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MEMOIR

Transcending Race, Religion, and Class:
Select Huntsville Memoirs by
Margaret Anne Goldsmith

by

Lance J. Sussman and Lynda Barness *

Margaret Anne Goldsmith, “Cora Memoirs”: A Tribute to My Mother, Cora Barley Binford; Marguerite Newton, Margaret Anne Goldsmith’s Birth Mother; My Doll Named Cora; The Jew Joint¹

In 2017, Leonard Rogoff and Margaret Anne Goldsmith contributed an article to *Southern Jewish History* on “Four Jewish Families and the Built Environment of Huntsville, Alabama, 1852–2017.”² They concentrated on the contributions of Goldsmith’s extended family to the economic and cultural development of the city of Huntsville and its Jewish community. Their work drew from the extensive archives donated by Goldsmith, a prolific memoirist and daughter of Huntsville’s leading Jewish family.³ Included in her papers are also memoirs of the private life of her family. The memoirs presented here focus on her relationship with Cora Barley Binford, a thirty-four-year-old Black woman who was hired by the Goldsmith family in 1942 to care for Margaret Anne as an infant but who became her “mother” due to the extraordinary circumstances these memoirs reveal. Her 2005 obituary describes much of what we know about Cora Barley Binford’s biography:

In early 1942, Cora began taking care of Margaret Anne Goldsmith and continued in that capacity for 12 years. She provided for Margaret Anne the care and the unconditional love that a

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mother provides. Cora became Margaret Anne's mother and Margaret Anne became Cora's daughter, for it is not in giving birth that makes one a mother but through raising that child that makes one a mother.⁴

Domestic Service

The relationship of Cora Barley Binford and Margaret Anne Goldsmith, itself a touching story, also points to wider cultural issues. With the rise of modern social history and feminist historiography, the role of women serving as domestic servants, wet nurses, and nannies has attracted significant scholarly attention.⁵ In popular culture alone, scholars have substantial material from which to draw. From the complex biblical narrative of the birth of Moses, to Angelica in *Romeo and Juliet*, to Ruth

Cora Barley with a young Margaret Anne Goldsmith.
 (Courtesy of the Huntsville History Collection,
 gift of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)

("Mammy") in *Gone with the Wind*, to Maria in *The Sound of Music*, to Aibileen Clark in *The Help*, nonfamily women of different classes, faiths, and races have played essential roles in childrearing and household management. In recent years, the discovery of nonfiction sources has also challenged and deepened our understanding of these cross-cultural, often enduring, and norm-defying relationships.⁶

The study of the southern American Jewish experience and its mix of interfaith, multiracial, and cross-class domestic relationships comes with its own set of special questions and issues. How did Jewish slave owners treat their household help?⁷ What was the frequency of miscegenation among southern Jews before and after the Civil War?⁸ Were postbellum Jewish employers of Black women just another example of White folks exploiting the services of underclass people, or was there something different about the Jewish-Black, minority-minority nexus? And, if southern Jews generally or quietly supported the civil rights movement after World War II, did they in turn treat their help differently, and, if so, how?⁹ In 1987, playwright Alfred Uhry, in his classic *Driving Miss Daisy*, suggested that there were no easy answers to these and other questions. In 2002, "Jewish Girls and African American Nannies," appearing in *Lilith* magazine and based on multiple interviews across the United States, further problematized the historical relations of American Jews and their domestic help.¹⁰

With respect to the American system of in-house childcare, the history of nannies in the United Kingdom provides comparative perspective. By 1700, nannies in England were generally educated, worked solely for food and lodging, and mostly reported to the lady of the house. During the Victorian period, a degree of nanny professionalization occurred, and by 1892 the Norland Institute Nanny Training College had been established. By contrast, the role of nannies in America's segregated South was radically different and did not professionalize.¹¹

Unsurprisingly, scholars hold a wide range of opinions about the origin, nature, and function of the southern Black nanny. In her path-breaking 2008 book, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory*, Kimberly Wallace-Sanders notes that "historians suggest that the term *black mammy* was developed to draw boundaries between the various maternal figures on the plantation." Eugene Genovese, Wallace-Sanders continues, made the "dramatic proclamation" that the presence

of the Black mammy in the Big House was essential to “understanding the tragedy of plantation pluralism.”¹² By contrast, other historians have argued that the character of the antebellum mammy was largely an anachronistic invention of the Jim Crow era and served in a somewhat analogous manner to the infamous Uncle Tom character. Recent scholarship demonstrates that postbellum mammies were “dedicated to their own families, and often resentful of their lowly societal status.”¹³

On January 25, 1912, the New York *Independent* ran a blistering story titled “More Slavery at the South” by a “Negro Nurse.” The anonymous writer lashed out without restraint. “[Though] today we are enjoying nominal freedom,” she noted, “we are literally slaves. We had to attend to all the needs of the children of the house on a 24-hour basis including nursing and to do other menial chores as well. It’s ‘Mammy, do this’ or ‘Mammy do that,’ or ‘Mammy do the other’ from my mistress, all the time.”¹⁴ By contrast, Cora Barley Binford was maternal and devoted.

The tension between the personal experience of the Black mammy, her resentment of the social system which defined her, and her sincere and reciprocated love of the children she cared for was poignantly captured by Sally Mann who boldly states in “White Child, Black Nanny,” “down here in the South, you can’t throw a dead cat without hitting an older, well-off White person raised by a black woman, and every damn one of them will earnestly insist that a reciprocal and equal form of love was exchanged between them.” This reflects, Mann continues, “one side of the fundamental paradox of the South, that a White elite, determined to segregate the races in public, based their stunningly intimate domestic arrangements on an erasure of that segregation in private.”¹⁵

Jews in the postbellum South faced the added dimension of living as a religious minority in a region defined by racial segregation. Abraham J. Peck observes, “Jews in the South also continued to hover between myth and reality. They assumed a certain distance from the racial question but made every effort to see that religious and economic freedoms were not harmed by an overt distaste for the system of segregation and a too visible reaction against the entire oppressive nature of Southern society.” Peck concludes, “this was in keeping, after all, with the notion that Southern gentlemen—both Jew and Christian—were required to maintain a proper and correct attitude at all times. This was to be the proper response even if their make-believe could not hide the glaring inequalities around

them."¹⁶ However, the question remains whether the public nature of the southern Jewish experience was also true inside southern Jewish homes.

The memoirs offered here—Margaret Anne Goldsmith’s “A Tribute to My Mother, Cora Barley Binford”; “Marguerite Newton, Margaret Anne Goldsmith’s Birth Mother”; “My Doll Named Cora”; and “The Jew Joint”—do not bring us any closer to definitive conclusions about Black nannies and Jewish families in the middle decades of the twentieth century. However, they provide particularly heartfelt accounts about one special relationship between the only child of an elite Jewish family, the Black caretaker she came to call “mother,” and the special circumstances that brought them together. In this case, the biological mother was absent, and the Black “mother” stayed with the child on a 24/7 basis during her childhood.

Huntsville

Part of those special circumstances included the history of Huntsville, Alabama, where Goldsmith and Barley forged their lifelong and evolving relationship. In 1940, near the end of the Depression, Huntsville still housed a population of only thirteen thousand people. Best known for cotton production, it was also identified as the “Watercress Capital of the World.” The situation changed rapidly during World War II when the United States Army obtained thirty-five thousand acres in the Huntsville area for three chemical munition facilities, including the Redstone Arsenal, which brought twenty thousand people to operate the military programs. After the war, successful lobbying resulted in development of the Ordnance Guided Missile Center (OGMC) in Huntsville, which eventually led Wernher von Braun and a team of nearly two hundred former Nazi scientists to settle in northern Alabama. Huntsville quickly became known as the Rocket City. According to the 1960 census, Huntsville grew over 340.3 percent during the prior decade and, with continued growth, it currently boasts the second largest metropolitan population in Alabama.¹⁷

The influx of new people during World War II helped thwart efforts to maintain the city’s long-standing segregationist policies in the early 1960s.¹⁸ Today, Huntsville proudly celebrates the fact that it was the first city in Alabama to integrate its public schools, a legacy that may have helped shape Goldsmith’s “Cora memoirs.”¹⁹

Margaret Anne and Cora

Margaret Anne Goldsmith was born in 1941 in Huntsville just as the city began its remarkable transition in size, economy, and racial policies.²⁰ In many ways, she represents a living bridge between the old and new Huntsville. Over time, Goldsmith developed an acute sense of responsibility to preserve her family's multigenerational role in the development of the general and Jewish community and consequently assembled a massive archival collection to which she added her many memoirs and historical articles. As a prolific chronicler of the Huntsville experience, she endeavored to be as comprehensive as possible.²¹

Her father, Lawrence Bernstein Goldsmith, Jr., a scion of Huntsville's leading Jewish family and a highly successful businessman, married Marguerite Newton, a daughter of a local Presbyterian family.²²

Margaret Anne shared the following about her parents:

[M]y biological mother was Presbyterian. My DNA is 51 per cent Ashkenazi Jewish and about 2 per cent British Isles, 25 percent Northern Europe and 1 per cent Viking. Marguerite's father was a Newton and her mother a Payne. My mother was not particularly religious. I did find a King James Bible in her possessions. When she died, I asked a good friend who is a Presbyterian minister to officiate at her funeral. He was very understanding as to my wishes to not have any Christian references. My thoughts are that there were no young Jewish women to date in Huntsville and my father had very little Jewish upbringing. He was born in 1909. They were married by a Justice of the Peace. Marguerite's father had a men's clothing business, they were middle class without the social standing of the Goldsmiths, plus she had been married before and divorced. My father described some prejudice as to his dating the Christian women in town with equal social status to his. Once my father had received custody of me, there was no question as to my being raised Jewish.

It was when I began dating a young man from New York who was Conservative and worked at the Arsenal that I realized there were Jews who did not consider me Jewish. Elisha Gurfein broke up with me because his mother had asked him to because I was not Jewish. I experienced more of the same when I lived in New Orleans. It was devastating to me, and I began questioning my Jewish identity—it took years to work through the conflict. I did

*Margaret Anne with her father,
Lawrence Goldsmith, and grandmother,
Annie Schiffman Goldsmith, c. 1942.
(Courtesy of the Weitzman National
Jewish History Museum, gift of
Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)*

so while writing the history of my family and the Huntsville Jewish community during the 1980s.

My father's second wife was Gentile but of no denomination. The rabbi would not marry them, however the Central Presbyterian Church minister agreed to do so. Jewell began going to his church after they married when I was 12. It was confusing to me. She recognized that and began going to temple and joined Sisterhood, knowing that it was important that I not be confused, which I appreciated. Their friends were mainly Jewish and when she died, the rabbi at Temple B'nai Sholom, who officiated at her funeral, buried some old prayer books beneath her casket. Although my stepmother never converted, the rabbi told me that he considered her to be Jewish based on the way she conducted her religious life after marrying my father.²³

Immediately after Margaret Anne's birth it became clear that the baby was unsafe in the care of her birth mother, according to Goldsmith's memoir. The couple divorced, and the father won full custody of the infant. He arranged for her to be raised in the Jewish tradition despite her

lack of matrilineal Jewish status. Unable to care for the child by himself, Lawrence Goldsmith first employed an elderly housekeeper, who in turn identified Cora, a maid in Huntsville's prestigious Russel Erskine Hotel, where the family maintained a residence, to raise the child there and in a separate summer home in Huntsville. In 2002, Goldsmith wrote an extensive article on life at the hotel, including pictures of the maids in full uniform and a "Christmas party for hotel employees," as well as several references to Cora.²⁴

Margaret Anne and Cora were inseparable, even sleeping in the same room while in the hotel, sharing a bathroom, and eating together, but with Cora having her own designated dinner plate. When Margaret Anne turned twelve, her father remarried, again to a gentile woman, Jewell Shelton.²⁵ The new Mrs. Goldsmith rapidly integrated herself into the small local Jewish community and changed Cora's status from Margaret Anne's nanny to a household maid. Subsequently Margaret Anne was sent to a boarding school in Washington, D.C., for her junior and senior years of high school, before she matriculated at Tulane University.

However, Margaret Anne never forgot Cora's role in her early childhood nor her stepmother's realignment of the Goldsmith family. Margaret Anne, who lived in New Orleans after she married, eventually returned to Huntsville in the 1980s and reconnected with her "Mother Cora." Goldsmith became part of Cora's geriatric care team with the measured cooperation of the Barley Binford family. Margaret Anne participated prominently in Cora's 2005 funeral as her "daughter." Cora's funeral incorporated several Jewish prayers and, although Cora retained a deep Christian faith and remained a devout Christian throughout her life, her funeral was a Judeo-Christian event, reflecting the religious heritage of her daughter, Margaret Anne.

The seventh of sixteen children, Cora Dixon Barley Binford was born on December 21, 1908, in Madison County, Alabama, in a predominantly Black area called Pond Beat. The family owned a farm where Cora worked with her family. She attended a local school and later earned a GED while working in Huntsville. Along with her parents and siblings, she belonged to Center Grove United Methodist Church.²⁶

As a young woman, Cora moved to Huntsville and found employment in the Russel Erskine Hotel in 1929. She remained there throughout the difficult Depression years and even helped find employment in the

hotel for several family members. During her years at the hotel, Cora volunteered during her off hours at Huntsville Hospital. Early in 1942, Cora began taking care of Margaret Anne Goldsmith and continued in that capacity for twelve years. Her obituary explains:

The Lakeside United Methodist Church played a major role in Cora's adult life. She joined Lakeside when she moved to Huntsville during the early 1940s and continued as a devoted member until her death. For over fifty years, she attended church school and religious services regularly. When she could no longer drive herself, she continued to attend. In addition to taking part in the church's religious activities, Cora belonged the Lee Fearn Circle and the Satellite Senior Group. Cora's early public service in the community began with joining Mizpah Chapter #37 of The Order of The Eastern Star in 1951.²⁷

Cora married Reverend Elmer Binford in 1950, which increased her social status in the Black community. Binford, a graduate of Howard University, taught high school. The Binfords' marriage lasted over forty years; they had no children of their own. Cora assisted her husband in his ministry as a visiting preacher and teacher throughout small towns in Alabama and Mississippi on weekends, which often placed them at great risk as a Black couple traveling alone in the rural South. During the reverend's ministry, Cora taught Sunday school and served as the district coordinator of Children's Work for the Methodist Church. When Reverend Binford became bedridden during his later years, Cora devoted herself to his care. Cora Barley Binford died on November 28, 2005, and was buried in Valhalla Memorial Gardens in Huntsville. Margaret Anne contributed a poem to the service sheet for Cora's funeral:

A Tribute to My Mother
Margaret Anne Goldsmith

How blessed I am that I could choose my mother—
God guided Cora to me and I chose her
I knew then that she would give birth
To my spirit—my soul—my essence—
She became and continues to be my teacher
Whose teachings I strive to follow
Whose person I strive to emulate

Cora introduced me to the world
 She introduced me to the beauty and goodness of life
 Cora gave me roots and pride in who I am
 And at the proper time
 She gave me wings to fly

Cora's Daughter

The Memoirs: An Overview

Margaret Anne's memoirs of Cora contain many highlights of their time together. For example, Cora avoided racial flashpoints in Huntsville when caring for Margaret Anne and did not attempt to sit at segregated lunch counters or in Whites-only sections of movie theaters. On the other hand, Cora took Margaret Anne to the public library in Huntsville. Cora also brought Margaret Anne to synagogue for lessons and services although Temple B'nai Sholom, established in 1847, was too small to employ a full-time rabbi prior to World War II. At the end of the nineteenth century, it had been able to build an impressive structure (1898) with the help and leadership of the Goldsmith family. Yet by 1945, only sixteen families contributed to the congregation.²⁸

Cora also brought Margaret Anne to Barley-Binford family events. In her essay "The Jew Joint," Goldsmith demonstrates her belief that a special Jewish-Black alliance in the South was mutually and respectfully held. Thus, in defiance of Jim Crow, Margaret Anne grew up on both sides of Alabama's color line.

Few if any of the great historical developments that transformed her hometown played explicit roles early in Margaret Anne's childhood. What did matter was that Cora was always there for her as her mother, read poetry to her, and took her to church and synagogue to nurture her spiritual development. In the end, both women became pillars of their respective communities and worked toward making civic society in Huntsville more civil. They remained emotionally connected as grown women. All of this and more is part of Margaret Anne Goldsmith's remarkable "Cora Memoirs."

The unique relationship of Cora and Margaret Anne points to wider cultural issues. The "Cora Memoirs" illustrate a poignant, heartwarming, sad, and yet uplifting story. They depict family and religious difficulties as well as triumphs from a previous era in which a talented woman in the

Black community turned to domestic service because of the exigencies of a segregated society. The memoirs also demonstrate the limitations and difficulties of being Jewish in small southern towns. At still another level, the Goldsmith–Barley Binford saga illustrates the strong bonds developed across racial and religious lines in a complex relationship.

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**Margaret Anne Goldsmith, “Cora Memoirs”: A Tribute to
My Mother, Cora Barley Binford; Marguerite Newton, Margaret
Anne Goldsmith’s Birth Mother; My Doll Named Cora; The Jew Joint**

A TRIBUTE TO MY MOTHER, CORA BARLEY BINFORD

When I was a little girl, I would beg Cora to tell me the story of how we met. She was the maid on the eleventh floor of the Russel Erskine [Hotel], where my father, who had received custody of me, and I shared connecting rooms. My grandparents had a suite on the twelfth floor. It was early 1942; I was born in October 1941. Every afternoon when Cora finished cleaning the twelve guest rooms on the floor, she would play with me. I became so attached to her that she had to get down on her knees and crawl out of the room to leave so I wouldn’t cry. That stopped working when I could pull up and see her crawling out of the door. The following June, my father, my grandparents, my nurse Alice, and I moved to our family home on Gates Avenue for the summer months. It was then that my nurse Alice told my grandmother she was too old to take care of me and needed to retire. When my grandmother got upset, Alice reassured her there was no need to worry, that Margaret Anne had found “a replacement nurse for herself. Later, my grandmother, who I called “Annie,” interviewed Cora, and our wonderful mother-daughter relationship followed. Cora said that during the interview my grandmother told her, “Cora, you will be responsible to keep the baby from crying.” Cora said she responded that babies cry and if that was what was expected, she would return to the hotel. My grandmother realized the foolishness of what she said, and Cora remained and was never questioned again.

*Cora Barley as a hospital volunteer.
(Courtesy of the Weitzman National
Jewish History Museum, Philadelphia,
gift of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)*

Cora was not only my mother; she was my family. In fact, Cora was the center of my life. In the afternoon after my nap, Cora would take me to see my grandmother, and before supper in the evening she would take me to my grandparents' suite to visit with them and my father. I never ate with my father or grandparents, nor did they provide any of my care. In fact, until I was around seven years old, I ate all my meals with Cora.

One story Cora told me that illustrates my attachment and dependence on her occurred when one of her family members who lived in Chicago died. Cora took the train to Chicago and when she arrived there had been numerous calls from my grandmother. Although someone had been hired to take care of me while she was away, my grandmother said that I had not stopped crying since Cora left. Cora did not stay for the funeral but returned on the next train. When I was a few years old, Cora would leave me with my grandparents and father to visit with them alone before supper. Shortly after she left, she would get a call that I was crying and to come get me. Cora and I slept in the same room, ate together, and wherever we went, Cora took me. When a ride was needed, Bore Scruggs, who worked in the family's automobile shop, would drive us.

Cora believed in eight glasses of water a day, proper diet, fresh air, sunshine, and sufficient exercise. She always made sure I ate an apple a day. Before I could eat it alone, I remember Cora first peeling my apple and then scraping it with a spoon to a sauce-like consistency. As soon as I could walk, Cora took me on adventures. Some days we would go to the Big Spring, where I would throw rocks in the water and watch the ripples spread out in circles, or I would feed the ducks or spend hours riding on the little cast iron lion. When I was older, Cora would let me climb on the limestone bluff above the spring or slide down the hill behind Cotton Row on pieces of cardboard. When we came home in the late afternoon and on rainy days, Cora would turn on the radio and we listened to music.

Sometimes Cora would recite poetry from the works of Paul Laurence Dunbar, a late nineteenth-century African American poet whose poems she and her siblings learned by heart as youngsters. At other times Cora would sing to me. My favorite was one that began, "Dance with the dolly with a hole in her stockin', her knees keep a knocking and her toes

*Margaret Anne, c. 1947, by a pond where she used to swim.
(Courtesy of the Weitzman National Museum of American
Jewish History, gift of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)*

keep a rocking. . . . Dance by the light of the moon." I had an old Victrola, the windup kind, and often we would listen to recordings of children's stories. We also played games including checkers, Chinese checkers, and tiddlywinks.

Where we went every day was left up to Cora. Being intelligent and wise, she exposed me to everything Huntsville had to offer during the 1940s. Our daily adventures took us all over town. There were visits to the Big Spring Icehouse and to the Coca Cola Bottling Company. Regularly we went to the old Carnegie Library, where we would check out books several times a week and attend the Saturday afternoon story hour. Other mothers who brought their children to story hour would consult Cora on child rearing. Cora's reputation had spread throughout Huntsville.

Cora never spanked me. She often said there was no need to, that she would just redirect me when I was getting out of hand. Ours was a most unusual relationship. Living together in one room created a special bond, greater than many children have with their own mothers. She had a special ability with children to understand them. Cora knew my thought process and could judge when it was appropriate to scold me and when not to do so to encourage my creativity.

One recollection illustrates that ability. One summer, when I was around three years old, I was outside playing in my sandbox one morning and Cora had to go inside. She asked Ada, our cook, to keep an eye on me. Cora told me not to go in the house because I would get sand all over Ada's kitchen. When Cora returned, I was standing at the kitchen sink getting water. Cora asked why I hadn't used the hydrant near the sandbox, and I replied that the water was wetter in the kitchen. Cora decided that in my mind I had provided a logical answer, and she didn't reprimand me. In fact, Cora never needed to reprimand me; she realized that I did not want to be bad and that I always wanted to please her. It was the fact that Cora understood me so well that helped me develop as I did.

During my early years, Cora and I would often visit her family. Her mother lived on Pulaski Pike. Mrs. Cooper, with whom Cora lived before she began taking care of me, lived on Oak Avenue (now Gallatin Street), with [Cora's] sister Leona, who worked as a secretary at a nearby gas station. Mrs. Cooper always kept a room for Cora in case she wanted to

return; however, I would never have let "My Cora" leave me. I often played with Cora's nieces and nephews who lived near her mother's house on Pulaski Pike. In fact, it was Cora's family members with whom I spent most of my time playing during my early years.

We never went to the drugstore to buy ice cream or to places where Cora as a Black person could not be served; Cora was too proud to subject herself to that humiliation. Once we went to the movies and had to sit in the balcony. My father's secretary, who worked for our family for over fifty years, told me that after the movie we had gone to the office, and I had a tantrum because "My Cora" had not been able to sit downstairs with the other parents and children. I remained in the balcony with her.

Years later, when I asked Cora about my father and grandparents and their limited ability to take care of me, especially during my early years, Cora said that they didn't understand children. I remember her telling me long after I was an adult that she had been so upset at times that she wanted to kidnap me but that her brothers and sisters had warned her against doing that. I do not know what upset Cora, but I do know that she loved and wanted to protect me as a mother. Cora was levelheaded and sensible. Whatever had upset her I am sure was serious. I cannot recall what happened; I do know that my early childhood was far from normal. I realize that my father and grandparents truly were not capable of taking care of a child, as Cora surmised. My grandmother also suffered from depression. Although never diagnosed, I made that observation based on her lack of activity, her reclusiveness, and my own understanding of depression in later years.

I remember one upsetting incident that occurred when I feared for Cora's safety. I was visiting my mother, Marguerite, one summer afternoon. I was outside playing, and I remember going to the door to go inside and seeing Marguerite standing in front of Cora, screaming at her. I tried to open the door and it was locked. Cora and Marguerite then ran out of the room. I remember looking through the locked door at Marguerite's aunt, Mrs. Camper, sitting on the couch, laughing at me. Cora went out the back door and came to get me. I was crying; she reassured me that she was all right. I learned later what had happened. Marguerite wanted Cora to leave so I could visit alone. I never visited my mother or her family without Cora being with me. That was the agreement regarding my visits required by the court.

MARGUERITE NEWTON, MARGARET ANNE
GOLDSMITH'S BIRTH MOTHER

I was born in October 1941; Marguerite Newton and my father, Lawrence Goldsmith, Jr., married during the summer of 1940. Marguerite suffered from mental illness. Soon after she and my father married, her symptoms became apparent, and the doctors recommended she have a baby, "something to call her own." In those days, the understanding of mental illness was limited and having a baby was thought to be the cure for a woman's problems.

As a result of my birth, Marguerite's mental and emotional problems became more severe. I was several months old when she had a tantrum and broke the apartment windows and pulled down a curtain rod that just missed my bassinette. My father called Marguerite's doctor, Dr. Holliman, her mother Edith Newton, her uncle Will Payne, his parents Annie and Lawrence Goldsmith, and his attorney. It was recommended that Marguerite's mother take her home with her and that I be taken to a neutral place with my nurse. My nurse, Alice, and I went to live with Mrs. Alene Payne, the former wife of Marguerite's uncle, Will Payne. Mrs. Payne lived near my father and grandparents on Eustis Avenue. When I was in my forties, I read all the above in the records of the Madison County Courthouse. There is a note in the records from Marguerite's doctor, Dr. Holliman, recommending she not have custody of me, stating "Mrs. Goldsmith should not have custody of her daughter, or she could kill or maim her." My father was awarded custody of me. I was less than six months old.

After the custody proceedings my father, my nurse, Alice, and I went to live with my grandparents, who lived in the Russel Erskine Hotel. Alice had been my father's nurse when he was a child and was now too old to take care of a baby, a fact no one seemed to recognize. During the summer before I was a year old, when we were living at our family home on Gates Avenue, Alice told my grandmother that she was too old to take care of me and needed to retire. When my grandmother became upset, Alice told her that [she] had found a new nurse for [me] the previous winter, Cora Barley, the maid on the eleventh floor of the hotel who played with me every day after she finished her work. Cora was

hired and remained with me until my father remarried when I was twelve. During my first twelve years, Cora was the most important person in my life.

I began to visit my mother once a week as a toddler when it was required by the court. I always visited with Cora. I assumed later that Marguerite's family had asked the court to request I visit weekly in hopes that Marguerite would be able to respond to me and that her emotional condition might improve. That never happened. Marguerite was never able to relate to me.

I was not told that Marguerite was my mother. Her mother Edith referred to Marguerite as my "Little Mother." I assumed that a Little Mother was a family friend and always called her Marguerite. It was not explained that Marguerite's mother was my grandmother, and I was told to call her by her first name, Edith. Since I thought Marguerite and Edith were family friends, I did not think their behavior odd. Visiting them was not something I enjoyed since I always played alone. In hopes that Marguerite would play with me, Cora talked to Edith and Marguerite and let me play by myself.

My earliest memories of visiting Marguerite and her mother were when they lived in an apartment in a large two-story house on Lincoln Street at the end of Gates Avenue. It was a short walk along a shady tree-lined street of antebellum houses to their apartment from our home at the corner of Gates and Green Street, where we lived during the summer. During the winter we lived at the Russel Erskine Hotel. Then we walked through downtown Huntsville, past my father's and grandfather's office on the courthouse square to the town's early residential district and continued to Lincoln and Gates. I remember there were many steep steps from the sidewalk up the hill to their front door. When Cora and I arrived, there were no hugs or special greetings. Cora was invited to sit and talk to Edith. Marguerite sat quietly and seldom spoke while I played alone on the floor with the toys that we brought with us.

Once I remember Edith telling me to polish Marguerite's toenails, which I did. Years later I realized Edith was trying to create a connection between Marguerite and me. What seems strange is that Edith did not suggest that Marguerite paint my fingernails or toenails, which would have been the normal thing for a mother to do with her little girl. I did what I was told. I remember trying to do a good job and not get any polish

on her skin. I had just learned to color by staying in the lines of the pictures in my coloring book. Painting her toenails was a similar project. My memory of that situation was the companionship of her legs that were strong and of olive complexion.

Several years later Marguerite and Edith purchased a modest house off Holmes Avenue in a new neighborhood called Terry Heights. The Braden family lived next door with their two daughters, Diane and Dena. Diane was my age and I played with her when I visited Marguerite and Edith. Cora always stayed with me during my visits. In the late afternoon we had ice cream that Marguerite had made in an ice tray. Edith would say, "Marguerite, get your cream for Margaret Anne." Looking back, Marguerite did not initiate activity but seemed to always follow the instructions of her mother.

When I was around seven, Marguerite and Edith moved to Daytona Beach, Florida. When they returned to Huntsville at Christmas and during the summer, they stayed with Edith's sister Vassie Camper and her husband, who lived in Madison, which at that time was in the country. The Campers' house was an old farmhouse with no running water, only a hand pump and an outdoor toilet. The house was on a hill above a small creek. During the summer Marguerite said she would bathe in the creek. We often walked down the hill to look at the creek. I remember thinking how much fun it would have been to go in and show Marguerite that I had learned to float, but she never offered to take me swimming and I did not ask.

Memories of my visits at the Campers' house during Marguerite's and Edith's trips are few. I do remember when I was around seven or eight years old, taking a walk alone in the woods with Marguerite and seeing a stile and asking Marguerite what it was. She explained that it was a structure that enabled people to cross over a fence that did not have a gate. The wooden stile we were looking at straddled a wire fence that was about four or five feet high and had steps like a ladder on both sides. While we stood there, Marguerite turned and looked at me and said, "You know, I should not have had children." I remember responding, "Well, I am glad I am here." I think Marguerite said that she was glad I was here, but I don't remember exactly what she said because it was upsetting for me to think that she had not wanted me. I vividly remember standing next to the stile and Marguerite's words. I realized after I was an adult that by telling me

she should not have had children she was making a reference to her mental and emotional condition that became more severe after my birth. Nevertheless, I was hurt by her comment since I knew nothing about her problems after my birth and was too young to understand.

Big and Little Daddy

I remember my first day of school (1947?) and my grandmother, who I called "Annie," taking me to register. On our way home, I remember asking her who were the people in my family, if Little Daddy (my father) was my brother, if she was my mother and was Big Daddy (my grandfather) my father. It had never been explained to me who everyone was in my family, since I had been taught to call my grandparents and my father Annie, Big Daddy, and Little Daddy. I also wanted to know who the lady was I visited every week that I was told to call, "Little Mother," who in fact was my mother, Marguerite Newton. Annie answered my questions correctly and seemed surprised that I would ask. Regardless, I still felt that my father was my brother, my grandparents my parents, and that Cora was the person who filled the role of mother.

School

I went to kindergarten at Miss Mary Bern Darwin's at the corner of California and McClung, and in the first grade I went to Fifth Avenue School on Governor's Drive. Bore Scruggs would drive me to and from school with Cora. The following year, when I was in the second grade, the school districts were changed, and I went to West Clinton, down the street from the hotel. It was only a few blocks away and Cora and I walked to school every day. In the afternoon Cora was there to pick me up and we walked home together. Before going out to play, Cora helped me with my homework. Because of her help I made straight A's. It was Cora who read to me every night before bed from books we checked out at the library from the time I was able to listen to stories until I was able to choose books to read myself.

Sometimes after school I brought a friend home to play. I remember that Cora did not interfere with my play and encouraged me to use my imagination and creativity and play with whatever was at hand. For example, when we went to the Big Spring, I found old pieces of cardboard stored in one of the buildings to use for a sled to slide down the hill behind

Cotton Row. When I climbed on the bluff above the Spring, I used one of the rock ledges for my pretend kitchen. I had toys but not many. My grandparents bought all my toys at FAO Schwarz when they went to New York in the fall and spring. The toys were selected by the salesperson. They also bought my clothes in New York and would have them shipped to Huntsville. Mrs. Farley, a local seamstress, made whatever alterations were needed because Annie bought my clothes too large so I could grow into them. Neither my grandparents nor my father ever took me shopping. I remember once asking my father if he would buy me a gift for Christmas because Annie and Big Daddy bought all my clothes and toys. He bought me a silver bracelet with a blue turquoise stone in the center.

I had a collection of Story Book Dolls that sat on my toy shelf, and I did not play with them since they were too elegant. A few dolls that I remember included my Margaret O'Brien doll, named for the well-known child actress of the nineteen forties, and a doll that could drink from a bottle, the water went through, and she wet her diaper. However, not having had a biological mother relationship meant I did not know how to play with dolls by assuming the role of mother.

MY DOLL NAMED CORA

One of my most treasured toys was a doll that Cora made for me when I was four or five years old. The doll had black hair and was made of light brown material. Her embroidered facial features were not typically African American but more like Cora's, whose ancestors were a combination of African American, American Indian, and Caucasian. Cora was tall and slender with light brown, almost cream-colored, skin with freckles. She dressed my doll in a red dress with a white apron. The only doll I kept through the years was my "Cora Doll," because I could not part with her.

Temple B'nai Shalom

Regarding my religion, an incident occurred that I remember when I was in grammar school. I was the only Jewish child at West Clinton. Frances Sturtevant, who I played with occasionally, asked Cora if I could go to church with her since I didn't have a church. Cora told Frances in no uncertain terms that I was Jewish and that I went to Temple B'nai

Cora's doll.
(*Courtesy of the Breman Museum,*
Atlanta, gift of Margaret Anne
Goldsmith.)

Temple B'nai Sholom, Huntsville, Alabama.
(*Courtesy of Huntsville–Madison County*
Public Library Special Collections.)

Sholom.²⁹ It was the first time I was aware there was a difference between my temple and the churches in town. When I was older, I realized that some of the children may have been told by their parents that I wasn't Christian and didn't go to church.

When it came to religious school at Temple B'nai Sholom, Cora learned all the Hebrew prayers and would then teach them to me. She was so well-regarded that the teachers would always give me the lead in the holiday plays because they knew I would learn my part perfectly under Cora's tutelage.

A Trip to Segregated Florida

When I was seven my father met Jewell Shelton through a mutual friend. Jewell lived in Birmingham when they began dating. She later moved to Decatur and then to Florence, Alabama. At the time they married I was in the seventh grade. Shortly after they began dating and before Cora married, my father and Jewell took a trip to Florida with me. Since they were not married at the time, my grandparents insisted they take Cora as a chaperone. I remember how humiliating that trip was for Cora because of segregation. She was not allowed to go to any of the restaurants or even to the hotel's beach area or swimming pool. Cora was confined to our room all day where she ate her meals. I was with my father and Jewell all day at the beach and sometimes would go out to dinner with them. I remember when we returned to Huntsville seeing Cora cry with relief. I had never seen Cora cry before and realized in later years how traumatic that trip had been for her.

Cora's Plate

When I was seven, I began eating meals with my father and grandparents. During the summer when we were living at our house on Gates, Cora ate lunch in the kitchen. I remember that Cora only used a particular plate and that it was cream colored, designed with short black curved lines and a thin black border. I called it Cora's plate because it reminded me of Cora's freckles. She also used the kitchen utensils, not our sterling silver. It did not seem odd to me then that Cora was not using our china and silver. It was years later that I thought about the custom, especially in the South, for Black servants to have separate tableware. Likely Cora accepted

Cora's plate.

*(Courtesy of the Breman Museum,
Atlanta, gift of Margaret Anne
Goldsmith.)*

the custom and did not feel insulted, as I do for her today. That same plate was among the items that were passed down to me when my father passed away. I kept it at my apartment at the I. Schiffman Building, where I lived in the 1980s and 1990s during trips to Huntsville to assist my father with our family business. My "Cora's plate" was a treasure; I used it often.

Cora's Story

Cora often talked about life on her father's farm near the Tennessee River, inhabited at that time by some White families and about 70 percent black families, many of whom owned their own farms. Cora and her siblings were tall, slender, and light-skinned, with features that were more Caucasian than African American. The Barley sons and daughters were protective of each other, not only because it was how they were raised, but also to take care of each other. Because of their coloring, Cora told me that they often were the brunt of not only White prejudice but prejudice from other Blacks whose skin was much darker.

When Cora was a young woman, she came to town to live with Mrs. Cooper and work at the Russel Erskine Hotel shortly after it opened in 1929. One main reason was to make money to send home and help her family during the Depression. She continued to work at the hotel until she began taking care of me in 1942. A story she told me about her work at the hotel occurred when her sister came to work as a maid there also. The housekeeping superintendent told Cora that because of the Depression they were not able to keep her sister, but that they wanted her

*Postcard of the Russel Erskine Hotel,
c. 1934. (Courtesy of the Southern
Jewish Historical Society.)*

to stay. Cora responded that if they wanted her, they would have to keep her sister also. Cora and her sister remained. That incident is an excellent example of who Cora was and demonstrates her loyalty to her family and her ability to assert herself during those years during segregation when it was not acceptable for a Black person to do so. While Cora worked at the hotel, and before she began taking care of me, she volunteered as a nurse at Huntsville Hospital.

Cora Marries Reverend Binford

Schools for Black children only went to the seventh grade in Pond Beat, where Cora grew up, one of the areas later taken by the government for Redstone Arsenal. After I started school, Cora did not remain idle but began taking a correspondence course to get her GED. She was able to complete all the courses alone except for algebra and needed a tutor. She heard about a teacher at Council High who was also a traveling minister on weekends, Reverend Elmer Binford, from the well-respected Binford

family of Huntsville. Reverend Binford fell in love with Cora and, in addition to teaching her algebra, he began to court her. I remember the chocolate-covered cherries he would bring that I enjoyed eating. When he proposed I was terribly upset. I was around eight years old at the time. Cora began preparing for their wedding, and I remember her making her wedding dress on her mother's Singer sewing machine. The machine was old-fashioned and not electric; Cora operated it by gently moving her foot back and forth, rhythmic fashion, on the foot pedal.

Cora and Reverend Binford's wedding took place on a hot summer afternoon at her mother's house on Pulaski Pike in 1949. My grandmother took me and her friend, Mrs. Grace Goldstein. We also took my childhood friend Susan Pipes. I remember during the wedding, to keep from crying, I kept fanning myself with the hem of my dress. Cora remembered watching me and told me later that she was so concerned about me that she could hardly concentrate on what the preacher was saying.

When Cora married, I was able to manage without her being with me around the clock. Cora continued to work for us and would pick me up after school and take care of me until around five, when she went home. I would then eat with my father and grandparents and sleep with my grandmother in her room.

During the four years after Cora married, until I was twelve, her life was quite active, taking care of me during the afternoons and on weekends as the wife of a traveling minister. Cora always drove so Reverend Binford could be rested when they arrived at one of the churches where he preached. Years later, I asked Cora about those years and their experience driving to small churches through rural Alabama and Mississippi during the period of the civil rights movement. She told me that as a precaution they always kept their gas tank as full as possible, stopping often to fill up, since they never knew if they would be refused gas because they were Black. She said that they never experienced any dangerous situation because Reverend Binford always kept a level head, and when asked to leave a station, he never became argumentative but would turn and leave. I admired how brave they were and their devotion to Reverend Binford's churches.

Cora became active in Reverend Binford's church Sunday schools and went to Methodist conferences with him. She became an Eastern Star

and was active at her home church, Lakeside Methodist. Cora and Reverend Binford adored each other; their marriage was a blessing for both. I remember Cora saying that they never argued but were able to talk and work out whatever their differences might be.

After Cora married my life changed, as it centered more around my friends and school and my reliance on her became less. Many afternoons after school and on weekends I spent skating and playing with my best friend Anna Gene Clift from West Clinton School, who lived a few blocks away. In addition, my father had begun to date Jewell, and she spent weekends with us in Huntsville. Often, they took me with them during the day on Saturdays and Sundays. Although my time with Cora was limited, our love and devotion to each other never changed.

Margaret Anne's Stepmother and Cora's Dismissal

My father married [Jewell] when I was twelve, and Cora continued to work for us but not as my caretaker, instead as my father's and stepmother's maid. They had moved to the family home on Gates Street and my grandparents then lived in the Russel Erskine year-round. The following summer, when I was away at overnight camp, my stepmother, who was jealous of my relationship with Cora, told my father that Cora had cursed her. What happened was that my father had the floors refinished and my stepmother told Cora to remove her shoes so she would not scratch the floor while she worked. Cora responded that the floors were cold and that she did not want to catch a cold and refused to remove her shoes. I believe my stepmother created the situation to have a reason to tell my father to fire Cora.

My father never asked Cora what had happened; instead, he said, "Cora, we can't have you talking to Mrs. Jewell that way, you will have to leave." I learned about what happened when I returned from camp and only heard Cora's explanation years later. Even today, I cannot get over my father's lack of appreciation for the many years that Cora had taken care of me or concern for my relationship with Cora. There was no severance pay. Cora had income from her husband; however, had she been alone I know he would have acted the same way, which disturbs me greatly, even today. Cora would normally have stood up for herself; however, I believe she realized that with my stepmother in charge, it was time for her to leave. My stepmother had taken over my care, and Cora did not

like being a maid; she preferred to take care of children. Sometime later Cora went to work for the Vernon Hutchens family, who had several small children. Cora's leaving would have been devastating to me had I been younger, but as a twelve-year-old, I said very little and kept my sadness to myself.

Prep School and Beyond

I left home in the eleventh grade to attend prep school, and after graduation I went to college. When I was able to drive, I visited Cora when I was home, even though my parents said that my driving in a Black neighborhood was dangerous. It was evidence of my stepmother's continuing jealousy of Cora. I visited with Cora, regardless.

When my father died in 1995, I asked Cora to sit with me at his funeral since it had been Cora and my father who raised me. I remember overhearing my stepmother telling people, "Margaret Anne let that Black woman sit next to her at her father's funeral." When Cora died and I gave her eulogy, my stepmother refused to attend her funeral. She also made remarks about the special tribute I wrote that was published in the *Huntsville Times* in which I referred to Cora as my mother.

*Cora Barley Binford.
(Courtesy of the Huntsville
History Collection, gift of
Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)*

Reverend Binford was much older than Cora and began to decline while Cora was still quite active. They had moved from Mrs. Cooper's house that Cora had inherited near St. Bartley's Church when urban renewal took it by eminent domain and had moved to Hammonds Avenue off Pulaski Pike to a new brick house they had built. Cora took care of Reverend Binford beautifully by herself during those years, even though her siblings, her friends, and her neighbors all offered to help her. She prided herself on being able to develop a technique to turn him often so that he never had a bed sore. Cora would leave home for short periods to take care of errands. She told me that it was important that she get out and would carefully plan her outings so that she could go out once a day. Cora said that she realized if the house caught on fire, she would not be able to get Reverend Binford out. She trusted God and knew Reverend Binford would be fine when she returned, and he always was.

THE JEW JOINT

The "Jew Joint Event" occurred during the 1990s when I had begun attending the Barley family reunions with Cora. Attendees often numbered around two hundred, including children. Everyone arrives on Friday and there is registration and a reception. Saturday morning there is a family picnic at one of the town's parks since the "old home place" no longer exists. On Saturday night there is a banquet. One of the senior family members gives a keynote speech, followed by a program which includes more talks, tributes to ancestors, and a video. On Sunday everyone attends the family's ancestral church, Lakeside Methodist.

During one memorable reunion, I was sitting next to Cora at church on Sunday morning. One of her nephews, Cory Brown, not an ordained preacher but a preacher nevertheless, was invited to give the sermon. At one point in the sermon Cory warned everyone not to go to places where there was drinking and other questionable behavior. He called these places "Jew Joints." When I heard his remark, I was devastated. Here was my family, folks I had played with as a child, and I heard one of them make a remark like that. I thought Cora hadn't heard the remark and so I said nothing to her.

The following week I phoned ADL [the Anti-Defamation League] and the rabbi at Temple B'nai Sholom and was told not to make an ordeal

of the situation but to get some books on Judaism for Cory and ask Lakeside's minister to call together a meeting with the three of us to discuss what I had heard Cory say. I phoned the minister, who agreed to convene a meeting.

We all arrived after dinner. First the minister suggested we join hands and pray, which we did. Then we sat down, and the minister told Cory that I had something I wanted to say. I began by telling him that I was Jewish and that during his sermon at the family church service I had heard a remark he made that had disturbed me. Cory looked baffled. When I mentioned his reference to "Jew Joints," Cory began to laugh and explained that he would never have said anything negative about the Jewish people. Further, that he had lived in Mississippi during the civil rights era and had made many wonderful Jewish friends from the North who had saved his life. He then told me that what he had said was "Juke Joints." Then I remembered what juke joints were from reading Alice Walker's *Color Purple*. Initially I was embarrassed but recovered quickly because what followed was bridging a cultural gap between races that we three recognized. We hugged, prayed some more, and parted as new friends.

Since then, I have shared my "Jew Joint" story at appropriate places, once when Dillard, a New Orleans African American university, and Tulane, with its large Jewish population, were having a gathering with the local New Orleans Jewish community. Both groups were sharing their slave stories, attempting to outdo one another. It occurred to me that they were missing the point and raised my hand to offer my "Jew Joint" story. As I was talking, the Jewish folks were on the edge of their chairs and the African Americans were smiling, knowing exactly what had happened to me. Telling the story made such an impression that the wife of Dillard's president asked me to sit next to her during the rest of the event. Before I left, she invited me to be her guest the following week to hear B. B. King, who was performing at Dillard at an invitation-only performance.

I've told my "Jew Joint" story countless times, once to Abraham Foxman, former Director of ADL. It illustrates the real issue between races, which is a cultural one. Another issue between Blacks and Whites is the concept of TIME—which I have discussed at length with Cora's brother Earl Barley. That story will have to wait for the right occasion to share. It too illustrates a cultural gap between races.

*Cora Barley Binford and Margaret Anne Goldsmith.
(Courtesy of the Huntsville History Collection,
gift of Margaret Anne Goldsmith.)*

Enduring Ties

After Reverend Binford passed away Cora continued to live alone and to be active in her church and her community, until she too began to fail. I had returned to Huntsville to live after my father died in 1995 and visited with Cora regularly; I took her out for dinner on Mother's Day and on other occasions and went with her to her family reunions every year. I was fortunate to hear Cora give the keynote address at her reunion banquet one year.

My relationship to Cora deepened over the years; when I had three children, I became even more aware of the important role Cora had played in my life. My children had the good fortune of meeting and getting to know Cora, as she lived until all three were young adults.

As Cora began to decline, I stayed in close touch and checked on her daily. She remained at home, and I arranged with her two nieces who oversaw her affairs for the three of us to take meals to her when she could no longer cook. Cora began to suffer from dementia. I remember crying following our visits when she would talk about her parents and her siblings who were no longer living as though they were still there. Eventually I was able to deal with the situation and began responding appropriately. I suggested to her nieces that they move Cora to an assisted living arrangement, but they refused, saying that her brothers would not approve. When Cora fell and was hospitalized, I spoke with her doctor and asked him to request she be released to a facility where she could receive care and not go home alone. Her nieces then moved Cora to an assisted living home. Cora remained there and then was moved to a second home where she received excellent care, and I was pleased. When that arrangement ended with the caretaker retiring, Cora was moved to a third facility. The last facility, run by an immature young woman, was of great concern to me. I talked to her nieces and to several other members of her family. Cora was not moved and continued to decline rapidly. I made calls to various agencies, only to learn that small facilities of that nature are not supervised and do not fall under the guidelines of homes that must follow government regulations.

As I look back at our over-sixty-year relationship, Cora was the most important person in my life, especially during my early years, and she continued to be important to me throughout her life. She was and continues to be my teacher. Cora was a person of sterling character, a person

whom I respect and admire more than anyone I have ever known. She lived through difficult times, including segregation, the Depression, and World War II. She never wavered from her high standards and impeccable morals. My life without Cora would have been very difficult. A wise woman who was my therapist told me after hearing my family story that it was because of Cora that I survived.

NOTES

¹ A redacted version of Margaret Anne Goldsmith's "Cora Memoirs" is presented here to establish a clear chronology of the Goldsmith/Barley Binford personal story. In some instances, similar versions of the same information appear. Section headings in italics, drawn from "A Tribute to My Mother," were also added by the editors for clarity.

² Leonard Rogoff with Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "Four German Jewish Families and the Built Environment of Huntsville Alabama, 1852-2017," *Southern Jewish History* 20 (2017): 33-67.

³ Margaret Anne Goldsmith amassed a vast archival collection. It is located within the Goldman Schiffman Family Collection and housed in the Archives and Special Collections in the M. Louis Salmon Library, University of Alabama, Huntsville. It includes detailed documents about Schiffman and Company, Hollytree Camp, the Russel Erskine Hotel, the estate documents of generations of her family, and a genealogy of these generations. In addition, her collections include photographs, documents, artifacts, descriptions of contributions (including land donations, endowments, and exhibits), and the transfer of the Goldsmith Schiffman Collection from the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library to UAH Special Collections and Archives in 2017, as well as master list notebooks, VHS and cassette tapes, framed artwork and certificates, oversized materials, reference books, close to 150 vignettes authored by Margaret Anne Goldsmith, business and family tax information, an 1840 siddur, and a box of Cora's personal belongings. Margaret Anne Goldsmith donated some 150 boxes. Other family heirlooms are housed at the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia and the Breman Museum in Atlanta.

⁴ "Cora Binford Obituary," December 2, 2005, accessed April 1, 2024, <https://obits.al.com/us/obituaries/huntsville/name/cora-binford-obituary?id=9508300>.

⁵ Stephen Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA, 2004); Katherine Van Wormer, David W. Jackson III, and Charletta Suddeth, *The Maid Narratives: Black Domestic and White Families in the Jim Crow South* (Baton Rouge, 2012); Geraldine Youcha, *Minding the Children: Child Care in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (Boston, 2005).

⁶ Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, curator, *Framing Shadows: Portraits of Nannies from the Robert Langmuir African American Photograph Collection*, Emory Libraries, accessed May 12, 2024, <https://exhibits.libraries.emory.edu/framing-shadows>; Just Like a Family (blog), accessed

March 15, 2024, <https://justlikefamilyblog.com>; David Pilgrim, "The Mammy Caricature," Jim Crow Museum, accessed March 15, 2024, <https://jimcrowmuseum.ferris.edu/mammies/homepage.htm>.

⁷ Bertram W. Korn, *Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789–1865*, "Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society, 50 (March 1961): 9–68; Lance J. Sussman, "Foreword," in Bertram Wallace Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (Philadelphia, 2001); Jonathan D. Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn, eds., *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader* (New York, 2010).

⁸ Laura Arnold Leibman, *Once We Were Slaves: The Extraordinary Journey of a Multiracial Jewish Family* (New York, 2021); Joshua D. Rothman, "'Notorious in the Neighborhood': An Interracial Family in Early National and Antebellum Virginia," *Journal of Southern History* 67 (February 2001): 73–114.

⁹ Marc Dollinger, *Black Power, Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s* (Waltham, MA, 2018); Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton, 2006); Eric J. Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land: Blacks, Jews, Post-Holocaust America* (Cambridge, MA, 2005). For an insightful fictional account of the relationship between a Jewish family and its Black maid in Alabama, see Roy Hoffman, *Almost Family* (New York, 1983).

¹⁰ "Jewish Girls and African American Nannies," *Lilith*, December 17, 2002, accessed March 25, 2024, <https://lilith.org/articles/jewish-girls-and-african-american-nannies-2>.

¹¹ Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny* (London, 2014); Katherine Holden, *Nanny Knows Best: The History of the British Nanny* (Cheltenham, UK, 2013).

¹² Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory*, (Ann Arbor, 2008): 14.

¹³ Pilgrim, "Mammy Caricature." Other words are also descriptors of types of domestic and household help. Synonyms for "mammy" mean different things at different times and in different places: nanny, nurse, wet nurse, caregiver, housemaid, nursemaid, house servant, mother's helper, domestic, and housekeeper.

¹⁴ A Negro Nurse, "'We Are Literally Slaves': An Early Twentieth Century Black Nanny Sets the Record Straight," *Independent*, January 25, 1912, 196–200, accessed February 29, 2024, <https://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/80>. The *Independent* was a weekly magazine published in New York City from 1848 to 1928.

¹⁵ Sally Mann, "White Child, Black Nanny," *Saturday Evening Post*, October 26, 2015, accessed February 29, 2024, <https://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2015/10/white-child-black-nanny>. See also Sally Mann, *Hold Still: A Memoir with Photographs* (New York, 2015).

¹⁶ Abraham J. Peck, "That Other 'Peculiar Institution': Jews and Judaism in the Nineteenth Century South," *Modern Judaism*, 7 (February 1987): 110.

¹⁷ Ranée G. Pruitt, ed., *Eden of the South: A Chronology of Huntsville, Alabama, 1805–2005* (Huntsville, AL, 2005), 180–99.

¹⁸ John H. Tate, "Do You Know Sonnie?," *Old Huntsville* 354 (August 2022): 3–6; Adam Harris, "Why Not My Son? How Sonnie Hereford IV and His Dad Integrated Alabama's Public Schools," Southern Poverty Law Center, September 7, 2018, accessed March 31, 2024, <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2018/09/07/why-not-my-son-how-sonnie-hereford-iv-and-his-dad-integrated-alabamas-public-schools>; Kelly Fisk Hamlin, "Huntsville Civil

Rights Timeline," *Huntsville Historical Review* 44 (April 2019): 35–60. By contrast, see Diane McWhorter, *Carry Me Home: Birmingham Alabama, The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York, 2001).

¹⁹ For an example of a current narrative of Huntsville during the civil rights era, see the children's book Hester Bass, *Seeds of Freedom: The Peaceful Integration of Huntsville, Alabama* (Somerville, MA, 2018).

²⁰ Redstone Arsenal Video Archives, "The Historical Record of Margaret Anne Goldsmith," January 7, 2024, accessed April 1, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pp9hQQKtbU4>.

²¹ In an e-mail to the editors on March 26, 2024, Goldsmith explained: "I wrote the [Cora] memoir after my eightieth birthday, sometime during 2023. After my eightieth birthday I wrote letters to many of my guests, including those unable to attend. Afterwards my daughter Bobbie encouraged me to write a memoir about Cora, which I did. Then I wrote memoirs to each of my three children and one about their father who had passed away. I had each child's memoir, the one of Cora, and the one of their father hand-bound in leather for each."

²² Margaret Anne Goldsmith Hanaw, "5 Generations of Life: My Family and the Huntsville, Alabama Jewish Community, 1852–1982," *Huntsville Historical Review* 12 (July 1982): 5–40; Marjorie Ann Reeves, "Jewish Business Community During the 19th Century," *Huntsville Historical Review* 42 (October 2017): 24–28; Dawn Suiter, "I. Schiffman & Company: A Depression-Era Success Story," *Huntsville Historical Review* 42 (April 2018): 18–50; "Huntsville, Alabama," ISJL Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, accessed April 1, 2024, <https://www.isjl.org/alabama-huntsville-encyclopedia.html>.

²³ Margaret Anne Goldsmith, e-mail to the editors, January 2, 2024. On March 15, 1983, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) passed a resolution on patrilineality.

²⁴ Diane Ellis, Lynn Jones, and Pat Ryan, eds., *The Historic Huntsville Quarterly* 30: 3–4 (Fall and Winter 2004) was devoted entirely to the Russel Erskine Hotel, including the following articles: David Bowman, "The Russel Erskine Hotel," 13–44; Margaret Anne Goldsmith, "Living at the Hotel: Childhood Memories," 45–54; and David C. Greenberg, "Historic Renovation of the Russel Erskine," 65–70.

²⁵ Margaret Anne Goldsmith, telephone call with editors, January 22, 2024.

²⁶ Cora Binford Obituary, accessed April 19, 2024, <https://obits.al.com/us/obituaries/huntsville/name/cora-binford-obituary?id=9508300>.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ "Huntsville, Alabama," ISJL Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, accessed April 1, 2024, <https://www.isjl.org/alabama-huntsville-encyclopedia.html>.

²⁹ The authors had a telephone call with the current rabbi of Temple B'nai Sholom, P. J. Schwartz, on January 5, 2024, that included an extensive conversation about current antisemitism in the Huntsville area. Rabbi Schwartz observed that antisemitism exists in Huntsville but is often subtle.