



City of Alexandria  
Office of Historic Alexandria  
*Alexandria Legacies*  
Oral History Program



**Project Name:** *Alexandria Legacies*

**Title:** *Interview with Unalane Ablondi*

**Date of Interview:** *June 30, 2007*

**Location of Interview:** *At Unalane Ablondi's home in Old Town, Alexandria, Virginia*

**Interviewer:** *Jennifer Hembree*

**Transcriber:** *Valerie Davison*

**Abstract:** Born in Washington, D.C., Unalane Ablondi moved to Alexandria, Va., from Edgewater, Md., when she was fourteen years old, during World War II. She describes what Alexandria was like during the 1940s, when there were corner grocery stores and few restaurants. She talks about her classmates and activities at George Washington High School and her interest in dramatics. She also talks about her mother, Una Franklin Carter, a journalist with the *Northern Virginia Sun* and the *Old Town Crier*. Mrs. Ablondi moved back to Alexandria with her husband and children in the 1970s and was one of the first docents for the restored Carlisle House. She describes how Alexandria changed between the 1940s and the 1970s and how it continues to change now.

**This interview has been edited by the interviewee and may not reflect the audio-recording exactly.**

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*Unalane Ablondi, 2007*

<b>Childhood</b>	
Jennifer Hembree:	Usually, my first question is to ask where and when you were born.
Unalane Ablondi:	In Washington, D.C., in the old hospital for women.
JH:	What was the name?
Unalane Ablondi:	The Columbia Hospital for Women. It was on November 28 <sup>th</sup> , 1929. A long time ago.
JH:	When did your family move to Alexandria, and what instigated the move? If you recall.
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. My mother and father...I think the first home they took me to was in Cherrydale, Virginia. We moved an awful lot during my childhood. We lived on Kalorama Road. I remember going to nursery school there, at the age of two. My memory of that goes way back. Then we moved to Georgetown, and we lived on S Street in Georgetown, which was not far from the Georgetown Hospital, the Georgetown University Hospital. I went to school up the street. I believe it was called Fillmore, Fillmore School. But my sister and I were boarded out a lot, as children. When I was four I was on a farm, boarding with the Thomas family, at Valley Brook Farm in Falls Church. He has sold all that land now. It's a beautiful subdivision of houses out

	<p>there now. I still keep in touch with their daughter.</p> <p>We moved to Edgewater, Maryland. My mother and father were divorced. We lived up on...see, when we came to Alexandria...not my immediate family...came to Alexandria when I was just under fourteen...thirteen...going into high school, as a freshman, that year. We had been living down in Edgewater, Maryland, for three years, which is near Annapolis. But we came here when I was just under fourteen, and my life changed completely because I fell in love with this place.</p>
<p>JH:</p>	<p>What made you fall in love with it? Can you describe it?</p>
<p>Unalane Ablondi:</p>	<p>Well, for one thing, we were with my mother, my sister and I. We were all together. I was happy in high school. I had a happy high-school career...My mother wanted to send me to Christ Church, so I started going there with a young girl I met not far from my home. We became best friends. She had been to Christ Church, and my mother wanted us to go there, so we did. We were very active in the Young Peoples Service League, an organization for teenagers at Christ Church. It went up to about the age of eighteen. Then you went into Young Adults, which went through age forty.</p>
<p><b>Houses</b></p>	
<p>Unalane Ablondi:</p>	<p>This is the fifth house I've lived in here. The first house was on South Fayette Street, which is no longer in existence. It was the oldest post office in Virginia, I believe, at that time. They've demolished that now, and there's a new house in the same spot. From there we went to 1707 Duke Street, which is across the street, directly across the street from the Whole Food Store now. My mother had this deep garden in the back. She was quite a gardener. She loved to garden. Not only flowers, but she had a vegetable garden right in back of it. That is now a parking lot. From there we went down to 214 South Lee Street, around the corner here. I graduated from high school there. Then we went to...let's see. That was the third house, right? Then Mother moved, and she rented 210 Duke Street. I was going off to college then, sort of never there for long periods of time, during the summers and holidays, [unclear] holidays. It was a beautiful house, historic house, the Craik House—George Washington's doctor, Dr. James Craik.</p> <p>...I married a New Yorker and lived up there for many years. We came back here in 1972, when he received his presidential appointment to the United States Tariff Commission. During his term, Congress changed the name to the International Trade Commission. He stayed for the one term. It was a six-year term, and they had three Democrats and three Republicans. My</p>

	<p>husband was a Democrat, and he had to go to a lot of interviews and appointments in New York and he met with different members of Congress here. He was approved on the floor of Congress by a vote. He stayed for six years, but he decided he would not accept a second term because he needed to make some money.</p> <p>He was an attorney, and in New York he had always been in corporate and estate law. Here, he was practicing international law...trade. When we came down from New York for that appointment, when he became Commissioner, we looked around for houses, in Georgetown, Chevy Chase, Bethesda, Alexandria, and we liked this house, the Dr. Dick House, very much. The strange thing is, it was always my favorite house in town, even when I was a teenager, and I had not ever been inside it. Just from the outside.</p>
<p>JH:</p>	<p>So you would be walking up Prince Street here...Was this part of your route to school or something like that, where you passed this little [unclear].</p>
<p>Unalane Ablondi:</p>	<p>I would pass it when I would walk up to Christ Church (we lived at 214 South Lee). I would turn the corner and walk up. Also, in high school, I'd come home from high school...I'd usually walk. Sometimes I'd take the bus, and walk [unclear]. George Washington High School is now a Middle School. That was a four-year high school. There was no eighth grade in Alexandria, and there was no eighth grade in Maryland, where I graduated...where I finished elementary school. They added that, I think, before my sister had to graduate. I don't remember the exact year they added that eighth grade. But I think they came into the regular high-school building, to attend that grade.</p> <p>So I graduated from there. We were living at 214 South Lee then, but my husband liked this house. We did an awful lot of entertaining here, receptions, cocktail buffet and sit-down dinner parties.</p>
<p>JH:</p>	<p>Great. It's a perfect house for that.</p>
<p>Unalane Ablondi:</p>	<p>We have a drawing room upstairs...well, we call it the drawing room....We did a lot of entertaining. We could move up there. We could start out up there, and people would be all over the house, having cocktails. If it was warm weather, we would go outside. We would have dinner, either with buffets or, sometimes, sit-down dinners. It kept me very busy.</p>
<p><b>High School</b></p>	
<p>JH:</p>	<p>To go back to your high-school years...What kind of activities did you do with Christ Church? What kind of youth activities</p>

	were you involved in?
Unalane Ablondi:	In Christ Church? Well, the Young People's Service League. We made very good friends. Actually, we did not go out and do as much service as we should have. We went over to the Anna Lee Memorial Home, which was on the corner of Cameron and Fairfax Street. It used to be an old-ladies' home. It was originally a tavern, back in the 18 <sup>th</sup> century. We would go over there and sing Christmas carols to them, at that time of year.  Actually, we didn't do a lot of stuff. Oh, we did serve as a choir for Christ Church evening service.
JH:	Oh, you did?
Unalane Ablondi:	I don't remember whether it was 7:00 P.M. or 7:30, at Christ Church, for the service in the evening. We'd go up in the balcony...the gallery, they call it now...and serve as the choir, with no practice or anything. We just sang.
JH:	Do you have a favorite song that you remember, that you liked to sing?
Unalane Ablondi:	Well, my favorite hymn is <i>Abide With Me</i> , and I'd like to have that at my funeral, if they will do it. I love <i>O Come All Ye Faithful</i> , too, as a Christmas carol.  But in the Young People's Service League, the rectors were The Reverend B.B. Lisle and the Reverend, I think it was, O.V.T. Chamberlain. The adults called him Van. We always called Reverend Lisle, Mr. Lisle and Chamberlain, Mr. Chamberlain. They would conduct our sessions at the Young People's Service League, and they would always start out with a talk or a lecture, and I don't remember what it was about.
JH:	Was this a sermon?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. Little discussions about good living. And we would do square dancing.
JH:	That sounds fun.
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. We did a lot of that. During the summer we would have suppers outside, at someone's home. I remember doing that once at 1707 Duke Street. Lots of room for all those young people to come and have a cookout, a barbecue. My mother would prepare a lot of food.
JH:	What kind of food? Was it burgers, the same as...?
Unalane Ablondi:	I think potato salad, deviled eggs, fried chicken. I don't think we cooked anything. Maybe chicken salad. Things like that...things you didn't have to cook. There was plenty of

	<p>food... and soft drinks. I remember once calling, "Stuff is ready. Come." This one boy, Edward Rubley, he was [unclear], and he came dashing. He crashed into the table with the soft drinks, knocked them all over, and, of course, they emptied. She had bought us each two. I put the second ones down, and when they asked for seconds, I said, "Sorry. Eddie knocked them over."</p>
<p>JH:</p>	<p>Were these in cans?</p>
<p>Unalane Ablondi:</p>	<p>Bottles. [Unclear] Mr. Chamberlain came to that. Then we had one out at his house, on Braddock Road, and we had a scavenger hunt that he had planned for us, around the neighborhood. These were all planned.</p>
<p>JH:</p>	<p>This would have been in the early [19]40s?</p>
<p>Unalane Ablondi:</p>	<p>Yes. Now I graduated from high school in [19]48, January of [19]48. So I went into high school, I guess it was, in [19]43. I'll confess something that I shouldn't say. I went an extra semester, because I was a terrible algebra student. I didn't want to go to summer school to make it up, so I put it off. I remember my English teacher, who was my mentor, adviser... They would give each one an advisor. He said, "You won't graduate with your class." I said, "That's all right." Now I am rather regretful; but, at the same time, since we didn't have an eighth grade, they squeezed the entire elementary school curriculum in, and it was too much all at once, in just eleven years of school. Then to go on to college. That's what you did.</p>
<p><b>World War II</b></p>	
<p>JH:</p>	<p>So you were here during World War II? What do you remember of what went on in the city during that time?</p>
<p>Unalane Ablondi:</p>	<p>I was in Edgewater, Maryland, when the war broke out. A friend of mine, a boy from my elementary school class, called and told me that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. When I hung up I told my mother, and she said...she was a newspaper woman, and during Truman's administration she was a speech and report writer for the White House. But she immediately threw her arms up and said, "My God—we're going to war." We didn't have a radio with much reception, and there was no such thing as television. The radio just had very faint reception, so she and the other neighbors all gathered at a home there and listened.</p> <p>The war broke out, and we were cloistered down there, you know, sort of protected. I remember sitting around the radio and listening to Roosevelt speak, with other people in the</p>

neighborhood. I remember young Queen Elizabeth...Princess Elizabeth's...talk. I remember that also. From there...that's when we moved to Alexandria, and I entered high school. Alexandria and Washington both were filled with uniformed people...Army men, Navy people...and the women, who were WACs in the Army, who did all this and other work, the same as the Navy. They were called WAVES, and I admired them all so much, because they were so well-groomed, with neat hair and polished fingernails. Then the SPARRs, I believe, was the name of the women Marines. But I definitely remember the WACs and the WAVES.

But the streets were crowded with people. I even remember seeing them here on King Street, in uniform. Well, it was crowded for those days. Today it's much more crowded. To me, it seemed to be populated, but not the way it is today.

I remember when Roosevelt died, before the war was over. I really loved him. My mother had taught us...She was a very staunch Democrat, and she had taught us to love Roosevelt and Mrs. Roosevelt (Eleanor). So the way we felt about him was like grandparents almost, you know? I really cried. I remember when it was announced on the radio.

My mother, she could do just about anything. She was painting the ceiling in the dining room. She was up on a ladder. And I had on my Senior Service Girl Scout uniform. I was sitting on the sofa, listening, and we heard the announcement. She dropped her paint brush, and we just hugged each other and cried. I went to buy a newspaper, when they had the time to get it out, and I remember a young girl I also went to high school with, across the street, looking out of the top window in her house, and she said, "Unalane, let me see the headlines." I was holding it like that, up so she could see it from the second floor window.

So I was in Birmingham when we had VJ-Day, I remember. Then, in Birmingham, where I went to visit my father, in Alabama...we used to have visits with him and we had gone down this one summer, to have a month or so with him and his wife, his second wife, and that's when VJ-Day occurred. We went into town to celebrate. I remember a guy grabbing me and kissing me. I was horrified. My sister said I just looked horrified. My father and stepmother said it was time to go back home. Well, I was quite young, you know. Fourteen.

Then things became better in the country, after that. Well, I was very young, very young. But we had ration stamps...

Shoe leather was hard to get. Your shoes were rationed, as I



	<p>recall it, when we would buy shoes, definitely in the summer. It would be cloth shoes. And sugar, as I recall, was rationed. And, of course, meat. There was a black market, where people would buy the meat illegally...but not my mother. We ate meat, what we had to, and we had a few meat meals...I mean a week, then the others would be vegetarian meals.</p> <p>And margarine came in, when I was living down there in Edgewater, to replace butter. It was a substitute for butter, and in the beginning it was white. Just white. Then they would have these packets of food coloring. I remember my mother mashing that into the margarine, to make it look like butter, yellow.</p>
<b>Girl Scouts</b>	
JH:	<p>You mentioned that you were a Girl Scout. What do you remember about being a Girl Scout?</p>
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>Working for the badges, enjoying that, the stoll, which my mother would sew them on for me. I started out as a Girl Scout; then when I was a little older I became Senior Service Scout, and I did volunteer work here in Alexandria. I remember the old Community Chest, which was later renamed the United Way. I would do some filing for them, and I did a lot of work up at the hospital, on Saturdays. The hospital, the old Alexandria Hospital, was on Washington Street, on South Washington and...what is it? It must have been Duke Street, I don't know. But it was right on the corner there. South Washington and Duke—the main entrance was on Duke. I would go up there on Saturdays, and there would be another Girl Scout with me. We should change ice water for the patients, and I became very adept with an ice pick, because they had a freezer with ice in it, and we had to chunk it up, break it up, and put it in the pitchers. And changing flowers for them. If there were any errands to be run, we would do that. And we would eat our lunch up there; take a sandwich or something, and eat it there. There was a third place where I volunteered, but I cannot remember it. I forgot it a long time ago, and have not been able to remember where that third place was.</p> <p>I enjoyed working at the hospital. I always wore my Girl Scout uniform.</p>
JH:	<p>That sounds really nice. Did the service work you did for the Girl Scouts and [unclear] to some of the work you did later in life, by any chance? In college, or anything like that?</p>
<b>New York</b>	
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>No. Not really. I'm serious. I was interested in fashion then, and I went two years to the University of Alabama. Then I went up</p>

	<p>to New York City, to the Tobe-Coburn School for Fashion Careers. It was a school that trained girls to work in advertising and merchandising; it was not designing. So I worked, for not very long...a year and a half. I was married in [19]51, and then about a year later became pregnant. We were living with my husband's parents. They were poor Italian immigrants.</p>
JH:	In which neighborhood in New York?
Unalane Ablondi:	Hell's Kitchen. Are you familiar with it?
JH:	Yes.
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>West 40<sup>th</sup> Street—401 West 40<sup>th</sup>. It was an experience for me, believe me, the little girl from Christ Church, in an Italian neighborhood. The bathtub was in the kitchen. I had to make an appointment to take a bath. They would all go out into the living room to sit. It was a railroad flat—one room right after another—and the top to that bathtub was metal, and that served as a food-preparation area. My mother-in-law was a fabulous cook. She did all these wonderful things from scratch, like cappelletti and broth, chicken broth. She did ravioli and polenta—those wonderful Italian dishes—from scratch. There was one little bathroom with a toilet, off the kitchen, and a sink in the kitchen next to the tub that came up to here on me, below my waist. My mother-in-law was a short woman, and in those days the Italians would come—congregate at night at the kitchen table. They would all just come, after dinner, and they'd all have coffee and cake. There were always bakery boxes filled with cakes and goodies. It was embarrassing for me, though, because I had to brush my teeth and wash my hair in front of them, in that little sink.</p> <p>We slept on a pullout sofa in the living room, my husband and I, and we lived there for seven years. His parents moved downstairs when an apartment became available, and we continued to live there. We had our first two children there. They were born in St. Clair's (or St. Clare's—can't recall the spelling) Hospital. All three of my children were born there. Then we moved down to Greenwich Village, which I absolutely loved. It was a wonderful family place then, and there were beatniks. They were the forerunners of the hippies. On Saturdays, you would see flower carts drawn by horses...horse-drawn carts with flowers. A cart would come through with vegetables, fresh vegetables. It was a nice place to live. A wonderful public school...P.S. #41...one of the best in the city, and my daughters went there.</p>
JH:	Was it hard to leave, when you moved ...?

Unalane Ablondi:	I left with mixed feelings. It was getting so everywhere we went in New York we would see people we knew. My husband was an attorney, and he was very active in the Columbus Club, which was for people of Italian descent. We met a lot of people, and we had some very good friends. But, at the same time, I was not at all unhappy to come back here.
JH:	Well, that's good. [Unclear]
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. And I've been here ever since. I still love it as much as ever.
<b>Alexandria in the 1970s</b>	
JH:	So what did you notice in terms of the change, from when you had been here when you were in high school, versus when you returned in the [19]70s?
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>Well, there was a lot of restoration that had been done on the houses. They were spruced up, and there were new houses that had been built. All this area north of us, all the new town houses. Then the houses down in the Yates Garden, is it called? Down in the southern part of the city, the southern part of Alexandria, in the area of St. Mary's School...they were here when I was a teenager. But they're very nice houses. They're not antique, all of it, but they're nice.</p> <p>I think it became more transient, people coming in from other places, to work for the government. Everybody, I guess—many people were better educated, who came in. Women were all—more had gone to college than previously. I always said my mother was the forerunner of today's career woman.</p>
JH:	<p>She sounds that way, yes.</p> <p>So in the 1970s, when you arrived, did you join any organizations? I know right now you do some volunteer work at [Gadsby's Tavern Museum].</p>
<b>Organizations</b>	
Unalane Ablondi:	I was. I don't do it anymore. When we came in, I joined a group at invitation called Independent Agency Women, which was a group of Washington wives, who were the wives of Washington commissioners, the wives of presidential appointees. My husband was a presidential appointee. I was very active. I became president. First, I was treasurer, one or two terms, then I became president a little while after that, for a term. That kept me very busy. I often chaired events, some of the affairs that we had. It was a social group, but it served a good purpose. Women came from all over the country, and it gave them an opportunity to make good friends with people. Some of them became very

	<p>good friends.</p> <p>I joined, let's see... Well, Historic Alexandria Docents.</p>
JH:	What was that for?
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>When that was founded it was—let's see. It was about 1974. I might be wrong on that date. But it was a group who were trained to give tours through historic buildings... Gadsby's Tavern Museum; Carlisle House; the Robert E. Lee boyhood home. Those were the three main ones then. I became a docent at Gadsby's Tavern Museum, and I was there for eleven years. The first curator was Bill Adam, William Adam. We had a number of them. Gretchen Sorin, Susan Borchard, who went, later, down to Gunston Hall. They were the curators. Susan Borchard was at Carlisle House. Gretchen Sorin and Bill Adam were at Gadsby's, and Suzanne Hurlitz was at Gadsby's. I started out there, first, as a docent. Then they closed it for restoration, for a period of time. At the same time, they were restoring Carlisle House. There had been a hotel built around it, and they had incorporated that house, right into the hotel, in the center of the hotel there. So they removed all that hotel, and restored the building. Richard Bierce was the head architect. He took part in some of my training sessions. Sometimes we would meet at the Lyceum on South Washington Street, in that auditorium there. He would talk sometimes, and it was just fascinating. We had a lot of training sessions right in the buildings themselves. Then after the restoration Carlisle had, they opened. What year was it? I can't remember. The mid-1970s. But I was one of the docents there on a very cold and windy day in January, when it opened for the first time, and people from all over who had invitations were walking through. We were there to answer any questions.</p> <p>So I did that. I did both those buildings until about 1986 or something like that. I had been away from the church. My husband was a Catholic, and we raised our daughters and son as Catholic. I had been away from the Episcopal Church for a long time, and I had this increasing urge to return. So I went through the re-affirmation classes...</p>
JH:	Oh, at Christ Church.
Unalane Ablondi:	...and became re-affirmed. That's my main interest.
JH:	I think that's fabulous, after being away from it, going back home and...
Unalane Ablondi:	Well, they have some wonderful things going on there. Spiritual. Spiritual growth, you know. And at this age. Jesus Christ is the main thing in my life now, and my children and

	grandchildren. My husband died in 2001. So I stayed in the house here. I feel that it's my home. The children come and visit. My daughter was here last week. She just left the night before last. My son is coming on Monday and the grandchildren visit.
JH:	You were saying that you went up to New York [recently] because your husband received an honor of some sort?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. That was at Stuyvesant High School in New York City, which is a really outstanding school, academically superior. They called me and said that his friends [begin Tape 2, Side 2] established a scholarship fund in his name. So I was not able...I did it two or three years ago. I was not able to get up there last year, but this year he called me early enough. My daughter is living in New York, my younger daughter, and so is my son. He could not come, but she came with me. This was at their awards night, last Friday night.
JH:	They were presenting the scholarship to the [unclear]?
Unalane Ablondi:	I had given them a list of names, of people I thought would be interested. It was quite short [unclear]. A few came. It was an awards night, and I was just so impressed with those kids. They're geniuses! It's mainly based on math and science. They did all these wonderful individual projects, working with professional scientists, just individually, on their own, things that middle-aged people, experienced with science, would have been doing. So I think they have a great future when they graduate. Some of them will be very successful.  The award in my husband's name went to two girls who were graduating. One is going to Harvard and the other is going to Swarthmore. I just received a note yesterday from one of them, thanking me. That was very kind. I was very proud. I hope it will last for a while.
<b>Shopping, Restaurants, and Dramatics in Alexandria</b>	
JH:	I have some more questions back to Alexandria again. I was curious if you remember when you were in high school, and also when you first returned here in the [19]70s...What stores did you used to do your shopping, grocery stores or [unclear]?
Unalane Ablondi:	My mother did the grocery shopping, and there was a small Safeway right down here on Prince Street at the corner of South Royal Street, where the furniture store, the antique store...Do you know where that is?
JH:	Yes.

Unalane Ablondi:	That was a small Safeway. [Unclear]. The clerk would ring up the cash register, and as he took your item of food, he would announce its weight, and what it was, and the price. Out loud.
JH:	Can you imagine doing that today?
Unalane Ablondi:	Then he would pack the bags up. Then I remember there was an A&P near the 1701 Duke Street House, which was....is that Daingerfield Road?
JH:	I think it might be.
Unalane Ablondi:	There's another one there, too. It has a new name. Daingerfield is one of them. Of course, it's not there anymore. They've been doing so much building up there.  Then there was a store north of Old Town. We didn't have [unclear] until later. That was built a little later. So there was a store across from Washington Street, in that area. My mother would go up there and buy all this food, then she would take a taxi to return home. There were some little stores, where you could pick up things like milk and bread...there was a butcher on King Street.
JH:	Corner stores.
Unalane Ablondi:	...between your major shopping Prince and South Fairfax entrance was Leon's on South Fairfax right here on the corner. His name was Leon. It was where the flower shop is now. There was a little grocery store there, with different things in it, and really good homemade ice cream.
JH:	Homemade ice cream?
Unalane Ablondi:	I think it was. There was one French vanilla, that was so good. Then on the corner of Duke and South Fairfax...It still looks like a storefront but it's been made into a residence. It's on the southeast side, and that was a small grocery store, run by a family, and they lived above it.
JH:	What about restaurants? Do you remember?
Unalane Ablondi:	We had very few restaurants. There was Seaport Inn down on Union Street.
JH:	Is that the one that's a Starbucks now?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. It's a Starbucks. Yes....That was a restaurant. It was good. It was seafood. I don't recall any other really nice restaurants. Things like Howard Johnson's up on North Washington. And what was the one that Marriott started? Hot Shoppes. Hot Shoppes and Howard Johnson's. And all the kids, the high-school kids would go to the Hot Shoppe after a football game.

	After the Young People's Service League, a few of us would go up there.
JH:	What would you eat?
Unalane Ablondi:	Things like hamburgers, cheeseburgers, a milkshake, and French fries. Typical teen food. Pizza was not big then—I didn't have pizza until age 19. My Italian husband-to-be introduced it to me. That really...there were no outstanding restaurants at all. My mother, when she'd go in to have dinner with friends...There was a place in Washington, which was a pretty good restaurant.
JH:	She would make a special trip to do that?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. It's just saturated with restaurants now.
JH:	Yes. There's a big difference.
	What about when you came in the [19]70s? Had the restaurants started coming yet?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. But I noticed, after coming back from New York City...oh, it's developed. The restaurants have developed for the better since 1972, when I finally moved down. All the restaurants had these little globes, red globes, with a candle inside; red lights on the tables.
JH:	That was the "in" thing, maybe?
Unalane Ablondi:	They were all doing it. And I thought, Oh, my goodness. Compared to some of these fabulous restaurants in New York...Gradually, they began to get better, though.
JH:	Right. A little more on the upscale.
Unalane Ablondi:	New came in. I noticed on television, on the news or any of the talk shows...they seemed so amateurish to me, just the tone of it, the quality, compared to New York. Then we gradually noticed the sophistication coming in.
JH:	Since you had been here.
Unalane Ablondi:	Now they're equal [unclear]. But that's just a short time ago.
JH:	Yes. It wasn't that long ago. What else, in general? Do you have anything else you want to say about growing up there? Or living in Alexandria?
Unalane Ablondi:	Well, the one thing I was looking for, and I had to just look everywhere...and I'm a little concerned about these papers, some of my mother's, where she had written...It was either in the late [19]50s or no later than 1960 (she died in 1961), that she wrote articles on the urban renewal that was to take place on

	<p>King Street, and there were sketches that accompanied her stories. She wrote several articles on that. Then in 1949...I wanted to tell you this...there was a big production put on. The name of the production was <i>Alexandria Thy Sons</i>, and I've been looking for the program of that, which would really give more information. It's bound to turn up. I think I just put it away so safely...</p>
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<p>JH:</p>	<p>What was the production?</p>
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*George Washington High School Dramatics Club, Unalane Ablondi, pictured back row, far left  
(courtesy Unalane Ablondi, from her George Washington High School Yearbook, 1946)*

<p>Unalane Ablondi:</p>	<p>It was called <i>Alexandria Thy Sons</i>, and it was the history of Alexandria, about people who lived here. I remember that the wife of the funeral director, of the main funeral parlor, took the part...She was like the Spirit of Alexandria, and she was in red, white, and blue with stars. She was kind of an eccentric woman. She went to Christ Church, and she would purposely come in late, to sit up in the gallery, to make an appearance with her husband, Mr. Demaine, owner of Demaine's Funeral Parlor. I believe her first name was Clover.</p> <p>She was the Spirit of Alexandria, and I had two small parts. I had a small speaking part and I was also a bridesmaid at Robert E. Lee's wedding—we danced the Virginia Reel—such fun. I was interested in dramatics when I was in high school, and I went over to a dramatic school in Washington, after school.</p>
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<p>JH:</p>	<p>Was this in Alexandria?</p>
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<p>Unalane Ablondi:</p>	<p>No, it was Washington. Rose Robinson Cowan's School of Dramatic Art for Children. From there, I started taking drama</p>
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	<p>classes at Catholic University, and I did that after school. I went to Catholic U, and I would do it in the summer. I did it for about six weeks straight, every day. We would sit under a tree on the lawn, and have our classes during the summer. It was just great. Then in high school, I was very active in the dramatics club, and [unclear] active on the school newspaper, called <i>The Surveyor</i>. I wrote articles, and worked on their archives and things like that.</p> <p>At George Washington High, my English teacher, Edwina Parker, was director of the dramatics club. She was a wonderful woman—truly interested in young people—someone you could talk to.</p> <p>Now I got off of what I was talking about. Yes. The play down here. It took place in Lee Street Park, and it was like a big amphitheater. The park has another name, but to me it has always been Lee Street Park. They had a platform stage set up, and I know they had seats for the people but I don't remember just how that worked. It ran for several nights. I had a small speaking part.</p>
JH:	You did?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes, just one or two lines. I had a name, and that would be in the program, the name of the person I was. Then I was a bridesmaid in Robert E. Lee's wedding.
JH:	Were they staged?
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>They were staged, some of them. My good friends were also...Jack Humphreys, who was...he's now a retired Episcopal priest. He and my sister were engaged for a while. He was in the army, and when he came back (he had been in Okinawa), they broke it off. They were young, you know.</p> <p>Anyway, he was great fun, and we were all in this wedding, Robert E. Lee's wedding, and we danced the Virginia Reel.</p>
JH:	Is that kind of like a square dance?
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>Yes. It was so fun. I would have to learn how to do it again.</p> <p>I know our last time around, he said, "Let's go around once more." This was our last night, you know. So the music started up again. But I loved that. We went to rehearsals.</p>
JH:	What was it in honor of? Just Alexandria in general?
Unalane Ablondi:	I think it was around the time of Alexandria's birthday, in July. What birthday would that have been? Probably...the 200 <sup>th</sup> is over. It's over 250 now. So it would have been around the 200 <sup>th</sup> .

	<p>I was nineteen.</p> <p>I wanted to show you the program, and also a photograph made of me and a man and another woman, a short woman, really a cute kind of a photograph in black and white...if I can find it.</p>
JH:	Did you get to keep the costumes?
Unalane Ablondi:	No.
JH:	What do you remember about the plays you did for high school? Do you remember any particular roles that stand out in your memory?
Unalane Ablondi:	I know one was <i>Maybe It's Love</i> . And I didn't get the ingénue part; I would get a character part. Jack Humphreys would be in that, and Willard Scott. I went to high school with him.
JH:	I didn't know that.
Unalane Ablondi:	He sat right behind me in homeroom. He was a little younger. I don't know...he transferred from another place, and for some reason he was in my homeroom. He was the nicest guy. He was tall and slim then. Every morning he would greet me with a new joke, and start my day off with a smile and a chuckle. He was great. He was in that dramatics club with us, and in one play, I remember, I took the part of a Sunday School teacher, and Jack was a priest. He must have borrowed a collar from one of the Episcopal priests, and I wore one of my mother's black dresses and put my hair back in a bun. We were very severe, sort of Victorian types of people, the way we did our parts. I have the yearbooks here, if you'd like to look.
JH:	Oh, yes. I'd love to see them.
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>I can get them, here. I wish I had more, but we were not...we didn't take pictures the way people do today, snapshots, you know. Just on certain occasions. I'll bring them up to you. I have five, because I went that extra semester.</p> <p>[Looking at Yearbooks]</p> <p>That's when I first went in. This is the first one, when I was a freshman. If you want to look through them, you can.</p>
JH:	Okay.
Unalane Ablondi:	Well, I did have a freshman picture. Let's see if we can find it. I had all this "shop building, that was constructive." Oh, here was the principal...
JH:	Mr. Howard Richardson.
Unalane Ablondi:	...at that time. Mrs. Talbot, I remember, was the principal for

	girls.
JH:	So there was one for the boys and one for the girls, actually?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. We had a cadet corps. You were required to take either physical education, cadets, or band.
JH:;	Okay. Which one did you take?
Unalane Ablondi:	I took phys ed. The cadets would march. They had uniforms. You know how the cadets did. They had blue uniforms.
JH:	Here's the freshman class.
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes...But I don't think it will be easy to find me. I do have a magnifying glass. Let's see. I was kind of tall. I'll go get that.  This is the band.  Ralph Schwab would lead the band onto the football field at George Washington High—he wore a white uniform and a high major's hat. He was expert at twirling his baton and could really strut! He is dead now. So many are.
JH:	Junior band.
Unalane Ablondi:	George Washington High is now a middle school. They've done a lot of changes up there, in that structure. They've put additions on it. So the side steps aren't in existence anymore.
JH:	So this [photo] was [taken] on the side of the building, these steps here?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. They were side steps, that went up.
JH:	Is this going to the gymnasium or something, this doorway?
Unalane Ablondi:	It went into a hallway. Then there were stairs on either side. That's the [unclear].
JH:	Oh. Okay.
Unalane Ablondi:	But don't the girls and boys look different than they do today?
JH:	They sure do.
Unalane Ablondi:	It's so interesting.
JH:	A lot of it, I guess, has to do with hairstyles.
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. And they didn't wear as much makeup then...just lipstick. But it was a bright lipstick.
JH:	Right. I can [unclear]. Very noticeable.
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. The hair was so different, and the dress was different. We were bobbysoxers...sweaters and skirts, sometimes little

	<p>dickeys, the collars. Bobby sox with penny loafers or saddle oxfords (white with brown) and plaid shoestrings.</p> <p>Those are the seniors. Mr. Lindsay was the head of the math department. I just thank my lucky stars I could get enough... (?) I've been told that he really didn't like girls.</p>
JH:	Oh. Interesting.
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>Some boy in the school... a boy attacked him once, and knocked him down on the floor and was choking him, in the hallway. Three or four boys came over and got him off of Mr. Lindsay. Of course, they expelled him. He caused trouble later. I know who he was. He went to jail later, my sister told me.</p> <p>Then I would be in a sophomore picture. This is junior.</p>
JH:	So at school... did most people eat lunch at school? How did that work?
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>Yes. We had a cafeteria, and you either took your lunch or you could buy it.</p> <p>I know there are some that have pictures of me in it. This is freshmen.</p>
JH:	Do you remember what homeroom number you were in?
Unalane Ablondi:	I'm afraid I don't. This is [19]46.



*Unalane Ablondi, lower right hand image, left-side, at work on The Surveyor. (courtesy Unalane Ablondi, from her George Washington High School Yearbook, 1946)*

JH:	What was the name of the newspaper you worked for?
Unalane Ablondi:	<i>The Surveyor</i> , after George Washington. He was a surveyor.

JH:	Oh, that makes sense. That's why it's [the yearbook] called <i>The Compass</i> , then?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes.
JH:	What kind of articles did the newspaper report on? Local news? Or was it...?
Unalane Ablondi:	Just high school news. Whatever was going on in the high school. I remember interviewing one or two teachers for articles; doing a write-up.
<b>Mother</b>	
JH:	While I'm thinking of it... What was your mother's name?
Unalane Ablondi:	Una Franklin Carter. Her maiden name was Franklin.
JH:	I'll try to research those articles she wrote.
Unalane Ablondi:	Have you been to the <i>Northern Virginia Sun</i> ?
JH:	No.
Unalane Ablondi:	She was the Alexandria editor. After her days at the White House, when Eisenhower was elected... Of course, she left then, and she operated a news bureau on Capitol Hill. The name of the paper she wrote for was the <i>Delta Democrat Times</i> , down in Mississippi. It was Hodding Carter's paper. Hodding Carter was a Pulitzer prize winner, and they're cousins of mine. He was my father's first cousin. His son, Hodding Carter, is my second cousin. He was living here for a while. He was going to Christ Church and was on the vestry. He's moved now. He went to Florida, and he's now, I think, in North Carolina. I think he's still there.
<b>High School Yearbooks</b>	
JH:	Maybe you would be in <i>The Surveyor</i> photos.
Unalane Ablondi:	[Unclear]
JH:	Do you mind if I take a picture of it?
Unalane Ablondi:	No. Here he is.
JH:	I think I've got my little camera, which should be able to handle it.
Unalane Ablondi:	Can we get that?
JH:	[Unclear]
Unalane Ablondi:	I'm listed here, under Reporters. And they have us listed here, under Reporters. Dramatics. Am I in here? I should have really [unclear]. I was in the club, and they may have listed me in the

	senior year.
JH:	Right. [Unclear]
Unalane Ablondi:	He was a very good friend of mine...Bobby Ballenger. His name's not here, either.
JH:	Maybe you are listed on the seniors.
Unalane Ablondi:	Oh, here I am, tucked in back there. [Unclear] One of the plays. Am I in that? And this girl [unclear]. My grandson got titles like that. He just graduated (in Michigan).
JH:	They still do it.
Unalane Ablondi:	He's "most athletic." This girl...she became "most popular," and things like that, you know? "Most popular. Most attractive." She looked like Lauren Bacall, I thought.
JH:	[Unclear] "Girl Shy."
Unalane Ablondi:	[Unclear] She was a friend. And Linda Hillman.
JH:	There's Jack Humphreys' name.
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. There he is. Right. Let's see if his picture's here. You know, I was on a radio program, on a local radio station in Alexandria, WQXR. I did it with Willard Scott, Linda Hillman, and a boy named Lloyd. I can't remember his last name. It was called "High School Highlights," and it was terrible.
JH:	Was it a weekly show?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. It was eventually cancelled. We didn't get a lot of listeners. We gave all the news from the school, the high school, in a conversation way. We talked to each other. But after that, Willard...He made such a pest of himself around the radio station, that they eventually let him do a show there, once a week. [Unclear]
JH:	That sounds fun.
Unalane Ablondi:	I know.
JH:	So what else do you remember about the high school itself? Your lockers?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes, the lockers are still there. And I remember the general area where mine was.
JH:	Was it near your homerooms, or was there a special locker area?
Unalane Ablondi:	No, they were in the hall. I guess they were near our homerooms, too. Here's freshman.

	I went back to a reunion three years ago. My sister and I went together, and a couple of other friends who came in especially for that. And it was so sad, because everybody I looked up...a lot of them had died.
JH:	Did your senior class—did they have a class song that was chosen for graduation? Do you remember? The school song was “On G.W.” School colors were blue and gold. School newspaper was <i>The Surveyor</i> .
Unalane Ablondi:	A class song? [Unclear] working on the paper then. You can see my face there.
JH:	What did you like most about high school?
Unalane Ablondi:	What did I like most? Well, I think those two activities I had. Now here’s Jack Humphreys. Here’s Willard Scott.
JH:	Oh! And it says...
Unalane Ablondi:	[Unclear] or something. Willard Scott. And the Dramatic Club. I should be in there somewhere. Here I am...
JH:	...with your hair pulled back.
Unalane Ablondi:	I know there was another one I was looking for...another picture.
JH:	Did you attend the weekly football games?
Unalane Ablondi:	[Unclear] My sister and I often went to them together, when they weren’t away. They would be in...there was a stadium right behind the school there, between the school and the railroad tracks. There were bleachers, and we would join in all the cheers and everything. There was lots of spirit. [Unclear] It’s a perfectly terrible picture of me that I’m looking for.
JH:	What were your school colors. Do you know?
Unalane Ablondi:	Blue and gold. I did a profile. Isn’t that awful? I thought I was Joan of Arc or something.
JH:	This is your senior photo?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. And look what they put under it. “Footlights and greasepaint are her desire.”
JH:	[Unclear] in greasepaint?
Unalane Ablondi:	At that moment, they were.
JH:	What does the term “greasepaint” mean? Oh. Makeup. Okay.

Unalane Ablondi:	Here's another one of me, at that party. [Begin Tape 2] I can't find anything in here.
JH:	How many people were in your class? They look like they're quite large?
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>Yes. I don't remember the exact number. I'd have to count them. But I think Willard Scott is the best-known person who was in the school. I keep saying I'm going to take that directory that I received at the reunion and go through here...see who's still living, and where some of them are living.</p> <p>But I don't know. It all changed. Now they have this big addition up there. They use different entrances. In the back way, there's an entrance there. They've maintained the old building well—jazzed it up with cheerful colors.</p> <p>But I was very happy up there, in high school. I went up there to take a computer course this past winter. It was strange, being in those old rooms again.</p>
JH:	Did they feel smaller than they had?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. A little more congested.
JH:	Well, in terms of going to classes and stuff...Besides algebra, what were other things you didn't like?
Unalane Ablondi:	My favorite was history. I remember my favorite. And I liked English, too.
JH:	I guess you were a reporter, so [unclear].
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>But history really was the interesting and fascinating thing. I remember a couple of the teachers. Miss Tiller was the journalism teacher. Our very favorite teacher, not only mine but others who had her, was Edwina Parker. When she married, she became Mrs. Bachschmitt. But she was an English teacher, and she was also the director of the Dramatics Club. When she was engaged...Oh. A few of us were young and curious, and we wanted to go see what a nightclub was like. So she and her fiancé took us over...I think it was a place on Tenth Street. She said, "Now you all cannot dance, because you're underage." She got up and danced with her fiancé, beautifully. We were just mesmerized. We had Cokes, you know.</p>
JH:	You were allowed to go in, but you couldn't dance.
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes.
JH:	That sounds so special.
Unalane Ablondi:	We just wanted to go in to see what it was like, you know.



JH:	She sounds like a cool teacher.
Unalane Ablondi:	I think the Jefferson Memorial was built during my teen years, and I remember walking across the Fourteenth Street Bridge, with Jack Humphreys and a couple of other people. We thought we were really living it up, dangerously. We walked across the Fourteenth Street Bridge to go look inside the Jefferson Memorial.
JH:	That's a hike. So does this mean that everybody got their licenses later on?
Unalane Ablondi:	Their licenses?
JH:	Was that something you did when you were an adult, and not a teenager?
Unalane Ablondi:	You mean driving. No, I remember that there was a class in driver's education. But it didn't seem to be as widespread and popular as it is now. I know girls would tell me that their father was teaching them. But I know they had it. I remember boys taking it.  But we had assemblies there. A young man named Jack Gore used to boogie-woogie on the piano. That was the fun part of the assembly, and we would go crazy. That was the forerunner of rock 'n roll. It has a wonderful rhythm to it.
JH:	Were you dancing on the chairs?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. Yes. We cheered and clapped for him. Then we had a singer, a girl who sang popular songs with the band. She was Betty Somebody. She had a wonderful voice. But those were the fun parts of the assembly.
JH:	The rest of it would be a teacher talking to you?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes.
JH:	So you mentioned that you used to walk to school, and sometimes you would take a bus. Was the trolley still around? Streetcars?
Unalane Ablondi:	They were in Washington.
JH:	So you would take the trolley in Washington.
Unalane Ablondi:	I would when I went in for my dramatics class. Once a week I would take a bus into Washington, and then transfer to a trolley, and take that out to Catholic University. I remember walking up...on my way to Catholic University, walking on a little path to go back to the dramatics school building, where I was going to take a course. There was a little pedestal there. It was like a

	<p>little globe, a glass globe, and a tiny statue inside, and it said, "Site of the Future Shrine of the Immaculate Conception." So that's where it was, and you would never picture it that way, the way that I remember it, in that particular spot. And I would pass Trinity College, going out there, Trinity College for Girls. I met some of those girls later, after I married my husband. He was Catholic.</p>
JH:	[Inaudible]
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>I wish I could bring up all those old memories.</p> <p>We had another pep rally...the football team [unclear] once, off one of the piers down there. They were playing a game away. Everybody in the school congregated to see them off. [Unclear]</p>
JH:	Did you get class rings...class sweaters...
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>We had rings. But I don't have mine anymore. I lost it. And I remember when the torpedo factory was closed down, and they gave us all a tour of the torpedo factory. They gave us each a little necklace, with a little gray, torpedo charm. It's like a plastic thing, but I don't think plastic was in then.</p>
JH:	I wonder if it was a precursor.
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>Yes. Something. Of course, I wore it. I would save it. It would be a historic thing today, but being a teenager, I wore it. Then it broke, the chain broke, and I threw it away.</p>
JH:	What did you think of the torpedo factory when you were in it?
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>It was fascinating, interesting, because it served the World War II, which we won.</p>
JH:	Was this part of the history class, do you think, for you?
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>No, they just did it for Alexandria. Of course, I like it a lot better now. I like what's coming out of it today.</p>
JH:	<p>And [unclear] wasn't open when you returned to [unclear], right? It wasn't open yet?</p>
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>The Torpedo Factory [Art Center]? No, that came about...Well, after we moved here. Then when they [unclear] this building, with a huge ball, and cracked the building, and broke down parts of it. There were [unclear] five gun factories here in Alexandria. I think there's still one left. They're military related. [Unclear] factory. I didn't have much to do with them.</p>
JH:	<p>What do you remember about the waterfront when you were in high school? Because you lived fairly close to [Unclear] Street.</p>
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>I went down and visited a pier here and there. Boating became</p>

	much more popular later. Sailing.
JH:	Was the boat around? Was the Dominion Boat Club around?
Unalane Ablondi:	I don't remember that, but it probably was. It probably was.
JH:	What about Jones Point? Did you ever walk down there?
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>I didn't go there, no. I had a friend who lived down on Jefferson Street, I believe it was. We'd go down to see her. But I don't remember going to Jones Point at all. There's an Italian restaurant down here on the corner of King, [unclear] King, and is it Lee Street? It's like 102 Union...an Italian place. That used to be [unclear]?. It later became jewelry...silver. Silver repair. I know my mother had a little work done there.</p> <p>But all these little shops and boutiques were not there at all. They were just warehouses. There was a hardware store down there. The old-timers would remember it, the really old-timers.</p>
JH:	I think there used to be a market, where Market Square is. An outdoor market?
Unalane Ablondi:	Market Square. There was a market in there. But the old <i>Alexandria Gazette</i> newspaper building was there, and it faced King Street. It was right on King. The market was [unclear] behind. My mother used to go there. She would go there and buy flowers. It was a real farmer's market. Today it's not as much so.
JH:	Right. It's more craft oriented, I think.
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes, it is. It's fun to go and see that. There are baked goods in there now, and lots of vegetables and fruits. Grace's breads—wonderful.
JH:	Is there anything else? I don't have any more specific questions, but I want to make sure...
Unalane Ablondi:	No.
JH:	Was there something in the scrapbook you wanted to show me?
<b>Mother's Scrapbook</b>	
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>I was looking for those articles by my mother.</p> <p>This has nothing to do with Alexandria, but I thought you would find this interesting. These are all articles that she had written, and she put them in this scrapbook. We have so much better ways of keeping things now, don't we? ... This is when the Mellon Art Gallery came into the system, the National Gallery of Art, in Washington. It was called the Mellon, and it was when he donated all that art. Mother told me that the</p>

	Mellon Art Gallery building would take on a pink cast when it rained.
JH:	It's from the start.
Unalane Ablondi:	Then further in the book there's an article where Congress approves that.  Now these are pictures of the World's Fair. My mother toyed with photography for a while. She used to develop her own pictures. She had a little dark room when we lived in Washington, and she took all of these. This is at the zoo...
JH:	The Washington Zoo.
Unalane Ablondi:	...one of my favorite places. I was there last Monday with my daughter, and the week before that with my granddaughter, because we just love the pandas.
JH:	Did you used to go when you were younger?
Unalane Ablondi:	My mother would take us.
JH:	Great.
Unalane Ablondi:	She took all these pictures. I went with her to the World's Fair. We went in 1940. I was ten years old. That looks like [unclear].
JH:	It does. It really does.
Unalane Ablondi:	You would never walk on a [unclear] like that. Isn't that a shame?
JH:	[Inaudible]
Unalane Ablondi:	A swan. They're a little faded.  Oh. This was the WPA art show, in Lafayette Square. She had a painting done of me there, when I was about 11.
JH:	That's right...from the White House, there. What do you remember about the World's Fair? When you went?
<b>World's Fair</b>	
Unalane Ablondi:	Oh, it was fun. She was a reporter, and she had a reporter's ID card. They gave me one that said, Reporter's Daughter, and I got to go...She would be out covering stories, and she would let me go around by myself to some of these things. I was ten years old, and I would get into everything free, because I was a reporter's daughter...  We used to go to National Symphony Watergate concerts on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. [These concerts had nothing to do with the World's Fair; I don't know how this got mixed in here] Once when my husband was courting me we rented a

	<p>canoe and paddled over to a barge from which the National Symphony Orchestra played, and we enjoyed the symphony....</p> <p>[Talking about the World's Fair again] Oh, yes. Then I remember the aquatics show, which we loved...the swimming show...[unclear]</p> <p>We were sitting there, waiting for the show to start, and out on a diving board, a high diving board, walked Johnny Weissmuller. He took the part of Tarzan, you know, in the movies. Mother said I called at the top of my lungs, "There's Tarzan!" and embarrassed her to death. We went in 1940.</p>
JH:	That was in New York. [Unclear]
Unalane Ablondi:	It was the best [unclear] part of it somewhere. [talking about the World's Fair again] And they had different World's Fair streets, and each street had a color, like Pink Street or Blue Street, where Mother would tell me to meet her. "Now you go to Blue Street, and you sit on the second bench here." [Unclear]
JH:	[Inaudible]
<b>Washington, D.C., and the <i>Old Town Crier</i></b>	
Unalane Ablondi:	These are family of mine...That was an aunt married to my uncle, one aunt, my father's sister. And that's my paternal grandmother. She looked like and had the same type of body build and beautiful speech like Mrs. Roosevelt [Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt].
JH:	Oh. I'm going to see that.
Unalane Ablondi:	You can see that tonight. But the way people dressed then. It's [unclear].
JH:	It really is.
Unalane Ablondi:	Hats were the thing.
JH:	Did you have hats that you wore?
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>To church. We were required to wear a hat, and I had so many. I had a lot of hats. And you know the way teenagers dress now. Well, my crazy dress was in the summer. I would wear different hats, like a brown felt bowler or something, with a white peasant blouse. Things that never went together.</p> <p>T. C. Williams High School—my son graduated from there. It's a shame they have to tear it down. There's a stadium there now.</p> <p>Now these were friends...newspaper reporters...friends of my mother's. When you look at those people...</p>
JH:	They look like reporters.

Unalane Ablondi:	They look different from today, though. There's something so different about them. You can see this one. He's turned the brim of the hat up, posing for that picture.
JH:	[Unclear]
Unalane Ablondi:	[Unclear] In high school we wore penny loafers. We would put a penny in them. It was just a teenage thing. Or you wore brown and white saddle Oxfords with bobby sox and plaid shoestrings.
JH:	Where would you go shopping to get these things?
Unalane Ablondi:	You would go to Woody's. Woody's was in Washington, D.C. There was a J.C. Penney, now Walgreen's, where McDonald's had been, on King. Supposedly, they're going to open a Walgreen's. That place has been boarded up for so long, and empty. It's a disgrace. I think the City Council should do something about it. You know what I'm talking about.
JH:	Did you ever go into D.C. to go shopping?
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>Yes, as a teenager, about once a month. My mother...or even younger than that...I remember our mother taking us there when we were young children. Woodward &amp; Lothrop, Woody's, had a children's restaurant with a children's menu—the walls were painted with murals of characters from Mother Goose nursery rhymes.</p> <p>[Back to talking about visiting Woody's as a teenager] [My mother] she would give me a check for \$5.00, and I would go to City Bank, which was on Pennsylvania Avenue. The building is still there. One of them had these double...they look like castle towers. I would go in there and cash the check, and I would go to Woody's and look around. I would have lunch in their tearoom. The waitresses wore little black uniforms with white-doily aprons and little white caps. They were always one or two of them. Things have changed.</p> <p>After lunch, I would go up to the Capitol Theater on F Street, or to the Earl on F Street, and they still kept the arch, the entrance. It's incorporated into the new building there. The National Press Club restaurant is in that building.</p> <p>We would see the movie, and they had a stage show. They had an organist who would play the organ. It would rise up slowly, he would play these tunes, and you would sing along. They had the words up on the screen, with a bouncing ball. I would sit up there and sing songs, all by myself.</p> <p>It was really fun. They had the feature, the regular feature. They had the Previews of Coming Attractions, and then they had the newsreels. We didn't have television. "The News of Today."</p>

	What was it called? "The World News of Today," or something like that. Then they would have a comedy short. Then they would have a cartoon.
JH:	About how long was this for?
Unalane Ablondi:	Well, you were there for two or three hours; two and a half, three hours. The Earl Theater did the same thing, and they had a line of chorus girls. It was sort of a take-off on the Rockettes, at Radio City. They would do a dance, you know. Dancing girls. It was great.
JH:	This would have been the Woody's at...
Unalane Ablondi:	...Eleventh and F Street.
JH:	It's still there, the building.
Unalane Ablondi:	The building is still there. I hated to see it close. [Looking at her mother's photos again.] I think she took that from...
JH:	That's a great shot. Is that the Empire State building?
Unalane Ablondi:	I think that's the Chrysler building. It's not quite as tall as the Empire State. That could have been taken from the Empire State, or it could have been taken from her hotel room. The hotel was the Lincoln Hotel. It's still a hotel, but it's a different name now. I believe it was on 8 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, New York.  That was fun.
JH:	It sounds fun. Oh, here's some of the [unclear].
Unalane Ablondi:	Somebody else wrote this story. Mother kept all that, and made a book of a couple things, from the Our Town exhibit Mother and Audrey Walz organized at Gadsby's Tavern.  Now I know that after you're gone I'm going to think of things, and I'm going to say, "Why didn't I remember that?"
JH:	Well, I'll send you a transcript of this, and you can add whatever you want.
Unalane Ablondi:	Nineteen-thirty-seven. I have a couple of things in here from Old Town.
JH:	<i>Old Town Crier</i> .
Unalane Ablondi:	They still print it. I think they still do. Just Old Town news. Oh, she was the manager. I didn't realize she was.
JH:	The <i>Old Town Crier</i> is published six times yearly, by Franklin Carter, Edgar [unclear], Dorothy Keller and [Mother's name was] Una Franklin Carter. 1955.
Unalane Ablondi:	I can look up some of these things. It takes time. I never heard

	of Dorothy Keller, and Jay Walz was a reporter for the <i>New York Times</i> . He and his wife, Audrey, were some of my mother's best friends. His wife, Audrey, and my mother, they planned to put on a program at Gadsby's Tavern called Our Town. I've got it downstairs. I got it out to bring up, and I forgot. I can go get it for you.
JH:	So the publication [by] was the Old Town Civic Association.
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>Whether it's still there I don't know, but I see it around. I know that Burke and Herbert Bank still have a few copies sitting on the bench. You can just take one.</p> <p>Anything I come across in the future, I can call and let you know. I might find something that you...I know I've got papers somewhere. Let me go down and get that Our Town...I know Gadsby's Tavern has a copy of it. When I was a docent there, the curator was showing it to the docents, during our training sessions. I didn't say anything about my mother. I'll get it. [Interruption]</p> <p>When I got married...I went up to school in New York and then married, and was up there, you know, for twenty-two years. Then we came back in [19]72, so there's a lot of information in those years that I don't have.</p>
JH:	What is this? "Our Town. Gadsby's Tavern, April 12 to May 12, 1956." So was it a production of some sort?
Unalane Ablondi:	It was like an exhibit, paintings. My mother and Audrey...Let's see. She was...
JH:	...President of the Alexandria Association.
Unalane Ablondi:	She was president for two terms. Then she was also vice-president of the Old Town Civic Association. I'm not involved in all those things. I have other interests. I'm very much into genealogy, and I'm trying to get back to that, and Christ Church is my first love.
JH:	So she and Audrey Walz produced this exhibit.
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. And I remember taking my daughter over, and having her silhouette done there. This was art, you know. Portraits.
JH:	So there were probably a bunch of paintings of George Washington [unclear] Old Town [unclear].
Unalane Ablondi:	<p>She must have been a wonderful friend then. So much history of the people.</p> <p>Now I know that Gadsby's has a copy of it. You say you would like to photocopy it?</p>



<p>JH:</p>	<p>We could photocopy it. That or, at least, maybe a copy of the <i>Old Town Crier</i>, since your mom worked on the newspaper. For this, I can actually check to see if we have [unclear]. We might have that.</p>
<p>Unalane Ablondi:</p>	<p>Yes, she was...After the news bureau...after the White House and the news bureau, she became...There was a certain title for her. I have two scrapbooks on her that I made, on her life and on her death, all newspaper articles and everything that appeared. There is a lot about her in that, and it lists the title that she had at Northern Virginia [Unclear]. They always called her the Alexandria editor.</p>
<p><b>Memories of Alexandria</b></p>	
<p>JH:</p>	<p>Yes. It sounds like she [unclear].</p> <p>[Discussion of photocopying the documents...] Is there anything else that comes to your mind right now, that I should know about? That should be recorded?</p> <p>What, generally, are some of your thoughts about Alexandria? If someone were going to move here, or were thinking about it, what would you say?</p>
<p>Unalane Ablondi:</p>	<p>Well, I would point out all the best features we have. I think if people are interested in history and antiques...antique furnishings...I think that's one of the major draws...in Old Town, the willingness to retain an old house without making changes; to do restoration as authentically as you can.</p>
<p>JH:</p>	<p>This is what you found in Old Town.</p>
<p>Unalane Ablondi:</p>	<p>Yes. I only regret that us old-timers [unclear]. They have to be dead. I didn't know them very well, he and his wife. Those were all people who really go back, and were still active there.</p>
<p>JH:</p>	<p>These are people you knew in the [19]70s, or when you were younger?</p>
<p>Unalane Ablondi:</p>	<p>Well, I never knew the Monroes very well, but Mildred Cantor was a friend of my mother's. Then Eveline Cox was a very good friend of Mother's. She lived right across the street 210 Prince and she wrote [unclear]. You've seen that?... So she could add a lot, too, if she were still here to tell about it.</p> <p>I remember one time when I was living in New York my mother ... I was on the phone with her. She was very upset when I called her. She said there was a developer who wanted to come in and tear down half of Old Town, and put up high-rises. Well, she said there was such a turnout at the City Council meeting...[Begin Tape 2, Side 2]...And they passed a law that</p>

	nothing 100 years or older could be demolished without permission of the city (probably City Council). I'm glad they did that.
JH:	Yes. It's much different to have that....
Unalane Ablondi:	I wish I had been able to give you more. But the fact that I was not living here for quite a few years...I was very much involved in my new work life, my husband and my children. New York was a great place to live at that time...But I would come back here when my children were babies, and preschooler.
JH:	...to see your mom, right?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. I'd come and stay a month with my mother, and my husband would come down on weekends. It was just a nice getaway, being here. She had a wonderful house, a terrific garden, and she had a little wading pool out there, for the children. My mother gardened a great deal. She loved gardening. There was a spinning wheel in the attic, [unclear] and my bedroom was just beneath that. At night, I would go to bed and I would hear this spinning over my head. And I told my mother, "Somebody's spinning that spinning wheel, after I go to bed at night." So we decided that we would investigate. There were two very large turtles in the garden—Mother named them George Washington and Dr. Craik. This was at 210 Duke Street, the Craik House. So one afternoon... You know, it's a little scary, to fall asleep... One afternoon, in the middle of the afternoon, we decided we would investigate. So we held hands, and we climbed up the attic steps, very slowly, and we could hear the spinning. But as soon as we got to the top, it stopped.  Well, there's a book on ghosts in Alexandria, and there's the story of the spinning wheel ghost.
JH:	You're witnesses. So the spinning wheel had been left there by the previous owner.
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. And the new owners, who had it... They moved out, and two women then bought and lived in the house—the spinning wheel was no longer in the house. I asked them if the spinning wheel was still going. Mother used to say that [unclear]. There were two turtles who lived in that garden, two turtles, and she named one of them George Washington and the other Dr. Craik. Mother and I decided that it was Jennifer, Dr. Craik's daughter, doing the spinning.
JH:	To keep their spirits alive.
Unalane Ablondi:	They changed that [unclear] when she was there. They took up the old brick in the back, and put in new brick. Now there's a

	swimming pool there. They still have it L-shaped, and they still have the little grassy lawn there, with the marble steps....
JH:	Thank you so much for your time.
Unalane Ablondi:	Well, I'm so glad to have met you.
JH:	It was a pleasure.
Unalane Ablondi:	Lucky girl.
JH:	Thank you. I really enjoy doing this.
Unalane Ablondi:	Do you? Have you talked to a lot of people?
JH:	I have. I've talked to some people who were growing up in Chinquapin Village, when they were in high school, and their experiences about that. I've spoken to some other people who—I don't remember what years they graduated from high school—and a couple other people. One who went to, I think it was, St. Mary's High School. And one who went to GW, or George Washington. I don't know if you called it that.
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. I went to George Washington High School—now a middle school. You had to call it GW. You had to print out the GW.... You had to pronounce it G Doubya. Christ Church parish hall, when I was there in high school...just the old one that...
JH:	[Inaudible]
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. Christ Church parish hall, the old parish hall facing Washington Street. The entrance was on Cameron Street. When I was in college...I think it was when I was in college...they started construction on the new one, facing Washington, and my sister was there for that. She got down in the ditch, with a shovel. This was all ceremonial. Then when I was re-affirmed at the church (was that in [19]86? I'd have to look, to see)... but they were going to build an extension, to connect both of those parish halls together, and I got down in the ditch then. That was the day I was re-affirmed. So it's all connected together.
JH:	I'd like to take your photo, if you don't mind...
Unalane Ablondi:	I wanted to tell you, too...On King Street there used to be a movie theater called the Reed.  Well, these old things come to mind...I remember a movie theater. It was called the Reed Theater, and it was down on King Street in the area across from the Metro. It was still there when I moved back to Alexandria from New York in 1972. I don't know if something has been put in its place now. But there was a restaurant, an Oriental, or an Italian restaurant that was there for a long, long time. But that exact spot...it was in

	that vicinity. And then on King Street, further up, where the Old Town Theater is today... That was called the Richmond Theater. They had regular movies there. I remember once Christ Church had to use it when some restoration was going on in the church. They couldn't meet in the church building, so we used the Richmond Theater, and they had the service from the stage. We had more comfortable seats there than in the pews. That was in the [19]40s, I believe.
JH:	Did they get the same movies as Washington, D.C., did?
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes, they did. The Reed was really the better one, the Reed was. That's the one that I and my girlfriend would go to on Sunday afternoon. We had a long day, with Sunday School in the morning, and church. They had Sunday School in the Meade Room in the old parish hall, and they [unclear] room now. We would go to church... church and then home, and we would have a snack or ice cream in a drug store after church. We'd go home, have dinner in the middle of the afternoon. Sunday dinner was a big thing. My sister and I used to take turns doing the dishes, and then my friend and I would go to a movie. Then from there to the Young People's Service League at Christ Church. So it was a long, long day. You had to be sure you had your homework done before Sunday.
JH:	That sounds fun, full of social activities.
Unalane Ablondi:	Yes. Anything I think of....
JH:	Give me a call. Or you can e-mail me.
Unalane Ablondi:	I will. I've got a computer set up there. I've had it for about two, two and a half months... I do genealogy. That's the reason I got the computer... I've got a software program called Personal Ancestry File, put out by the Latter-Day Saints. The Mormons. Oh, they're so big on genealogy. I went out there for about ten years with my husband, twice each winter, January and March, for two and a half weeks each time. We were there for about a month out of the year. He would ski. We would stay downtown in the Marriott, a block from the Family History Library. He went up to the ski resorts in the mountains, and I would go to the library and do research. I was happy as a lark.
JH:	Sounds like fun.
Unalane Ablondi:	Then we would get together at night, have dinner, go to a concert or something, a movie, or fireworks on New Year's Eve. It was great.... <b>[End of Interview]</b>