

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

MEMORISTS: ALICE SHERR
SAUL SHERR
INTERVIEWERS: MARSHA VRONO
RUTH EINSTEIN
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INTERVIEW BEGINS

[Recording Begins]

Marsha: My name is Marsha Vrono, and it is March 28, in the year 2001, and I am here interviewing Alice and Saul Sherr. I am going to let them actually introduce themselves with their full name, and let them get started.

Alice: I'm Alice Bacharach Sherr.

Saul: I'm Saul Sherr. No middle name.

Marsha: Alice, I know we talked a little bit before we started the interview and I know you don't remember a whole lot because you were very, very young when everything took place, but if you could sort of just try to take us through the steps of your childhood.

Alice: I know when I was young my parents used to warn me when Hitler would come by and say, "You know, you have to be out of the way." I remember we couldn't go to school in that town where I lived, which was Egelsbach in Germany. It was a small town and we had to go by train to Darmstadt. I think there were about five or six of the kids. Usually an adult went with us, because of having to go on a . . . it's not like a modern train, but a regular train. I know we had to be quiet in school, and the school we went to was a Jewish school. Jewish teachers and I don't know it was so much like a Hebrew school where we learned. There were all those little beer stands, and the grownup that would go with us, kind of like a carpool, would buy beer and wanted us to taste the beer. To this day I cannot stand beer. I don't know what it tastes like, but I think I know what it tastes like. It smells bad. I just don't like beer. So I think it's because they gave us beer when we were five or six years old. We had a big iron gate and my grandfather's store was right next to the house, and we lived. . . attached to the house. . .

and we lived with my grandfather. They wrote something nasty on the gate with white either shoe polish or something white. Before that, my mother was a seamstress, and what she made is the gowns that you put on people for burial. I remember helping her with pulling the elastic through the top. My mom had a sewing machine by one of the windows and one night they broke all the windows, and when we woke up all the glass was in the living room, but they didn't take anything. My mom's watch was on the sewing machine and it was still there. They just want. . . just vandalism. They just wanted to break everything. After that we left and moved to my uncle's apartment in Frankfurt. I'm not sure, but I think he had already moved to France, but I'm not sure. I don't think they were there. In Frankfurt, I went to another Jewish school, and I think in Darmstadt, where we went on the train, I think I only went two, three months, and then in Frankfurt I went maybe two, three months to school. Then there, it was *Kristallnacht* [Night of Broken Glass], and that I remember very vividly. We lived upstairs, I don't know, maybe [it] was the second or third floor, and they came with axes and sickles and all kinds of tools, and we were very scared. They broke in a lot of places and a lot of Jews were harassed. I don't know if it was, when, on that day, but my grandfather went to *shul*¹ every morning, and they threw him down and pulled his beard, and I think it was kind of like in the film *Exodus*, where they burned the books. I just remember one of the *shuls* burning. It was a white building, and we could see it from our window when we looked down. This might not be in the correct sequence, because I can't remember, and then I don't know if it was that night, but it was sometime when they got my father and took him to a concentration camp. I thought it was Dachau. My uncle said it was, what did Gilbert, I can't remember. It was one of the other concentration camps. My mother's other two sisters also had lived there. We all lived in my uncle's apartment in Frankfurt. My mother and me and my aunt, we all slept in one bed. Maybe it was a double bed or something. My father was gone for a while. I don't know how long, but he got out, and when he came back, I didn't want him to come in bed with us, because I didn't recognize him. His hair was cut. The first thing he did was vomit when he came in; he was just, they just, little things I remember I remember as young child. I don't remember it exactly. Then, my parents sent me to Switzerland. It was on January 5.

¹ Synagogue.

Marsha: Before we get to that part, I wanted to quickly ask what, who was part of your family, like your parents' names, were you an only child [unintelligible]

Alice: No. I, I'm sorry, it scratched my... I was about five when my sister was born, and my mother's name is Guta Bacharach, and my father's name was Ludwig Bacharach. She was born Katz. Katz in German.

Marsha: And your sister's...

Alice: My sister's name was Edith [pronounced Ay-dit], Edith in English.

Marsha: And it was one sister?

Alice: Yes, that's, yes.

Marsha: Okay, so then all three, the four of you were in Frankfurt?

Alice: Yes, and my grandfather, Nathaniel Katz, and my mother's two sisters, Eda and Paula Katz. Neither one was married. One of them was engaged to a jeweler, and the other one I don't, I just rem... that's all I remember.

Marsha: At what [unintelligible] age were you, do you remember when you were in Frankfurt?

Alice: About six. I was just barely seven when I went to Switzerland.

Marsha: So, you mentioned that your father had gone away for a while. He wasn't in camps yet [unintelligible].

Alice: Yes, he was in a concentration camp. [unintelligible]

Marsha: He was able to come back?

Alice: Somehow he got out. I don't know why or how, and he didn't look the same when he came out. In fact, I didn't recognize him. I don't think he was gone that long, maybe three months, six months. I don't think he was gone a year. When he came back.

..

Marsha: And then shortly after he came back...

Alice: They sent me to Switzerland. We met at an orphanage and...

Marsha: Did your, did someone escort you to Switzerland, or [unintelligible]

Alice: There was a children's transport of 200 children, and my sister couldn't go because she was too young. She was two and a half at that time. We met at an orphanage and a man from the orphanage escorted us on the train, and there were about 200 children, and about 50 of us went to this small town in Switzerland. A German

speaking town named Heiden. And one of the children that was there was Ruth, what's her name?

Saul: Westheimer.

Marsha: Really?

Alice: Yes. She was a little bit older. She went to the same children's home as I did. And I think I said, I think, it was January 5, 1939. And we supposed to stay there for three months, kind of to get us relief from what was going on in Germany, but I stayed until 1947. Of all the children, I think I was the longest one that stayed in the children's home. Some of the children went to Holland, where their families had gone to; some of them went to Denmark. Just all over Europe. Some of them went to Israel, Palestine at that time.

Marsha: Right, right.

Alice: I went for one year to live with a family, and my uncle, who had escaped from France, the one whose house we lived in. . . his name was David Katz, he and his wife and four children all escaped. Not all together, and they all came to Switzerland; they lived in the mountains. He was very unhappy about me going to live with that family, because the woman in the family was not Jewish, but I don't know if she converted. At that time, I didn't know better. They didn't keep kosher; the children's home was kosher, but after a year, the woman's mother was too old to live by herself and she came back and I had a very difficult time in the family. It was hard for me to live in a family, because I didn't remember. I lived in a children's home for so long, and I went back to the children's home. But before that, a few years before, and I don't know what year it was, I was supposed to join my parents in France, and this man came and he was going to escort me across the border, and I got as far as Zurich and the borders closed between Switzerland and France, which was very traumatic and sad for me. But when I think back, it's lucky. I wouldn't have been alive if I would have been able to join my parents. Anyway, I never saw my parents again after January Fifth. My, the parents were not supposed to come to the train. They were supposed to take us to the orphanage and then leave us, and, but my father, I remember, came to the train. He wasn't supposed to. I remember looking out of the train window and waving to him. It wasn't that sad for me, maybe for the older children, because it was like going on a vacation. I did not know

it was the last time I would see my parents. I was always behind a year in school, because the two months I went to Darmstadt to school and the few months I went to, in Frankfurt, it didn't add too much. When we got to the children's home, since we [were] only going to be there for three months, the children that were in the first grade, which I was, didn't start in the school there. The next year, when I was eight, I had to start over again. When they figured out that we were going to stay we had to start over again, because we didn't have enough of the first grade. Not enough instruction. I stayed in Zurich about a week. They thought the border would open, but it didn't, so we went back to the children's home. Then later on when I lived with that family, I stayed about a year with them.

Marsha: That was in Switzerland?

Alice: Yes. In Zurich [unintelligible]

Marsha: This was a different family.

Alice: Yes, completely. The first time when I supposed to meet my parents it was a widower and he was quite old and he had a housekeeper, and he wanted me to stay real bad. He even let my girlfriend come over, but I just wasn't ready. He was, I think, a very rich man, because he had a business. It was called Seiden-Fenigstein.² He had a business on *Bahnhofstrasse*, which is kind of like the New York. . . what is that, what is that street?

Ruth: Fifth Avenue?

Marsha: Park Avenue?

Alice: What?

Marsha: Park Avenue?

Alice: Yes, something like that. It was, but I just wasn't used to that. The children's home was fairly, was clean, and not all, fairly warm, but everything was very rationed in Switzerland. Not even the things that Switzerland produced, like milk was available, but they had to ship so much out to Germany, and the Germans used to have that song, translated in English, it was "Switzerland porcupine, we take her in on the way home." You know, they were going to capture the whole world, and so they were going to get Switzerland. The porcupine because of all the mountains. We had a, enough to eat. We

² Seiden-Fenigstein AG conducts business in Zurich relating to the retail sale of silk products.

never had to be hungry, but the food wasn't what I would have liked, and I did not want to eat. I was very, very skinny. As you can see I'm still . . . no. <laughs> I did not want to eat and they made me eat. I remember wishing that I was in a concentration camp where I didn't have to eat, because I didn't know really what it was. We did not have newspapers in the children's home. There was a radio and every once in a while we heard some on the radio. In fact, for many, many years I thought Eisenhower was a German guy, because it sounds German. But I didn't know about it. I heard a little bit about the concentration camp, but not too much. You don't have papers or radio, then you don't. There was one radio for the whole children's home.

Marsha: Were you like already in your teens by this time?

Alice: Um. . .

Marsha: Eleven?

Alice: Yes, it might have been then.

Marsha: Did the other children that came back to the orphanage, they also had lost their parents?

Alice: They came, they left, now in Switzerland it was a children's home; it wasn't an orphanage. The orphanage was in Germany, where we met. We just met in a big room, you know, to go to the train from there. I don't remember what the transportation was, but we went together. We didn't have things like candy or ice cream or pudding, or what kids grow up with. When I, when we went to school, only the first graders, and there were four of us, went to the public school. There was a man who took all the other children and taught them in the children's home. But we went to public school; somehow he couldn't teach first grade. We went to Hebrew school at the children's home after school, but not, not regular school. I remember after school, sometimes we [went] to this little store, like a grocery store, and we would sing. Well, I can't carry a tune. <laughs> We would sing and they would give us candy, till they finally called the children's home and said we were coming to sing there for candy <laughs>. And they, the children's home, made a big fuss about us doing that. We had maybe one or two ice cream cones a year, so, sometimes we did things like when nobody was looking. Two of us would share the food so that they wouldn't get a plate and it would look that they had, because, but we had enough to eat. I think it was nourishing, but it wasn't what we wanted. On

Hanukkah we used to get packages from some women in, they had some kind of club or something and gave us sweaters and shoes and stuff. A lot of the clothes we had were hand me downs that they had kept, that other children had outgrown. We weren't in Switzerland maybe, like, maybe a month and everybody got the chicken pox. We were pretty sick and they made us drink like hot milk, and one time they brought us lemonade, and we mixed the lemonade with the milk <laughing> decided it would make it taste better. Nobody could drink it. But we did things, and we had to take naps in the afternoon when we were maybe ten, twelve years old. I don't know. It was kind of strict. Not too long after, my father, I got a note from my mother that my father had died. My mother wasn't able to send her sisters, my two aunts that lived with us mail, so she used to send it through me. I would send it, I could send it to Germany, but she couldn't. You couldn't mail things directly. I read a few of my mother's notes, which I shouldn't have, but I did, because they were awful. Sometimes she said, "I just made a hat. I hope Edith and I can find something to eat." They were pretty bad, and when, as I said, my uncle and his two, his four kids and his wife all escaped over the mountains and came to Switzerland. Not together, at different times. I visited them once in the French part; it was called Baix-le-Bains [*sic*, Aix-les-Bains?]. I met this old woman, I can't remember her name, and she told me she and my mother and my sister lived in cloister. The nuns were hiding them in the basement. My folks were pretty kosher, and especially my uncle. He was very upset if things didn't go the Orthodox way. In 1947, I was supposed to come to United States, maybe in January or February, and I went to Zurich back to that family that I had lived with for just a short time, and I got really sick. I got a sinus infection, and that was just about when Switzerland got penicillin. I don't know when penicillin came out, but Switzerland got it. It wasn't given like one shot. You got a shot every three or four hours, day or night, and you had to go to the hospital in isolation. I was with other children in isolation. Not, you know, they were just children that lived in Zurich. I'm kind of skipping around. In the children's home all during the war, they would take transports of children for three months and then send them back, from Hungary, I don't, from, you know, a lot of countries and a lot of times they came with lice. At that time when you had lice you had to shave off the hair, especially, I mean the girls, I guess the boys too, because they didn't know how to control it then. I was lucky.

When I got sick I didn't miss the ship I was supposed to go on, because the seas were too rough and they really didn't sail. I came in, I'm sorry, I have to look it up, I think in April of 1947 here with five other girls and when we landed in New York, we were written up in six papers that we had come. It was a ship, it was the first sailing of the ship, and it, the ship's name was the *SS Sobieski*. It was a Polish ship. There was one girl, I think she was about 17 or 18. She kind of watched us. We went to some kind of a home, take up home, and I think who paid for the trip was Joint³. Let's see, what was, do you remember [unintelligible]. Yes, something like that. It's kind of like the Welfare Fund⁴ now. I saw my two uncles, the uncle that was in Switzerland, the one that escaped from France, who was extremely Orthodox. All his children are Hassidic, with extreme Orthodox ways. Their marriages are arranged and stuff like that even now, when they're 17 or 18 for the girls. He wanted me to stay with him, but he only had come to the United States maybe six months before me, maybe a year, but not really long. Then I had another uncle on my father's side, Max Bacharach, and he had married a non-Jewish woman, which was not all that bad, but she was a German, and <laughs> and that was bad at that time. He wanted me to stay with him, but I think he wanted me to stay with him because he thought my father had left me some money, which he really didn't. They asked me what, you know, wanted, and I say, "I don't know. They're fighting." If it was up to them, my father and mother would have never gotten along. I mean, it was everything "Your mother wanted it this way; your father wanted it this way." So the social worker in New York at that place where we were staying asked me where I want to go. She didn't think it would be good for me to stay in New York with the extreme opposite of the two uncles. So I said, "I don't like New York, because there is, it's dirty and everything is so close together. I lived in a town that had farms. You had to walk five minutes to get to your neighbors, and so I want trees and flowers." So they sent me to Atlanta. And I lived with different families, some very nice, some not so nice.

Marsha: Did your uncles stay in New York? [unintelligible]

³ The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Active today in more than 70 countries, the Joint Distribution Committee and its partners work to rescue Jewish lives at risk, bring relief to Jews in need, renew lost bonds to Jewish identity and Jewish culture, and help Israel overcome the social challenges of its most vulnerable citizens, both Jewish and non-Jewish. JDC reach extends beyond the global Jewish community by providing non-sectarian disaster relief and long-term development assistance worldwide.

⁴ The Atlanta Jewish Welfare Fund, now part of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta.

Alice: Yes, both uncles stayed in New York.

Marsha: To back up just for a second, how did they decide when you were in Switzerland that you were going to go to the States?

Alice: That I don't know. It came through the Agency, through the Joint Agency. I was 15 then, so it's still kind of young.

Marsha: Right.

Alice: But I knew I didn't want to have that conflict, and so the social worker said, "Where would you like to go?" I never heard of Atlanta. [unintelligible] New York and Honolulu I had heard, but never of Atlanta.

Marsha: How did you, I know your mother had wrote you about your father. How did you find out about your mother?

Alice: Just by correspondence stopping. My father was in a concentration camp in France called Gurs, and he got polio. They let him get out, and he went to Rothschild Hospital for two days and died in the Rothschild Hospital in France. Then my mother had to go from place to place. This old woman who lived with my mother in the cloister said she tried to come to Switzerland, and was in a car. This was not legal. My uncle did not come to Switzerland legally; they didn't want to let him in, but deep hate, you know. She wanted to come, and there was not enough room for my sister and her, so she was going to go another time, but they never made it. The way I know for certain what happened is when Gilbert, my second son, went to France and he started investigating. He did not know that I knew about my father, and Gilbert had found out that my father had died and had been put in a mass grave. There was no money for burial. Later on they said they couldn't stay there and he got moved again after he was dead. He found out that my mother and my sister got deported, and I don't have the date right now, but I have it somewhere if you need it. I forgot what concentration Gilbert said they went. Gilbert found this out. He investigated in France; he spoke a little French, but I never wanted the children to know German because that's how <laughs> I could talk behind their back when I didn't them to know what I was saying. So, my husband speaks Yiddish, so when we couldn't communicate well enough between German and Yiddish, "It's between the foot and the knee," if we didn't know what "leg" was. But we got around where the kids couldn't. . .

Marsha: You were raised speaking German?

Alice: Yes. And in the children's home, at one time I had a room with two girls, and you know how kids are. They didn't want me to hear what they were saying, and they wanted to keep secrets when we were in bed, so they talked in French, because I didn't know French, but I learned it. I couldn't understand, I couldn't translate. I never learned to read; I never studied, but they talked enough where I learned to understand what they were saying. I didn't know all the words, but I knew if they were talking about the weather, or about me. I knew the subject they were talking about, could understand enough. In Switzerland, a lot of the kids that grew up there speak three languages. Now four, English too, but at the, during the war, they did not take English too much. The schools in Switzerland, I had trouble with school. It was hard for me, and the routine was hard. The whole family business was hard. In Switzerland, I was not good in math, and, but when I came here and I didn't speak English and they put me in biology and things like that, and I didn't know what "table and chairs" were, and they talked about protozoa and amoeba, and things like that, I, it was too hard for me. But even though I wasn't a good math student, they put me in algebra, I excelled, because I didn't need to know the language. I could see the numbers on the board and they were the same. The seven didn't have a line across, but the numbers looked the same and the writing was the same, so I excelled in algebra. Even so, math was one of my. . .

Marsha: That was a totally different language when you were in school.

Alice: . . . yes. I only spoke German and *Switzerdeutsch*, which is a kind of a dialect similar to Uncle Remus how he wrote *B'r'er Rabbit* and stuff like that. It's spoken more than written. Uncle Remus never wrote in, I mean spoke, it's mostly writing. Nobody speaks like that much. And. . .

Marsha: When you were living there, you were, this was still in the home, not in the private home in Switzerland. You were going to school in Switzerland. [unintelligible]

Alice: . . . yes, it's German. In Zurich you speak German; in Heiden we spoke German. That's the only two places I was. I don't even think I travelled many places with the school trips or something.

Marsha: Right. You were living, at that time you were living with the family?

Alice: I only lived with the family one year. At first I was in the children's home and then I lived with them for a year, and then I was back in the children. . . and I left actually from the children's home, but the seas were too rough. That's why I went back with the family for just a little while.

Marsha: Then you went to the States?

Alice: Yes. [unintelligible] and came to Atlanta, I went to Druid Hills [High School] for one year and I learned a little bit, I learned English fairly well. Then when I moved to another family, the first family, he wasn't, the man wasn't too well and he, he travelled from like one Jewish community center to the other and he couldn't do it anymore, so he, they moved to Miami.

Marsha: Did you keep up with your uncles at all after. . .

Alice: My uncle that married the non-Jewish woman wrote me very mean and nasty letters, and I discontinued, I don't like writing to this day, and I discontinued contact. I, my Uncle David, I kept in touch and I went many, many times to New York, once with the whole family, to see him a last time. You know, I always thought, what would I do if I he had died, and I would have gone there and I would have felt guilty, so I saw him and we corresponded, and, for many years. And then he moved to Israel, and when he actually died <laughs> I couldn't, I missed, the Orthodox way of burying the next day, I mean. I didn't even know it. I don't think all his children went. He had four children, so I don't think all his children went to the, Israel. His one son went, and I still keep in touch, seldom, *Pesach* and New Year's, with my four cousins.

Marsha: They're in New York?

Alice: They're in New York, and they have many, many children. One of them has 14. . .

Marsha: [unintelligible] They continued on with the. . .

Saul: They're Hassidic.

Alice: . . . yes, yes. One of them has 14 children. No, 11. Their children have many children. I know a lot of the girls, but the boys, you don't introduce a woman to boys, and at weddings they have separate rooms and stuff like that.

Marsha: So you've got to some events [unintelligible]

Alice: Yes, I did when my uncle was alive. I went just about to any one, every one I could, but then when he died, I, I mostly went to see him.

Marsha: So when you came here, were you were living with families?

Alice: At first I lived with the Jacobsons. He's the one that was travelling and couldn't do it anymore because he got sick. Then I lived with a family around the corner named Gelfand, but I don't remember how to spell it, Gelfand. They moved back to New York. I lived with about maybe six or seven or eight families not very long with each one, and. . .

Marsha: Did the Federation⁵ find homes for you?

Alice: . . . yes. It was a social worker named Gertrude Fink who worked with me. I heard she's not living anymore.

Alice: She was nice.

Marsha: You lived with just several different families.

Alice: Yes, yes.

Marsha: Did it make you have to change high schools? You mentioned that you went to Druid Hills.

Alice: Only one time I went to Hoke Smith, and the last family I lived with was the Cohens. You know Judy Cohen? I think there are two Judy Cohens. And they were nice. They're not living anymore. Their kids are living here.

Saul: Lillian and Ruby.

Alice: Lillian and Ruby Cohen nd. . .

Saul: Kids were [unintelligible], Martin? No?

Alice: Michael and Judy and Martin.

Saul: Martin. Martin's the oldest one.

Marsha: So, were their certain families that took in the children?

Alice: Yes. They were paid. The Federation paid a certain amount.

Marsha: So when you were finished with high school...

Alice: I married him right before I finished with high school.

Marsha: Now you have to go back and tell us how you all met.

⁵ Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta.

Alice: I was in a program in Hoke Smith called DE, Distributed Education, and we worked part of the day <doorbell rings>. Excuse me a second. It did have trees and it did have green spaces, and it was kind of different then as it is now. Oh, I was wrong. I didn't live with the Jacobsons first; I lived with the Robkins first.

Marsha: Okay.

Alice: I'm sorry. You might know Jacquie and Benjamin Hirsch? Jacquie was a Robkin; I lived with her. I liked Jacquie a lot, but I didn't get along with her sister because she was about two, three years younger than me, but was very much advanced of what I was, because Switzerland is different. If I had used lipstick and stockings in Switzerland, it would have, I would have been a hussy, and here, 15 year old girls do that. A lot of the things was, me, that I didn't get along with the family, and all the change. It was hard when I first was here; it, food was different and just the whole upbringing of, and what you did here. In Switzerland, it would have been terrible for me to chew gum.

Marsha: Were you ever sorry at that point that you didn't stay in Switzerland?

Alice: No, because I did not have anybody in Switzerland. My uncle had already come here and I hadn't seen him that much. And. . .

Marsha: As you got closer, even though he was in New York, you felt closer being in the States.

Alice: . . . and also in Switzerland, there was antisemitism, especially in that small town. The children's home was the only Jewish...

Marsha: Right.

Alice: . . . place, and, no Jewish families. Later on there were some, but there were none when we were there.

Marsha: Were there any other children from the Jewish home that you were in that came to the States? Did a lot of them come?

Alice: Several of them came, but not at the same time I did. The only, one girl that came to Atlanta, Stephanie, I met at the agency in Switzerland, maybe, maybe three to six months before.

Marsha: Was there anybody, did you ever correspond with any of them?

Alice: At first, yes, but then, not liking to write. . .

Marsha: Right

Alice: . . . I did not; I lost contact with them. I did get in contact with several of them later on,

Marsha: You did?

Alice: Yes, but not keep in touch. Ruth Westheimer, I didn't remember her. Her name was Karola Siegel then, not Ruth. Ruth is her middle name.

Marsha: How did you find out that that's who it was?

Alice: A friend of mine read the Ger, Helmut Jacobi, read the German paper, and he told me somehow he remembered where I stayed, I don't know. But he told me somebody wrote a book about the children's home and it was Ruth Westheimer. And I, he told me who published it, and I wrote to them and got her name and then I wrote to her. At that time she was in Israel, and her husband called me and I'm mentioned in the book.

Marsha: Really?

Alice: Yes. It's not so much a story book, it's just who was there and what happened to it, and why they were there. I wrote to her, and her husband called me and he was very friendly, [unintelligible] and she said when she comes back from Israel, she would call me, but she never did, and when I was in New York I traced her and had very hard time. It's like calling the president of the United States <laughs>, you have to speak to this one, and after many calls I finally traced her down and she talked to me. She wasn't all that friendly.

Marsha: Really.

Alice: Yes. She, if somebody from my youth had come to Atlanta I would have made sure I was in the airport, and later on, I heard that she was speaking at a hotel here many years later. She talked to me on the phone, but she didn't say "Let's get together" or anything. She. . .

<phone rings>

Alice: [unintelligible] that she used in the book and everything, you know, that she would want more. Do you want to answer the phone?

<interview stops and then resumes>

Marsha: We're just wanting to talk a little bit more, we're just wanting to hear a little bit more about your first impressions about Atlanta. I know you said there were some things that were different about Switzerland and Atlanta.

Alice: Well, the way you grow up, because, and when you can do and where and how you can act here and over there. Over there you were much more restricted, held down. There were, they didn't have women's rights and stuff like that, and here girls at 15 already look at boys and date boys, and it was just completely different. The food was different; the cheese in Switzerland is real Swiss cheese, not what we have here as Swiss cheese. I hadn't lived with families, so it was hard to live with families and get used to it and do things families do. It also, everybody was new. I didn't know anybody. It was very hard to get used to. One thing that happened to a friend and me in New York, we were going on the subway and we spoke the language that we knew, German. The lady came and kind of attacked us verbally and said, "If you want to speak that language, you should have stayed there and not come here." After that we already tried to speak in a Swiss dialect. My friend didn't know the dialect as well, but I had lived there a long time, I knew the dialect. School was different. We were in one class in Switzerland. In fact, the first maybe three, four years we were several classes in one room, and it was much stricter. The teachers were permitted to hit you on the knuckles with a ruler, and here it was freer, but it, the freedom wasn't as appreciated when you're not used to it. I was different. I think the kids were nice, but it was a long time ago; I don't remember exactly.

Marsha: Did you feel accepted by the, in the families?

Alice: By some of them, yes, some of them not.

Marsha: If you were unhappy in a family, was there someone you could go to? I mean [unintelligible]

Alice: Gertrude Fink, I could talk to her. One family I lived with said when I, one night when I tried on shorts because it was getting warmer, that I was looking, you know, for things. I didn't even know about looking <laughs>. I hadn't been there yet. I was still maybe ten years old, as far as being aware of boys and stuff like that. I had some bad experiences with one family in particular. Some of them I couldn't get used to. Some of them, like the Jacobsons, they were very nice, and I liked them, but. . . and then I lived

with a woman, Mrs. Alexander, who had two children and her husband had died. She wasn't Jewish, but she brought her children up Jewish. I don't know if she converted, but her husband had been Jewish. And to bring up her children, make a living, she kept children, different kind of children. I was one of them, and that was a temporary home, and. . .

Saul: She lived over there on [unintelligible] Road.

Alice: . . . yes, yes. And I didn't like, well, the, the Goldmans. He became too familiar with me and took kind of advantage of me. So I had all kinds of experiences. One of them, because I wasn't mature, like I'm supposed to be. And I hadn't been brought up where I knew what was what. Sex wasn't a thing you spoke about in Switzerland.

Marsha: Were they affiliated with different synagogues? When you lived with them do you remember different synagogues?

Alice: The Jackie's mother and father were affiliated with the AA⁶, that's all I know. Jackie Hirsch, and I don't know who the other ones were affiliated with. I know when we were teenagers and I was at Hoke Smith we spent all the time between the two *shuls* the big *shul* and the little *shul*. Beth Jacob and AA, but it was the big *shul* and the little *shul*.

Saul: Shearith Israel, Alice. Shearith Israel was down the street.

Alice: Yes, maybe, yes. Maybe you're right.

Saul: AA was the big *shul*.

Alice: Yes, yes.

Saul: That was down on Windsor, I think, Windsor [Street] or Washington [Street].

Alice: Both of them were on Capital Avenue.

Saul: Yes. No. Washington

Alice: Washington, yes.

Saul: Yes.

Alice: We spent all the time walking between the two *shuls*, which were about, how much, about two, three blocks away from each other?

Saul: No, no. They were longer than that.

⁶ Congregation Ahavath Achim, a large conservative synagogue in Atlanta.

Alice: It was?

Saul: Shearith Israel was near Richardson Street, and the AA was over near Windsor. It was about five, ten minute walk between the two. At that time it was mostly in the whole neighborhood, was mostly Jewish. But then it's slowly, slowly started changing. The Agency paid the families for us staying there, and had a certain amount of allowance for us to get. I think I got three dollars, I forgot a month or a week. It's a lot of difference.

Saul: We hadn't known each other then.

Marsha: But you got an allowance from the Federation?

Alice: Yes, and [unintelligible] the family got paid. I think it was like \$52 maybe a month or something. At that time that was more money than. . .

Marsha: Living with the families, did you learn anything about any one family about how you would model your own family later on?

Alice: I don't think so. I, the only two I was really fond of was the one of the first ones, the Jacobsons, he got sick, and then the Cohens, Lillian and Ruby Cohen were very, very nice.

Saul: They were.

Alice: They were. They even helped me with getting married and when I had trouble with his parents, like you always do at the beginning, [unintelligible] she stood up for me a few times like a mother would.

Marsha: Well that's good. Now we can go on because you were just getting ready to meet your future husband.

Alice: Okay, I was in this program, DE⁷, and he got out. But we didn't take many extra-curricular things. We just took book subjects, and we got out of school like at 12 and we had to work at least three hours a day, fifteen hours a week, and we would get credit for that. We also, the employer, where we got a job, would pay us, so that gave me spending money and helped me kind of with clothing at that time. We had gotten out and I had walked with another girl to the library, but the library wasn't open yet, I think it opened at one o'clock and I was waiting, sitting on the steps. The library was across the street from where the old stadium was going to be later on. There was no stadium then. I

⁷ Distributed Education

had met him and his brother before, but I don't know where or how. I belonged to club called the New World Club, where there were girls who spoke German or French, and we kind of communicated. I said girls, girls and boys. It was somewhere where we were accepted and where we could understand each other. We had dances and stuff. I had met him but I don't know where. He walked by the library, and he said, "Why don't you come to the store with me?" I gave him all kinds of excuses. I said, he had gotten a haircut, that's where he had been, and he was walking back. I said, "Well, I have all these books and I can't carry them." He says, "Well, I'll bring you back with the car and help you." I said, I had all kinds of excuses. Then he says, "Oh, my mother and father are at the store." So I went with him. I didn't know where the store was, but I knew him. He said hello. I had, and I walked with him, and met his parents and stayed for a little while in the store. They had a kitchen in back of the store. They had built that store, and my father-in-law used to lay on the sofa and take a nap and my mother-in-law would cook all their meals there. It had, you know, everything a kitchen has except a bed, which a kitchen doesn't have. He, on the way back, which was only two or three minutes ride to the library back, he asked me for my phone number. Well, to this day, and even then, I can not remember numbers. I have to write them down. Numbers don't mean anything to me. I gave him my phone number knowing he would be the same as I, not remember. I couldn't imagine anybody being able to remember phone numbers, and he called me and we got together.

Saul: It's like they say, it's one thing after another.

Alice: I was like two or three years older than the children in my class, and I went through the first half of the twelfth grade, and he wanted to get married and I wanted to finish school. Well, he won out. I went to school, to another school, to finish the twelfth grade. It took me longer because I had been in a college preparatory class. By that time I knew English, well, you know, I spoke English well and I could do well in school.

Marsha: What motivated you to want to do well in school? I mean, usually it would be your family encouraging you. What motivated you?

Alice: I don't remember, but I thought that was the better course, and I guess more prestigious. When I went to that other school, at that time you could not stay in school when you got married. I went to another school and instead of taking me three more

months of school, I had to go almost two years to another school, because I had to take a business course. That other school didn't have college preparatory courses. And if they found out, I don't know how the school could find out that you got married, either, I don't know if it's in a paper or something, but I told them, and you know, I had to leave. It's kind of like committing a crime, was. And I was pregnant with my oldest one, Larry. His name was Larry then. I didn't like Lawrence; he changed it. I was pregnant two months with him when I graduated, but I did graduate from high school. Nobody knew it, the other school was for kids that had left or were asked to leave and grown-ups, adults that wanted to go back and learn a job after their families were maybe in high school, or you know, on their own, where they could go back to work.

Marsha: Saul, do you want to jump in now and tell us [cross talk unclear] and then we'll catch you up and we'll go from there?

Saul: Okay. I was born in Poland in a small town Chusziachin⁸, C-H-U-S-Z-I-A-C-H-I-N, Lomza Guberniya. Lomza Guberniya means the town, the main one was Lomza, was near the German [East Prussian] border. And there were two of us, my brother, I have my brother named Julius. Julius Sherr. He's got two daughters and, well, we came over here in 1937, 193. . . yes. We had the Sappersteins in, from Pittsburgh, [sounds like] Steisapier, Steisapier, oh yes, Steisapier. They were very influential and they brought us over, they brought the Alva family over, so they brought three of us over. I don't know if you know the Silv. . . you said you're a Silverman? You remember Dave Silverman and Gus? Gus Silverman and Dave Silverman, that's my cousin. Margie Kodner was my cousin. You remember Margie?

Marsha: Szczuczyn Yes.

Saul: You know her kids?

Marsha: Yes.

Saul: You know Gloria and Sheila?

Marsha: I know Sheila.

Saul: I like Sheila, then you know Mark and you know Fred. Isn't that? Fred.

Marsha: I only know Sheila.

⁸ Szczuczyn. Now located in Grajewo County, Podlaskie Voivodeship

Saul: Yes, well, their, the two families came over together, and we went through, you know, the same old thing. Then the Itelds came over. They brought them too. You remember, do you know the Itelds? Evelyn, Evelyn Silverboard and Julius Iteld. So then, we lived in Pittsburgh and then we, we lived in Pittsburgh for a while. In 1944 we came over here, because I wasn't doing good with my allergies in Pittsburgh, with all that filth and soot. So I was going to the doctor, and they felt, my parents felt that I would do better here, but see the Itelds had moved here. The *Landsleit*⁹ opened them, gave them a grocery store and that's where they started, over here on Richardson [Street] and Martin Street. We were about two blocks up and we had a store too. So we were close to the, on Georgia Avenue, past the library, Capital Avenue there, I was walking to get the hair cut and that's where I met Alice and she made a mistake and not. Even to this day I still remember numbers. Face too, faces sometimes, yes, but numbers, they stick in my mind.

Marsha: Why don't you back up a little bit, because we wanted to sort of hear about how your family came from Poland, how they, you know, a little bit before.

Saul: We came from Poland through luck, because the rest of the family that didn't come here were, died, they got killed in the concentration camps. We don't have, I don't have any family left at all that I know of, and my mother's family I never, never knew too much about them. We assume that they got killed too, so that is something. I have a younger brother, he's two-and-a-half years younger than I am. We came here in 193. . . like I tell you, 1937. I was *bar mitzvah* in Beth Shalom in Pittsburgh, and I lived in Pittsburgh till 1944. I started having problems with my allergies, asthma and hay fever. Used to be that, you know, I couldn't breathe. So it was better here, even in, you know, we, what we did, we were one of the few families we had a store Martin and Crumley and that was near Capital Avenue. Piedmont Hospital was still there on Capital and we used to go to Shearith Israel, and I remember going up and down the street.

Alice: Excuse me. Your mother and father belonged to AA.

Saul: No, they belonged to Tenth Street AA.

Alice: Yes, but that's still AA.

Saul: AA, but that was different, that was. . .

Marsha: Alice came with you though.

⁹ Fellow Jews; sometimes, specifically, those from the same town or village in Europe as oneself.

Saul: . . . oh yes. Alice came with me. [phone rings] So I worked in the store, my brother went in. My dad did pretty good in catching on, but he didn't like, he was raised kosher and he needed somebody to cut meat, so I became the butcher. So I used to work nights sometimes and we helped put my brother through Emory. He graduated from there, and. . .

Alice: You lived behind the store.

Saul: . . . we lived next to the store there for a while. Then we moved, we moved in, well a few years after that, about four or five years, and we moved onto **Parkway** [no idea what street this is] and the kids went to Grady. Went to Grady High School, and if you want to know, it's, you want to tell them about we going to Stone Mountain and. . .

Alice: Are you talking about the kids you jumped in?

Saul: . . . I'm not jumping in yet.

Alice: Way ahead.

Saul: Yes.

Alice: You said you moved to Parkway. We didn't live there; that was you and your parents.

Saul: Yes, me and my parents lived on Parkway over there. 844 Charles Allen [Drive].

Marsha: How old were you when you met?

Saul: I was 24 and a half, around 25.

Alice: Saul, that's when we got married, when you were 25.

Saul: 24 then a few years younger. I am about five years older than her, six years.

Marsha: So you didn't know anything about Alice's background when you met.

Saul: No. Didn't care, really.

Alice: But his parents did; that's where the conflict came in.

Saul: Didn't, well, I, I was, I wasn't a big shot, but I knew what I wanted at that time, it seemed like I did. I, should I tell them about Uncle Max? <laughs>

Alice: You can.

Saul: I, her Uncle Max was, I don't think very much of him, and he wrote some letters, and he called one time. We had gotten engaged already, and he called and he was

telling me something, how ungrateful she is and all that stuff, and I got, I said, “Look, why don’t you go stick your head in the toilet?”

Alice: They, his parents did the wedding, because I didn’t have folks in the, [unintelligible] they didn’t do that kind of, brought me up to that point, and the Cohens weren’t my parents. So he sent my uncle an invitation, both uncles, and when my uncle got the invitation he sent a letter back to my in-laws for him, for Saul not to marry me, because I was very ungrateful and they were going to be sorry. I was, we went to New York, were supposed to get some inheritance or something, before we had any children, but we were married about one or two years. I called my uncle. He had never told me that my uncle had wrote a letter about, you know, for him not to marry me because I was ungrateful and I wouldn’t appreciate. I called him and he said something nasty and I started crying, so we put another nickel in the phone and called him back and Saul said, “Why don’t you stick your head in the. . .” That was the last time I ever heard from him. I looked him up in all of the New York phone books many years later and could not find his son, so I didn’t look anymore. Not that I wanted to get in touch with him so much, but I don’t think you do that. You don’t [unintelligible].

Marsha: How did you find Atlanta from Pittsburgh, I mean.

Saul: I liked it, I mean, I don’t know if I remember that much more. It was, seemed okay. I mean I liked Atlanta right away. There were trees, there were green spaces, and the family was here, and I thought it would be fine. Develop friends. We lived in the store, next to the store for a few years, then we moved to Parkway, and after that, we lived pretty close, we lived, we bought a house on Sixth Street. . .

Alice: An apartment.

Saul: An apartment first.

Alice: For a year or two, then we bought the house on Sixth Street.

Saul: Over two years.

Alice: Two years?

Marsha: Over two years.

Saul: Over two years, and then we moved to Sixth Street and then we, yes, I mean we just, after the normal good and bad and good times and bad times, and so we are still together.

Marsha: So you stayed in the store, that you worked in the store.

Saul: Yes, I was working in the store.

Marsha: Then when did you have your first child. You were talking, it was about a year or two after...

Alice: It was over two years.

Saul: Yes, we got married in 1950, my oldest son was born in February the fifth, 1953. Gilbert was born in 1955, the next one was born in, let me see, Joey was born in 1958, and the last one was born in 1960, 1961. Neil died 14 years ago. That's another story. And, so with, you know, Joey has muscular dystrophy, my third son.

Alice: Do you see the wheelchair in the picture?

Saul: He has facioscapulo muscular dystrophy.

Alice: Humeral. Facioscapulohumeral.

Saul: Humeral That's right. Facioscapulohumeral. So we, we went through, we've had some bad times too, but we still, still managed to stay together. There were bad, I mean, she drives me up the wall, but I tell everybody that if I had to do it all over again, I would still do it, and that's not too, that's not, I don't hear that too often.

Marsha: [unintelligible]

Saul: So, and so we just celebrated our fiftieth, and that was nice, the kids gave us a cruise and I feel good, I had my, I've had my share of problems, now. I had the bypass about, almost three years ago, wasn't it? It's going to be three years.

Alice: And you had more than one bypass.

Saul: Six, six, six veins. But, it was weak and I managed to get better and I'm doing fine. I'm watching myself. So we are here.

Marsha: Were your children here in Atlanta?

Alice: Joey, that is in New Jersey, that's why we're going. Joey is now on life support. He can't breathe on his own anymore. He has a respirator. It's not just the respirator, it's all the equipment, the treatment he needs. So he kind of demanded that we all come for *Pesach*, and so all of us are going for *Pesach* there.

Marsha: So, all the children. [unintelligible]

Alice: Yes, we're going to kind of have a reunion. He said his wife doesn't mind, and so that's a first.

Marsha: [unintelligible]

Alice: They were here in 1996 during the Olympics. They came for the Olympics, but he can't travel anymore.

Saul: If he does he has to lug a whole lot of stuff around.

Alice: And I think we did well.

Saul: Yes.

Alice: Because we have two kids with a Ph.D. Joey has a Ph.D. [unintelligible] Even so, Joey has a tube coming out of his throat, he's still working every day, and he's still earning. . .

Saul: [unintelligible] You know Lawrence, don't you? Both of you know? Lawrence has a Ph.D. MA from a music. . . he teaches music at Kennesaw. And we're both very active in the, we're active with the muscular dystrophy. She's been going there for years, at the telethon.

Alice: Oh more than the telethon

Saul: Yes. And we, I'm active with the mentally ill. I've been doing that for about 15 years.

Marsha: [unintelligible] volunteer [unintelligible]

Saul: Yes, that's what I do mostly.

Alice: When you call the 800 number, the national 800 number and you say you live in DeKalb County, he's the contact person for all of DeKalb County.

Saul: That package we just got is NARSAD¹⁰, that's National Alliance for Research for mainly depression and schizophrenia. We're talking about the real thing now. Not talking about the word well. So we're both advocates. She's a facilitator for the support group and I've, I'm active with the program meeting too and the whole thing. So we try to get help for the mentally ill, people who have schizophrenia, mainly depression, OCD, anxiety disorders. They call them social disorders now, but they're part of the illness. So is autism and things like that, but there is a lot of stigma involved for people who don't understand what's going on. We try to get help for them. The main thing we try to do is to convince people that these people are sick. They are sick, and

¹⁰ National Association for Research on Schizophrenia and Depression.

they need medication. We have a lot of problems with the medication. We have a lot of problems with some of the doctors sometimes who don't believe that this is a biological disease, who think that it's strictly environmental. That enters into it, but we still, we really still don't know what causes the illness. We have a good idea what the illness is, and so we're, we're just working. So I'm active with that. She's active, and she's been a great help to me in giving me leeway to do that, because I know if I didn't have her help, I couldn't do it, and in that sense, I try to be tolerant and supportive of her in what she wants to do. She's been teaching the MDO program for 20 years, isn't it?

Alice: Well, 18 in there and five in another school.

Marsha: What is MDO?

Alice: That's Morningside Day Out, that's. . .

Marsha: So you've been doing that for about 18 years?

Alice: . . . yes, and then I was at Cliff Valley, which is another school for [unintelligible] five years.

Marsha: Did you [unintelligible] while you were raising the children?

Alice: No, no. Neil, the youngest one that died, he had a learning disability, and at that time to get into learning disability you had to help with the learning disability class. Not his class, another class. When I had problems and I was worried and stuff like that, when I went to school it was like I had a backpack and the school is like two blocks, one and a half blocks from here, and the principal would say, "You can't bring that pack in." I would leave it outside. The pack is not real. It's my problems. I would be completely, I would completely forget about problems, and as soon as I would be finished with the children, there would my backpack sitting out, walk home and start worrying again. It helped me a lot. I had a neighbor and she said, "Cliff Valley needs some teachers; they're short. You want to try it?" I tried it and I liked it. I was with them for five years and then, and 18 years with that when Neil died and I couldn't function at home. I would write a check and half an hour later I would still be writing the check and I don't know what happened. I was depressed. But when I was with the children, I don't know how I did it, or what, but I wouldn't be depressed. I could function normally, and that helped me not get over it, but it helped me function [unintelligible] therapy.

Saul: Yes. The only way I would get through it is through, I was angry, what happened to him, for about a year.

Alice: Oh [unintelligible].

Saul: Well, not that big angry. I tried turning myself around, trying to make it concrete. About a year later, I did, and it was, I could do that by helping other people. We've impacted a lot of people over the years. We've saved some, and we've helped them. I can remember that, but I've always liked to do that, I still like to do it, feel, it makes me feel good; it makes me feel useful. It makes me feel like I've got some self worth. So, but that was the way I got through it. Somehow I got sort of, I'm still angry, she says I'm still angry. I do have some anger, but I tried to use it as a motivating factor. I try to speak out in, for the mentally ill, because they're vulnerable and they are just lost. So, that's, I guess that's why our lives work. [unintelligible] and I still do it.

Alice: This last year through [unintelligible] that's her name, we started, he didn't work on it so much, but one of the members started a jail diversion program, and she tried to get some money from the legislature, but didn't. It's that mentally ill people, when they don't have a place to put them, they put them in jail. It's for the ones that committed non-violent crimes. The violent crimes ones, misdemeanors, like loitering and things like that.

Saul: We try to get a mental health court started in DeKalb County, where, [unintelligible] know what's going to happen now. Flo Giltman is the one that started that and has been working tremendously on that. We have our little projects we work with, that we're trying to make a difference for the people, because they need somebody to. If you had a child who couldn't articulate anything, who was confused, disoriented, you would be the advocate, and that's how come we got started. When the, they have a program on TV, it's about like Patty Duke, I get calls then. I get calls from referrals from the jail, so we are in a lot of different programs, and we try to make an impact, which try to make a difference. I feel good about us. We're not just, we don't talk about tennis, and we don't talk about cars, we do some real things.

<phone rings, interview stops, then resumes>

Marsha: We were talking a little bit about because of the way you were raised, how did you know to raise your family. How did you learn along the way what you wanted to, how to raise your family?

Alice: Well, one thing it started off very, was very disappointed. One of his cousins told me that “Wait till they put that child in your arms, you just, you never had anybody to love you like that, and you’ll love, they put, love that child something awful.” They put this, put Lawrence, or Larry then, in my bed with me, and I was so afraid of him. I was afraid to breathe, I was afraid to turn around in bed. I was sure I would break him. I cried a lot because what she said didn’t happen. I really didn’t love him. Not, you know, instant love like she said, and I was very disappointed. I wanted him, that wasn’t it. It was just, it wasn’t instant love. I guess a lot of the upbringing came through trial and error. A lot of it.

Marsha: Did you feel because you didn’t have your immediate family, that you didn’t have help? Did you have any help, like from Saul’s family?

Alice: Not too much. They loved to see them, but they didn’t, they believed in women should do all the work. There was one silly incident when Gilbert was little. I was feeding him and they didn’t, in his parents’ house, and they didn’t have a high chair, and I was holding a napkin around him and I was trying to feed him, and the spoon was too far away. I told my father-in-law, “Could you please hand me the spoon?” And he says, “If you want it, get it yourself.” Because he didn’t like, because Saul helped me with the different. Saul helped me a lot and he didn’t believe in that, so I had to get up, take the napkin away from him, and then had to settle back down and everything. No, his parents didn’t help much, but they loved the children. They loved to play with them. My father in law was very, very fond of Gilbert. He was the last one he really saw. No, I had one niece that he knew, but otherwise, he died before the other ones were born.

Saul: When Gilbert was born, he had blond hair. He used to call “his little *shaygetz*.¹¹”

Alice: So they were not too much help. My mother-in-law used to come over, but she didn’t ever want to babysit or anything. It was fine as long as I was there. She was

¹¹ Non-Jewish boy or young man.

more help, because she invited us for *shabbos* [Sabbath] dinners and stuff like that, but as far as helping with bringing up the children, they were not.

Marsha: Did you have anybody that you had a relationship with, maybe other mothers that you met with younger children, or.

Alice: Not too much. I had some friends, and he used to say, when he, before I was pregnant he wanted children right away and I didn't, because I wanted to finish school. He used to say when he saw a child, "We could have one like that." But, and he was in the store a lot and he was not help. He did help, but his hours were till ten o'clock at night, so he wasn't that much help. It just kind of through trial and error.

Saul: But we had the strong commitment to each other.

Alice: Oh yes. That, that is true.

Saul: We had a strong commitment, and just doing what comes naturally I guess. It was never any question about I was there for her, she was there for me, and there were certain things I believed in, and I was ready to, I was committed. I didn't have to be talked to or not talked to. I mean, my parents, I guess I have to defend them, because that's the way, they had this belief that if you do some, if you do any little thing you become an enabler and it starts something, and it's not true.

Alice: That was the same thing with the marriage. They had a certain belief. His father insisted that I didn't wear a train with my gown, so I didn't know you could buy white gowns without a train, wedding gown, so I wore [unintelligible] one, and Lillian Cohen helped me. She went to talk to his parents. But his parents were just all European and had not modernized that much in the things.

Saul: But. . .

Alice: They were nice, they were really nice, but they also were very apprehensive of me marrying him, not because they didn't like me or anything, they didn't have any background on me. Many, many times since we've been married, I said, "I wish they could see me now." I've gotten old, and my children accomplished things, and it worked out all right. I lived longer than they did, both of them, right?

Saul: Yes.

Alice: Your mother was. . .

Saul: Sure. So, that's all there is. We just stuck to each other. I was there for our kids. It's old fashioned, maybe, but I was there for her, she's there for me, and sometimes when I had to do things, I couldn't say, you know, we had Joey and Neil was sick too, and we couldn't say, well, do you need, nobody came to ask me, "Do you want it? Do you need it? Can you handle it? Do you think you" <laughs> I didn't have any choice in this. We had it, we got it, and we took care of it the best we could. But if you think this is perfection, it's not, but it's human. I believe and I think we stuck to each other and we accomplished, so we're here with the grace of God, we're still here. With a great story too.

Marsha: Your religious, we were speaking a little bit about that. How did you transmit that to your children, because I know you're kosher and observant?

Saul: Yes. Not observant.

Alice: Not

Saul: Not. . . cognizant yes of our Jewishness. Observant, I don't eat pork, I don't eat shrimp, we go out and eat in non-kosher restaurants too, but we keep kosher at home.

Alice: This is. . .

Marsha: You Alice, you were raised, you could have gone either way.

Alice: . . . yes, I would not have kept kosher. His parents wanted me to keep kosher. Now, since I have done it for so long, I would like to get away from it, but it's kind of there. You just don't drink a glass of milk when you have meat. I mean, that's not natural.

Marsha: So how did you, did you just learn to keep kosher from his parents, or. . .

Alice: Kind of. I had been in a children's home that was kosher, but I did it because his parents kind of insisted that we keep kosher. But when his brother got married, they didn't insist anymore. My sister-in-law did not keep kosher. The children were brought up Jewish. To me, it's a joke, but one of my cousin's husband in New York, once I visited, says, "You don't have to be a *rebbitzin*¹². If you just could be a little bit Jewish." <Saul laughs> I don't know if that's like being a little bit pregnant. But they. . .

Saul: I'm sure you could duplicate this in your own way, because of what's going on through the, she has a much deeper core, core belief than I do in a way.

¹² The wife of a rabbi.

Alice: . . . Well he . . .

Saul: I mean, I go to *shul*¹³. You know why I go to *shul*? Beause I love it. I like it. I think that everybody should do that. It's not so much, I go to *shul* almost every night, and the reason I do it, if God forbid, somebody wants to say *Kaddish*¹⁴, they should have that chance, so I've been last few years, I've been going to *shul* almost every night.

Alice: He's very fluent in reading Hebrew. I don't know how much he understands [unintelligible].

Saul: I understand some.

Alice: I've forgotten a lot. I can still read, but I wouldn't let anybody hear me read, because <laughs> it's worse than a first grader.

Marsha: Where do you go to synagogue?

Saul: Shearith Israel. Most of the nights I have to lead the services too, so I can do that. I can do with *mincha-maariv*¹⁵, I can do it in the morning, Saturday I don't do, I've forgotten all the tunes, but I remember when during my early youth I was very, very committed to *shul*, and when we came over here, I remember, we lived in Pittsburgh, I was knowledgeable, and I used to love to *daven*¹⁶. I've always like to, I've always liked synagogue.

Alice: Now, I'm the opposite, I don't that much. On Saturday, when he goes to *shul*, that's the only day I don't have to go anywhere, I don't have to get dressed. So. . .

Saul: Think that's. . .

Marsha: You know, being brought up the way you were, was it important for you to find someone Jewish and marry something Jewish?

Alice: Oh yes.

Marsha: I think you got that feeling from, from where?

Alice: I guess because everybody in the children's home was. Then, it's kind of, I couldn't face my cousins if I wasn't, even so they don't think I'm really Jewish.

¹³ Synagogue.

¹⁴ The *Kaddish* is a prayer found in the Jewish prayer service. The central theme of the *Kaddish* is the magnification and sanctification of God's name. The term "Kaddish" is often used to refer specifically to "The Mourners' Kaddish", said as part of the mourning rituals in Judaism in all prayer services as well as at funerals and memorials. Adult sons are required to recite the *Kaddish* for 11 months after the death of a parent, and the recitation of the *Kaddish* requires a quorum of ten Jewish adults.

¹⁵ Late afternoon or early evening Jewish prayers.

¹⁶ To recite Jewish liturgical prayers.

Saul: That's the end of our story, I guess.

Ruth: I just wanted to ask one more thing. Alice, this is a broad question, but how did your experience going through these children's homes, how did that affect you as an adult and how have you integrated that experience into your life?

Alice: It's a deep question.

Saul: Yes, it is. Deep question.

Alice: Well, I think it's best to be brought up in a home, in a family. It's hard in a children's home because you don't, nothing is personal. You're just there, and some of the experiences were very hard.

Ruth: Do you remember any of those experiences? Can you tell us about one?

Alice: I said about the eating. Okay, we had to take a nap, and we were like ten or twelve years old, and we took our knitting to bed with us, and somebody came outside on the porch and saw us, and we were punished for weeks, because we were in bed, instead of sleeping we were knitting and talking to each other. When we were sent to bed at night we weren't suppose to talk, and we still did, but things like that. There was never love and there was punishing, but never loving. The little kids I wouldn't let anybody come in without saying, "Good morning," or "Those are nice new shoes," or "You have a nice haircut," or "I like your dress." It's always something nice, which I never had. You know, if it was nice it wasn't mentioned if it was bad, it was.

Ruth: So you're trying in a certain way to create the childhood that, children's experience that you didn't have [unintelligible]

Alice: Yes, yes, and have it more personal. I don't know if I'm supposed to, but I kiss the children, boys and girls, and I say I love them, or you're a pretty girl, or things like that. I just, you know, and I hug them, and it's not just like coming to school. I think I make it personal, sometimes they say to me they love me, or they like my earrings, or they want me to wear a certain thing.

Saul: It's reciprocated, because, for her it's more fun than really, than work.

Marsha: Well, you've made your family a strong family.

Saul: Yes, hopefully we did.

Marsha: That was probably very important to you to really give them a family.

Ruth: Did you have to learn how to love, if after you left your parents that you didn't really feel love directly. . .

Saul: Psychology major.

Alice: I never thought about it, I guess I just did what came naturally. But, none of the children when they first were born did I love them. When I had a roommate in the hospital, "Oh, the father and the mother, Oh, this is the most beautiful child." To me, babies, newborn babies, kind of look very similar to each other, and I can't really see the beauty in a newborn baby that much as I can when they start smiling and getting into things, and. . .

Saul: I think a lot of it is façade. A lot of that instantaneous psychology, like . . . <laughs> We use that observational psychiatry, you just look at a person, you think you can tell, but you can't. You have to observe them, you have to watch them, you have to take some sort of measures.

Alice: I think love has to grow. I love the children at the end of the year much more than I do when they come, and I usually get at least a year, because I've seen them on the playground and corrected them on the playground, and said, "We don't throw sand in somebody's eyes." So I actually know them, but the love doesn't come till they're in my room and I'm in charge of them completely.

Marsha: Do you have the one grandchild?

Saul: Yes.

Alice: One grandchild, Ephraim, that's him when he was a baby, and that's some picture, that's the latest one where he's sitting there with his suspenders. But he's ten now. That one was when he was about six. These here are my two oldest ones, Larry and Gilbert.

Marsha: How are you with your grandchild? I mean [unintelligible]

Alice: It's very hard with him because we don't see him a lot. It's, we call him on the phone, "Hello, how are you." "I need to go back to my video game," or something like that. It's very hard. We had him one year, but he didn't have any friends to play with while he was here, and we took him a lot of places, but it's kind of hard, because we don't see him a lot. We see him once, mostly twice a year, but more often just once a year.

Saul: That's a big gap, which I guess, you know, but that's the way it is.

Alice: I wish it closer [unintelligible].

Saul: Yes, we have our life here, very fulfilling and very satisfying, and I don't think I'd be happy anywhere else right now. We've made our footprint here, and, you know, it's. . .

Alice: It's kind of sad. My son, we have gotten away from him too, because we can't understand him very well. It could be a little bit my hearing, but his talking is not as clear, and it's very hard to understand. Have to really adlib when we talk to him on the phone, and sometimes we get it wrong. So our conversations get further apart and longer, and his wife is a nurse, so she doesn't, she gets very angry and I did too when he was here, when people say, "Don't talk to him" and "Talk to her." "Can he talk?" "Well, he's very intelligent." "Well, is he going to get up and walk?" or "Does he have a credit card?" You know, they don't talk to him, they talk to her. But, I'm there too and I'm having a hard time understanding him, and it makes being close to my child. . .

Saul: You know, that irks me. They see the chair, but they don't see the person.

Alice: . . . and you can't hug him anymore either. [unintelligible]

Saul: And that bothers me sometimes, it really does, because he's brilliant, really. I mean, without, I know I'm prejudiced, but he is; he's very, very smart.

Alice: He has a Ph.D. in pure math, so you have to be smart.

Saul: And he has this uncanny ability to really get, to put the nail on the head right away. None [unintelligible] subterfuge, and what's going on, but he has the ability to get and, I think in our situation he's been more of a help then, because you can really get a lot of lessons from him. I know I did. I don't get worried about little things, and I've learned that if you fall, you can get up again. You have to get up, and you have to keep fighting for what you believe in.

Alice: When I had my hip surgery, when I broke my hip, and I was depressed, and I said, "Well, Joey never can walk, and I'm going to walk again. I can walk with a walker." And we kind of base our life on him and what he has accomplished. He's not, he's not, he doesn't mope around and say, "Oh poor me." He does the best.

Saul: He doesn't whine. He's got a lot of courage, a lot of courage, a lot of spunk.

Marsha: I can see where it's coming from.

Saul: No.

Alice: And the other two boys think so too. They both admire him.

Marsha: Maybe he's got two very inspirational parents

Alice: Thank you

Marsha: You're still busy, and the work that you're doing for both the causes are unbelievable, so. . .

Ruth: Have we forgotten to ask you anything at all? Is there anything else that you would like to. . .

Alice: Right now I can't think. . .

Ruth: Okay.

Marsha: Well I really enjoyed meeting you and hearing your stories

Saul: Thank you, thank you.

Alice: My daughter-in-law is wonderful too. Even to have married him when he was in a wheelchair already, and she takes care of him. She doesn't complain either.

Saul: Well, Joey's lucky in a way too, because I know the meaning of support. We have a lot of people who don't have that, and your questions are based on support, psychologically, based on support. That's so important, the Jewish family is something inherent, like I said, it's a core belief with us. Even, I remember years ago, ten years ago, when they're all, when everything was developing, the psychologists, the psychiatrists, the doctors never wanted to hear anything from the family. The patient, no matter what kind of frame of mind he was, they used to say they used to treat it like it's gospel, and the family came along and tried to talk to them, they wouldn't even listen or hear. I never accepted second class citizenship for our people, and I said, "I won't accept it." I fought it. I got the reputation of being a loudmouth. When they speak and I don't agree with it, I don't mind getting up, I don't care how many people are there, I'll get up and speak to say something. Today you have to know something too, and I spent, I spent my time, a lot of years reading articles and making sure I know what I'm talking about, because if I don't know what I'm talking about, I'm going to shut up.

Alice: He spends a lot of time on the phone too.

Saul: I spent a lot of time on the phone, because people get, people have problems and they need help. I know the system. People respect me, I respect them. I think

everybody has an agenda, I think people should be heard, and not agree. You don't have to agree, but you can learn to respect each other and learn to listen to each other, and still disagree. Without that, there's nothing happening, because no one person knows it all and no one person needs it all. You have to work together. But you don't give up, you call relief. That is your, that's what you stand for and you have to do it in such a way, I don't know about other people, but the way I do it is plain. What you see is what you get. I'm not a politician, I'm not an actor. I am who I am, and I'm so glad I do that, because I don't have time to play games. There are too many worthwhile things to do that you have to do, rather than play games and go ring around the roses. And with that I think I should shut up. <laughs>

Alice: We don't work so much with the mentally ill, because we're not trained. We work with their loved ones, and we have a course, how to cope. We don't teach it ourselves; we don't teach it ourselves, we have other people from the organization that they, we had like two or three people that took the course say they were much happier and they could take the mental illness much more because now they know how to cope with it, and

Saul: That's the key, Because we don't have a lot of answers for a lot of things that are happening.

Alice: So we work more with their loved ones [unintelligible], rather than with them.

Saul: We work mostly with families. She's the, like I said before, she's the facilitator for our support group. She does a good job with it. I have a tendency to run on a little bit, and she stops me because she wants everybody to have a chance to talk. It doesn't seem from this, from this interview, I rambled on. You were more quiet. Well, there was a time, Alice. You had to tell your story. I think, there was time to do that.

Ruth: Well, we want to thank you both very, very much. . .

Alice: You're welcome

Ruth: . . . and Marsha. It's wonderful for you to share your stories, and I know they will have a positive impact.

Saul: Let's hope so.

Alice: Okay.
[Recording Ends]

INTERVIEW ENDS

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