Interview with Josef and Bea Bienstock

Under the Auspices of the
Monmouth County Library Headquarters
125 Symmes Drive, Manalapan, N.J.
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Date of Interview: June 12, 2000
Name of Interviewers: Flora Higgins and Douglas Aumack
Premises of Interview: Monmouth Country Library, Headquarters, Manalapan, NJ
Birthdates of Subjects: Bea Bienstock- April 9, 1922 Josef Bienstock- September 12, 1920

Mrs. and Mr. Bienstock, present day

Ms. Higgins: Good morning to you both. I am glad you came for this interview. Can you tell me a little bit about how you ended up in Howell?

Ms. Bienstock: My husband's family bought the farm in 1942. From 1943 to 1946, my husband was in the service. We were married in 1944, but he was overseas all that time. When he came back, we rented a house nearby, near the farm. After a couple of years, we were able to buy the house we are in now. And we have been there since 1946.

Ms. Higgins: Your parents were from here, too?

Mr. Bienstock: No. I was an immigrant. I immigrated to the United States in 1941.

Ms. Bienstock: From Germany.

Mr. Bienstock: Yes, from Germany. Actually I think I left Germany in 1938 to go with my parents and my sister, and then after some wanderings, we arrived in the United States in April 1941. My parents had difficulties in getting established. We came to New York, but first we lived somewhere else. My parents were fortunate enough to bring along some money, and that tided them over for the first few years, as well as helped them buy the farm. In Germany, my parents had been in the men's clothing manufacturing business and really had no background in farming. However they had good business sense and saw that the farming business could provide them with an independent living. Very shortly after we got here, we found some friends and relatives who were in the same area. They were also in Howell, and they were in the chicken business.

Ms. Higgins: Do you remember their names?

Mr. Bienstock: Yes. Mr. Stang.

Ms. Bienstock: There were about a thousand chicken farms in Monmouth and Ocean Counties at that time.

Mr. Bienstock: And it was the type of business that you could get into with relatively little capital. As I said before, my parents had some money, and that helped them to get started. But also they got a mortgage from the Federal Land Bank and also a second mortgage from the Jewish Agricultural Society. This was very helpful in getting established. Not only did the society lend them money, but they also assisted in teaching my parents and myself about the chicken business. We had absolutely no background in the chicken business. As a matter of fact, I was selected to spend the summer of 1942 with the Stangs, and in those four or six weeks, I became an expert in raising chickens. In August 1942 my parents got title to about five acres and established the business. The most important thing was when we walked in, we could make a living immediately. So anyway, that bought us a house.

Ms. Higgins: I see. We have interviewed other chicken farmers from that period, and it was apparently a good business.

Ms. Bienstock: It wasn't that lucrative, but it was steady.

Mr. Bienstock: What was attractive was that you did make a living. But it was more attractive that you were your own boss. You didn't have to work for anybody else. The feed was bought through a cooperative. None of these things were on a contract basis. We had to purchase our feed, because we didn't grow anything. We had to buy everything to feed the chickens, which was done through a cooperative. The name of the cooperative was the Jersey Farmers Cooperative, which was in Hightstown and is no longer in existence.

Ms. Bienstock: Well, none of this is in existence today.

Mr. Bienstock: The eggs were also sold through a cooperative. The egg marketing cooperative was called Farmco. That was interesting because Farmco was a little bit based probably on a union-type of contract. Farmco had a contract with a number of dealers that made them pay a certain market price for the eggs. There was a price sheet, and I wish it was in existence today. This was a paper published by Urner Barry, a private company that published the daily produce prices for eggs, chickens, and all kinds of different things. That was the basis for the price we got paid for the eggs.

Ms. Higgins: So you all sold at the same price?

Mr. Bienstock: We all sold at the same price, right. Whatever the price would be. The dealer agreed to take all the eggs we had. In other words, they didn't tell us how much they wanted us to produce. They just agreed to buy whatever we had.

Ms. Bienstock: We had to sort them by size.

Ms. Higgins: Was this an outgrowth of the programs initiated during the Depression?

Mr. Bienstock: I don't think so. It was sort of like there was a need. I'm not sure exactly how it came about. Maybe it was because of the Depression, but what really happened was that most of the egg farmers did come from New York. So the cooperative relationships of supplier, producer, and buyer were probably patterned after the unions in New York. So I think there is probably a relationship.

Ms. Higgins: Was your family able to pursue any activities in the garment industry?

Ms. Bienstock: Not at that time.

Mr. Bienstock: No, once he left New York, he left New York. My father had tried, in the beginning, to get into the garment trade. As a matter of fact, one of the problems he had proved to be a very sour experience. He worked for minimum wage, and he was a skilled person. In the garment industry, there was the cutter, the designer, etc. But he found that in order to get into the union, he had to "bribe," or you had to pay a certain amount of money in order to get into the union. And he just thought he wasn't going to do that, because he wasn't sure whether or not they would live up to their word. He just didn't feel certain about the whole thing. So he got soured by that, and decided it wasn't for him. My mother by the way, tried various things herself. She took some things in and did some embroidery work so they could make a living.

Ms. Higgins: There were a number of people I interviewed that worked making uniforms for the servicemen, a number of people who had been trained in the garment industry. That's why I asked.

Mr. Bienstock: That was probably a little bit later.

Ms. Higgins: Yes, during the War.

Mr. Bienstock: There was an aunt of mine that did some embroidery work like gold stitching, and things like that.

Ms. Higgins: It seems from what you said, you almost barely got settled when you went to War.

Mr. Bienstock: Yes.

Ms. Higgins: Did you take over the business, Bea?

Ms. Bienstock: I wasn't there. We were married in 1944, but I lived in New York, in Brooklyn then.

Mr. Bienstock: I was working in New York and going to school a little bit, and I did various things.

Ms. Bienstock: He went to the library, where I worked.

Ms. Higgins: I was going to ask how you met.

Mr. Bienstock: Yes, that's how we met. We met at the library.

Ms. Higgins: The New York Public Library?

Ms. Bienstock: The Brooklyn Public Library, the Brownsville branch.

Ms. Higgins: The Brooklyn Public Library is considered one of those librarian's libraries that has been instrumental in founding our own public library system. Were you a librarian?

Ms. Bienstock: No, I was a college graduate with a teaching degree. And there were no available jobs, because they didn't need any English teachers. It was war time; they needed science and mechanical teachers. I was going with some fellow at the time who told me there was an opening at the library. And that's how it came about.

Mr. Bienstock: Tell them how much you made a week.

Ms. Bienstock: I made two dollars and fifty cents a day!

Ms. Higgins: Oh, good heavens! Was that full-time work?

Ms. Bienstock: Full-time work. It was three evenings and six days a week. Two dollars and fifty cents a day, as a full-time librarian!

Mr. Bienstock: This was not unusual, because everyone got the same thing. Minimum wage was thirty-five cents an hour, and you made fourteen dollars a week. And that was it. I did some factory-type work when we first came, and I moved from one job to another one. But the pay didn't really get up that much. Later on, I made a little bit more than when I first started. Actually my parents took care of the farm, and I came back weekends and worked part-time, and it helped them to get started. But I had a little bit of technical engineering background in Europe, and I got into a metal working place. That was before the War. Then my salary was sixty dollars a week.

Ms. Higgins: Well, let's just talk about your military service for awhile.

Mr. Bienstock: Can I make another remark? My parents took over the place in 1942. We had a clear income of sixty or seventy dollars a week, which was quite a bit of money at that time. If you are familiar with the chicken business, the chickens are good only for one year, maybe eighteen months, to lay the eggs, because our business was to sell the eggs only, and not the chickens.

Picture of baby chicks

Ms. Bienstock: We would get rid of the old ones, and then raise baby chickens.

Mr. Bienstock: The summertime was your peak profit period. Let's say from June to February, you had most of the income, because you only fed the chickens that produced the eggs. But after that, you took in new chickens to replenish the old ones. So therefore, you had to feed the young ones. So obviously, you had to eat up some of the profits the rest of the year.

Ms. Higgins: Maybe what you are saying is they made sixty or seventy dollars a week, instead of the sixteen or seventeen dollars a week you might make, but that was maybe because they worked so many hours.

Mr. Bienstock: That's true, it was seven days a week. At the time, nobody really minded it that much. It was just a different way of life.

Ms. Bienstock: People used to come out to visit, and then you would be sitting there with company, and you were not going to run out to the chicken coops. So

they would think it was such an ideal life! (laughter) They would think we just sat here and the chickens just laid eggs, and we didn't have to do any work.

Pedigreed roosters from Babcock Breeding Farm waiting for baby chickens to mature

Mr. Bienstock: It was hard work, but if you were a good manager, you could take off a few hours or control your life to a certain extent. You weren't completely independent, but you didn't report to anyone in particular.

Ms. Higgins: What happened to the chicken business?

Mr. Bienstock: Actually what happened was in the 1950s. There was an oversupply. The egg prices dropped, but the feed prices did not. And there just wasn't any profit margin left.

Ms. Bienstock: Then the feed companies took over and built their own…they had their own people working in the chicken farms.

Mr. Bienstock: Also, the expenses were higher here. Taxes were higher and labor was higher.

Ms. Higgins: What do you mean by "here:" Monmouth County?

Mr. Bienstock: Yes, compared to Georgia and places like that. That was in the 1950s and 1960s. It was a competitive thing, really.

Ms. Higgins: The rug mill moved south, too.

Mr. Bienstock: They moved south for the opposite reason. Well, actually because it was cheaper labor there.

Ms. Higgins: The chickens worked for the same money, but in a sense, no! Do you think the decline had anything to do with the fact that during the War people were eating a lot more eggs because of the meat rationing, and then after the War, they weren't?

Ms. Bienstock: It might have a little.

Mr. Bienstock: They probably were eating more, but there is always a relationship between egg prices and meat prices. As meat prices go down, usually egg prices come down, too. But there was one factor that was very important. Somebody found out that eggs had a lot of cholesterol.

Ms. Bienstock: Of course meat did, too.

Mr. Bienstock: And you would be surprised how dramatically the consumption of eggs dropped! What also happened was that because people started to work again, instead of having leisurely breakfast at home, they would eat cereal and things like that. Eggs were the staple food mostly for breakfast, and habits had changed. Those were all factors that influenced the pricing of the eggs.

Ms. Higgins: You were farming with your parents at the time of this decline?

Mr. Bienstock and Ms. Eckstat after Mr. Bienstock joined the army. They were engaged.

Mr. Bienstock: Actually, I got into the Medical Corps in the service, and I'm not sure why. I was trained in the Medical Corps, for whatever reason. Then at some point, a few of us were pulled out. We were mostly German Jews, Jews who had been born in Germany and spoke German. We were pulled out, and we were sent to a training facility in Maryland. Henry Kissinger was at the same school, but he probably was about four or five classes before me. The training was about three months, or something like that. We basically were instructed in the Order of Battle of the Germany army.

Ms. Higgins: Instructed in what?

Mr. Bienstock: It is a military term. Order of Battle means the organizational charts of an Army, and it's called the Order of Battle.

Ms. Bienstock: Well, actually it was military intelligence.

Mr. Bienstock: Yes. So we were trained as interrogators of prisoners of war.

At the end of the battle of Ruhr, a German corps-commander posing for a picture, somehow putting a smile on his face

Ms. Bienstock: There is a wonderful picture of him with one of the Major Generals, sitting in a jeep. He was sitting and guarding him because the General was a prisoner.

Mr. Bienstock: Anyway, I went overseas fairly early, before D-Day. On D-Day, I was in England. Because they anticipated a certain amount of casualties, the Army always had replacements. I wasn't in the first wave, but I was like a second fiddler. So I was in the replacement wave. During the Normandy Invasion, I was in England. But about six weeks later, a lot of the people from the intelligence school were sent in. We were sort of like a group that had certain, particular skills, and they kept us together to be parceled out as the need arose. Then I wound up in the Seventh Armored Division. I joined them in Holland.

Ms. Higgins: Was that Patton?

Mr. Bienstock: No, that was the First Army. Patton came up from the south.

Mr. Aumack: So you were Monty's campaign.

Mr. Bienstock: Right. I joined a team. Our purpose was to interrogate the prisoners of war at the Battalion level. In other words, we were in the G2, and G2 is Intelligence. We were attached to the G2, but we were pretty much independent. Our mission was to collect tactical intelligence. The real purpose was to find out who was in front of us, in other words, which German unit we were fighting. And you could establish that when you first interrogated a prisoner, because they came to us. So we interrogated them, and the first thing we found out was what army they belonged to. According to Geneva laws, they only had to give us name, rank, and serial number. But it was usually not a problem. But let me continue on a little bit, because it changed later on. And we really didn't have that many prisoners come in. I was over there in 1944, and by the fall of 1944, it was fairly quiet. We had some artillery fire coming in, but I was fairly far back. Well, we weren't really that far back, but we were about two or three miles from the actual front line. The infantry was right up front. It was probably about November of that year, we were sort of floating around. Then all of a sudden, the Germans decided to break through in Holland and Belgium. And we were brought in around November or December; it was before Christmas. We were brought into Belgium, and then we became part of the Battle of the Bulge. That was one of the toughest periods I have had. It was very cold, and there were no real facilities. The Belgians were so friendly, and it was a little bit different than the Germans. But we didn't want to take anything away from them because they were so friendly, so we stayed outside. And it was freezing…unbelievable! Besides that, I heard some German commands. We were in the company headquarters, and we heard the Germans broke through. As a matter of fact, we saw some American soldiers take off this way, and we went that way. And I mean there were some really young kids that were thrown in, and the Germans knew that there were some green troops, and that's when they broke through. There were also a lot of rumors about spies and things like that. I had a particular problem because our whole team was all ex-Germans, and we all had very heavy German accents, which made us a little bit nervous. I still have an accent today, but in those days, I had a much, much stronger and heavier German accent. Anyway, after that, I think what actually happened was the Germans ran out of supplies. It was very well planned, but they just ran out of supplies, which was our luck. As an aside, I had an occasion to get back to the city I was born and raised in. And that was in the Ruhr Valley, which is a heavy and intense industrial steel and coal area of Germany.

A picture of the ruins, October 1945

Ms. Bienstock: We have a lot of pictures of all these ruins.

Mr. Bienstock: Well, that was pretty much mopped up, and the rest of the campaign was a piece of cake. And the German people did not really fight us, or anything like that. They were glad, I think, that it was over. They were poor, and they had very little to eat. For a pack of cigarettes or a bar of soap, you could buy three quarters of Germany.

Ms. Bienstock: I think an interesting point to bring in here, is that you found your aunt and uncle.

Arnheim, Germany in October, 1945

Mr. Bienstock: Oh yes, that's one thing I forgot to mention. I knew that a sister of my mother had survived the War in Holland. And they were hidden, and they were underground. The children were farmed out to other people for the main reason that children make noise. And they were usually in a hay barn, or something like that. That is the way they survived, with the help of the Dutch people. They had some money and they paid, but still the Dutch people took a big chance to hide the German Jews. But they did. My uncle had family here, and somehow through the Red Cross, I found out where he was located. That was while we were in the service.

Ms. Bienstock: I think it was actually after the War.

Mr. Bienstock: Oh no, it was during the War. In the service, you couldn't do a lot of things. We had a jeep, and you could do pretty much what you wanted, within reason. Let's say you wanted to take a trip of thirty or forty miles. Normally you would have to tell someone you were going to go someplace. And it was a very, very emotional experience. Another interesting thing was that while I was Jewish, the other two members of the team were not Jewish. One of them actually left Austria because he was Catholic, and he just couldn't make it. And the older one, he had a very unusual experience. His parents were still in Germany, and he was Gentile. He was older than I was, and he was in England because he was a wholesale cotton dealer. He was a broker, really. And that's how he got to the States, it wasn't related to any political pressure at all. He just didn't like to be in Germany for one reason or another. His brother, though, was in the German army, and he eventually was killed on the Eastern front. Later on toward the end of the War, this fellow came with me when I went to find my uncle and aunt. Then later on, I went with him to find his parents, somewhere near Frankfurt. So that was an interesting experience. After the Armistice, we were shifted and assigned to prisoner of war camps. There we interrogated the prisoners of war. We had to

classify them, because if they had a certain amount of rank, they were considered suspect, and they were separated.

Ms. Bienstock: Is that when you got your General?

Mr. Bienstock: I don't know, the General just drove in and surrendered.

Ms. Higgins: Were you married all this time?

Ms. Bienstock: Yes, we were married before he went overseas.

Ms. Higgins: And you were then at the library?

Ms. Bienstock: Then I was working in an office in Manhattan.

Mr. Bienstock: I suspect because it paid more money.

Ms. Bienstock: Yes, it would have been more than the library. I think I earned forty dollars a week, or something like that. I did payroll.

Ms. Higgins: And your in-laws were…

Ms. Bienstock: They were on the farm.

Ms. Higgins: Coping with the downgrading of the prices and trying to keep the farm together.

Ms. Bienstock: Yes.

Ms. Higgins: And they had five acres?

Mr. Bienstock: Yes, they had five acres originally.

Ms. Higgins: Did they farm anything else?

Mr. Bienstock: No. The soil in our area was pretty sandy and poor, and we didn't really have any skills. Later on, many years later, we started to grow vegetables and things like that. But they were not for sale, they were just for our home. And I still do today.

Ms. Bienstock: And now we have forty acres.

Ms. Higgins: You have forty acres?

Three families operated the adjoining farms during the mid nineteen fifties. Mr. Josef Bienstock and Mrs. Martha Padawer are brother and sister.

Standing (from left): Josef Bienstock, Miriam Bienstock, Bea Bienstock (Mrs. Josef), Jill Padawer (between Bea and Martha), Martha Padawer, Elsa Bienstock, Gabriel Padawer.

Sitting (from left): Wolf Bienstock (family patriarch), Marshall Bienstock, Mrs. Ida Eckstat (mother of Bea Bienstock), Susan Padawer (front), Dora Bienstock (Mrs. Wolf, partially obscured)

Mr. Bienstock: Yes. When I came back from the Service, I didn't have any real skill. So I joined my parents on the farm. When we first came, we had old buildings, and the house didn't have indoor plumbing. There was an outhouse, and there were no showers or anything like that. There was a shower, but it was outside.

Ms. Higgins: Is this the house you live in now?

Ms. Bienstock: No.

Mr. Bienstock: But that is one of the first things we did: remodel the house and put in indoor plumbing.

Ms. Bienstock: The house we live in now was lived in by the Searles family. Mr. Searles was a manager of some sort at the Lairds on Colts Neck Road.

Ms. Higgins: Let me get this straight. Your father and mother have a five-acre farm, but you didn't live there.

Ms. Bienstock: No, we lived a couple of doors down.

Mr. Bienstock: We rented a house about a couple hundred yards away. Eventually, my sister and brother-in-law bought that farm. I think Searles got tired of chickens. We had rented a house next door, and we were always friendly with them. And they approached us and asked if we wanted to buy their house. And then we bought that house, and my brother-in-law bought the house I had rented. He eventually sold it, and he didn't stay in the business. He found that he liked engineering a bit better.

Ms. Bienstock: He has a Ph.D. from M.I.T.

Ms. Higgins: The chicken business was failing, so what did you do?

Mr. Bienstock: No, at that time the chicken business was still alive.

Ms. Higgins: In the late 1940s, ok.

Ms. Bienstock: We didn't sell the chickens until the early 1960s.

Mr. Bienstock: Actually there were periods where there were good times and not such good times. The bottom finally dropped out probably around 1960. And it was a very tough period. My parents had left, by the way, by that time. My parents had gone back to Germany for a short period of time, mainly for the purpose of restitution. We kept the house for them, and they went back and forth. But actually, they had moved away from the farm.

Ms. Higgins: Did you help with the farm?

Ms. Bienstock: Not really, I was teaching at the time.

Ms. Higgins: Where did you teach?

Ms. Bienstock: Originally I was an English teacher, and I was supposed to teach in the higher grades. But I became interested in reading, and I wanted to know where reading problems started. And I worked three years in second grade, and I wrote my thesis on second grade reading. But they said that they didn't need reading teachers. So I found a job at Old Bridge, in the high school. It was a new school, and it was the first year that it was open. And I was the Reading Specialist there, and I was there for twenty-four years, until I became sick and had to retire. At the time, it was called Madison Township High School, and they changed it to Old Bridge.

Mr. Bienstock: Actually, things got bad in the late 1950s. And I got to the point in my life where I felt if I didn't do something else, I would be stuck and not be able to change anymore. I liked the life, but I knew economically it was a difficult thing. You need a bunch more capital to mechanize the chicken business. You needed an enormous amount of capital to automate things, and the margin wasn't there to support it. The idea was to increase the number of chickens from 10,000 to 20,000 if you weren't making enough money, but obviously that took a lot of capital to put up the extra buildings and get the machinery, etc. Anyway, I decided I didn't want to go that route. So I started to look around. I felt I had had a very sheltered life because I was home all the time. I was involved in different things and with the community, so I wasn't completely self-contained. But at some point, and through a friend of mine, I went into sales. Actually this friend was an army buddy of mine. He had been in the country a little bit longer than I had been. And somehow we remained in contact with each other, even after we got out of the army. One day he told me I should just try it, and he gave me a bunch of leads that were at least six months old, and he gave me a book. He

imported equipment that was sold to the pharmaceutical industry, mostly lab equipment and things like that.

Ms. Higgins: That was a good field to get into.

Mr. Bienstock: Yes, it was good. As I mentioned before, I had an engineering background and had gone to engineering school for awhile.

Ms. Higgins: Did you have some medical training?

Mr. Bienstock: No, no real medical training. I had only learned how to keep someone comfortable, and the Army training was only for about two months. It was more like a hands-on, nursing type situation. The people I visited for this business were small and large pharmaceutical companies. I also went to some of the hospitals. When I started this, I didn't even know how to make a contact. But the funny thing was, I felt I might be able to make a living out of it. When it comes to friends and finances, sometimes things don't work out too well. (laughter) I was doing fairly well, and I was strictly working on commission at that time. We were still friendly, but I started to feel that my friend wasn't completely honest. And I felt that I was being taken advantage of. He had a certain line, and I was visiting the same people. And I liked what I was doing. It was technical application of selling, really. Then I started looking around for a job, and I got into something that was completely unrelated to pharmaceutical work. I got a job then, and not just on commission as I was before. And there are some advantages and disadvantages to that. For two years, the farm kept going. First I was trying to get into the camera repair business, and I did a couple different things. But I had some help, and we didn't raise any new chickens. We sort of coasted on what we had, which was alright for a couple of years. We got into debt, though, and that was another problem. But by doing all these different things, it was manageable. We got a little close to losing our place a couple of times. We had a few periods where we did really well, but we really had to put all the money back into the farm. But we did buy more property, and that's how we got forty acres. Our son is farming, but he doesn't do the type of farming I did. He is into grain farming.

Ms. Bienstock: He is a graduate from the University of Delaware in Agricultural Engineering.

Mr. Bienstock: He decided to go into grain farming. He used the old chicken coop buildings. One of the reasons we are able to hold on to the property is because of our son. He grows some hay and corn on a few of the acres, so we have farm assessment.

Ms. Higgins: He probably as a child heard you talking about all those high prices of grain.

Mr. Bienstock: And you know, today it is the opposite. Today grain is very cheap. But there was a time where eggs were like thirty cents a dozen and a bushel of grain was twice as much as it is today. You know, it's a supply and demand thing.

Ms. Higgins: You must have been quite busy with three children. Tell us about it.

Ms. Bienstock: We put them all through college. The first two were girls, and they are both in education.

Mr. Bienstock: We had a little bit of help because my mother-in-law lived with us. The reason my wife could go to work was because my mother-in-law kept the kids.

Ms. Higgins: You were saying there were changes in the zip codes.

Mr. Bienstock: We paid our taxes to Howell, but Howell was split up into three different areas. It was Freehold, Lakewood, and Farmingdale. Our first address was R.D.#2 Freehold, and as it grew, we became R.D.#4, Freehold. Then our address became 207 Casino Drive, Freehold, and then 207 Casino Drive, Howell. And then the post office decided that it was such a screwed up area, they couldn't tell where anything was. So they divided all the property into 50-foot areas, and each one got a number. Then we became 655 Casino Drive. We have had five different addresses.

Mr. Bienstock: The biggest change was from Freehold to Howell. We were not particularly fond of it for awhile. People in Howell felt very strongly to have their own identity. But anyway, it worked out all right, but we had no choice. You didn't vote on it or anything like that, somebody just decided that's what they were going to do.

Ms. Bienstock: The funny thing is that Lemon Road is right up the road from us, but it is Farmingdale. And they never changed their numbers. So you go up Lemon Road, and you have 47, 52, 67, and then 24, etc.

Mr. Bienstock: They changed the name.

Ms. Bienstock: No they didn't. They are all different numbers.

Mr. Bienstock: They changed recently because of the Matawan situation.

Ms. Higgins: What would you say are the most significant changes you have seen in Howell?

Mr. Bienstock: Urbanization.

Ms. Bienstock: Development. We went to a concert at Rutgers a few weeks ago. We got off at Route 18, about twelve miles from our house. And I counted thirty-six commuter buses coming south!

Ms. Higgins: Wow!

Ms. Bienstock: That's a lot of development.

Ms. Higgins: That is a lot. Is anyone watching it, to your satisfaction?

Ms. Bienstock: Right now our mayor is putting a moratorium on development. He is trying to cut down on the development in the Township.

Mr. Bienstock: Today it's both political and clout. Sometimes the Township does not want certain things to be developed, but certain people have their own money and the rights of zoning…

Ms. Bienstock: I hope they don't change Howell Township to Hovnanian Township…

Ms. Higgins: Are you serious?

Mr. Bienstock: It has not been established, because all of these things are still in the courts. Even zoning can be fought against in court. If a developer has enough money and clout, he does pretty much what he wants, because he has the resources to do so.

Ms. Bienstock: Having been in the school system for thirty-two years, I know this. At one time, when small developers put up housing, they had to put something towards a school. Today they put up whatever housing they want without thinking about schools. Every child that comes into a school costs a minimum of $10,000 today. If a family comes in with two or three children, that's $20,000 to $30,000. And their taxes do not cover that schooling. Who is paying for it? I am.

Mr. Bienstock: Are you familiar with Howell at all?

Ms. Higgins: Not really.

Mr. Bienstock: There's a section in Howell which is Adelphia.

Ms. Higgins: Is Adelphia in Howell?

Mr. Bienstock: Yes, it's part of Howell. But they have their own post office.

Ms. Bienstock: And it's the best post office in New Jersey. If you want anything sent out fast, go to Adelphia.

Mr. Bienstock: Adelphia is sort of like a little village in itself. It has it's own history, by the way. A lot of it was related to the funeral parlor there, and I think the Claytons were the prominent people there.

Ms. Bienstock: And Josef was a fireman at one time.

Mr. Bienstock: I belonged to the fire company for twenty-five years. Actually until I started to work outside the farm. I know you have all heard about affordable housing. There was a development right across the street from the Adelphia post office, and you should go past there. It's the ugliest thing.

Ms. Bienstock: It was beautiful farmland.

Mr. Bienstock: It's called Adelphia Greens.

Ms. Higgins: Are the roads keeping up with developing?

Ms. Bienstock: No, there is so much traffic.

Mr. Bienstock: I don't know whether you commute at all, but once in awhile we have to get into New York fairly early. And we go by bus. And there is a Park and Ride in Howell. It's bad in the morning, but it's worse in the evening. A trip that would normally take you about an hour, you are doing good if you can make it in two hours. And it's getting worse.

Ms. Bienstock: I never voted against schools in my life, but when I see the developments coming up, there is no provision for the schools at all.

Mr. Bienstock: One of the nice things: if you have the house and you retire, and you have a little bit of a resource, it's an easy life. We have been in retirement for twelve years now, and we spend our winters in Florida. We managed to buy a condo in Florida, and we have a pretty nice arrangement where we spend five months in Florida and seven months here. And we really enjoy that. You don't have the stress or the wind of the cold weather, and we usually leave right after Thanksgiving, and we come back after Easter. And you do different things in Florida than you do here.

Ms. Higgins: You are my audience that disappears after Thanksgiving! (laughter) Would you care to comment on the facilities in Monmouth County, including if you like the library, the park system, or whatever?

Ms. Bienstock: We used to go to the library…well, first there was a bookmobile.

Ms. Higgins: Oh yes, when your children were little.

Ms. Bienstock: Right. That was my big social event.

Mr. Bienstock: Very rarely do we use the Howell library.

Ms. Bienstock: I can't even find it.

Mr. Bienstock: Unfortunately we don't use the library now as much as we used to. As you get older and slow down a little bit, I find that I have much less time than I used to.

Ms. Higgins: So many people say that. I think there is somebody up there shaving a millisecond off every day! (laughter)

Mr. Bienstock: I am very jealous of the way I spend my time. I still have a little garden but we cut back every year, and we have some fruit trees. And I do some woodworking.

Ms. Higgins: You are still actively farming your acreage?

Mr. Bienstock: I am a gofor for my son now; I don't participate in it very much. But I help him whenever I can, if he needs help.

Ms. Bienstock: And we have some fruit trees. We have automatic lighting outside the house, where if you drive up, the light automatically goes on. Well at five o'clock this morning, I saw the light was on, because the deer come at that time. You can see deer tracks all across the lawn.

Mr. Bienstock: I am very proud that last week I was able to drive the hay bailer for my son. It's a very intense labor period now because you depend on the weather to try and get your stuff in. And sometimes he can't get enough help. So whenever I can, I pitch in.

Ms. Higgins: Beatrice, please comment on education during the twentieth century in Monmouth County. Tell us how it was when you found it, when you were working there, and how you see it now.

Ms. Bienstock: I think the education was good. My three children went through high school, and I think they did well. We had one school on Adelphia Road. Now we have nine or ten elementary schools, and five or six schools in the regional high school system!

Mr. Bienstock: Our children did not settle in Howell. Well our son is in Howell, but he doesn't have any children. The two daughters have children, but one lives in the state of New York and the other lives in south Jersey. I have a feeling that

the school system changed, especially as to the activities like Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. I think the schools were much more a part of the life of the family when our kids grew up. And I don't think the PTAs are nearly as strong. I think it's because of all the people coming in from various places outside. It's not as homogeneous as it was when our children grew up. And we were sort of grafted onto it, too, because then we were the outsiders. It took us awhile to get Americanized, and just to speak the language. But we adapted very well. Adelphia Fire Company was very insulated, and it was very difficult to become volunteer. Around the late 1940s or early 1950s, my brother-in-law and myself were invited to become members of Adelphia Fire Company. Although we were active members, socially you really did not mix much with all the other people who were born in the area. I never went to school here, and there is a grade school and high school. So it makes a big difference. All the people in Adelphia Fire Company had a common background because they went to school together, to church together, etc. But we were taken in very, very nicely, and that lasted for a long period of time. Most of the people are gone now, and I haven't been an active member for almost forty years. When we came here, Howell had about 2500 inhabitants. It was very, very small, and you certainly knew the people on your street.

Ms. Bienstock: There was only one school at the time. And now there are about ten or twelve schools, I think.

Mr. Bienstock: Today I think it's more like 50,000 people here, and it's more like a city. A lot of things have changed. We had no zoning. When you wanted to build something, you built it. It was really a free life. There were no codes, no plumbing codes, no building codes, etc.

Ms. Higgins: Were you in the county when the troubles at Fort Monmouth were going on? Would you care to comment on that?

Mr. Bienstock: Oh, yes. We belonged to the Jewish Community Center, which was really in Farmingdale. And that was pretty much the center of our social life. Farmco, the egg cooperative, had their meetings at the Jewish Community Center.

Mr. Aumack: Do you remember a very wonderful woman who used to come to the library all the time, Ruth Keats?

Ms. Bienstock: We were very close, dear friends.

Mr. Aumack: Anyway, her husband was working at Monmouth at the time. His name was not Keats, it was Katz, and he changed it because of the problems in Monmouth at the time.

Ms. Higgins: I knew Ira Katchen, who was the lawyer who was so instrumental in helping many of the people accused.

Mr. Bienstock: In Germany, it was guilt by association. If you were Jewish, you were automatically suspected to be a leftist. By the way, the Community Center suffered with that also. There was a feed cooperative which was much more leaning towards the left side.

Ms. Higgins: Did Agway come out of these farming cooperatives?

Mr. Bienstock: No, Agway was much older. Farmco and FLF were fairly recent because the chicken business did not really become established until the late 1930s, when it became more concentrated. Before people had chickens, but they weren't organized. Agway was the successor to GLF, (Grange League Federation) and GLF was an old, established farm association which really was not that political, but conservative.

Ms. Higgins: So GLF is older?

Mr. Bienstock: Yes.

Ms. Higgins: There are Grange buildings all over the County.

Mr. Bienstock: I think GLF was much stronger in New York state.

Ms. Higgins: Was GLF regarded as leftist?

Mr. Bienstock: No, it was FLF that was really leftist. And the Jewish community suffered. At one time, it was really split apart. After McCarthy, people began to feel afraid to show their convictions on the outside, and they kept them to themselves. They were afraid to lose their jobs, and that was a tough period. Then the leftists sort of faded away. Some of them were probably Communist, and they sort of took their cue from Russia. You probably heard of the Doctor Trials in Russia, and that changed a lot of the outlook of people here, too. They saw that Communism was antisemetic, and people became disillusioned. Today, you have new conservatives like Harry Krystal. Do you know Harry Krystal? His son was advisor to the vice president under Bush.

Ms. Higgins: Let's back up just a minute to the library on Broad Street that you were talking about.

Ms. Bienstock: We used to go there for the book reviews and discussion groups.

Mr. Bienstock: For awhile the library was in Grand Union, and I think from there, they moved here.

Mr. Aumack: When did this library open?

Ms. Bienstock: 1986. I belonged to the Friends of the Library for years, and then we started going to Florida. But they used to call me to come in and help out.

Ms. Higgins: When we changed the tape, you were talking about Mr. Krystal.

Mr. Bienstock: He was one of the political figures that went all the way from the left. I just happened to remember his name because it's a typical political flip flop…I mean he changed so much from being a leftist to being an ultra conservative. And there are others like that, too. At the moment, I can't think of their names. Interestingly enough, the people who suffered, somehow I don't think they ever became new conservatives. They pretty much stayed level. The people that did not really suffer, they just were exposed or they were active but did not really physically or personally suffer by McCarthy.

Ms. Bienstock: I just remembered, you should have a couple of books here at the library that were written by Dr. Gertrude Dubrovsky. It is the history of Howell and the Jewish Community Center.

Ms. Higgins: She came and gave a talk here once. She is a very interesting woman.

Ms. Bienstock: Yes, I know her very well. Our kids went to school together.

Mr. Bienstock: Their parents had a farm.

Ms. Higgins: It was in Farmingdale, right?

Ms. Bienstock: Yes. Now she is in Princeton.

Ms. Higgins: Did you find when you came to the county that there were any problems regarding relations between the races, and would you care to comment on that?

Ms. Bienstock: It was segregated. When we went to the movies, the Black people sat upstairs. Mrs. Roosevelt wrote an article in "My Day" about Freehold and the Blacks being allowed to go into the movies without having to sit upstairs.

Mr. Bienstock: We didn't have any Blacks in Germany.

Ms. Higgins: The schools were not segregated?

Ms. Bienstock: No, not when I was there.

Mr. Bienstock: I think when we first came, we were not really aware of it with our children. We didn't have children at the time; our children were born after the War and didn't go to school until the 1950s or so. I think the one school in Freehold was segregated. As a matter of fact, it was the one on Court Street. And they didn't know what to do with it anymore, so they just made offices out of it.

Ms. Bienstock: But when I taught there, it was not segregated. I had Black children then.

Mr. Bienstock: But we were not really ever exposed to segregation. I don't think that Howell was segregated. But we didn't really have knowledge of it because our kids did not enter the system until the 1950s. By that time, there was a new New Jersey Constitution, which was probably written in the late 1940s, I think. But it was after the War. Are you aware of it? You ought to look at that. I think that did away with the segregation. And so I am not an expert on those things, but I am fairly certain that it had a lot to do with doing away with segregation.

Ms. Higgins: Do you have any questions, Doug?

Mr. Aumack: I'd like to discuss your background of being a German Jew. You said you came to New York in 1941. Was the reason you came in 1941 to New York City because you were a Jew? Was that the main reason?

Mr. Bienstock: Definitely yes.

Ms. Bienstock: He left Germany in 1938.

Mr. Bienstock: We moved through Europe, and I don't want to get too involved talking about that because it's a separate chapter. My granddaughter wrote a little story about my travels.

Ms. Bienstock: They were climbing over the Pyrennes, he and his father.

Mr. Bienstock: Just to sort of give you a little bit of a closer background, what happened was I was born and raised in Germany. And I went to German schools. In 1933, there had been some upheaval in Germany partly because of the economics, and there was a Depression. Germany was always much more Nationalistic than other countries in Europe probably. Hitler had become very powerful, and the German people really had voted almost fifty percent for the Nationalistic Party, the NSDAP or Nazi Party. But in 1933, there were a lot of disturbances. On the left side there was a leftist element, and there was the right side. Actually the one which governed was the Catholic Party, very similar to Christian Socialism. There was a very large Catholic group in Germany, and they had their own Party. But they were not able to govern because the parliament had a large proportion of Nazis in it. Interestingly enough in 1933, it went down a little bit. The numbers of Nazis within the parliament went down a little bit.

Ms. Bienstock: Isn't that about the time Hitler was elected?

Mr. Bienstock: No, Hitler was appointed. It was a parliamentary government. It was a little bit different, and not like he was elected. The parliament really was the deciding factor. There was a President, and his name was Hindenberg. He appointed Hitler, without any choice, because nobody else could form a government that would be able to govern the country and pass all the laws, because the parliament was so mixed up. Once Hitler came to power, it was well known that he was a rabble rouser.

Ms. Bienstock: He had already written *Mein Kampf*.

Mr. Bienstock: He thought all the economic problems were there because of the Jews. He postulated that they were the prime cause of poor economic times. Until that time, Germany was a perfect country. You minded your own business and you were more free. But once Hitler came to power, it changed very rapidly. Persecution included not only Jews, but all people that were opposed to him, including Catholics, Communists, and Social Democrats.

Ms. Bienstock: And Gypsies.

Mr. Bienstock: And they established concentration camps, and these people were put into them. And then for awhile, things quieted down a little bit. As a matter of fact what happened was because he geared up the military, the economy came up. As a matter of fact, my parents benefited by it, in a way. They were in the manufacturing business, and they had customers, and business became very good. And if you sell more, you make more money. It was simple as all that.

Ms. Bienstock: It's called Economics 101.

Mr. Bienstock: There were intermittent persecutions of Jews. I remember when I was a kid, they put up a big sign on our business that said, "This is a Jewish Enterprise," and things like that. In other words, there was a certain pressure. Some of the Nazis had certain people they didn't like, and they all of a sudden had the power to do something about it. They would beat them up, and there were some people that died, there is no question about it. This started out in 1933, and things changed fairly rapidly for awhile, and then they calmed down a little. Things didn't really change much until probably 1936 or 1937, when the Nuremberg Laws were enacted. Are you familiar with those things? It became law that the Jewish people couldn't have businesses and things like that. It was very common for everyone to have a maid. The Nuremberg Laws said our maid had to be at least forty-five years old. The reason for it was that she was not fertile. They were stupid, ridiculous things that were adopted, but that is what happened. The reason for that was that after forty-five years old, women usually could not conceive. Therefore, if any hanky panky would go on, there wouldn't be

any mixed children. But anyway, there was no question that if you were a Jew in Germany, you were persecuted. They didn't kill you, but they didn't want you. I got kicked out of school in 1935, when I was fifteen years old. First they separated me…segregated…and I wasn't black, either. I hung in there for a few weeks, and I guess they thought I would get tired of it. But then they found some reason for expulsion, and that was it.

Ms. Higgins: I was just wondering how you came to America, also.

Ms. Bienstock: I was born here.

Ms. Higgins: Were your parents born here?

Ms. Bienstock: No, they came here on their honeymoon in 1906. They came from Russia. Actually, my father was what you would have called a revolutionary. You have heard of pogroms? My mother's father was a rabbi, the chief rabbi in their town. In the pogrom in 1905, he died. He wasn't killed, but in trying to rescue his family, he got wounded. He was forty-eight years old when he died. The following year, my mother met my father. And he had to get out, because otherwise he would have been sent to Siberia. While my mother was legally able to leave, my father wasn't, because he couldn't get a visa or passport. So they did the route where you are hidden in the back of a truck or farm wagon, and you pay through the nose to get there. And they eventually arrived in New York. My father was a skilled carpenter, so he had no trouble getting a job. Eventually my mother got tired of having babies, so she opened a store. She had been a school teacher. She worked for the Singer Company, and she had a school of sewing and design. In fact, during one of the pogroms, the chief of police who was running the pogrom, told his men not to touch that school because his daughter was going there and it was a good school for sewing. So her school was protected.

Ms. Higgins: I wondered if either one of you would comment on several things. When you were young and just married, what did you do for entertainment?

Ms. Bienstock: We usually went to movies or to the Community Center.

Mr. Bienstock: That was probably the extent of it.

Ms. Bienstock: We didn't have the money to do more. I mean you couldn't bring in a dozen eggs!

Mr. Bienstock: I do remember a very crass example of that. When we first dated, the hot dogs were a nickel, and I was a little hesitant to treat my wife. (laughter) We observed the Jewish laws at home. Kosher food, especially meats, were not readily available for many different reasons. As a matter of fact, there was a period when all we had was chicken, which wasn't necessarily a bad thing.

When we came here, one of the first things that attracted me was that I always liked sausage, salami, and things like that. And I was really fond of hot dogs, which is an American thing. We had hot dogs in Germany too, but not kosher ones. When we came here, I used to like to eat them with sauerkraut, mustard and all that stuff. And you could get all that for a nickel! And when they went up to six cents, believe it or not, I stopped eating them. That's the kind of economics we had. You have to sort of understand because a nickel was a lot of money then. I made fourteen dollars a week, and you got by on it, but you couldn't do a heck of a lot. When we were married, we didn't have a car. I always liked skiing, and we didn't really have a honeymoon because I was in the service. We got married on a three-day pass. Bea and her mother made all the arrangements based on me being able to get out on a three-day pass. And that was it. When I came back from the Service, we went up to Canada, in the Montreal area, and went skiing. One of the first things we bought was a 1935 Dodge for $550. When the car was new, we probably could have bought it for less money, but that was after the War, and there were no cars. Everyone has their own taste, but our emphasis was more on reading or something else like that.

Ms. Bienstock: We read, and I was a very strong reader. We had records and radio.

Ms. Higgins: Do you have any words of advice or comment that you would like to leave for posterity?

Ms. Bienstock: You know there is an interesting article in today's Times on the very rich people, and what is happening to their children with drugs and laziness. It lists a number of young people who have died of heroin overdoses. And the article is trying to tell the parents what kind of restrictions to put on children so that they don't feel that because of all the money in the family, they can do whatever they want.

Mr. Bienstock: I don't think it is so much instructions. I always firmly believe that if you want your children to be a certain way, be that way yourself. In other words, lead the life. Don't tell the kids to be something, but be it yourself first. And then you really should not have to worry. And that's what we did, in retrospect. We acted the way we wanted our children to act, rather than telling them what to do. And that's the kind of advice I would like to leave them. Live the life you want your kids to live.

Ms. Bienstock: My older daughter is a math teacher in a New York high school. There is a school on 116th Street and FDR Drive called the High School of Math and Science. She is a high school teacher there. My second daughter is the Vice Principal in Marlton schools in South Jersey. In fact, they just had a wonderful program that I wasn't able to get to. She is very creative, and they had a beautiful program with artists, writers, actors, and musicians. In fact, people volunteered from Princeton, from the theater, from Rutgers, and other places. And they all

came down to put on this fabulous program for the kids. It was like half-hour sections, and the children could rotate to each of these things. She has some of it on tape, and I am waiting to see it.

Ms. Higgins: She must have been planning that a long time.

Ms. Bienstock: Yes.

Ms. Higgins: How did you decide that you wanted to be an English teacher?

Ms. Bienstock: I don't know. I just gravitated to that. My favorites authors were Shakespeare and Milton, and I did a lot of reading and work on courses like that. Even in high school, we had courses like that. I liked Shakespeare and Milton rather than reading just general stuff.

Mr. Bienstock: Not to blow Bea's horn, but our children and grandchildren use Bea as their resource.

Ms. Bienstock: When my grandchildren need some information on literature and discussion, they call me up. Even my son-in-law calls me up for quotations from Shakespeare, etc.

Ms. Higgins: We're doing two Shakespeare plays this summer. We're doing *Timon of Athens* at Barnes & Noble for the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival, and we're doing the *Taming of the Shrew* here.

Ms. Bienstock: I was going to be a Shakespearean scholar at one time.

Ms. Higgins: Doug, did you have any more questions you would like to ask?

Mr. Aumack: Did you work as a spy?

Mr. Bienstock: No, I was a prisoner of war interrogator. When prisoners were brought in, we would interrogate them and try to find out which part of the German army was in front of us, which was very, very important. This was important especially in the Battle of the Bulge. They had brought in troops and equipment from the Russian front. And the American army did not know about that because it was done at night, and done very fast. And this was the sort of information we were after. We were trying to find out what the Germans were doing each day, and if there were new troops coming in, and things like that. In those times, I spoke more like a native German. At first they were amazed, and they immediately knew that I probably was Jewish. They sort of sensed it. And most of the time, you could not shut them up. One of the things they would tell you was how many Jewish friends they had. Accents are local here in the States, you know if somebody is from Rochester or Alabama, etc. In Germany, it is pretty much the same, but it's much smaller. I was born and raised in the Ruhr Valley,

which is sort of near the Rhine. The twang I had is still with me today. My English probably still has that twang. It's something you grow up with, and it's something you never really lose. And so they knew where I was from. So it was just very simple. In the Battle of the Bulge, they were mostly the stormtroopers, the elite. They were part of the army also. And they were tough. They knew that all they had to divulge was their name, rank, and serial number. And we did not use any physical force, we just used psychology. I wouldn't even say we threatened, but we found out what we wanted.

Ms. Bienstock: Psychological force.

Mr. Bienstock: That was one of the things we were trained in, and some of it is common sense.

Ms. Bienstock: You know at Camp Ritchie, where he took his training, all orders were given in German. They would get a map of the locations around Ritchie, and the towns were all written in German. And they had to find their way around, that was part of their training. It's like dumping somebody in the middle of nowhere, and you had to try and find your way out. But the maps they were given were not the names of the area, but were in German, which I found very interesting.

Mr. Aumack: You mentioned Mrs. Roosevelt in "My Day" in which she used Freehold as an example. Could you talk more about that?

Ms. Bienstock: She wrote it because the movie theater was integrated at the time she wrote the article. She praised Freehold for liberating the Black people.

Mr. Bienstock: I think the New Jersey Constitution was adopted in the late 1940s. There were some legal problems in not integrating after the Constitution.

Ms. Higgins: I have a lost thread here. You said that after you had sold the pharmaceuticals on a commission basis, you got a "real job." But you didn't tell us what that was.

Mr. Bienstock: I'll just talk a little bit about it. It was a company that manufactured self-adhesive materials. Self-adhesives today are very widespread, but in those days, they were a novelty. This company established a machinery division, and the purpose of it was to increase the consumption of the self-adhesive material.

Ms. Higgins: What is the name of the company?

Mr. Bienstock: The name of the company was Kleen-Stik.

Ms. Bienstock: He had the whole east coast.

Mr. Bienstock: Anyway, the company I worked for was Label-Aire. Actually Label-Aire was a division of Kleen-Stik.

Ms. Higgins: And where were these companies located?

Mr. Bienstock: When I joined the company, it was in Chicago. I was hired as the eastern sales representative for the machinery division. Then the company moved to New Jersey, first to Newark and then to Princeton Junction. Then the self-adhesive part went belly-up and was partly sold, but the machinery division always made money, and it was bought out. Actually it existed until about two years ago, and then it was bought out by somebody else. I worked for them for twenty-five years. It was applications engineering. There was a machine, but it had to be adapted to manufacturing facilities. They had a patent on the big part of the machine that applied the label automatically at a fairly high speed on a production line. First we sold mostly to companies like Colgate that made some cosmetics and also soap powders and things like that. Originally the label would be a promotional item. Self-adhesives became more popular. Today most labels are self-adhesive, including stamps. I started there in 1963, and I worked there until 1987 or something like that.

Ms. Higgins: Did you work out of your home?

Mr. Bienstock: At first I worked out of the office in Newark. I really didn't know that much about the business, and I had somebody that trained me. I had a good grasp of the engineering background, but I didn't really know too much about the self-adhesive business. At that time we sold directly to the end user, like Lever Brothers, etc. The labels were produced by printers, which is sort of like an intricate thing. The printers sold labels to the end user. We sold the machinery to promote the uses of material, and in a way we controlled the label application. Since we made the machine, there were companies other than Kleen-Stik producing material, the printer was sort of inclined to buy Kleen Stik material. I was more interested in the machinery, because I really didn't get a commission on the self-adhesive label material, so I really had no proprietary interest in that. The self-adhesive business was a very competitive business, and so was the machinery end of it. But Kleen-Stik had a patent on the machine, and nobody else could make it, and the patent was good for seventeen years. There were other competitors around, but they had other methods of applying labels to the product. But ours was very, very flexible and very easy to use on a production line. The way the label was applied to the product was it was blown on, and that is why it was called Label-Aire.

Ms. Higgins: The twenty-first century is shaping up in Monmouth County. What are your comments on that?

Mr. Bienstock: When I started out years ago, I was very active in our Jewish community. And this was probably until the mid 1950s or late 1960s. When did

we move, was it the mid 1960s? it used to be all chicken farmers, and I'll make the connection in one minute. And it was a very liberal group, and you never worried about insurance or liability. That was a term which was almost non-existent then. There were lawyers and this and that, and they would try and get some money out of a car accident, but it was certainly not for the phenomenal amounts like today. By the mid 1960s, our community changed. The farmers either died or moved out, or went bankrupt. And we were very proud that we were able to hold onto our land, because we had some very tough times in doing that. To me it was very important to maintain an honest name and not to file for bankruptcy, and somehow we survived, and it was by sheer willpower. Today that pride is not there anymore. A younger element came into the Jewish community, and they took over pretty much. They started to run the place. The first thing they worried about was liability insurance. And to us, you just took care of it if something happened, but obviously you didn't want anything to happen. And this was the beginning of a downhill course. And the same thing happened to politics. There was a famous story about the elections during President Johnson's campaign. They were fighting each other tooth-and-nail, and then later on they would have a poker game together. And they'd even enjoy a couple of drinks, and that was a common thing back then. You could fight each other politically, but still maintain a basic friendship. Now can you see that happen today?

Ms. Bienstock: This is society in general, not just in Monmouth County.

Mr. Bienstock: I found this meanness in politics. They try to destroy the other person. To me, I just want to forget about politics. It has become a very unpleasant, disagreeable kind of thing. And I don't want to have anything to do with it anymore. And this is what I am missing. I think our whole society has changed. Another thing is that the middle class was pretty strong. When I used to work, going back again to the 1960s, it was common that when you worked for somebody, once in awhile, you would even have something social to do together. There was a class difference, but it was acceptable from the worker's point of view. Today the difference between rich people and poor people is so much more, and there is no more connection between the two classes. And the middle class is sort of…well it hasn't disappeared, but life is not as gentle as it used to be years ago. I see this to be accelerating in the twentieth century. And if I am apprehensive about it, that is what I am apprehensive about. At some point, there has got to be a backlash.

Ms. Higgins: Do you have any concluding comments, Bea?

Ms. Bienstock: I think he took care of it!

Ms. Higgins: I have enjoyed this interview very much, and I thank you both for coming.

Mr. Bienstock: I want to thank you for listening to us. Anytime you have any questions, feel free to call us.

Ms. Bienstock: I was more or less protected being in school. I didn't have the kind of problems people have in the outside world, sort of. Over the years, I had some very prominent students. In fact the President of the Atlanta Braves was one of my students, Stanley Kasten. He was the president of the team, and he was my third grade student. Jerry Nadler, who is in Congress, was one of my students. And I could probably name a dozen more that I taught, and I feel very proud of having had good students.

Mr. Aumack: Have they turned out the way you wanted them to?

Ms. Bienstock: Many of them have. Many of them didn't, though. Can I tell you a funny incident about one student I had in the high school?

Ms. Higgins: Sure.

Ms. Bienstock: I had been out sick for one and a half years. I had cancer, and I had surgery. When I went back, they gave me an entirely different program from what I had been doing. And the name of the absolute worst student who was ever in that school was on my list. And I thought I wasn't going to survive that. So the first thing I did when he came into the classroom was to say, "These are the rules of my class. If you come in on time, you don't cut my class, and you don't give me hassles, you pass." And he questioned again if that was all you needed to do to pass. And I told him that was right. Then I told him if he did some work, he'd get a better grade, but he had to do those three things to pass. So he sat in the back of the room and kept looking at me like he couldn't figure it out… Well then finally he did drop out of school because the only class he passed was mine. (laughter) He got a 'D', and he got an 'F' on everything else. That was one of my greatest achievements!

Ms. Higgins: Well thanks again.

Mr. Aumack: Thank you very, very much.

Ms. Bienstock: Thank you very much.