00:58:41
Chall: Yes. That's right, of the Democratic party. I think in the Republican party, I'm not sure that I—.

Lage: It doesn't look like you have quite as many that you conducted. Maybe other people interviewed them. I just have the list here of your oral histories.

09-00:59:07
Chall: Yes.

Lage: We're about to run out on this tape, but I love this title for Rosalind Wyman. *"It's a Girl": Three Terms on the Los Angeles City Council, 1953-1965; Three Decades in the Democratic Party*, 1948-1978. It's a Girl.

09-00:59:24
Chall: Yes. That's because—.

Lage: Is that the response she got as she rose up?

09-00:59:31
Chall: Yes, yes.

Lage: Wonderful. Okay, I have to stop here, because we have to change the tape.

Audiofile 10

Lage: Okay, Malca, we're back on. This is tape ten. Today is still April 2, 2015. We're talking about the California women political leaders.

10-00:00:17
Chall: Yes. I'm not sure, because I can't remember all of my people, but I can't remember if there was a state party committee chairman on the Republican side. I just knew them on the Democratic side. There were people like Rosalind Wyman and Carmen Warschaw. Carmen Warschaw was in the Democratic party, also. I think she was called the Tiger Woman. She was a fighter for what she wanted and believed in.

Mildred Younger was the wife of Evelle Younger, who was the attorney general, at that time. She had a career of her own, and a very interesting woman she was. Because attorneys general travel around through the state—there are about three or four places where they check—she would often be in San Francisco, and I would interview her there. She had a very interesting background, because at one point she lost her voice entirely and couldn't talk. Then when she could, she became active in the Republican party. A very interesting person. Again, I really don't know how I was able to contact her, but she was a willing interviewee. All of these people were willing

interviewees. They were in different parts of the Democratic party, although I think most of the women were liberal.

Lage: When you say willing interviewees, did you get a sense that it was important to them to get their experiences recorded?

10-00:02:18
Chall: I think so. Yes, I think they were happy that we had this kind of a project. Particularly the black women. One of them in Los Angeles had really worked very, very hard. Her project had been the founding and development of a junior college in her district. She was in the Watts neighborhood. When I was in Los Angeles, I would have to learn where these different parts of Los Angeles were, and travel on the freeway. Because I think she was still working, I had to go there at night. So I had to learn where I made my turns and all of that, and interview her at night. And interviewing women in their—.

Lage: Do you remember her name? I'm sorry to interrupt.

10-00:03:18
Chall: I do not remember her name.

Lage: Would it be Odessa Cox?

10-00:03:34
Chall: Yes, I think it was Odessa Cox.

Lage: *Challenging the Status Quo, the Twenty-Seven Year Campaign for Southwest Junior College*, 1979.

10-00:03:41
Chall: That would be Odessa Cox, yes.

Lage: Okay.

10-00:03:44
Chall: Here was a middle-class woman, in a really lovely middle-class neighborhood. It was like any neighborhood that you would find anywhere else. It was a charming little home, and she was a very lovely, charming lady. I think I had two interviews with her in her home. Then I had another, besides—. Sorry.

Lage: Tell me what you're thinking about and I'll try to pull it out here.

10-00:04:28
Chall: I'm thinking of the woman in the Bay Area.

Lage: Oh, Frances Albrier?

10-00:04:35
Chall: Frances Albrier. Frances Albrier was my other black woman, whom I interviewed in her home several times, in Berkeley. And I think I interviewed another black woman, besides these.

Lage: Frances Albrier is a fascinating interview.

10-00:04:53
Chall: Yes.

Lage: I'm sure all of them are, but I'm more familiar with how important it is now, how much history is in that interview, that people are still looking back on.

10-00:05:08
Chall: Oh, I see. I see.

Lage: And making use of.

10-00:05:13
Chall: Oh, they are? That's good.

Lage: I think I told you this—well, you told me—she talks about her World War II work.

10-00:05:26
Chall: Yes, yes.

Lage: I reread that the other day.

10-00:05:29
Chall: Oh, did you?

Lage: It's so to-the-point for the project the office is working on now [Rosie the Riveter, World War II Home Front project].

10-00:05:33
Chall: I know. I don't know how it could have been missed, if—.

Lage: I don't think it was really missed, no. But when we get our new website, which is going to have better links between interviews, Albrier will be linked to the current project.

10-00:05:50
Chall: She was a good interviewee. So were they all. Now, at that time, the list could go on and on. So I asked Gaby [Gabrielle Morris], who had come on the staff and who was active in the Berkeley League of Women Voters, if she would take some of the interviews. She had judges. I think she had one judge; I'm not sure. She had other people in different areas—Marin County, for example—who were very prominent women. That article in—I don't know

what paper it was, probably the *Oakland Tribune*—was just about Gaby and her interviewees. That's very good. So Gaby did some, and I do think that Mimi [Miriam] Stein came in about that time, and I gave her some. At least one or two.

Lage: So you're developing a team for this.

10-00:07:06
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Did Chita work on this project, too?

10-00:07:10
Chall: No. No, Chita was solely involved with the suffragists.

Lage: As far as women in politics were concerned.

10-00:07:20
Chall: Yes. Then mine was the women political leaders, and then ultimately, the minority women political leaders. For that, we had to go out and get extra funding. I think the Rockefeller Foundation may have given us some of that money.

Lage: So that was sort of a separate—?

10-00:07:40
Chall: It was separate because eventually I realized, we're leaving somebody out of this. We have some other women that we should be interviewing.

Lage: So you got extra money just to focus on—.

10-00:07:53
Chall: Minority women.

Lage: Is that when you interviewed the Japanese woman?

10-00:07:58
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Or had you done that earlier? Kimiko Kitayama? [*Nisei Leader in Democratic Politics and Civic Affairs*, 1979.]

10-00:08:01
Chall: No, not earlier. She lived out here. She was a member of the League of Women Voters. She was also active in the Japanese community. Her brothers were. This was very important, because she had been sent off during World War II, with her family. I wanted to talk about that, and we did. Then the fact that she was very active in the community. I don't know that she thought of

herself always as a Japanese woman, because many of her friends were not Japanese. But she was definitely a part of an old Japanese family in the Hayward area.

Lage: I notice here she was the first woman on the board of the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District.

10-00:08:59
Chall: Oh, yes. Well, she was politically active. It wasn't that she was just Japanese, she was a very—.

Lage: Right, right, and a Democratic party leader.

10-00:09:06
Chall: Yes, she was politically active.

Lage: "Comments on women and on Asians in politics" [from the ROHO catalogue]. Now, there again, I see that the breadth of approach that you took makes these interviews more relevant over the long term.

10-00:09:20
Chall: Yes, I see.

Lage: Like Asians in politics.

10-00:09:25
Chall: Yes, right.

Lage: It's happening now. It wasn't happening very much then, but you were talking about it.

10-00:09:30
Chall: No. Well, that brings me into the fact that I did interview, on this [little set of pilot interviews with] women political leaders, I interviewed March Fong, because by this time, of course, I knew March Fong; I'd been working on her committee. That was a very interesting project. But when it came to interviewing March Fong in this other part of the project, the women political leaders, I wasn't going to do that again. I didn't feel that I should, because I didn't feel that I would ask the right questions. So I asked Gaby to do it, and Gaby did. Of course, it was a good interview. Now, Gaby said that March sealed it, and then Gaby was very amused when she went to March's office one day and there it was right out in front, the whole book.

Lage: Yes, but it was sealed for a long time.

10-00:10:32
Chall: But she had it out there.

Lage: Yes, Isn't that interesting? Now, you had these several people working on the project.

10-00:10:40
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Did you try to have some uniformity in approach?

10-00:10:45
Chall: Yes. All right, then that goes into—.

Lage: How you manage a project.

10-00:10:51
Chall: Yes. And I managed quite a few of them, eventually. We had to agree on an indexing. That's the manual of style and—.

Lage: But how about agreeing on what kind of questions you're going to ask?

10-00:11:07
Chall: I don't remember doing that. It seemed to me that we all were on the same page. Willa really had a project plan. You find out about their background, you've got to find out about their family. How did they come to where they are now? If you're an interviewer and involved in a subject, you just do it. I don't think at that point, we had to be—. I didn't do anything about that.

I do remember that, eventually, many of these interviews, particularly the Helen Gahagan project and much of the suffragist project, were never completed. The interviewing was completed; there were other interviewers. Chita went away and they were left.

Lage: Now, not processed, not fully ready for the public eye, is that what you're saying?

10-00:12:16
Chall: Yes, that eventually, with I think a couple of Mimi Stein's—never Gaby's, a couple of Mimi Stein's—many of Chita's suffragist interviews—. Now, that's because in the suffragist program and in the Helen Gahagan Douglas project, there were outside interviewers. There was a woman in Washington D.C. Ingersoll was her last name.

Lage: Right. Fern.

10-00:12:58
Chall: Fern Ingersoll. Fern Ingersoll did a couple of interviews in the suffragist project. She might've done some also in the Helen Gahagan Douglas project. Then there was another woman who wrote a book, a biography of Helen

Gahagan Douglas. She did several interviews, I think, in Los Angeles, on Helen Gahagan Douglas. [Ingrid Scobie]

Lage: So those people didn't finish up their interviews, it sounds like.

10-00:13:40
Chall: No, they were transcribed in our place. I think they may have been edited. Some were edited, some were not edited, and they landed on my desk. Willa always said, "Okay, you finish them." There were other projects which Willa would give me to finish, that had nothing—.

Lage: Willa knew who she could give things to finish.

10-00:14:16
Chall: I think so. That's another part of Willa's persona that we'll talk about at another time, but we can just put it in here. Willa knew what each of her staff would or could, or would-could, do. She knew, I think, that Suzanne, if she asked her to, she would do some things, she wouldn't do others. She knew that I would do almost anything.

Lage: What would Suzanne not do?

10-00:14:57
Chall: I don't know. I think that Suzanne would not have taken on some of the projects I took on. But I do feel that Suzanne would have completed, and probably did, some unfinished interviews, because Suzanne would do that. I would not be able to work with Willa on the painstaking work that went into our semiannual—.

Lage: And the catalogs.

10-00:15:26
Chall: Yes, the catalogs. But Suzanne did. That was painstaking work. When they needed to find a logo or something for the front covers and something for our sweatshirts, Suzanne would do that kind of research, whereas I probably wouldn't have or couldn't have. That's basically it. So I think Suzanne was very important on the staff for Willa, for what Willa needed at any time. Suzanne had been there a long time; they had a long relationship together. They were close. Willa always knew what somebody would do well and what somebody else wouldn't do well. Now apparently, she found out that I would finish. And I had a lot of them. Hans Jenny for example, soil science. That was fascinating. But I had to finish it, and I had to work with Professor Jenny to help finish that. So that's the kind of thing that Willa would hand over to me. Now, when it came to the women political leaders, Gaby was on her own, and she did it well. And I think so did Mimi. Those were good interviews. They're all a part of that whole series that I didn't do.

Now, you want to get into the Helen Gahagan Douglas project? Is there something you're looking for?

Lage: No. No, no. I would like to hear about how the Helen Gahagan Douglas project came to be. I have the names of the people that did the interviews. Chita, yourself, Fern Ingersoll, and Ingrid Scobie.

10-00:17:17
Chall: Yes, Ingrid Scobie. Ingrid did write a biography, ultimately, on Helen Gahagan Douglas.

Lage: Okay, so how did that project come about? Four volumes. Maybe first tell who she was, because I don't think most people would know anymore.

10-00:17:33
Chall: I guess they don't, because now when people ask me about one of my most interesting interviews—they always want to know that—I say Jeannette Rankin.

Lage: I want you to talk about that, too.

10-00:17:47
Chall: Nobody knows Jeannette Rankin. Nobody knows who they are. And perhaps nobody knows now who Helen Gahagan Douglas was. But Helen Gahagan Douglas was a very active member of—. Not the Democratic party so much. Yes, I guess she was [a] very active Democrat, in politics, and she had been in the—. Was she in the Senate?

Lage: I think she was in the House of Representatives.

10-00:18:23
Chall: She was a representative from California. When she ran again [when she ran for Senate in 1950], Richard Nixon came to the forefront, and he accused her of being not necessarily a Communist, but certainly too close to the Communist party and the Socialists. That was part of that era. So she was defeated. She belonged to the women political leaders project. On the other hand, she had started out as an actress, a very prominent stage and screen actress, and was married to Melvyn Douglas, who was a very prominent screen actor. There were antecedents there in her life. When we approached the Rockefeller Foundation, they said, "We will fund this interview, but only if you do her entire life." Entire life.

Lage: That's nice to hear, because often you don't hear, "We want the whole picture."

10-00:19:35
Chall: That's right. They wanted the whole thing. "We're just not interested in just her politics."

Lage: It was a very famous campaign. [Senate]

10-00:19:46
Chall: Yes, it was.

Lage: The campaign she was defeated in was the 1950 campaign. I think that's where Nixon made the charges. She was in Congress 1944 to 1950. [And then ran for the Senate against Nixon.]

10-00:20:06
Chall: So yes, that was after the war. You see, the Soviet Union was rather important in history at that time, and we were concerned with the bomb and we were concerned with who was running. And Nixon was an early advocate of getting rid of anybody who was tainted. Of course, it was a nasty, nasty campaign.

Lage: Right. And a famous campaign. So the Rockefeller Foundation wanted a broad treatment.

10-00:20:48
Chall: They wanted a broad treatment. Okay. Now, I believe that it was Chita who had set this up, with Helen Gahagan Douglas herself, because she did have to meet her, and did. I think by this time, Chita was—. I'm not sure; had she already moved to Washington?

Lage: I don't think so.

10-00:21:12
Chall: No, I think not.

Lage: I don't think that early.

10-00:21:14
Chall: So she started it here. She knew Fern Ingersoll, because Fern had done some work with her in the suffragist project. Fern had interviewed a number of suffragists who were living in Washington DC at that time. So we had to do the entire thing.

Lage: Well, there are four volumes: *The Political Campaigns; the Congress Years; Family, Friends, and the Theater*; and volume four is *Congresswoman, Actress, and Opera Singer*.

10-00:21:49
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Quite a woman.

10-00:21:51
Chall: Yes, she was quite a woman. In her last days, she was the kind of woman who would never give up. She was dying and she was in the hospital, and she was still on the phone. I forget what the issue was at the time, but she was on the phone and she was writing and she was dealing with life. Now, here are the interviews. They are transcribed, and some of them are edited; but still they have to be put together in volumes. You decide on how the volumes would work. Now, it was up to me to get all of this done. That's table of contents, mainly editing—. What comes after editing? Proofreading. Proofreading and indexing.

Lage: And of course, everything had to be retyped each time, we have to remember.

10-00:23:02
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Every time a change was made.

10-00:23:06
Chall: At that time, were we with the computer? I think not.

Lage: No, no, no.

10-00:23:10
Chall: Okay, so they were being retyped. At that time, we had IBM IIs, with corrective ribbons. That helped. So we didn't need carbon papers anymore. That made it a lot simpler. What needed to be done—and it was probably one of my jobs—was to decide on what the volumes would be and how we would edit them. The major problem then was to see that all the editing and indexing were the same. Now, we did have, and I have in that little box over there, a large folder full of indexes, indexing ideas, indexing problems, manuals of style. "Let's try it this year." Now, those were little jobs that Willa, either she'd hand them over or I would simply take them over. Things that needed to be done. When it came to the interviews with Helen Gahagan Douglas, I had to set up an index that was going to be the same for all four volumes.

Lage: You mean where the entries would be the same.

10-00:24:41
Chall: What would the entries be? Now, I couldn't decide on all of those, but how we would capitalize—. And the capitalization had to be the same in all of them, the index had to be the same, certain ideas. They had to say maybe, "See also volume two."All of this. I was very fortunate. I did have a woman in the office whose name was Marie, and I don't remember her last name [Marie Herold]. She was around for a long time.

Lage: I think she went over to IGS or—.

10-00:25:32

Chall: I'm not sure where she finally went. I know that she caused some kind of disruption within that room of transcribers and editors. I don't know why they didn't really like her. I felt she was my savior, because Marie and I worked out these particular problems. She had enough of an understanding and a memory to help me. If she saw that we were slipping somewhere, then she would come and we would discuss the problem. I have even a little newspaper article that she had sent me. It was about the environment, about Mr. [James G.] Watt, when he came into the environmental—. He was in somebody's cabinet.

Lage: Reagan.

10-00:26:25

Chall: Reagan's. But this was a long article in the newspaper. It showed how we—or at least how they—capitalized departments, capitalized this and didn't capitalize other things. She gave it to me and said, "Maybe we're going to need this. Let's keep it handy." So Marie was a *very* important help. I just couldn't have worked without her. Anne Apfelbaum was another. I taught her how to index and edit. Anne was faithful and she had a good memory and she understood all of this. So in one of those folders over there, it shows my communication between one and the other, about how we would handle this indexing and the rest of it. It was a very long, arduous job, because I had to do it all.

Lage: Yes. Yes, this is good. We're referring to some papers that I'm thinking will end up in the Bancroft Library, and give much more detail on all of this.[8]

10-00:27:40

Chall: Yes, on how we worked. Because that was important, those four volumes. What was so special when it came to the final major volume, I think, on Helen Gahagan Douglas per se—. No, I think it was the Helen Gahagan Douglas bio. It was the published book I'm thinking of. There was a book that was published, a biography of Helen Gahagan Douglas, or it was an autobiography. I am not sure. I wish I did know for sure. All I know is that in the frontispiece, when it came to acknowledgements, that Willa had put an acknowledgement to Malca Chall, for her work on this project. That was in a volume that you pick up in the library. I had a cousin, a first cousin. She was a niece of my mother, but she was a niece who was many years younger than my mother, and maybe about twenty years older than I, who had grown up in Montreal, was a concert pianist. She married and lived in New York. When I was living in New York, I visited her. She had a little boy, about four years old, in the tiniest apartment you could imagine in New York City. She was interested in

[8] Some of the materials Malca is referencing here will be placed in the Bancroft Library, University Archives, as part of the ROHO records.

going to college. She said, “Malca, what do you think about my going to college and getting—?” I don’t know what it was she wanted to learn. I said, “I just think that’s a great idea.” This was about 1946, ’47.

When I went abroad, in one of my trips abroad with Harold, in 1983, she was in the hospital, I think suffering the last stages of cancer. Somewhere before that particular time, she had been gone to the library, and she’d seen this book on Helen Gahagan Douglas and was curious. She opened it up and she saw the acknowledgement to Malca Chall. She wrote to my mother and she said, “You know what I just saw?” She said, “I’m going to have to see Malca when she comes back from Europe.” That was a promise. She was dying of cancer, just coming out of a coma, at one time, and she said to her husband, “Isn’t Malca about to come here for a visit?” He knew that Harold had just died and I, of course, was not coming to New York.

Lage: Oh, my.

10-00:31:14
Chall: He never said anything to her, of course; it was pointless.

Lage: That’s very touching.

10-00:31:20
Chall: That’s a tale that goes with the Helen Gahagan Douglas interview, because Willa was kind enough, really, to put that into the volume.

Lage: But Willa always acknowledged the contributions of people. She never tried to take credit.

10-00:31:38
Chall: No, no. But this was extra. She didn’t have to do that. And to have my cousin Vera find it was even more interesting.

Lage: Yes, that’s a very nice story. Okay. Do you think we should move to another project, or is there more to say here?

10-00:31:59
Chall: Do you have any questions that are still lingering in your mind about the interviews with Helen Gahagan Douglas or the women political leaders?

Lage: Just did you interview Helen Gahagan Douglas yourself, or someone else did it?

10-00:32:17
Chall: No. No. I believe that Chita did all of those. I believe that Chita did. [There were many colleagues, friends from all of her different activities who were interviewed.—MC]

Lage: Well, it seems that you did some of the interviews in the project.

10-00:32:28
Chall: I don't think I interviewed Helen Gahagan Douglas. I don't think I did any of the interviews.

Lage: You're listed as one of the interviewers for the project.

10-00:32:40
Chall: I could have.

Lage: The four of you: Malca, Amelia Fry, Fern Ingersoll, and Ingrid Scobie [listed in the 1980 ROHO catalogue, although Malca is not mentioned as interviewer in any of the volumes.]

10-00:32:51
Chall: Well, I don't know. Yes, I could've. I could've. I might've gone to Los Angeles particularly for an interview. It's possible that even some of the women I interviewed, like Rosalind Wyman and Carmen Warschaw, would certainly have known her.

Lage: Right, and probably talked about it.

10-00:33:18
Chall: That's probably part of those interviews. I'm not sure.

Lage: Your memory is more of bringing them into the world, shall we say? Okay. No, I don't have any more questions about that. There's a lot more to cover, but we have background material.

10-00:33:40
Chall: Yes.

Lage: I did have one question. I think it's a good place to point out the value of the front material in the interviews. I'm thinking of the interview history, in particular. And often in a project, you'd have a project history or a series history.

10-00:34:03
Chall: Yes, yes.

Lage: Because a lot of what people want to know about—how did you plan this project?—is in the front pages, right?

10-00:34:13
Chall: Yes.

Lage: How was it funded?

10-00:34:16
Chall: Mm-hm. I think those are very important. I think that those prefaces, if you want to call them that—. We call them interview histories. Now, that was Willa's idea. That was never dropped, ever, as long as Willa was there. Because you're right, it tells exactly how this whole thing came about. Otherwise, how would you know? Even authors of books, biographies, have to acknowledge at least who helped them. You sort of have an idea, then, how it came about. But with an oral history, you just can't suddenly throw it into an archive and say, okay.

Lage: There it is.

10-00:35:04
Chall: Because you have to know. You have to know why certain kinds of questions were asked.

Lage: How much did the interviewee participate in planning it?

10-00:35:10
Chall: Yes. And why didn't she ask that question? That would often come up.

Lage: But of course, that's not in the interview history, usually.

10-00:35:18
Chall: No, that's it. So you have to explain how you do it. I think that one of the questions that you have in your interview outline here—genesis, funding, advisors, planning topics and themes—. The genesis, we've talked about: go out and raise your money. There are so many different ways that we did it.

Lage: And then also how you found the interviewees, which is sort of one thing leads to another.

10-00:35:50
Chall: How you find the interviewees. Planning topics and themes is something that I'm not really familiar with, in terms of the way we worked. Of course, you planned your topic, because that's how you did it. Willa had her antennae out like this all the time. She planned long ahead. She would get an idea, like the handicapped project [the Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement project]. Who else would've thought that one out, until it was too late?

Lage: Well, two things. She didn't really think of it; Susan O'Hara thought of it.

10-00:36:34
Chall: Yes.

Lage: But she recognized the value of it.

10-00:36:37
Chall: She picked it up.

Lage: She recognized it as something that was historically significant.

10-00:36:41
Chall: That's right. You're right about that.

Lage: Although now I'm participating here with you.

10-00:36:48
Chall: That's true. You should, you should.

Lage: She interviewed—way back [in the mid-1950s], one of her early projects was on "the organized blind." She interviewed several people.

10-00:36:56
Chall: Yes, that's right. Exactly.

Lage: In that interview history, where she writes about it, she brings out the themes that later were the themes of the independent living movement. She recognized what was happening.

10-00:37:10
Chall: Willa did. You're talking about Willa?

Lage: Yes. Willa recognized what was happening.

10-00:37:13
Chall: Yes, yes.

Lage: Maybe that's why she was so receptive to Susan O'Hara's idea about the disability rights at Berkeley.

10-00:37:20
Chall: Yes, yes. Yes, I think so. Willa was very perceptive. Many of these came out of ideas from other people or what was happening, like the AIDS project. Or we were asked. When it came to Kaiser Permanente, they came to us.

Lage: Let's talk about that next, okay?

10-00:37:43
Chall: All right.

Lage: That's a good one.

10-00:37:46
Chall: We know that Helen Gahagan Douglas and the women political leaders came really through Chita. Chita was there; she was starting it all. With Kaiser

Permanente—and the same with Ralph Tyler, these kinds of examples—they came to us. They have a person they want interviewed, so they come to the office. I think this happened quite often.

Lage: But particularly with Kaiser Permanente. That turned into a big project.

10-00:38:33
Chall: It did.

Lage: Did it start as a big project?

10-00:38:35
Chall: It started because they were approaching, I think, either the thirty-fifth year—. I think it was that. They felt that some of their earliest doctors, like Dr. [Sidney] Garfield—it was his baby, in a way—that he needed to be interviewed. You won't find him there in the series list; he was dead.

Lage: Oh, that's too bad. We didn't get to him soon enough?

10-00:39:08
Chall: Yes. Well, they do have an interview with him, but Kaiser went to—I think it was maybe the state college—someplace they went to have these people interviewed. They weren't satisfied with them, and so they came to us. They came to us with a plan, they came to us with possible interviewees—definitely some interviewees—and how much money will it be? We decided on how much money it would cost.

Lage: Did you help with that? Were you drawn in right at the beginning?

10-00:39:50
Chall: Yes, I think so.

Lage: Even though health care wasn't—.

10-00:39:54
Chall: Oh, well, that—. [they laugh] No, sometimes these things just come. I mean, education, with Ralph Tyler, started a whole series on education.

Lage: Right.

10-00:40:10
Chall: Yes, I was called in. So was, I believe, Gaby. We had meetings with—. I guess it was a financial officer. We told him how much it would cost and we set up a plan. We had a meeting with a group that was planning this. Dr. Garfield and some of the other early people, who we did, in fact, interview, were there. Well, they had to decide among themselves whether they wanted this and whether it would be worth the money and all of that. So they did, among themselves, decide that we would do it. So they gave us a certain

amount of money, and I think it was quarterly or something of that sort, and they appointed a young woman to monitor this. She would set up a meeting with me about once a month. Maybe more often, but at least once a month. [interview interruption]

Lage: Okay, we're starting up again, after a little interruption. We were talking about Kaiser Permanente and meeting with advisors. Your advisors, it sounds like, were partly the actual early doctors and others that helped formed Kaiser Permanente.

10-00:41:56
Chall: Yes. So we did organize it, in a way. They helped. They knew the ages of these folks and they knew who they were. They helped us set it up.

Lage: Did they know what they wanted you to talk to them about? Did they say, we want to learn about this, that?

10-00:42:17
Chall: I don't recall that, although there must have been that, because we did—. We, meaning I, had a staff by this time; I set up a staff. One of them was a new interviewer on the staff, Ora Huth. Ora had been a very prominent, active member of the League of Women Voters of Berkeley.

Lage: Is that how you knew her?

10-00:42:45
Chall: I barely knew her. I think Gaby knew her, and she was a good friend of Harriet Nathan's. So they all knew her, and I think that they asked—. They thought about having her on the staff. So Willa hired her. I think I also asked—

Lage: Well, Sally Hughes.

10-00:43:16
Chall: —Sally Hughes. So Sally and Ora were—.

Lage: Sally brought a background in history of science and medicine.

10-00:43:24
Chall: Yes. Oh, Sally was *very* important. Ora actually sort of floundered for a while. But what we did was work out—. I believe that we did determine kind of questions that we would need. I had to train both of them in the way the office works. I think Ora had no idea. She was just plopped into the office and put on a project.

Lage: Sally had been working with the Bancroft.

10-00:44:08
Chall: She had been. I don't think she was too acquainted with our oral history methods or the way we worked. So what we did, with this little committee, we plotted out who we needed to interview, what kinds of questions we would need, and which one of the three of us would take the interviews. That, we worked out. You can confirm all this with Sally, because she'll remember it even better. But we had meetings. I think we met once a week for quite a while, to work this out. In the meantime, I was being queried once a month or so about where the money was going.

Lage: By Kaiser Permanente.

10-00:45:03
Chall: By this person at Kaiser. Eventually, I think that stopped.

Lage: Were they not too trusting of our capabilities?

10-00:45:15
Chall: Something about it. They got our interviews; they were done. Many of them were done. I think in the middle of it all, they just—. Somehow, I do not remember exactly what it was, but they were just stopping. I think in one of my pieces over here, where Willa has to give the staff, each one of us—. What do you call it?

Lage: A personal review?

10-00:45:49
Chall: These changed from year to year, but this was employee performance appraisal.

Lage: Right, right.

10-00:45:56
Chall: Willa has here, in this one—this is my appraisal—"You were unable to complete the Kaiser Permanente on schedule or within initially planned budget, due to inaction of sponsors." In addition to which, I was doing an awful lot of work on other things, at that time. That was one of them. She mentioned this someplace again, which—

Lage: Probably in the annual report, she would.

10-00:46:51
Chall: —prompted my memory on this, because I think you had asked me. There was then a second series for the Kaiser Permanente. So we did finish one. Well, there is a list in one of those folders over there, of all of the interviews that had been completed. That was even the completion of Mr. [James] Vohs's interview, which I did.

Lage: That was your last one.

10-00:47:30
Chall: That was my last one and that was their last one, until they then went back to ROHO, which was then under different direction, to do a whole series of others. So they kept going. They may still be going, but I doubt it. But they were following up. I think the new interviews were done in a slightly different way. By this time, everybody was a PhD on staff, and I think they had themes and—. From what I can understand, on some of the information that I would get from time to time, was that the new ones—. Of course, they weren't pioneers. It was all more or less current, how Kaiser was working, although they did follow up on—. I think it was David Lawrence, I think was his name, who followed Mr. Vohs as the head of—. Everything was changed. *Everything* was changed. He brought in a completely different way of organizing Kaiser.

However, in the ones that we did, it was the pioneers, up through Mr. Vohs. I did a few, then I think I took over the second—. I believe that I did most of what would be considered the second series. Some of them were administrators. It was a very different kind of interviewing, and I didn't understand a lot of it. But they tell you. They were very important to this story. However, I also had to travel. Well, I used to travel a lot to Los Angeles, because I did a number of interviews in Los Angeles, of Rabbi [Edgar Fogel] Magnin and the women political leaders who lived there. I was going back and forth to Los Angeles quite a bit. I'd rent a car from the UCLA garage. They would pick me up at the airport, take me to the garage, give me the car, all ready to go, and off I'd go.

Lage: UCLA would do that?

10-00:49:52
Chall: Yes. For a long time, they did it. Then toward the last part of my interviewing, they didn't. I also interviewed Governor Brown, Pat Brown, down there in his office.

Lage: We're going to talk about that next time, because we want to spend time on the Brown gubernatorial project.

10-00:50:09
Chall: Yes. Now, Kaiser Permanente, I went to Denver. Now, you see, because these were the pioneers. When Kaiser began to branch out, they had clinics and hospitals in Vancouver, Washington, which is right across the bridge from Portland; in Denver, Colorado; in Cleveland, Ohio; and of course, in Southern California. Now, I think that Ora Huth did the ones in Southern California. But I did go to Denver, I did go to Ohio, Cleveland, and I did go to Vancouver. Those were very interesting interviews, because it was all pioneer work. These were the pioneer doctors and administrators.

I had an interesting time in Cleveland, because I had to call Kaiser and say, "Where will I stay? Where am I going to stay?" They said, "There's a hotel that's attached to the Cleveland Clinic, so we'll make a reservation for you." Well, that was great, because the Cleveland Clinic Hotel, they had a happy hour. A real happy hour. They also had a bulletin board that told you what else was going on around Cleveland, because they had patients there from all over the country, and their families stayed in the hotel. I finished my interviews, I think, after a couple of days, and I had time before my plane took off one day. I went to the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, their morning concert. It was just great. I also went later to their art museum, which is like the MoMA here—more or less like it—or the de Young. So I had a whole day, just a fine day. The clinic took my suitcase and they had their own special cab driver, who did all this kind of thing. He took the suitcase, he met me when I was all finished with the—I guess it was not the concert, but the museum—met me where he was supposed to, took me to the airport. It was perfect.

Lage: Lovely. You never would've gone to Cleveland, most likely.

10-00:52:41
Chall: Never. Nor heard that concert. The Cleveland Orchestra was under one of the great conductors, at that time, whose name I don't remember now. But it was a great day.

Lage: How wonderful. And you gathered some great history, I would say. Kaiser Permanente is a really —.

10-00:53:03
Chall: Yes. Yes, we did get some great history. I think with Mr. Vohs, it was the final cap. Now, we had been after Mr. Vohs for many years.

Lage: He had been the administrator?

10-00:53:16
Chall: He had three hats. He had been in charge of all of the top Kaiser, at one time. He was CEO—there are three positions—president of the board, and one other Chairman. Yes, he took it all. He was in charge. Well, I'd see him from time to time and I would say, "We're planning to interview you." "I won't do an interview until I've retired." So when he did retire—I guess there was an article in the paper or something—Willa said, "Now go get him," more or less. So of course, I did. I went to his office. For about five years, after retiring, they'd keep their offices, the way they do with colleges. He said, "Malca, I want to tell you something. You must be prepared. You must understand how Kaiser works. You must understand Kaiser. If you're not prepared, I will not do this interview."

Lage: Well, didn't you feel prepared, by this time?

10-00:54:43
Chall: I was prepared, but not for the kind of work that Mr. Vohs did.

Lage: The administrative end.

10-00:54:50
Chall: Yes. Who knows this? Besides his own background. It's very important background, growing up into Kaiser, through Kaiser. So naturally, I had to do a great deal of research. But I had old Kaiser papers, I had old Kaiser interviews, and I had a lot of stuff. They put out magazines often. The usual research. You do a lot of research. I felt I was obligated to be very, very good.

Lage: He was satisfied?

10-00:55:28
Chall: Yes, he did compliment me when I was finished. I was pleased with that, because you never really know for sure.

Lage: This came towards the end of your career at ROHO, didn't it? Or am I wrong about the dates?

10-00:55:43
Chall: Probably toward the end. I think I still had the water interviews.

Lage: Right, those were your last. Okay, well, anything else you want to say about the Kaiser project? We might be sort of winding down for the day here.

10-00:55:57
Chall: No, I think it was important, because again, I had a staff that I could work with. We planned out, probably, also the indexing and all that goes with it.

Lage: Did they finish their own interviews, Sally and Ora?

10-00:56:13
Chall: Yes.

Lage: So you didn't have to.

10-00:56:15
Chall: This is true. I think they did.

Lage: Yes. Okay. Well, I think this is a good time to stop.

10-00:56:20
Chall: Good. I think so, too.

Lage: Next time, we have much else to cover.

Interview 6: May 4, 2015

Audiofile 11

11-00:00:04
Chall: Hello.

Lage: Good morning, Malca. Here we are back again. It's May 4, 2015. And this is interview 6 with Malca Chall. I'm Ann Lage, a retiree of the now Center for Oral History of the Bancroft Library, previously known as ROHO. Now, we have been talking about various projects. Last time we discussed women political leaders and Kaiser Permanente, and I wanted to talk today about our extensive gubernatorial history projects. I think as you look at the overall production of ROHO, they really stand out as incredibly important.

11-00:00:47
Chall: I think so.

Lage: It seems like you didn't interview very much on the Earl Warren era. A couple of interviews, public health.

11-00:00:59
Chall: And water.

Lage: And water on Earl Warren, too?

11-00:01:03
Chall: Oh, yes.

Lage: Ah-ha.

11-00:01:06
Chall: And therein lies a story.

Lage: Okay. Well, let's start with that story.

11-00:01:10
Chall: All right. I think Chita—. Well, when I was first considered for a staff position with ROHO—this was in 1967, when I was in correspondence with Willa—she mentioned, even at that time, 1967, a possible set of interviews on the government of Governor [Edmund G. "Pat"] Brown. Also, she had in mind a Jewish history series. This was before Lowdermilk, before she had the money for that.

Lage: I'm going to stop for just a second. [interview interruption] Okay, now we're back; a little technical adjustment there. So they were thinking ahead to—.

11-00:02:14
Chall: Yes, I say this because when I was looking at the correspondence with Willa, which is in this little package here, I then went and looked at when I started those interviews, which was 1971, ’72, my first one with the Jewish community. Brown was much later.

Lage: But they were doing the Earl Warren project.

11-00:02:44:
Chall: That wasn’t what Willa was talking about.

Lage: Right.

11-00:02:51
Chall: So I realized then, as now I realized, looking back on those dates—I checked them out carefully—that Willa was, as we always knew, well ahead of the story. She was always planning.

Lage: Right.

11-00:03:08
Chall: Now, Chita had been with Willa a long time already, and most of the time Chita was doing forest history. But Chita had a brain that was sort of like Willa’s, always looking ahead. You don’t stop anywhere, you just keep working, looking ahead, and looking broadly ahead.

Lage: And making contacts, one leading to another.

11-00:03:34
Chall: Always the contacts. So Willa, at that point, had several things in mind already. When it came to the gubernatorial series, how it was that they started with Warren, I don’t know. But that was something that Chita had worked out, I think. This was all part of Chita, and I think Willa, working together. They knew that Governor Warren was now on the Supreme Court. Came out here at least once a year, and I think it was for the organization that met in the redwoods.

Lage: Oh, the Bohemian Club.

11-00:04:25
Chall: The Bohemian Club. Also to do other things, but he came back here. So it was decided somehow, and Earl Warren agreed that he would have a series of interviews.

Lage: I’m just going to interject. I think a lot of it goes back to Chita’s interview with Newton Drury—

11-00:04:52
Chall: That could be.

Lage: —who was a close friend of Earl Warren's.

11-00:04:54
Chall: That was probably it.

Lage: This was, again, where one contact leads to another.

11-00:04:57
Chall: You're right. This is all that sort of thing. So Earl Warren came to our office. That's when we had a room already, where—. At the time you came, it was used for Chita and—.

Lage: Gaby [Gabrielle Morris].

11-00:05:21
Chall: Gaby, and also I think that's where the women did the typing, in that same room. I don't remember. But it was pretty much vacant, at that time. So Earl Warren was going to be interviewed by all of us, on our particular subjects. That was our subject. So then we sat around in a circle, around Earl Warren.

Lage: In our little garret room.

11-00:05:55
Chall: Mine was water. I asked him a few questions. Then I asked him a question which had been composed by Paul Taylor. Paul Taylor was concerned about the 160-acre limit. There had been one of these major cases having to do with the 160-acre limit, that had gone all the way to the Supreme Court. Much of the argument for the 160-acre limit, Paul Taylor had written a lot of that. Beautifully written. Beautifully written. But Earl Warren had cast a vote on that. Now, my recollection is that the 160-acre limit, Paul Taylor, they had won that case. What interested him was why Earl Warren had cast a vote when he was from California and had been a governor at the time a lot of this was being argued.

Lage: Did Taylor feel like he should recuse himself?

11-00:07:33
Chall: This is what I think. Now, again, you see, I'm going back a long, long way. But I do remember it as that. The whole argument is in that part of the Earl Warren oral history, including a very special footnote. Since Earl Warren said at this meeting—.

Lage: Well, you asked him the question.

11-00:07:56
Chall: I asked him the question. He said, "I did not vote. I did not cast a vote." If that's what they call it in the Supreme Court. "I did not." All right, I asked. That sent me on a hunt through all the Supreme Court records of that time. Sure enough, he *had* cast a vote. But one of the other members of the Supreme Court had not. The question was, why did this happen? Now, all the way, he insisted; and so did the staff, at some point. Chita was then in Washington, and she was still interviewing Earl Warren on California. We couldn't get any response at all. But somewhere along the line, at this period of time, I met Abbott Goldberg. Is it Goldberg? Wait a minute, I interviewed him. Let me find it. Sorry.

Lage: I'll put a pause here. [interview interruption] We're back on. You interviewed Abbott Goldberg.

11-00:09:14
Chall: Yes, on California water issues. I don't know how I met him or where. I asked him about this. He said, "I know how those votes were cast. I know why so-and-so did." One of his either friends or former students having to do with water and government—I can't remember that person's name at all—had told him. Fine, I just kept it in my mind. So several years later or more, when I had the opportunity to interview Abbott Goldberg, when it came time—. You ask a question. You wait until the appropriate time to ask this question. I said, "You told me many years ago that you knew how that vote was cast in the Supreme Court, and why, because you knew so-and-so." I knew his name by then. He said, "I can't remember."

Lage: It's still a mystery to you?

11-00:10:25
Chall: It's still a mystery. So what I finally had to do was to put a special footnote in Earl Warren's interview, to explain this problem.

Lage: Okay, I will look that up. [*Conversations with Earl Warren on California Government*, interviews conducted in 1971 and 1972 by Amelia R. Fry and Members of the Regional Oral History Office Staff, p. 204]

11-00:10:39
Chall: Now, that is an interesting sidelight to Earl Warren.

Lage: Right, right. Well, the whole Earl Warren interview was kind of interesting, because wasn't this conversation that you're describing with several ROHO people kind of a preliminary?

11-00:10:54
Chall: Yes.

Lage: But we never really got to the full interview?

11-00:10:58
Chall: Oh, I think so. I think that you must have, in the record, many other interviews, because Chita, I think, did interview him more.

Lage: In Washington.

11-00:11:10
Chall: In Washington. There was this interview that I did, and that had to do with public health.

Lage: Right.

11-00:11:20
Chall: I guess there were a few major concerns of Warren, and public health was one of them. So that's why we interviewed on public health.

Lage: Well, we interviewed many, many people in his administration, and out of the administration.

11-00:11:36
Chall: Yes. That's right. So we had the Oliver Carter interview. Now, Oliver Carter was a very important senator, over the years, and a very important person in the Democratic party. And he had been in the senate for a long time.

Lage: In the state senate.

11-00:11:59
Chall: State senate. So various aspects of that that Chita would want to know about: the forest practice and Governor Warren's relationship with the legislative assessment and assessing legislators. So I interviewed him on a couple of things. One of them had to do with water and one of them had to do with some other part of the Warren administration. Then when it came to the Department of Public Health, which was a very important concern of Warren's at that time, when he was—. I think he was interested in the kind of health problems that we have now, government and health.

Lage: Right. Well, not just was he interested, but it seems to me our office was interested—

11-00:12:55
Chall: Yes.

Lage: —in this broad range of issues.

11-00:12:56
Chall: That's right. We wanted everything that had to do with Earl Warren's administration, and this was whatever was a part of it. By this time, Chita knew well what it was, and Gaby, because they were working together. I'm not sure whether I interviewed Frank Stead, because the name sounds familiar; but I did Henry Ongerth. Now, Henry Ongerth shows up in a couple of places in my interviews. He was concerned with sanitary engineering. There were members of the university staff who were sanitary engineers, who were teaching; and he was a sanitary engineer, and he wanted these folks to be interviewed.

Lage: I see.

11-00:13:55
Chall: So he came very early to Willa, and he was still promoting this when Willa was retiring. The problem was that he could never bring in the money. But we did interview—.

Lage: There's a big series on sanitary engineers.

11-00:14:14
Chall: Yes. And I interviewed several of those people, Henry Ongerth one of them. Henry Ongerth was an interesting person. Then I interviewed others in sanitary engineering, somewhere along the line.

Lage: It seems to me, when I was reviewing to get ready to talk to you, that this was related to the water series.

11-00:14:40
Chall: Yes. Well, it's all related, isn't it, to water?

Lage: Yes. I think we forget. I used to think, why did we interview all these sanitary engineers? We forget that about that time or shortly before, we were dumping raw sewage in the bay.

11-00:14:55
Chall: That's right. We still are.

Lage: Well, not the way—.

11-00:14:58
Chall: In San Francisco.

Lage: But not routinely. So sanitary engineering was a huge water issue.

11-00:15:07
Chall: I interviewed two people in sanitary engineering. Three, I think. One of them was Percy McGauhey. Let's see, where did I—?

Lage: Chester Gillespie.

11-00:15:32
Chall: Yes, Gillespie.

Lage: I have these written down. Wilfred Langelier.

11-00:15:36
Chall: Yes. Langelier, I think. I'm sorry, you'll have to help me.

Lage: I'm not sure how to pronounce it. Langelier?

11-00:15:45
Chall: Langelier. Percy McGauhey, Langelier, Ongerth, and I think there was another one on the staff.

Lage: It seems like you got funding from the Water Resources Center.

11-00:16:15
Chall: Probably. Eventually—. It depends on how anybody wanted to set this up so that we could find them easily [referring to series list]. Yes, Gillespie was a sanitary engineer, and you did have that one. And Percy McGauhey. Here's Langelier, yes. Sanitary engineer. It's interesting how they come up. And there may have been one other. There's Percy McGauhey. So that's McGauhey, Ongerth, Langelier, and—.

Lage: Gillespie.

11-00:17:07
Chall: Gillespie.

Lage: Sanitary engineers.

11-00:17:10
Chall: That's right.

Lage: This was kind of the start, or one of the early parts, of our water resources work.

11-00:17:17
Chall: Yes, that's right. It seemed to be a stretch, but it was not a stretch. None of these having to do with water is a stretch. These people were very interesting. Percy McGauhey was one of my early people in this field. He was very knowledgeable. He was the first one who explained to me that yes, we may be mining a lot of copper and this and that, but copper, pipes, old stuff, they're going to go into landfills, and someday we'll just take them out. They'll be useful. He had a very broad range of ideas in the field that just really surprised

me. I didn't know anything about it, so I learned from these people. He also had a very dry wit.

He was so knowledgeable about the environment and all the issues that I thought he might be a very interesting speaker at the Audubon meeting. I suggested it to the Audubon board and they agreed. So Percy McGauhey and his wife came out here and had dinner with Harold and me and then we took him. Well, it was a total failure—I mean to me, it was—because nobody was that much interested. His wit didn't show. Most of the people in the Audubon were interested in birds and environment and how— So that didn't go over with them.

Lage: He wasn't connecting his field to—?

11-00:18:58
Chall: Yes, more academic. So I realized then—. I was pretty new to the Audubon Society at that time. But he and his wife stayed good friends. Langelier, also. He lived—. You know Ashby Avenue, as you come down toward the big hotel from—.

Lage: Near the Claremont Hotel.

11-00:19:30
Chall: Yes. You come down on this two-lane road, which will always be two lanes. He lived in a street that went to the right, up the hill. He had a lovely home up the hill there, and acreage. Another home could've built above it, except that it was their garden, uphill. She always sat with us when we interviewed. He was modest about his whole career, but it was a very interesting interview. It seemed to me that we had a little tea and cookies or something, at that time.

But we could talk gardening afterwards, and I had a plant that I couldn't identify, so I explained to her what it was. I think I eventually brought her a little piece, and she told me what it was. Also they had persimmon trees. When I told her that I made persimmon pudding, I used to get one or two *huge* bags of persimmons.

Lage: They were glad to find somebody who wanted them.

11-00:20:47
Chall: Yes. So that began my career, almost, of giving friends—and Willa Baum, for her family Christmas and New Year's dinners—large persimmon puddings with all the trimmings, every year for many, many years.

Then he refused to give it up, his interview. It wasn't good. This is not the first time we've ever heard this. He wouldn't do it. So Willa said, "It doesn't matter. Put it away; eventually, it will come." Eventually, it did.

Lage: Eventually, it came out?

11-00:21:35
Chall: Eventually, he was willing, many years later. Maybe five years or more, he said, "Okay." It would be all right if so-and-so wrote the introduction. That was always a—. So the fellow said yes, he'd write the introduction, and he wrote it. Unh-uh, too full of accolades and whatever, and now he won't accept it.

Lage: This shows—I'm trying to make a point here—the degree of control that we gave to our interviewees, over the interviews.

11-00:22:15
Chall: Yes.

Lage: It wasn't like, okay, you've done the interview, you've signed the legal agreement—if he did—that we had—

11-00:22:20
Chall: Yes, he did. That's right.

Lage: —and now we're going to do it.

11-00:22:24
Chall: No, no, no. They could seal it. Now, he did not seal it.

Lage: He just let it go into limbo.

11-00:22:32
Chall: He just wouldn't go. Yes, it was in limbo.

Lage: Remember the in-limbo drawer?

11-00:22:36
Chall: Right. Willa and I had an in-limbo drawer. Some of it went back twenty years.

Lage: Well, I just a few years ago, finished one from 1956.

11-00:22:49
Chall: Really?

Lage: And got it up on the Internet. [Jacobus tenBroek, interviewed by Willa Baum, 1955-1956]

11-00:22:51
Chall: Really? Good for you. Well, we don't think about in limbo anymore, perhaps; but that's where it lay. Finally he agreed—his wife was adamant about this—and it went out. So these sanitary engineers—I had a fine time—I enjoyed them.

Lage: Well, just to make the larger point about your career, it seems like you were not an expert on water when you arrived at ROHO. You became educated by your interviewees.

11-00:23:31
Chall: Of course. Of course. I still struggle, because there's never an end to what you need to know about water.

Lage: I know. What an issue.

11-00:23:42
Chall: And it changes all the time. Yes, that's true. That's a little bit about how we got started with Warren.

Lage: And you did a lot of water with the Knight-Brown project.

11-00:23:57
Chall: Now, that was major. Because it was Brown who set up the whole California Water Project of 1958. What a struggle that was, because he had to get the final okay, actually, from the Metropolitan Water District people. Carl Boronkay. Until he got them to agree, it meant that it couldn't go down all that way. They wouldn't have enough money to finish it. So that was a sticking point. So we had to discuss all of that with Governor Brown. I did.

Lage: You were the one who interviewed Brown on that topic.

11-00:24:46
Chall: Yes, I did. I interviewed Brown twice. The first time, he came to my room in the motel and I interviewed him.

Lage: Oh, in Sacramento?

11-00:24:59
Chall: Yes, in Sacramento. He was there. Well, we went through a lot there. Then he kept saying, "I am so tired." He said, "Last night," I think, "was my birthday. I celebrated my birthday and I was up late, and I'm just so tired." I said to him, "You can't go to sleep now," or something like this, "Governor Brown. We just have to finish this. We have to do this interview." I never thought much about it, except that whoever was doing the transcribing just found this very interesting.

Lage: And funny!

11-00:25:40
Chall: And funny. How could you say this to the governor?

Lage: Right.

11-00:25:44
Chall: But I did. I made him perk up and do the interview. Now, we had a second interview and we made a date, because I was going down there. I don't know, maybe it was a month or so later. Made the date, and he was again, to come to the motel. I stayed in the same motel whenever I was in Los Angeles.

Lage: Now, this was all Los Angeles. We said Sacramento, but after he was governor, he was in Los Angeles.

11-00:26:13
Chall: Yes. Oh, excuse me Los Angeles. No, I think it was not Sacramento.

Lage: Well, we can check that. I'm sure it's in your interview history.

11-00:26:24
Chall: I'm sure it was.

Lage: Because he was the ex-governor, by the time you interviewed him.

11-00:26:27
Chall: He was in Los Angeles, I'm sure.

Lage: Yes. So now let's think about this motel. From what I know about the cost problems at ROHO, interviewers never stayed in very luxurious motels.

11-00:26:44
Chall: No, this was not a luxurious hotel.

Lage: And here you're inviting the ex-governor to come interview in your room in the motel.

11-00:26:51
Chall: It was a nice room, it was a good room, it was a big room. I used to take out the dim lights, because everybody was supposed to be just watching television. I couldn't study. I couldn't do anything. So I learned to bring good lights. And I would take out the little dim ones, I'd put in my own. It was a nice room. I had a table. I could spread out my notes; I could study. So he was to come, but he didn't show up. I finally called him at his office and he said, "Oh, I forgot. Come down here. Come down to the office." So I did. I went down. But I always rented a car. I went down there and we had an interview, whatever it was that I was still working on. I was very impressed with Governor Brown. He wrote a very nice letter thanking me for the interviews, said he was going to use them for a biography or something of that sort. He was good. He was fine.

Lage: Was he forthcoming?

11-00:28:00
Chall: He was. He was. I don't think he ever hesitated in telling me just what it was. And I learned. That's how I learned how we got through the 1958—.

Lage: The water bond—? [Proposition 1 funding the State Water Project passed as a ballot measure in November 1960]

11-00:28:21
Chall: The water issue, how we got through that. So that when it came to interviewing Carl Boronkay many years later—that had to do with, I think, the CVPIA [Central Valley Project Improvement Act] interview—I had a lot behind me.

Lage: A lot of background, right.

11-00:28:37
Chall: Yes, I did.

Lage: And that interview with Brown I think has been quite used. I know *Cadillac Desert* [by Marc Reisner] quoted you.

11-00:28:45
Chall: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Lage: Quoted Brown.

11-00:28:48
Chall: Quoted him, yes, right.

Lage: You asked, why did he want to do the California Water Project? And he answered, something like, So that so many people wouldn't move to Northern California.

11-00:28:57
Chall: Oh, yes. Then I interviewed somebody else later, on one of the other projects, having to do with the Peripheral Canal, during this present Governor Brown's first term.

Lage: Right, the second Governor Brown.

11-00:29:13
Chall: When he was first governor, he tried the Peripheral Canal. So it's an ongoing issue.

Lage: It sure is, it sure is. I don't want to skip around too much, but if you could give some sense of how those large projects were organized. You were not the project director either time.

11-00:29:31
Chall: No. No, I was not. This was really an interesting arrangement, because Gaby and Chita set that up. I think originally, it was Chita and then Gaby came in. Gaby was very good and she could interview. She had some broad knowledge of state government. She was, I think, a League of Women Voters woman, too.

Lage: Another League of Women Voters woman.

11-00:30:02
Chall: That's right. Gaby was a sort of no-nonsense person. So together—.

Lage: Chita was project director—

11-00:30:09
Chall: Yes, she was.

Lage: —and Gaby, project coordinator.

11-00:30:11
Chall: Coordinator. That was a good title.

Lage: She must have made things happen.

11-00:30:15
Chall: She did. They had this second room, as I call it, where they set up—.

Lage: The little room in the back.

11-00:30:26
Chall: In the back. They set up a bank of files. It was probably about the size of about this, maybe from the wall to this picture, or further.

Lage: I remember it as about four file cabinets, maybe four drawers high. Three to four drawers high.

11-00:30:43
Chall: At least. All the way across. And everything in it pertained to the government. Now, when I interviewed—for example, I was interviewing the women political leaders—if Elizabeth Gatov, for example, would've talked, as she did, about Governor Brown, because she knew him well, in some other aspects, or any of the other women did, or anybody else I was interviewing, I just made a note of that, put it in the file under Governor Brown. So we agreed that anything that we were doing that pertained to any of these people who were being interviewed, or the problems of the state at any time, we would put that into the file, so that we could always go to the file and find more information. It was a beautifully organized set. I remember putting things into the file, and I think they put things into the files that I used. It was very good. When it came to water, of course, most of that just stayed in my drawer.

Lage: Right.

11-00:31:52
Chall: But they [Gaby and Chita] were very good together. I think they were the ones who decided what people I would interview that had to do with water policy. Maybe public health. At the time, we were still doing women political leaders, and so I asked Gaby to do some. She also knew some people. There were many, many women done in the women political leaders. I did some, Gaby did some, I think Mimi Stein did some. These were all decided by—. Maybe we all decided it together.

Lage: Was there a smooth interaction between people?

11-00:32:50
Chall: Yes. Yes.

Lage: Why do you think things went smoothly?

11-00:32:56
Chall: I think because we were all capable women who could work on our own, who understood the issues. Sometimes when we didn't understand them, particularly when it came to suffragists—I didn't know anything much about the suffrage movement—I had to learn a lot about that from Chita. So that when I went to interview Jeannette Rankin, I had some background. Even Jeannette Rankin was sort of what we'd call, in these days, an outlier in that area of suffrage movement. But I learned a lot. When it came to water, I was pretty much on my own. But there was so much available. There was a little four- or six-page water magazine—I wouldn't call it a magazine—that would come out. I think it was printed by some important water organization.

Lage: I think we got that for years and years. I can't remember the name, either. [*Western Water*, published by the Water Education Foundation]

11-00:34:08
Chall: It went out for years and years and years, and it was always filed away. I used to read it every—. Well, I had to go back and read a lot of earlier ones, of course, but then I would read the new ones. So I was up-to-date on a lot of water issues. I think they eventually stopped printing that, but it was a vital resource. And of course, the Water Resources office in Berkeley—.

Lage: The archive [Water Resources Center Archives]

11-00:34:38
Chall: The archive.

Lage: We had a close relationship with the archive.

11-00:34:41
Chall: Very close. Now, I can't remember the man—.

Lage: Gerald Giefer.

11-00:34:45
Chall: Yes, Gerry Giefer. He was very close to Willa in history here. And if he felt that somebody should be interviewed, he told her. So that she was ahead on these things.

Lage: Did he help with securing the funding from the—?

11-00:35:02
Chall: Sometimes he may have been able to do that. But he was a very important resource. Whenever I needed to go there and get something out, it was always there. That was an extraordinary resource.

Lage: And then Linda Vida took over from him. Remember Linda Vida?

11-00:35:20
Chall: Yes. Yes, and then of course, the whole thing was just picked up and sent, I think, to—. Oh, where was it, Riverside?

Lage: UC Riverside.

11-00:35:31
Chall: So that was kind of a shock. But at least it all went together. I don't think anything was left out. And that's where everything, all the research materials that I had in my drawer all these years, I just—.

Lage: You sent over to them?

11-00:35:46
Chall: Oh, yes. There were a couple of boxes. Yes.

Lage: Yes. Oh, yes, wonderful.

11-00:35:51
Chall: Yes, that was a good relationship with Gerry Giefer, and important.

Lage: I'm going to go back a little bit to the Knight-Brown project.

11-00:35:58
Chall: Yes. That's all right.

Lage: Just the project as a whole, and talk about some of the people who came into the office at that time. We had Chita and Gaby, and then Sarah Sharp, James Rowland, and that's when Julie Shearer appeared. Do you remember their involvement?

11-00:36:18
Chall: Yes. Sarah Sharp, she was important to this because she, I believe, was already a PhD.

Lage: Right. I wonder if that was the first PhD in our office.

11-00:36:36
Chall: I think so. I think so.

Lage: Yes. Was her PhD in government, politics?

11-00:36:42
Chall: I believe it had to do with environment, forest history. I'm not sure exactly what it was, but she was able to handle whatever was given to her to do. She was very smart. We had another young woman who came in. I believe maybe she was getting a PhD. She was interested in women's history, and I think she may have come in to do typing. I don't remember her name; I just remember that she was very capable, and I think she was given some interviews to do. She had a fatal accident.

Lage: I remember that.

11-00:37:36
Chall: She and I were planning an article on women that she had an idea about, and we had begun to set it up in some way. She was ready to cross the street, standing on the sidewalk, when a car got out of control and hit her.

Lage: Right on Shattuck Avenue.

11-00:38:01
Chall: Yes. Oh.

Lage: I have her name here, Catherine Scholten.

11-00:38:06
Chall: Yes. Really tragic.

Lage: Oh, yes.

11-00:38:10
Chall: Gaby and I went together and sat for about an hour in the hospital, in the lobby of the hospital, just kind of meditating for her. But she just didn't—

Lage: She didn't survive. So sad.

11-00:38:29
Chall: For me, it was a deep gap in what was available for ROHO at that time.

Lage: Right, right. Yes, and Sarah got a professorship in the Midwest, I believe.

11-00:38:44
Chall: Yes, moved away.

Lage: The other PhD was Susan Schrepfer. She's the one that was in the environmental field.

11-00:38:51
Chall: Oh, that's Susan, yes. Okay, I remember. That's right . So Sarah Sharp, I don't remember; what was she?

Lage: I think it was government and politics.

11-00:39:00
Chall: It might've been. Of course, Jim Rowland was the only man we had on our staff who did any interviewing, for years and years.

Lage: Years and years. Do you remember about him? I never got to know him.

11-00:39:12
Chall: Not very well. I'm not sure, but he didn't last very long.

Lage: And Julie.

11-00:39:21
Chall: Julie Shearer. Now, I don't know whether she did any interviews in the Brown—.

Lage: She did, she did, yes.

11-00:39:29
Chall: Okay. You probably have all that, because I have only what I did, my material.

Lage: Okay. Well, is there any other thing about the Pat Brown series that you want to talk about? Did you work on finishing up those interviews, or did Gaby sort of take care of that?

11-00:39:53
Chall: I don't think I had to finish up any of those. Not those; I had to finish my own and some that Mimi Stein did, I think for women political leaders. She did a few women political leaders, and I had a couple of others, of people who left, whose interviews I finished. But no, I think it was well run. Of course, they wanted to do Ronald Reagan, you understand. But Reagan did not work with them in any way. But they went on anyway, to do people in his administration. So again, I did some water and few other topics. So the Reagan era, in terms of administration, which is really what they were after, is the administration of the governors. So even though Reagan wouldn't participate, we did get people who did.

Lage: It was a huge project, yes.

11-00:41:01
Chall: It was very good.

Lage: Do you remember any of the politics behind getting the funding for these? I recall that some of the other oral history programs in the state were sort of resentful—

11-00:41:17
Chall: Oh, yes.

Lage: —that our office had done the Warren and the Knight-Brown, with some state funding.

11-00:41:23
Chall: Yes. Ultimately, if we were going to go on with it, we had to divide up the projects, so that Southern California would get some, middle California would get others. But listen, that was really—.

Lage: UCLA.

11-00:41:48
Chall: UCLA.

Lage: Claremont Colleges—

11-00:41:50
Chall: Claremont.

Lage: —and CSU Fullerton and UC Davis, too, I guess.

11-00:41:50
Chall: That's right. That's right. We did have to divide the spoils, as it were.

Lage: Do you remember anything about coordinating that? Or was that really not your bailiwick?

11-00:42:06
Chall: I didn't have to do any of that, but I do remember, of course, that it was a knotty—K-N-O-T-T-Y—problem, because we'd never faced this kind of scrutiny before. It never occurred to us. But you see, they were up-and-coming. UCLA, I'm not sure they really cared, because they were doing mostly interviews having to do with the theater, movies. They didn't do a lot of political interviews. They did some, I think; but that wasn't their main concern. Still, we were taking over—. If I were going down to Los Angeles to interview Governor Brown and a Rabbi Magnin and some of these other folks who belonged to Los Angeles, well, they didn't really care that it happened to

be our Jewish history project or something of that sort. No, we were in their territory. I think that had a lot to do with it, eventually. But Willa never gave up. I think that Chita and Gaby—. Maybe Chita might've been gone by this time.

Lage: Well, she still had her hand in, though.

11-00:43:27
Chall: Yes, yes.

Lage: Chita was never really gone.

11-00:43:29
Chall: That's right, Chita was never gone.

Lage: She was always on the staff.

11-00:43:33
Chall: That's right.

Lage: And turning in some hours, so she could keep on the staff, for years and years.

11-00:43:35
Chall: That's right, that's right. Yes, that's right.

Lage: And doing our contacts in Washington.

11-00:43:43
Chall: Yes, she was. Yes, she was. I must say, because I don't want to forget it, that Chita was so bright, so friendly, so upbeat about everything. She called every one of her interviewees, and even her men who were older men with high positions in the state, she always called them by their first name—until Earl Warren. Never called him by his first name. I always thought Chita was just—.

Lage: You noticed that.

11-00:44:22
Chall: I did notice that, because I never called anyone by his or her first name, until some of the women just would introduce themselves as whatever they were, their first name.

Lage: Oh, isn't that interesting? Even though you became friends with many of these.

11-00:44:37
Chall: Yes, I did; but initially, I never called them by their first name.

Lage: In letters and—.

11-00:44:41
Chall: And never the men. *Never* the men. I never called T.J. Kent by his first name. *Never*. But they always called me by my first name. Always.

Lage: It's interesting, because that kind of, I think people might say, in the world today, this would indicate a power dynamic.

11-00:45:06
Chall: Mm-hm. It could, it could. I think maybe initially, they may have called me Mrs. Chall; but I think *always*, they called me by my first name.

Lage: [interview interruption] When you started up, were you mainly interviewing older people, older than yourself?

11-00:45:34
Chall: Oh, yes.

Lage: Do you remember when that shifted, and you were then interviewing your age mates, who had the same cultural experiences growing up? Then eventually, you were interviewing much younger people. Did that ever enter your—?

11-00:45:51
Chall: Some of the women political leaders were my age. Several of them were. I would guess that most of them were about my age. Might've been a little older. I think some of the men I interviewed later, in the Baumberg Tract interviews and this CVPIA, were my age.

Lage: Or younger.

11-00:46:27
Chall: Not my age, younger than I. I looked at their dates yesterday, to see what the age difference was, and I realized that some of them were younger.

Lage: Do you think that affected the way the interview went at all?

11-00:46:43
Chall: No, because they were concerned about the story. If it had to do with the Miller-Bradley Bill [Senator Bill Bradley and Congressman George Miller], or Seymour [Senator John Seymour, Republican from California], all of whom were involved with the election of the first President Bush—. [interview interruption]

Lage: Okay, Malca. We had a little interruption there, with a phone call. I want to go back to the water interviews you did during the Reagan era.

11-00:47:26
Chall: All right.

Lage: I remember most vividly Mr. [William] Gianelli, who I think was quite a character. Or was he?

11-00:47:34
Chall: I don't recall. Now, I notice that he was about my age. But I never, never thought about age, ever, in the interviews. I just noticed it now, that he was born about a year before I was born. Otherwise, these were gentlemen of note, and I was interviewing them. You have to remember that I had interviewed people when I was working for the War Labor Board, who came from different parts of the labor and industry spectrum, and I was just twenty-four years old about that time. So I guess I never gave a thought to age or the fact that I was a woman interviewing these men. I just never thought about it.

Lage: Right. But do you think they thought about it? You didn't get feedback? People, especially in this earlier era, treated women sometimes with kind of a pat on the head.

11-00:48:48
Chall: I never felt that way. I think they respected us. I think by this time, ROHO was a respected institution. This whole government documentation had some merit. So I think they were interviewed because they agreed.

Lage: They were often flattered to be chosen to be interviewed.

11-00:49:14
Chall: Yes. Yes. Now, Gianelli went back a long way in water.

Lage: He had really had to encounter a lot—. That's when the environmental movement was strong.

11-00:49:29
Chall: Yes.

Lage: He had Ike [Norman B.] Livermore as his boss.

11-00:49:35
Chall: I see. You may remember something—.

Lage: Oh, I probably remember. Ike Livermore was kind of his enemy in the cabinet.

11-00:49:42
Chall: I see. I remember that, in the north, people who were concerned about water issues thought Carl Boronkay, head of the Metropolitan Water District, was an ogre. When I met him, he was not an ogre. Of course, he had retired by that time. But these men were not ogres. They were there because they were there to do a job, and the Metropolitan Water District was tough and big. But with Gianelli, I don't remember a great deal. I can see that I interviewed him on a number of major subjects. But what I had remembered was, either in an

interview that had been done by somebody else with him or something that I saw in a news clip, I'm not sure, or maybe in that water magazine that came out, he had said that it was—I don't know whether he put it as a crime—for good water to go into the sea.

Lage: Right, waste into the sea.

11-00:51:01
Chall: Waste into the sea. I always thought that was quite a statement. So I asked him, "Do you still believe that?" He said he did, and explained why. Now, that is still an issue here. So whether it goes into the sea or whether it goes down into the agriculture, down into the ground, that's a whole other—.

Lage: Or a new reservoir. I think it was during Gianelli's time that the first successful challenge to the California Water Project occurred [the successful opposition to the Dos Rios Dam on the Eel River].

11-00:51:34
Chall: Yes. See, one of the great issues for a long, long time was the Central Arizona Project. The Central Arizona Project was like the project that Governor Brown did, the [California] State Water Project. Until they [Arizona] could figure out exactly what water from Arizona—

Lage: From the Colorado River.

11-00:52:08
Chall: —the Colorado River, could come down for use in Arizona. It was called the "long suit," it was a legal issue. In this little magazine I would read every month, the "long suit." That was that we could take a lot of water from Arizona, until Arizona got its project. It took years. Then we knew we were going to lose a lot of water– hundreds of acre feet.

Lage: But Southern California, primarily.

11-00:52:42
Chall: Southern California was. So this was always in the offing. The whole subject was so complicated. Every time I studied water, I realized how little I understood.

Lage: Who does? Now, you were able to work the BCDC [Bay Conservation and Development Commission] interviews in under the Reagan era project.

11-00:53:11
Chall: Yes.

Lage: And you did some interviews with BCDC people.

11-00:53:15
Chall: That's because I guess we were interested in how they started to organize. The reason that I knew BCDC was because I interviewed the three women who had founded Save San Francisco Bay, and as a result of their work with the legislature at that time, BCDC was set up.

Lage: Right.

11-00:53:43
Chall: Okay. So whoever was supposed to be the director of it was a very important person, because they had the lock on what could happen to the bay. I interviewed, I guess it was John Tooker [director of Office of Planning and Research in Governor Reagan's office]. But eventually, I interviewed, yes, Melvin Lane.

Lage: Right.

11-00:54:19
Chall: And Clement Shute and Joseph Bodovitz.

Lage: Yes. You may not know, but now Martin [Meeker] has been interviewing Joseph Bodovitz.

11-00:54:32
Chall: Really?

Lage: Isn't that good, because he went on to be executive director of the Coastal Commission, which we hadn't interviewed him about.

11-00:54:37
Chall: That's right. Oh, very good. Yes, he was an important person. These were important interviews, at that time. Of course, Senator Eugene McAteer, the one who worked on the legislation.

Lage: Did you interview him?

11-00:54:56
Chall: No. I don't know if anybody did. I'm sure somebody must have.

Lage: Oh, I think he passed away.

11-00:55:01
Chall: Might have.

Lage: I think he did, early on.

11-00:55:03
Chall: I don't know that anybody ever interviewed Senator [Nicholas C.] Petris.

Lage: Oh, yes. Gaby interviewed him, at some point.

11-00:55:11
Chall: Oh, good, because he was a very important in terms of his relationship with the governors and the senate. He'd been there a long, long time, had a long record. Very liberal, all that goes with it. Yes, he was one of the people that I voted for, before they changed the—

Lage: The district lines.

11-00:55:41
Chall: Interestingly enough, I used to go door to door for him, when I was not on the League of Women Voters board. Every few years, or about once a year, he would send out a Christmas card with a Greek recipe. Sometimes it was for cake, sometimes it was something else. They were very good. Many years later, I saw him at a Democratic party function that every year, they have here in Hayward. I saw him and I said, "I haven't received any of your recipes for a long time." He said, "Oh, well, you want me to send you some? Just put your name down here." I didn't, but they were good.

Lage: Yes. Well, he was very proud of his heritage, his Greek heritage.

11-00:56:36
Chall: He was, he was.

Lage: Tell me how you got to interview the Save the Bay ladies. Was that funded by the Water Resources Center?

11-00:56:48
Chall: We actually had to get money from San Francisco Foundation. These women were able to persuade the San Francisco Foundation, because I think one of them may have been on its board, to provide funds. Also Save the Bay itself provided some funding. That was about it.

Lage: Were they forthcoming?

11-00:57:13
Chall: Oh, they were very good. They were so good.

Lage: Tell me a little bit more about that.

11-00:57:20
Chall: We had out interviews around a breakfast table, in the Kerr house in—.

Lage: Was it El Cerrito?

11-00:57:36
Chall: No, Kensington.

Lage: In Kensington. This is Kay [Catherine] Kerr we're talking about.

11-00:57:40
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Wife of the president of the university.

11-00:57:43
Chall: Wife of the president of the university. [Clark Kerr]

Lage: I'm going to stop, because I see I need to change the tape.

Audiofile 12

Lage: We're back on, after a change of tape. We were talking about the Save the Bay women.

12-00:00:05
Chall: Oh, yes. All right.

Lage: You were telling me a little bit about meeting in Kay Kerr's home.

12-00:00:11
Chall: Yes. Well, President Kerr was living in a lovely home in Kensington, and he wouldn't move to the Blake House, or wherever the president was supposed to live at that time.

Lage: Yes, which was the president's house.

12-00:00:26
Chall: So I think they remodeled their home a bit, so maybe they could have receptions, I don't know. But they had a lovely sort of a breakfast room, I guess you'd call it. Beautiful windows looking out into their lovely back garden, and a round table, near the kitchen. So the three women and I would be at that table, and we had tea. I don't remember whether anything went with the tea, but there was always a pot of tea there.

Lage: Let's just mention the three women.

12-00:01:06
Chall: Oh, yes. Kay Kerr and Sylvia McLaughlin—

Lage: And Esther Gulick.

12-00:01:14
Chall: —and Esther Gulick. They were very close friends. Of course, they had put all this together. I did as much research as I possibly could, from the records that were already in Save the Bay.

Lage: So you went down to Save the Bay—?

12-00:01:36
Chall: Yes, somehow I got what I needed for questions. Now, mostly, I didn't know anything. That's where it was. I just was learning from them.

Lage: But you had lived through it, too.

12-00:01:51
Chall: Yes, I had. That's true. That's true. So we sat around. I think I did at least three interviews with them. They gave each other opportunities to talk. Very excited about the early days, how difficult it was to have anybody pay any attention to them at all. They would try the Sierra Club and other organizations, and bring their concerns to them and they would say, "Oh, yes, we need to do something." But they [the women] couldn't get anybody to set up something so that they could have money, put out newsletters, whatever it was. Nobody would work, nobody would move. I guess they finally did it themselves. The next was to get Senator McAteer and others to listen to them, pay attention. They finally did.

Lage: How did they impress you as people?

12-00:03:01
Chall: Oh, smart ladies, smart women, yes. Really dedicated. Being a dedicated public servant, I just admire them. Now, I knew a little bit about Kay Kerr already, because she had been on a committee having to do with enlarging the East Bay Regional Park District—is that what it's called? My husband, Harold, had been on that same committee. I don't know how he was appointed; maybe the Audubon Society had put him on that committee. But he and Kay Kerr walked around together and helped think about it together, so he already knew her. I, of course, knew Clark Kerr, by this time, quite well, so it was nice to be there. But Sylvia McLaughlin and Esther Gulick, they were so bonded with one another and what they did. They told me, I remember, that when they first had to go to the state assembly, I guess— or maybe it was an administrative body , someplace they had to go in the state government—to argue their case, and they didn't even know what an andronimous fish, is it called?

Lage: Anadromous?

12-00:04:30
Chall: Anadromous fish. They didn't know these words, either. They had to learn them. They had to learn everything they could about water and the bay and

things that they knew they had to know, because they were going to have to answer questions. And they were just three women: "What were they doing in our territory?" as it were. So they fought.

Lage: They really were a group. They did a remarkable job.

12-00:05:00
Chall: They did. They were remarkable, and they achieved more than they ever thought they would achieve. They did achieve it. So that's memorable.

Lage: I know that the other side of Kay Kerr's house had a view of the bay. Am I right about that? She looked out on the bay?

12-00:05:20
Chall: Very possibly.

Lage: She was up on a hill and—?

12-00:05:22
Chall: Yes, they were on a hill, and it was a very nice—.

Lage: And Sylvia McLaughlin's home looked out on the bay.

12-00:05:28
Chall: Yes. Well, I was only in her home once, for a reception that she had given for T.J. Kent and a few others. But these women were exceptional. And they had such a good time in this interview. Sylvia McLaughlin wrote me such a nice letter afterwards, thanking me for being their interviewer. That was sweet of her to do that. But they really did have a good time. And it's very important, because that is it. That is it. When they did this story of the bay, which is now a public television production on DVD, they're in there. It's so nice to hear their voices. Some of the quotes may have been taken from the ROHO interview or others, and they may have been interviewed other times, when—.

Lage: Well, they certainly went back to Sylvia McLaughlin, but—

12-00:06:45
Chall: Yes, they did.

Lage: —I don't think they—. Esther Gulick had passed away.

12-00:06:48
Chall: Yes, rather soon afterwards.

Lage: Kay Kerr, I don't think wanted to be interviewed for that program.

12-00:06:53
Chall: Probably not. Now, Kay Kerr was a woman who had severe arthritis for a long, long time. But she did very well. There was no problem at all about interviewing her. It was good. They deserved it, and I'm glad that the San Francisco Foundation was willing to back it, finance it.

Lage: Okay, so that's great. Let's talk a little bit maybe more about other water projects. Would CVPIA be the next one to talk about?

12-00:07:31
Chall: Well, yes. You want to go back, eventually, to Paul Taylor, but we can do the CVPIA. Now, the CVPIA, I knew it was going to be a game changer, because it was set up in such a way that we were now supposed to consider the fish and the environment. Not just water going from here to there, but what happens to the fish, what's going on in the delta—a whole change. I could see this coming. Well, you just needed to read the newspaper.

Lage: Right. Let me just get the full name. Central Valley Project Improvement Act, which happened in 1992. That was a federal act that, as you say, was the first time that the environment and the fish received some standing, perhaps.

12-00:08:29
Chall: Yes, the environment came in. It was a bill that was sponsored by Senator [Bill] Bradley [from New Jersey] and—.

Lage: And Congressman Miller, George Miller.

12-00:08:47
Chall: And Congressman Miller. Yes. Now, Congressman George Miller was a very astute congressman, and he really understood California and water issues and other things of this kind, because he'd been around for a long time. He, from what I understand from interviewing one of his staff, eventually, he could just promote almost anything and he would be elected. He had a really fine following, and he cared.

Lage: He also had a tie to the delta. That was his district.

12-00:09:30
Chall: Yes, that's right.

Lage: So he cared a lot about the delta.

12-00:09:32
Chall: Yes. To get Bradley on was, I guess, a coup.

Lage: I wonder what Bradley's interest was, coming from the East Coast.

12-00:09:46
Chall: I'm not going to remember now.

Lage: You didn't interview him?

12-00:09:52
Chall: No, I didn't.

Lage: They weren't the people you interviewed.

12-00:09:55
Chall: I didn't, because I interviewed enough about them. What I had to interview were the people who were most active in California. So Tom Graff and David Yardas were with the Environmental Defense Fund here. Then I interviewed a member of the staff of Senator [John] Seymour, Richard Golb.

Lage: Did you interview Senator Seymour [Republican from California] himself?

12-00:10:31
Chall: No. This was a hard-fought issue.

Lage: How did you choose who you wanted to interview?

12-00:10:49
Chall: Well, I guess I must've been reading enough to know who was on various—.

Lage: Kind of behind the scenes, though.

12-00:10:58
Chall: Behind the scenes.

Lage: You got behind the scenes.

12-00:11:16
Chall: Yes, and one thing sort of leads to another. I don't know why I started with Tom Graff. I'm not sure why I started there, but I think that I did. Those were the first interviews I did. The two of them had worked on this for so long, and they wanted to be interviewed together. Yes, Thomas Graff and David Yardas. Now, they were considerably younger than I.

Lage: I went back and had the chance to do a whole long interview with Tom Graff.

12-00:12:05
Chall: Yes, you did, with Tom Graff. Very good interviewee.

Lage: You interviewed Barry Nelson and Jason Peltier. They were kind of on opposite sides of the issue.

12-00:12:18
Chall: Say those two names again to me.

Lage: Jason Peltier and Barry Nelson.

12-00:12:29
Chall: Well, Barry Nelson had been a long-time head of the Save the Bay. He started with Save the Bay. I'm not sure, at this time, whether he was with Save the Bay or not; I think he was not. But of course, he had been very active in this.

Lage: So you were getting kind of the two sides, right?

12-00:12:56
Chall: Oh, well, you have to.

Lage: Right.

12-00:12:59
Chall: Richard Golb, he was the legislative assistant to Senator Seymour. Who was the other name that you had given to me? Peltier.

Lage: Yes, Peltier. What was his role?

12-00:13:13
Chall: Well, Peltier's still around. He had to do with the State Water Project. I'm not sure right now [looks at list of interviews]. Here he is. He was the manager of the Central Valley Project Water Association. That's no small job.

Lage: No.

12-00:13:38
Chall: Right now, he has another important position. I keep seeing his name in the news, with respect to the Westlands Water District.

Lage: Oh, that's such an important—.

12-00:13:57
Chall: So it's all part of the same thing. These people could talk about John Seymour, Stuart Somach. Thomas Graff, and Pete Wilson. They were all involved in this major—. It was a *major* battle.

Lage: Two things about it impressed me. One, it was extremely complicated.

12-00:14:27
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Two, it was very contemporary. You were interviewing about things that had very recently happened—

12-00:14:23
Chall: That's right.

Lage: —and perhaps were likely to shift.

12-00:14:37
Chall: Yes.

Lage: How did you handle that? That's a difficult thing to do, I think.

12-00:14:42
Chall: Well, at that time, it [the legislation] was done. What I wanted to do was get it— the background— the back story as it were.

Lage: Get this particular passage of this legislation.

12-00:14:51
Chall: That's right. Because it was so—. I shouldn't say life-threatening, but in a way, it was life-threatening to the two sides on it, particularly for the Westlands Water District and the people in the field of agriculture here. Of course, one of the earliest battles had to do with the river, I think, between the state of Oregon and California. I think the Klamath River. It had to do, very early, with the salmon run there. And of course, it has to do with the delta. Shortly after, we began to have these battles, legal battles related to water, fish, agriculture. We're still having them. But these folks—the Miller-Bradley people and those on the side of the CVPIA that won the battle—they continued to be so proud of themselves that a few years later, they had a special meeting in one of the hotels in San Francisco. They all spoke. They were so very proud of what they had accomplished and how it had been done. I think, also, maybe Peltier and the others had been there to speak on their side. I almost have a feeling that Senator Bradley showed up. I almost think he did.

Lage: Was this a place where you presented the oral history?

12-00:16:45
Chall: No, this was their own project.

Lage: Just kind of a celebration of the legislation?

12-00:16:52
Chall: It was a celebration. I forget exactly what time it was, how many years had passed. Maybe five.

Lage: Did you go to that?

12-00:17:01
Chall: I did. I did. What was interesting about it is that one of my interviewees on the other side, I believe, knew that I was there, brought his interview, and wanted me to sign it.

Lage: How lovely!

12-00:17:20
Chall: Wasn't that interesting? And write a little something. I was so taken that I don't even think that I wrote it legibly or said anything worth knowing. But it was impressive. He was on the other side, as I recall it. So I interviewed people on both sides. I just would go from one to another with the notes, because I learned; I was learning all the time.

Lage: How much did you challenge your interviewees?

12-00:17:50
Chall: I would challenge. Sometimes, Richard Golb. I would challenge some of them to find out exactly how Senator Seymour was working on this.

Lage: Did you take what one person said and then use it to develop the questions for another?

12-00:18:08
Chall: Yes. Yes, I could do that, and I did. It was contentious.

Lage: Did they mind if you—

12-00:18:18
Chall: No, I don't think so.

Lage: —kept the contention alive?

12-00:18:20
Chall: No. No. I do remember how careful Richard Golb was. Now, he's a very young man. He had an important position with Senator Seymour. He wasn't going to downgrade Senator Seymour, whatever mistakes he probably did or didn't make. I don't think he made any. It was just the times were just against him. But he was very careful to state where they were at that time, how they felt. He was careful about how he spoke.

Lage: Well, did you try to get through that, to get him to drop some of his guard?

12-00:19:02
Chall: No, I didn't. No. Because I asked him the question, he carefully answered the question. It's like asking Mr. Gianelli, do you still believe that water is wasted if it goes into the sea? It's like asking that question. You believed it; do you still believe it? That's a sort of question that has to be answered.

Lage: Right. It's challenging, but on the other hand—.

12-00:19:30
Chall: It's a challenging question; but it's still an obvious question that one should ask. The same with these people, whoever they were, that I was interviewing. Richard Golb, I remember. Peltier. These were all good interviewees. Jason Peltier, Barry Nelson, Stuart Somach.

Lage: Oh, here's another one. Daniel Beard.

12-00:20:08
Chall: Daniel Beard was a good interviewee, because Daniel Beard had been on the staff, I think, of Miller.

Lage: Yes, long-time assistant to Congressman Miller.

12-00:20:17
Chall: Yes. So he was the one who could—. You see, I got enough information about Congressman Miller so that I didn't feel that I needed to go out to Washington DC, take a trip.

Stuart Somach was an attorney, I believe, on the side of, working with, John Seymour. I can see from the material here that I got a lot of information from him. He could talk about Somach, Graff, and he could talk about Carl Boronkay, the Metropolitan Water District, because they were all involved, and he was very good about talking about—.

Lage: Did they show respect for one another as they talked, or was there animosity?

12-00:21:48
Chall: No, I think they did show respect. I was surprised, too, how much I was able to get—or I think I was able to get—in about ninety-nine pages per interviewee. So many of these were short interviews, maybe just three or four hours, I realize. But then when I see the information that came out, there's a lot.

Lage: Yes. Well, there's a skill to that, on the part of the interviewer—

12-00:22:20
Chall: Yes.

Lage: —to get a lot in a brief time.

12-00:22:24
Chall: By this time, you see, I knew—. Graff and Yardas gave me a great deal of it. Theirs was a fairly long interview, as I recall, 133 pages, because they were there right up to the very last minute. They had helped start it. They had irons in the fire all over the state and all over Washington. Other than that, I think

then they were all a little shorter. Barry Nelson was ninety-seven pages, Peltier eighty-four. So those are about three hours, I think. So you get what you need, at point. Apparently—I hope—they got enough, each one on his own side. By this time, you know what it is. It's an area that is just full of information. Congressional Records are there. You don't have to deal with a lot of it; you just let them deal with the personal, the issues as they faced them.

Lage: Right, their motivations, their personal insights.

12-00:23:43
Chall: Yes. Then there's all this other research material that's available.

Lage: Well, that's interesting. That's part of the process of planning. What are you going to get that's not already in the record?

12-00:23:57
Chall: Yes. Now I don't even remember an awful lot of what I wanted to know. The major final interview, I think, on this whole issue and all of the others that came, was with the California State Archives State Government Oral History Program.

Lage: That was kind of a successor to our series on the gubernatorial administrations.

12-00:24:40
Chall: It was a successor. I really don't know how this came about, but it was a lucky thing. David Schuster was the major figure that I interviewed. He sealed it until January 2005. I'm not even sure that it was unsealed.

Lage: Who was he?

12-00:25:00
Chall: He was with the US Bureau of Reclamation. That's a federal agency. And he had a major role, from 1965 to 1982. So he's a major figure in anything that had to do with water. He was the California State Water Contractors general manager, from '82 to '89. So if anybody should've been interviewed on water, that was one, and he agreed.

Lage: He was sort of on the side of the water users, the agriculturalists.

12-00:25:32
Chall: Yes, that's basically it. But he knew everything. More than I knew.

Lage: And did he tell everything?

12-00:25:40
Chall: More than I knew.

Lage: Well, hopefully most of them knew more than you knew.

12-00:25:44
Chall: He had an office, I believe, in a hotel of some kind in Sacramento. He moved around a bit. I would drive there. I think I must've interviewed him about five times. He was a very able, knowledgeable sort of—. Well, I wouldn't say he was nervous; he was active. He would pace. Rarely ever sat down. He would pace, and he would smoke. I guess the transcribers could hear this, taking a puff. But I never thought about it; I just think that was his way. I could ask him all kinds of questions. I had outlines. He could talk, because he knew the subject. But when it came to putting it all together, editing it, it was a very difficult editing job. I did it, sent it to him. Now, this was a long interview, say ten to twelve hours. You know what that would be like. Because I think I went there at least three times, and those are at least five hours. One time I went there and he wasn't there. He had not forgotten to call me and tell me that he was going to Washington. I stayed outside of his office for a couple of hours, just waiting. Finally, one of the people from the hotel came out and said, "You've been here a long time. What is it that you need?" I told them, so they got hold of whatever phone records they had and they said, "Well, he went to Washington." Well, it wasn't his fault. I didn't have a message machine at that time. So that prompted me to get a message machine.

Lage: Oh, interesting. When was that interview, in the nineties?

12-00:28:03
Chall: It was in 1991, 1992. When he saw the edited transcript, he was appalled. He called me back or wrote a letter—I'm not sure what I've got in the files—"You just let me talk and talk. There's just more than I can do. I can't handle this; I don't have time. Just not going to do anything with it. That's it." So I asked Willa, "What do we do with this?" We decided that he could seal it, and that he probably would never do anything with it. So you might want to ask.

Lage: I'll check and see if it's sealed.

12-00:28:53
Chall: 2005 is a long time ago, ten years ago.

Lage: Sometimes they wait until someone requests it. Because in the catalog record, it says, sealed until 2005. So if someone requests it, then—.

12-00:29:03
Chall: Oh, I would think that eventually, somebody would request this interview.

Lage: I'll check on it. I'll check on it.

12-00:29:1
Chall: There's a lot in it. There's just everything in there. He was an interesting person. Actually, I was called back from my so-called first retirement—

although we never retired—I was called back to do Rita Singer, and then David Schuster.

Lage: Now, Rita Singer was also an interviewee on water?

12-00:29:34
Chall: Yes. I don't know who it was who said that she must be interviewed, whether it was Tom Graff or somebody within the state administration of water.

Lage: Was she in the Department of Water Resources?

12-00:29:50
Chall: She had been. She started out as a US Attorney, with the Department of the Interior. Then she was with the California Department of Water Resources, from 1977, it says, "to the present."

Lage: Oh, wow. Yes.

12-00:30:04
Chall: But she was very important in negotiating contracts for the Westland Water District.

Lage: Ah-ha.

12-00:30:20
Chall: She also had a very interesting background in legal work for the Farm Security Administration, prior to that. She was an attorney. I was interviewing her in 1991, about things that went a long way back. Negotiating contracts for the Westland Water District, that was a long time ago, so she had a real difficulty remembering all that far back. But her interview was short; it was very interesting. All that is available in the record. So after that, I think I did Schuster. Or within the same time frame.

Lage: Yes, those were your two State Archives projects.

12-00:31:09
Chall: Yes. I don't know how that came about, because—.

Lage: Well, maybe you initiated it. The office had money to do state government interviews.

12-00:31:17
Chall: I didn't initiate these. I was brought back to do Singer, and I didn't even know who she was.

Lage: Oh, I see, someone else chose her.

12-00:31:29
Chall: Somebody said, “She must be interviewed.” I didn’t know her. I knew the Westlands Water District, but I didn’t know anything about what it meant legally to do it. I had interviewed these administrators. That’s a whole other story. Then with respect to Schuster, I’m not even sure I knew anything about him. I think in both cases, I was told to interview these folks.

Lage: That’s interesting. Well, since you brought it up—this is a little off the topic, but talk some about how nobody ever retired at ROHO. [they laugh] And why.

12-00:32:09
Chall: Well, because Willa never allowed anybody to retire, and nobody ever did. They just said, “Well, I’m retiring. I’m leaving.”

Lage: But you did put in for retirement and got retirement, your official retirement.

12-00:32:26
Chall: I put in retirement; I’m not sure that it was official, because I don’t know whether all those papers were signed. I think if I go back in the record, I noticed that they were retired but on call.

Lage: Yes, retired but called back.

12-00:32:44
Chall: But called back. So you never left, until you left. So we were called back.

Lage: Was Willa persuasive in saying, we need you for this and that?

12-00:32:55
Chall: I don’t know. I think that’s how everybody did it. So I did it. I think I had maybe three years.1989 to about 1991, maybe. Yes, about three years. Then Rita Singer had to interviewed, whoever she was to me. I didn’t know who she was. She has to be interviewed. So okay, come back and do it.

Lage: Then you did the CVPIA after that.

12-00:33:31
Chall: Yes, then I was there, and then I thought, oh, my goodness. Then the CVPIA material was—. It was just all over the news; it was that important. And there was the Miller and Bradley bill, and Senator Seymour. This was major news. You could read what the bill was all about. I just thought, this is absolutely changing the whole water project, the whole water system, so we’d better do this.

Lage: So you did that.

12-00:34:04
Chall: I asked for it and I got it.

Lage: Then you did the Baumberg Tract interviews.

12-00:34:08
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Now, how did those come about? You initiated that.

12-00:34:14
Chall: I initiated that. I knew that I'm about ready to leave. That was right here in my backyard. I knew Mr. [John M.] Thorpe, the attorney and builder. He lived right above my house in Castro Valley, on a hill. I knew him, I knew his wife.

Lage: Did you know them personally?

12-00:34:41
Chall: Yes, more or less. But I knew him personally, also because he had a beautiful old Victorian house on Hesperian Boulevard, where everything else was a little cottage, barely one story. Tiny little cottage, and there was this old historic building, I think two or three stories high. A *beautiful* piece of Victorian architecture, and painted blue. You could not miss it. That was where he had his very fine office. Below, in a sort of first floor basement, he had, oh, half a dozen vintage cars. But he was a very good citizen. When the Emergency Shelter Program needed a place to have a fundraiser, we had a fundraiser in that space. So I did know him.

Lage: Yes. Give a little background. What were you investigating with the Baumberg Tract interviews?

12-00:35:52
Chall: Well, he had a great idea to take a piece of the Hayward waterfront, which was not just water; it was wetlands. What do you do with wetlands? Had a great idea. He was going to use that space, build a racetrack there, because the racetracks in both Albany, I guess it is, and across the bay, he knew that they were soon going to stop racing over there; they were going to close up. That's what he said and what he thought, and I guess other people did, too. So he was going to build a racetrack there, and a hotel and whatever else would be needed for this great plan, on these wetlands. Well, of course, we had very good, by this time, strong environmental organizations. We had the Audubon Society, had various other organizations that I don't recall. Hayward Area Shoreline Planning Agency, HASPA.

Lage: Well, Save the Bay must've gotten in on it, at some point.

12-00:37:05
Chall: I don't know. It may have. But there was the Hayward HASPA. My friends were in there, my friends were in the Audubon Society. My friends were fighting Thorpe. There were people on either side—there were attorneys, there

were the Cargill people—and I knew these people. And there was the professor here.

Lage: [Howard L.] Cogswell?

12-00:37:49
Chall: Cogswell. He lived just down the street here. I knew him from the Audubon Society. They were all in battle here. And it had been frozen. Thorpe lost the bid, after a lot of—. Now, the newspapers, I had the *Daily Review*; it was full of it. So I had clipped and clipped and clipped, over the years.

Lage: You were famous for clipping newspapers—

12-00:38:18
Chall: I clipped.

Lage: —and sending them to all of us, very helpfully.

12-00:38:24
Chall: I had a great deal of material, I knew these people, and I thought, in terms of saving the bay, here is another example of saving the bay. Why don't I see if I can do that one? I called the water people.

Lage: The Water Resources Center [Center for Water and Wildland Resources]?

12-00:38:46
Chall: Water Resources. They knew who I was, practically on a first-name basis, and they said yes. They said yes, so I just went to work. That was not difficult; but I did have to find the other side. I had to find other people.

Lage: Right. Well, you had Mr. Thorpe himself.

12-00:39:11
Chall: I did. Now, it was called the Baumberg Tract, at that time. Janice Delfino was a friend of mine; we had children in grade school together. When I was working with the parents club in charge of the library, I induced Janice Delfino to be on my committee. She had never spoken a word in public. She was my great birder. She taught me all about birds in my area. We would go walking together. But then when she got going on the environment, she was such a fighter. She was great. So I interviewed her, I interviewed Howard Cogswell, I interviewed all these and I interviewed Roberta [G.] Cooper. I didn't know her. She was the mayor of Hayward, at the time. But they were all involved in this, in one way or another. Then there were people who were environmental consultants, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. I didn't know them at all. I had to get them. What was interesting to me about Carolyn Cole and Richard Murray and Karen [G.] Weissman, they were all—well, Karen Weissman and Carolyn Cole particularly—they were just coming out of

college, with environmental degrees, degrees in environmental science. You could say they were not even washed behind the ears, as it were. They were in the *middle* of this. They were writing these papers that had to be written.

Lage: For the city, would they have been writing them for?

12-00:41:34
Chall: For the state. State and federal government. I can't remember the name of when you have to write a state—.

Lage: Environmental impact?

12-00:41:43
Chall: Environmental impact statements. One for the state, one for the federal. They had to write those things. They also had to explain what would happen when you built the track, hotels, all the plans. Then there was the salt marsh harvest mouse.

Lage: Oh, yes. [The Cole and Murray interviews are available only in the Bancroft Library.]

12-00:42:04
Chall: He, the mouse, was running all over this area.

Lage: Was he endangered?

12-00:42:09
Chall: He was endangered. There were other endangered species on this piece of land, wetlands. They had to prove, one way or another in their writing, that this was a danger or it wouldn't be a danger. These environmental consultants, one of them, Karen Weissman, worked for a firm that was just a starting firm in this field. I tell you that she and I—. She would tell me what they had to do to prove that the salt marsh mouse would be okay if they built certain kinds of barriers. So they would build the barriers, put a cat in there.

Lage: Oh, they did some experiments.

12-00:43:00
Chall: These were experiments. We would just laugh. There was no way—. She was on the other side; she was trying to help Thorpe. That was what her business was. She would describe what they were trying to do to prove.

Lage: But did she find it a little bit ludicrous?

12-00:43:17
Chall: Of course! We just laughed. We laughed.

Lage: Does that show up in the interview?

12-00:43:22
Chall: It *should* have. Couldn't help it. Couldn't help it. It was just a fascinating series of everything from Howard Cogswell, who was such a professor—. He had maps, he had notes. He would drive me crazy with all of this stuff. You had to get it in there, and we did. Those things are in the book, those maps and—.

Lage: That's right. Now, that brings another point up that takes us off the topic.

12-00:44:01
Chall: That's all right, it's not off.

Lage: That the interviews often included a lot of ancillary material.

12-00:44:08
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Sometimes right in the pages of the interview, sometimes in an appendix.

12-00:44:12
Chall: Yes, yes.

Lage: And sometimes they just went in a packet.

12-00:44:15
Chall: Into the Bancroft Library.

Lage: To the Bancroft Library.

12-00:44:17
Chall: That's right. I guess that that was acceptable. That was part of our tradition at ROHO.

Lage: Yes, definitely.

12-00:44:28
Chall: They're there. If you have a person like Dr. Cogswell explaining to you where it is, where the land and the water come together and what other things are happening, and his own background—. He was a person who taught himself to fly over the garbage dump, so that he could see where the gulls were coming in.

Lage: You mean he had his own plane that he would take?

12-00:44:58
Chall: Yes. Yes, I think he did. So he could prove that, let's say, the gulls were flying into the planes. That eventually means you've got to move this thing somewhere else, not on the shore. So I had a lot of his background. There was

more of it than—. It brings it out to what he was doing then, with respect to the Thorpe thing.

Lage: So you got background previous to the Thorpe issue.

12-00:45:28
Chall: I got his background. Yes, I did, because he was an important cog there. The others might've been just maybe two or three hours. Thorpe was a little bit longer. It was a little hard to get Thorpe to concentrate on all this. I remember when I finished my first interview with him, I went out and took a long walk on the bay shore because I just felt exhausted.

Lage: You obviously had a point of view about this. A strong point of view, I would say.

12-00:46:04
Chall: I had a point of view, but I was really—.

Lage: What was it like to interview Mr. Thorpe?

12-00:46:09
Chall: Well, it was important to interview him and get his—. Regardless of how I felt. I really wanted his opinion, why he did it. How did he battle all these other issues, these people? He had his own attorney, Richard Murray. Richard Murray I had to interview by telephone. He was down in Monterey, I think, or somewhere there. I interviewed him, yes, by telephone. I'm not sure that we ever were able to get a finished interview with him that he accepted, but it's in the interview. It's in here somewhere. One of the other people—and maybe it was Peter C. Sorensen; I'm not sure—they had moved away, and so I had to interview them by telephone. Didn't like any of that kind of interviewing. Very hard.

Lage: You didn't like it.

12-00:47:12
Chall: I didn't like doing it by telephone. But I did. Then I think a couple of women. Carolyn Cole. Yes, the draft of her transcripts, Carolyn Cole and Richard Murray both, are available for research; but they wouldn't sign anything. No, my feeling was, what about, let's say when the harvest mouse—. You couldn't prove that you weren't going to kill the harvest mouse. What did you do? Well, Richard Murray had his own draft. Other people were doing other research, therefore—.

Lage: Disproving about that.

12-00:47:56
Chall: Disproving, that's right. Mr. Thorpe had his own feelings about these folks from the environmental US Fish and Wildlife Service. He wasn't all too happy about them. But it was a good interview. It was a little difficult to get him to answer the questions, because I think his mind was—. He was just too busy thinking about how to answer, or there was too much for one question. But he was a good interviewee. Of course, he actually lost so much money that he had to move out of his grand place, and he now had his law office in one of these little houses, a couple doors away from the big building.

Lage: Oh, interesting.

12-00:48:55
Chall: So he told me that he didn't sell the building; he rented it out. He was very careful to whom he rented it. I think it was a man who was rebuilding one of the organs in one of the theaters here, somebody who—. It was an unusual kind of tenant. The building is still there. Now, Mr. Thorpe died a few years ago. So it was a good interview—timely.

Lage: Well, that was kind of an interesting finale for you, it seems to me.

12-00:49:33
Chall: Oh, it was great, because this was right here.

Lage: Right in your own backyard.

12-00:49:37
Chall: Of course, Thorpe lost. He lost the battle, he lost money. All these people were involved. My friend Janice Delfino had just become a great battler for the—. Oh, my goodness. And John Thorpe himself. This was all interesting. It's [The Baumberg Tract] an ecological preserve now, and there is a way to walk near it. I know where it is, I just haven't stopped and walked on it. [I did at the time I was studying for the interview.—MC]

Lage: Probably doing some restoring of the wetlands.

12-00:50:27
Chall: Yes. That's right. Of course, soon after, Cargill sold off a lot of the salt ponds. I think it was through Senator [Dianne] Feinstein that a very, very large section was sold. Cargill sold it.

Lage: And it became part of the wildlife refuge.

12-00:50:50
Chall: [It permitted the huge diked salt ponds to be returned to wetlands over time.—MC] They're not manufacturing salt that much anymore around the bay. But there is still an attempt—that was what started Save the Bay years ago—to build housing on the other side.

Lage: Over in Redwood City.

12-00:51:10
Chall: Redwood City. That's what started the women, because Rockefeller, I think, had owned part of that land, and they decided that they would just take the top off the land, which was—.

Lage: Top off San Bruno Mountain, I think.

12-00:51:27
Chall: The hill. Put it down and build homes on that. Now, they're not doing quite that now, but for the last ten years, I think, they've been trying to build homes there, and it's still an issue. Almost every time you read the local Audubon news, they're fighting that one. So far, they've lost the battle, the builders. Then they come back and there's another legal argument. So we haven't finished it yet.

Lage: No.

12-00:51:59
Chall: But that's why this was a very, very important interview to do, I thought, because it's still ongoing, just like the CVPIA is still ongoing.

Lage: Absolutely. Okay, I'm going to stop here for a second.

Audiofile 13

Lage: Okay, Malca, we're back on.

13-00:00:09
Chall: All right.

Lage: We're still continuing interview six, on May 4, Malca Chall and Ann Lage. Now we're just going to shift a little bit, actually go back in time, and talk about a real major interview that you did, a life history, with Paul Taylor.

13-00:00:28
Chall: Yes, yes.

Lage: First, maybe say who Paul Taylor is, because I guess a lot of people that read this won't know Paul Taylor.

13-00:00:36
Chall: I see. No, they don't. Well, Paul Taylor was, at the time I met him, on the staff of UC Berkeley. I don't know what his field was at that time.

Lage: He was an economist. And I recall that he was a mentor to Clark Kerr.

13-00:01:09
Chall: He was, because he and Clark Kerr, during the thirties and early forties, they had studied the Mexican migration. [I am not sure, T think Kerr was a graduate student.—MC] That was mainly it. Something about the way migrants worked in the fields. So yes, they were a research team. Years later, Kerr became president of the university. It was because I knew Clark Kerr, as I explained before, that I was able to induce him and Kay Kerr to help finance the Paul Taylor interview, and they did. They had a very large number of names, and they sent out and asked for financial help and got it.

Lage: Just, again, to bring this back to the whole story of ROHO, that was a very common way that we'd finance interviews.

13-00:02:12
Chall: Yes.

Lage: We would get a prominent person or persons, to solicit funds from friends and colleagues of the interviewee.

13-00:02:17
Chall: Yes. So that it was because there was a close relationship between Clark Kerr and Paul Taylor that they were willing to do this. It was very important.

Lage: How did the earlier Dorothea Lange interview lead to the Paul Taylor? *Did* it lead to the Paul Taylor?

13-00:02:44
Chall: Not the Lange interview. [Taylor had been on Willa's list for many years.—MC] Well, before I came on the scene Suzanne was interviewing Dorothea Lange in 1960 and 1961. In order to do Dorothea Lange, you'd be certain find out about Paul Taylor.

Lage: They were married.

13-00:03:04
Chall: They were married, that's right. I'm sorry; everybody doesn't know this.

Lage: And they worked together.

13-00:03:13
Chall: And they worked together. That's correct. Now, when I was asked to interview Paul Taylor, I didn't know anything about Paul Taylor. But I knew that this was an important interview, so I went to visit him and got sort of acquainted. I think I then began to find out about his life. There was a lot of biographical material already available.

Lage: Had Dorothea Lange died before we started this?

13-00:03:45
Chall: By this time, yes, I believe she had died. Not shortly after her interview with Suzanne, but some time later.

Lage: Within a couple years, I think. [In 1965.]

13-00:04:00
Chall: Yes. Yes. I didn't pay much attention to this until I began to—. I remember going into the room at ROHO that we had talked about, with the gubernatorial projects. We had just sort of moved into a vacant room. So there was a very, very long table that we had, that we'd used in the other room—almost about as long as from here to here—moved into that other room that was vacant. So I took over that table. I took notes—I guess it was notes having to do with almost decades; Paul Taylor here, Paul Taylor there—and spread them all over. Now, by this time, of course, I had done Walter Lowdermilk, so I knew about broadly going over somebody's life, in twenty, thirty, forty years. With Paul Taylor, you start when he was born. When was he born? Well, we'll look and see. We'll take a minute's time to find out. There we are. Paul Taylor was born in 1895. I was interviewing him in 1970, '72. He was an elderly gentleman, by this time. I don't think he was teaching, but I think he was doing his own research in his large office on campus. So he had a long life for me. Let's say you start when he's born, and you take it decade by decade, and then you find out all that he's done during the thirties, with Clark Kerr, and all the papers that they were writing. You read those, you get hold of them, you read them all, you know what it's all about. Then you go into the 160-acre limit and then you go—. Well, then he had his World War—. Well, that was before. So it was World War I when he was gassed.

Lage: World War I or World War II?

13-00:06:23
Chall: World War I. He was gassed during World War I, and that's what prompted him to go to California, because the doctor thought he would do better, with his lungs, in California than in the East Coast, with the bad winters and all. So that's what prompted him to go here, and that's when he met this graduate student, Clark Kerr. Then he teaches. There's a long, long life.

Lage: There were also the investigations with Dorothea Lange, in the farm labor camps.

13-00:07:01
Chall: Yes, that's right, before World War II.

Lage: During the Depression?

13-00:07:05
Chall: Yes. They were working together and apart in many areas. So yes, he had a long and very special career. This was a person who not only taught, but he wrote. He wrote articles. As I may have told you already, that he wrote arguments that went to the state court and the state supreme court and the federal Supreme Court, and to his congressman. He was a masterful writer. I don't know whether I told you or somebody else, but he was so good with some of these papers that were in print. And I had them, because he always went to his files, and he would bring things out so that I could understand what he was talking about. Even in the middle of an interview, he would just get up and go to the files. I had a few of these that he would sign. They were so beautifully written that I didn't want to part with them. I *wouldn't* part with them. I finally did, when I left ROHO. I just said, "These shouldn't be in my drawers; they belong in the archives." So I gave them [to the Water Resource Center Archives with all my files on water.—MC] But he was such a good writer.

So I had this big table, and it was all spread out and I thought—. Apparently, I wasn't going to be limited by the number of interviews that I was going to do. I didn't feel that pressure. I just thought, I don't know how I'm going to get through it. I don't know how I'm going to manage.

Lage: Because it just seemed too complicated?

13-00:10:28
Chall: I don't know how I'm going to learn all this. There's just too much to learn. Then I decided, at one point, look, I don't have to do his early life; I don't have to do his World War I experiences; I don't have to deal with his marriage to Dorothea Lange. Suzanne has covered all of this. She knows him; she can cover it. So I asked Suzanne if she would do it. I probably had to ask Willa first and then I asked Suzanne, and she was willing to do it. Of course, it was a good interview for her.

Lage: Oh, that's how that happened, that you did some and she did more of the background on Paul Taylor.

13-00:11:11
Chall: Yes. She already knows Paul Taylor. If she hadn't met him before, she certainly knew him. She knew Dorothea, she knew their work together. This was ideal for Suzanne; all she had to do was fill in the blanks. And she did, and that was also a long interview. All I had to do was water.

Lage: Ah, so you concentrated on water.

13-00:11:38
Chall: Absolutely. That was enough; the table was full, full of Paul Taylor's history, the writing that he did, as major water and land policies unfolded.

Lage: So did you feel you needed to read all that he had written?

13-00:11:50
Chall: I did. I did a lot of research. [The Paul Taylor project became a three-volume oral history.]

Lage: Then what did you want in the interview that wasn't on the page, of these written papers?

13-00:11:59
Chall: Well, I just wanted him to talk about it, how he felt about it. Then we would get into such things as the 1958 water project.

Lage: The State Water Project.

13-00:12:17
Chall: Yes. He was upset. He was very upset that the League of Women Voters was in favor of it. That bothered him. How could they do this? But he was such a mild-mannered man. So the longer we worked together, the easier it was, because he was always forthcoming. And I was always learning. I had an outline. I didn't know anything, really; I just knew what was covered or what maybe I needed to ask questions about.

Lage: You had the topics.

13-00:12:56
Chall: I had the topics.

Lage: Then you would—.

13-00:12:58
Chall: Then I would ask him to tell me about it. Isn't that our project?

Lage: Yes.

13-00:13:04
Chall: You wrote about this, now tell me about this. And he did. Then I got the information about Earl Warren and the Supreme Court. Why did Earl Warren vote, when he probably shouldn't have? Should've recused himself. I carried that forward.

Lage: Interesting, yes.

13-00:13:29
Chall: Took a long—. That was another whole setup. It was wonderful.

Lage: What did Paul Taylor seem like as an individual, to you?

13-00:13:40
Chall: Oh, he was so intelligent and he was so kindly. Now, I don't know what he was like when he was younger and when he was maybe more upset than he was now. Time had passed. He was a good friend, who was happy to have this opportunity to talk about his career and how he felt about all these landmark decisions and the people that he had met. Many of these people whom I interviewed probably—like Gianelli—they might've crossed paths, probably did.

Lage: So this was a big education in water issues for you, it sounds like.

13-00:14:32
Chall: It was. It was my introduction. It was really an introduction.

Lage: Yes, to California water.

13-00:14:38
Chall: Yes, because I think that that was—. When did I do it, 1971? Then I just went on, I think, to all these other things. They just led on, didn't they? One after another, until I began, I guess, to be considered somebody who knew—

Lage: An expert.

13-00:14:56
Chall: —a little bit about water. I had put up a big map on water that came from the Water Education Foundation. It's still in my office upstairs, attached to one of the doors. I continually look at that and say, "I didn't realize that. I didn't see this." There was always something to know that I didn't understand. Absolutely. And he became a good friend. Sometimes we would go out to lunch together at the Faculty Club.

Lage: It sounds like you developed relationships with a lot of your interviewees, that you would continue.

13-00:15:44
Chall: Yes. I did. Some of them more than others. The relationship with him was interesting. I remember, now that we talk about it, he and Dorothea had owned a little house, a little cottage somewhere on the water, up in Marin County somewhere.

Lage: Right, kind of overlooking Stinson Beach.

13-00:16:15
Chall: Yes.

Lage: I'm forgetting the name of the spot [Steep Ravine].

13-00:16:21
Chall: He had decided, I think, to sell it. He was having a farewell to the cottage, some kind of—. I know Suzanne had been asked to come. Friends, family were all there, invited. Now it's just dim in my memory, that I recall this. So that I was a part of his little entourage, I guess, to be invited to something like that. Suzanne, too. As we got into the last number of interviews—I don't know how many we did, quite a few—it was always easier. It was always easier when you had long interviews and you got to the end of it, because then you'd covered almost all the ground. Well. When he retired, he started to work with George Foster, a professor of anthropology. Now, Suzanne interviewed him later on another project. But Paul Taylor went out into India and Bangladesh and places like that, studied the land and the way people farmed, whatever he was supposed to do, with this colleague. He showed me a scrapbook of pictures that he had taken—he was a good photographer—on these trips. One of them was just beautiful. A little black and white print about so big showing women planting rice. I said to him, when I brought it back—. He had taken the picture; Dorthea had printed it.

Lage: Dorothea had printed it?

13-00:18:50
Chall: Yes. "Do you have copies of these pictures that you took?" He simply said, "Which one do you want, Malca? Which one do you like?" And I said, "I like this one." "All right," he said. He took it out. "You can have it. But I'm not giving it to you until I have it framed. I have a framer in San Francisco who does framing for us, for me, and I like his work. I'm going to have it framed, and then I'll give it to you." That's how I got it.

Lage: How lovely.

13-00:19:31
Chall: Now, he said, "I wonder if Suzanne would like one of these." So I asked Suzanne. My recollection is that she didn't want one. Now, I could be wrong; you'll have to ask her. But I'll show it to you. I have it hanging upstairs.

Lage: Yes, I'd love to see it.

13-00:19:48
Chall: He's written a little comment on the back of it. To me, it's a treasure. Just a treasure. It was just as simple as that. "Which one do you want?"

Lage: That's very dear. I think we should stop here today. That's a very nice way to kind of wrap up for today.

13-00:20:06
Chall: Yes. Because Paul Taylor you can Google or whatever, it's just all over the place.

Lage: Yes, he's an important figure.

13-00:20:17
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Okay.

Interview 7: May 18, 2015
Audiofile 14

Lage: Okay, Malca, we're back on for our final interview.

14-00:00:10
Chall: Good.

Lage: Interview seven, May 18, 2015. I'm Ann Lage, interviewing Malca Chall. Now Malca, we're going to pick up a few pieces from the previous sessions.

14-00:00:20
Chall: All right.

Lage: This is kind of an ending to the women in politics and suffragists. You interviewed Jeannette Rankin—

14-00:00:30
Chall: I did.

Lage: —which must've been quite an experience.

14-00:00:33
Chall: It was.

Lage: Tell me about that.

14-00:00:35
Chall: Well, I think the preface or the interview history tells it very well, that we caught her, really, because we found out that she was living in Carmel. So we decided that I would go down and interview her. I think Chita Fry was now in Washington DC, and there was nobody else, and I could do that. So I did. I don't know whether I want to tell you what—. She was suffering from a throat ailment, and I suspect it was cancer. But nobody ever said it was, but one day she asked me to look at her arm. She said, "Now, I seem to be losing a lot of weight," and she did have some other problem with her throat.

Lage: So she had difficulty speaking?

14-00:01:32
Chall: Speaking. There was some kind of saliva that was—. They had cut a duct, and that was part of the whole thing. They'd cut a duct. It had to do with the retention of saliva, I guess, whatever it was. As explained, she just didn't want to talk about things in the past. She wanted to talk about the future and democracy and peace. That was her primary interest. So she would move the questions away. She didn't want to talk about the early days of the differences between the Alice Paul group and the other group that were all—. There was a

state-by-state group and the Alice Paul do-it-all-at-once group. But she didn't want to talk about that. It sounded sort of catty; and besides, it was all over.

Lage: So the kinds of things that you were going there to get from her were—.

14-00:02:34
Chall: Yes. She wasn't interested in talking about that, so we talked about the other. Well, I'm not going to go into it because it's already out.

Lage: Okay. We'll either include that in your interview or we'll link to it, and people can go right to the interview.

14-00:02:50
Chall: I think so, because it's quite complete. It seems to me that we don't have to deal with it.

Lage: Right. Well, just to make a point again—I like to make these points about ROHO as we go along—

14-00:03:04
Chall: Yes. Okay.

Lage: —how really informative the interview histories are. As I go back in preparation for this interview and look at what you've written, they're so important.

14-00:03:17
Chall: Yes.

Lage: The further we get from the event, the more important those interview histories are.

14-00:03:21
Chall: Yes. I was quite pleased with this, that you sent it to me, because it brought everything back. It brought her back, and then I understood the relationship between Hannah Josephson—. Because when we talked about it before, I wasn't sure whether Hannah Josephson was here just after Rankin died; but I was quite sure that she had gone down to interview her. But I couldn't relate it properly, until I saw this.

Lage: Right, and this interview history does. Hannah Josephson was the biographer.

14-00:03:58
Chall: Yes. She had known her in New York and for many years. Then as I noticed, she had written her biography, and her notes were just the May of the year that I was interviewing her, in 1972. So we were both with Jeannette Rankin at the last part of her life, and that was very good. Hannah Josephson spotted some

things that Jeannette Rankin had said to me, when she probably had misunderstood me, so she corrected a few things.

Lage: Did you get an impression of Jeannette Rankin as a person? Or was she just not in good enough health to—?

14-00:04:40
Chall: Oh, she was definitely a person—. I don't know how she put it, but she mentioned the fact that people would understand her historicity.

Lage: What did she mean by that?

14-00:04:59
Chall: That she is an historical person, and people understand and she understands, that she is an historical person. She understood her role in this. Now, most of her more recent life had been devoted to peace.

Lage: Wasn't she the only person to vote against our entry to World War I?

14-00:05:25
Chall: Well, that she had. She voted against World War I, but she was not the only one to vote against World War I. But she voted against World War II.

Lage: Ah, World War II.

14-00:05:35
Chall: She was the only one, the only vote cast against World War II. She was a longtime pacifist. There was one article, at least, about her in *Life* magazine. It showed her protesting the Vietnam War.

Lage: Yes. This is the time when you were interviewing her, around the time of the Vietnam War.

14-00:05:57
Chall: Yes, and we saw that. I think eventually, that may have led us to find out about where she was now. I have some pictures of her that John [Kirkley], her young helper, or collaborator really, gave me. He gave me an absolutely beautiful portrait of her that had been taken when she was quite young. It was his, his own, and he treasured it. When we took it, it got into the Bancroft Library, it got someplace, and we couldn't retrieve it. John was just so disappointed. But then we tried to get *Life* magazine to give us a copy of the picture of Rankin protesting in New York, and they refused to give it to us. We just tried everything. Willa had ideas. Explain to them what we're doing and why we're doing it, and its importance. They would not give it. They would *not* let us have it. I don't know what their legal arrangements were, but they wouldn't give it up. So we were disappointed not to have that.

Lage: Were you able to use the photograph that got lost in the Bancroft? Is it in the volume?

14-00:07:35
Chall: I'm not sure. I think it is the frontier piece picture. But where it landed and why we couldn't get it, I don't know.

Lage: Okay.

14-00:07:45
Chall: You mentioned the fact—I guess it's a preface to something else—that I was the director of the Suffragists Oral History Project. That surprised me. So I looked at it, and sure enough, that's true.

Lage: That's from the interview history. You signed it that way.

14-00:08:03
Chall: That's from the interview history. So I tried to really think about why that would be. Of course, one reason was that I think Chita had left. But I think I would've been the director anyway, because Chita was spending all her time on Alice Paul and a couple of other women she interviewed. The other interviews among what the Rockefeller finally funded, and they're here in this preface—. There was Sara Bard Field, and that was Chita. That's how Chita started the whole thing.

Lage: Yes, that just started it.

14-00:08:48
Chall: But there were Burnita Shelton Matthews, Rebecca [Hourwich] Reyher, Mabel Vernon, and a few others that I had interviewed. With respect to the work that—.

Lage: Was it Sherna Gluck?

14-00:09:12
Chall: Sherna Gluck did. Now, Sherna came into the office with this plan, that she was already doing, to interview these women. I think Willa was willing to take it in as part of the ROHO suffragist project, and she may have helped with the payment, with Sherna.

Lage: Was Sherna an independent scholar, or did she come out of a program?

14-00:09:38
Chall: More or less independent. No, I don't know what she was doing. Very, very sharp, intelligent person. Her book came out in paperback, *From Parlor to Prison*. There it is over there. An *excellent*, excellent book. She did not want to use the interviews verbation, so she wrote them, as stories being told. It is a very interesting history book, very interesting. And her women were very

interesting. But back to Chita's project, I remember that I was—. Let's see. Fern Ingersoll, who was a friend of Chita's in Washington DC, was an interviewer, and somehow Chita put her onto this. Because I don't know what all she was doing; I think she was an historian. She interviewed several of the women, including Mabel Vernon. I was the person who had to have them transcribed, edited, send them back and forth, finish it up—the whole final—.

Lage: You were managing the project.

14-00:11:06
Chall: The whole final thing. What I remember particularly was that Mabel Vernon was one of these suffragists with Alice Paul. She had a beautiful speaking voice, which she was *very, very* proud of. She tried so hard to do the interview with what voice she now had. When the transcript came back—I'm not sure whether this was an old tape, whether she had just done this years before. All I remember about it is that it was Mabel Vernon reading something to the background music of the "Méditation" from *Thais*. It was absolutely breathtaking.

Lage: Oh. This was part of the interview?

14-00:12:05
Chall: No. Fern sent it to me. She may have done it during the interview; now I do not remember. It probably will show up; it may be in the interview history. But I'll never forget it.

Lage: Was she an actress or something?

14-00:12:26
Chall: No. She was very active in the Women's party. But I think she was one of their main speakers, because of this beautiful voice.

Lage: Did you listen to our tape, the taped interview? Did her voice quality come across?

14-00:12:42
Chall: I don't remember that.

Lage: Yes. Because that would be interesting to know for—.

14-00:12:44
Chall: Yes, it would. I'm sorry, I just don't remember.

Lage: Yes, of course.

14-00:12:47
Chall: I just remember that Fern and I did quite a bit of back and forth. I can see why I was considered the director of that.

Lage: I see. Okay.

14-00:13:00
Chall: I also want to bring up the fact that one of the interviewers—I think she was a PhD candidate or student. Her name was Jacqueline Parker. She interviewed [Helen] Valeska Bary. Now, Valeska Bary was a prominent woman who was interested in not only suffrage, but I think she was an active union person. Jackie interviewed her and came to the office and talked to Willa about it. Now, I don't know where Valeska Bary lived.

Lage: She interviewed her separately from ROHO?

14-00:13:44
Chall: Yes. Willa accepted this and gave her whatever stipend you give, so that she would have it. Then we accepted this—or Willa did—in the oral history. Then it became a part of the women's history project, you see. It became a part of that. So that's why it's listed here in this preface. This is a preface that I think—. I don't know. Willa may have written it, or I might have written it. It's a preface. I just wanted to tell you that Jacqueline Parker then became Jacqueline Braitman.

Lage: Oh, yes.

14-00:14:38
Chall: She was—and I believe maybe she was when she was also interviewing Valeska Bary—she had a temporary non—. What do you call it?

Lage: Non-tenured?

14-00:14:56
Chall: Non-tenured position at, I think it was UCLA, teaching, I believe, women's history. She went on to interview, as Jacqueline Braitman. She was in the office from time to time, or in Berkeley, and I remember meeting her then. We had dinner together. I think it was at Scott's in Oakland. It was a long, long evening, and just a great visit. From that time until very recently, we corresponded by email. She had a baby, and ultimately was a single mother with this baby and still trying to do work at UCLA, so she could never get back up here. She would always say, "We're going to have another visit." Then this little baby went to Berkeley and graduated from Berkeley, and Jacqueline and I could never make another connection. Just to have a visit. She couldn't carve out any time. Then she was back at UCLA and using our interviews for research. She wrote a profile of Elizabeth Snyder, one of my interviewees in the Democratic party. Lately, within the past several years, she wrote a biography of a prominent Democratic male who went on to the California Supreme Court. I can't remember his name [Stanley Mosk], but she was featured in one of the first of ROHO's new—

Lage: Oh, the newsletter.

14-00:17:00
Chall: —newsletter. She wrote about how she used our oral histories to write this article, this biography. So that's Jackie Braitman, who was originally Jacqueline Parker, with Valeska Bary. So the Suffragists Oral History Project has many little angles, many little ties to other things. Willa was always sharp enough, when these women came to the Oral History Office—. Because they came from Los Angeles. Both Jackie and Sherna Gluck lived in Los Angeles. They came up here, because they were dealing with, I guess, women in this area, and they just came to Willa. Willa listened to them. She made arrangements so that their material could be part of the Bancroft Library.

Lage: Right, and get much broader distribution.

14-00:18:25
Chall: Yes, that's right.

Lage: And now, the Suffragist project was the very first project that was digitized and put on the web from our office.

14-00:18:31
Chall: Oh, my. Now, we talk about Jeannette Rankin. Sometime, I would guess in late nineties, maybe earlier 2000s—no, it must've been the late nineties—a woman, and I think she may have been a teacher or professor at the University of Nevada, Reno, wrote a sort of one-person play about Jeannette Rankin. She needed a man for some part of it. Just a couple of minutes, as it were. I think it may have been her husband. But she was giving this little playlet, little one-woman play, around the Bay Area. And other places. But when it hit the Bay Area, there were leaflets that came out, publicity. I don't really know how we got it; obviously, we would. She would go to assisted living places, libraries, senior centers, synagogues, churches, wherever, and give this little play. It was very good.

I knew that it was being given at the Temple Beth Sholom, in San Leandro, so I decided, well, I'll just go and hear this. I told Lisa [Lisa Rubens, Regional Oral History Office interviewer] about it. She came all the way, and I took a neighbor and a friend from here. Since it was in the temple there, I knew some of the people that there in the audience, of course. We went in, and it was very good. There was a period when there was sort of an intermission. I must've already realized or been apprised, that I was going to do something, so I did get up during this period and I spoke about my relationship with Jeannette Rankin, and then they went on with it. Now, that leaflet is someplace in the Bancroft Library, because I would never have destroyed it, and I didn't keep it. Lisa was very sorry, of course, that she hadn't brought along a tape recorder, because it hadn't occurred to her either, that this was something to tape. But it

was good. Then I think she was in Berkeley, did a few performances. I told Willa about it. I don't know that Willa did go, or anybody in the office did.

Lage: But you yourself did a play based on the suffragists.

14-00:22:17
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Tell me about that.

14-00:22:18
Chall: Well, the organization called—. I have the name in my notes somewhere—the Women's Political Caucus, I think.

Lage: We can just fill the name in later.

14-00:23:41
Chall: In January, I think it was Women's History Month; I think it still is. This organization now was becoming quite important nationally. They took over one afternoon, a nice little restaurant in Berkeley, and they asked us to come and speak about women's history. Chita and I decided that we would make some kind of a play out of this. And so we did, and here it is [refers to transcript of the play], in all of its—. How many pages of it? Seventeen or eighteen, nineteen pages, large type, single spaced. I tell about the long, continuous struggle, et cetera, et cetera.

Lage: Is this play all in the words of the interviewees?

14-00:24:49
Chall: Yes, and I explain. All right, that's the first. So I tell them about the Women's History Project. Then Chita. Now, Chita and I worked all this out; it's all typed in here. Chita says, "Alice Paul, a tiny Quaker girl," and then Malca says, "From the interview with Alice Paul, who was eighty-eight at the time of the interview, how did you yourself, Alice—?" And then I ask a question of Alice, and then Chita answers, in the voices of these women. So it's Malca, Chita, so that we would know where we were supposed to come in. Chita, Malca, all the way through. Then we have here Malca: "From the interview with Ernestine Kettler." Now, she's part of the *From Parlor to Prison* women, who was seventy-seven. In fact, at twenty-one, she was the youngest woman in the picket line. "Ernestine, how long had you been at the headquarters of the Women's Party, before you went out in a group?" And then Chita answers what Ernestine said.

Then it goes on to somebody who was arrested and went to jail. And the hunger strike. Now, we must've then maybe gone back with Alice Paul. Now, from the interview with Jessie Haver Butler, who was eighty-five, Chita says, "Mrs. Butler, once the suffrage amendment was ratified, what came next?" I

answer, “Alice Paul was a woman with a one-track mind, and she still is.” And so it goes. Now again, from the Alice Paul interview, it goes on. There was a lot here about Alice Paul, of course. Then we had Sylvie Thygeson. She’s one of these women over there in the book. Malca, now from the interview with Sylvie Thygeson. She was 104. But she’s as much a part of our third wave as she was the second. That goes on. We ask her about the change of women.

Then finally we get into Jeannette Rankin. This is taken from an interview with Jeannette Rankin, who was ninety-two at the time of the interview. Chita, “Jeannette, your approach is one in which you say that there should be more women in Congress. ‘If half of the Congress were women, we wouldn’t have war.’ That’s one of the statements that you make. There are many people who, in response to that idea, say, ‘Look at Mrs. Gandhi and look at Golda Meir.” “They don’t know a damn thing about Mrs. Gandhi,” is the reply. Chita, “They feel that indicates that women are just as strong on war as men.” Jeannette Rankin says, through me, “Indira Gandhi settled that war in Bangladesh. She didn’t spend ten years working it, like we have in Vietnam. She went in to settle it. They don’t know anything about her.” And so it goes.

Lage: Was that from your interview with Rankin?

14-00:28:25
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Oh. Fascinating.

14-00:28:27
Chall: So see, we were reading everything. It’s Malca, Chita, Malca.

Lage: Right.

14-00:28:31
Chall: But we’re reading everything out of the interviews.

Lage: Yes, questions included.

14-00:28:36
Chall: That’s right. That’s this little package.

Lage: Did that go over well?

14-00:28:40
Chall: Yes. Now, I think you knew about that, because I think it must’ve been Willa who wrote something about that. Here it is here. *CU News*. This was Willa’s.

Lage: Which is the UC Library publication.

14-00:29:01
Chall: Right, UC Library. And Willa tried very—. Hard is not the word.

Lage: Diligently?

14-00:29:09
Chall: Diligently, to see that ROHO got into *CU News* often. So here's one in March 1975. "The Saga of Jeannette Rankin Oral History Interview." I'm sure that Willa wrote it. It says—but maybe she didn't; maybe Chita did—"Applause interrupted the words of Jeannette Rankin, as excerpts from her oral history interview were read by Malca Chall and Amelia Fry, for a program sponsored by the National Women's Political Caucus—

Lage: Okay, there we go, with the full name of the group.

14-00:29:41
Chall: "—of Alameda County, on Sunday, February 16. Calling their program The Historical Mandate for Women Now, they read portions of the transcripts of four of the twelve interviews with suffragists who were taped for the Suffragists Oral history Project of the Regional Oral History Office." So that's it.

Lage: There we go.

14-00:30:05
Chall: That was part of the *CU News*. Now, for the National Women's Political Caucus, I was asked in Castro Valley once, to do a little presentation on Women's History Month. I just spoke. I don't remember all that I said, but I do have a news clipping that indicates that I had been asked, and so I did it.

Lage: So there's quite a bit of outreach and publicity about what was going on.

14-00:30:41
Chall: Oh, yes. And then also I gave you quite a bit of the Hayward *Daily Review*, the *Oakland Tribune*, and the newspaper in Berkeley. We had major spreads on this woman's history. So you have all that.

Lage: Yes. Well, it was very much a time when women's history was getting going.

14-00:31:03
Chall: Yes, yes, that's right. So that was a major bit of publicity for us. So that takes care of Jeannette Rankin. And the whole project.

Lage: Right, right. Well, it's a great story. Do you need a break?

14-00:31:21
Chall: No, that's fine, I can go right on. I'll just have a little tea.

Lage: I'm just thinking we should talk a little bit about Jewish community history [Jewish Community Leaders of the San Francisco Bay Area], and also our relationship with the Magnes Museum [Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum in Berkeley, now the Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, a research unit of the Bancroft Library].

14-00:31:36
Chall: Yes.

Lage: You did a couple of interviews in California Jewish Community series, it appears.

14-00:31:42
Chall: I did. My first one was with Rose Rinder. Then I did Rabbi [Edgar F.] Magnin.

Lage: Those must've been important, major interviews.

14-00:31:51
Chall: They were. Rose Rinder was important because her husband [Reuben Rinder] was the cantor at synagogue in—.

Lage: Was this in Los Angeles?

14-00:32:09
Chall: No, San Francisco.

Lage: Temple Emanu-El?

14-00:32:13
Chall: Yes, Temple Emanu-El, for many years.

Lage: But why would that make her important?

14-00:32:23
Chall: Well, she was important because he was important, and because they were the sponsors of the young Yehudi Menuhin. So it was all part of the music that was part of—. I believe it was Cantor Rinder met the family, knew them. It was a Jewish family, and here was this little prodigy. So the interview tells how they managed to get Yehudi Menuhin, when he was eleven years old, on the stage as a debut.

Lage: They fostered him.

14-00:33:05
Chall: As a debut. What also was interesting was that they were not Germans. The major portion of the active members of the Jewish community in Temple Emanu-El were from the German families. Cantor Rinder and Mrs. Rinder

were from, I believe, Poland. They had a different point of view about Jews and their place in history. They were Zionists, I guess you would put it. Now, this is difficult for people who don't understand all of this, but we'll just leave it at that, because you can read Mrs. Rinder's oral history.

Lage: That was not kind of the dominant opinion of our San Francisco Jewish elites.

14-00:35:02
Chall: No, it wasn't. It was not. Particularly in 1948 and before, when the Jews were seeking a home in Palestine. There was a real split in the Jewish community. It was not only a split, but there were many Jewish congregations in San Francisco who were predominantly Russian, Polish Jews. They had their opinion about Palestine, and then there were the Germans, who did not.

Lage: Were the Germans of a more longstanding—?

14-00:34:44
Chall: They had been here longer. They had been here longer, and there always had been, within the Jewish community—it doesn't matter whether it's in Europe or wherever it is—a difference between the Jews of Germany and the Jews from Russia and Poland, and the Jews from Spain ousted during the Inquisition. Jews from Spain, many, many of them went to England, and many of them went to Poland and many of them went to Tunisia and India and Egypt. They're all over. Those are known as Sephardic Jews. There's always been a split among the Germans, the Poles and the Sephardic Jews, for many, many years. So Mrs. Rinder explained. She did a good job, because she felt this very strongly.

Lage: Did she explain it in terms of the people in her congregation?

14-00:35:53
Chall: Yes. Yes, she did. So there was an uncomfortable time for them at Emanu-El.

Lage: Interesting. How did that interview come about? Who sponsored that, do you remember? We could look at the interview history.

14-00:36:09
Chall: You'll have to look at the interview history. My suspicion was that maybe the Magnes Museum did, because Willa and Seymour Fromer were colleagues.

Lage: Now, tell me, was he the director of the Magnes?

14-00:36:29
Chall: Yes. Seymour Fromer not only was the director of Magnes, he started it, practically, in his house, in the garage—

Lage: I see.

14-00:36:37
Chall: —collecting important Jewish icons and things of importance. He had a real feel for the history, of gathering it together. Eventually, he got this little house in Berkeley. But he would know that a Jewish community in India someplace, that there were few of them left, and therefore, the synagogues and whatever was left of Jewish heritage was going to just disappear, be either dismantled or just allowed to rot. So he would know just where within the Jewish community to gather up funds to go to India, get this stuff packaged up and brought here. He was very much like Willa, you see. She was forward-looking, too. She knew just where the importance was historically, in terms of oral history; she knew where the money might be; and she worked hard for it. She built up the Regional Oral History Office in a way that Seymour was building up the Magnes museum.

Lage: Oh, that's an interesting comparison.

14-00:37:59
Chall: Yes. I had been thinking about it when you asked me to think about it. I think this is exactly what it was.

Lage: That was kind of the attraction between the two programs?

14-00:38:11
Chall: Yes. Yes, definitely. Now, I knew Seymour, not from the time he moved into Berkeley, because I'd met him early, but in some other context. I only knew him, gradually began to know him, when I began to work at ROHO. But he would see me there sometimes. He had a way of saying, "Hello, Malca." He was a good friend, and he was a good friend of Willa's. So my guess is that Willa may have talked to him. This may have been in the offing, for some reason or other. But it was really a very good interview. Now, Mrs. Rinder didn't like her interview. She just read it and she didn't like it. So she was refusing to allow it out. I spent quite a bit of time urging her, telling her, "It's very good. When you read it, you don't hear your voice; you just read it, and it reads very well." It took maybe a couple of years, but we did get her signature and it is in.

Now, the organist at Temple Emanu-El, through most of Rinder's years—and he was the same organist who had played the organ in the Palace of the Legion of Honor once a month on Sundays; I don't remember his name, but he was really sort of prized in the San Francisco area. He took me into the private little chapel at the Temple Emanu-El, and I think he talked to me about Cantor Rinder and some of Cantor Rinder's music. He showed it to me, I believe. It was gratifying for me, to have been given this glimpse of another side of Cantor Rinder. And so lovingly done. So lovingly done. Those are impressions that you don't forget.

Lage: Right, right. The hidden benefits of our job.

14-00:40:58
Chall: Yes. Right, right. Now, when it came to Rabbi Magnin, I really don't know how that came about; but I suspect—.

Lage: Here he is in Los Angeles.

14-00:41:07
Chall: He's in Los Angeles, but he grew up in the Bay Area. I think Sacramento. I've forgotten, but he did grow up in this area, and I think he spent most of his early life here. So I believe that was also a Magnes sponsorship. Rabbi Magnin was a huge man, in many ways. He was considered the rabbi of the stars, the rabbi of the baseball team, *the* rabbi of Los Angeles. And he was; he was the rabbi of the largest congregation in Los Angeles, also a Reform synagogue. He was very busy. He agreed to the interviews. The first hour that I had with him, or the first three hours, the phone rang constantly. He picked it up and he would talk, and I would turn off the recorder. I think the second time, it happened again, and then I balked. I may have talked to Willa about this, but I told his secretary, who was right outside the room there, that she must not send any phone calls to Rabbi Magnin while I'm there. He was not to be interrupted. This is not a way to conduct an interview. That's how it went from that time on. She became a good friend. We would have dinner together, because I was spending several days there at one time. Oh, I think we did get a very good interview.

Lage: And you did quite a bit of research down there, in his papers.

14-00:43:03
Chall: Yes, I did. Yes, I did. He had women in his congregation over the years, who clipped every article—I'd forgotten about this—that was ever written in the newspaper about Rabbi Magnin. They were all in scrapbooks. Now, this is something like—. The Hayward *Review* does it and the *Chronicle*, over the years, they had people who clipped and put them into envelopes and dated them. But this was in scrapbooks. So I spent many hours, many, many hours, going through scrapbooks and making notes. So I would do that, even before—. Maybe one day would be devoted to doing this. There was this tiny, little room where all of these were kept. So that was my little room.

Lage: Your introduction to this famous man, really.

14-00:43:59
Chall: Yes, yes. So I used that very much. Now, in the course of my interviews with him—. He had many friends, but one of them who was an attorney in Los Angeles, Mr. [Walter S.] Hilborn, thought that he would like to be interviewed. So he paid for his interview. I interviewed him, I think maybe three hours or something like that. He was interesting, a very interesting person. His father was the, I guess, inventor of the Gillette razor blade.

Lage: Oh, my.

14-00:44:43
Chall: Then as a result of that, I also interviewed, but not on tape, several of the rabbi's friends, one of them a well-known attorney in Los Angeles. It was the first time I had ever gone into a building, gone up the elevator, and when the elevator opened, you were in the office of this person, this attorney. I had never had that experience before. I also interviewed the major prelate of the Catholic Church in Los Angeles.

Lage: No. But you taped that one?

14-00:45:23
Chall: No, I did not tape it.

Lage: But why were these not taped? Were they background interviews?

14-00:45:29
Chall: Background interviews.

Lage: For the rabbi.

14-00:45:32
Chall: Yes. I just wanted to know a little bit more about the rabbi, his relationship with the Catholic Church, which was very good. Rabbi Magnin was to the Jewish community, the rabbinate, what this man was to the Catholic Church. I don't remember his name, but it is in the preface and the oral history. [Cardinal James Francis McIntyre]

Lage: Well, then would you get—.

14-00:45:58
Chall: Then I could talk to the rabbi about it. But I probably had talked to the rabbi about these people before. That's why I went to them. They weren't total strangers to me, by this time. Then I wanted to know more about the rabbi's personal history. We didn't talk a great deal about his daughter. We talked about his son, but not his daughter. I found out that his daughter was living in Monterey, I think, or Carmel. So I made an appointment to go down there and visit with her, and I did. She was very gracious about allowing me to interview her. It was not on tape. But I did find out a little bit more about the rabbi's personal relationship with his daughter, with his son, his relationships with Christmas holidays and holidays that were not Jewish. What did the family do? I think they went away.

Lage: Interesting. But did this come out in the interview, did you feel?

14-00:47:08
Chall: No. No, not very much.

Lage: Oh, it sounds like you should've written a book; that you knew more than you got on tape.

14-00:47:16
Chall: Yes. Yes, I did. But somebody later did write a biography. Willa, I think, learned about it in something that she was reading. We checked—I think we always checked—to find out whether they ever used our interviews. I don't remember now, but they probably had. So the rabbi, yes, I think people have written about him. He had little what you call aphorisms, little things that he said. Somebody sent me a whole list of them. Little cards. It's almost like the Mao's " Little Red Book." [*Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung*]

Lage: Magnin was a very respected figure.

14-00:48:00
Chall: Yes, he was. He was a very respected figure. He had quite a bit to say about growing up in this area.

Lage: He was part of the Magnin family, correct, of I. Magnin and Joseph Magnin department stores?

14-00:48:12
Chall: Yes, he was. Yes, exactly, he was that. He was part of the Magnin family.

Lage: So he came from wealth, I would guess.

14-00:48:20
Chall: Well, no, they weren't that wealthy at the time he was growing up. He was not part of the wealthy part of the family.

Lage: You make me want to read the interview, I must say.

14-00:48:35
Chall: The head executive nationally of the American Jewish Committee, I believe it was, was in the office once—he must've had something going on in the Bay Area—and he came, as so many do, to the Oral History Office. Now, somewhere in my collection of pictures of ROHO—and I may have one of these—was a picture of Willa and him and me. He said he'd read the interview, and I really captured Rabbi Magnin's personality. So that was good to know.

Lage: Yes, yes. Very good.

14-00:49:14
Chall: There's not much else to say. There was a magazine published in Los Angeles that dealt with Jewish history. Willa was quite aware of that magazine. It would always come to the Bancroft Library and it was sent up to us, and Willa would look through it. Then gradually, she made me aware of it. They

sponsored, I think, a large sort of a colloquium. It was a major weekend in Berkeley, on Jewish history. I spoke at that, and referenced many of our interviews by that time.

Lage: It might be in this collection here.

14-00:50:16
Chall: I couldn't find it, but it is in that pile that I gave you.

Lage: Right, yes. Well, we had quite a collection, over the years, of Jewish community and the Jewish Community Welfare Federation. Is that the right title?

14-00:50:29
Chall: Yes. Yes. Willa always managed to move ahead on those. Many people who were Jewish but were not part of ROHO's Jewish community program were the philanthropists that Gaby Morris was interviewing.

Lage: Right.

14-00:50:52
Chall: Because many of those philanthropists are Jewish. So I suppose we did have a list. I think Willa once did have us make a list of all the interviews of Jews that we had done. I know that we had to do that with interviews that we had done with Jewish women, because an organization grew up—I think it's in Boston—the Jewish Women's Archive. They, the founders, came out here and I met both of them. I think that Ilene Weinreb was in touch with them, and they were having, I think, a meeting and lunch at her home. I was invited and I met these women. One of them is now being recognized for her work in setting this up. So the Jewish Women's Archive wanted us not to send them the interviews, but just to send them the information, like the—.

Lage: The lists?

14-00:52:04
Chall: The lists. Well, the background.

Lage: Like the catalog cards that we prepared?

14-00:52:11
Chall: The catalog card, yes. That's all they wanted, because what they were doing was gathering from the entire world, the interviews that had been done with Jewish women. So I think, yes, it's twenty-five years old or more now, and it's ongoing. So I feel that when we're through with this, just send them a note.

Lage: Okay. They will add you. Now, did you have anything to do with bringing Eleanor Glaser onboard?

14-00:52:42
Chall: No. No, Eleanor came somehow on her own. How she was found, I don't know; but no, I didn't have anything to do with it.

Lage: Or training her or launching her or anything?

14-00:52:54
Chall: No, no. No, she just seemed to fit in and start doing just what she was doing.

Lage: Yes, right. She mainly did the—. Is it the Jewish Community Welfare Federation?

14-00:53:09
Chall: Yes. I think her husband had a prominent position in one of the Jewish organizations locally. May have been the American Jewish Committee. I'm not sure just what it was.

Lage: So she knew people and had connections.

14-00:53:24
Chall: She did know them. She knew them; there was no problem about her getting them, and probably about some funding or how to get it. [interview interruption]

I just want to tell you just this little anecdote; that when Willa's son, Brandon, was married, the wedding was in the lovely little garden at the Magnes museum in Berkeley.

Lage: Oh. Lovely. That was such a lovely building. A lovely home, really [on Russell Street in the Elmwood district of Berkeley].

14-00:54:22
Chall: Yes, it was.

Lage: Was that Seymour Fromer's home?

14-00:54:28
Chall: No, no. It was not.

Lage: Or no, he bought that.

14-00:54:31
Chall: They had to petition the planning commission—I guess that this was in Berkeley—to allow this little museum to be built in a neighborhood which was really set up for homes. But they did get it, and over the years, they built onto it. They built onto it nicely, so that you weren't aware that it was no longer just a home. They sold it. The Magnes museum sold it a couple of years ago.

Lage: And now the Magnes museum is part of the Bancroft Library.

14-00:55:13
Chall: I know. I thought that was a splendid change, because the Magnes museum, the powers that be in the Jewish community, with money, and I guess the boards of these two organizations, thought that perhaps the newly founded Contemporary Jewish Museum and the Magnes museum could be combined, so that there would be one board, one type of fundraising, and it would work very well. Well, from the get-go, I would say, this was a marriage that was never going to take, and it did not, so they had to separate it. It was fraught with a lot of difficulties. But not too different about that time, I remember that Stanford Hospital and the—

Lage: The UCSF hospital?

14-00:56:19
Chall: —the UC system thought that they would make a nice little combination, too. It failed utterly.

Lage: Right, different cultures in both cases.

14-00:56:28
Chall: Yes. It didn't work. It was different cultures. So the Magnes museum, I just thought, was just a great move to go into the Bancroft Library.

Lage: Because it does sound like it was very archival in its thrust.

14-00:56:44
Chall: Yes, it is. That's exactly what it is. The Contemporary Jewish Museum is on its own and doing well, in whatever its plans are. I don't get over there very often; it's a little hard for me to get there. But I have been there a couple of times, and I get their mailing, so I know how they're heading. There is a contemporary Jewish culture. It's very different from the culture that goes back with little icons and things of this kind, which are very, very important. They're both important; but they both have their own constituencies and they both have histories, which are not always the same. So I think that's fine.

Lage: Okay. I'm going to stop this for a moment.

Audiofile 15

Lage: Okay, we are back on, with our interview on May 18 with Malca Chall. Malca, we have a number of things to cover here. But one thing I wanted to have you comment on was our mission, if you could call it that, to collect papers related to the interviews, for the Bancroft Library. Is that something that was impressed on you?

15-00:00:34
Chall: I think it was. I'm not sure how it was, just it must've been, because we always, if anybody had papers—and most of them did—we wanted them as not a backup, necessarily, but just a part of the person and his background, because we couldn't get it all in a tape. That we couldn't, and we knew that, so we wanted whatever we could get. Get it out from under the bed or wherever you can get it. I think that even with the Save the Bay women, the fact that we were sure that they all had papers, and we asked them, please give them to us. And we asked the Save the Bay to give the Bancroft Library their papers.

Lage: And surely they did, and there's a big collection on Save the Bay there.

15-00:01:34
Chall: Yes, and I don't think that would've been done if we hadn't been doing the interviews. So we did get the papers. I think that the interviewer really didn't have to do much sifting through; we would just get whatever we had or might use. I think Willa was concerned about the cost, too. Pictures, we always wanted the frontispiece picture; that was essential.

Lage: And sometimes a lot of appendices would be put in interviews.

15-00:02:09
Chall: Yes. Yes, that's right. So those were papers. They related to the interview, so that you could say, on page so-and-so—. Yes, that was correct. Just like the interview history, it made it so important. These were not going out through the Internet, through the web, and therefore, they were only going to research libraries; that was very clearly settled. So if you wanted them there, you'd certainly want as much as you could get.

Lage: Yes. These papers weren't easily available.

15-00:02:52
Chall: No, no.

Lage: I remember we used to, when an interviewee died, we would cut out the obit—

15-00:02:59
Chall: Yes.

Lage: —paste it in our copy, and send it to Bancroft, who would paste it in their copy.

15-00:03:03
Chall: That's right. That's right. Even with the long list of doctors that we had done, and others within the early stages of the Kaiser Permanente, I realized—I just dug it out yesterday—what a long list of interviews we had done. Now, I had

only done maybe five or six of them, but there're quite a few. I remember one time Willa asked me to find out whether any of them had died. I had to go and look or check—call the office of the Kaiser Permanente, look in the—. Whatever it took to get this information. Now I think it's never done. Nobody would even think about it.

Lage: No, but it's much more readily available. You just search the web and you come up with the information or the obituary.

15-00:04:55
Chall: Now you can. In those days, you couldn't do anything quickly or easily. So Willa wanted details that were important details.

Lage: Yes, very carefully. I'd asked you about faculty advisers or community advisers, like for the Jewish interview. Did you have people you'd talk to?

15-00:04:20
Chall: No. No.

Lage: Well, it wasn't really advisors for Rabbi Magnin, but you collected—.

15-00:04:27
Chall: No. And for Rose Rinder, I think I just may have gone to her.

Lage: But for the women political leaders, there wasn't some faculty member who—

15-00:04:39
Chall: No, no. No, we were on our own.

Lage: Yes. Sometimes ahead of the curve, too.

15-00:04:46
Chall: That's right. I think that Willa had had advisers in her early days, to help her get started. They were all faculty members; they didn't have much time. Willa sailed through this, much of it, on her own. Now, I think that if she had any advice at all, they came to her. We talked about Gerald Giefer in the Water Resources Center. He had ideas and he would come to Willa with them; but I don't remember ever going to Gerry Giefer and asking him for background on anybody.

Lage: Yes. Okay, well, that's interesting. I want to talk a little bit more, also, about project management or office management. In particular, I'm interested in the way we came to edit our transcripts, which were more heavily edited than most other projects, most other programs in the country.

15-00:05:50
Chall: I see, yes.

Lage: Do you know anything about how the editing standards evolved or why?

15-00:05:57
Chall: No. My editing, as I did it, was just to make sure the sentences made sense.

Lage: And if they didn't make sense?

15-00:06:12
Chall: Well, if they didn't make sense, you'd just try to—. Now, that sometimes was the problem with the transcription. So you might change the punctuation.

Lage: Right. You might listen to the tape again?

15-00:06:29
Chall: Yes. I always listened to the tape. Did we always do that?

Lage: I think it would depend, in part, on time issues. So you would listen. You'd have the transcript and the tape.

15-00:06:41
Chall: I listened to every single tape.

Lage: Okay. That's important.

15-00:06:44
Chall: I will confess that I must've been one of the most expensive interviewers on the staff. Willa never chastised me; she just knew that I spent a *lot* of time—

Lage: Getting it right.

15-00:07:01
Chall: —in research, and I spent a lot of time editing and indexing and all of that. So I think that probably, in the time when I was doing the cost analysis, some people didn't really take as much time as I did.

Lage: Did you keep track of how much time you spent per tape?

15-00:07:27
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Is that how you got the cost analysis?

15-00:07:29
Chall: Pretty much.

Lage: In editing, how did you deal with ungrammatical English, say?

15-00:07:39
Chall: Well, I might've left it the way it was or I might've changed it. Now, that got to be a problem. Not with mine so much, because my people were well-educated academics. But when we did the wine interviews—I forget which winery it was; Gallo, I believe—I think the editing had changed it, so that they didn't sound so—. Or he wanted it changed.

Lage: So he may've had—?

15-00:08:23
Chall: He may have had feelings that he didn't sound right, because—

Lage: Didn't sound educated enough?

15-00:08:28
Chall: —he had accents. So I remember there was quite a bit of discussion between them and whoever did the interview.

Lage: Ruth Teiser, probably.

15-00:08:42
Chall: It might've been Ruth Teiser; it might've been somebody much later than Ruth Teiser, whoever was doing the wine interviews later.

Lage: Carole Hicke?

15-00:08:54
Chall: Carole Hicke. It may've been one of Carole's. I don't know how Ruth and Catherine [Harroun] dealt with theirs. But I didn't have this problem. I would just make it so that if there were too many ahs and ehs, as we all speak, or start—. At one time, everything started with, "Well," many of them. Now they probably all start with "So." There are always the crutch words, as we used to call them.

Lage: Right, yes. Often our interviewees, particularly these well-educated ones, failed to realize that their conversational speech was more casual.

15-00:09:39
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Then when they'd see it on the page, they would object.

15-00:09:42
Chall: I'm sure they did. I'm sure I will, too. [they laugh]

Lage: Right.

15-00:09:48
Chall: I understand this problem. So I usually tried to make it so that it went well, as you read it. Because you know when you're writing something yourself—. I always read it to myself, to make sure that it sounds—.

Lage: So as you read it out loud, it was okay. Yes.

15-00:10:09
Chall: Yes. Here I was listening to them, and I realized that this just didn't come across easily to read, as you would in a book or something.

Lage: It's like a translation, almost.

15-00:10:22
Chall: It is, it is. It can be lost in the translation. So that's what I did. I did it to my own sentences, because I would um and stumble over something when I'm trying to ask a question that should be asked easily. I'm not an easy questioner. So I would make it better, so that it came out well and the person could answer it, as if I made sense.

Lage: However, they were really answering the way you asked it.

15-00:10:57
Chall: Yes, that's true.

Lage: It possibly makes more sense listening to it than seeing it on the page.

15-00:11:03
Chall: Yes.

Lage: What did you do about errors of fact or contradictions with other interviews, things like that?

15-00:11:13
Chall: We would point out in a footnote, that this was said in some other way at another time. The most difficult time I had—and I explained that to you, I think on tape—was with Earl Warren.

Lage: Oh, yes. We talked about that.

15-00:11:30
Chall: That had to be footnoted. I didn't have too many of those. I'm not sure that I had read all the other interviews, so that I would know. We always figured that it was up to the author to deal with those problems.

Lage: Or the researcher.

15-00:11:47
Chall: Well, yes, the researcher, who would've been the author, one would hope.

Lage: We always did have the preparatory remarks. This is an interview, it's one person's remembrance. We still have that.

15-00:12:02
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Apparently, much the same wording.

15-00:12:05
Chall: I think that's very true.

Lage: One person's memory, not statements of fact throughout.

15-00:12:06
Chall: Yes. Now, when I went to do research in New York, I must've been—. I don't remember whose work I was looking at, at the time. I went to Columbia. Now, Columbia did not edit. Columbia transcribed, put the transcription into boxes. They were usually boxes that came from jigsaw puzzle boxes or something like that. It would fit the 8½ x 11 loose leaf paper, most of the time. That was all there was.

Lage: But the interviewees could write their corrections on that.

15-00:13:00
Chall: Yes.

Lage: So they had the interviewee's—.

15-00:13:04
Chall: Yes, notes, that's true. I remember it was confounding to read. I don't remember whose interviews I was looking at, but I remember spending time at Columbia with something. Now, they just did an interview and put it in a box.

Lage: They didn't distribute it?

15-00:13:29
Chall: No. You had to go there. You had to get permission, and then you could—. You were in a special room, and you could open up the box and go through it.

Lage: So it was truly like an archival paper.

15-00:13:44
Chall: Yes, that's what it was.

Lage: Interesting. That was a big contrast with ours. I think they didn't approve of our style, and we probably didn't approve of theirs.

15-00:13:55
Chall: Well, some of the great major authors of the Roosevelt period, Franklin Roosevelt period—because they had done just many of them, at that time, and the war period—major authors were using that material. Of course, it was a lot cheaper.

Lage: Yes, much cheaper.

15-00:14:23
Chall: So we had to defend our costs, and that's the reason that I spent some time on the cost analysis.

Lage: Now, did Willa ask you to do that, or did you see it as something the office needed?

15-00:14:41
Chall: I think it was both. You see, Willa, over the years, was very, very bright about—. She had a pretty good idea of the time that everything took, and she would base it loosely on that time. By this time, we had so many people in the office—there weren't just five or six of—doing all kinds of different interviews with different subjects, so it looked like a good time. Probably both of us may have decided, let's do it. I think that when you think about anybody else in the office who had a knack for detail and organization, I had it. I can't imagine Suzanne doing this. Chita—impossible—wouldn't do it, either. Well, you did it. You did one after me. So I think you have to have a certain kind of knack for organization and detail, and be willing to spend the time doing it. So I did it. I think it really helped, because she wanted it to present to—I think it was still Dr. [James D.] Hart [director of the Bancroft Library]. Because he just couldn't believe that the costs would be what they were, and kept going up. We couldn't believe it either, but we had to defend it. We had to defend it to people who would come, like the Kaiser Permanente people. You have to defend your figures. So that's why I did it.

Lage: Well, we're talking about "it," but you broke down each step of the process, how many hours it would take per tape hour.

15-00:16:36
Chall: That's right. That's right.

Lage: And then—?

15-00:16:39
Chall: Then we converted that to what most people were getting per hour.

Lage: Then we had costs for the interviewing work and a cost for the more clerical, transcribing.

15-00:16:52
Chall: Yes. Every piece of it was in there. I remember looking to see, just picking out different interviewers and different transcribers, and the time that it took for editing—every single bit of it was there. I used mine, I used probably yours, Suzanne's, even Harriet Nathan, [who] did a different kind of interviewing, different kind of job. It was all there.

Lage: And you sort of averaged it.

15-00:17:35
Chall: Yes, I kind of averaged them out, or looked very carefully. So you used their time sheets, you used everything.

Lage: Well, this was predicated on the fact that we turned in time sheets that broke all this down.

15-00:17:46
Chall: Yes, yes.

Lage: What we'd done. What interview we worked on and what we were doing.

15-00:17:50
Chall: That's right, just the way lawyers do.

Lage: Yes, right. So you had the data.

15-00:17:55
Chall: Yes. Yes, we did.

Lage: That's so interesting.

15-00:17:57
Chall: That's interesting, because not only we punched a time clock morning and night, but we had to keep track of what tasks we were working on. Then somebody in the office had to take that, for each person, and then multiply it by whatever rate they were getting.

Lage: And charge it to the project.

15-00:18:17
Chall: Charge it to the project. So that took an extra person in the office. I think Anne Apfelbaum did it for a few years.

Lage: Yes, she did. It was a lot of work.

15-00:18:31
Chall: It was a lot of work, and it was another paying job. But that's the way we did it. I think that it still needs to be—. Well, maybe they don't pay much attention to that anymore, I don't know.

Lage: I don't think we have that kind of detailed analysis. Then also the production manual was a work of art. I think you were responsible for that.

15-00:19:00
Chall: Production. Tell me about it.

Lage: The production manual. The manual that all the employees, somebody new to the office would get. Every step in the process and who did it, who was responsible for each step.

15-00:19:15
Chall: I see.

Lage: Starting with contacting the interviewer, sending out the letter of invitation, research. And that might've incorporated projected hours in there.

15-00:19:28
Chall: Oh, I see. I'd forgotten about that. Yes, I'm sure I did it. [they laugh]

Lage: You did do it. I don't mean to laugh at it, because it was extremely helpful.

15-00:19:38
Chall: Yes.

Lage: And then what drawer to file each stage of the production process in. Now everything's on the server.

15-00:19:44
Chall: Ah, I see.

Lage: In a digital form. But then we'd have our precious transcript at each stage, and there was a special drawer for each stage.

15-00:19:53
Chall: Oh, yes. Oh, indeed. Thank you for reminding me. I think I did that because we had some new people coming in. Then when I had to take charge of the Kaiser Permanente and had—. Well, Sally was not really new, but she was relatively new. Ora Huth was brand new, and so were a couple of other people in the office, Mimi Stein. They were flummoxed, really. They just didn't know what to do. They didn't understand. So I think that's why I finally decided, we have to have some—. We have the organization; we'd better understand it. It's the only way to do it. So yes, I must've done that on my own.

Lage: Well, it's a work of art. I think there is one among your papers here, we could refer to.

15-00:20:51
Chall: Probably. I'd forgotten about that.

Lage: Okay. Well, I think that covers the kinds of things I wanted to talk about, in terms of office management. We haven't talked about presentations, though.

15-00:21:10
Chall: Oh, yes.

Lage: The importance or the role of them.

15-00:21:15
Chall: Well, of course, that was started with the Lowdermilk; that was the first one. I may have talked about this when I did the interview with Willa. That probably sparked Willa's idea that when we finish an interview, we should present it to the individual, with his or her family, and have a lunch or make something special of it. So that's what we did. I think it was important, because it was important to the interviewee, and the interviewer had an opportunity to be a part of it, and the family. So it was a nice gift for all the time that it took, because sometimes these people, not only they gave their time, but sometimes they also gave funds. Yes, and that was specially done after every interview.

Lage: Often it was done at some meeting or occasion that the interviewee was connected with.

15-00:22:25
Chall: Yes, that's right. Yes, that's right. Often, if that person were kind of well-known, there might've been a reason for doing it that would've been there already; but otherwise, it was made up. No, those were really important, I think. See, that was another way of Willa's getting us out in front, because there was no way—. The Bancroft Library wasn't going to do it, Dr. Hart wasn't going to do it, Charles Faulhaber wasn't going to do it. If Willa didn't do it, it wasn't done. We were just there. In fact, I think sometimes we were just a pain in the neck.

Lage: I don't know.

15-00:23:12
Chall: I don't know, either.

Lage: That's an exaggeration. But I think Willa also saw the presentations as a way to move onto other interviews.

15-00:23:22
Chall: Yes, yes.

Lage: People would be there and see the interview presented and they'd say, oh, we should be interviewing so-and-so.

15-00:23:27
Chall: That's right. It was a forward-looking step. I'm sure in every way, it paid off. In one way or another, it definitely did.

Lage: Yes, I agree. Well, I'm glad we got into that. We're almost finished, I think, but I want you to sort of reflect on—. You sat behind Willa's desk. Yes, you did.

15-00:23:52
Chall: Yes, I sat behind Willa from the time I moved in.

Lage: Right, and really quite close. These were desks with no separation.

15-00:23:59
Chall: That's right. Yes, that's right.

Lage: And you kind of saw how she operated.

15-00:24:06
Chall: Yes, and when I first moved in, we were only in one room. So there was Willa's desk, my desk behind it, the administrator's desk behind that, which for many years, was—

Lage: Marge.

15-00:24:22
Chall: —Marge Prince. Directly across from Willa and me was a desk, and that was Chita's desk. That's where Chita sat for a long time.

Lage: Oh. That was before my time.

15-00:24:30
Chall: Yes, a long time. At the back was this big, long, long table, along the side of the room, where they did work, they put manuscripts together.

Lage: Right. So just that one room for a while?

15-00:24:51
Chall: Yes, that one room. Then there were one or two desks behind Marge Prince. I think Suzanne had one in the back, at the back of that room, and there might've been another one in there. That was it. That was the staff.

Lage: Did you observe the interaction with Chita and Willa?

15-00:25:14
Chall: Yes.

Lage: They sat just adjacent.

15-00:25:15
Chall: Yes, they also—.Because the two of them were running the office, at that time, and Willa was out doing what—. Willa was also interviewing. She interviewed Emmy Lou Packard's father, Walter Packard.

Lage: Right.

15-00:25:35
Chall: Willa was doing water interviews, mainly, environment and water.

Lage: Water, some agriculture.

15-00:25:41
Chall: Mm-hm, and she handed them all over to me. That's when Willa stopped interviewing. I got the projects. Then Chita was working mostly with forest history. That's how many of the interviews that we did moved on, started. They just fanned out in this direction.

Lage: It's hard to think of any work getting done, with people so closely in the same office.

15-00:26:15
Chall: It did.

Lage: Right.

15-00:26:18
Chall: It did. It never stopped.

Lage: Of course, I say that having sat in an office with three people.

15-00:26:23
Chall: Yes, that's right.

Lage: A rather small office, and we all worked.

15-00:26:27
Chall: That's right. When I think about it, I have often told people we started out in one little room, with about five desks, maybe six; and eventually, we were in three rooms, but we still didn't have enough room. Therefore, many new interviewers would come in, always part time, and they would get a drawer in another interviewer's desk. They would get a drawer in somebody else's desk, and that would be their drawer.

Lage: Right. That went right up towards the end of our time under Willa.

15-00:27:02
Chall: Really. Yes. I never had to share a drawer with anybody. There was never any room.

Lage: That's amazing. Then a lot of us worked at home, as a result.

15-00:27:15
Chall: I worked at home a lot. Yes, I did. I did all my editing at home. That meant listening to the tapes. So I did that all at home, and I did the indexing at home. I did most of all of that at home. That's right. Just sent in my hours and brought them in. Then sometimes I would just come in maybe once a week or so. Yes.

Lage: Do you think part of Willa's success was her ability to choose her staff?

15-00:27:53
Chall: Yes. I think so. Eventually, when new people came in, they were all capable. Not only did she choose the staff well, but she knew everybody's good qualities—what people could do and would do, and maybe other tasks they wouldn't do. So she worked from each one's strength, is what I think it is. She could see what it was, and I don't think she ever made any mistakes. People would come in, brand new people. I just saw one that I was noticing, when I was going through my stuff, whatever's left of it, yesterday. We had a woman, a young woman who came in. I think she was qualified to be an interviewer, but I believe she started out as a transcriber, maybe. I noticed that she wrote a very interesting article in one of the magazines, about one of our projects and how it worked. The baseline about her at the bottom of the page was that she was an interviewer on the staff of the Regional Oral History Office. She was young, she was married, she had one or two children. Sometimes she would come in with a sleeveless dress or a blouse, and I would notice definitely that she had had serious breast surgery. After a year or two, she died of breast cancer. But even the short time that she was with us, she wrote an article for a magazine, about ROHO. So that was one of Willa's strengths.

The other one I think I told you about, who is also—. I don't know that she had ever done—. Maybe she did some interviewing. Women's history was her field. I think she was getting a PhD in it, or already had it, and we were going to write an article on the women together. She was standing, ready to cross a street, and an automobile just moved in on her and she was killed. But each one of these women had a strength. They were going to do something special at ROHO, no question about it. Our ROHO tee shirts, our catalogs, all this kind of thing, with the right pictures on them, Willa just knew who would help her get these lists of things out. So she did.

And Willa was also smart. We were in one room, and when some room looked as if it were going to be vacant—the second room where you all were, or Willa, Chita, and Gaby were for a long time, and all the others crowded in—she took over that room. Then when rooms became empty down the hall, she managed to wangle a way into those rooms.

Lage: And that wasn't easy.

15-00:31:53
Chall: I'll never forget the broom closet, which was right across the hall from us. That's where the janitors kept their brooms. But it had a couple of shelves, and small as it was, it could really hold things, and Willa wanted that closet. There was a lot of argument about it in the building. It wasn't safe, et cetera, et cetera. We moved into it.

Lage: But we didn't work in it; now, let's be clear about that.

15-00:32:25
Chall: No, we didn't work in it. There weren't any windows. I think there was a light. But we built shelves.

Lage: It had room for files.

15-00:32:34
Chall: Yes, it did. It took a file. That's where I think we kept a lot of—.

Lage: The in-limbo file drawer was in there.

15-00:32:40
Chall: The in limbo was in there. It was a good place for it. No, you're right. So I think Willa was looking ahead; she did publicity. And she made a point to know people and meet them, the people who would help her, whether they were outside in the community or within the university. But Willa had started, with Chita and Knox Mellon and few others, the Oral History Colloquium. Is that what it was called?

Lage: Association.

15-00:33:19
Chall: The Oral History Association. That's where she put all of the people in California—and there weren't many of us at that time who were doing oral history. There was just UCLA and ROHO. That was about it. I remember helping out in those early colloquia.

Lage: I think there was one that we were in charge of arranging. She talks about that in her oral history.

15-00:33:49
Chall: That was at Monterey.

Lage: So much time went into it.

15-00:33:55
Chall: Oh, it was terrible. But I remember walking with, I think, Willa and Knox Mellon once. And Knox said—this was in the early days, or just beyond the earliest stages—"Okay, Willa, Chita," I forget, some other names. He was setting up the official—.

Lage: The meeting?

15-00:34:24
Chall: No, he was setting up how we were going to set up the future workers and the board and all. Then there was Malca coming out. She was going to be on this committee or the board or the people who set it up. I thought to myself, no. No way am I ever going to take part in this organization at that level. So I made up my mind that I would never join, because if I didn't join, I couldn't be put on a board. I knew what this would take. I knew that I didn't understand this culture. I could see how Willa and Chita and Knox and the others worked together, and how hard it was, and I decided I had enough already, just at home, in whatever I was doing. I did not want this.

Willa, I think, never really forgave me. She never spoke to me about it personally, but she did tell me once that Harriet Nathan had never joined the association, and there were a few others who hadn't joined, and she couldn't understand how those of us who were so committed to oral history and were working in the field would not join. I just never answered her, because I didn't feel that I needed to. I had my own reasons. I don't know what Harriet's were, but I had mine, for not joining. However, we did have a meeting with the Oral History Association of the Northwest, and also in Albuquerque, and we made decisions on who would speak on what projects. I was willing to do it. I spoke on the early Kaiser Permanente history. I think we had one meeting in Tacoma, Washington. Now, that didn't bring in a lot of people, but my sister and my brother and my brother-in-law were all there.

Lage: Well, that's good. You didn't mind public speaking. I know, for instance, Suzanne kind of refused to do public speaking.

15-00:36:57
Chall: It was always a problem, but I was willing to do it and so I did it. Also in Albuquerque, I think I spoke on something. By this time, when you have a major project behind you, you want to let the colloquium, all the people who are there from around the West, in this major gathering of oral historians, you really do want to let them know what your office has accomplished. And you should. This is the *least* you could do for the office. Certainly, for Willa, who spent so much time organizing this and keeping it going, and going every year. So, no, I couldn't refuse to do that. Those were my projects, and I was proud of them.

Lage: Oh my goodness. Well, anybody else you want to mention, or any kind of wrap-up thoughts about your career?

15-00:38:06
Chall: Well, it was a good career. It was good. I worked with people that I admired. Whether I became close friends of theirs or not, I don't know, but it was well worth it. I made good friends within oral history.

Oh, I must go back a minute and tell you about Willa, because she was tough, in many ways. I remember there was a time when I think the staff, the people who did transcribing, felt that when Willa came into the office, she never acknowledged them. They just felt that they hadn't been properly acknowledged, and I think somebody told Willa about this. She realized it. She comes in, she's getting ready to sit down at her desk and go to work; it never occurred to her that she should smile and say something to each one of them, or whoever. So I think that was one aspect of Willa. Not serious, but I can see that it might bother people who were at the lower end of the staff.

But when this young woman who died of cancer—. Willa wanted to plant a tree in her yard; to give it to the husband and have a planted tree in the yard, which I thought was really very nice of her, to think about it, to think this way. When my husband died, she notified the people who I was interviewing. I may have still been working with some of them. They all knew it. She made a point of telling them. Mrs. Heller and the others, whatever I was doing at that time, I know she told them all. Of course, she told everybody on the staff and around the building. Dr. Hart wrote me a nice letter. It was very special of her to do this. She didn't have to do it, but she did.

Lage: I do remember people feeling that they weren't acknowledged enough, or their work wasn't. But I think Willa just wasn't that sort.

15-00:40:57
Chall: No.

Lage: I always knew that she valued what I had done, but I didn't expect some flowery acknowledgement.

15-00:41:05
Chall: Yes, that's right. Yes. That's right. Because whenever you needed some advice—and we almost always did: what to do about some problem we might be having, or just who in this group of people in this field should we be thinking about—she might've come to you, or you might've thought about it and gone to her. But definitely, if she didn't think you were worthy of going on and doing something else, she wouldn't have done it. Or you might not have stayed on the staff. Now, we did lose staff members who just weren't going to be able to do the work. They were too slow or needed extra help, or

we just didn't have the money for anything else. But I think she chose wisely and she made decisions about the staff wisely.

Lage: Now, what did you think about the condition of her desk? What did it reveal?

15-00:42:11
Chall: Well, it revealed that she had more to do than she could handle.

Lage: Could you describe it?

15-00:42:20
Chall: It was piled high with manuscripts, books, things that she should read, letters. But she always got through them. My desk is looking pretty much the same now, because I don't know what I should put away in a drawer or—. She would say, "If I put it away, I will not remember that it's there." She was right about that, because I have the same feeling. I think we took pictures of it.

Lage: Yes, we did.

15-00:42:58
Chall: I have a picture of it. Yes.

Lage: It was a busy woman's desk.

15-00:43:03
Chall: It was a very busy woman's desk. She always knew where things were when she had to have them.

Lage: And she always took the last look at a volume, before it was out in the world.

15-00:43:18
Chall: That's right. I want you to stress that, because it had been edited, it had been proofread at least once, if not twice, by the editor, by the final typists, as we called them, by a number of people. It had been finished.

Lage: Maybe proofread by Jim Kantor.

15-00:43:44
Chall: Maybe even that. Now, it was not bound; it was ready to go to the bindery. Willa would look it over. She would just do this. Glance through it, and *inevitably*, she would spot an error. Now, it might be just a misspelled word, it might be something else; but she spotted it, and then it went back to be repaired, before it went into the bindery. Inevitably. Now, you can talk about her desk, but that head. She was remarkable. She was remarkable. I remember the time—I may have told you—she was standing there; I think it was Lisa Rubens had finished something that she had been working on for a long time. It was all done. It was edited, everything was finished, and she handed this pile of papers to Willa. Willa started to look through it. Then she walked up to

my desk and she stood over it and she kept doing this. Then finally she said, "This will never do. I cannot let this out of the office—the errors in it. You take it. You work with Lisa, and you get it right." Or words to that effect. So that's exactly what I did. It took a long, long time; but Lisa was remarkably gracious about it. She knew that she had worked—. The interview was good, but the rest of it was not. So we worked together on it a long, long time. Lisa, as a result, has been a good friend, and she's always acknowledged, whenever she can, "Malca made an editor out of me."

Lage: Oh, that's wonderful. Yes.

15-00:46:01
Chall: So yes, that was an experience that I had. I never had to do that with anybody else, because it was always given to me to do.

Lage: Earlier on.

15-00:46:11
Chall: Oh, yes, from the very beginning. But this was one that was ready to go out, finished.

Lage: That might've been the Dave Jenkins.

15-00:46:21
Chall: It was, it was.

Lage: Yes. Who was a probably very difficult person to translate from conversation to paper.

15-00:46:27
Chall: Well, that, too. Yes, that might've been. But it was very interesting. I learned a lot from reading that interview. Of course, Willa was a very close friend of that family.

Lage: Yes, the Jenkins.

15-00:46:44
Chall: The Jenkins family. They were one of the earliest sponsors of Willa's endeavors at ROHO. They had a modern dancer in the family, and Willa tried never to miss one of those recitals, and I went to several with her, wherever they were.

Lage: She went to any number of different arts and music performances, theater.

15-00:47:21
Chall: Almost all that were around Berkeley. Yes, she did.

Lage: Then I would notice that she'd always look at the list of contributors.

15-00:47:31
Chall: I still do it.

Lage: Just to see if there's any possible sources of ROHO funding.

15-00:47:35
Chall: That's right. Exactly. No, that is exactly right. That's what she did.

Lage: We haven't mentioned Judith Dunning, our dear friend Judith.

15-00:47:46
Chall: Oh, yes.

Lage: You became such good friends with Judith. Do you remember her coming onto the staff and how you became such good friends?

15-00:47:54
Chall: Yes. That's in my talk that I'm supposed to be giving, promised I would give, at her memorial service.

Lage: Whenever it might happen.

15-00:48:09
Chall: Whenever it might happen. I think she was so interesting. She was an interesting person. I just felt that I'd like to know her better. So we did become good friends, and she was here—. I have a hanging in the hall up there that was taken down when they painted this room once, and I couldn't get it up by myself. For some reason or other, Judith was here, and she was taller than I am; so together, we hung it up there. I remember she just went—*bang*—that's it. It was posted, it was really nailed against the wall. I did go with her, to her new little house in—.

Lage: In El Cerrito?

15-00:49:03
Chall: Not El Cerrito, Point Richmond.

Lage: Oh, out in Point Richmond, early on.

15-00:49:07
Chall: Yes, I went out there with her once to see what it was. So we did various things together.

Lage: This was before she was married, then, when she was just getting the project going.

15-00:49:17
Chall: Yes, yes. Yes, that's right.

Lage: Her project was on Richmond and the waterfront.

15-00:49:23
Chall: That's right.

Lage: The precursor to our Rosie the Riveter project.

15-00:49:26
Chall: Oh, yes. Yes, she was doing other—. Yes. Willa was very—. Well, Willa put her on the staff. She [Judith] herself went out and managed to get most of the funding.

Lage: Right.

15-00:49:47
Chall: But Willa did help. I think Willa saw her as—. Well, she was not doing what we were doing, because she would get a group of people who worked in an industry, and interview them about their work, like she did with Rosie the Riveter. She didn't do long interviews of people in some special academic field or professional field; she was interviewing the little person, as we would say.

Lage: Right, the workers.

15-00:50:26
Chall: Yes. We had never done anything like that, but Willa brought her on staff. That was a smart move on Willa's part, to try something else. So I just became interested in her, and that's how it started. Then of course, when I met Jamie Liebman [Judith's husband], he was a person I really enjoyed, and I felt very comfortable with him. So that was just the start, and then I would see her during her pregnancy—as I think we all did. We visited her in that house up on the hill and watched her go through all that. So yes, she's been an interesting friend, so I just remained a friend.

Lage: Right, right. Well, many good friends from those days, from our ROHO connections.

15-00:51:24
Chall: Yes, there were. Well, let's see. I didn't tell you about the recipes.

Lage: Oh, no. The ROHO—.

15-00:51:40
Chall: The ROHO recipe book.

Lage: Yes.

15-00:51:43
Chall: I think that came out of the fact that we would have potlucks, either among the staff, or sometimes we would have a party in the office, to celebrate something. But that was not too well received by Willa; we were just wasting time. So one time, I think one of our staff members who was with us just shortly had an idea for putting together our recipes, and so we did it. It was put together with binding, this kind of spiral binding, and became part of the office—.

Lage: Part of our lore.

15-00:52:20
Chall: Part of our lore. I tried to get a recipe out of it a couple of weeks ago and it fell apart, so—. There it is.

Lage: *The ROHO Ho Ho Ho Cookbook*. [they laugh] Yes. Had some good things in it.

15-00:52:42
Chall: Yes.

Lage: Okay.

15-00:52:44
Chall: All right, fine.

Lage: I think we should wind this up, unless there's something else you wish to say.

15-00:52:49
Chall: I think not.

Lage: It's been wonderful, Malca, interviewing you. I've really enjoyed it.

15-00:52:56
Chall: Well, thank you very much. I don't think I would've done it with anybody else but you.

[End of interview]