

**THE WILLIAM BREMAN JEWISH HERITAGE MUSEUM  
ESTHER AND HERBERT TAYLOR  
JEWISH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ATLANTA  
ATLANTA JEWS**

**MEMOIRIST:** MAX LEWIS KUNIANSKY  
**INTERVIEWER:** KIM COHEN  
**DATE:** JULY 28, 1990  
**LOCATION:** ATLANTA, GEORGIA

**INTERVIEW BEGINS**

<Begin Tape 1, Side 1, 01>

**Max:** I am interviewing Max [Lewis] Kuniansky for the Jewish Oral History Collection of Atlanta at his office, M & K Construction.<sup>1</sup> It is now July 28, approximately 3:20, 1990.

**Kim:** First I would like to ask you where were you born and when?

**Max:** Atlanta, Georgia.

**Kim:** What was the year?

**Max:** 1917.

**Kim:** Do you remember what hospital?

**Max:** I was born, I believe, at home on Edgewood Avenue and Fort Street. F-O-R-T.

**Kim:** Were you delivered by a midwife? Do you remember?

**Max:** I don't remember.

**Kim:** What were your parent's names?

**Max:** My mother's name was Annie Fitterman Kuniansky. My father's name was Louis. L-O-U-I-S Kuniansky.

**Kim:** Can you tell me where your parents were born?

**Max:** They were born in Russia as far as I know.

**Kim:** In the same city?

**Max:** No, my mother was born in a *shtetl*<sup>2</sup> called Voroshilovka<sup>3</sup>. I don't know how to spell that

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<sup>1</sup> M & K Construction, also known as MK Construction and MK Management, was started in Atlanta in 1950 by Max Louis Kuniansky.

<sup>2</sup> The Yiddish term for town, *shtetl*, commonly refers to small towns or villages in pre-World War II Eastern and Central Europe with a significant Jewish presence that were primarily Yiddish speaking.

<sup>3</sup> Voroshilovka, a town in the Russian Empire before World War I and now Voroshylivka, Ukraine. In 1926 there were 1,097 Jews in the town, more than a quarter of its population. In the 1930's a Jewish communal farm was established in the town. During these years many of the Jews left the town. In 1941, the town was taken over by the Germans, who immediately imposed various decrees on Jews, including the obligation to wear a yellow badge and

though. I understand that the town no longer exists. Mr. Fishman, who lived in Atlanta for a while . . . Sam Fishman used to work for my parents. My mother's father had a kerosene concession from the czar<sup>4</sup> and probably collected taxes from the *shtetls* for the czar, as far as I was told.

**Kim:** And your father?

**Max:** My father was one of many children whose father—my grandfather—worked in a textile mill. His name was Max Kuniansky. My grandfather [Max] was killed in an accident at the textile mill and they gave the job to my father. [My father] was the oldest of six brothers and part of two families because his father remarried after his first wife died. [They had] I don't know how many children, probably 12 or 15 kids from the two families.

**Kim:** Do you remember any stories that your father told you about the pogroms<sup>5</sup> in Russia?

**Max:** I really don't remember my father telling me. My mother told me about pogroms that they had that they would come in and just beat up on the people in the *shtetls*—exactly like you saw in *Fiddler on the Roof*.<sup>6</sup> It always reminded me of that. They got out of Russia, my mother . . . at the time she left Europe was living in Warsaw, Poland, with her brother, Leon Fitterman.<sup>7</sup> There are many families in the Fitterman family still alive and living in Atlanta. My mother passed away in 1976. My father passed away in 1936 at the age of 55. Of the six brothers, two of the younger brothers, Harry Kuniansky<sup>8</sup> and Wolf Kuniansky<sup>9</sup>—W-O-L-F-E—started the Atlanta Realty and Construction Company. Probably after they were in this country a short while, two of the younger brothers, Isadore<sup>10</sup> and Max Kuniansky<sup>11</sup> were sent to Georgia Tech [Georgia

the obligation to perform forced labor. In September 1941, the town was annexed to the Romanian province of Transnistria, and in 1942 Jews who had been deported from Bukovina and Serbia were transferred to it. In June 1942, the Jews of the town were rounded up in the ghetto, which was surrounded by a fence, and a Judenrat was set up to supply Jewish workers for forced labor. Many of its inhabitants died of typhoid fever. In mid-March 1944 the town was liberated by the Red Army.

<sup>4</sup> An emperor of Russia (before 1917).

<sup>5</sup> The term 'pogrom' refers to violent attacks against Jews in the Russian Empire carried out by non-Jews during the 1800's. The term has been applied to all violent episodes against Jews throughout the world and world history.

<sup>6</sup> The Broadway musical *Fiddler on the Roof* was based on *Tevye and his Daughters* (or *Tevye the Dairyman*), a series of stories by Sholem Aleichem that he wrote in Yiddish between 1894 and 1914 about Jewish life in a village in the Pale of Settlement of Imperial Russia at the turn of the 20th century.

<sup>7</sup> Leon Fitterman (1875-1957) was a restaurant owner in Atlanta, Georgia. He was born in Russia. He was a Mason and a member of Ahavath Achim Synagogue in Atlanta.

<sup>8</sup> Harry Kuniansky (1889-1933)

<sup>9</sup> Wolf Kuniansky (1885-1964)

<sup>10</sup> Isadore Kuniansky (1894-1957) born in Komorovo in the Russian Empire, was an outside plant engineer and supervisor for American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T). Graduate of Georgia Institute of Technology. He was a World War I veteran, serving in the Signal Corps. He was a treasurer for The Temple and a member of Gate City Lodge of B'nai B'rith and the Mayfair Club.

Institute of Technology]<sup>12</sup> by the older brothers. They became . . . Isadore became long distance manager for AT&T<sup>13</sup> company and Max Kuniansky lived in Lynchburg, Virginia. He was executive vice-president of two steel mills, one in Lynchburg and one in Roanoke, Virginia. He represented the United States during World War II.<sup>14</sup> The government sent him over to Germany to check the steel mills in Germany after World War II. Both of them became well known in their trades. Uncle Max won the Bernard MacFatham Medal<sup>15</sup> for contributing the most to the metallurgical industry in the United States for two straight years. As I said before, I told my son that they were Russian immigrants over in this country for a short while. After a few years they were able to deliver prices and plans for houses in one day, and come into the office and give them a plan and a price the same day. They built up half of Morningside<sup>16</sup> in Atlanta: Zimmer Drive, Cumberland Road and Rock Spring Road.

**Kim:** Can you name some of the people that lived in those houses? Do you remember some of the Jewish names?

**Max:** Most of them were Jewish.

**Kim:** Anyone in particular?

**Max:** I don't really remember a lot. We lived on Zimmer Drive. I actually built some houses

<sup>11</sup> Max "Kunie" Kuniansky (1899-1953), a resident of Lynchburg, Virginia from 1923, he was a graduate of Georgia Institute of Technology. He was vice-president and general manager of the Lynchburg Foundry Company and was awarded the William H. McFadden Gold Medal for distinguished service to the gray iron industry in 1941.

<sup>12</sup> The Georgia Institute of Technology (commonly referred to as 'Georgia Tech' or 'Tech') is a public research university in Atlanta, Georgia, in the United States. It is a part of the University System of Georgia. The educational institution was founded in 1885 as the Georgia School of Technology as part of Reconstruction plans to build an industrial economy in the post-Civil War Southern United States.

<sup>13</sup> AT&T Inc. is an American multinational telecommunications corporation. AT&T is the largest provider of fixed telephones in the United States and the second largest provider of mobile telephone service (2015).

<sup>14</sup> World War II (often abbreviated to WWII or WW2), also known as the Second World War, was a global war that lasted from 1939 to 1945, although related conflicts began earlier. It involved the vast majority of the world's countries—including all of the great powers—eventually forming two opposing military alliances: the Allies and the Axis. It was the most widespread war in history, and directly involved more than 100 million people from over 30 countries. Marked by mass deaths of civilians, including the Holocaust (in which approximately 6 million Jews were killed) and the strategic bombing of industrial and population centres (in which approximately one million were killed, and which included the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), it resulted in an estimated 50 million to 85 million fatalities. These made World War II the deadliest conflict in human history

<sup>15</sup> William H. McFadden Gold Medal was conferred for distinguished service in the gray iron casting industry. The award was named for William H. McFadden, a prominent steel and oil executive. The medal is awarded by the American Foundry Society (AFS), a professional society for the metalcasting industry.

<sup>16</sup> Morningside/Lenox Park is a neighborhood in Atlanta, Georgia founded in 1923. It is located north of Virginia-Highland, east of Ansley Park and west of Druid Hills. Approximately 3,500 households comprise the neighborhood that includes the original subdivisions of Morningside, Lenox Park, University Park, Noble Park, Johnson Estates and Hylan Park. After World War II, residents of heavily Jewish Washington-Rawson and Summerhill neighborhoods south of the State Capitol relocated to northeast Atlanta including Morningside when those old Jewish neighborhoods were demolished to make way for the Downtown Connector freeway and Turner Field.

myself after World War II on Zimmer Drive where my mother and I lived. Dr. Frank Waites . . . The Zimmermans, Sherry Frank's<sup>17</sup> parents on Zimmer Drive, were right up the street from us, Jack and Esther [Horowitz] Zimmerman.<sup>18</sup> Max Alterman,<sup>19</sup> Max and Roz [Rosalyn Sugarman] Alterman lived over on . . . I guess Zimmer Drive, a little street called a 'byway.' I guess I started building the first houses in Johnson Estates myself right after World War II when I got back in 1945, 1946. I built the house that Oscar Dvoskin<sup>20</sup> bought on Pasadena . . . Beach Valley [Road] and Pasadena [Avenue]. Many houses, I don't know how many but I built quite a few of them in those days.

**Kim:** Can you tell me how many children were in your family?

**Max:** I have three children and six grandchildren.

**Kim:** Can you tell me their names?

**Max:** Sure. We lost one son named Robert when he was 26 years old. I have two sons that are running the MK Company<sup>21</sup> now: Douglas Kuniansky<sup>22</sup> and David Kuniansky.<sup>23</sup> They have two children. Doug has two boys: Evan and Daniel. David and Lois have Michael and Rachel.

**Kim:** How about yourself, can you tell me about your brothers and sisters?

**Max:** There are five boys, four brothers and one sister. My oldest brother is Louis Kunian.<sup>24</sup> K-

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<sup>17</sup> Sherry Zimmerman Frank (1942-), a native of Atlanta, Georgia, was executive director for the Southeast Region of the American Jewish Committee for 25 years. She served as a leader for the Atlanta Black-Jewish Coalition, a president of the National Council for Jewish Women (NCJW), vice-president of the Epstein School in Atlanta.

<sup>18</sup> Jack H. Zimmerman (1907-1954), a native of Atlanta, was president and general manager of Allied Insurance and Finance. He was a co-founder of the agency in 1943.

<sup>19</sup> Max Alterman (1919-2008), a native of Atlanta, Georgia, was president and chief operating officer of Alterman Foods, Inc. He was one of five brothers who, along with their father Louis Alterman, founded the grocery business which operated the Big Apple and Food Giant grocery chain that once commanded nearly one-third of Georgia's retail grocery business. Max served on the board of directors for the Atlanta Jewish Community Center.

<sup>20</sup> Oscar Dvoskin (1911-1965) was the son of Morris Dvoskin who started Dvoskin & Sonsan Atlanta based wallpaper company. Oscar was president of Dvoskin, Inc., a wallpaper and fabric distributor, while his brother Harry Dvoskin was chairman of its board of Directors.

<sup>21</sup> MK Management Company is an Atlanta-based commercial real estate company founded in the early 1950's by WWII veteran Max Kuniansky. In 2007, MK Management sold 66 percent of its property holdings to Crow Holdings and downsized. Also known as M & K Construction and M & K Management.

<sup>22</sup> Douglas Silver Kuniansky was president of M K Management Company, an Atlanta-based commercial real estate company. He was a president, board chairman, and interim CEO for the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta. He has also served on the boards of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, Jewish Family & Career Services, and the William Breman Jewish Home.

<sup>23</sup> David Kuniansky was CEO of MK Management Company, an Atlanta-based commercial real estate company. He is a past co-chair of the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival.

<sup>24</sup> I. L. Kunian (1913-1997), a real estate developer and civic leader in Atlanta, Georgia, was born Isador Louis Kuniansky. He shortened his last name and everybody called him "Sonny." He was a graduate of Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech). He was president and partner with Atlanta's Kay Developers and owned a real estate development company, Kunian Enterprises. He served in the Navy from 1943-45. He was a president of the Georgia Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation and chairman of the Center for Rehabilitation Technology. He served on the

U-N-I-A-N. I'm next and my sister, Frances, is next. Her name is Frances Alter. Harry Kuniansky<sup>25</sup> is next and then Raymond<sup>26</sup> and Leon.<sup>27</sup> There's a picture of all of us. All five of us were in the service. My mother was a "Five Star Mother."<sup>28</sup> I don't believe there was ever five brothers in one family in the service at one time.<sup>29</sup> All of us saw combat service. None of us were stateside. Harry and Raymond were injured during the war. I was offered the Purple Heart.<sup>30</sup> I wouldn't take it because I didn't want to bring myself a *kina hora*.<sup>31</sup> I flew 35 missions over the target as a navigator in a B-24 bomber.

**Kim:** Where were you stationed?

**Max:** I was stationed with the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force in Italy. There's a picture of us when we were kids.

**Kim:** They were all born in this country?

**Max:** Yes, all six of us . . . the five brothers and a sister.

**Kim:** What was your father's occupation?

boards of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Association, Families First, American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League, Atlanta Jewish Federation, Georgia Council on Adult Literacy, Southern Regional Education Board, and the National Jewish Welfare Board.

<sup>25</sup> Harry P. "Koon" Kuniansky (1922-2000) was a football player at Boys' High School and University of Georgia. (UGA). He played in Rose Bowl and Orange Bowl games in 1941 and 1942. He was a World War II veteran, a lieutenant in the Navy who was wounded when his ship was torpedoed off the coast of France. After the war, he started a construction company in Marietta, RACO General Contractors, Inc. which built industrial parks, warehouse and manufacturing facilities.

<sup>26</sup> Raymond Louis Kuniansky (1923-2004) was a native Atlantan, and a graduate of Boys High School and Georgia Tech. A World War II veteran, he served in the Navy as a radar officer on the aircraft carrier the USS Wasp. He was an engineer specialist in chemical warfare. After the war, he was an engineer for Atlantic-Richfield. He was a volunteer for Meals on Wheels and Jewish Family & Career Services.

<sup>27</sup> Leon Louis Kuniansky (1924-2003), was a native Atlantan, and a graduate of Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech). He served in the U.S. Marines during World War II in the Communications Center of the Air Corps. He was stabbed to death in his home in Flowery Branch, GA, a murder that remained unsolved as of 2010.

<sup>28</sup> An article in the *Southern Israelite* used the term "five-star mother" to describe Annie Kuniansky as the mother of five sons serving in the military simultaneously. It was a reference to the practice of issuing a family a formal display banner with blue stars on it for each member in their family who were in the service started in World War I and was carried into World War II. These mothers were called "Blue Star Mothers." Their banners had blue stars on them, one for each family member in the service. If the service member was killed the blue star was covered by a gold star, after which they became "Gold Star Mothers."

<sup>29</sup> The statement about no other family having five members in the service is not correct. All five sons of the Sullivan family joined the Navy and persuaded the Navy to allow them to all serve on the same ship, the *USS Juneau*, which was torpedoed in a sea battle off of Guadalcanal in 1942. As a result of the Sullivans' deaths, and in order to safeguard the only remaining sons of families that had lost other children during World War II, the United States passed a law in 1948 that exempted sole surviving sons from the draft when one or more children (sons or daughters) from the family had already died or been killed during military service, commonly known as the "Sole Survivor Policy."

<sup>30</sup> The Purple Heart is a United States military decoration awarded in the name of the President to those wounded or killed while serving, on or after April 5, 1917, with the U.S. military.

<sup>31</sup> *Kina hora* is a Yiddish phrase which can also be pronounced "*kein ayin hora*." Translated, it means "without the evil eye" or "there should be no evil eye." It is the verbal equivalent of knocking on wood. When it's said quickly it can sometimes sound like "*kina hora*."

**Max:** My father started off as a grocer.

**Kim:** Where was that grocery store located? In this country?

**Max:** Yes, it was. It was on Lakewood Avenue when I was born. It's where the first store was. I remember stores on Magnolia and Vine and we lived out in East Atlanta most of my childhood . . . where the Old Soldiers' Home<sup>32</sup> was . . . Woodland and Confederate.

**Kim:** How did he happen to come to Atlanta, Georgia?

**Max:** There was some people from the home *shtetl*. Dr. [Joseph] Yampolsky<sup>33</sup> was a doctor here in Atlanta, a pediatrician. His father . . . [Samuel] Yampolsky<sup>34</sup> was already settled here in Atlanta. I remember the days when they were either in the building business or the grocery business. The building business was always up and down. They either had a lot of money or were dead broke. Every Jewish immigrant that came over . . . a bunch of them used to get together and go on notes to the Morris Plan [Bank]<sup>35</sup>. I remember going down every Monday morning to pay off. . . you paid \$20 a week for [every] \$1,000 that you borrowed in those days. The Jewish people in Atlanta took care of their own, even in those days. They didn't need any Exodus Campaigns<sup>36</sup> to settle them. They brought them in and put them in business themselves. My daddy was one of the charter members of the old Associated Grocers,<sup>37</sup> Atlanta Grocery Company, Quality Service Stores. In fact, he was a charter member of the loan association. They set up their own loan association<sup>38</sup> and lent their own members money at unusually low rates. They didn't have to have a bunch of endorsements like you had to have at the bank. They lent it to them themselves and had a thriving business.

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<sup>32</sup> The Atlanta Confederate Soldiers' Home (also called the Old Soldiers' Home) was built in 1890 at 410 E. Confederate Avenue on the south edge of the Ormewood Park neighborhood of Atlanta, Georgia. In 1901 it burned down, and was rebuilt in 1902 at the same location. The Home housed widows of Confederate veterans beginning in the 1940's before closing in 1963. It was razed in 1965.

<sup>33</sup> Dr. Joseph Yampolsky (1892 -1978), also known as "Dr. Yam," was a board member of the Atlanta Jewish Educational Alliance (JEA) and a leader in the Georgia Chapter of the American Association of Pediatricians.

<sup>34</sup> Samuel Yampolsky,(1868-1923) was a merchant in Atlanta, Georgia who was born in Ternovka, Russia (now Ternivka, Ukraine). He was one of the founders of the Atlanta Arbeiter Ring in 1908 and a founding board member of the Jewish Educational Alliance (JEA).

<sup>35</sup> A bank first established in 1910 to lend money to individuals who couldn't obtain loans from mainstream banks. It opened in Atlanta in 1911.

<sup>36</sup> The name of the fundraising program for the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Fund in 1949.

<sup>37</sup> Associated Grocers Co-op Inc., originally founded as Atlanta Saving Stores in 1929 and later known as Quality Service Stores, bought merchandise collectively, and in turn, sold it to their member owners at the lowest possible cost. It was founded by eight Atlanta Jewish grocers, who met at the home of Dr. Irving Greenberg. The membership remained entirely Jewish until the 1930's, when it expanded to include grocers from the general community. Most of the small stores were not passed down to the next generation and simply went out of business. Associated Grocers Co-op closed in 1988.

<sup>38</sup> Associated Grocers' Credit Union was created in 1932 and dissolved in 1988.

**Kim:** Do you remember any other Jewish families who were involved in that, either the grocery association or . . .?

**Max:** Yes, Jack Maziar<sup>39</sup> was manager and the Newmans . . . Morris Newman<sup>40</sup> and [Theodore] “Teddy” Newman<sup>41</sup>. What was that guy’s name<sup>42</sup> . . . his son was police chief<sup>43</sup> . . . Beerman, [Frederick Harrison] “Fred” Beerman? The Beermans were in the grocery business and part of the organization, too.

**Kim:** Can you remember the names of some of the individuals that applied for these loans?

**Max:** I don’t remember. They were all members of the grocers’ association.<sup>44</sup> They lent each other their money. I think the Berkowitz’s. . . you know Shirley [Brickman]<sup>45</sup> and Perry Brickman.<sup>46</sup> . . . their name was [Irving and Rose] Berkowitz<sup>47</sup> and they were members of this organization also.

**Kim:** Did your father have any type of formal or informal training?

**Max:** My daddy was the philosopher of the family. He had no formal education but was a very bright man and a learned man . . . not from a religious standpoint because my daddy was a

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<sup>39</sup> Jack Maziar (1908-1997), a native of Russia, was a manager at Associated Grocers Co-op in Atlanta, Georgia from 1929 to 1971, which bought merchandise and sold it to member retail grocery owners, eliminating the wholesaler. He set up the Associated Grocers Credit Union. He was active in the East Point Rotary Club, headed the grocery division of the Atlanta Jewish Federation, and was treasurer of the Atlanta Bureau of Jewish Education.

<sup>40</sup> Morris Newman (1884-1962) was a native of Poland and an Atlanta retail grocer who co-chaired the retail food division of the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Fund Campaign that was known as the Exodus Drive.

<sup>41</sup> Theodore “Teddy” Newman was a native of Poland and an Atlanta grocery owner. He was a president of the Associated Grocers’ Co-op.

<sup>42</sup> Harry Beerman (1886-1957) was the owner of H. Beerman Grocery in Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>43</sup> Frederick Harrison “Fred” Beerman (1911-1994) was Assistant Chief of Police in Atlanta who was the first police officer on the scene of The Temple Bombing in 1958. He retired in 1972.

<sup>44</sup> The official name was the Associated Grocers Co-op.

<sup>45</sup> Shirley Berkowitz Brickman (1935-) is a native of Atlanta, Georgia. Along with her husband, Dr. Perry Brickman, she is a long-time volunteer with Jewish organizations in the community, including as a docent at the William Breman Jewish Heritage & Holocaust Museum and a founder of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta’s newcomer program, Shalom Atlanta.

<sup>46</sup> Dr. Stanley Perry Brickman (1931-), born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, is a noted oral surgeon who practiced oral surgery in the Atlanta area from 1961 to 2004. A graduate of Emory College and the University of Tennessee, Dr. Brickman was kicked out of Emory University’s School of Dentistry in 1951 because he was Jewish. Brickman interviewed dozens of Jewish students who attended the school in the 1950’s and 1960’s, compiling a video that revealed a pattern of antisemitism by the school’s dean. In 2012, Emory University administrators issued a public apology to Stanley Perry Brickman. He served in the United States Air Force as a dentist at the Strategic Air Command (SAC) base in Westover, Massachusetts. He has been a president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta and a volunteer at various synagogues in Atlanta, Hillel, Yeshiva High School, the Greenfield Hebrew Academy, the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta, Atlanta Jewish Academy, Atlanta Israel Bonds, the Georgia Israel Law Enforcement Exchange (GILEE), the Southeastern Region of ADL, and the Southern Jewish Historical Society.

<sup>47</sup> Parents of Shirley Brickman and owners of Irving’s Market on Chestnut Street in Atlanta, Georgia from 1933 to 1968.

Zionist.<sup>48</sup> I remember going to the [*Yiddish Natzionaler Arbeiter*] *Farband*<sup>49</sup> School and learning Hebrew as a language.

**Kim:** Where was that located?

**Max:** On Atlanta Avenue right across from Atlanta Hospital<sup>50</sup> . . . right around [the corner] from the Ahavath Achim [AA] synagogue,<sup>51</sup> the old synagogue on Washington Street. In fact, Dr. [Isaac ‘Yitzchok’] Fine<sup>52</sup> was our Hebrew teacher and his son, Leonard Fine,<sup>53</sup> is an internationally-known lecturer and writer. We have set up a Helen Kuniansky Torah Institute at the AA synagogue. We have different speakers come two or three times a year. Dr. Leonard Fine was here. His father was a teacher at the rabbinical school in Baltimore. In fact, I buried my mother in 1976 and the lady who was keeping the cemetery told me that she couldn’t take care of it anymore. I’ve been taking care of the [*Yiddish Natzionaler Arbeiter*] *Farband* Cemetery at Greenwood [Cemetery]<sup>54</sup> for the past 15 years. My brothers and I set up a trust fund so that we would get enough money to take care of the Zionist . . . the [*Yiddish Natzionaler Arbeiter*] *Farband* Labor Cemetery at Greenwood Cemetery.

**Kim:** Can you name any other people who were in that class with you taking Hebrew? Other students?

**Max:** There were Louis Zipperman<sup>55</sup> and Sylvia Kuniansky [Zipperman]<sup>56</sup> They live in

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<sup>48</sup> Those who subscribe to Zionism, that is, support for a Jewish national state.

<sup>49</sup> *Yiddish Natzionaler Arbeiter Farband*, the Yiddish name for the Jewish National Workers Alliance, was an early Yiddish-speaking Labor Zionist landsmanshaft in North America. The Farband operated as a mutual aid society parallel to the political party Poale Zion, organizing cooperative insurance and medical plans and an extensive Yiddish and Hebrew educational system. In the 1920’s, it developed a cooperative housing building in the Bronx, New York.

<sup>50</sup> Davis-Fischer Sanitarium was also known as Atlanta Hospital. In 1908, Dr. Edward Campbell Davis and a former student of his, Dr. Luther C. Fischer, opened the 26-bed Davis-Fischer Sanatorium at 35 Crew Street, near Atlanta Avenue in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1911, the hospital moved to Linden Avenue and was renamed Crawford W. Long Memorial Hospital in 1931.

<sup>51</sup> Ahavath Achim was founded in 1887 in a small room on Gilmer Street. In 1901 they moved to a permanent building at the corner of Piedmont and Gilmer Street. In 1921, the congregation constructed a synagogue at Washington Street and Woodward Avenue. The final service in that building was held in 1958 to make way for construction of the Downtown Connector (the concurrent section of Interstate 75 and Interstate 85 through Atlanta). The synagogue moved to its current location on Peachtree Battle Avenue in 1958.

<sup>52</sup> Isaac [Yitzchok] Fine was a professor of history at Baltimore Hebrew College (now Baltimore Hebrew Institute) and a teacher at the Atlanta Farband School when it opened.

<sup>53</sup> Leonard J. Fein (1934-2014), also known as Leibel Fein, was an American activist, writer and teacher who specialized in Jewish social themes. He was co-founder and editor of *Moment Magazine*, and the founder of MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, a Jewish hunger-relief organization.

<sup>54</sup> Greenwood Cemetery in Atlanta Georgia, opened in 1904, is designed in the Lawn style, with long vistas in all directions. Greenwood has a large Jewish section.

<sup>55</sup> Louis Zipperman (1915-2007) was born in Atlanta, Georgia where he was a vice-president of the Aaronean Young Judean Club. He was the owner of Community Linen Rental Service in Los Angeles, California. He was a

California right now.

**Kim:** Did your mother have an occupation . . . the ‘Five Star Mother’?

**Max:** My mother helped in the grocery store. She ran the family actually. My daddy let my mother do the raising of the family mainly. When my daddy died I was 19 years old. I quit school and went to run the family grocery store.

**Kim:** Where was it located at that time?

**Max:** The corner of Woodland and Confederate Avenue in East Atlanta. We were one of three Jewish families in the whole neighborhood.

**Kim:** Can you name the other families?

**Max:** There was Teddy Newman . . . his daughter used to work at the synagogue, what was her name<sup>57</sup>. . . and Milton Smithloff.<sup>58</sup> All three had grocery stores in East Atlanta. When I went into the service, my mother had to close the store up and when I came back I never went back into the grocery business. I had been building houses to supplement the family income in the early . . . let’s see Daddy died in 1936, before I went into the service in 1943.

**Kim:** Can you tell me about your mother and father’s involvement . . . any other Zionist, Jewish . . . ?

**Max:** They were mainly involved in the [*Yiddish Natzionaler Arbeiter*] *Farband* Labor organization.

**Kim:** Can you tell me any more about that? What type of functions they did?

**Max:** We had a Yiddish School . . . I graduated from Yiddish School. They taught Yiddish<sup>59</sup> as a language. I was *bar mitzvah*<sup>60</sup> at home in Yiddish and in English. Although we lived on a

leader in the textile industry and president of the Linen Supply Association of America (LSAA-renamed TRSA in 1979).

<sup>56</sup> Wife of Louis Zipperman.

<sup>57</sup> Edith Newman Waronker.

<sup>58</sup> Milton Smithloff (1924-1994) was an Atlanta dentist. His parents, Benjamin and Jennie Smithloff, owned a grocery store in Atlanta.

<sup>59</sup> Yiddish is the common historical language of Ashkenazi Jews from Central and Eastern Europe. It is heavily Germanic based but uses the Hebrew alphabet. The language was spoken or understood as a common tongue for many European Jews up until the middle of the twentieth century. Although Henry uses the terms “Yiddish” and “Yid” to refer to Jews, Yiddish is a reference to a person’s language and not necessarily their ethnicity, religion, or culture.

<sup>60</sup> *Bar Mitzvah* is a rite of passage for Jewish boys aged 13 years and one day. At that time, a Jewish boy is considered a responsible adult for most religious purposes. He is now duty bound to keep the commandments, he puts on tefillin, and may be counted to the minyan quorum for public worship. He celebrates the bar mitzvah by being called up to the reading of the Torah in the synagogue, usually on the next available Sabbath after his Hebrew birthday.

corner . . . we lived right where old Piedmont Hospital<sup>61</sup> used to be on Crumley Street, where the ambulance driveway used to come. [It] would have run right into our house. Dr. Floyd McRae<sup>62</sup> was our doctor at one time. I used to watch him come in and out of the hospital. He was a well-known surgeon in the city of Atlanta.

I think there were six of us at home. We lived right across from the hospital and I remember taking out the tonsils. Five of us had tonsils taken out at one time at home in those days when we were kids. But actually the main thing I remember [was] that my father always taught me that your word is your bond and it's better to have a good word than a signed contract. We've always tried to live up to that. My mother always told me to stand up for what I thought was right and speak out [and] don't keep quiet. I always felt that if the Jews in America ever spoke out like they should have we wouldn't have had so many people killed in the Holocaust.<sup>63</sup> From my own stand point, I think the Jews in America were a sorry bunch of people during the Holocaust. None of them raised any hand. As far as [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt<sup>64</sup> is concerned, I always considered him like a saint [until] after I found out he never helped any of the Jews. During the Holocaust he only let a thousand Jews stay at a POW [prisoners-of-war] camp in Oswego, New York.<sup>65</sup> From then on you can have him and the whole bunch as far as I'm

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<sup>61</sup> Piedmont Atlanta Hospital is located at 1968 Peachtree Road, Atlanta, Georgia. Piedmont was established in 1905 as the Piedmont Sanitarium in the former mansion of Charles Thomas Swift at the northwest corner of Capitol and Crumley streets in the then-affluent Washington-Rawson neighborhood. The name was changed to Piedmont Hospital and eventually the hospital took up an entire square block. The Washington-Rawson neighborhood was razed in the early 1960's to make way for Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium and its parking lots.

<sup>62</sup> There were two surgeons with this name in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Floyd Willcox McRae, Jr. (1889-1972) was a native of Atlanta, Georgia who began his practice as a surgeon in Atlanta after serving as commanding officer at a base hospital in France during World War I. He was a Chairman of the board of directors for Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta. His father, Dr. Floyd Willcox McRae, Sr. (1861-1921) was born in Telfair County, Georgia. He was a co-founder of Piedmont Sanitarium (later renamed Piedmont Hospital) in Atlanta, Georgia and its first Chief of Surgery. He gained fame by performing 49 appendectomies without a death. He died in 1921 of a self-inflicted gunshot wound that was ruled accidental by a coroner's jury.

<sup>63</sup> The Holocaust was the systematic, government-sponsored attempt by the Germans to annihilate the Jews of Europe between 1939 and 1945, which resulted in the deaths of nearly 6,000,000 Jews.

<sup>64</sup> Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945) was the 32nd President of the United States and a central figure in world events during the mid-twentieth century, leading the United States through a time of worldwide economic crisis and war. Popularly known as 'FDR,' he collapsed and died in his home in Warm Springs, Georgia just a few months before the end of the war. He was a Democrat. FDR was an avid horse rider and enjoyed an active early life. He was diagnosed with infantile paralysis, better known as polio, in 1921, at the age of 39. Despite permanent paralysis from the waist down, he was careful never to be seen using his wheelchair in public, and great care was taken to prevent any portrayal in the press that would highlight his disability.

<sup>65</sup> The Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter in Oswego, New York was a refugee camp which housed 1,000 Jews who were permitted to come to the United States from Italy in the summer of 1944. The camp was surrounded by a fence topped with barbed wire. The Jews lived in barracks but they were allowed to leave the camp with permission, including to attend school. They were released in February 1946. It was the first and only refugee center for those fleeing the Holocaust in the United States during World War II.

concerned. If anything happened today, I believe the Jews of America will speak out. They will be heard. They're not going to let things go on over the world like the Jews of my father's generation did. I know some of them might have tried. As far as I'm concerned, none of them tried hard enough. Between Bernard Baruch<sup>66</sup> and the Lehmans<sup>67</sup> and the Warburgs,<sup>68</sup> they should have been able to help the Jews in Europe. I just don't feel that they had the courage enough to do what they should have done.

<End Tape 1, Side 1, 01>

<Begin Tape 1, Side 1, 02>

**Kim:** How did your father develop his Zionistic beliefs, do you know?

**Max:** I really don't know that except I always compared my father to a . . . he would have been a perfect settler in Israel. He always wanted us . . . as kids . . . I remember we traveled out to see my mother's brother in Akron, Ohio.

**Kim:** What was his name?

**Max:** His name was [Edward] Fitterman.<sup>69</sup> He lived in Akron, Ohio and we went up and on the way up we passed a truck farm on the way in Nashville, Tennessee. My father always had a dream of being a farmer and being close enough to the big city where the children could get a Jewish education. That was his dream, to be a farmer.

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<sup>66</sup> Bernard Mannes Baruch (1870–1965) was an American financier, stock investor, philanthropist, statesman, and political consultant. After amassing a fortune in business, he devoted his time toward advising U.S. Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt on economic matters and became a philanthropist. Baruch College of City University of New York was named for him.

<sup>67</sup> The Lehman family is a prominent wealthy family of Jewish-German-American businesspeople who founded the financial firm Lehman Brothers which was the sixth largest investment banking house in the United States by 1950. The family traces back to Abraham Lehmann, a cattle merchant in Rimpar, Bavaria, who changed his Yiddish surname Löw (Loeb) to the German Lehman. Lehman Brothers was co-founded by brothers Henry and Emanuel Lehman. Other Lehman family members were New York Governor Herbert Lehman, for whom Lehman College is named; Robert Lehman, who donated his art collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art; District Attorney Robert Morgenthau; and a former ambassador to Denmark, John Loeb Jr.

<sup>68</sup> The Warburg family is a family whose members were eminent in banking and philanthropy. They settled in the German town of Warburgum (from which the family derived its name) in 1559. Subsequently, branches settled in Scandinavia, England, and the United States. Simon Elias Warburg (1760–1828) founded the first Jewish community in Sweden and his grandson Frederik Elias Warburg (1832–99) was a co-founder of the Central London Electric Railway. Moses Marcus Warburg (d. 1830) and his brother Gerson (d. 1825) founded in 1798 the bank of M.M. Warburg & Co. of Hamburg, Germany. Among their descendants were five brothers, grandsons of Moses M., of whom four were bankers: Max M. Warburg (1867–1946), financial adviser to the German delegation to the Paris peace conference in 1919; Paul Moritz Warburg (1868–1932), member of the U.S. bank of Kuhn, Loeb and Co. and of the Federal Reserve Board; Felix Moritz Warburg (1871–1937), partner in Kuhn, Loeb and Co.; and Fritz Moritz Warburg (1879–1964). Felix M. was a supporter of adult education and Jewish theological schools and was active in other philanthropic organizations. James Paul Warburg (1896–1969), son of Paul M., was a banker and economist, member of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's original "brain trust," and author of several books.

<sup>69</sup> Edward Fitterman (1876–1960), a grocery owner in Akron, Ohio.

**Kim:** Can you tell me a little bit about growing up in the West End?<sup>70</sup>

**Max:** I never grew up in the West End. I grew up, like I said, on Crumley Street. Crumley ran between Washington Street and Capitol Avenue.

**Kim:** What was it like to be one of the few Jews in the area?

**Max:** We had quite a few Jews in that area in those days. The Zippermans, the Fogel family, Marvin Goldstein,<sup>71</sup> they lived on Capitol Avenue and we lived on Crumley Street. The Wolbes were living there then. Dan Wolbe's parents [Emanuel Wolbe and Beatrice "Beatty" Wolbe] lived on Glenn Street, I think. The Weisses . . . Abe Weiss and his family lived on Glenn Street, I believe. In those days you had a dirt driveway between the streets. We lived between Crumley Street and Glenn Street. Crumley and Glenn ran east and west and the dirt driveways ran north and south. Our whole house would be somewhere in the [Atlanta-Fulton County] Stadium<sup>72</sup> now. In fact, all that whole area . . . That's how the Kuniansky's got started in the building business. Harry Kuniansky, my uncle . . . bought the corner of Georgia Avenue and Washington Street. He built the grocery store on the corner. Jacob's Pharmacy,<sup>73</sup> which was a big chain in those days, decided they wanted the corner, so they paid Uncle Harry a lot of money for the corner. He built

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<sup>70</sup> The West End is a neighborhood in Atlanta. Originally called 'White Hall' in 1835 it was the meeting of important railroad lines. By the mid 1950's and 1960's it was in decline as people fled to the suburbs and black people moved in. Today it is primarily black middle class.

<sup>71</sup> Marvin C. Goldstein (1917-1997) was a prominent dentist and businessman in Atlanta. He was a graduate of Boys' High School in Atlanta, had with a combined undergraduate and master's degree in dentistry from Emory University in Atlanta, and trained in orthodontic dentistry at Columbia University and the University of Michigan. He served as a dental surgeon for the United States Army Air Forces in Europe during World War II. He and his brother, Irving Goldstein, also a dentist, built the Atlanta Americana Motor Hotel, Atlanta's first integrated hotel, which opened in 1961. Marvin was international president of the Alpha Omega Dental Fraternity, editor of the American Journal of Orthodontics, president of the Georgia Society of Orthodontists, trustee for the American Fund for Dental Health, honorary fellow in the American College of Dentists and International College of Dentists, and chief of staff of the Ben Massell Dental Clinic. He was a president of Ahavath Achim Synagogue, Atlanta Jewish Federation, ORT Atlanta men's chapter, Tichon Atlanta, B'nai Brith's Atlanta chapter; vice-president of the American Jewish Committee; and a vice-chairman of the board of trustees for the Martin Luther King Center for Non-violent Social Change.

<sup>72</sup> Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium, often referred to as 'Fulton County Stadium' and originally named 'Atlanta Stadium,' was built to attract a major league baseball team. In 1966 it succeeded when the Milwaukee Braves relocated to Atlanta. The stadium was built on the site of the cleared Washington-Rawson neighborhood, which had been a wealthy area and home to much of Atlanta's Jewish community. The Braves continued to play at Fulton County Stadium until the end of the 1996 season, when they moved into Turner Field, the converted Centennial Olympic Stadium originally built for the 1996 Summer Olympics. The stadium was demolished in 1997. A parking lot for Turner Field occupied the site.

<sup>73</sup> Jacob's Pharmacy was a chain of drug stores founded by Joseph Jacobs. Jacobs was born in Jefferson, Georgia. He attended the University of Georgia in 1877 and received a degree from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy in 1879. In 1879 Jacobs opened the Athens Pharmaceutical Company in Athens, Georgia. In 1884, he bought a drug store in Downtown Atlanta on the southwest corner of Peachtree and Marietta Streets where, in 1886, Coca-Cola was served for the first time as a fountain drink. There was also a Jacob's Pharmacy in the heart of Atlanta's Buckhead neighborhood where Charlie Loudermilk Park is now located.

his store next door to Jacob's Pharmacy right on the corner of Georgia Avenue and Capitol. At that time, I believe, the Novak Bakery was [there] also. He owned the whole block there. That's the way the Kunianskys got started in the building business . . . in the shopping center business. They started off in houses and in shopping centers. I quit building houses in the 1950's and started building warehouses. We don't build houses anymore. I have two sons running the business. We have an MK Management that's run by Doug, my youngest son, Douglas Kuniansky. David Kuniansky, my oldest son, he runs the whole business, the construction company and the management company. I have two fine sons. I'm only semi-retired. I come to work every day. Quote: "I just come to make sure the boys know who's still the boss." Otherwise, they do all the work and I just give a little advice. I really feel I've earned my keep already.

**Kim:** How were the holidays observed in your home?

**Max:** We didn't observe . . . we were not religious Jews. In our own home we celebrated, of course, *Yom Kippur*<sup>74</sup> and *Rosh Ha-Shanah*<sup>75</sup> and Passover<sup>76</sup> . . . usually celebrated all the days of *Rosh Ha-Shanah*. *Hanukkah*<sup>77</sup> we always celebrated. In my own home, my wife . . . my wife was a very studious woman that believed in . . . went to religious classes at both The Temple<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Hebrew for 'Day of Atonement.' The most sacred day of the Jewish year. *Yom Kippur* is a 25 hour fast day. Most of the day is spent in prayer, reciting *yizkor* for deceased relatives, confessing sins, requesting divine forgiveness, and listening to *Torah* readings and sermons. People greet each other with the wish that they may be sealed in the heavenly book for a good year ahead. The day ends with the blowing of the *shofar* (a ram's horn).

<sup>75</sup> *Rosh Ha-Shanah* [Hebrew: head of the year; i.e. New Year festival] begins the cycle of High Holy Days. It introduces the Ten Days of Penitence, when Jews examine their souls and take stock of their actions. On the tenth day is *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. The tradition is that on *Rosh Ha-Shanah*, G-d sits in judgment on humanity. Then the fate of every living creature is inscribed in the Book of Life or Death. Prayer and repentance before the sealing of the books on *Yom Kippur* may revoke these decisions.

<sup>76</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Hebrew f Hebrew: Pesach. The anniversary of Israel's liberation from Egyptian bondage. The holiday lasts for eight days. Unleavened bread, matzah, is eaten in memory of the unleavened bread prepared by the Israelite during their hasty flight from Egypt, when they had not time to wait for the dough to rise. On the first two nights of Passover, the seder, the central event of the holiday is celebrated. The seder service is one of the most colorful and joyous occasions in Jewish life. In addition to eating matzah during the seder, Jews are prohibited from eating leavened bread during the entire week of Passover. In addition, Jews are also supposed to avoid foods made with wheat, barley, rye, spelt or oats unless those foods are labeled 'kosher for Passover.' Jews traditionally have separate dishes for Passover. or 'dedication.' An eight-day festival of lights usually falling around Christmas on the Christian calendar. *Hanukkah* celebrates the victory of the Maccabees in 165 BCE over the Seleucid rules of Palestine, who had desecrated the Temple. The Maccabees wanted to re-dedicate the Temple altar to Jewish worship by rekindling the menorah but could only find one small jar of ritually pure olive oil. This oil continued to burn miraculously for eight days, enabling them to prepare new oil. The *Hanukkah* menorah, or *hanukiah*, with its nine branches, is used to commemorate this miracle by lighting eight candles, one for each day, by the ninth candle.

<sup>78</sup> The Temple, or 'Hebrew Benevolent Congregation,' is Atlanta's oldest Jewish congregation. The cornerstone was laid on the Temple on Garnett Street in 1875. The dedication was held in 1877 and the Temple was located there until 1902. The Temple's next location on Pryor Street was dedicated in 1902. The Temple's current location in

and Beth Jacob.<sup>79</sup> Tuesday was the day of learning. She really was a student of Jewish religion.

**Kim:** Her name was Helen?

**Max:** Helen [Silver Kuniansky]. Of course, it never rubbed off on me. I only went to synagogue so she would not be by herself. I guess what I was raised to be. Of course, I've been very active in the Jewish community all my life. I was head of the Youth Department in the [Jewish] Federation [of Greater Atlanta]<sup>80</sup> in 1945 when I returned from service. I guess I've held every position in the Atlanta Jewish community throughout the years.

**Kim:** What synagogue would you go to? You said you went on High Holy Days.<sup>81</sup>

**Max:** I go to Ahavath Achim, [a] Conservative<sup>82</sup> synagogue. Most of my brothers belong to The Temple, but I would consider myself a Conservative Jew from a religious standpoint. Not Orthodox.<sup>83</sup> Not Reform.<sup>84</sup>

**Kim:** Where did you attend elementary school?

**Max:** I went to James L. Key<sup>85</sup> and Crew Street School.<sup>86</sup> In fact, Ida Jarrell<sup>87</sup> taught . . . she was later head of the school at the Board of Education in Atlanta. She taught me in Crew Street

Midtown on Peachtree Street was dedicated in 1931. The main sanctuary is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Reform congregation now totals approximately 1,500 families (2015).

<sup>79</sup> Beth Jacob is an Orthodox synagogue on LaVista Road in Atlanta founded in 1942 by former members of Ahavath Achim who were looking for a more Orthodox congregation. Beth Jacob is now Atlanta's largest Orthodox congregation. The first location was a converted house on Boulevard.

<sup>80</sup> The Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta raises funds, which are dispersed throughout the Jewish community. Services also include caring for Jews in need locally and around the world, community outreach, leadership development, and educational opportunities. It is part of the Jewish Federation of North America (JFNA).

<sup>81</sup> The two High Holy Days are Rosh Ha-Shanah (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).

<sup>82</sup> Conservative Judaism is a form of Judaism that seeks to preserve Jewish tradition and ritual but has a more flexible approach to the interpretation of the law than Orthodox Judaism. It attempts to combine a positive attitude toward modern culture, while preserving a commitment to Jewish observance. They also observe gender equality (mixed seating, women rabbis and *bat mitzvahs*).

<sup>83</sup> Orthodox Judaism is a traditional branch of Judaism that strictly follows the Written *Torah* and the Oral Law concerning prayer, dress, food, sex, family relations, social behavior, the Sabbath day, holidays and more.

<sup>84</sup> Reform Judaism is a division within Judaism especially in North America and Western Europe. Historically it began in the nineteenth century. In general, the Reform movement maintains that Judaism and Jewish traditions should be modernized and compatible with participation in Western culture. While the Torah remains the law, in Reform Judaism women are included (mixed seating, bat mitzvah and women rabbis), music is allowed in the services and most of the service is in English.

<sup>85</sup> James L. Key Elementary School was located at Ormond Street and Capital Avenue in Atlanta, Georgia and was in existence from at least the 1940's through the 1960's.

<sup>86</sup> Crew Street School was the first grammar school opened in the Atlanta Public School System. Crew Street grammar school opened in 1872, which also happened to be the end of Reconstruction in Georgia. The original structure was located at 97 Crew Street between Washington Street and Capital Avenue. It was demolished and rebuilt twice in 1895 and 1911. In 1957, it was one of the nearly 500 buildings demolished for construction of the Interstate 20 expressway.

<sup>87</sup> Ida Jarrell was superintendent of the Atlanta Public School System circa 1958. Ira Jarrell was superintendent in 1948.

School. Then I went to Hoke Smith Junior High<sup>88</sup> and then to Boys' High School.<sup>89</sup> I graduated high school in 1933 at the age of about 16 or 17. Let's see: 1917 to 1933, 16 years old.

**Kim:** Can you name some of your classmates at either elementary or junior high?

**Max:** I was in school with Sylvia Kuniansky [Zipperman]—a first cousin— in junior high, Louis Zipperman, Eleanor [Weiss] Parks,<sup>90</sup> [William Wolford] 'Wolfie' Bromberg.<sup>91</sup>

**Kim:** What was the neighborhood like that you grew up in? What was the ethnic composition and the economic?

**Max:** [It was] mostly Jewish. The Jews in those days lived between Washington Street and Capitol Avenue and backed into Pulliam Street where we used to fight with the *goyim*.<sup>92</sup> They used to come over into our territory. We called it 'our territory.' It was basically Washington Street. There was no law for us in those days either. We were taught to protect ourselves when we were 15 years old on up. We had to protect ourselves if we wanted to exist. I don't think it was any organized antisemitism.<sup>93</sup> The only kind of organized antisemitism that we ran into was the Columbians.<sup>94</sup> In those days . . .

**Kim:** Was that the KKK [Ku Klux Klan]?<sup>95</sup>

**Max:** No. The KKK existed, too. In fact, my brother Harry used to go to the KKK meetings and

<sup>88</sup> High school in Atlanta from 1947 to 1985 that was named for Michael Hoke Smith who was a United States Senator from Georgia, the 58th Governor of Georgia, and United States Secretary of the Interior.

<sup>89</sup> Boys' High School was founded in 1924 and is now known as Henry W. Grady High School. It is part of the Atlanta Public School System. It has had many notable alumni, including S. Truett Cathy, the founder of Chick-fil-A. It is located in Midtown Atlanta.

<sup>90</sup> Eleanor Wise Parks (1917-2008) was a native of Atlanta and a graduate of Girls' High School.

<sup>91</sup> William Wolford 'Wolfie' Bromberg (1918 -2004) was a commander for the Mack Frankel-Atlanta Post 112 of the Jewish War Veterans. During World War II, he served three years overseas in the U.S. Army, keeping the books on soldiers' pay. He returned to Atlanta where he owned a grocery, then a variety store, before entering the real estate business.

<sup>92</sup> Plural form of the word *goy*, a Yiddish term meaning "people" or "nation." In common usage, it designates a non-Jewish or Gentile person.

<sup>93</sup> Antisemitism is prejudice against, hostility to, or hatred of Jews.

<sup>94</sup> The Columbians were one of the first neo-Nazi groups in the United States. They were formed in 1946 in Atlanta but only lasted a year because its leaders, Homer Loomis and Emory Burke, were arrested and convicted on charges of usurping police power and inciting to riot. At the height of the organization, Loomis claimed there were 2,000 members but the real number was probably closer to 200. They made their presence known by marching in lockstep through the streets of transitional neighborhoods dressed in uniforms that looked like those of the SA in Germany. They harassed black families and several members did attack and beat black people. George Bright, who placed the bomb at the Temple in Atlanta, was a former Columbian. However, I could find no evidence that they bought houses and moved in black families in order to foment trouble.

<sup>95</sup> The Ku Klux Klan (or Knights of the Ku Klux Klan today) is a white supremacist, white nationalist, anti-immigration, anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic, anti-black secret society, whose methods included terrorism and murder. It was founded in the South in the 1860's and then died out and come back several times, most notably in the 1920's when membership soared again, and then again in the 1960's during the civil rights era. When the Klan was re-founded in 1915 in Georgia, the event was marked by a cross burning on Stone Mountain. In the past its members dressed up in white robes and a pointed hat designed to hide their identity and to terrify. It is still in existence.

report to Drew Pearson.<sup>96</sup> They had . . . Pearson was . . . “Washington Merry-Go-Round.”<sup>97</sup> I organized a group of 50 young Jewish war veterans. We went down to a meeting of these Columbians. They were the worst kind of antisemites<sup>98</sup> alive. They had tried to organize the Atlanta community but the white community would not have any part of it. They were the ones that bombed The Temple<sup>99</sup> but they could not prove it in court. We went to their meeting and let them know that if they touched any Jewish person in Atlanta, young or old, that we weren’t going to turn them over to the police. We were going to take care of them ourselves which we did. I mean, we had the permission of the elders of the community, Abe Goldstein<sup>100</sup> and Frank Garson<sup>101</sup> at the time. Alex Miller<sup>102</sup> who was southeastern director of ADL<sup>103</sup> okayed our permission to go to the meeting with only the understanding that we would not try to start any trouble at the meeting. The Columbians really bought houses in the fringe area of Atlanta between blacks and whites and they would move blacks into the white sections to cause disturbances. They made a lot of profit off of selling the houses to black people moving in the white section. The whole irony of the thing was that the Jewish doctors would take and care for free these Columbian’s kids. I think when we came to the meeting, we flushed it out and police

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<sup>96</sup> Andrew Russell Pearson (1897-1969) was a well-known and controversial columnist writing under the pen name Drew Pearson. His column was known as the “Washington Merry-Go-Round.” In his column, he broke the story of Lt. Gen. George S. Patton and the soldier he slapped in 1943, brought about the downfall of Secretary of Defense James V. Forrestal, an ideological foe, and denounced the smear tactics of Sen. Joseph McCarthy in fanning fears of Communist subversion. He also had a program on NBC Radio titled *Drew Pearson Comments*.

<sup>97</sup> Founded by Drew Pearson, “Washington Merry-Go-Round” began as a syndicated column in 1932 and is the longest-running syndicated column in the United States.

<sup>98</sup> People who are prejudiced against Jews, hostile to Jews, or hate Jews.

<sup>99</sup> The Temple on Peachtree Street in Atlanta, Georgia was bombed in the early morning hours of October 12, 1958. About 50 sticks of dynamite were planted near the building and tore a huge hole in the wall. No one was injured in the bombing as it was during the night. Rabbi Jacob Rothschild was an outspoken advocate of civil rights and integration and friend of Martin Luther King Jr. Five men associated with the National States’ Rights Party, a white separatist group, were tried and acquitted in the bombing.

<sup>100</sup> Abe Goldstein (1889-1982) was a business and Jewish community leader. He was active in Ahavath Achim and Israel Bonds, the Anti-Defamation League, the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Federation and many other community causes. He founded Prior Tire Company in 1920 and remained active in the business throughout his life.

<sup>101</sup> Frank Garson (1886-1955) was an Atlanta businessman and philanthropist. He founded the Lovable Company, manufacturing lingerie and brassieres. He was born Frank Gottesman and later changed his name to Garson. Garson was active in the United Palestine Appeal, the Jewish National Fund, the Jewish Welfare Board and the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith.

<sup>102</sup> Alexander Finn Miller was Director of the Southern Regional Office of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of B’nai B’rith from 1945 to 1954, and National Community Service Director for the ADL from 1954.

<sup>103</sup> The Independent Order of B’nai B’rith, a Jewish service organization in the United States, founded the ADL in October 1913. It is an international Jewish non-governmental organization based in the United States. Describing itself as “the nation’s premier civil rights/human relations agency,” the ADL states that it “fights anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry, defends democratic ideals and protects civil rights for all,” doing so through “information, education, legislation, and advocacy.”

chief, Captain [Herbert] Jenkins,<sup>104</sup> and Mayor [William] Hartsfield<sup>105</sup> followed it up and made sure they didn't cause any more trouble. I think we flushed them out into the open and they were able to do something about it. Can you name some other Jewish men that were in this group that went to visit them?

**Max:** There were quite a few of us. Harley Ross<sup>106</sup> was one of them, Alfred Berman,<sup>107</sup> my brother Harry Kuniensky. We had a football player named Doug [unintelligible 12:10] that also joined the crowd. I put Harry and Doug at the back door. We were two flights up a rickety stairs at a labor union hall on the corner of Pryor Street and Fair Street in those days—that's what Memorial Drive was called<sup>108</sup>—just in case we needed to get out in a hurry. As it turned out, I think only one person in our group got angry enough to shout out something. As a rule we behaved in good order. We accomplished our purpose.

**Kim:** Was it difficult to get bank loans in your business when it first started?

**Max:** No. We've always had a good relation with all the banks.

**Kim:** Who helped you make some of your early contacts in the construction business?

**Max:** I made most of them myself. I had an engineer. We have a specific type business. Our business is we meet with the agent and we have our own in-house architects and engineers. I used to go all over the country seeing different customers with my engineer making lease deals. We mainly build for lease, we're not just a construction company. We build specifically for customers for lease purposes.

**Kim:** How did the Great Depression<sup>109</sup> affect your business?

**Max:** My daddy and his brothers lost everything they had between 1929 and 1933. They were

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<sup>104</sup> Herbert T. Jenkins Sr. (1907-1990) was Chief of the Atlanta Police Department from 1947 to 1973. He appointed the city's first eight black police officers. He was the only Southerner appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson to the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. He joined the police force in 1931, was promoted to captain in 1945 and to chief in 1947.

<sup>105</sup> William Berry Hartsfield, Sr. (1890-1971), served as the 49th and 51st Mayor of Atlanta. His tenure extended from 1937 to 1941 and again from 1942 to 1962, making him the longest-serving mayor of his native Atlanta. It was under his direction that Atlanta became a world-class city with the image of the "City Too Busy to Hate."

<sup>106</sup> Harley H. Ross (1917-1990), a native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was a jewelry executive at Ellman's, a catalog merchant in Atlanta, Georgia. His name was changed from Harley H. Rosansky (or Rasansky) in 1946.

<sup>107</sup> Alfred "Al" Irving Berman (1922-2001), known to friends as "Apples", was co-founder of Berman Office Supply in Atlanta, Georgia. He was a World War II United States Army Air Corps veteran. He was on the football team of Boys' High in Atlanta.

<sup>108</sup> Fair Street in Atlanta, Georgia was named for the South Central Agricultural Society fair, which moved to facilities on Fair St. in 1850. The street was renamed Memorial Drive.

<sup>109</sup> The Great Depression was a severe worldwide economic depression in the decade preceding World War II. The time of the Great Depression varied across nations, but in most countries it started in about 1929 and lasted until the late 1930's or early 1940's. It was the longest, most widespread, and deepest depression of the twentieth century.

dead broke. When my daddy passed away he had probably \$500,000 in second mortgage notes and didn't have enough money . . . didn't have any insurance money left. In fact, when my Daddy died I had to go to Jefferson Mortgage Company and arrange a longer payout on our house. Daddy was a wealthy man during the twenties. He lost every bit of it in the Crash<sup>110</sup> . . . didn't have enough money to pay off the house, but mother and I sent all of the kids to college. I went to night school at [Georgia Institute of] Tech[nology—Atlanta, Georgia].

**Kim:** What did you study?

**Max:** I started taking chemical engineering but I used to go to night school at Georgia Tech . . . it was, I guess the beginning of Georgia State [University—Atlanta, Georgia]<sup>111</sup> because I used to go to night school and have to make a passing mark in order to take the day school exam. You only got credit for the day school exam if you passed the regular exam. But I didn't seem to have any trouble. Going to Boys' High School, I didn't have to study because I had such a good education at the old Boys' High which is now Henry Grady High School.<sup>112</sup>

**Kim:** Can you name any Jews who were in the banking business at the time when you first got started in the business?

**Max:** The only Jews ever in the banking business was old man [I.J.] Paradies.<sup>113</sup> He owned a small bank way out on Marietta Street. At one time a group of us tried to form a bank in Atlanta and the big banks squashed it. We didn't stand a prayer. It was mainly made up of Jewish people in the city of Atlanta.

**Kim:** Can you name some of them?

**Max:** Sam Miller,<sup>114</sup> [who] was a lawyer, Harry Lane Siegel,<sup>115</sup> he was in the advertising

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<sup>110</sup> Wall Street Crash of 1929. It occurred in October and was the most devastating stock market crash at that time in the United States. It signaled the start of the 12-year Great Depression.

<sup>111</sup> Initially intended as a night school, Georgia State University was established in 1913 as the Georgia Institute of Technology's Evening School of Commerce. A reorganization of the university system of Georgia in the 1930's led to the school becoming the Atlanta Extension Center of the University System of Georgia and allowed night students to earn degrees from several colleges in the university System. During this time, the school was divided into two divisions: Georgia Evening College, and Atlanta Junior College. In 1947, the school became affiliated with the University of Georgia and was named the 'Atlanta Division of the University of Georgia.' The school was later removed from the University of Georgia in 1955 and became the Georgia State College of Business Administration. In 1961 the name was shortened to Georgia State College. It became Georgia State University in 1969.

<sup>112</sup> Henry W. Grady High School is located in Atlanta, Georgia, United States. It is one of the first two high schools established by Atlanta Public Schools in 1872.

<sup>113</sup> Isaac Jacob Paradies (1885-1967) was the founder of Paradies and Company. He was born in Latvia and lived in South Africa where he worked in diamond mines and as a rancher before relocating to Atlanta, Georgia. In Atlanta, he started a wholesale grocery business that grew into a chain of 'dime' stores. In 1942, he established a wholesale toy and housewares distributorship, Paradies and Company, a family business.

<sup>114</sup> Samuel Alva Miller (1906-2003), a native of Cordele, Georgia, was a prominent attorney in Atlanta and partner

business . . . Harry Lane Siegel, I don't remember any of the other names. I think Mr. Al Garber . . . Alfred Garber.<sup>116</sup>

**Kim:** Can you tell me some of your thoughts that led up to you building your first business park and warehouse?

**Max:** I was building a few houses to supplement the income from the grocery business. When I came back I decided to not go back into the grocery business. I went into the construction business, house construction. I found out that if I owned the land I was . . . I made more money off the lots than I did off the construction. Then I started developing. The first part was in Johnson Estates<sup>117</sup> and then off of Briarcliff Road called 'Helen Drive.' I developed about 50 acres along Peachtree Creek. I called it 'Helen Drive' after my wife. Then I went into Johnson Estates and developed some land right off of Johnson Road. I think one of the first houses I built was in Johnson Estates. After I got back the first house I built was [at] Second Avenue and East Lake [Drive]—right across from East Lake Golf Course.<sup>118</sup>

In those days we used to work seven days and eight nights a week. We used to draw up the plans for people to have their houses. My boys have followed in my footsteps. I used to travel with my engineer to LA [Los Angeles, California]. I built a 300,000 [square] foot building for hot water heater people. The main office was in Los Angeles. That was one of the first big buildings I built. They had a brick oven and they used to bake the aluminum for hot water heaters. I used to go . . . one outside Chicago [Illinois] for Kraft Cheese.<sup>119</sup> We still own the

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in the law firm Nall & Miller. He was a president for the Piedmont Federal Savings & Loan Association, Mercantile City Bank, and Standard Federal Savings & Loan. He served a term as president for The Temple, the Gate City Lodge of B'nai B'rith, the Mayfair Club, and the Standard Club. He was honored with the City of Hope Torch Award in 1969.

<sup>115</sup> Harry Lane Siegel (1906-1988) was an advertising executive and president of Eastburn and Siegel Advertising Agency in Atlanta, Georgia. He was president of Ahavath Achim Synagogue (AA) from 1967 to 1968.

<sup>116</sup> Alfred E. Garber (1910-1997) was a prominent Atlanta accountant with Young & Garber, an accounting firm, which was sold to Touche-Ross. He was a resident in the Atlanta Hebrew Orphans' Home he served a term as president after it was renamed the Jewish Children's Service.

<sup>117</sup> Johnson Estates is a subdivision in the Morningside-Lenox Park neighborhood in Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>118</sup> East Lake Golf Club is a private golf club located approximately 5 miles east of downtown Atlanta, Georgia. Established in 1904, East Lake is the oldest golf course in the city of Atlanta. It was the home course of golfer Bobby Jones.

<sup>119</sup> Kraft Cheese Company was founded by James L. Kraft as a wholesale door-to-door cheese business in Chicago. In 1915, the company had invented pasteurized processed cheese that did not need refrigeration. By 1924 it was known as the Kraft Cheese Company. By 1930, it had captured forty percent of the cheese market in the United States. After a series of mergers, acquisitions, and splits, Kraft merged with Heinz in 2015, creating the fifth-largest food and beverage company in the world, Kraft Heinz Company. The company continues to market products under the brand name 'Kraft'.

building. GE [General Electric]<sup>120</sup> just bought them out. We built the building for them in northeast Atlanta. There's a Kraft Cheese still on it with a joint venture. Throughout the years I've tried to retain ownership of most of the buildings. You can't build all of the buildings but I made it a practice not to sell any unless I had to.

**Kim:** Did you join any business organizations such as Chamber of Commerce?<sup>121</sup>

**Max:** I've always been a member of the Chamber of Commerce and the United Way<sup>122</sup>. My heart was always in the Atlanta Jewish Community Center<sup>123</sup> because as a young man it was like a second home. We had a basketball court. My wife was active in the nursery school at the Jewish Community Center. I have been active ever since. In fact, I just attended a Board of Trustees meeting at the Jewish Community Center today and we established the Max Kuniansky Family Building at the Cobb County Community Center. We have, believe it or not . . . we called a meeting . . . when Gerald Cohen<sup>124</sup> was president of the Federation . . . on two weeks' notice we had 450 young Jewish families that wanted a nursery school and a preschool like Cobb County. That's the way that we would decide if we needed to put a facility at Cobb. Now we have the main branch on Peachtree Road, we have the Zaban Park<sup>125</sup> in DeKalb County, and we have the Shirley Blumenthal Park<sup>126</sup> in Cobb County. Hopefully, we'll have quite a few new members coming in with the swimming pool season opening. We don't really have as much

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<sup>120</sup> General Electric (GE) is an American multinational conglomerate corporation incorporated in New York and headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts. *Edison General Electric Company* was founded in 1889 based on the research of Thomas Edison. In 1896, General Electric was one of the original 12 companies listed on the newly formed Dow Jones Industrial Average. After 121 years, it is the only one of the original companies still listed on the Dow index. In 2017, GE ranked among the Fortune 500 as the thirteenth-largest firm in the United States by gross revenue.

<sup>121</sup> A chamber of commerce is a local association to promote and protect the interests of the business community in a particular town or state.

<sup>122</sup> United Way is a national system of volunteers, contributors and local charities helping people in their own communities.

<sup>123</sup> Atlanta Jewish Community Center was officially founded in 1910, as the Jewish Educational Alliance. In the late 1940's it evolved into the Atlanta Jewish Community Center and moved to Peachtree Street. It stayed there until 1998, when the building was sold and the center moved to Dunwoody. In 2000, it was renamed the 'Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta.

<sup>124</sup> Gerald Hershel Cohen (1918-2009) was an Atlanta businessman who was born in Pocomoke City, Maryland. He was president of Central Metals Co., a family business in Atlanta founded by his father Morris Cohen and his uncle Joe Rodbell in 1912. He served terms as president of the Ahavath Achim Synagogue, the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, and the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization Adult Committee. He was a founding member of the Harry H. Epstein School and The Doris and Alex Weber School.

<sup>125</sup> Zaban Park in Dunwoody is home to the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta. The area is named for philanthropist and community leader Erwin Zaban who gave and raised money for what was formerly undeveloped pastureland.

<sup>126</sup> Shirley Blumenthal Park was a Jewish community center in East Cobb County, and was part of the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta. However, it has been closed and was sold to Mt. Bethel United Method Church in 2013.

participation as we had envisioned in Cobb County as yet. We are still in hopes of adding.

**Kim:** I know you were involved in the fund raising efforts for Zaban Park. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

**Max:** In 1960, Erwin Zaban<sup>127</sup> was chairman of the fundraising committee when I was president of the center. I guess between . . . we had set a goal of \$1,000,000 at that time. Everybody said we'd never raise it. We raised \$1,000,000 . . . \$1,048,000. We went over the top by \$48,000 of our original goal. We haven't been as fortunate in Cobb County. My family gave \$500,000 for the Cobb County facility. In fact, we're still paying the loan. We borrowed the money against one of our buildings and gave it to the community. The building is called the Max Kuniansky Family Building and the park was named after Philip Blumenthal's<sup>128</sup> wife, Shirley. He wanted to name something after his first wife. God bless him, he gave \$500,000 provided we named the park after . . . named it the Blumenthal Park.

<Interruption in tape>

**Max:** Anyway, 25 or 30 years ago the Jewish merchants in Atlanta . . . there used to be a lot of Jewish merchants in the small towns. Today they're a thing of the past because the big chains have taken over. My in-laws owned a store in Douglas, Georgia.

**Kim:** Can you tell me their names?

**Max:** Silver . . . Morris and Pearl [Greenberg] Silver . . . they had a little dry goods store in Douglas, Georgia which was every bit of 10,000 people in those days. They had three Jewish families: my in-laws, the Jacksons, and the Freedmans. All of the children have moved away. They don't want to live in a small country town.

**Kim:** Can you tell me about your wife's Jewish education? Were they educated at home in the small town?

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<sup>127</sup> Native Atlantan, philanthropist and community leader Erwin Zaban (1921-2010) was known by many as the 'Godfather of the Jewish Community.' After quitting school to help in his father's Depression-era business at age 15, Zaban built successful businesses worth billions of dollars and donated millions to worthy causes. He worked alongside his parents to build Zep Manufacturing Company. Zep later merged with National Linen and became National Service Industries, a Fortune 500 Company. He donated and raised money for undeveloped land in Dunwoody that became Zaban Park, home of the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta. He donated money to the Jewish Home, for which the Zaban Tower is named. He helped create the homeless couples' shelter at The Temple which bears his name.

<sup>128</sup> Philip Blumenthal (1919-2005) was an Atlanta businessman and philanthropist who was born in Lavonia, GA, and grew up in Franklin, NC. He graduated from the University of North Carolina, was a Lieutenant in the 317th Artillery Battalion during World War II, and founded the Atlanta Textile Company in 1955. He was instrumental in establishing the Shirley Blumenthal Park of the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta, the center's Cobb County branch.

**Max:** She was educated at home . . . they didn't have any formal [Jewish] education. She went to North Georgia College<sup>129</sup> and the University of Georgia.<sup>130</sup> They had what they called a 'traveling rabbi' in those days. He would come to Douglas for the High Holy Days and all of the people from Fitzgerald [Georgia] and all the little country towns, Valdosta [Georgia], Albany [Georgia] would go to . . .

<End Tape 1, Side 1, 02>

<Begin Tape 1, Side 2>

<Talking already in progress>

**Max:** . . . Morris Abram<sup>131</sup> used to give lectures on the High Holy Days. He lived in Fitzgerald [Georgia]. There were a few Jewish families. The Halperins lived in Fitzgerald. I think [Philip] Halperin<sup>132</sup> was a merchant in Fitzgerald, he probably had the biggest store in Fitzgerald. His daughter was Ruth [Kruger] Singer<sup>133</sup><sup>134</sup> . . . Sol<sup>135</sup> and Ruth Singer.

**Kim:** Can you tell me any more stories about your life growing up in that small town and being Jewish?

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<sup>129</sup> North Georgia College began as North Georgia Agricultural College in Dahlonega, Georgia in 1873. It was a branch of the Georgia College of Agriculture and Mechanical. It was the first co-educational college in the state of Georgia and the first educational institution in Georgia to award a degree to a female. In 1929, it was renamed North Georgia College and in 1996 it was renamed North Georgia College & State University. In 2012, it was consolidated with Gainesville State College and became the University of North Georgia.

<sup>130</sup> The University of Georgia, founded in 1785, also referred to as UGA or simply Georgia, is an American public research university in the city of Athens in the U.S. state of Georgia.

<sup>131</sup> Morris Berthold Abram (1918-2000) was an American lawyer, civil rights activist and leader in the Jewish community who grew up in Fitzgerald, Georgia. Defending civil rights workers in Georgia in 1963, Abram won decisions that helped overturn the state's insurrection and illegal assembly laws, which had been used against civil rights demonstrators. Over the years, Abram helped bring civil rights cases to the United States Supreme Court. President John F. Kennedy named him the first general counsel to the Peace Corps in 1961. President Lyndon B. Johnson made him United States representative to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, co-chairman of the Planning Committee of the White House Conference on Civil Rights and a member of the Committee on the Office of Economic Opportunity. Abram served as President of Brandeis from 1968-1970. He was the Representative of the United States to the European Office of the United Nations from 1989 to 1993. In 1993 he founded United Nations Watch while he was Honorary President of the American Jewish Committee.

<sup>132</sup> Philip Halperin owned the Surprise Store in Fitzgerald, Georgia. It became Halperin's Department Store. He was one of the founding members of the Fitzgerald Hebrew Congregation in 1946.

<sup>133</sup> Elex Kruger was the father of Ruth Singer. He was the owner of the Fair Store, a dry goods store in Fitzgerald, Georgia. Elex's brother Abe Kruger owned Kruger's Department Store that was sold to Belk's in 1954.

<sup>134</sup> Ruth Kruger Singer (1918-2004) was born in Sales City, Georgia and grew up in Fitzgerald, Georgia. She was a founding member of The Breman Jewish Heritage Museum. She was also a founder of Atlanta's The Epstein School and active in the Atlanta Jewish community, volunteering at Ahavath Achim synagogue and the Atlanta Jewish Federation.

<sup>135</sup> Sol Singer (1918-2003) was born in Atlanta and raised in Unadilla, Georgia. He resided in Columbus, Georgia for 23 years. In 1962, as president of Singer and Co., Sol moved his wholesale business and his family to Atlanta, Georgia. Sol served as a president of Shearith Israel in Columbus, as a vice president of the Southeast Region of Conservative Judaism, and as a founding member of the Columbus Jewish Federation.

**Max:** I remember one incident when a noted antisemite was trying to speak in Douglas. There happened to be a father and son who ran the city newspaper in Douglas and surprisingly enough, they were very much opposed to . . . I think it was Father [Charles] Coughlin<sup>136</sup> speaking in Douglas. They had arranged to fill the town up with college students who would understand better what the antisemite was talking about. They wound up . . . they would not allow him to speak in the city. He spoke in a farm house five miles outside of Douglas. There were more journalists and Jewish war veterans than there were people listening to the speech. I would say in those days that the non-Jews were very sympathetic to the Jewish cause and really didn't have any blatant antisemitism in those days as far as I can remember. There was a few. Most of the people were not antisemitic in my early days in the small town because most of the merchants were Jewish. They used to come in and buy from the merchants all of the time. My father-in-law was a self-educated person. I don't ever believe we'll ever have another generation like my in-laws and my parents. They would sacrifice everything for the *kinder* [Yiddish: children]. I don't believe we would do that.

**Kim:** How did your in-laws end up in Douglas?

**Max:** I would say that they ran out of gas. Peddling goods. That's the way most of them would end up in Texas, as they say. They used to peddle. For some reason or another . . . I think my mother-in-law was educated in New York City. [She] went to Drew High School in New York. My wife never could understand how [her mother] married my father-in-law. I guess they made a *shidduch*<sup>137</sup>] in those days. They lived in . . . before they moved to Douglas they went to some small town . . . Donalsonville [Georgia], I believe. Like I said they used to work in the store . . . run the store, and Pop used to discuss the Bible<sup>138</sup> with all the non-Jews in town. He knew their Bible better than they did. I really admired him because he was a self-educated person.

**Kim:** Can you tell me how you met your wife?

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<sup>136</sup> Father Charles Coughlin was a controversial Roman Catholic priest in Royal Oak, Michigan. He used radio and print to reach a mass audience in the 1930's. Early on he was a supporter of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal but later became a harsh critic of Roosevelt and his "Jew Deal." He formed a political party called 'Nation's Union of Social Justice,' whose platform called for monetary reform, the nationalization of major industries and the protection of labor. The slogan was "Social Justice." He grew increasingly antisemitic. The Church took no action against him. Eventually his radio program and his paper, Social Justice, was closed down.

<sup>137</sup> *Shidduch* is a system of matchmaking in which Jewish singles are introduced to each other in Orthodox Jewish communities for the purpose of marriage. A shidduch often begins with a recommendation from family members, friends or others who see matchmaking as a *mitzvah*, or commandment.

<sup>138</sup> The Bible ( Greek: the books) is a collection of sacred texts or scriptures that Jews and Christians consider to be a product of divine inspiration and a record of the relationship between God and humans.

**Max:** Yes. I met my wife . . . she was working as a secretary at ADL, [the] Anti-Defamation League, in Atlanta.

**Kim:** How old was she?

**Max:** Helen was 22 when I met her. We were married [when she was] 23. I was 29 or 30. I went in the service in 1943, stayed overseas a couple of years, and flew 35 missions. I received . . . somebody came in and said, “Why don’t you put up your medals?” So, I put them up and framed them. I received five Gold Air Medals<sup>139</sup> and the Distinguished Flying Cross.<sup>140</sup> Not many Distinguished Flying Crosses were given. I was real proud of that medal.

**Kim:** Can you tell me a little bit about the courtship with your wife?

**Max:** It was fast and furious. I met Helen . . . I got out in September of 1945 and we got married in October of 1946. We were married 42 years when Helen passed away. She had a massive stroke to the brain. Helen had taken care of me through many heart attacks and two open heart surgeries. We were on vacation in Florida. We went to a hotel that serves meals because although we had a place in Sarasota, she didn’t want to have to bother with the cooking. The first day we were there, the first night, we were having dinner. We went back to the dining room and danced. She had a stroke going back to the dining room. She had a massive stroke to the brain. Fortunately, we had a Living Will<sup>141</sup> where either one of us could put them on the . . . what do you call that system?

**Kim:** Respirator.

**Max:** Respirator . . . and we were told that in South Florida if you ever put anybody on a respirator you had to have a court written summons to take them off. So I called all my kids down and we decided unanimously not to put Helen on the respirator. I had called my neurologist and he was in touch with the doctors. Un fact, he talked to the doctors who were waiting on Helen at the time and they told Dr. [Herbert] Karp<sup>142</sup> that if she survived, she would

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<sup>139</sup> The Air Medal is a military decoration of the United States military. The medal was created in 1942 and is awarded for meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight in combat.

<sup>140</sup> The Distinguished Flying Cross is a military decoration awarded to any officer or enlisted member of the United States Armed Forces who distinguishes himself or herself in support of operations by heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in an aerial flight. The Distinguished Flying Cross would usually be awarded for roughly twice to five times the requirements of the Air Medal.

<sup>141</sup> A living will is a document that explains whether or not you want to be kept on life support if you become terminally ill and will die shortly without life support.

<sup>142</sup> Herbert Rubin Karp (1922-2016), a native of Atlanta, was a prominent neurologist and chair of Emory University's Department of Neurology. In 1983, Dr. Karp became the inaugural medical director at the Wesley Woods Center, the nation's first geriatric hospital. He was president of the Ahavath Achim Synagogue where, for over three decades, he sounded the *shofar* during the High Holy Days services.

have been a vegetable. She would not have wanted to live that way. My kids and I all decided that it was better to not put her on it.

**Kim:** Can you tell me a little bit when you met Helen . . . her job at ADL? What type of things was she working on?

**Max:** She was just a secretary to Alex Miller. She didn't actually do any work. She just did the secretarial work. She came to Atlanta after she graduated University of Georgia and went to work. I met her right after I got back from the service. I finally convinced her to marry me a year later.

**Kim:** Did you lose any family during the Holocaust?

**Max:** No.

**Kim:** Can you tell me some ways the Atlanta community assisted new immigrants in the 1950's?

**Max:** I know that the Federation which was in . . . they did a lot of work for the old Ben Massell Clinic<sup>143</sup> and at the Jewish Educational Alliance.<sup>144</sup> They did a lot of work for the immigrants that came in. They helped them get started. The Atlanta Jewish people have always taken care of their own. We're going to try to take care of our Russian immigrants now. My son, David, and his family are in Israel now. I know that we have given money to the Project Exodus<sup>145</sup> and we have pledged them more money for the next three years. I'm sure the Atlanta community over-subscribed to its share of \$1,100,000 or \$1,200,000 goal for the Russian emigrants. I'm satisfied we'll raise more and more money. We've got to convince our Congress people to let our people go and make sure that they should be allowed without any quota directly into the United States. I'm a firm believer of that. I've written my representative to that affect.

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<sup>143</sup> In 1915, philanthropist Morris Hirsch established the Morris Hirsch Clinic to provide outpatient medical services to those unable to afford care. A dental program was added to the clinic in 1929. In 1956, the dental clinic moved to Pryor Street and was renamed the Ben Massell Dental Clinic. The brothers Irving and Marvin Goldstein, both dentists, supported a volunteer dental force that served 6,000 patients each year. The Ben Massell Dental Clinic is still in existence today.

<sup>144</sup> The Jewish Educational Alliance (JEA) operated from 1910 to 1948 on the site where the Atlanta- Fulton County Stadium was located. The JEA was once the hub of Jewish life in Atlanta. Families congregated there for social, educational, sports and cultural programs. The JEA ran camps and held classes to help some new residents learn to read and write English. For newcomers, it became a refuge, with programs to help them acclimate to a new home. The JEA stayed at that site until the late 1940's, when it evolved into the Atlanta Jewish Community Center and moved to Peachtree Street. It stayed there until 1998, when the building was sold and the center moved to Dunwoody. In 2000, it was renamed the 'Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta.'

<sup>145</sup> Operation Exodus was a fundraising campaign by The Jewish Federations of North America that collected more than \$1 billion between 1990 and 1997 to rescue and resettle Soviet Jews in Israel, the United States or Canada. In the 1990's, of slightly over one million Jews who left the Soviet Union and its successor states, over 800,000 went to Israel.

There's no reason why . . . they're going to let all the boat people in . . . they shouldn't let the Russian Jews in.

This business of émigrés and refugees is a bunch of nonsense. They have a right to choose where they want to go. I firmly believe they ought to be made to go to Israel first but I can understand their feelings. Of course, I believe they wouldn't get out of Russia if they didn't have a passport to Israel. I think every Jew in the United States should write to their Congress people and make sure that our representatives understand that we want our people to be able to come to the United States without any quotas. I don't think that many Jews that have come to the United States have been any burden to the United States government. While I'm talking, President [George Herbert Walker ] Bush<sup>146</sup> and [Secretary of State James] Baker<sup>147</sup> ought to be ashamed of themselves. They're holding a gun at the heads of the Israelis.

<break in tape>

They sent troops into Africa to stop [General Erwin] Rommel.<sup>148</sup> They have not been without fighting for their own causes. There's no reason for Jews in this country to criticize them unless they were in the firing line. I've been to Israel many times on many missions and worked in missions where . . . Prime Minister's Missions<sup>149</sup> . . . where we raised money on the Missions. We Jews have always paid our way and paid our tolls. I know that there was a . . . on brotherhood week we had a Baptist<sup>150</sup> minister, I guess . . . I don't know whether it was Baptist or Lutheran<sup>151</sup> . . . but he spoke at the AA and he was telling us about the Zionist zealots took the

<sup>146</sup> George Herbert Walker Bush (1924- ) was the 41st President of the United States (1989-1993). He was a Republican.

<sup>147</sup> James Addison "Jim" Baker III (1930- ) is an American attorney and statesman. He served as White House Chief of Staff and United States Secretary of the Treasury under President Ronald Reagan, and as U.S. Secretary of State and White House Chief of Staff under President George H. W. Bush.

<sup>148</sup> Erwin Rommel (1891–1944) was a German general. He served as field marshal in the Wehrmacht of Nazi Germany during World War II. The success of his North Africa military campaign earned him the nickname "Desert Fox" from British journalists.<sup>1</sup> When Rommel was accused as a conspirator in the plot to assassinate Adolph Hitler in 1944, he committed suicide rather than face trial.

<sup>149</sup> Prime Minister's Missions were tours of Israel for top leaders and donors of the Jewish community across the United States, coordinated through the United Jewish Appeal (UJA). A highlight of the tour was a meeting of leaders with the prime minister of Israel. The trips were a way to give participants firsthand exposure to the needs of Israelis.

<sup>150</sup> Baptists are individuals who comprise a group of Evangelical Christian denominations and churches that subscribe to a doctrine that baptism should be performed only for professing believers (believer's baptism, as opposed to infant baptism), and that it must be done by complete immersion (as opposed to affusion or sprinkling).

<sup>151</sup> Lutheranism is a major branch of Protestant Christianity which identifies with the theology of Martin Luther (1483–1546), a German friar, ecclesiastical reformer and theologian. The name Lutheran originated as a derogatory term used against Martin Luther by German Scholastic theologian Dr. Johann Maier von Eck during the Leipzig Debate in July 1519. Eck and other Catholics followed the traditional practice of naming a heresy after its leader, thus labeling all who identified with the theology of Martin Luther as Lutherans.

land away for the Arabs. I gave him a copy of a book by Joan Peters'<sup>152</sup> *From Time Immemorial: [The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict over Palestine]*. She used to be an Arabist<sup>153</sup> until she went to the Middle East and studied the Middle East. She documented that all the land that was in Israel was purchased from vacant Arab landlords. They did not take any land. They paid for every bit of the land that they took, in the same way with what's going on in Israel. They never took anything, they paid for it. The ones that made the money were the Arabs. The Arabs owned the land. They were the ones who sold it to the Israelis and they're blaming the Israelis for taking the land. (unintelligible 14:10)

**Kim:** Can you tell me about being president of the AA Synagogue?

**Max:** I have never. That's one thing I never was. Off the record . . .

<break in tape>

**Max:** . . . scheduled to be president of the Federation but I wouldn't take it.

**Kim:** Can you tell me about your term as president of the [Atlanta] Jewish Community Center?

**Max:** Yes. I was president of the Jewish Community Center for three years.<sup>154</sup> Normally the term is two years. When I was president we were in the middle of our campaign drive. We had to stop it because of the Six-Day War<sup>155</sup> [and the] Battle of the Sinai.<sup>156</sup> Bernie [Bernard] Howard<sup>157</sup> and I who were co-chairmen of the Federation drive . . . we stopped our drive at the

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<sup>152</sup> Joan Friedman Peters (1936–2015) later Caro, was the author of the best-selling, controversial, 1984 book *From Time Immemorial*, in which she argued that Palestinians are largely not indigenous to modern Israel and therefore do not have a claim to its territory. She wrote for *Harper's*, *Commentary*, *The New Republic*, and *The New Leader*. She was an adviser to the White House on American foreign policy in the Middle East during the Carter administration.

<sup>153</sup> Arabist is a person who favors Arab interests and positions in international affairs.

<sup>154</sup> 1961-1964.

<sup>155</sup> The Six-Day War was fought between June 5 and 10, 1967 by Israel and the neighboring states of Egypt (known at the time as the United Arab Republic), Jordan, and Syria. Relations between Israel and its neighbors had never fully normalized following the 1948 War of Independence and in the period leading up to June 1967 tensions became heightened. As a result, Israel launched a series of preemptive airstrikes against Egyptian airfields on June 5 following the mobilization of Egyptian forces along the Israeli border in the Sinai Peninsula. The outcome was swift and decisive. Israel took control of the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. The Sinai was returned but the other territories were incorporated into Israel.

<sup>156</sup> The Battle for the Sinai was a military confrontation between the Israeli and Egyptian military in the Sinai desert in June 1967, as part of the Six-Day War. The decisive defeat of the Egyptians was critical to the eventual loss of the entire Sinai Peninsula to Israeli forces. The head of the Israel command was Ariel Sharon, who later became a prominent politician and prime minister of Israel.

<sup>157</sup> Bernard Howard (1920-1989) was a local Jewish leader in Atlanta, Georgia. He served terms as president of the Atlanta Jewish Community Council (predecessor of the Atlanta Jewish Federation), the Atlanta Jewish Community Center, and the Standard Club. The Gate City Lodge of B'nai B'rith awarded him its Distinguished Service Award. He was a vice-president of the Lovable Bra Co. for 30 years and later operated a wholesale showroom in the Atlanta Decorative Arts Center. He was the father of Clark Howard, a popular consumer expert and host of the nationally syndicated radio program, the Clark Howard Show.

Center until the UJA [United Jewish Appeal]<sup>158</sup> drive was over. We continued our center drive after the city fathers thought it best for us—who were supposedly top fund raisers in the city—to raise money for Israel rather than for the local community.

**Kim:** Can you name any of the other officers the year you were president?

**Max:** My greatest achievement as far as the Jewish community is concerned, I firmly believe, is getting Milton Weinstein,<sup>159</sup> Sidney Feldman,<sup>160</sup> and Erwin Zaban interested in the Jewish community. We were all officers of the [Atlanta Jewish] Community Center. You see, when Barney Medintz<sup>161</sup> died in 1956, I succeeded Barney as president of the Jewish Community Center. At that time, I appointed Bernie Howard, Milton Weinstein, Erwin Zaban, and Sidney Feldman as officers. I figure that's my greatest contribution. I got real leaders involved in the community, not only with the Center but the Federation and the Jewish community. I just attended Milton Weinstein's seventy-fifth birthday. Milton and I went on many Prime Minister's Missions to Israel together. He did a lot of good for the Jewish Community Center . . . the Jewish community, period.

<Break in tape>

**Kim:** What does it mean to you to be a Jew?

**Max:** It's very important for me to be a Jew. If I had to choose any religion at this age I would always want to be a Jew. I think Judaism is a way of life and you live it from . . . all day long. To

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<sup>158</sup> The United Jewish Appeal (UJA) was a Jewish philanthropic umbrella organization that collected and distributed funds to Jewish organizations in their community and around the country. UJA existed from 1939 until it was folded into the United Jewish Communities, which was formed from the 1999 merger of United Jewish Appeal (UJA), Council of Jewish Federations and United Israel Appeal, Inc.

<sup>159</sup> Weinstein, Milton N. (1915 - 1999) succeeded his father, Isadore M. (I.M.) Weinstein as head of the National Linen Supply Company.

<sup>160</sup> Sidney Feldman (1921-2005) was a leader of many organizations, both nationally and in Atlanta. Among his many honors were the B'nai B'rith Man of the Year, the Anti-Defamation League Abe Goldstein Human Relation's Award, Prime Minister's Medallion on the 25th anniversary of Israel, the National Council of Christians and Jews 'Good Neighbor Award,' and the American Jewish Committee Award for Advancing Understanding Among All People. He was National Vice-President of United Jewish Appeal, President Emeritus of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta and past president of several organizations including the William Breman Jewish Home, and the Marcus Jewish Community Center.

<sup>161</sup> Barney Medintz (1910-1960) was a Jewish leader both nationally and locally in Atlanta. He was one of the national leaders of the United Jewish Appeal and the Israel Bond Organization. He was also vice-president of the National Community Relations Advisory Council, vice-president of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds and a former member of the executive committee of the American Jewish Committee. Locally he was president of the Atlanta Jewish Community Center and past president of the Atlanta Jewish Community Council and the Atlanta Bureau of Jewish Education. He was also president of the Southeast Regional Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. Medintz graduated from Northwestern University at Evanston, Illinois where he was a star basketball player. He came to Atlanta after he graduated to become a recreation director at the Jewish Educational Alliance. Camp Barney Medintz, a Jewish camp in Cleveland, Georgia, is named in his honor.

me it's not a religion, it's a way of life. Not like some people or other religions where they can do what they want during the week and then go to Mass<sup>162</sup> and get excused for everything you did during the week. I'm not a religious Jew but I'm a good Jew.

**Kim:** I think we'll go ahead and stop now.

<End of tape 1, side 2>

**INTERVIEW ENDS**

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<sup>162</sup> Mass is a term used to describe the main eucharistic liturgical service in many forms of Western Christianity. The term mass is commonly used in the Catholic Church, Anglican, as well as some Lutheran churches, Methodist, Western Rite Orthodox and Old Catholic churches. In the Catholic Church, Mass is symbolic of the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross.