



## Interview with Bernice Eisenberg

Under the Auspices of the  
Monmouth County Library Headquarters  
125 Symmes Drive, Manalapan, N.J.  
Flora T. Higgins, Project Coordinator

**Date of Interview:** September 23, 1999  
**Name of Interviewer:** Flora Higgins  
**Premises of Interview:** Ms. Eisenberg's home, Ocean, NJ  
**Birthdate of Subject:** August 20, 1927

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Good morning, Flora.

**Ms. Higgins:** It's very pleasant for me to be here this morning and to talk about Long Branch and the twentieth century. What perhaps is your most salient memory? What would you like to tell us about this morning?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I think I would like to talk about my parents and the hotel business that they were in, in Long Branch, on the boardwalk. In the end of this story, there will be three hotels that they bought, or built, or managed in the course of their entire marriage.

**Ms. Higgins:** That's wonderful. What are the hotels? Are they still there?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** No hotel is there. Every one of them, that is the Vendome, seems to have burned down for one reason or another. But not when they were in our possession. They were on Ocean Avenue across from the boardwalk, when Ocean Avenue was a beautiful, double-sided street with an island in the middle with lampposts, where women walked in evening gowns on Saturday night on the arm of their gentlemen. And some of these people stayed in our hotel.



***Bernice Sacks Eisenberg:  
photographed as  
Miss Senior  
Monmouth  
County, 1996.***

**Ms. Higgins:** I always think of Long Branch with that Winslow Homer painting, with the women in those beautiful dresses. What years were your parents involved in the hotel business?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** My father came over from Russia about 1900 and the family lived in New York in a walk-up. And my uncle, who became an ear, nose, and throat specialist, said to me, that he said to himself, "How does a poor boy like you think he's going to become a doctor?" But he did. And somehow the family ended up in Long Branch. There were other relatives here. And they bought a boarding house on Ocean Avenue. I think the land extended all the way to Second Avenue or close to it. And I heard that there were cows grazing in the backyard. And the story goes that one day my grandfather, Ruben Sacks, went to New York and came back and found that my father, Irving Sacks, had knocked down a wall of the building, because he decided that he was going to make it bigger. He was perfectly capable of doing that. And in the end they built the hotel for the Ocean Plaza. And I was born August 20, 1927. And I think in those days they would have kept my mother in the hospital a week. I would have been brought back - did I say August 27<sup>th</sup> to that Ocean Plaza on Ocean Avenue, Long Branch.

**Ms. Higgins:** Do you have any memories of it?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I was there long enough to be a little girl. I remember the music room and an upright piano. And I remember in the dining room these little lanterns along the wall with orange shades that lit up when the bulb was lit. And that's a little girl's memory. And that's all I remember.

**Ms. Higgins:** Do you remember going into the ocean? Did they go bathe?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** You know I see only pictures of that. And I see pictures of, perhaps, Winslow Homer's paintings of people on the beach in what we would call clothing. Lots of clothing. Men even with suits, and shirts, ties, and hats.

**Ms. Higgins:** In the water?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** No, no, no. On the sand, on the sand. And the ladies with their long dresses. And men who went in the water wore a sleeveless shirt and boxer shorts and that would be how they would dress to go in the water.

**Ms. Higgins:** Women?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Women would wear a blouse and a skirt.

**Ms. Higgins:** Blouse?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** And I only know this from pictures, which anybody would know.

**Ms. Higgins:** Um-hmm. And they'd sit on the sand and then...

**Ms. Eisenberg:** And then I wondered how they got their clothes cleaned.

**Ms. Higgins:** Yes, and dry, let alone clean. What kind of clientele did your parents have?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** If you go back to the older days when I was a little girl, I don't know. But I will tell you that when I was older - a teenager, I have a recollection of seeing a man sitting in our lobby. And this is now the second hotel which is the Vendome, and which is in the middle of the boardwalk, just about the exact middle of the boardwalk. And we had families who would come in June, make their arrangements for the entire season and just stay there, and come back for twenty years.



Hotels along Ocean Avenue, (CIRCA 1930). The structure with the flag is the HOTEL VENDOME. The part of the structure underneath the hotel was a gambling house equipped with extremely large windows and secret buttons that revealed secret panels that enabled patrons to make a quick escape in case of a police raid; gambling was illegal at this time. To the right is the PLAGER COTTAGE, a boarding house, (no longer standing), to the far right are the SCARBORO HOTEL, (no longer standing).

**Ms. Higgins:** Wow!

**Ms. Eisenberg:** So they were like cousins to me and I did grow up with them. So that I knew all of them. And if there was a stranger there, I would notice that. There was a nightclub built on the corner of Brighton Avenue and some of the entertainers stayed in our hotel. So I did see this gentleman sitting alone in a chair and I went up to him. I was an early teenager, I'd say. And I said, "Are you an entertainer at the nightclub?" And he said, "Well, I'd like to be but I have to go to an audition and I don't think I'm going to do very well." And I said, "Well, that's no attitude to take. You're not going to do well if you think you're not going to do well. You have to have a better attitude." And my mother came over and said to him, "The kid gave you some good advice, didn't she?" He was Sam Harris, producer of George M. Cohan. But I didn't advise Hank Greenberg on how to play baseball.

**Ms. Higgins:** He was there, too?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** His parents came every year. They were the tallest people you ever saw.

**Ms. Higgins:** How would you entertain yourselves in the



The Hotel Vendome, located on Ocean and Howland Avenues. The hotel was purchased by Irving Sacks (Bernice's father) in the 1940s. Among those who stayed here were the Ambassador from the country of Santa Domingo, baseball revolutionary Hank Greenberg, the producer of George M. Cohan: Sam Harris, and owners of famous New York night clubs: Leon and Eddies, and the Copa Cabana.

evenings when it would rain, or what would people do there in the hotel on a rainy day?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** We entertained ourselves in the evening by having an orchestra, which also came back every year for many years. It consisted of a violinist, a drummer, and a pianist and they were all women.

**Ms. Higgins:** That's very unusual.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** And the drummer and the violinist were sisters.

**Ms. Higgins:** Now may I assume that they got to stay at the hotel for free while they entertained the customers?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Absolutely. They lived there the entire summer. Anybody who worked there stayed there and lived there and ate there.

**Ms. Higgins:** A very nice arrangement for everyone.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Oh, sure. We had many college boys. We had a young man who was a busboy, I believe, who met a Long Branch girl, married her, is here today. Her father owns Siegel's Men's Shop on Broadway. He was studying to be an accountant. He married Mr. Siegel's daughter; his name is Sol Laperdon. And he and his wife, Sarah, had clothing stores in this area until about a month ago when they closed up their last store in Red Bank on Broad Street.

**Ms. Higgins:** What store did they own in Red Bank?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** It was a combination men's shop and women's shop, right near where Monmouth Street meets Broad. And I don't know the name of it.

**Ms. Higgins:** When Long Branch was in its heyday it certainly had some very famous people come and go. I have seen people trying to name the seven presidents over and over. Can you name the seven presidents?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** No, but I know where to get the information. People carry it around, but not in their heads. They carry it around on a sweatshirt.

**Ms. Higgins:** Really?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** From the Long Branch Historical Association and I believe the front of it says, "Who are the seven presidents?" and they are listed on the back of that shirt.

**Ms. Higgins:** I must get one of those shirts.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** And the president of the Long Branch Historical Association is Robin Levin of Long Branch, of course. And she works very closely with her mother, Joanne. And it's a very active organization. They're now taking over the Church Street School in North Long Branch.

**Ms. Higgins:** Where did you go to school? When all the summer people went home and the New Jersey gloomy winter descended, then where did you all go to school?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Long Branch - well, when you get to the high school, Long Branch High School. All of the Long Branch schools, starting with Garfield, which by the way was named after one of our presidents.

**Ms. Higgins:** There's one.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** From Garfield to junior high, which became the Anastasia School. Now, in the winter we lived on Pavilion Avenue in Long Branch in a house which my father built with his own hands, 165 Pavilion Avenue, opposite Monmouth Memorial Hospital, at that time. That is now Monmouth Medical Center.

**Ms. Higgins:** Right. But that was Monmouth Memorial...

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Yes.

**Ms. Higgins:** Since when?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Well, my brother was born there. If he were alive now, he would be about seventy-seven. And it was called Monmouth Memorial Hospital at that time.

**Ms. Higgins:** Well, the mention of presidents here, it's beginning to occur to me that one of those presidents was the one that had the child out-of-wedlock?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** But I don't know who that is.

**Ms. Higgins:** But at any rate, the mother was supposed to have been in a hotel, put into a hotel in Long Branch, and the child... I wonder if that was one of your hotels?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Not that I ever heard of. I think not. I think not.

**Ms. Higgins:** I think you would have known.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I'll tell you who did stay there. We had nightclub owners from some of the famous nightclubs in New York. Such as Jack Entrator who owned

the Tropicana, and Leon from Leon and Eddie's who ended up in my bed. Is that okay to have recorded?

**Ms. Higgins:** Sure.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** He ended up in my bed. Except that I wasn't there.

**Ms. Higgins:** All right.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Because the hotel was full and he came up to my mother and asked her, "Do you have a room?" "No, only my daughter's." She threw me out of my bed; I don't remember where I slept that night. And he slept in my bed and left his tie in the morning. And she did not charge him and I'll tell you why. On my twentieth birthday in 1947, my uncle, the ear, nose, and throat specialist in New York, for my birthday gift, was to give me a tonsillectomy.

**Ms. Higgins:** Ouch.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Ouch. And mother asked Leon if he would pick me up at the hospital in New York and take me to his apartment to recuperate. And that is why she didn't charge him and that's why she gave him the room. And his daughter did come and pick me up and I did stay there over a weekend to recuperate.

**Ms. Higgins:** Do you remember the tonsillectomy?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I remember very well because I was not put to sleep, I sat in a chair. And, well, general anesthetic is not the safest thing, and my uncle knew that he could do it with a local anesthetic. And the main thing I remember is him saying, you know, "You're going to feel some needles in your tonsils," and that's how I was anesthetized. And I sat up the whole time. And what was also interesting about it is they took me from my room to the O.R. on a gurney and had me walk back.

**Ms. Higgins:** That is very interesting.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** My uncle sent someone with me. It might have been his assistant, but it wasn't a man who walked me back to my room.

**Ms. Higgins:** I remember to this day my tonsillectomy, which was about the same timeframe. I was born in 1934 and I was about eight or nine when I had it. But it hurt. It hurt for days. I felt very betrayed because I had been told you'll wake up and have ice cream. But, I never got any ice cream.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I never did either. I didn't want any. And I will say that my uncle - in connection with Long Branch is that my younger brother, who's seven-

and-a-half years younger than I am, was an infant when he contracted streptococcus. And we called Dr. Strauss who lived down the street on Pavilion Avenue in Long Branch, too. He was an ear, nose, and - we had a lot of different specialists. In fact, he delivered me. And then he became eye, ear, nose, and throat. So he was called and I guess he couldn't help my brother and there was a private nurse on duty that I remember, and my uncle came down from New York and my brother, Raymond, was the first one in Monmouth County to have the sulfa drugs.

**Ms. Higgins:** Really.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Yes. And he's here today.

**Ms. Higgins:** Good, I'm glad. You apparently went back to college after graduating from Long Branch High School. Did you start college and then return or...?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I have to explain that. I started college and I was in Monmouth Junior College when I met Julian Eisenberg, just back from World War II. There were nineteen people in the class, a girl who was kind of a bookworm, a girl who was engaged, and me. So I didn't have a lot of competition. And we both needed to go to college. So we did get married and I intended to finish college in Chicago, because he was going to Chicago College of Optometry. But I promptly got pregnant and have at this moment a fifty year-old daughter. And I had three more children. I had four children in eight years.

**Ms. Higgins:** That kept you very busy, I'm sure.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** And when the youngest was two, and the oldest was ten, I went back to Monmouth College at night, taking one course at a time.

**Ms. Higgins:** What were you studying? What was your area?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I have a major in English and Education.

**Ms. Higgins:** That's wonderful and I see that you did graduate and went on to be a teacher.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Yes. So, you see by the picture that I showed you, which was taken by the Asbury Park Press, because Mama didn't go to school at that time like she does now.

**Ms. Higgins:** No, Mama didn't. That must have been very arduous, coming home and taking care of the children and...

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I figured out how to do it. I let the beds be unmade; I let the dishes sit in the sink. And I did my homework and studying first. And loved every minute of it. And it got me away from the house and the diapers.

**Ms. Higgins:** And Monmouth College then went in your experience from a junior college to college and now, the university.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I watched it grow - I remember when it was a girls' school.

**Ms. Higgins:** I didn't know it had been.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** It was exclusive girls' school, that is Shadow Lawn. Monmouth Junior College started in high school at night about 4:00 o'clock. And that is when I went, from 4:00 to 10:00. And at that time the property on Shadow Lawn, New Jersey was an exclusive girls' school. And then Monmouth Junior College moved over to the property where they are now. And became a college.

**Ms. Higgins:** And its area of expertise is education. They have a very strong school of education. They always have.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** And a lot of other schools, too.

**Ms. Higgins:** And a lot of other schools, now, too. The county has always been helpful with the junior college, but I think Monmouth College being private, they probably didn't get help from the county or the state?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I have no idea, even though I did work there. I worked as a sub-professional in the library in the periodicals department.

**Ms. Higgins:** You must remember Joy, who was the librarian there for years and years and years. And along the way developed one of the finest periodical collections in the state.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I do still see Hilda Webb. Hilda Webb was the librarian there and Gertrude Reinach.

**Ms. Higgins:** Joy Osborne?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Oh, Joy Osborne. Oh, her real name was Jocelyn. Oh, yes. Ah, yes. Oh, sure. I worked with her - that's how I know.

**Ms. Higgins:** That's what I would have thought.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Right, yes, right. And I want to say that her son graduated from college the same day I did.

**Ms. Higgins:** Really?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** But I was the bigger celebrity - they printed my picture, not his.

**Ms. Higgins:** Well, that's a very nice picture with your four children around you.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Oh, I love it. And my husband.

**Ms. Higgins:** Of course, your husband so proudly putting on the graduation cap.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Yes.

**Ms. Higgins:** Do you have one salient memory of Long Branch which you would like to have preserved in this oral history? And it doesn't have to be the only one, but just maybe a fond memory.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** When I was an adult, I went down to the beach. I say that the ocean and the sand are in my blood. I say I was born on the beach. And I went up to the water, just to the very edge, and I rolled up into a ball. And I just let the water do what it wanted with me. And when I came out, a stranger came up to me and she said, you must have been around here a long time.

**Ms. Higgins:** You rolled up like part of the beach.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Part of the water, just let the waves do what they wanted.

**Ms. Higgins:** Where do you go to the beach now, when you go?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Well, being a senior citizen, now I can go down to Long Branch beach for free. My problem is that this year since they have filled out the sand, it looks like a mile to me, from the bottom step to the water. And I'm not getting any younger and that sand can be hot and I think I'll be exhausted by the time I get there. So when I went to the beach this year, I did go to the Philip Avenue Beach in Long Branch, which has a little boardwalk out, which is not so large and which has facilities without climbing up a big flight of stairs. But this summer I also worked the Ocean Township Pool in the front entrance where I had to see people's membership cards or else they had to buy a membership.



**Bernice Eisenberg  
surrounded by her family  
on graduation day**

**Ms. Higgins:** We enjoy the Seven Presidents' Park. But that too has gotten filled out. Maybe after the storm it'll be easier for us to get to the water.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I would like to go down there, too. That's where you drive in and they have facilities and everything's on the level, which I like.

**Ms. Higgins:** Yes, it's a beautiful beach, it's very well maintained by the county and we enjoy it a lot, and I hope to see you there sometime.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** All right. I'll look for you.

**Ms. Higgins:** Well, we talked about your graduation from college. That certainly must have been a milestone in your life. Can you think of any others that you would like to tell us about?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Every time you ask me of a memory, my mind flashes back to my life in the hotel.

**Ms. Higgins:** Good. Tell us more about that.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I had a formal sixteenth birthday party. All the young men were away at war. Except at that time, my first boyfriend, who lived in Red Bank, was still around before he went into the Army, and his cousin. And we had broken up, but I sent him an invitation. I sent out fancy, engraved invitations to him and his cousin. And it turned out that his cousin came, and when I saw this boyfriend years later, who by the way, became - not years later, but a year later - became mayor of Holmdel, he said, "You invited my cousin and not me." It seemed that he never got the invitation.

**Ms. Higgins:** Oh, dear.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Now, I don't know what happened to the soldiers, whether they got their invitations or not. But I knew two soldiers and I told them I was having this party and they said, "We'll give you the company address and you can send invitations to the soldiers." Well, the night of the party, the two that I met, came. None of the others came and when the two saw that no one else was there, they said we'll go find them. And if I had any brains I would have known that they weren't going to go all the way to Fort Monmouth and round up these soldiers. But at that time I believed everything everybody said. And they left and never came back, either.

**Ms. Higgins:** So you and the girls had your party.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I think maybe some of those girls did not have a very good time. I don't know. They didn't get a lot of opportunity to come into the hotel. The local people didn't come into the hotel. And they probably rode by and

looked in and wondered what it was like. So that did give them that opportunity. So they did come in and they were in gowns and they brought me very nice presents. And there was food, and there was a band. And maybe in that respect, I hope they had a good time. Nobody ever said. I still see some of them.

**Ms. Higgins:** What do you think of, not only Long Branch, but Monmouth County, New Jersey, the world. What can you offer us on that?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Well, Long Branch isn't what it used to be. And my brother moved to Santa Barbara, California and when he and his wife came back for a visit, he went out of his way to keep his wife from seeing Broadway, Long Branch. It just isn't what it used to be, like a lot of places. I see in the paper that they keep talking about a comeback. We're happy that the Hilton built here. And I think there's some action on the Armory, they're talking about making that an amusement area. They got tired of Ocean Avenue falling down into the beach. And so there is no longer an Ocean Avenue that you can drive from one end to the other. And we now have Ocean Boulevard, which is now a bit inland.

**Ms. Higgins:** One of the Long Branch institutions that went inland with the boardwalk was Max's.

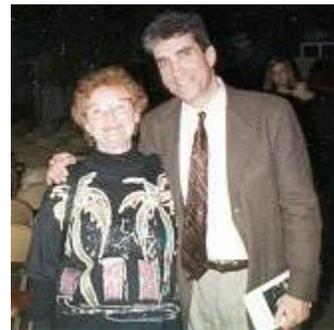
**Ms. Eisenberg:** Yes, Max's. I saw his wife the other day at our synagogue. I was on the Donahue Show with Mrs. Max. We had a bus trip to the Donahue Show and she was interviewed and so was I, so, we both got to be on television.

**Ms. Higgins:** What did you say?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** You know, I said something on national TV that I didn't want anybody to know.

**Ms. Higgins:** There you go. We can erase this; you can't erase national TV.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** And it seems that my friend's daughter was watching television and I came on, and she said, "Mom, that's Bernice." And everybody was so startled that nobody knows what I said. They were so busy saying, "That's Bernice on the Donahue Show." So I got away with it. Well, Robert Pinsky, who is my husband's nephew, really, and he's mine through marriage, called a book of his, *The Figured Wheel*, and there was a poem by that name and it's about the wheel of chance on, I think, the Long Branch boardwalk. It's about that wheel with all the numbers on it that they would spin and you would try to win a toy.



**Bernice Eisenberg and  
her nephew, Robert  
Pinsky**

**Ms. Higgins:** Oh, sure. It was a lot of fun. It was innocent, good-time fun, and then we'd end up at Max's for the corn on the cob.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Another memory I have of the stand is that some of our guests from New York liked this area so much they moved down here. One of them was named Alan Goldenthal, who ended up doing a radio program on the Long Branch station, where I also appeared, because he asked me, "What contributions did your parents make to the city of Long Branch?" Well, he knew very well, having grown up in our hotel, one of the people who stayed there year after year after year.

**Ms. Higgins:** Well, those old hotels in Long Branch, I remember pictures of them. I think they were pretty much gone by the 1960s.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Ah, yes. What happened with our first hotel is the Depression came along and we lost it. Now, in the middle of Ocean Avenue sat the Vendome, closed up, condemned, taken over, I think for taxes, by the city of Long Branch. And my mother went to the commissioners and said, you have an empty, boarded-up hotel there. If you will let us have it, the first season rent-free, my husband will stay there all winter and put it back in shape. I think that was the winter that my mother's brother had to put coal in our furnace. Yes, I think we were pretty much out of money.

**Ms. Higgins:** Now that's a great story.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** And that was originally Phil Daly's gambling house.

**Ms. Higgins:** Oh, before it had been boarded up? And was gambling legal?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** No. The dining room was round. The dining room was magnificent and I have a picture of it. And it was perfectly round; all in a dome was a hand-painted picture of a horse race. Just magnificent. Now, it had a lot of decorations, and at my height, a lot of little round things, about eye level for me, around the room. And a lot of panels. Well, some of those little round things were buttons and some of those panels were doors. And they opened up and led under the porch, so that you could escape if there was a raid.

**Ms. Higgins:** Oh, my goodness.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Now, someone I know who's interested in Long Branch history said the story he got is that the very large windows opened up and you could get out of a window.

**Ms. Higgins:** Well, your parents made it a more conventional hotel.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Absolutely. And I do want to tell you one story about that dining room and that construction. The children used to eat in the children's dining room an hour before the parents so the parents could enjoy their dinner. There were no children in the main dining room; we had counselors to take care of them. Can you imagine the parents sitting in the dining room and looking way up at the windows, way up high in the dome and seeing their children looking down at them? Because my oldest brother, who was a devil from the day he was born, led them up the ladder which was up the dome to reach the flagpole. And there was a roof there, which went all the way around and windows, which went all the way around, and all the children were looking down at their parents. And then you can imagine how terrified they got. I just like to visualize that.

**Ms. Higgins:** I do, too. And the kids so delighted. You weren't there?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Oh, no. I was a very good, quiet kid. In fact, I have a book, *Grandma's Memories*, and you open the pages and it asks you questions. And one of them was, was there some kind of private place you went? And on the hotel grounds, was a large, round bush, way over my head and it was completely hollow in the inside. And children like to have a clubhouse and that was our clubhouse.

**Ms. Higgins:** That's a secret garden.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Yes, and that was my place. And our place.

**Ms. Higgins:** I bet it was lovely and cool - 'cause in Long Branch it's always cool.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Yes, well, I was fortunate to be on the oceanfront in the summertime.

**Ms. Higgins:** How would people get back and forth from there?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** My father had a vehicle that he called the suburban. It was the first station wagon I remember. Visitors came on a train. I don't have a memory of a lot of cars. They came on a train. And then when the train would come in, my father would send some driver with the suburban to pick them up.

**Ms. Higgins:** How luxurious, in that time that was very luxurious.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Rainy days we would also load up the suburban and take the children to the movies. Now I have to tell you this. We took the children to the movies; I was one of them. We go to leave and get back into the suburban, and for some reason we can't sit. We can't all get back in. So one man said, okay, everybody get on the sidewalk. And he said, now, you sit in the back seat in the

middle, and you sit in the back seat on the right side, and you sit in the back seat on the left side. And he got us all in and he was a meatpacker. I love that story.

**Ms. Higgins:** I do, too. Another Long Branch institution is Monmouth Park.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I don't know a thing about it. In fact, after I was married and we bought a house on Broadway and West Long Branch, I could hear the races being called from my backyard. And it was year after year after year that we never went there. And I said to my husband, "I think maybe we ought to go once." So we went and oh, oh, I bet across the board which is win, place, and show.

**Ms. Higgins:** Six dollars?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Um-hmm. And I won and I got four dollars. So I said to the teller, "I won and I got four dollars?" And the next thing I know a security guard took me away.

**Ms. Higgins:** Good heavens!

**Ms. Eisenberg:** And my husband said to the security guard, "I'll explain it to her." And it was like, my horse didn't win, it like, showed. My husband wanted to explain.

**Ms. Higgins:** He jumped right in on that, he must have -

**Ms. Eisenberg:** You know, they don't - you're not to argue with them

**Ms. Higgins:** No, I guess not. I'm sure they thought you were somebody from a gang.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I was going to cause some trouble, and they wanted not to discuss it with me.

**Ms. Higgins:** And your husband just started explaining. What part of your life would you like to relive if you had a decade that you could relive?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I know that most people say that teen age was a horror. It wasn't for me.

**Ms. Higgins:** Good.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I enjoyed high school. I was, I have to say in the best class, I had wonderful classmates. We formed a little sorority; they made me the president. I always thought because it was in my house. You know.

**Ms. Higgins:** And your house was very roomy being a hotel, right?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** No, no, in the winter we lived in a house.

**Ms. Higgins:** Okay.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** But, you know, I was the hostess,

is what it was, I think, being modest. I was the hostess and I thought that that was the reason they picked me for president. And we all ate together in the cafeteria. And I had this wonderful nucleus of friends who all became professionals. All, we all went our way to college. Also, I would like to relive the early years of my marriage, 'cause I - well, you know, it was a real love affair and it was wonderful in the beginning. And we had four children, which, you know, really puts a strain and a drain on things. But that love affair and the beginning of my marriage was really wonderful.

**Ms. Higgins:** I can tell just the way he's putting this cap on you how proud he is of your graduation from Monmouth College.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** And little did I know that I was going to be a widow. I was forty-eight when my husband died. And I say I was left with four children, but they were not little children. The youngest, actually, was eighteen. So at the time, I had two in college, no one was employed, and a pension. And my husband had become an optometrist and when he died my son and I tried to continue the practice by hiring an optometrist, and having my son work as an optician, because we always added to the Pinsky family who are all opticians.

**Ms. Higgins:** Oh, I didn't know that.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** We had one poet laureate and about four or five opticians.

**Ms. Higgins:** Everybody seeing things.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** But we couldn't keep it up for long and I had to sell the practice. And then go on my way. I took a job at Fort Monmouth.

**Ms. Higgins:** And you were a teacher, as well. Tell us about those two jobs, if you will, please.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** The teaching - when I was graduated from Monmouth and about in 1960, I took a job as a teacher in Asbury Park High School. I had to be there 7:30 in the morning. I had four small children. I went down a complete size, which everybody might say, good, but for me I, I went down to about a seven, I think. The principal called me in and said look what you look like, the skin was hanging on my neck. And Mildred Pinsky told me I looked sick.

**Ms. Higgins:** Lot of work.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** It was more than I could handle, but I finished the year. After that I became a substitute teacher. I did sign up every place and it was fun to go back to Long Branch High School and go into the teachers' room in the place where I wasn't allowed when I was one of the students. In fact, I was talking in the room and a teacher told me to keep quiet because she thought I was one of the kids. And the principal, Dorothy Howland, I think her name was, not the principal, sorry, but the school secretary, told me that I was the most requested substitute.

**Ms. Higgins:** That's very nice to have on your record.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** However, I narrowed it down to Ocean Township School System. I was a substitute there for a very long time. And I loved every minute of it. I had good control. I always taught the class. And the mayor, the present mayor of Ocean Township, where I live now, was one of the students in my class while I was a substitute, and he remembers me well. And he once held up a political meeting to come over and give me a kiss on the cheek and then go and start the meeting.

**Ms. Higgins:** Even though I went to school a long time ago, and things were a lot better disciplined then, I can remember how cruel we were to substitutes.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Yes.

**Ms. Higgins:** You must have indeed been a very fine teacher.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Well, I kind of had this stern face and I do have this loud voice. And I had disciplined four children of my own.

**Ms. Higgins:** Yes, that would help, too.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** And I just never let anything get out of hand, at all. One of my students from Asbury Park High School is now principal of Howell High School. She's in *Who's Who In Education*, she's a customer of my son, who is an optician in Freehold at Glen Marks Eye Care, Craig Road. And she came in to him and said, "Your mother never yelled no matter how bad they got." Actually, I don't recall that they ever got bad, cause I always nipped it right in the bud. And I would reason with them; as a substitute, I would say, "Now if I were a visitor in your house, you'd offer me a cup of coffee. Well, I'm a visitor in this classroom. Your teacher is sick and I need your help and cooperation." And then they would understand that.

**Ms. Higgins:** What stories did you hear at the time that were handed down to you from previous generations that you might like to tell us?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Well, I'd like to tell you about my grandmother, my father's mother.

**Ms. Higgins:** Please do.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** And the first hotel, which was the Ocean Plaza. My guess is at that time they didn't hire a chef like they did. I don't know but what I heard is that she worked very hard. And that she was such a good woman that even though she had five children of her own, she took in an orphan child. She was very religious. And you know, in the true sense of the word. In fact a robber, a former employee, came back with an accomplice to rob the hotel, and my grandmother caught them. The employee said to his accomplice, "Don't harm her." Well, I have to tell you that one Saturday morning she was walking back from synagogue with a lady and they were talking and they did not hear a lone train car coming down the track and it hit both of them.

**Ms. Higgins:** Oh, dear.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Yes. The other lady lost her arm and my grandmother suffered in the hospital a couple of days and died. And that I heard, you know, of course, many, many, many years later. My older brother is named after her, and he's six years older than I am. So she was dead a very long time before, probably seven years before I was born.

**Ms. Higgins:** What advice would you like to give to present and future generations?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I have come to the philosophy of life at this point where I try to enjoy every day. I can't do anything about getting older. I appreciate every birthday, instead of saying, oh, another birthday, I say, I'm lucky to have gotten another birthday. And so I live my life to the fullest and try to enjoy every day. I'm a little worried about how the country and the world look now. There's a phrase, "man's inhumanity to man." And every time I turn on the radio or the television that is what I'm hearing. I have no idea what to do about it. This country is trying to do something - President Clinton made a speech here today at the United Nations, saying this has got to stop, and we have got to help, and it's up to each country, for their people to behave like human beings. And I hope it gets better, but it doesn't look good at the moment. I hate to be pessimistic.

**Ms. Higgins:** What are your feelings as we enter the millennium? Is this a big occasion for you or is it just another New Year's Eve? Actually it's not the millennium until 2001, but...

**Ms. Eisenberg:** But, but the computers think it is.

**Ms. Higgins:** The computers definitely think it is.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** And I think is going to be a very interesting New Year's Eve, not like any other. And I personally am storing water. I have had my chimney cleaned out and my fireplace so I can light a fire. Somebody has promised me he's got a lot of wood he'd like to give me. I'm keeping my bank statement. My son just made sure to pay off a credit card so they don't say that he owes 100 years' interest.

**Ms. Higgins:** Yes, things could get very interesting.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** We just had a major storm and they're saying that's good practice for the Y2K, that's what they're calling it. And nobody knows, I think they can't tell us that it's going to be a fiasco because we would all get hysterical. I say that that's the same reason they don't tell us the aliens have landed. And they're telling us for the most part using guarded language that everything's going to be fine, but that remains to be seen.

**Ms. Higgins:** When you were at Fort Monmouth - I'm back up to that for a minute, because of what you were saying about things being kept from us. Were you working at Fort Monmouth during the McCarthy era?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Oh no, I was not working there at that time. My son, Glenn, was born at that time and he's forty-seven. I remember it because I remember being on the lawn outside of our apartment complex and striking up a conversation with a neighbor, and saying, "What do you think of the McCarthy hearings?" And she said, "It's best not to talk about it if your husband works at Fort Monmouth." So it was like Russia. It was like people were afraid. I understand that the people that they picked on- who were accused of having some associations perhaps back in their childhood, even, were the Jewish engineers and one African-American man. I met the lawyers who defended them. The lawyers were told please don't use anti-Semitism as a defense. Well, the lawyers got disgusted. That was Harry Green and Ira Katchen, who were the lawyers, who did this pro bono, all for free. And they got so disgusted with the way the trial was being run on Fort Monmouth, in a military court that one of them threatened to call the press. And so the judge said, "No, no, don't do that. We'll shape up, we'll do it your way." And they did use anti-Semitism as a defense. And all these young Jewish engineers were exonerated, but their families and they lived through a terrible time.

**Ms. Higgins:** It was a terrible time.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** The blot on our history. And I remember when McCarthy died, I said to my father, "It's a good thing for the country that he's gone."

**Ms. Higgins:** I remember my father sent a letter to Dean Acheson who had said, "I will not turn my back on Alger Hiss." And I was afraid that people would

come to the house and come for my father. And that was in the United States of America.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Yes, we feel so free, now.

**Ms. Higgins:** Yes, we certainly do feel free, now. I wanted to ask you how did you happen to become interested in the Long Branch Historical Association? You're obviously active in it. I do want one of those shirts of the presidents.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Home is Long Branch. It's not my life. I've lived in Ocean Township thirty years, and I love it here.

**Ms. Higgins:** Yes, but Long Branch is home?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Long Branch is home. And I'm not - I didn't get very far away. I always go back to Long Branch. We lived in Matawan for a very short time where my husband started an optometric practice. And every weekend, where would we go? Long Branch. Visit the Pinskys, visit the Sacks family.

**Ms. Higgins:** Long Branch has a nice library, too. It's held on through thick and thin, and good times and bad because the people like their library and they use it.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** One of your librarians I went to school with, and I think her name was Muriel Hamilton, I always knew her name, but now, I forgot, but I think it was Muriel. And she showed me the Long Branch collection. I got some information there for my autobiography, that's how I know about Phil Daly's gambling house.

**Ms. Higgins:** Let's talk about your autobiography. Do you have a publisher?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I don't have a publisher. I'm just starting to write it. In fact, I've had trouble with my old Macintosh computer and so, this week or next, I'm going to buy a computer and really get serious with it. But this is as much as I put on so far and the Table of Contents reads: Family Hotel, and I'm gonna tell a lot of the stories that I just told you now, Love and Marriage, the Single Scene, because I've been a widow for twenty-three years, but the last chapter is called Old Car, because the last time I saw my doctor she said, "So, how are you?" And I said, "Like an old car, you replace one part, and then you need another part and then this is wrong and that's wrong." I've been very healthy up until now, but some things are beginning to fall apart a little. And it's the style to write your memoirs for the grandchildren. Everybody is either doing genealogy or writing their autobiography. And I did start. Like I said, the senior citizen's activities network at Monmouth Mall had a creative writing group and the object is to write your autobiography, and some of the people in my class have done that and brought bound copies to me, and they are very proud and they would like it to be a published book. And that's far in the future. I'm just getting started with the

writing. I know it's difficult to become published, but I can think of a lot of words that I want to put into it, and I wanted to include the history of Long Branch in my life because it's so closely intertwined. And I am going to start seriously on that book in about a week.

**Ms. Higgins:** Why did you give a chapter to the single scene?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Oh, I've been a widow for twenty-three years.

**Ms. Higgins:** Tell us about the single scene.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Well, oh, boy. I handled widowhood very well. My husband was sick for a long time. He did have cancer between 1970 and 1975, so I did have a lot of time. And I decided that I shouldn't put in any more bad time, I should just go out and live my life. My son's mother-in-law was a travel agent, and she put me on a cruise ship with a group called, Single World, so I had a group of single people to travel with. I did meet a man on that trip. He was a bachelor from Philadelphia and I did go with him the first year and he kind of got me to get past all the bad times, all the anniversaries and the birthdays, the hardest - and the holidays, and the hardest things to handle in the beginning. And then we broke off, partly because he lived in Philadelphia and I lived here and it wasn't easy to see each other. I went to the singles' dances. I found that sometimes single men, and women, can be very rude, they have dances called Lady's Choice and there were times when I'd go up and ask a man to dance and he would say no. Or if you were with a man, a woman, even your best friend, wouldn't hesitate to come up and take him away from you. I had a lot of experiences like that. I just turned seventy two and I've kind of given up on it. I never met anybody who was quite right. Not that I was like a lot of other widows who said, oh, there isn't another man on the earth who could replace my husband. I just wanted to meet somebody nice and thoughtful and who cared about me, and my needs and my desires. And that never happened. And at my age now, a lot of men are sick, and I'm not a nurse. I like my freedom. I think that the best of all worlds is to date and have fun. And there are couples who do that and they're having a really good time.

**Ms. Higgins:** And your children are local as well.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** My children are all local, yes. And so I'm just getting on with my life and I'm gonna sit with my computer and write my book.

**Ms. Higgins:** You will enjoy it. I can tell by the way you've spoken today you have a lot to give.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I do want to tell you that I have traveled around the world. I've attended the Space Academy.

**Ms. Higgins:** Really?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Which was five days of simulated astronaut training. It was a program for teachers and students. And I took my oldest grandson as his Bar Mitzvah present. He was twelve and he went in with the children's group and I went in with the teachers' group, and we didn't see each other for five days.

**Ms. Higgins:** Wow!

**Ms. Eisenberg:** And I went through a lot of the equipment. And we flew two simulated missions. I had dinner with Alan Shepard.

**Ms. Higgins:** How wonderful!

**Ms. Eisenberg:** And one of our instructors, or speakers, was Jim, Colonel Jim Irwin, who was the eighth man on the moon. And the one you see saluting the flag in the picture taken on the moon.

**Ms. Higgins:** That's a wonderful story.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I have been very adventuresome. I've gone to the Mardi Gras in New Orleans. And if there's some mischief to get into, I go looking for it.

**Ms. Higgins:** Before we close, I definitely want to talk to you about your pen pals.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Oh! Okay. I have a thing in my entranceway I do want to mention. It is the poem by Robert Pinsky, which was written for my husband and my sister-in-law after they both died within a year of each other. My sister-in-law had gone to school with Robert Pinsky and he had taken her to the prom, so the poem refers to a date that they had. And it mentions her mother and the Scott Towers on the oceanfront, which my sister-in-law's father built. He built all of Elberon Village and did a lot of building in that area. So the poem is about Julian Eisenberg and Nan Marlin Sacks. And, and what else?

**Ms. Higgins:** The other letters in your life?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Oh, yes. I wrote and sent a picture to Queen Elizabeth because I came across some official government photos from World War II. And there was one of hers when she was a driver of a vehicle. And there's a picture of her in a jumpsuit with the hood up on her vehicle. And she and I are very close to the same age. And so I wrote her a letter and sent her that photograph and told her that I had been to England as part of an ambassador program started by Jimmy Carter and that Amy Carter was part of our group. And also I sent her an article from the Asbury Park Press saying that Windsor Castle had been restored after the fire and that she and Prince Philip were celebrating their fiftieth wedding

anniversary. And she answered me, not in a form letter, but answering all of those points, and thanking me very much for my thoughtfulness.

**Ms. Higgins:** That's lovely. She's apparently a very fine woman.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** So I hear. And I heard her crack jokes and I understand she has a very good sense of humor, which she doesn't show to the public. I also have a letter from Abba Eban because when I went to Israel in 1969 I met a member of the Knesset who at that time was assistant mayor to Teddy Kolleck in Jerusalem. And we became friends and pen pals. And he gave me a private tour of the Knesset, which is their parliament. And we passed the mailboxes and he said, "This first one, this mailbox belongs to Abba Eban, would you like to leave him a note?" And I had the smallest pad with me and I wrote one sentence which was, "I'm proud of the way you stand up in the United Nations and fight for right and justice, despite world censure." And he asked me to put my name and address on the back of that little piece of paper. And Abba Eban wrote me a letter saying thank you for that.

**Ms. Higgins:** That's a very interesting story. I see you've been all over the world.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Yes, I just want to add to that Israel trip, that the member of the Knesset is Rabbi Porush. My son was living in Israel at that time. I was there to visit him and Rabbi Porush sent a man with a car for us. He drove us to the Knesset, he got us past security, and we were invited into the private dining room. The person at the next table was Moshe Dayan. Yes, and Begin did come into the room, and then we attended a session in the Knesset.

**Ms. Higgins:** Speaking of politicians, I like to ask people of our age, where were you, what is your memory of the death of Franklin Roosevelt?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I don't remember the day so much as, they all say, you know where you were when John Kennedy died. And I do know where I was.

**Ms. Higgins:** What was that experience like?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I was substitute teaching in a the Dow Avenue school in Oakhurst. And the announcement was made over the loudspeaker. And one little girl started to cry and ran out of the room and I let her go. I thought she wanted to go into the girls' room and cry. I let her go. Ordinarily you don't let a child run out of your class. I let her go. And the other children just sat there. And that's all I remember. I don't remember what I said, or what anybody did in that classroom.

**Ms. Higgins:** Often when I do these interviews, I say is there anything you would like to conclude the interview with and then there's something very fine

said. Then we turn off the tape and the best stories come. Now, are you going to do that to me or are you going to put the best stories on the last few minutes of this interview?

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I kind of feel like I've said a lot. I just have this love for Long Branch. I just feel like it's my life. And by the way the name of my autobiography is *Five Generations*. And the way, it came about is that just one day, out of the blue, I said to myself, "Just how long have we been here?" And I began to count from my grandfather to my grandchildren. I get five generations. And we're all still in Monmouth County.

**Ms. Higgins:** That's says that you've chosen well where to live. And Monmouth County is lucky to have you, I'm sure.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** Oh, I know that I am lucky to have Monmouth County and I have said to my children, I hope you realize how happy, how lucky you are to have been born here. And I feel how lucky I am that my father hid under the hay in a wagon leaving Russia going over the border to Poland to board a ship at the Baltic Sea to come here so I could be born in Long Branch, New Jersey on the oceanfront.

**Ms. Higgins:** Your father did a very brave thing. I hope when you finish your memoirs, you will give the Monmouth County Library an opportunity to purchase it. I hope you get a publisher, if you don't get a publisher, perhaps you will give it to the archives and make it available to future generations.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I'm so happy you said that because the whole time I'm going to be writing this I'll feel like there's a purpose. I know it's very difficult to get published. A lot of people think they're going to write a book and get published. I know some of those people. It's difficult. I will try and I am honored that you would like a copy of it.

**Ms. Higgins:** Wonderful stories. I've enjoyed this interview very, very much. Thank you.

**Ms. Eisenberg:** I've enjoyed it, also, and thank you.