THE ALEXANDRIA ORAL HISTORY CENTER
OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA
CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

Oral History Interview

with

Rochelle L Levy

Interviewer: Jaclyn Maraldo
Narrator: Rochelle L Levy
Location of Interview: 220 N. Washington St, Alexandria, VA 22314
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Transcriber: Jaclyn Maraldo

Summary:

Rochelle L Levy grew up in Montgomery County, MD, worked as an entertainment journalist and writer in Los Angeles and Northern Virginia, and spent eight years as an FCPS high school English and Journalism teacher. An Alexandria resident since 2019, living in both Old Town and Parkfairfax, Rochelle reflects on the city's wealth of opportunities for every interest – and how those opportunities provide a sense of community and purpose. She shares stories of training to be a docent at both Carlyle House Museum and Gadsby's Tavern Museum; working one-on-one with a first grader as a Book Buddies literacy tutor though the Alexandria Tutoring Consortium; completing a three-month training with Arlington and Alexandria Tree Stewards; taking English Country Dancing lessons with the Alexandria Assembly and attending a Jane Austen Ball in Gadsby's Blue Ballroom; and cultivating meaningful friendships on Alexandria's pickleball courts.

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Introductions	
Rochelle Levy [00:00:01]	Hi, I'm Rochelle Levy. I'm 63 years old. Today is February 26, 2026, and we're recording this at Lloyd House.

Jaclyn Maraldo [00:00:11]	I am Jaclyn Maraldo. I'm 35, the date's February 26, 2026. And we are at the Lloyd House in Alexandria, [Virginia]. All right, Rochelle, let's start at the beginning. Can you tell me a little bit about where you were born?
Rochelle Levy [00:00:26]	Well, I grew up in Montgomery County, Maryland, in suburban Maryland. So it was called Rockville, but really more like the Aspen Hill area. Um, although I was born in Washington, D.C. [District of Columbia]. But, um, it's interesting, it makes me wonder were there not hospitals near us in Maryland? Why did my parents go all the way down to Washington, D.C. [District of Columbia]? I don't know.
Childhood in Maryland	
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:00:55]	That's interesting, yeah. And is that where you grew up as well?
Rochelle Levy [00:00:59]	Yes, so [I] grew up there, went to school, public schools, through Montgomery County, [Maryland] and, yeah.

Moving to Virginia

Jaclyn Maraldo [00:01:11]	Okay, great. And when did you come to Virginia?
Rochelle Levy [00:01:16]	Okay, well, actually, I moved to Falls Church, Virginia, in 1986, and lived with friends in a townhouse just for about 9 months, and then moved to Los Angeles, California. So we actually had to break our lease, disband, and ... Yeah, and then I was in L.A. [Los Angeles, California] for over 22 years and then returned here, interestingly, to Falls Church [Virginia] in 2009. Much different, you know, I went from being young, single, to older, [I] had a son at that point who was in middle school. And it was only after I had lived in my place a little while I realized, "Huh, this is like a mile from where I lived before I moved to L.A. [Los Angeles]."

Jaclyn Maraldo:	Wow.
Rochelle Levy:	Yeah, and so I went and looked at the townhouse that we used to live in, my same friend and I. I said, "We gotta go look at this."
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:02:24]	And it was still there.
Rochelle Levy [00:02:25]	It was still there, yeah. And I used to run on the track of [George C.] Marshall High School when we lived there, you know, back in like 19, what, 86. And so now, you cut all those years later, and my son goes to [George C.] Marshall High school, and I'm involved in the school. I thought, "Wow, who would have ever thought, you know, that all those decades later it would have kind of come full circle?"

Jaclyn Maraldo [00:02:55]	Full circle.

Rochelle Levy [00:02:56]	And so I've stayed in Virginia since then, yeah.
	Journalism Career in Los Angeles
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:02:59]	And what brought you to Los Angeles, [California]? Let's go back to Los Angeles.
Rochelle Levy [00:03:03]	Oh wow. I had never been there. I had really never been off the East Coast except one trip abroad. And I was into the arts, acting, and I had actually started my career in journalism, broadcast journalism. I got my degree at the University of Maryland, College Park, in broadcast journalism, and I had this dream to go to L.A. [Los Angeles]. Even though I'd never been there, I knew one person. And so a friend was gonna go with me, and then I realized, “She's not gonna go. I gotta just do this.” And so I got my car, my little Honda Civic. And there was a friend who said, “Oh, I'll drive out there with you.” So he drove out with me and drove out there. And again, I knew one person. I had no job, I had nothing. I look back at it now and go, “Wow, [laughs] those are the days you could do something like that.” And I was there for, yeah, like 22 years.

Jaclyn Maraldo [00:04:05]	So that's, like, the typical, “get in your car and you go” and you made a living for yourself out there.

Rochelle Levy:	Yeah, yeah, yeah.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	So how did your career develop?

Rochelle Levy[00:04:19]	Well, I was a tour guide at Universal Studios Hollywood, so I made $4 an hour. I thought I was doing pretty well. And then I actually got a big promotion. I tried out to be one of the show announcers for, like, the animal actor stage and the stunt show. And that doubled my salary, Jaclyn. It doubled it. I made $8 an hour. But what's interesting is we had to be in IATSE [International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees], the union, and so making that much, we also had to pay union dues, which was just insane, insane.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:04:57]	$8 an hour. Do you remember how much the dues were?
Rochelle Levy [00:04:59]	No, I don't remember, but I mean, it was nothing. So, yeah, I did that and eventually got into journalism, print journalism. I went from broadcasting to print and became a writer for magazines and *Billboard* magazine. I wrote the radio column there and did music industry stories and worked at *Us [Weekly]* magazine in charge of sending people out to cover the party scene. I had no interest in covering it myself. I was like, “Yeah, no, that's all right.” And did a lot of freelance and then worked at the American Film Institute for 7 years and ended up kind of being in charge of editorial at different companies.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:05:53]	Do you have any memorable interviews that you did for *Billboard* or the party scene [laughs]?
Rochelle Levy [00:06:01]	I think the most memorable were the Life Achievement Award books I wrote for the American Film Institute because I once was on the phone with Barbra Streisand for 2 hours. [laughs] That's a story.

Jaclyn Maraldo [00:06:15]	What did you talk about?
Rochelle Levy [00:06:16]	Well, she called- [pauses]
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:06:21]	If you can tell us.

Rochelle Levy [00:06:22]	I know, that's what I'm, like, “Huh, let me think about that.” You know, very exacting person. But she called about something, I couldn't believe she was on the phone. I was on the line with my friend, and I was like, “Hang on.” I said, “I gotta go, I got Barbra [Streisand] on the other line.” [laughs]
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:06:42]	As one does. .
Rochelle Levy [00:06:42]	As one does. And we started talking and there was a piece that I had to write for the book. I wrote 2 pieces. But one was kind of cobbling together from interviews the person has already done and doing kind of an interview from that. But I had her on the phone. I thought, “I'm just going to start asking her questions and have an original interview.” And so, you know, I remember telling her that my sisters and I went to see *Yentl*. Probably on, like, Christmas Eve, as Jews do, you know, you have Chinese and then you go to a movie. And it was just so interesting because the people around me in my office, they thought, “Wow, she's really having a long personal phone conversation there.” Until I must have said something and [they] thought, “Oh my God, is she on the phone with Barbra Streisand!?” [laughs] I remember she was getting a manicure done at the time as she was talking, whatever, of course she was. I don't know, I thought it was lovely. It was really a nice phone conversation. And then I went to Harrison Ford's house. That was a whole thing. I walk in and Sydney Pollack is there. They're meeting about a movie. And Harrison Ford comes to the door and I'm standing there in the rain and I said, “Your publicist didn't tell you I was coming?” [Harrison Ford said,] “Oh, yeah, she did.” I said, “She didn’t, right?” He's like, “No, no she didn't. Come on in, sit in the kitchen. I'm just meeting with Sydney Pollack.” I'm like, of course. I'm, like, I can't even believe this. And, you know, there were no phones. I couldn't text anyone

	and say, “Oh my God, I'm sitting in Harrison Ford's kitchen drinking his coffee and reading his *New York Times* waiting for my meeting with him.” [laughs]
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:08:29]	What year would that have been?
Rochelle Levy [00:08:30]	And that was 2000, I believe. Yeah, yeah.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:08:35]	So Harrison Ford.
Rochelle Levy [00:08:36]	Tom Hanks, Meryl Streep, George Lucas, [Robert] De Niro. How'd I forget that? Robert De Niro. [both laugh] Yeah.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:08:50]	Okay so-
Rochelle Levy:	Anyway.

Jaclyn Maraldo:	Yeah, you've dabbled with some bigger names.
Rochelle Levy [00:08:53]	Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. [Jaclyn laughs] Yeah, yeah.
	Return to Virginia
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:08:56]	Okay, and then what brought you back to Virginia?
Rochelle Levy [00:09:01]	So I was working at a, actually, like, a tech company that they were headquartered in El Segundo, California and I worked there in internal communications. But I could tell that they were gonna close down that office and they had a big office here in Falls Church, [Virginia] and they ended up moving the headquarters here. And I came out to visit and they said, “Hey, we will move you back here if you'll work in internal communications here.” And I

	thought, you know, “Time to come back and they'll pay for this big cross-country move.” So that was February of 2009.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:09:45]	Oh, okay, so 17 years-.
Rochelle Levy:	Oh my gosh. [Jaclyn laughs] Yeah, wow.

Jaclyn Maraldo [00:09:53]	Wow. And what kind of changes from when you first moved to L.A. [Los Angeles, California] and then you moved back? What changes did you observe?
Rochelle Levy [00:10:01]	Well, I mean, I just remember as a kid, Olney out in Maryland was like farmland. And even where we lived was kind of the ends of the earth. And I would come back once a year, usually in the summer. And I remember watching Bethesda, [Maryland] being built up, Bethesda in Maryland. And just, I remember the, I think it was, when I first got back here, yeah, because I was living right off of Route 7, Leesburg Pike. And I thought, “Oh, there's some construction going on. I guess this is gonna just happen for a few minutes or whatever.” No, they were building the subway. They were building the Silver Line. I watched that being built every day when I drove to work. Because after that, then I worked in Reston, [Virginia] and I would watch, and I remember I would drive down Route 7 thinking these people who work, you know, it's almost like they live here building this line and they must think, “Why are there all these cars in my living room?” You know, almost like we're intruding on them. And to watch that go up was just kind of extraordinary.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:11:14]	I can't even imagine. Wow. And then did you take the Silver Line? Is that something that became part of your commute?
Rochelle Levy [00:11:22]	No. [both laugh]
Jaclyn Maraldo:	No

Rochelle Levy:	I'm a horrible person who used a car.

Jaclyn Maraldo [00:11:26]	More convenient, that's okay. .
Rochelle Levy [00:11:27]	I don't think it was finished by the time [I left]. It was still, yeah, it was still being built.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Still in production.
	Teaching in High Schools
Rochelle Levy:	Yeah, when I was working out in Reston, [Virginia] because I had a number of different jobs and things. And then became a high school teacher. And that was my final act. That was in 2016, high school English and journalism teacher, which is something I always wanted to do.

Jaclyn Maraldo [00:11:52]	And what high school was that?
Rochelle Levy [00:11:53]	I was at Falls Church High School for 6 years, and then I was at T.J., Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, the magnet school for the last, for 2 years.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Wonderful
Rochelle Levy:	Yeah, and then, I retired from teaching because 8 years is really plenty. It's a very, very hard job.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Absolutely. Can you say more about your -
Rochelle Levy:	I don't know if I can. [both laugh] No, it's just, I can, should I? That's really the question. Teachers are expected to be

	everything. And, you know, I truly believe the people who make policy should not make policy unless they're boots on the ground, until you've been in a classroom and you see what a teacher deals with every day. It's hard to make those decisions in the abstract for people who are living it every day. But I made some wonderful, you know, I got some wonderful relationships with kids and I know I hopefully, you know, out of the what, thousands of kids, I hopefully helped a few lives, you know. I'm glad I did it and I still continue to tutor one-on-one now. And I work with the Book Buddies program here in Alexandria, [Virginia], which is, so now with a first grader that I'm with all year, twice a week, and that's through Book Buddies, through the Alexandria Tutoring Consortium. I got involved with that last year and I work at Charles Barrett [Elementary School]. I volunteer there and I had a wonderful little boy last year, I have a wonderful little boy this year. Is it always easy? No, no Jaclyn, it's not. [laughs] These are first graders! And you know, the little boy this year, I mean he gets a little bit, you know, he gets frustrated with himself, just like we all do. But he's, you know, it's so wonderful to watch kids who are maybe not at grade level in terms of literacy and reading really learn how to read and just the joy and the world that opens up with that.
	Book Buddies
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:14:01]	And how long do you get to spend with each child?
Rochelle Levy [00:14:05]	So it's, you're assigned 1 child for the school year and you can do either 1 or 2 times a week. I do 2 times per week with the child and it's about, like, a 45- minute session. So I can, you know, I feel like both years I've had a really special relationship. You know, they draw me things and I have them on, believe me, I have them on my refrigerator, look at them every day.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:14:32]	Do you spend the whole year with them?
Rochelle Levy:	Yes-
Jaclyn Maraldo:	You're, like, their dedicated tutor.

Rochelle Levy[00:14:37]	That's right, that's right. So if you say, “Oh, I can only do it once a week,” then they'll have 2 tutors. I feel like, you know, I wanna be a stable presence for a kid and I can do it now. So I do like doing that.
	Career Highlights
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:14:49]	That's amazing, yeah. So we'll get into your vast volunteer experience. Looking back at your career, the different jobs you've held, did you have a favorite?
Rochelle Levy [00:15:03]	Oh, that's a good question. Hmm. I, you know, I did enjoy being a journalist. I mean, even at *Billboard*, I mean and doing the books at the American Film Institute, which wasn't really journalism, but I do love researching and then, you know, presenting material. That's why I love teaching. It's why I love being a tour guide here in Alexandria, [Virginia]. I love having something tangible. You know, when I was doing freelance writing, I wrote a number of personal essays, personal narratives that were published in the *Washington Post* and *Salon* and that kind of thing. I love doing that. It's very hard and vulnerable, but at the end, you go, “Hmm, I have something that hopefully resonates with other people and their experiences.” And so I actually really loved teaching the personal narrative to high school students and helping with college essays, which are personal narratives, and I still do that now one-on-one.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:16:13]	Another thing to add to the old résumé.
Rochelle Levy:	Yeah.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Is there any form of writing that you do now just for fun?
Rochelle Levy [00:16:25]	I feel guilty every day that I'm not writing. Thank you for bringing that up. [laughs]
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Any time, any time.
Rochelle Levy:	Yeah, no, it's something that I need to get back to my own personal narrative writing. I have stories and I want to get them

	out, but, you know, I need to just have the discipline to start writing again, I think.
	Moving to Alexandria
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:16:48]	Ok, great. So you said you're a volunteer in Alexandria, [Virginia].
Rochelle Levy:	Yes.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	What brought you to Alexandria? So you were in Falls Church, [Virginia], Alexandria, [Virginia].
Rochelle Levy:	Yes.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Tell me about that. .
Rochelle Levy [00:16:58]	So I was actually living in Dunn Loring, [Virginia] and my personal situation changed. And so I was looking for, “Okay, I can live wherever I want on my own. And I don't have a child anymore.” I mean, he was in college. He was out of college. “I don't have a child, that I need to always peg it towards the school,” which people understand you're always like, “Okay, where's the best school?” And I thought, “Wow, I know Old Town [Alexandria, Virginia] a little bit. I remember it from way back in, like, the 1970s, in the [19]80s.” And I remember this day very clearly. I was still teaching and it was April and it was spring break and I thought, “I'm gonna drive to Old Town [Alexandria, Virginia]. I'm going to park somewhere. I don't really know the city and I'm gonna walk around and I'm gonna think about if I maybe want to live there.” And so I did. I remember still, it's so funny because this was in 2019 and I still, every time I pass the intersection, thousands of times, I think, “That's where I parked the day that changed my life.”
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:18:06]	What intersection was it?
Rochelle Levy [00:18:10]	It was, yeah, that's a very good question. Can we walk over there? [laughs] It was Patrick [Street], and I know this. I think it was Patrick [Street] and Queen [Street].

Jaclyn Maraldo:	Okay.
Rochelle Levy:	There's a hair salon on the corner.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:18:27]	Okay, that sounds familiar.
Rochelle Levy [00:18:29]	Patrick [Street] and Queen [Street] or Henry [Street] and Queen [Street] or something.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:18:32]	Somewhere in that area, yeah.
Rochelle Levy [00:18:33]	And I just started walking and, you know, I remember I walked into, okay, here's a plug for the [Alexandria] Visitor Center.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:18:40]	Hey!
Rochelle Levy [00:18:40]	Everybody ready? [Jaclyn laughs] I walked into the [Alexandria] Visitor Center and I said, “Hey, I’m-” and, you know, there were some wonderful volunteers there. I remember the woman, I said, “Thinking about moving here. Tell me about where should I live?” And she took out a map and she drew things on it and said, “Well this is a good area and this is a good area and this is a good area.” And I walked around and I thought about walking to Del Ray [Alexandria, Virginia] and I thought, “Eh, that's a little far,” you know, I wasn't really sure. And I just spent the whole day walking around and then I thought, “Yes, this is, like, my dream place to live, cobblestone streets, brick, wonderful King Street, all of the waterfront, the whole thing.” And I saw, I guess on an app, rental app or something for a place. And I got in touch and I went to see it, I think probably 2 days later. And just thought, “All right, I'll jump, I'll do this.” And then I lived in that place for 4 and a half years and then 2 years ago moved to Parkfairfax which is also another very historic Alexandria, [Virginia] area and bought something over in Parkfairfax.
	COVID-19 in Alexandria
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:20:02]	That’s amazing, okay. And so you moved to Alexandria, [Virginia] pre-COVID [coronavirus disease 2019].

Rochelle Levy [00:20:07]	Yes, it was June of 2019. It was June 2019 and so a lot of my time here was COVID [coronavirus disease 2019] and I remember so much walking, you know, there was nothing to do but walk.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Right.
Rochelle Levy	So a friend, we would walk, I don't know, if it was 4 miles a day, we'd be like, "Oh, we barely did anything today." You know, because you just walk and walk and walk and walk and walk because there was nothing else to do. And of course, ignoring and cross the street when you saw somebody, the exact opposite of what you normally do in the before times. But I remember walking down King Street and just feeling so sad. There was particularly one block, now I forget which one, that was like 3 shops in a row were shuttered. They were done. But I remember, you know, it just being, it was nice that you could cross the street and not be hit by a car. That was nice. And it wasn't as crowded, obviously. But just not to see people outside, not to see anything going on. And then I remember the first time I saw people sitting outside at a restaurant here in Old Town [Alexandria, Virginia] again. And I think I took a picture and sent it to someone and said, "Oh my God. [laughs] Life is coming back."
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:21:34]	Yes! So everything was closed. All the restaurants, there was nothing.
Rochelle Levy [00:21:37]	Yeah, I mean, it was like a ghost town. I expected, you know, bales of hay to come flying down the street. [laughs]
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:21:46]	Some tumbleweed.
Rochelle Levy [00:21:47]	Tumbleweed! That's what I mean. Bales of hay? That would be weird. [Jaclyn laughs] Well, tumbleweed, that would be weird too.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:21:55]	Yeah! OK. And so you're in Alexandria, [Virginia]. You're in Parkfairfax [Alexandria, Virginia]. We met at the Carlyle House.
Rochelle Levy [00:22:02]	Yes.
	Volunteering at Carlyle House

Jaclyn Maraldo [00:22:03]	So tell me about how you landed upon volunteering at the Carlyle House.
Rochelle Levy [00:22:08]	So I had been, I always was looking for volunteer opportunities even when I was still teaching. And I got, I suppose, on an email distribution because I had volunteered to do after-school, like, creative writing through Momentum Collective. Wow, I just remembered that, Momentum Collective. And I did that from, like, spring break to the end of the school year years ago and so I was still getting emails and I remember so clearly the time it said, "Carlyle House Docent Tour Guide." I thought, "What! That's, you know, hey, I was a tour guide back at Universal Studios, and I'm a teacher, I can do this." And got in touch with Becky. Becky [pauses]
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Super.
Rochelle Levy:	Super, yes. And went in, met with her, and I remember meeting you and Kerry [Walter]. And the interesting thing was that was in December of 2022, [20]23.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:23:22]	[20]23.
Rochelle Levy [00:23:24]	Yeah. And I said, "This is great. And now I'm moving out of Old Town [Alexandria, Virginia]." So everything that I started doing there, I could have just walked to, but that's okay. And then it was great because we started the training, I believe it was February.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	That's correct.
Rochelle Levy:	Right? And we had that whole training, which now, so that's 3 years ago.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:23:44]	No… 2.
Rochelle Levy [00:23:45]	2 years ago, 2024, so I just moved. That's right, 2024. And I had never been to Carlyle House. I had been in the gardens. I remember walking through the gardens and thinking, "This is really cool. I wonder what this is." But I had never taken a tour there or been inside. And the training was wonderful. It was great to meet other people who were interested in doing this kind of thing. And I didn't actually start doing tours though until the fall, until October. And the reason is because, anybody who's

	interested in doing this, you're not just handed a script. You learn a tremendous amount and then need to kind of put together your own outline. Now, I love doing that. But of course I go down the rabbit hole of research and figure out what do I want to put, you know, how do I wanna structure it? What are gonna be my themes of the tour? I need to have the context, I need to have, you know- So because I was teaching, it took me a while. But I finally started giving my tours in October of that year. But I do remember giving you, I had to do my practice tour for you. And [you] were like, "Okay, Rochelle, that was about 2 hours and, uh, your tour's gonna be like,-" [and I said,] "What's the problem?" [both laugh] [Jaclyn said,] "Well, it needs to be a lot shorter."
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:25:21]	Trim it down a little bit.
Rochelle Levy [00:25:22]	Trim it down, trim it down. So that's the thing, yeah, is, and then we worked on getting it shorter and shorter. And you know, the first time you give a tour, I still have my notes. I'm like, "Hmm, how am I gonna remember all this and all that?" But after a while, you know you kind of, you get it. And people love taking tours there.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:25:45]	Absolutely. You currently are a volunteer there, a docent.
Rochelle Levy:	Yes, yes.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	What's your spin? What's a story that you love to tell about the house or the family or anything?
Rochelle Levy [00:26:02]	Well, I am not as much about the wars and the, I don't want to say history, because it is all history, but I'm always about the human condition. And so, I don't love this, but the fact is that they had a death every 18 months in that house. What was it, 11 children, and only 1 survived into adulthood. And so the idea, I always say as I walk through this house, I'm always just, I am just always aware of the human beings who were here and what they endured and the physical and emotional and psychic toll that that took on them. And it's not a museum in terms of, like, "Oh, here are these historical artifacts." It's not just pointing at objects. It's, these people lived here and laughed and cried and ate and drank a lot, a lot of alcohol, [Jaclyn laughs] gotta say here. And so just that idea of, these were real human beings and the enslaved people who made all of it possible.

Jaclyn Maraldo [00:27:26]	Yeah. And for those who don't know, what time period does the tour cover of the house?
Rochelle Levy [00:27:31]	Well, it was built in 1751, did I say that wrong?
Jaclyn Maraldo:	[whispers] [17]53.
Rochelle Levy	[17]53? I thought it was like [17]51 to [17]53.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Yes
Rochelle Levy	The 2 years it was being built? Yeah. And I believe we talk about things that go until, well, we talk about one of the daughters attending George Washington's birth night ball in like 1798, [17]99. Yeah, when she was maybe 40, right before [George] Washington died. So yeah, it's a chunk of time. And I knew nothing about history. I really didn't. And so that's what's been very exciting is going down those rabbit holes and learning about the history of Old Town [Alexandria, Virginia]. [It's] just so important for our nation and as we became a nation.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:28:31]	Absolutely. So you weren't interested in history, per se, prior to, in maybe the same way that you are now?
Rochelle Levy [00:28:38]	Right. It wasn't even that I wasn't interested. It just, I was so focused on, you know, writing, being an English teacher, being a journalism teacher, that I mean, I think about how, I guess a lot of people, they're ignorant in terms of, it's just not-on-your-radar ignorance. I mean honestly, I know so many people who live here in Old Town [Alexandria, Virginia] who don't even know that Carlyle House exists. So it's just, it's like when you're about to buy a car and then you're aware of every car.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:29:17]	Sure, yes. [both laugh]
Rochelle Levy [00:29:21]	It's just whatever is on your radar at that time. So once I started learning about Carlyle House and going into the history and, honestly, every time I give a tour, there's a new thing to look up because people ask questions, you can answer, you know the

	answer, you make up an answer, just kidding, just kidding. [Jaclyn laughs] Or most often it's, "Wow, thank you. I have to look that up. Let me go think about that and look that up," because there's just so much. And so, I get more and more intrigued and curious with all the questions that come up.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:29:56]	Always more to learn.
	Volunteering at Gadsby's Tavern Museum
Rochelle Levy [00:29:56]	Right. And then learning about, I give tours at Gadsby's Tavern as well. So also there, that starts in 1785.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Right
Rochelle Levy:	So it's about, you know, what, 40, I was an English teacher, not a math teacher, 50, 60, 70. [both laugh] 30-some years later, something like that?
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:30:35]	Yes, yeah.
Rochelle Levy:	Yeah, yeah. 30 years, 30-something years later. So learning that history too, you know. And then it all makes sense, like, the context around it all.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:30:35]	Yeah! And so Carlyle House came first and then Gadsby's Tavern. How did that come about? Or how did going to Gadsby's [Tavern] as a volunteer, how did you discover- [laughs]?
Rochelle Levy [00:30:48]	So, wonderful people that I have volunteered with at Carlyle House and there was one man in particular.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:30:56]	Who was that?
Rochelle Levy [00:30:57]	Gary, what's his last name?

Jaclyn Maraldo [00:30:59]	Um, Gary Aufforth.
Rochelle Levy [00:31:02]	Yeah, and I got to know Gary [Aufforth], we worked at a Halloween event at Carlyle House together and had a lot of fun and just started really, yeah, we were like, huh, simpatico. And so we would talk a lot, and he said, "You should give tours over at Gadsby's Tavern." And so I got in touch with Kristy [Huettner], who is the volunteer coordinator over there, and they didn't have a training class that was gonna happen for a while. But she said, "You know what, you'll just do your own training. We'd love you to come on board if Gary [Aufforth] vouches for you." He has some clout, that Gary [Aufforth]. So, Kristy [Huettner] and I met and then I remember it was, it was like Christmas to New Year at that time. And I watched, she gave me all these videos to watch because I believe they had done virtual training. Maybe it was during COVID [coronavirus 2019] time. And so, Michele, Michele Longo, had made all these videos. And so I watched them and took notes and they had all these materials for me that they already had and it was great. And again, same kind of situation where it then took me longer than I would have liked to actually get my tour. It was so much information to distill down into 45 minutes. And this one really has to be 45 minutes. And so it just took me a while to wrap my brain around it all and figure out how I was going to present it and have the transitions and that kind of thing. But it's really, really interesting because it's a very different kind of tour. That's what I like is Carlyle House is about a family. Gadsby's Tavern is about a front row seat to "who do we want to be as a nation?"
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:32:50]	Yeah and how does that change how you deliver the tour?
Rochelle Levy [00:32:56]	Well, I think it's, I almost wanted to say more factual. It's not that it's not factual at Carlyle House. It's just, it is different because, like, there's a bedchamber over there [at Gadsby's Tavern] that Thomas Jefferson stayed in and there's, you know, a lot of, okay, [George] Washington did eat in this dining room, although he had a townhouse right around the corner, so he didn't have to sleep here. But it's more, it's broader in that it's, you know, there were so many taverns at that time but this one catered to a type of clientele that it could be very political. You know, if they're raising a glass to the Constitution in the first tavern in 1785 when we still had the Articles of Confederation, they're looking around going, "Hmm, hmm, who's not raising his glass? Who is not with me? Who is with me?" And so it was really more about the systems of

	power that we put into place. Again, as we're trying to figure out who do we want to be as a nation? And these taverns existed because for any kind of commerce and travel, you needed somewhere not just to eat and drink, but to stay over. So lodgings and entertainment and all of that.
	Docent Training
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:34:29]	Yeah, okay. That's good, yeah. Thinking back to the training for each site, did you prefer being in class with a cohort or did you like having the self-paced, virtual learning?
Rochelle Levy [00:34:42]	I mean, I think I don't mind training on my own, but I do like a community. And so I really did enjoy, and not just because you led it, but I guess I have to say it because you did lead it. No, I really enjoyed our cohort and doing it together. And yeah, that was kind of special. You know, it made you feel like, "Okay, I'm in this with all these other people." And then I got to know people. Whereas quite honestly, I don't know other docents at Gadsby's. Also because you are on shift alone. Whereas at Carlyle House, you'll have 2 docents per shift, if they can get 2 docents at a time, and therefore you kind of get to know [people]. I know people more at Carlyle [House] for sure.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:35:31]	So you talked about Gary [Aufforth]. Are there any other people at Carlyle [House] that have made an impression or [laughs]?-
Rochelle Levy:	Oh, gosh.
Jaclyn Maraldo	That you remember from the cohort?
Rochelle Levy [00:35:45]	I haven't seen many of them in a while, now that I think about it. They do a wonderful volunteer appreciation brunch in the fall, and that's when I see people. Oh yeah, oh, Anne [Ramsey]! I have to say Anne [Ramsey], who also teaches yoga.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:36:03]	Oh yeah, Anne Ramsey. .
Rochelle Levy [00:36:04]	Anne Ramsey. Right, right, right. Because she also worked the Halloween event with me. Yeah. And that was a year ago. A year ago, Halloween. Yeah, I don't see them very often anymore.

	Halloween at Carlyle House
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:36:21]	Well, let's talk about that Halloween event. .
Rochelle Levy [00:36:23]	Oh, okay.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:36:23]	Let's do it!
Rochelle Levy [00:36:25]	Let's get down to it.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:36:26]	Get down to it. What made it fun and memorable or what are your memories of that?.
Rochelle Levy [00:36:31]	Okay, so it was groups of people that were gonna go through the house and they had to solve various riddles and puzzles in each room. And so I brought them, my job was to bring them through the house. And in each room, there were people dressed up. Only in one room was there someone dressed up as Mrs. Carlyle, one of the Mrs. Carlyles. That was the aforementioned Anne [Ramsey]. And so, like, Gary [Aufforth] was playing a lawyer, I think, a judge or a lawyer or a judge. And so, you know, here's the thing. I come from a performing background. So I love to riff. So I come in and he said something and people in the group said something and we just were off, you know, and it was really, it was like a little improv show. And I had various groups that night and I did 2 nights in a row. And so, and I got to, you know, I mean, honestly, Jaclyn, I got to wear a big red cape.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Yeah!
Rochelle Levy:	And that was fun. I really, I was like, I'm not a costume kind of person. I tried on various costumes. They didn't work. And I just wore black and put on a big, red cape. It felt like a very odd Little Red Riding Hood or something. And it just was fun, I don't know. It was just something. Yeah, and then I met people also that I ended up getting involved in English country dancing. So I mean, it's like this domino effect. Once you meet people here, I mean I could go on. There are so many different things I'm involved in now that all came out of starting at Carlyle House because Old Town [Alexandria, Virginia] has so many opportunities. And if you have

	time, and that's the hardest thing, but now I have time. It's been wonderful to be able to pursue those interests and passions.
	English Country Dancing
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:38:27]	Well, I want to hear more about English country dancing. How did you get involved with that?
Rochelle Levy [00:38:31]	So one day I went in to give a tour at Carlyle House and Gary [Aufforth] was the supervisor on shift and he said, “Oh, just so you know, when you get to the parlor, there's going to be 2 women, 3 women sitting in the parlor in period costume.” I'm like, “What now? [both laugh] Do they, are they supposed to be there? Are they just hanging out? What's going on?” [He said,] “Yes, you don't have to do your spiel. They're gonna just talk. They're not, like, members of the Carlyle family. They're just kind of like people that would have been around here during that time.” I'm like, “All right, okay, it's interesting.” And so it was really great. And then after my shift, I was speaking to them and they said something about dancing. I was like, “What now? You do dancing?” And they said, “English country dancing at the [Nannie J.] Lee Center twice a month, the first and third Tuesday in the evening, free.” And I was like, “Oh, that is so out of my comfort zone. I have to do that.” I didn't even know what it was. [laughs] And so I started going, and you know what? I think that was maybe, it was certainly a year, maybe like 13 months ago.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Oh, wow.
Rochelle Levy	Yeah, because I started it last maybe January, I think, I'm pretty sure. And so again, you know, it's this community of people that I've met down there. And I actually attended a ball at Gadsby's Tavern to celebrate Jane Austen's 250th birthday. It was November, I believe, 22 of 2025.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Okay
Rochelle Levy:	A few months ago. And we danced in the blue Ballroom. And I wanted to be able to say when I give my tour, “And, you know, I've danced here.” And then I also show people what English country

	dancing is. I kind of give them a little bit of, you know because it's like *Bridgerton*, Jane Austen kind of stuff. And people were all in the period dress. It was a Regency. So it's really just, it was easy to find something on Amazon, thank goodness. And there's a ball in Williamsburg, [Virginia] the first weekend of March I was going to do, but they're sold out. But there are things that go on all over the place. But it's just another really interesting thing to do. And then one day I'm in Carlyle [House] and the other docent that I'm going to be with on that shift, I'm like, "God, he looks familiar." And he's like, "Yeah we-," I said, "Don't we dance together over at-?" He's like, "Yeah." I said, "Did you know that we're tour guides together?" [He said,] "Yeah, I saw you at the volunteer brunch." I'm like, "Oh my god. I mean, it's all just so connected." [both laugh]
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:41:12]	That is so cool. So, okay, I'm curious about the experience of the ball, the clothing, the food, was there food?
Rochelle Levy [00:41:25]	There were desserts, there was a really wonderful desserts they put out in the in the Assembly Room which is part of Tavern One and then the blue Ballroom is the big ballroom part of Tavern Two, the City Hotel and Tavern because it's actually 2 different taverns but they're connected there. And so, yeah, halfway through or so it was a break and we all went into this other room and some people had made period-type desserts that were amazing. Like, "Oh yeah, this is a, you know, type of thing they would have eaten, da da da." And they had Madeira wine, which is something that, I know George Washington loved his Madeira Wine and his duck, as one does, over at Gadsby's Tavern when he would dine there. And it was packed. I mean, it was sold out, and everybody was in their Regency dress. And I danced every dance. It was really, I have to say, it was better than I expected because I was kind of nervous. And you know, these people I've met, they're like, "Come on, you know enough, you can do it. You could do it, you could do it." And I'm really, really glad I did.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:42:37]	Have you seen a progression from when you first started the country dancing and until now?
Rochelle Levy [00:42:44]	Yeah, sure, because you learn the different steps and when you start, you know nothing. I mean, absolutely nothing. Now, do I still sometimes progress the wrong way? Yes, let's be honest. Sometimes I turn and, because you dance with 4 people at a time. You have a partner, but you dance kind of in a 4. You have a line of men facing a line of women and the person in front of you is

	your partner. But 4 of you are dancing together at a time. But then there are movements that make you progress, meaning, depending where you are, you go up the line or down the line. So, you have danced with everybody, but you stay with your partner. Okay. So it's a new 4, a new 4. Do I sometimes go to the wrong 4? Yes, Jaclyn, I do. [both laugh] But who cares? No, we have so much fun. I mean, I have to say it's the kind of thing that you cannot be worrying about anything in your life because all you're worrying about is doing the step correctly. I love that kind of stuff where it just, you have to focus. It's good for the mind, it's good for your body, it's good for community. And so again, that all came out of Carlyle House.
	Alexandria Walking Tours
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:44:03]	Wow. So, Gadsby's Tavern, any other branches?
Rochelle Levy [00:44:05]	Yes! Yes, there are other branches!
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Tell me more!
Rochelle Levy:	Okay. I have given a few walking tours in Old Town, [Alexandria, Virginia]. And that is in partnership with Lee-Fendall House Museum.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:44:23]	Lee-Fendall House, yes.
Rochelle Levy [00:44:23]	Yeah. And so I've given the Lost Buildings Tour twice. And that's, like, the Parker-Gray area. And it's basically saying, “Okay, this is Charles Houston Rec[reation] Center, but it was the elementary school” or something like that. We have a book with photographs and the maps, the Sanborn maps, and it's basically showing you what used to be here. “Okay, this apartment building, but this was…” because Alexandria, [Virginia] has such an incredibly rich history and a lot of the African American experience as well. And then I also did, I led the Waterfront Tour. And it wasn't all on the waterfront, but we talked about Fishtown, which on the waterfront, which would be a few months of the year where there was just, again, African American people working, literally their fingers to the bone and covered in scales. I mean, really, really tough work. And it's just, the people, it's very interesting. The people that we've

	gotten on those tours, they're all locals. Like, “Oh, I live right here.” “Oh, I live right down the block.”
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Oh, cool.
Rochelle Levy	Yeah, it's not like, “Oh, I'm visiting in town and I saw…” no, it's people who live here and want to know more about it. And often it's been people who are involved in the city in some way. And so I'm like, “All right, hey,” people ask, I'm, like, “You answer. You seem to know more about this than I do. Please, we'd love to hear your expertise.”
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:46:19]	Oh wow, that's really cool. And what size groups do you get?
Rochelle Levy [00:46:22]	I don’t I think I've had more than 10 for a walking tour. Yeah, I believe. And then I've done training for a number of walking tours that I don't know if I'll ever actually lead, but I've done training for, like, the Architecture Tour.
Jaclyn Maraldo	Oh, and what is that?
Rochelle Levy:	That was kind of fascinating. Well, there's all kinds of architecture in this town. I mean, amazingly so. And so that's a tour I think they've offered. And you walk around and you can learn all about the different buildings, different kinds of architecture. Oh, the James Green Tour, I did training for that. So at Carlyle House, after it left the Carlyle family's hands, James Green, a local furniture manufacturer bought the Carlyle House. And then during the Civil War, it was actually taken over by the, yeah, it's a whole thing. But it's a tour of his different factories and different places here in Old Town, [Alexandria, Virginia]. And interestingly, a lot of the buildings burned down, yeah.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Hm, curious.
Rochelle Levy:	Curious! [both laugh]
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:47:38]	Those fires, huh?

Rochelle Levy [00:47:39]	Yeah, fires, but yeah, I mean, people love the walking tours and I like it because I just like being able to learn about it and also just be outside and walk around and talk about the history.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:47:51]	Amazing, okay. I know you have, oh yes-
Rochelle Levy	Hmm?
	National History Day
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Next weekend coming up is National History Day.
Rochelle Levy:	That's right.
Jaclyn Maraldo	I know that you were a volunteer last year and you're doing it again this year.
Rochelle Levy [00:48:04]	I am, I am. Yeah, I'm gonna judge. So National History Day, and again, I knew nothing about this. I wasn't a history teacher, social studies teacher, but I knew nothing about it, and it's national, and it, I believe, I don't remember how young, but there's various, you know, the really young kids, and then like middle school, and then high school. And there's a theme every year. And there are, I don't know, maybe 5 or 6 categories, right? They can create a website, write a paper, create a short documentary, do a performance, have an exhibit. What am I forgetting?
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:49:00]	I think that's it, right?
Rochelle Levy [00:49:01]	Maybe that's it. But it's also like, okay, Documentary Individual, Documentary Group. So there's so many. So last year, my first year, I got involved right at almost when it was time to judge. And so they gave me Individual Documentary. I believe it was middle school kids. And so some of those things you have to actually do the work before the actual day. Anyway, the point is this is the regional on Saturday, March 7, where we meet at a high school and the students present whatever they've done to a team of 3 judges at a time. Again, I don't know what my category is this year yet. And then we say, "Okay, here's number 1, number 2, number 3," and they go on to State. And then they go onto National, right? And I really enjoyed doing it last year. So I thought, let me do that

	again and try to do a different category just for, you know, to kind of experience it differently.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:50:23]	What category did you, you said Documentary?
Rochelle Levy [00:50:25]	Yeah, it was an Individual Documentary, and it was, I think, middle school kids, and there was some really amazing work. And then I know that Alexandria and different organizations give out different awards at that time as well.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:50:43]	I think Mount Vernon has a, yeah, there are different prizes for, even if they don't advance to the State, then certain categories can get them different prizes.
Rochelle Levy [00:50:54]	Yeah, right, exactly. And so, you know, anything for students to get interested in and learn about history, and I know they work really hard on these projects all year, and so, I retired from teaching, but I still, I guess, I tutor, I do all these other things, and I love to still be involved in however I can in anything having to do with education.
	Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:51:19]	Amazing and the other thing that you told me about was being a Tree Steward-
Rochelle Levy:	Oh!
Jaclyn Maraldo:	After you retired [laughs].
Rochelle Levy [00:51:26]	Speaking of, what other branches can I go down? Okay, woo. Yeah, so I heard about that through somebody at Parkfairfax who's been a Tree Steward for I think, I don't know, 20-some years. So I did, I did a whole training for Tree Stewards. There's the Tree Stewards of Alexandria, Arlington-Alexandria, which is a really large group, I think. It's also, there are Tree Stewards all through Virginia, different groups. I did do the training and you know, you learn about trees obviously, but, like, we had to do hands-on weeding, pulling weeds and pruning and tree identification and yeah. I haven't kept up as much with that, honestly. I did the training, I graduated. [laughs] And that's what mattered, right? And I moved the tassel, and you know what, I got

	to, again, it's all about getting to know people, and I met somebody who was, you know, in that. I mean, actually, we had small groups, we had to do projects, it was a whole thing, but I did end up meeting somebody who lives very close to me in Parkfairfax, and we've become good friends, and so that was, I'm like, “Hey, that's fantastic. You know, I met some cool people from this.”
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:52:52]	Wow, how long was that training?
Rochelle Levy [00:52:53]	It was September through [counts] It was like a 3-month thing. And we had Zoom, like 2-hour Zooms on Tuesday nights that'd be a different topic that somebody would be presenting on. We'd have a little quizzes. We had our group project. It was actually pretty intense. And we had to go out and sign up and do these hands-on outings where you had to go and learn how to identify, learn how to prune. We went to the cemetery on King Street, the one, I just forgot what it's called, but it's the major cemeteries you drive up King Street past the Masonic Memorial. And we spent a whole afternoon getting rid of English ivy, which kills trees.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Oh, wow.
Rochelle Levy:	So that kind of thing. And then last summer, I actually co-led a tree walk in Parkfairfax for neighbors who wanted to sign up. It was a Saturday and I did it with Scott Knudsen, who is the person who got me interested in this. And he knows everything about this. He's been involved with the Tree Stewards forever. And so we kind of co-led a tree walk. Um, it was like an hour and a half, 2 hours where neighbors who were interested, um, we talked about the trees and he had led a walk where he talked about the areas in Parkfairfax where we'd like to put in new trees. And yeah, so that also, again, is something that when I tell people, “Yeah, I'm doing this,” they're like, “Wait, wait what?” Because it was nothing I was ever, [laughs] I ever knew anything about.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:54:47]	You just kind of stumble into opportunities and yeah!
Rochelle Levy [00:54:50]	I go, “That sounds interesting.” And for the first time in my life, I have time to actually pursue it. So why not?
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:54:57]	Why not? Yeah, so you have all of these different volunteer experiences. Is there a through line that you think attracted you to these experiences?

Rochelle Levy [00:55:12]	Yes, they are all about learning about something I know nothing about. That's what it's about, right? And I love the idea of being a student again, right, at the start. When I was teaching, I always had to remind myself what it was like to [be a student]. There's this thing called the curse of knowledge. And that came from *Think Like a Freak*, the *Think Like a Freak* guys [Stephen J. Dubner and Steven Levitt], if you're familiar with those books, some people might be. But it's a way of thinking outside the box. But the curse of knowledge is once you know something, it's hard for you not to know it. And so as a teacher, you go, "Oh my God, how do you not understand subject-verb agreement?"
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Right.
Rochelle Levy:	Or, "How do you not know that a theme is this or that?" And then you have to say to yourself, "Okay, remember when you didn't know that?" And so that's why I like starting at the bottom as a student again, I mean, because it always helped me teach better, I think, be more empathetic, maybe. But also, I really believe it just, you know, I think it just keeps you young when you realize, I mean, I don't know anything about anything. There's so much to know about. And so all of these things are things that I love learning about, and then sharing that knowledge with people. When I'm giving tours and I'm sharing this knowledge and seeing how people react and the questions they have and I mean, that's just wow. What a gift to be allowed to do that.
	Changes in Alexandria
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:56:53]	That's great. I love that. I'm curious, I want to go back. So you saw Old Town Alexandria, [Virginia] in the [19]70s and [19]80s.
Rochelle Levy:	Yes.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	And then you came back in 2019.
Rochelle Levy [00:57:07]	I mean I was here many [times], I mean it's not like I had never been here. I'd definitely come here and eat and all that but 2019 is when I actually lived here.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	When you lived here.

Rochelle Levy:	Yeah.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	What were some of the changes between the [19]80s-
Rochelle Levy:	Oh, gosh. [both laugh]
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:57:21]	-and when you were living in Old Town, [Alexandria, Virginia].
Rochelle Levy [00:57:25]	Well, I mean... I, you know, I don't remember a whole lot about visiting Old Town [Alexandria, Virginia] before. I mean, honestly, my one memory is my friend and I, when we were in Falls Church, [Virginia] way back in like [19]86 and, "Hey, let's drive to Old Town, [Alexandria, Virginia]." Then get some fish and chips. And I'm thinking, "I wonder if that was the Fish Market."
Jaclyn Maraldo	Right!
Rochelle Levy	Probably.
Jaclyn Maraldo [00:57:49]	Probably. Yeah.
Rochelle Levy [00:57:49]	But I just, you know, I honestly remember like pulling up and parking right there and you know it wasn't all of this. But what's really interesting is when I moved here in 2019, the waterfront whole development was, like, just beginning in terms of Robinson Landing, there's condos, were just being built. And you could not walk on the promenade all the way across like you can now. That, I watched that whole thing go up. I watched Barca come in and Ada's on the River. And, you know, you had to like, if you wanted to walk on the waterfront, you had to then go through the parking lot where the [Old Dominion] Boat Club is, which is still there.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Yeah.
Rochelle Levy:	And walk up on the sidewalk and then walk back over. There was no just walkway there.

Jaclyn Maraldo:	Okay.
Rochelle Levy:	And so watching all that change was really something. And I believe, yeah, that when I got here in 2019, that even the whole, the big square down there where they have the art installations, I think all of that was fairly new in 2019. So things I don't love, can I say that too?
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Please, absolutely!
Rochelle Levy:	All right. I don't love the banks, a lot of banks coming in. I don't love the interesting, cool shops that are one of a kind and being replaced by the chains. I definitely see, even in that little amount of time, the character just kind of draining out a bit. And I think Old Town, [Alexandria, Virginia] is so special and so unique. And, you know, me and all these other people would hate to see it become just any other kind of main street. Although, you know, I understand the competing political interests. I understand that. But it's hard, you know?
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:00:24]	Yeah. And what was the waterfront before the art installation and what was there?
Rochelle Levy [01:00:31]	I don't know, [Jaclyn laughs] because I, you know, I don't know. I mean, I maybe had been there just a few times and just taken a walk maybe after eating, maybe at one of the restaurants down there when I didn't live here. Yeah, I'm not really sure. But I know there's a been a lot of development just in the last 7 years or so.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:00:57]	Yeah, absolutely.
Rochelle Levy [01:00:57]	And I know that there are two factions, you know, on that.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:01:03]	Was there any particular shop that you miss that you remember? Or a type of store, like, what did it sell?
Rochelle Levy [01:01:21]	Uh, that's a good one. I can't, you know, I just like shops that have their own, I mean, I will say this, I do love the thrift stores here.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:01:29]	Yeah.

Rochelle Levy [01:01:30]	[Rochelle laughs] Like Twig [Thrift Shop], you know, that's great. And yeah, there are a lot of really cool thrift stores here. I just, you know, it's like when you see the big banks come in, I don't know, there's something about that that's just a little heartbreaking.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:01:54]	Right yeah, the competition. And which chains are coming in that you've noticed?
Rochelle Levy [01:02:00]	Well, I mean, there have been chains here. I mean there's, you know, Chipotle's here and well, Gap and Banana Republic were here.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:02:10]	Mm-hmm.
Rochelle Levy [01:02:10]	And they went out, right? That was right at Washington [Street], and I think the bank took that over, didn't it?
Jaclyn Maraldo:	I think you're right, yeah.
Rochelle Levy:	Yeah, there are quite a few chains actually. You know, I almost think that there are more shops that are individual more on Upper King Street if I think about it.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Interesting, okay.
Rochelle Levy:	Yeah.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:02:38]	Yeah. I think you're right.
Rochelle Levy:	And I wouldn't, yeah, so that is interesting.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:02:46]	Something else to go down a rabbit hole on [both laugh].
Rochelle Levy [01:02:49]	I could do it. But the thing about Alexandria, [Virginia] I think that really, that intrigues me the absolute most is, and I wanna do a walking tour of this, is it's the association capital of the world. And I am so intrigued, because I lived on Prince Street. And you got the pharmacy one with the guy, the little kid with the, what do you think, the mortar and pestle or something there. It's the Association, the Helicopter Association, the Pharmacy

	Association, the Engineering Association, the Association HR [Human Resources] association, the Association of Associations.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:03:32]	That's so true.
Rochelle Levy:	Where does it end? [both laugh]
Jaclyn Maraldo:	You're right, yeah. Everywhere you look, it's a different association.
Rochelle Levy [01:03:45]	That's the first thing I noticed when I moved in. I would just take my walks and go, what is happening?
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:03:50]	You could do an independent walking tour.
Rochelle Levy [01:03:52]	Right, of the associations. And then there was a woman on one of my tours who said, “You know, I'm really interested in all the frame stores. Is this the frame store capital? Could you do a walking tour about the frame stores?” I'm like, “I bet I could, yeah.”
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:04:09]	That's so true. I'm sure there are a lot of little things like that.
Rochelle Levy:	Yeah, I mean, I like the quirkiness of it.
	Rewards and Challenges of Volunteering
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Something to think about, okay. Wanna make sure that I've covered most of what we have talked about. Oh yes, so I think we've talked about this a little bit but what makes volunteering a positive experience?
Rochelle Levy [01:04:42]	Well, for me, I feel like having the time to volunteer again is just a gift because it's about giving back, but you know, it sounds so, I mean, in a lot of ways, it's selfish. What I mean is what I get from it. You know, like, I think about working with Book Buddies and yes, you know, it’s like, “Oh, you're changing some kid's life,” and I'm like, “Yeah, but he's changing my life, too.”
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Yeah.

Rochelle Levy	You know? And it makes me feel part of this community. And that's, I think, the biggest thing is to be an active participant in the community and to meet people, like-minded. Whether it's they also really enjoy giving the tours and learning about the history, or they really enjoy being ridiculous and English country dancing and jumping around, or it makes, I mean, it's back to the human condition, but honestly, it makes you feel less alone. It's like there are other people and all ages. I volunteer with some people in their 20s and 30s, and then I also volunteer with people who are retired. You get the real gamut and life experiences and interests and... You know, being able to get to know people and feel part of that community and feel like I am maybe in some way contributing something positive towards this community.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:06:48]	So not all selfish. [laughs]
Rochelle Levy [01:06:51]	Both, I guess. I mean, yeah. And you know, and like, okay, so this morning, I gave a special tour over at Gadsby's Tavern because, along with Kristy [Huettner], because there was a group from Fairfax County, [Virginia] that came and we gave them a tour before the actual museum opened. And, you know, it's just so wonderful to see people and people who don't really know much about it and the questions they ask. They're like, “Oh, I wish we had more time to really delve into it.” And to just open that up, you know, and give people something to experience that they didn't know anything about, really. And it's people who want to hear what I have to say, unlike all those teenagers who didn't really want to hear what I had to say.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:07:50]	Puts a nice spin on it.
Rochelle Levy:	Yeah, yeah.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	On the teaching experience.
Rochelle Levy [01:07:53]	Some of them did, not all of them. You know who you are. [both laugh]
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:07:59]	Okay. I love that. Um, and then on the flip side, what are some of the challenges that you've experienced as a volunteer?

Rochelle Levy [01:08:06]	Hmm, so just volunteering in general, um ok. I think sometimes volunteers can be seen as their time isn't as important or respected. I've had that experience where maybe I've gone for something and they're like, "Oh yeah, that's not happening" or "That child isn't here today" or, and I'm like, "Wow, I mean, I kind of scheduled my day around it. I do have other things I do," and I would just like to feel respected. That is rare, but it has happened. And I understand, I mean, people are very busy with their jobs and that kind of thing. But yeah, unless you nip that in the bud, I know that can be something that can happen.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:09:02]	So about, yeah, respect, being supported.
Rochelle Levy [01:09:06]	Yeah, and not, you know, most people when you volunteer, people who work in the different places, are very appreciative. But, you know, not always.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:09:20]	Not always. [both laugh] And how-
Rochelle Levy [01:09:20]	You asked! [laughs].
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:09:22]	I sure did! How do you navigate those? Is it kind of a- I'll leave it at that. How do you navigate the challenges?
Rochelle Levy [01:09:36]	I, well, I speak up. I speak up and I say, "You know, that doesn't feel great." And not always, I don't always speak up, but when I can, I do. And just try to communicate so the person understands. And again, I'm sure many times it's completely, "Oh, I didn't realize that." I just, so I try to give people grace with that. And I mean, we all, in our careers, have had horrible experiences too. So everybody, I mean that's life.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:10:21]	Okay, so giving grace, speaking of communicating.
Rochelle Levy [01:10:24]	Yes, I think people should use their voices more.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Yeah.
Rochelle Levy:	That's what I think. I think people should speak up more.

	Final Thoughts
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:10:33]	Okay. I'm going to just review. Let's see. So I believe that we have covered everything on my list, but are there any other stories, memories, thoughts that you would like to share?
Rochelle Levy [01:11:01]	I think just that, you know, it's interesting, like, I know I do various things, but until I actually have a conversation about it, like we are now, it makes me feel so grateful that I saw that original email about, “Hey, there's this opportunity.” Because I think just like with anything in life, it's jumping and taking a risk. And there are plenty of people I know who [say], “Oh, I don't volunteer,” or “That's not what I do,” or, um, “Well, I wouldn't be able to do that.” And it's like, you can, you just need to jump, basically, and take a risk. And I've done a lot of things, like, you know, where I just kind of go, “Okay, I'm not gonna know anybody but I'm going to do this, and what's the worst thing that can happen?” And I started playing pickleball here in Old Town, [Alexandria, Virginia] by the way, let's just talk about the pickleball.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Let’s talk about pickleball! [laughs]
Rochelle Levy:	And I have the most amazing group of women friends now, and that's only since the summer. And these are now like my, I mean, just, I'm so grateful for them. And, you know, I was like, “I don't know anybody. We'll see what happens.” And I think especially as you get older, do it more, don't do it less.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:12:53]	And what are these friends' names?
Rochelle Levy [01:12:55]	Oh, I don't know if they want their names.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:12:57]	If not, you don't have to share them.
Rochelle Levy [01:12:59]	Yeah, I don't know if they want their names [laughs]. But yeah, but it's been life-changing having these friends, this group of friends. Yeah.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:13:11]	And so I guess the last thing is what is your hope for the future of these historic sites that you volunteer at, Gadsby's Tavern and Carlyle House?

Rochelle Levy [01:13:22]	Yeah, I would like it if more people knew about them.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	Yes.
Rochelle Levy:	I think particularly Carlyle House, maybe because it's set back from the road. But the fact that I had, you know, neighbors in Old Town, [Alexandria, Virginia] who lived right near me. And when I started volunteering, I told them about it. And they're like, "We've never heard of that." And I was like, "Really? Cause you could walk right there." That seems like a missed opportunity to me. And I'm not saying that people aren't doing their jobs who work there. I know there's very few people that work there. I just mean it makes me kind of sad because I don't know anyone who's ever gone there and taken a tour and said, "Yeah, you know, that was okay." I mean, I don't. Everybody who takes the tour is like, "Oh my God, that was amazing. Why don't I know about this? Let me come back!" because they change the house around depending on different things that are happening during the year. That's the difference with Gadsby's Tavern, too. That stays the same, but Carlyle House, you know, it can change for Yuletide during the holidays. It can change for when... um, um, John Carlyle, uh, died, you know, they can have his coffin in the dining room. I mean, that's a party. So I wish more people knew about it. And, um, you know, I hope that, um, there's plenty of funding or whatever we need to keep these places going because I mean we have, um, such rich history here and we should continue to celebrate it especially as you know the 250th of our country is coming up.
Jaclyn Maraldo:	That's right, July!
Rochelle Levy:	Yeah, yeah. We're so fortunate to be here.
Jaclyn Maraldo [01:15:18]	Well, Rochelle. Thank you so much for taking the time and speaking with me. It was truly a pleasure.
Rochelle Levy [01:15:24]	Oh, you're welcome. This was so fun. Thank you.