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ESTHER AND HERBERT TAYLOR
JEWISH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ATLANTA
GEORGIA JEWS**

MEMOIRIST: CLARA LAZAR FELDMAN
INTERVIEWER: ANITA EIDEX
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INTERVIEW BEGINS

<Begin Tape 1, Side 1>

Anita: I am interviewing Clara Feldman on Tuesday, February 22, 2005 for the Jewish Oral History Project of Atlanta co-sponsored by the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, the American Jewish Committee, and the National Council of Jewish Women. Clara, give us your full name and please spell it.

Clara: Clara Lazar Feldman . . . Clara . . . C-L-A-R-A . . . Lazar . . . L-A-Z-A-R . . . Feldman . . . F-E-L-D-M-A-N.

Anita: For whom were you named? Were you given a Hebrew name?

Clara: I was named for my grandmother. I do not have a Hebrew name. I have a Yiddish name, which was 'Kranie' [sp].

Anita: When and where were you born? Were you born at home or in a hospital?

Clara: I was born in Atlanta, Georgia at Piedmont Hospital on Capital Avenue, September 23, 1928.

Anita: What is your family's country of origin? Was the family name changed when they originally came to this country? What was it?

Clara: Yes, my father's name was Louis Tikotsky . . . T-I-K-O-T-S-K-Y. When he came to America he came through Canada illegally because of the quota system. He felt like perhaps he needed to change his name. He changed it to Louis Lazar because 'Lazer' was his Yiddish name so it became 'Lazar.'

Anita: Did you tell us what country they came from?

Clara: Poland.

Anita: Poland. When and where were they born?

Clara: Both my parents were born in Poland. I do not know what city.

Anita: Did you tell me when they were born? When they came to this country?

Clara: I'm not sure of that either.

Anita: Do you know what brought them here?

Clara: My mother came over. She had been left in charge of her whole family except for an older sister. She came over and they all settled here. My father, I don't know why. You know back in my day, early days, we didn't go too much into the history of why, what or when.

Anita: Do you know if they had any family that they were joining when they came here to this country?

Clara: Yes, my mother had, as I said, the older sister . . .

Anita: Who was already here?

Clara: . . . Yes, in New York. I do not know about my father.

Anita: How did they get to Atlanta?

Clara: My mother and father got married in New York. My father was not a well man. He was looking to leave New York and find a healthier climate and a place to start living. They had some—he had some cousins, the Greenbergs.

Anita: Clara, what language did your parents speak?

Clara: They spoke Yiddish and English. I guess they learned it . . . I know my father spoke English beautifully. Where he learned it, I don't know. My mother spoke broken English.

Anita: Did they ever tell you any stories about what life was like for them before they came to this country?

Clara: My mother told me many stories.

Anita: Do you remember any of them?

Clara: Yes. I remember she was telling me that the Cossacks¹ came into their little *shtetl*²

¹ Cossacks were a Slavic people living in southern European Russia and Ukraine and adjacent parts of Asia noted for their horsemanship and military skill. Cossacks massacred a large number of Jewish townfolk—100,000 as estimated by historian Max Dimont—during the Khmel'nitsky Uprising of 1648–1649. Cossacks formed an elite cavalry corps in czarist Russia. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the Russians used Cossacks extensively in military actions and to suppress revolutionary activities.

² A *shtetl* is a small town, usually in eastern Europe, with a significant Jewish presence in it.

and ran through it on horses and burned it. Fortunately they could survive because at the end of their property they had planted potatoes. They hid—back as she called it—the forest, that I guess it was a woods behind their property. They lived on those potatoes for a year. I will never forget that when I went to see *The Fixer*³ and the opening scene was just as my mother had described it. It was so emotional. That was many years ago that they showed that film. I don't know that anyone in recent years had ever seen it, but it was as if something had come alive right in front of me.

Anita: Did you know your grandparents?

Clara: I only knew one

Anita: Which?

Clara: My grandfather—my father's father—who was a very interesting man. He went from Palestine, I guess from Poland to Palestine. Then from Palestine he and my father's twin brother went to China, and lived in China for many years and he came to America once and I saw him.

Anita: How old were you?

Clara: Ten.

Anita: What was your grandfather's name and spell it? Do you remember? Well that's okay. Where is he buried? Where are your grandparents buried, do you know?

Clara: All of the others are buried in Europe. I presume he's buried in China.

Anita: Did your grandfather tell you any stories?

Clara: Not really. I was in such awe to think that I would finally have a grandparent that I could see. He was a very imposing man. I have a picture of him, of us together . . . the family when he was here.

Anita: You only saw him that one time?

Clara: That one time.

Anita: That was the only grandparent you knew.

Clara: Yes, that was living. All the others had passed away years ago.

Anita: What was your father's occupation?

Clara: He was a storekeeper.

Anita: What kind of store?

³ *The Fixer* is a 1968 British drama film based on the 1966 semi-biographical novel of the same name, written by Bernard Malamud. It is the story of a man named Yakov Bok, a Jew living in the Russian Empire, who was unjustly imprisoned based on prejudice and the blood libel. It was based on the incidents of the Beilis Trial in 1913.

Clara: We had grocery stores. Then after we had grocery stores we had . . . we used to call it a drug store. But it was no prescriptions, just over the counter, and food, and things like that. Then we had a liquor store.

Anita: You're saying "we." Did your mother work with him?

Clara: No. My mother worked. My father—as I said before—was not a well man. He couldn't do too much. She was the one that really worked.

Anita: Did he have any formal training for the business?

Clara: No.

Anita: Your mother worked in the business?

Clara: Yes.

Anita: Your father passed away when you were . . .

Clara: Twelve.

Anita: Tell me a little bit about that. I think you mentioned to me that you had lived upstairs?

Clara: Before that . . . our first grocery store we lived in back of the store. We left Atlanta for about a year and went to Miami [Florida]. He had part of a night club, but that didn't last. We came back. We had the store. The house was around the corner from the store on Butler Street near Grady Hospital.⁴

Anita: After your father died, what did your mother do for a living?

Clara: My mother . . . we had an ice cream store right outside the Municipal Market.⁵ Right down on Auburn Avenue, a block down from Grady. She worked in that store. She worked in all the stores.

Anita: Was the ice cream store hers, or did she work for someone else?

Clara: No, it was hers.

Anita: Do you remember the name of it?

Clara: We didn't have a name. It was just there. In fact, I think it might still be there. I want to go back and visit and see.

Anita: Your mother remarried?

⁴ Grady Memorial Hospital is the largest hospital in Georgia, and the fifth-largest public hospital in the United States. It is considered one of premier public hospitals in the Southeast.

⁵ In 1918 Atlanta established a farmer's market on land cleared by a massive fire which had swept through the city the year before. The Atlanta Woman's Club raised \$300,000 for a fireproof building. The brick and concrete building opened May 1, 1924, as the Municipal Market of Atlanta, in the exact geographic center of the city.

Clara: Yes.

Anita: Tell me about that. How long after? Who?

Clara: As I said, when my mother and father came to Atlanta, to stay with my father's distant cousins—the Greenbergs—and we were all very close. We spent a lot of time together and Mr. Greenberg's wife passed away. . .

Anita: . . . what was his first name?

Clara: Charles. Then when my daddy passed away, when I was 14, my mother and Charles Greenberg married. I became part, really became part of that family.

Anita: Tell me the names of Charles' children.

Clara: The oldest one was Aaron. Then there was Rose, and [Irving] Greenie, and Sol, and Mickie.

Anita: Thank you. Now did you have any aunts and uncles?

Clara: Not in Atlanta. I had many of them in New York.

Anita: Do you remember some names?

Clara: Yes. My father's sister was Sarah, and Ruth. He had a half-sister Harriett who lived in China. Then my mother had seven; she had seven sisters and a brother. Do you want their names?

Anita: I guess that would be all right. Who were your favorite relatives? Why?

Clara: My favorite relatives I guess were the Greenbergs because in those days everybody worked very hard all week in the grocery stores or whatever. On Sundays Piedmont Park⁶ was a gathering place. You'd go. You could take lunch. You would get together. The kids would play. The adults would schmooze. So that was what we did.

Anita: This was after you became part of the Greenberg family?

Clara: Even before, when my father was living too.

Anita: Do you have any other memories of growing up in Atlanta?

Clara: Golly, from what time on? I have many wonderful memories.

Anita: Tell me about your schooling. Tell me where you went to school; elementary, high school.

⁶ Piedmont Park is a 189-acre park located just north of downtown Atlanta. It was originally designed by Joseph Forsyth Johnson to host the first Piedmont Exhibition in 1887.

Clara: I went to Fair Street School. Then I went to Bass Junior High.⁷ I went to Commercial⁸ for one year. Then I went to Girls' High.⁹ I graduated from there.

Anita: What is Commercial?

Clara: Commercial was a school. It was down on Prior Street. It was for non-college preparatory. You learned typing, shorthand, all those things. After I had been there a year I knew that was not for me so I went to Girls' High. But I didn't go to college either because I got married at 18.

Anita: Who were some of the girls, your classmates that you remember?

Clara: I had a lot of them. I had my yearbook I could go through. Everybody comes to me for the Girls' High yearbook because it's one of the few that's around. But . . .

Anita: What was the year that you graduated?

Clara: In 1946.

Anita: That was from Girls' High?

Clara: Yes.

Anita: Do you remember the names of any of the girls?

Clara: Yes, let me see. I went to high school with Harriett Zaban, with Sylvia Pollock, with Selma Werner, with Claire Tennenbaum, with Beryl Cowan, with Gloria Rich, with Annette Zimmerman, Marilyn Burnett. I could go down the whole list because we were all there at the same time.

Anita: The names that you're giving me are their maiden names?

Clara: Yes.

Anita: Thank-you. Tell me about some of the activities or organizations that you may have belonged to while you were growing up in Atlanta.

⁷ Bass Junior High School was built in 1923 in Atlanta, Georgia serving Inman Park, Little Five Points, Morningside, East Atlanta, Kirkwood and Druid Hills. The first principal, J.H. Smith, suggested the school's name, William A. Bass. William A. Bass was born in 1832 and served as a Confederate Captain in the War Between the States. Mr. Wilbur Joe Scott became principal in 1929 and became the High School Principal when the school was changed to a high school in 1947. The school was closed in 1990 and converted to apartments known as The Bass Lofts in 1998.

⁸ Commercial High School began as a department of Girls High School in 1889 for girls who wanted to learn business skills. They taught bookkeeping, typing, math and history. It expanded to a four-story brick building on Pryor Street, and in 1910 became Atlanta's first coed high school. It closed in June 1947.

⁹ Girls' High School was one of seven schools as part of the original Atlanta public school system. It opened in 1872, and was the only public school in the area exclusively for girls. It was a superb school academically, and had 104 rooms including science halls, laboratories, sewing rooms, a library, and outdoor classrooms. In 1947, Atlanta high schools became co-educational and Girls' High was renamed Roosevelt High School.

Clara: I belonged to a club that we called the R-I-C Club, Ruthonian Intermediate [Independent] Club.

Anita: I guess spell that.

Clara: Ruthonian . . . R-U-T-H-I-O-N . . . ?

Anita: . . . I-O-N?

Clara: Yes.

Anita: What does that mean?

Clara: I don't know. I don't even know where it came from. But when I belonged to that club I realized that we did not have a BBG [B'nai B'rith Girls]¹⁰ group in Atlanta. We had a very vibrant AZA [Aleph Zadik Aleph].¹¹ Those were fun days. They were wonderful. We would go to the Alliance.¹² We would have meetings and watch the boys. That was all our social life really centered around. When I realized we didn't have a BBG group I went to B'nai Brith Women.¹³ I wanted to start one so we started a BBG group. But they didn't have a woman who would give the time that was necessary to be its advisor. So we had a man. His name was [Robert] Rube Libowsky.

Anita: Would you spell his name please?

Clara: His name, R-U-B-E . . . Rube Libowsky . . . L-I-B-O-W-S-K-Y. But I forgot to mention to you, with the Ruthonian, we did have a leader. Her name was Clara Ronan Cohannan [sp]. Her name's Cohannan now, but she . . . I don't know why she didn't go into BBG with us. Perhaps she wasn't a member of B'nai Brith Women. But Rube was not only our advisor, he was our basketball coach. He was a dear, dear man. His sister Rose, has been at Federation for—

¹⁰ B'nai B'rith Girls (BBG) is an international youth-led high school club for Jewish teenagers officially established in 1944. A structure was defined at that time to include women from high school to the age of 25. It currently exists as the female wing of B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (BBYO). BBYO's club for teenage boys is Aleph Zadik Aleph (AZA).

¹¹ The Grand Order of the Aleph Zadik Aleph (AZA) is an international youth-led fraternal organization for Jewish teenagers, founded in 1924. It currently exists as the male wing of B'nai B'rith Youth Organization, an independent non-profit organization. AZA's sister organization, for teenage girls, is the B'nai B'rith Girls

¹² The Jewish Educational Alliance 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 1940s, 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.

¹³ B'nai B'rith Women (BBW) In 1897 B'nai B'rith formed Ruth Lodge No. 1, the Daughters of Judah, a ladies' auxiliary in San Francisco, California. In 1957, with 768 chapters in the United States and Canada, and 41 chapters in foreign countries, the women's group officially took the name, B'nai B'rith Women (BBW).

what—50 years?

Anita: Her last name now is?

Clara: Is Klein. Rose Klein.

Anita: Spell.

Clara: K-L-E-I-N.

Anita: Great.

Clara: We became chartered. We were BBG 126 I believe. We had a small nucleus. It was fun. In those days there was another group. They were Young Judaeans.¹⁴ They were DOZ [Daughters of Zion].¹⁵ There was a good competition between DOZ girls and BBG girls. We played basketball against each other and things like that. Growing up in Atlanta in my day was just the greatest. It was just wonderful. We had lots of good times together. As I said, the Alliance was our get-togethers. When they had AZA conventions in Atlanta they were there. The girls went there and met the boys. Then they started dating. A lot of good things came out of those days.

Anita: Tell me where the Alliance was located.

Clara: On Capitol Avenue. Right down the street from where the Capitol is now, has been. It was right down the street.

Anita: Was that the precursor for the JCC [Jewish Community Center]?¹⁶

Clara: Yes.

Anita: Do you remember when it no longer was there? Let's go back for just a minute. You were telling me about your mother's store. Tell me about . . .

Clara: Well what happened . . .

Anita: . . . why she had to give it up?

Clara: . . . we had this notions, quasi-drug store and when liquor became legal—the liquor

¹⁴ Young Judaea is a peer-led Zionist youth movement founded in 1909. Its programs include youth clubs, conventions, summer camps and Israel programs that provide experiential programming through which Jewish youth and young adults build meaningful relationships with their peers, emphasize social action, and develop a lifelong commitment to Jewish life, the Jewish people, and Israel.

¹⁵ Daughters of Zion was established by Emma Leon Gottheil as an affiliate of the Federation of American Zionists. The wife of Richard Gottheil, an ardent Zionist and Columbia University professor of Semitics, she accompanied her husband to the Second Zionist Congress in 1898 and was charged by Theodore Herzl to organize American Jewish women on behalf of the Zionist cause.

¹⁶ The Atlanta Jewish Community Center evolved from the Jewish Educational Alliance (JEA) in 1946, when it was incorporated as the Atlanta Jewish Community Center (AJCC). It moved to Peachtree Street in 1956. 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.

stores became legal in Atlanta—we took part of that and built the first liquor store in Atlanta. Of course she could not even walk into it. Women were not allowed into the liquor stores. It was so interesting. In those days if a man went in to buy liquor he had to sign his name. He was only allowed to buy a certain amount. Very strange. Very strange rules. When my father passed away, there was a ruling that women could not own liquor stores. Our lawyer at the time felt like he could go to the judge and get him to change the ruling. Well that didn't happen so we had to sell the liquor store . . . rather quickly because the judge was incensed that the lawyer would even ask him if such a thing could be done. But before that we had also opened up this little ice cream store right across the street at the [unintelligible: 20:06] Building—the Butler Street side of the Municipal Market—and that's where my mother worked very hard. She used to make her own ice cream. It was not easy then. They didn't put . . . she made it in this big machine and used great big heavy stainless steel containers that she used to have to lift. She came up with—I guess like Baskin Robbins—she came up with flavors that nobody had ever done before. She worked there a long time and then my step-father helped her for a few years. Then they retired from there.

Anita: You had mentioned that there's a picture of your father in the Breman [Museum] or in the . . .

Clara: In the Conference Center. It's in the . . . I think they call that room the Business and it's a picture of him standing in front of the liquor store.

Anita: Let's go back to your high school days. Unless you . . .

Clara: . . . no, that's fine.

Anita: I wanted to find out if you were ever part of Ballyhoo?¹⁷

Clara: No, that was a group of people that we just didn't socialize with. When I saw *Ballyhoo*¹⁸ it bothered me because I guess I might have been one of the few that never had that—

¹⁷ From 1931 to the late 1950's, members of Atlanta's Standard Club sponsored "Ballyhoo," an annual courtship weekend attended by college-aged sons and daughters of the Temple community. Over a long weekend, participants endured rounds of breakfast dates, lunch dates, tea dance dates, early evening dates, late night dates, formal dances, and cocktail parties, with the goal of meeting a "nice Jewish boy or girl" who might well become a spouse. Similar courtship weekends in southern cities included Montgomery, Alabama's "Falcon," Birmingham, Alabama's "Jubilee," and Columbus, Georgia's "Holly Days."

¹⁸ *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* was written by award-winning playwright and screenwriter Alfred Uhry that premiered in Atlanta in 1996. *Ballyhoo* later received the Tony Award for Best Play when produced on Broadway. The play is set in Atlanta on the eve of World War II in an upper class German-Jewish community as Adolph Freitag and his sister and nieces look forward to attending Ballyhoo, a lavish cotillion ball sponsored by their country club. *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* was inspired by Atlanta-native Alfred Uhry's childhood memories and is the second of what is known as his "Atlanta Trilogy" of plays. The first is *Driving Miss Daisy* and the third is

knew, or had that—resentment. I mean it was foreign to me.

Anita: Well tell me about your . . . what synagogue did you grow up in?

Clara: [Congregation] Shearith Israel.¹⁹

Anita: Where was the congregation located?

Clara: On Washington Street.

Anita: Right. Who was your Rabbi?

Clara: [Tobias] Geffen.²⁰

Anita: Rabbi Geffen?

Clara: Right.

Anita: You've been a member of Shearith . . .

Clara: All these years.

Anita: . . . all these years until now?

Clara: That's right, yes.

Anita: Do you have any recollections of growing up in that congregation? Some feelings? Impressions?

Clara: I had a few. My step-sister Rose taught Sunday School and I lasted about two Sundays.

Anita: Rose is . . .

Clara: Rose Greenberg. I always remember holiday times. They were great. Of course the women sat up on the raised part of the sanctuary. You know it was like a step up.

Anita: Was it behind the men?

Clara: No. The men sat down.

Anita: Beyond the *mehitza*?²¹ That was when Shearith Israel still had a *mehitza*?

Clara: Yes. Anyway, I always loved to watch certain women who came on holiday that

Parade.

¹⁹ Founded in 1904, Shearith Israel began as a congregation that met in the homes of congregants until 1906 when they began using a Methodist church on Hunter Street. After World War II, Rabbi Tobias Geffen moved the congregation to University Drive, where it became the first synagogue in DeKalb County. In the 1960s, they removed the barrier between the men's and women's sections in the sanctuary, and officially became affiliated with the Conservative movement in 2002.

²⁰ Rabbi Tobias Geffen (1870-1970) was an Orthodox rabbi and leader of Congregation Shearith Israel in Atlanta from 1910-1970. He is widely known for his 1935 decision that certified Coca-Cola as kosher. He also organized the first Hebrew school in Atlanta, and standardized regulation of kosher supervision in the Atlanta area.

²¹ A *mehitza* is the physical divider placed between the men's and women's sections in Orthodox synagogues and at Orthodox religious celebrations.

looked so great, Rose Mazier, Annette Mays. They always were dressed so beautifully and had wonderful, beautiful hats.

Anita: I noticed your beautiful hat collection when I walked in the door.

Clara: I love hats.

Anita: Obviously. Were your parents or you actively involved in congregational life?

Clara: No. My step-father was. I mean once he retired he used to. They moved to University [Drive] across from Shearith Israel. He would go and enjoy studying with Rabbi Geffen. But until that point we were just members.

Anita: Tell me some more thoughts or memories that you have about the Jewish community's relationship with the non-Jewish community in Atlanta when you were growing up.

Clara: I really don't have any stories to tell you about that I can remember.

Anita: Was there any antisemitism?

Clara: I never faced any until I was a married woman.

Anita: Would you like to talk about it?

Clara: I went to the ballet at the Fox [Theater].²² That was the Russian Ballet. That was in the days that we were protesting what went on there. We were standing in front holding placards. A woman came by and shrunk away from me as if I had leprosy. She made some terrible remark.

Anita: Was it an antisemitic remark?

Clara: Yes. That was my only time of ever feeling it or hearing it.

Anita: That was . . . do you remember the year, approximately?

Clara: Oh golly, maybe in the . . . 1950's.

Anita: Do you have any thoughts about the Jewish community's relationship with the black community when you were growing up?

Clara: When I was growing up I was part of the black community because that's where I grew up. My neighbors were black. My playmates were black. There were several families that I was very close to. Two doors down from where I lived on Butler Street, there was a wonderful family. They were the Reeves family.

Anita: Spell it please.

²² The Fox Theatre is located on Peachtree Street in Midtown Atlanta. The theater was originally planned as part of a large Shrine Temple as evidenced by its Moorish design. The theater was ultimately developed as a lavish movie palace, opening in 1929. The auditorium replicates an Arabian courtyard under a night sky of flickering stars and drifting clouds. The Fox Theatre now hosts cultural and artistic events, and concerts by popular artists.

Clara: R-E-E-V-E-S. They were all educated. The sons were teachers. The daughter was a seamstress. I was ten years old. I would go down there. She made me clothes. I would eat dinner with them. I always had to do the dishes. I had to stand on a Coca Cola crate to reach the sink. But they were wonderful, wonderful, dear, dear people. On Saturdays I would go to the Royal Theater and go to the movies with them. That was the days of all the Dick Tracy²³—what do they call them—shorts and all. We had a great time. On a special occasion my mother would let me go to the Artistic Beauty Salon which was on Auburn Avenue. They did my hair.

Anita: Was the Royal Theater a theater just for blacks at that time?

Clara: Yes. That whole Auburn Avenue was all black.

Anita: And you never felt uncomfortable?

Clara: No, never. Never felt out of place. In fact when I went to Bass Junior High, I would catch the street car right there at the store where I lived and ride the streetcar. Whenever I went to town in those days I'd get on the streetcar. I'd go to the Carnegie Library²⁴ by myself. Those were the days where we did things without ever thinking about problems. If there wasn't a seat in front I went in back. I don't know that I ever got any ugly looks. I certainly never got any ugly remarks, but it didn't matter to me. They were my buddies.

Anita: I'd like to ask you now about some of the influential Atlanta Jewish community leaders when you were growing up. Do you remember some? Any names in particular?

Clara: When I was growing up I don't know that I remember any of them. But when I was just 18—as I told you—I got married. Of course my husband became involved in the community immediately. Of course my impressions were of the dearest people in the world, Meyer and Roz Balser. He was like a mentor to my husband, getting him to play basketball for the Jewish Progressive Club²⁵ years, when he was 17 years old. I think the first [Jewish] Federation [of Atlanta] meeting I went to was at Ben and Helen Massell's home. I sat there in

²³ *Dick Tracy* is an American comic strip featuring Dick Tracy (originally Plainclothes Tracy), a square-jawed, hard-hitting, fast-shooting, and intelligent police detective. Created by Chester Gould, the strip made its debut on October 4, 1931, in the *Detroit Mirror*. Dick Tracy made his film debut in *Dick Tracy* (1937), a 15-chapter movie serial by Republic Pictures starring Ralph Byrd.

²⁴ The Carnegie Library was the first public library in Atlanta which opened on March 4, 1902, on the site of the current Central Library at Forsyth Street and Carnegie Way. The Carnegie Library remained the main library of the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System for most of the century. Before 1950 the system was referred to as the Carnegie Library, but to commemorate the renovation of the central Carnegie Library the system was renamed the Atlanta Public Library in 1950. In 1977 the Carnegie Library was torn down to make way for the current Central Library.

²⁵ The Progressive Club was a Jewish social organization that was established in 1913 by Russian Jews who felt unwelcome at the Standard Club, where German Jews were predominant.

awe.

Anita: Well since we're talking about your husband tell me his name, his birthdate, and where he was born.

Clara: His name is Sidney H. Feldman . . . S-I-D-N-E-Y H. . . . Feldman . . . F-E-L-D-M-A-N. He was born in Brest, Poland. He is . . . always been part of this community.

Anita: When was his birth date?

Clara: I'm sorry. He was born January 2, 1921.

Anita: He came to this country?

Clara: When he was ten years old.

Anita: When and how did you meet?

Clara: We sort of . . . I knew the family. In fact I went to high school with his sister Eunice. His father would . . . that was when after my mother married Mr. Greenberg, we lived on . . . we moved into his home on Washington Street. That's when I was going to Girls' High and she went to Girls' High. Sidney's father would take us to school every morning so I knew the family. Then it was during the war. Sidney came home on leave. I bumped into him at . . . well, the first time I bumped into him was when I was walking home from Commercial High. He was visiting a friend who lived, who worked, on Pryor Street. I had known the friend, and stopped to say hello. Sidney was there. We chatted. Then he walked me and rode the streetcar because his folks lived on Washington Street. We rode the streetcar home. Then the second time was at the Progressive Club at the swimming pool. I saw him and we chatted. I think he brought me home that day. But anyway I really don't know how all this evolved except that during the war there was priority travel on trains. Only servicemen and people like that had first choice. I had gone to New York to visit these aunts and uncles and cousins. I got stuck. I couldn't get home. At that time . . .

Anita: You got stuck in New York?

Clara: New York. [I] didn't have a priority so I had to wait my turn. While I was up there my step-brother Sol had come home. He had been a prisoner-of-war for 18 months in Germany. Sidney had come home from the service. There were a lot of welcome home parties. When I got back my step-sister Mickie says, "Sidney's been asking about you at every party." I said, "Why?" She said, "I don't know. He wants to know." I said, "Oh, that's an old man. He's eight years older than I am." Then—I don't know—I guess we sometimes . . . I think divine intervention. I got to thinking about it. I went to some parties. I went with my brother Sol and would see Sidney. We

would . . . he wouldn't ask me out because he felt like I was too young. He would take his cousin Pearl Feldman to these parties. My brother Sol would take me. We'd spend the evening . . . whatever. Then he started coming by the house. He really never asked me out, so to speak. New Year's Eve came and he had not asked me out. I went to the Progressive Club with a date. In those days we all dated young. We'd date . . . we didn't date exclusively. We dated a lot of guys. I'll never forget, I was going from the ballroom to the ladies' room and he walked out behind me. He grabbed me and he kissed me. He says, "Don't you ever spend another New Year's Eve without me." Fifty-eight years and counting, we're still together.

Anita: That's great. Who married you?

Clara: Rabbi [Tobias] Geffen and Rabbi [Hyman] Friedman.

Anita: Was Sidney a member of Shearith Israel at the time?

Clara: Yes, his family was, the whole time too.

Anita: Where did you live when you were first married?

Clara: We lived with his parents for six months because Sidney had bought a duplex on Lanier Boulevard when he and his uncle bought a business. The woman that they bought the business from owned this duplex on Lanier Boulevard. But we could not move into it because of OPA [Office of Price Administration]²⁶. That was, after the war you could not—if somebody was living in it—you couldn't make them move. We had to wait six months for the people to move out. Then we moved in. We lived there for five years. My two daughters were born when we lived there.

Anita: Your first house? Did you tell me the address of it?

Clara: [It was] 1276 Lanier Boulevard.

Anita: Tell me the names of your daughters please, and when they were born. What years?

Clara: Our oldest daughter, Linda, was born in September of 1948. Terri was born in April of 1951. Then when we moved to this house we had our two sons. Lewis was born in 1954. Michael was born three, three-and-a-half years later. When you have that many you can't keep up with them.

Anita: Let's go back for just a minute. I want you to tell me about what married life was like when you were first married, you and Sidney. What kinds of things did you do as young couples?

²⁶ The OPA was originally created within the Office of Emergency Management of the U.S. government to control money (price controls) and rents after the outbreak of World War II.

Clara: We had a group of friends that every Tuesday and Saturday we would go to Progressive Club. We went to movies. We were . . . Sidney was involved in the community and so we went to community affairs.

Anita: Did you all entertain in your homes much? Or more at the clubs?

Clara: No. In the early days [we] didn't do too much fancy entertaining, but people came over and things like that. But we did, we entertained.

Anita: Now you mentioned Sidney's business. But I don't think you told me what it was.

Clara: Sidney, when he came out of the service, he and his uncle started a business called London Iron and Metal Company. It was a recycling business, and . . .

Anita: Did they call it recycling then?

Clara: No.

Anita: I didn't think.

Clara: It was called "junkyard."

Anita: Exactly. You said his uncle?

Clara: Max London.

Anita: Where was that located?

Clara: On Adamson Street in Southwest Atlanta.

Anita: How long were they in that business?

Clara: Up until 15 years ago when they sold it. Then they started London Feldman Properties. We're in real estate now.

Anita: I see. I'm going to go back to when Sidney was in the service. What branch did he serve?

Clara: He was in the Navy.

Anita: How long did he serve?

Clara: Three, three-and-a-half years I think. I really didn't know him closely then.

Anita: Do you remember where he was stationed?

Clara: He was in Africa at first. Then he was in the South Pacific. That's where he was wounded.

Anita: Tell me a little bit about his wound.

Clara: He was on a . . . he was the youngest officer on his carrier.²⁷ He was one of the first

²⁷ *USS Petrof Bay*, a United States escort carrier with 28 aircraft that launched on January 4, 1944. *Petrof Bay*

groups to be hit by Kamikazes. When the Kamikaze came onto his deck the noise was so loud that it shattered the hearing in his ear. He was not aware that he had lost his hearing until his commanding officer stood behind him one day and was giving him an order. When he didn't respond they realized [he lost his hearing]. Then he was sent to the hospital in San Diego, in California. He was in the hospital for about six months. I think they also sent him somewhere else. But those times that I saw him when he was in Atlanta he was on . . . he would catch a military plane and come home when he had a weekend off so . . .

Anita: Were you already dating at that time?

Clara: No.

Anita: That was before?

Clara: That was before.

Anita: This is going to be the end of Tape 1.

<End Tape 1, Side1>

<Begin Tape 2, Side 1>

Anita: This is an interview with Clara Feldman by Anita Eidex. Clara, let's talk about your connection to the State of Israel.

Clara: We have always been ardent Zionists²⁸ and always worked through Federation, bonds, whatever organization, to see it become a viable homeland. It's just part of us. I have a very special piece of property in Israel. We were on our first trip there. We went to a place called Lifeline for the Old.²⁹ It was so heartwarming and wonderful to see what they did with old people. Until that part of the country could work with old instead of young, they would sit at home and wait to die. Lifeline for the Old provided workshops, and food, and camaraderie, and gave them a purpose in life. When we visited there, I was so taken with it. As it happens, I had a birthday. We were traveling with our dear friends Erwin and Doris Zaban.³⁰ That night as we

participated in the Battle of Leyte Gulf that preceded the liberation of the Philippines. On February 18, 1945, aircraft from *Petrof Bay* supported troop landings of the marines at Iwo Jima. In May of 1945, *Petrof Bay* provided support for the landing at Okinawa.

²⁸ Zionism is a movement which supports a Jewish national state in the territory defined as the Land of Israel.

Although Zionism existed before the nineteenth century, in the 1890's Theodor Herzl popularized it and gave it a new urgency, as he believed that Jewish life in Europe was threatened and a State of Israel was needed. The State of Israel was established in 1948 and Zionism today is expressed as support for the continued existence of Israel.

²⁹ Lifeline for the Old is a non-profit organization that empowers the elderly and disabled poor of Jerusalem, Israel to become contributing members of Israeli society through training and work opportunities in handicrafts.

³⁰ 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

were celebrating my birthday they told me that they had purchased a Lifeline Workshop in my honor.

Anita: Clara, please give me the names of your children's spouses and their children's names and ages and their children's children.

Clara: Our eldest daughter Linda, is married to Richard Bressler. They have three children, Adam, Jay, and Leigh Anne. Adam is 32. He's a physician. He's married to Suzanne.

Anita: What was her maiden name? Do you remember?

Clara: Siegel. They have two children, great-grandchildren. Sophia's three and Asher's a year-and-a-half. Jay is a lawyer. He just became engaged to Leila Nadel. Leigh Anne is 23. Right now she is exploring New Zealand and finding "the end of the rainbow," as she wrote. We're very proud of them. Terri is married to Laurence "Laurie" Bagen. They have three sons. Matthew is 27. He's married to Tasha. Matthew is an anthropologist and an environmentalist at heart. He has a wonderful soulmate along with him. David is 24. He's out in Montana looking to save all the greenspace. Ethan is twenty. He's at Elon University in North Carolina. He wants to be a sports manager. Just ask him anything about sports. He can tell you. They're wonderful, dear, dear, wonderful, boys. Our son Lewis is married to LuEllen. They have two children. Danielle is 18, a senior in high school looking forward to going to college. Jonathan who's 15 is a rising junior . . . sophomore. Oh well, I'll push him along. Great kids. Our youngest son, Michael is married to Jody. They have three boys. Jason is 14. He's a wonderful actor, singer and great kid. They have twin boys, Kevin and Brett. They are seven . . . six . . . oh they're going to be seven. They are cute as they can be. We are very, very fortunate. We are so blessed to have wonderful children, grandchildren, and now great-grandchildren.

Anita: Where did you live when you were raising your kids, your own children?

Clara: Well when we—when the girls—when we lived on Lanier Boulevard. Linda and Terri were born there. We moved to this house when Terri was a year old.

Anita: This house being . . .

Clara: . . . being on Merton Road.

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.

Anita: In what area of town?

Clara: This is Northeast, Lenox Park.³¹ We've been here 52 years. The boys were born when we moved to this house.

Anita: What elementary and high school did your children attend?

Clara: The girls went to Morningside [Elementary School] and to Grady High School.³² The boys went to Hebrew Academy.³³ Louis went to Marist [School].³⁴ Michael went to Briarcliff [High School], Marist, and Lovett [School].³⁵

Anita: What type of religious education did your children receive?

Clara: I guess, sort of . . .

Anita: Did the girls go to religious . . . ?

Clara: They went to afternoon Hebrew School.

Anita: At Shearith Israel?

Clara: Yes. The boys, of course, went to Hebrew Academy.

Anita: Did you celebrate *Shabbat*³⁶ and holidays with your children?

Clara: Yes.

Anita: As they were growing up?

Clara: Yes. Always.

³¹ Lenox Park in the City of Atlanta was a subdivision begun in 1931 under the supervision of Ivey and Crook, architects. Today it forms part of the larger neighborhood of Morningside-Lenox Park. The iconic Lenox Park urn-and-column markers (several are still standing) were the inspiration for the more numerous Morningside-Lenox Park columns standing at the entrance to the larger neighborhood.

³² Henry W. Grady High School is located in Atlanta, Georgia, adjacent to Piedmont Park in the heart of Midtown. It was founded in 1924 as Boys High School, and was renovated once in 1950, once in 1987, and once again in 2004.

³³ The Hebrew Academy was the first Jewish day school in Atlanta, and was founded in 1953. In 1989 it was renamed the Katherine and Jacob Greenfield Hebrew Academy and provided pre-school through eighth grade education. In 2014 the Katherine and Jacob Greenfield Hebrew Academy merged with Yeshiva High School of Atlanta and the school was renamed the Atlanta Jewish Academy, becoming Atlanta's first pre-school to twelfth grade Jewish school.

³⁴ Marist School is a Catholic, private, nonprofit, college preparatory, coeducational day school of the Marist Fathers and Brothers serving students in grades seven through twelve. The school is owned and operated by the Society of Mary, more commonly known as the Marists, a religious congregation of priests and brothers founded in France in 1836. Marist was founded in downtown Atlanta in 1901 and is the oldest Catholic secondary school in the Atlanta area. The school moved to its current site on Ashford Dunwoody Road in 1962.

³⁵ Lovett School is an independent, coeducational college preparatory school currently located on Paces Ferry Road in Atlanta, Georgia that serves students in Kindergarten through Grade 12. Lovett School was established in 1926 at a location in Midtown Atlanta.

³⁶ *Shabbat* [Hebrew] or *Shabbos* [Yiddish] is the Jewish day of rest and is observed on Saturdays. *Shabbat* observance entails refraining from work activities, often with great rigor, and engaging in restful activities to honor the day. *Shabbat* begins at sundown on Friday night and is ushered in by lighting candles and reciting a blessing. It is closed the following evening with the recitation of the *havdalah* blessing.

Anita: How do you celebrate them now?

Clara: I go to my daughters for *Shabbat*. I go to my daughters for holiday. They've taken over the reins and . . .

Anita: Lucky you.

Clara: My mother did it for all the years. Then I took over. Now this generation has taken it over. *Dor L'dor*. [Hebrew: From generation to generation]

Anita: Did any of your children attend a Jewish camp?

Clara: Yes.

Anita: Which ones?

Clara: They all went to [Camp] Barney Medintz.³⁷

Anita: Tell me about the organizations and activities in which you might have been involved in while your children were growing up.

Clara: I think the first grown-up organization I belonged to was [National] Council of Jewish Women [NCJW].³⁸ Through the Council that's when I did my first teaching of English as a Second Language.³⁹ It was one of their programs. I've always found it to be a wonderful organization. Through the years I've done this or that with them. I think one of the things that I enjoy the most is helping to resettle. I remember one . . . several incidents. I remember one where we were collecting furniture to settle in new immigrants. There was someone moving out of an apartment at Cross Creek. They wanted to donate all the furniture and they had nobody to get it. It had to be picked up that day. I borrowed my son's pick-up truck. They got me a couple of boys from Yeshiva, I think. We went and loaded up and brought that furniture in. That was a wonderful day because I remember [Rosalind] "Roz" Penso [Cohen]. She was so special. She got up and gave me a standing ovation.

Anita: Now you're talking about when the Russians came.

³⁷ Camp Barney Medintz is the overnight camp of the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta, located in the north Georgia Blue Ridge mountains.

³⁸ National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) is an organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into advocacy and philanthropy inspired by Jewish values. They strive to improve the quality of life for women, children and families. NCJW formed under the leadership of social activist Hannah Greenebaum Solomon at the 1893 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

³⁹ English as a Second Language (ESL) is instruction for English-language learners, a term most commonly used in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Non-native English-speaking students are taught ESL so they may function in their new host country within the school system (if a child), find and hold down a job (if an adult), or perform the necessities of daily life (cooking, taking a cab/public transportation, or eating in a restaurant, etc.).

Clara: Yes.

Anita: That was in the 1960's perhaps? Or 1970's?

Clara: No. Another very special memory of Council work was working with my daughter Terri. She was very pregnant and she was settling these Russians right and left. We'd go to the warehouse. She took me along to translate because so many of them spoke Yiddish. I could speak with them. That was a joy.

Anita: Were you involved in any political causes?

Clara: No.

Anita: What kinds of activities did your children participate in while they were growing up?

Clara: You name it.

Anita: Of course, they're very involved.

Clara: Right.

Anita: To this day

Clara: They have always been involved. I can't even begin to enumerate . . .

Anita: The apples don't fall far from the tree. Did your family belong to any social club?

Clara: We belonged to the Progressive Club and the Standard Club.⁴⁰

Anita: Are you still members of the Standard Club?

Clara: Yes, we are.

Anita: We're going to talk about personal observations. I just wondered if . . . of course, Atlanta has changed positively and negatively from the time that you've grown up here. Give us some of these changes. Talk about some of the changes.

Clara: I always felt like I knew most of the Jewish community. We were involved, and my husband was president of the Progressive Club. As I said, we used to go there all the time. He was president of every Jewish organization in the city. I felt like I knew everyone. It was always so wonderful to walk into wherever, know everybody. Unfortunately, we don't have that today. I miss it.

Anita: Do you think the role of the Jewish woman in Atlanta has changed over the years?

⁴⁰ The Standard Club is a private, country club, with a Jewish heritage dating back to 1867. The club originated as Concordia Association in Downtown Atlanta. In 1905 it was reorganized as the Standard Club and moved into the former mansion of William C. Sanders near where Turner Field is now located. In the late 1920's the club moved to Ponce de Leon Avenue in Midtown Atlanta. The club later moved to the Brookhaven area and opened in what is now the Lenox Park business park. It was located there until 1983 when the club moved to its present location in Johns Creek in Atlanta's northern suburbs.

Clara: Yes. I see volunteerism has gone. Career women have taken over. We still have some very dedicated young people, but it's not the same.

Anita: Tell me about some of the organizations and activities—both Jewish and non-Jewish—that you've participated in over the years.

Clara: I belonged to *Hadassah*.⁴¹ I always tried to be part of it. I always tried to have meetings or affairs here. As I said, [I belonged to] Council, Sisterhood. I was president of Shearith Israel Sisterhood. That was a fun time. In fact, I was reminiscing the other night with Francis Cohen . . . Francis Goodman—she followed me as president—and Norma Cohen, who I followed. It was just a certain togetherness. Even though we had some rough times, it was always wonderful. I belonged to Brandeis [University].⁴² I belonged to every organization, not always active, but always belonged.

Anita: Do you have any hobbies?

Clara: No, I never had too much of a hobby. I've never been sports-minded, sort of dull.

Anita: I wouldn't say that. What do you do socially that you like?

Clara: At this stage of our lives, our social calendar consists of meeting with friends and having dinner. Mostly enjoying what we can . . . what's left of life and what's left of our friends. Of course, our children are a mainstay in our lives. We socialize with them. You know what? It's very nice to know that they like to spend time with us.

Anita: We've discussed many topics in this interview, but are there still some things that I haven't asked that you feel you'd like to share with me? I think you were going to tell me about some of the little jobs that you had.

Clara: Right.

Anita: The big money that you made.

Clara: When I was . . . the summer I think I was 13—no, I had to be older, 14—Rabbi Simon Noveck⁴³ who lived up the street was studying for his PhD. He had so much reading to do. His

⁴¹ *Hadassah* is the Women's Zionist Organization of America. It is a volunteer organization founded in 1912 by Henrietta Szold. It is an international Jewish organization with around 300,000 members worldwide. It supports health care, education and youth programs in Israel.

⁴² Brandeis University is an American private research university with a liberal arts focus. It is located in Waltham, Massachusetts, 9 miles west of Boston.

⁴³ Rabbi Simon Noveck (1914-2005) was a pulpit rabbi, author, and editor born in Atlanta, Georgia. He earned a B.A. from Yeshiva College and then moved to the Jewish Theological Seminary where he was ordained in 1941. He earned a Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1955. He was rabbi at Park Avenue Synagogue in Manhattan, New York and Emanuel Synagogue in West Hartford, Connecticut, and an editor of the B'nai B'rith Great Books Series.

eyes were not very strong. I spent a summer reading the most technical, deep books ever. I don't think I learned too much from them. But I made twenty-five cents an hour reading to him.

Anita: I hope you didn't spend it all in one place.

Clara: Anyway, it was interesting. Then, about 20 years ago, my daughters and I opened a shop at Phipps Plaza⁴⁴ called *Initially Yours*. It was invitations, stationary and gifts. That was one of the most fun things you could possibly do. I think that I got a greater appreciation of what my daughters were capable of. I think maybe that worked the same way for them. It was a fabulous experience. I wouldn't give . . . it was just wonderful. It was just wonderful.

Anita: Clara, if you had your life to do all over again, what would you do differently?

Clara: Maybe I would have followed through on some thoughts that I had about continuing my education. I always said I wanted to go back to college but I never . . . go to college, not go back. I never made it because I got married one month past I was 18. I feel like I've got a pretty good practical education but perhaps I should have done that.

Anita: Looking ahead, what things do you want to accomplish in your life? What are your dreams?

Clara: Goodness. From now on I don't imagine I will have any. My dreams are to see my children, my grandchildren, my great-grandchildren to be well and healthy; be part of the human race; continue to do all that they've always shown us they can do. To give us this pride that we have in them and to pass it on.

Anita: Thank-you Clara, wonderful interview.

Clara: Thank-you.

<Interview pauses, then resumes>

Anita: Clara has a little P.S. [post-script] that she would like to add to this interview.

Clara: Our very good friends, the Zabans [Erwin and Doris Zaban], their family, and my wonderful, wonderful children donated a conference center at the Federation building in my, and my wonderful husband Sidney's honor. This has been so very special for us. We've been part of the community all our married lives. Then to have this conference center at Federation where all that work has been done in our honor has been very heartwarming and means so much to us.

⁴⁴ Phipps Plaza is an upscale shopping mall located in the affluent Buckhead district of Atlanta. Owned by Simon Property Group, the retail center is located at the intersection of Peachtree Road (Georgia SR 141) and Lenox Road (Georgia SR 141 Connector) and sits adjacent to its sister-mall Lenox Square in the heart of Buckhead's commercial center.

Anita: This is the end of Tape two.

<End Tape 2>

INTERVIEW ENDS

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