Leonard: It’s November 10, 1980. I’m Leonard Leeds and I’m in the offices of Cecil Alexander. He and I will be talking about his biography and his origins. We’ll have a series of questions which will explore Cecil and his origins in the City of Atlanta, Georgia, and his antecedents, going back into the eighteenth century. We’ll give this as an introduction. We’ll also be able to check out sound here as we speak. This letter of October 17 from the American Jewish Committee Atlanta Chapter … Bill Gralnick1 wrote the letter to Ruth Gershon.2 He said, “Attached is your copy of our formal letter to Herb Kaplow3 concerning the oral history event.”4 This is what you wanted to know. “We need to have Leonard Leeds and Mark Bowman sit down as soon as possible to create an outline for the program. What Mr. Kaplow wants, as opposed to a script, is a listing of the key areas we would like explored and highlights within each broad area. He will construct questions, think through his actions, and reactions with that. I believe that Mark and Leonard also need to meet with the interviewees prior to the meeting, but well enough in

1 William ‘Bill’ Gralnick is an American activist, writer and leader in the Jewish community. He was born in Brooklyn, New York and attended George Washington University [Washington D.C.] before beginning a 33-year career with the American Jewish Committee first in Atlanta, Georgia and then in South Florida, serving as its Southeast Regional Director.

2 Ruth Gershon served as the Chairwoman of the Atlanta Chapter American Jewish Committee Oral History Project.

3 Herbert Elias ‘Herb’ Kaplow (1927 - 2013) was an American television news correspondent. His main focus was reporting out of Washington, D.C.

4 This is likely in reference is to an event held on December 3, 1980 in tribute to the Atlanta Chapter’s American Jewish Committee 75th anniversary oral history program. Four prominent Atlantans, Cecil Alexander, Sarina Rousso, Gerald Cohen, and Elliot Goldstein, were interviewed by American broadcast journalist Herb Kaplow at the studios of WAGA-TV in Atlanta.
advance so that if a second meeting is necessary there is time for it. The first meeting would be to
go over the outline and flush out memories.” That’s where we are, Cecil. What is your family’s
background? Where did they come from, when, and why? Can you tell us something about your
grandparents and parents?
Cecil: Do you want to start there or do you want to go back further?
Leonard: We’re going to go back further, but we’re going to take this first. Then we’re
going to move back further than that.
Cecil: My grandfather on my father’s side wasn’t an Atlantan. He came here, I guess, from Athens [Georgia]. He was in the hardware business, J.M. Alexander Hardware Company. He started with his brother. Then he and his brother broke up and his brother went to New York. His wife was named Rebecca Solomons [Alexander]. They were cousins, which wasn’t unusual in the south. I believe they were even first cousins. She came from Savannah, Georgia, and they moved to Atlanta. She was a very prominent citizen of Atlanta. She started the . . . I’ll have to come back to that, what she started. It’s slipping me for the minute. On my mother’s side, their name was Moses. My grandfather lived in Montgomery [Alabama]. It was a very prominent family. One of his brothers was the mayor of Montgomery at one point. He married a woman named Charlotte Baer who came from Germany, I believe from Frankfurt. They lived in Montgomery all of their lives. My mother and father met in Montgomery. My father brought her home as a bride to Atlanta. They spent all of their lives here.
Leonard: I’m looking at a book here called Notes on the Alexander Family of South Carolina
and Georgia and Connections. It was written by Henry Aaron Alexander. There’s a note on

5 Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander (1854-1938) was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Solomons who lived in Savannah, Georgia during the American Civil War. In 1873 she married Julius M. Alexander and moved to Atlanta. She was very active in the Jewish community and was one of the first women named to the board of trustees of the Temple. She was one of the founders and the first president of the Atlanta section of the National Council of Jewish Women.

6 Notes on the Alexander Family of South Carolina and Georgia and Connections 1651 – 1954 is a book by Atlanta native Henry Aaron Alexander published in 1954. The 142-page book contains a family tree, photographs, and notes about family members as well as those by marriage. A digital copy of the book can be found here: https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89062959242;view=1up;seq=154

7 Henry Aaron “Harry” Alexander, Sr. (1874-1967) was born in Atlanta, Georgia, the son of Julius Mortimer Alexander and Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander. His grandfather, Aaron Alexander, was the first Jew of American birth to settle in Atlanta. He was a prominent attorney, scholar, and religious leader. Alexander served in the Georgia State House of Representatives and was a veteran of World War I. He was also a president of the Atlanta Historical Society and a prominent Atlanta attorney. He was a member of the defense team in the trial of Leo Frank. In 1930 he built one of the largest homes in Atlanta on Peachtree Road. Alexander sold part of their land for development of the Phipps Plaza mall which opened in 1969.
here, 1651 to 1954. Can you tell us what 1651 means and bringing it up to date to 1954?

Cecil: I’m not absolutely sure what the 1651 means. The first ancestor, at least on my father’s side of the family, that we have any record of was named Raphael. He was the father of Abraham Alexander, Sr. who came to Charleston [South Carolina] in 1760. He was a reader of the Sephardic\(^8\) congregation\(^9\) in Charleston. I don’t know what he did ‘in real life.’ I know that the story is he was the head of the customs office there in Charleston. He fought in the [American] Revolutionary War,\(^10\) and had a son who followed him over whose name was Abraham Alexander, Jr. I have a copy of his naturalization papers. There’s no record of [Abraham] Sr.’s first wife. His second wife was named Irby. She converted to Judaism. As far as we know, they had no offspring. Skipping around a little bit, the first Alexander to come to Atlanta was named Aaron. He came here about 1848, and lived on Marietta Street, I believe. Then he bought a lot next door to the south side of where J.P. Allen\(^11\) is now. Records show he paid $150 for it, a hundred feet on Peachtree, back four hundred feet to Ivy Street. Another story shows the size of Atlanta, which I think was about twelve or thirteen hundred people at that time. When my great-grandmother went out to look at the lot, she got where the Candler Building is now in Atlanta. She said, “This is too far out. I’m not going to live here.” They did build a house, and they did live there. The two brothers, Julius M. Alexander and a man whose name slips me ... called him ‘Cooch’ [sp] for reasons I don’t know ... after the [American] Civil War\(^12\) they

\(^8\) Sephardic Jews are the Jews of Spain, Portugal, North Africa and the Middle East and their descendants. The adjective “Sephardic” and corresponding nouns Sephardi (singular) and Sephardim (plural) are derived from the Hebrew word ‘Sepharad,’ which refers to Spain. Historically, the vernacular language of Sephardic Jews was Ladino, a Romance language derived from Old Spanish, incorporating elements from the old Romance languages of the Iberian Peninsula, Hebrew, Aramaic, and in the lands receiving those who were exiled, Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Greek, Bulgarian and Serbo-Croatian vocabulary.

\(^9\) Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim was founded in 1749 in Charleston South Carolina and is one of the oldest Jewish congregations in the United States. The founding members of the congregation were Sephardic Jews of Spanish and Portuguese descent. The congregation is sometimes considered to be the originator of Reform Judaism in the United States.

\(^10\) The American Revolutionary War, also called the ‘American War of Independence,’ was fought between American colonists and Great Britain between 1775 and 1783. It resulted in the independence and formation of the United States of America.

\(^11\) J. P. Allen was a chain of department stores in Georgia. The Downtown Atlanta store was at 215 Peachtree Street which is now the site of the Hard Rock Café. (2017)

\(^12\) The American Civil War, widely known in the United States as the ‘Civil War’ or the ‘War Between the States,’ was fought from 1861 to 1865 to determine the survival of the Union or independence for the Confederacy. In January 1861, seven Southern slave states declared their secession from the United States and formed the Confederate States of America. The Confederacy, often called the ‘South,’ grew to include 11 states, and although they claimed 13 states and additional western territories, the Confederacy was never diplomatically recognized by a foreign country. The states that did not declare secession were known as the ‘Union’ or the ‘North.’ The war had its origin in the issue of slavery. After four years of bloody combat, which left over 600,000 Union and Confederate soldiers dead and destroyed much
started a hardware business called J.M. Alexander Hardware. My grandfather had fought in the Confederate [States] Army in and around Savannah as a young boy of 17 or 18. He was a top sergeant, showing how desperate they were for personnel in the service at that point. They started the hardware store. I think it flourished during the years that Atlanta was coming back from the Civil War. Every time I’ve seen Gone with the Wind and see the hardware store that Scarlett’s interim husband started, I think about J.M. Alexander Hardware Company. My father kept it going until right after World War II, when he lost his lease. The store was where the then new Journal Building was to be built. They took the store down. He had to find a place to go, so he closed it down.

My uncle, Henry Aaron Alexander, wrote the book you referred to. He was an attorney. He went to the University of Georgia [Athens, Georgia] and graduated at the University of Virginia [Charlottesville, Virginia]. He served in the Georgia legislature, a very outspoken man. He was one of Leo Frank’s attorneys. One of the memories I have, and was brought up on, was that he went out to defend Governor [John M.] Slaton when the mob went out. My mother reported as the mob went out Peachtree . . . we lived on Forrest Avenue in those days, now Ralph McGill

of the South's infrastructure, the Confederacy collapsed, slavery was abolished, and the difficult Reconstruction process of restoring national unity and granting civil rights to freed slaves began.

13 The Confederate States Army (CSA) was the military ground force of the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War.

14 A famous film based on the book of the same name by Margaret Mitchell in 1926. The film was made in 1939 and is an epic historical romance produced by David O. Selznick. It tells the story of Scarlett O’Hara, the strong-willed daughter of a Georgia plantation owner, from her romantic pursuit of Ashley Wilkes, who is married to Melanie, to her marriage to Charles Hamilton who died in a training camp, and then to Rhett Butler. It is set against the backdrop of the American Civil War and the Reconstruction era. The leading roles were portrayed by Vivien Leigh (Scarlett), Clark Gable (Rhett), Leslie Howard (Ashley), and Olivia de Havilland (Melanie).

15 The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (AJC) is a major daily newspaper in the metropolitan area of Atlanta, Georgia. The newspaper is the result of the merger between The Atlanta Journal and The Atlanta Constitution. Separate publication of the morning Constitution and afternoon Journal ended in 2001. The Constitution, as it was originally known, was first published in 1868. Its name changed to The Atlanta Constitution in 1869. The Atlanta Journal was established in 1883.

16 Leo Frank (1884 - 1915) was a Jewish factory superintendent in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1913, he was accused of raping and murdering one of his employees, a 13-year-old girl named Mary Phagan, whose body was found on the premises of the National Pencil Company. Frank was arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced to death for her murder. The trial was the catalyst for a great outburst of antisemitism led by the populist Tom Watson and the center of powerful class and political interests. Frank was sent to Milledgeville State Penitentiary to await his execution. Governor John M. Slaton, believing there had been a miscarriage of justice, commuted Frank’s sentence to life in prison. This enraged a group of men who styled themselves the ‘Knights of Mary Phagan.’ They drove to the prison, kidnapped Frank from his cell and drove him to Marietta, Georgia where they lynched him. Many years later, the murderer was revealed to be Jim Conley, who had lied in the trial, pinning it on Frank instead. Frank was pardoned on March 11, 1986, although they stopped short of exonerating him.

17 John Marshall Slaton (1866 – 1955) was Georgia's sixtieth governor, serving two terms, in 1911-12 and 1913-15. He was also a state representative and state senator, and practiced law in Atlanta, Georgia.
[Blvd.] . . . she could hear the mob yelling for Slaton and Alexander. I was brought up in sort of an atmosphere of uncertainty about the Jews in this community and what their future might be.

**Leonard:** Could you relate your experiences with either Jews or Gentiles from your childhood or young adulthood which would help explain the Jewish experience in Atlanta? That would be exclusive of what you’ve just recounted on the Leo Frank time?

**Cecil:** I wouldn’t say I was brought up in a strongly religious atmosphere. We certainly were brought up as Jews. We were Reform Jews. I thought that the rabbi, Dr. [David] Marx, was Jehovah until I was about 14. I was just certain of it. We observed the Sabbath. We observed the High Holy Days. In the neighborhood in which I grew up, which was St. Charles Place, there were a lot of young families there. I just went with the people on the street. We just bummed around together. It was really a great community. There was very little feeling, one way or the other, about religious differences. The first time I ran into it, I guess, was when I got to high school, and was asked whether I wanted to join a fraternity. I said I didn’t think the guy knew what he was talking about, that I would be blackballed because of religion. He insisted I go anyway, and brought his father along in order to pave the way. Still the antisemitism, or whatever you might title it in those days, was such that I wasn’t accepted. Of course, there might have been other reasons, as well, but that was what I was led to believe. The Jews, at least the Reform Jews, and I certainly think to some extent the Conservative Jews, were very much a part of the city’s life. There were certainly strong divisions in social context with the clubs. But as

---

18 A division within Judaism especially in North America and the United Kingdom. Historically it began in the 19th century. In general, the Reform movement maintains that Judaism and Jewish traditions should be modernized and compatible with participation in Western culture. While the Torah remains the law, in Reform Judaism women are included (mixed seating, bat mitzvah and women rabbis), music is allowed in the services and most of the service is in English.

19 Rabbi David Marx (1872–1962) was a long-time rabbi at the Temple in Atlanta, Georgia. He led the move toward Reform Judaism practices. He served as rabbi from 1895 to 1946. When he retired, Rabbi Jacob Rothschild took the pulpit that Rabbi Marx had held for more than half a century.

20 Jehovah is a Latinization of the Hebrew יהוה, one vocalization of the Tetragrammaton יהוה (YHWH), one of the seven proper names of the God of Israel in the Hebrew Bible.

21 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.

22 The two High Holy Days are Rosh Ha-Shanah (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).

23 To vote against, ostracize, or exclude socially.

24 A form of Judaism that seeks to preserve Jewish tradition and ritual, but has a more flexible approach to the interpretation of the law than Orthodox Judaism. It attempts to combine a positive attitude toward modern culture, while preserving a commitment to Jewish observance. They also observe gender equality (mixed seating, women rabbis and bat mitzvahs).
far as it being a prevalent experience of being aware, intensely aware, I was not. I went to a Jewish camp in North Carolina, Osceola Camp that was run by Dr. Solomon\(^\text{25}\) from Savannah. The counselors and the administrators came from a broad section. One of the counselors was Vernon ‘Catfish’ Smith,\(^\text{26}\) an old American football player at the University of Georgia who was certainly white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant. So even there, though it was a Jewish camp per se, I didn’t feel I was segregated. It was just an experience I went through. I guess what I’m trying to say is growing up Jewish in Atlanta in those days was something you were aware of, and it was something that was accepted as more of a . . . it wasn’t a deep religious experience. It was certainly an experience. It certainly made an impression on me that I was Jewish, and therefore certain doors were closed. On the other hand, there was instilled in us a great deal of pride in being Jewish.

**Leonard:** What was it like entering into business and professions as a Jew in Atlanta, as related to your adult life, as opposed to your relationship with the community as a child?

**Cecil:** I was away from Atlanta for a good portion of my education. I went to Yale [University–New Haven, Connecticut] four years. Then I went to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology–Cambridge, Massachusetts] one year. I was then in the Marine Corps for four years, came back from that, and two more years at Harvard [University–Cambridge, Massachusetts] where I got my master’s [degree] in architecture. By the time I got back, any continuity was really badly broken. I don’t think of it as being a continuation. I must say that I never felt any handicap in my profession about being Jewish. Now I did get myself heavily involved with the Civil Rights Movement\(^\text{27}\) at one point. There were some problems that evolved

---

\(^{25}\) Rabbi George Solomon was rabbi of Mickve Israel in Savannah, Georgia from 1903 to 1945. From 1926 to 1945 the Solomons owned and operated a Jewish camp called Camp Osceola on Lake Osceola near Hendersonville, North Carolina.

\(^{26}\) Vernon ‘Catfish’ Smith (1908 – 1988) was an American football, basketball, and baseball player, coach, and military officer. A three-sport athlete at the University of Georgia, Smith was named to the 1931 College Football All-America Team as an end. After his playing days, he served as the co-head basketball coach at his alma mater during the 1937–1938 season. Smith was also the head baseball coach at Georgia from 1934 to 1937 and at the University of South Carolina from 1938 to 1939 and again from 1946 to 1947. He was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame as a player in 1979.

\(^{27}\) The American Civil Rights Movement encompasses social movements in the United States whose goal was to end racial segregation and discrimination against black Americans and enforce constitutional voting rights to them. The movement was characterized by major campaigns of civil resistance. Between 1955 and 1968, acts of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience produced crisis situations between activists and government authorities. Noted legislative achievements during this phase of the Civil Rights Movement were passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Services Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968.
from that. We almost lost a large commission because someone thought that I was ‘selling out,’ so to speak. The only other thing, and I think this is a very interesting comment, the firm then was composed of five people, two of us Jewish and three Protestants. We were in a joint venture with a New York firm. Both partners were Jewish. In the discussion I was told about whether both firms should be retained. The chairman of this institution said, “I don’t know about getting two Jewish firms.” It always struck me as interesting that although we were outnumbered, two to three in this five-man firm by Protestants, nevertheless we were considered a Jewish firm. I think that that says something, again, about the awareness, the climate. There’s a phrase that I’ve used and I’ve experienced it. Maybe there are better terms for it, but I like to call it “locker room antisemitism.” By that I mean not the overt antisemitism that has been experienced in so many countries and in this country, as well . . . the kind of antisemitism that was in Atlanta at the time of the [Leo] Frank case. But the kind that’s just sort of snide, that’s always lurking below the surface, that results in stories in the locker room. That’s why I call it “locker room antisemitism.” I think it’s something that’s an evil well that’s there to be tapped, and one that needs to be constantly watched. These people who are willing to accept a certain level of antisemitism under the right situations, economic, social, or what have you, are probably a resource, not for leadership, but certainly for creating a climate where those who are virulent in antisemitism feel it’s safe to operate.

Leonard: Any new firm that comes into being always has a particular financial problem. They end up going to a bank and borrowing for its origin of funds, utilizing a portion of their own seed capital, as well. Did you have any trouble borrowing from banks when you opened your first firm here in Atlanta?

Cecil: No, those were in the days of Mills Lane28 and his really free-swinging extension of credit. He did it on the basis of people. Bernard Rothschild,29 who was my first partner, came

---

28 Mills B. Lane began at Citizens Bank as a vice-president and director in 1891. In 1901, Lane became president of Citizens Bank. In 1906, Lane and his associates purchased Southern Bank of Georgia enabling them to merge the two banks as the new C&S Bank. The newly merged banks were officially named the Citizens and Southern Bank of Georgia. His son, Mills B. Lane, Jr. (1912-1989), served as president, vice-chairman and chairman between 1946 and 1973 and made C&S the South's largest bank as well as the most profitable of the 50 largest United States banks at the time.

29 Bernard ‘Rocky’ Berman Rothschild (1915 – 2005) was an American architect. A 1937 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Architecture [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania], he moved to Atlanta, Georgia after World War II and formed the firm Alexander and Rothschild with Cecil Alexander. In 1958, Alexander and Rothschild merged with another firm to create the prominent firm of Finch, Alexander, Barnes, Rothschild and Paschal which is now Rosser International. (2017)
here from Philadelphia [Pennsylvania]. He married into the Haas family, which of course is very well known in the community. My name was known to Mills. We went in to see him and put a statement in front of him. He took one look at the statement, threw it in his trash basket and said, “I wouldn’t lend you a nickel on that, but how much money do you want?” He extended us credit for years, just on that basis. I never felt any difficulty at all in getting money. I certainly never thought it was predicated on whether we were Jewish or Gentile or heathens, as far as that went. He was a man that believed in the city. He believed in his ability to judge character. Sometimes he made mistakes, but I hope he doesn’t feel he made one with us.

Leonard: In the interaction between Jewish groups, obviously you had some experiences. Were there difficulties between German and East European, or with these and the Sephardic Jews that you have any knowledge of, or feelings about?

Cecil: Yes. There was a lot of feeling. I remember Rabbi [Jacob] Rothschild\(^{30}\) at the Temple,\(^{31}\) who I thought a great deal of as a very courageous leader. I worked with him in civil rights. At one point we were getting very ecumenical and we were inviting Protestants and Catholics and almost anybody who was out there to come speak to the Temple in their forums. I said, “Look, Jack, we are making all these overtures with the Catholics, and so on. What about the other Jewish congregations?” He says, “Oh no, that will never work.” I think some of this has changed. I don’t think there’s this much feeling of differences as there used to be. It probably still exists, a lot of it. I picked up a tennis racket the other day, a beautiful tennis racket. On it was the name ‘Status.’ It annoyed me when I picked it up, but its human nature. I think some of that certainly existed in this community. That tended to set the late arrivals apart from the earlier settlers, at least in the minds of the earlier settlers.

Leonard: Talking about the earlier settlers, did they help newcomers and how? Did they mix in business and socially?

Cecil: It may have been done, I don’t know, in somewhat of a paternalistic atmosphere. My uncle, in particular, was very much involved in this. I think, at least partially, because he

---

30 Rabbi Jacob Rothschild (1911 – 1973) was rabbi of the city’s oldest Reform congregation, the Temple, in Atlanta, Georgia from 1946 until his death in 1973 from a heart attack. He forged close relationships with the city’s Christian clergy and distinguished himself as a charismatic spokesperson for civil rights.
31 The Temple, or ‘Hebrew Benevolent Congregation,’ is Atlanta’s oldest Jewish congregation. The cornerstone was laid on the Temple on Garnett Street in 1875. The dedication was held in 1877 and the Temple was located there until 1902. The Temple’s next location on Pryor Street was dedicated in 1902. The Temple’s current location in Midtown on Peachtree Street was dedicated in 1931. The main sanctuary is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Reform congregation now totals approximately1500 families (2017).
married a lady who was studying here, studying dentistry, who had come in from Russia. He devoted a great deal of his effort and time into helping her sister, her brother, and so on get out of Russia. It didn’t stop with them, family. I think he was once selected as Man of the Year by the Jewish community here. That had to do with his great involvement and dedication to seeing what he could do in the areas of paving the way and easing the way for new arrivals. How prevalent this was through the Jewish community, I can’t answer.

Leonard: Do you have any understanding of what any restrictions were of your group and your relation with David Marx, Rabbi [Harry] Epstein, Rabbi [Tobias] Geffen, and Rabbi [Joseph] Cohen? Do you have any feeling about that past?

Cecil: I don’t quite follow the question.

Leonard: What were the reactions of your group in your relations with David Marx? The relationship?

Cecil: As I say, David Marx was my rabbi. As I also said, until I was a teenager I thought he was God. There was no question in my mind. The other rabbis, I knew them casually. I knew who they were, but the breaking down into the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox was very strong. My uncle, again going back to him as a member of a Sephardic congregation here, was considered very much a part of that congregation. He was in both. He was in the Temple as well as the Sephardic.

Leonard: If any of these groups were divided at all on different issues, what in your opinion, brought them together later?

Cecil: There’s no question that Israel brought them together. At other times antisemitism brought them together. There was a great divergence of opinion about Israel in the early days. Went all the way from the very pro-Israeli attitudes to the ‘anti,’ the ones that felt it would

32 Henry Alexander married Marian Kline (1895-1984). She was born Manya Kline in Kovno, Lithuania and died in Atlanta, Georgia. She is buried alongside her husband in Oakland Cemetery.
33 Rabbi Harry Epstein (1903-2003) served as rabbi of Ahavath Achim Synagogue in Atlanta, Georgia from 1928 to 1982, when he became rabbi emeritus. Under Rabbi Harry Epstein, the congregation began to shift to Conservatism, which they joined in 1952.
34 Rabbi Tobias Geffen (1870-1970) was an Orthodox rabbi and leader of 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.
35 Rabbi Joseph I. Cohen (1896-1985) was born in Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey. He was trained for the rabbinate in Turkey and accepted his first pulpit in Havana, Cuba in 1920. In 1934 he moved to Atlanta, Georgia where he was installed as the rabbi of Or VeShalom, a Sephardic congregation. Rabbi Cohen officially retired in 1969, but remained active at both the synagogue and in the community until his death in 1985.
endanger the life of the Jews in this country, to neutral and ‘wait and see.’ I suppose that, too, tended to be a factor of how strong the recent ties to Europe were. That was sort of the criteria for the amount of involvement.

**Leonard:** There was an uneasiness about it that could have been rocking the boat if there was a strong interest, pro-Israel, pro-Zionism?

**Cecil:** I don’t quite follow what you mean. Who would be uneasy is what I’m saying?

**Leonard:** Would the Jewish community, the people in the Jewish community, be uneasy about any after effects of their interest in Israel and Zionism?

**Cecil:** I don’t know if there was any uneasiness. There was a great deal of bitterness and recriminations between groups who felt very strongly pro-Israel and those who didn’t favor its coming into existence. But I don’t think there was any uneasiness about it. I think there was a general uneasiness on the part of those who went pro-Israel, a feeling that somehow there was going to be a breakdown of the Jewish citizenship in the United States.

<End Tape 1, Side 1>

<Begin Tape 1, Side 2>

**Leonard:** What about the Jewish social service agencies? Did you have any involvement with them, and could you describe it if you did?

**Cecil:** My involvement with them was definitely limited, I’d have to say. I’ve taken part in a peripheral way in all of them, I suppose, by contributing. I don’t know if the American Jewish Committee qualifies as a social agency, exactly. Is that what you mean? Because I was very much involved in that.

**Leonard:** No, I’m speaking of other agencies, social service agencies, which may have had a slant toward the Jewish area of interest. You don’t have any involvement in that at all? You didn’t have any involvement in that at all beyond the American Jewish Committee?

**Cecil:** Yes. As a contributor I had a very strong involvement, and also the Council of Jewish Women is something that my wife is very much into. The group that I couldn’t remember earlier that my grandmother had founded was the Council of Jewish Women in Atlanta.

**Leonard:** Would you like to expand on that? That your grandmother was a founder of the Council of Jewish Women in Atlanta?

**Cecil:** I think it was an indicator of her concern and interest in the Jewish affairs of the city. Not having been around at the time, I don’t know that I’m in a position to expand on it. To
go back to the Jewish agencies, I suppose I’ve tended to be involved in community-wide efforts that do involve those agencies, but not directly. I can’t say exactly why my course has been that, but I’ve tended to be more into things like the Community Council of the City of Atlanta, which I was acting chairman of at one time. Of course, all of these agencies were a part of that operation. That’s really been the course of action I’ve been into.

Leonard: Was there any resistance to the rise of Jews in politics and business that you might have been aware of? And what was your experience with other minority groups, particularly Blacks?

Cecil: As a child or as . . .

Leonard: . . . I would say as an adult, as you were coming up, the resistance to the rise of Jews in politics, and business particularly.

Cecil: I suppose there was some resistance. But if you look at Atlanta, you see that Sam Massell\textsuperscript{36} was mayor and that Sidney Marcus\textsuperscript{37} is a strong candidate. Jews have been very much involved in the political life of the city. There are people now in City Hall who are Jewish. I really can’t say that I see it now. Back in the 1920’s, if you wanted to get anywhere in state politics, you belonged to the [Ku Klux] Klan.\textsuperscript{38} There were a lot of good people, otherwise good people, who belonged to the Klan just for political reasons. Of course, that would automatically, I hope, prohibit a Jew from seeking statewide office. I think I mentioned my great-uncle was the mayor of Montgomery, and my uncle was in the legislature. It wasn’t widespread. I suppose that at some point it could have been an element that could have defeated someone running for office in the south, but I never felt it. I played around with the idea of getting into more active politics at one time, and I never felt inhibited by it.

\textsuperscript{36} Sam Massell (b. 1927) is a businessman who served from 1970 to 1974 as the 53\textsuperscript{rd} mayor of Atlanta. He is the first Jewish mayor in his city's history. A lifelong Atlanta resident, Massell has had successful careers in real estate brokerage, elected office, tourism, and association management.

\textsuperscript{37} Sidney Marcus (1928 – 1983) was first elected as a Democrat to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1968 from a district in the Buckhead community of Atlanta, Georgia. He subsequently was reelected to seven more terms in the legislature. In 1981, he ran for mayor of Atlanta losing to civil rights leader and former United Nations ambassador Andrew Young. Sidney Marcus Boulevard, a major street in the Buckhead area of his old house district, was named in recognition of his contributions to the city.

\textsuperscript{38} The Ku Klux Klan (or Knights of the Ku Klux Klan today) is a white supremacist, white nationalist, anti-immigration, anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic, anti-black secret society, whose methods included terrorism and murder. It was founded in the South in the 1860’s and then died out and come back several times, most notably in the 1920’s when membership soared again, and then again in the 1960’s during the civil rights era. When the Klan was re-founded in 1915 in Georgia, the event was marked by a cross burning on Stone Mountain. In the past it members dressed up in white robes and a pointed hat designed to hide their identity and to terrify. It is still in existence.
Leonard: Did you ever have any experiences with other minority groups, particularly Blacks?

Cecil: Yes, I had a lot. Let’s say the scales came off my eyes when I was at Harvard. I got to know a Black who is now a very prominent New York architect, and discovered for the first time that they were equals, I guess. I’d been brought up in the south with black servants, and there was real love there. A nurse I had, it compared the love I felt for her compared with my mother. I think that’s one of the big differences in the south, by the way.

<interview pauses, then resumes>

Leonard: We were talking about your experiences with other minority groups, particularly Blacks. You were talking about your nurse and the real love that was in the family through her [unintelligible].

Cecil: When I came back to Atlanta, I was president of the American Institute of Architects local chapter. Out of that, it came to the attention of Mayor [William B. Hartsfield]. He appointed me as the first chairman of the Citizen’s Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal [CACUR]. This was a bi-racial committee. It was an ongoing committee. Later we were able to expand it to some 90 people on the basis of about one-third to two-thirds, which was the ratio of Black to White. At that point, I really got to know, for the first time, Blacks as people, Blacks as businessmen, Blacks as politicians, and so forth. My wife and I both, Hermi and I, got very much involved with the old Civil Rights Movement. It’s something I’ve never regretted. It’s something that hadn’t gone quite the way I’d expected, but human nature is human nature. I don’t know why I ever thought that might be put aside. I’d hoped for a happily integrated city. I think that writes me off as a visionary. Nevertheless, it had a profound effect on me and on my relationships, not only with Blacks but with many other people, as well. I think one interesting phenomenon that went on at that time, there was a group of us, Jews and others of course. Jack Rothschild, the rabbi, and I could name quite a number of Atlanta Jews who were very much involved with Civil Rights. I think at least one of our motives, at least certainly one of mine, was

---

39 William Berry Hartsfield, Sr. (1890-1971), served as the 49th and 51st Mayor of Atlanta. His tenure extended from 1937 to 1941 and again from 1942 to 1962, making him the longest-serving mayor of his native Atlanta.

40 Hermione ‘Hermi’ Weil Alexander (1922 - 1983) was the wife of American architect Cecil Alexander. Like her husband she was very active in the Civil Rights movement in Atlanta, Georgia. She was also the first female jury commissioner in Fulton County history. In 1983, she and Cecil were on their way home and were hit head on by an intoxicated 16 year old driver. She was killed and Cecil was injured. The following year, Fulton County passed a resolution officially naming what is now a footbridge located on the Chattahoochee River at Paces Ferry Road not far from their home after Hermi. A plaque installed on the bridge states “Hermione Weil Alexander. She built bridges across gulfs of prejudice and intolerance.” In the aftermath of Hermi’s death, Cecil founded the Hermione Weil Alexander Fund Committee to Combat Drugged and Drunken Driving.
the feeling that when bigotry exists, it doesn’t take long before it’s on the doorstep of the Jew. It was self-serving to that extent. The reaction in the other southern cities was very, very negative. Like most Jews in the south, I had cousins around in Montgomery and Birmingham [Alabama], New Orleans [Louisiana], and Chattanooga [Tennessee]. They all were very, very upset and felt that we were exposing them. They said, “It’s all very well for you in a cosmopolitan city like Atlanta, to be advocating this sort of thing, but we’re exposed. You have no concept of our feelings.” I did have a concept of their feelings, but I thought they were wrong. I wasn’t about to give up on it because of that. I’ve always felt that fear breeds fear. Fear breeds attack. It’s a bad road to go down. The thing that really changed the Jews in other cities, at least in Montgomery I know, was the bombing of the Temple.41 Here was a sign that our safety in Atlanta wasn’t all that sure, that the Jews in Atlanta were exposed, and that what we were doing might be exposing the Birmingham or the Montgomery Jews. At the same time, we had our own necks out. I think that that was a great catharsis in the city, the bombing of the Temple. The Jews in Atlanta at that time didn’t know how much ‘money we had in the bank,’ so to speak, in the regard of the community. There was such a tremendous outpouring of support and indignation at this bombing that we all took a second look and thought, “Well, after all, we do have a position in this community that does entitle us to feel secure.” For some of it was predicated on the fundamentalists, the Baptist idea of the Jew as a descendant of the ancient Hebrews. Therefore the bombing of the Temple was a blow not only at Jews but at Christians, as well. I’ve often thought if they had bombed a secular Jewish facility, there wouldn’t have been nearly the outcry. There’s nothing original about that thought, but if they’d wanted to stir up the maximum amount of opposition to what they were doing, they picked their target.

Leonard: Now that you’ve talked about how the community reacted to the bombing of the Temple, do you remember your own feeling at the time when it happened? How did it strike you? 1958 is just exactly 22 years ago. What was your gut feeling at the time?

Cecil: I had a peculiar gut feeling. I was lying up in Piedmont Hospital where I had an operation on my arm. That thing went off in the morning. I had an open window facing the

41 The Temple on Peachtree Street in Atlanta, Georgia was bombed in the early morning hours of October 12, 1958. About 50 sticks of dynamite were planted near the building and tore a huge hole in the wall. No one was injured in the bombing as it was during the night. Rabbi Jacob Rothschild was an outspoken advocate of civil rights and integration and friend of Martin Luther King Jr. Five men associated with the National States’ Rights Party, a white separatist group, were tried and acquitted in the bombing.
Temple and its several blocks away. There was this tremendous noise. I woke up. I was drugged from painkillers, I guess, and I thought, “My God, they’re bombing Atlanta.” Then I thought, “Well, there’s nothing I can do about it in this shape.” I rolled over and went back to sleep, or tried to roll over. That was my initial reaction. My later reaction was that it wasn’t one of great surprise. It was one of outrage. I think way down at the bottom of the list was one of fear. I remember the great outpouring that Friday night. I was out of the hospital by then and we went to the Temple. I ended up sitting under this huge chandelier. I wondered how much damage might have been done to the structure holding that chandelier up. There was that feeling. But as to a feeling that there was rampant antisemitism abroad in Atlanta that was a real threat, I didn’t feel it, nothing like before World War II when the so-called Silver Shirts were marching in the streets of Atlanta. These guys were obviously a small handful. The fact that they did not have any part of support of the community was very comforting.

Leonard: You were in the service in World War II. I’m wondering if you did react differently to the migration of others from Holocaust Europe than the community may have, due to the entrance of East European or Sephardic Jews in the earlier era. Have the roles of men or women changed, etc.?

Cecil: I think, like every wave of immigrants that have come and including my own ancestors, there had to be an adjustment period. There were strange ways. There was more or less the willingness to be absorbed in the melting pot. Incidentally, I’ve never bought this theory of the melting pot. I gave a talk the other day in which I said, “It was more like a stew with people floating around in it. All in the same environment, but each pursuing their own ways.” I’m all for this pluralism. I think it can be carried too far. I think sometimes in our one interest approach to politics, the government, and life in general, we tend to lose track of the fact that we are a nation. There are strong ties that pull us all together. If we lose them, and we get broken down, as some people seem to want to do, into these very militant groups, I think we’re going to become very vulnerable, from within and from without, to attack. I’ve been a strong advocate of

---

42 The Silver Legion of America, commonly known as the Silver Shirts, was a white-supremacist, antisemitic American organization founded by William Dudley Pelley that was announced publicly in 1933. The paramilitary group’s uniform shirts bore a scarlet letter ‘L’ over the heart meant to symbolize Loyalty to the United States, Liberation from materialism, and the Silver Legion itself. The declaration of war on the United States by Nazi Germany led to the group’s rapid decline.

43 The melting pot is a metaphor for a heterogeneous society with different elements “melting together” into a whole with a common culture. It is often used to describe the assimilation of immigrants to the United States.
the idea of pluralism, that there was room for all thought, all actions, and all activities in this country. I still think so but I still feel strongly that there’s got to be a framework everyone relates to and is tied into, and they feel the destiny in this country’s future, not just always in their own internal interests. The “Me” generation has been expanded to the “Me” ethnic’ group, or the “Me” political’ group, or the “Me” social group. This country didn’t get where it is entirely by “Me-ism.” It got somewhere because it meant that individuals would stand out and really go for broke for their own, but at some point there was a willingness in a crisis to come together.

Leonard: In the late 1930’s, there was this ongoing action against the Jews in Nazi Germany. The Holocaust was underway. We were not yet in the war. We do know that England and France were suffering the indignities of the German attack. They had taken Poland. They had taken Belgium, the Netherlands, and so on. Throughout all of this time, before you were into the service I believe, the Jews as well as others were being massacred, gassed, and killed in the concentration camps. To what extent did that information ever get filtered into Atlanta, and would you have remembered anything about it?

Cecil: I certainly do remember, but I was at MIT during the time that I really began to hear it. I met a Jewish family who had escaped from Germany. I met them in New York, heard them talk, and believed. I never really understood this idea that the Jews in this country or the government didn’t realize what was going on. I was terribly disturbed by it. I had a couple of Protestant roommates at MIT. I remember saying to them, “I don’t know whether this is our country’s war, but by God it’s my war.” When I left MIT at the end of the year, I went to the Canadian Air Force recruiting office, which was in the Marine base next to La Guardia [Airport–Queens, New York]. When they found out I was already a commercial pilot and a college graduate, I didn’t think they were going to let me out of the room. One guy absolutely actually blocked the door. He said, “Son, you’re not going to leave.” I said, “I got to go home and think it over.” I did go home and I enlisted in the Navy as a Naval Air Cadet, and then later went to the Marine Corps. I did feel it. I don’t know that I knew the extent, but it certainly made an impression on me at the time. That was the fall of 1940 and the winter of 1941, spring of 1941, ________________

44 The “Me” generation in the United States is a term referring to the baby boomers generation and the self-involved qualities that some associate with the generation born in the 1940’s to the 1960’s. The 1970’s were dubbed the ‘Me’ decade by writer Tom Wolfe. The phrase caught on with the general public, at a time when self-realization and self-fulfillment were becoming cultural aspirations to which young people supposedly ascribed higher importance than social responsibility.
Leonard: You’ve touched lightly on your military service, but your biography here is interesting and comprehensive. Your service up to the lieutenant colonel in World War II, U.S. Marine Corps is brilliant. Having been an officer of your squadron and awarded the Air Medal\(^{45}\) and Distinguished Flying Cross,\(^{46}\) your record is distinguished. Can you recall any incidents or situations in which you as a Jew faced antisemitism in the service?

Cecil: It was indirectly in the service. I went through a school that was set up by American Airlines for navy and marine pilots learning to fly DC-3’s. I had an instructor who I thought was really great. His name was Sam Ross. He was tough. At some point I said something about being Jewish to him. Later it came back to me. He had made some remark. That’s what it was. He made some “locker room” antisemitic remark and I called him on it. It later came back to me from one of his later students who joined the squadron. I was in after being trained in transports equipment and dive bombers . . . but that’s another story . . . that I had said that he was giving me a hard time because I was Jewish, which I’d absolutely not said. I didn’t feel he was giving me any harder time than he gave everybody else. I really was glad he was because if he didn’t give me a hard time, nature certainly would at some point. I can’t remember in the Marine Corps, as such, running into it. When I came back from overseas, they put me in a hotel room with an army officer who had just come back from Palestine. He was all full of the Jewish effort in Palestine. He was Protestant. He was giving me a real big buildup of the future of the Jews, how proud I should be of being Jewish, and so on. That encounter really stands out in my mind much more than any antisemitism I might have run into. I think one of the things was that if you were in any branch of the Marine Corps, you sort of wore on your sleeve that . . .

\(^{45}\) The Air Medal is a military decoration of the United States military. The medal was created in 1942 and is awarded for meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight.

\(^{46}\) The Distinguished Flying Cross is a military decoration awarded to any officer or enlisted member of the United States Armed Forces who distinguishes himself or herself in support of operations by “heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in an aerial flight, subsequent to November 11, 1918.”
We were all in something together. It was all worthwhile. It was something that had to be won. I’m sure I look back through the haze of nostalgia, but it was a great time.

Leonard: These are very important moments today in the life of the nation of Israel. One wonders, as I do, having been a newcomer to Atlanta, what the attitude of the Atlanta Jewish community is toward the State of Israel today. Concern, otherwise, is it a problem? Do we meet the challenge?

Cecil: My feeling is that the Jewish community in Atlanta now has taken as a fact the existence of Israel. You could count on your thumbs almost people who are anti the fact of Israel. I think there are many more people that question some of the Israeli policies. I think there are people who question if Israel and the Israelis realize there’s a limit to the influence of the American Jewish community in getting actions through the federal government. The Saudi Arabian sale

ought to have been a signpost that it takes both communities. It takes an enlightened interest of the Israelis in the status of the American Jew in order to assure this continued support from the federal government. It also takes an enlightened interest on the part of the American Jew as to what are the Israeli problems and how it would be to live under the gun since the birth of your country. I think that here in Atlanta . . . I hear figures, I don’t know . . . 25,000, 30,000 Jews. I would guess that 99 percent of those feel very strongly about the support and reason for the existence of Israel. The 1967 War was a tremendous turn-around in all of this too, I think. A man here in my office, Protestant, came in beaming. He’s an older man who had retired and came to work with us after his retirement. After the 1967 War he said, “Boy, we sure did lick them, didn’t we?” He’s one of these guys that, in the past, I would have put in this category of the quietly antisemitic, but that day he had a ‘Star of David’ on him. I think the revelation that the Jew is a fighter had a lot to do with this. I also hope that the Jew as peacemaker is a strong

47 The sale of five AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) surveillance planes to Saudi Arabia by the United States administration of President Ronald Reagan was a controversial part of what was then the largest foreign arms sale in U.S. history. The sale saw objections from a majority of Americans, prominent US Senators, the State of Israel and the Israel lobby.

48 The Six-Day War was fought between June 5 and 10, 1967 by Israel and the neighboring states of Egypt (known at the time as the United Arab Republic), Jordan, and Syria. Relations between Israel and its neighbors had never fully normalized following the 1948 War of Independence and in the period leading up to June 1967 tensions became heightened. As a result, Israel launched a series of preemptive airstrikes against Egyptian airfields on June 5 following the mobilization of Egyptian forces along the Israeli border in the Sinai Peninsula. The outcome was swift and decisive. Israel took control of the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. The Sinai was returned but the other territories were incorporated into Israel.
influence. I sometimes worry that that’s gotten a little bit lost in the world’s image of the Jew that we speak of: “Let Israel be a messenger of peace into the councils and nations.” It’s been several years, I think, since we’ve been thought of as that, or the Israelis have.

**Leonard:** In a few days, we will be at the fifth anniversary of what Chaim Herzog, who was the Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations, characterized that the United Nations [General Assembly] Resolution 3379 was indecent. It was a resolution that equated Zionism with racism. Our then ambassador to the United Nations, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, also joined Chaim Herzog in decrying and denouncing the resolution. To what extent did the community of the Jews here in Atlanta take note of that? Was there any sort of an outrage in connection with that infamous resolution?

**Cecil:** I think there was. There’s been such a series of crises and events that it’s very hard to isolate in time a specific reaction to a specific event. But you know that old business of “When the United States sneezes, Canada gets a cold.” When something happens that involves Israel, I think the American Jews “get pneumonia.” I’m certain there was a reaction, but you’d have to ask someone else to get it specifically. I can’t recall.

**Leonard:** I think we’ve covered a great deal. Cecil thanks so very much. I’ve enjoyed this half hour to three-quarters of an hour with you. I appreciate your comments that here are recorded on tape.

**Cecil:** I thank you for doing this. I think this is a great contribution to the history of Atlanta and the history of Atlanta Jews.

**Leonard:** Thank you so much, Cecil. What we’ve just heard was an interview I conducted.

---

49 Chaim Herzog (1918 - 1997) was an Israeli politician, general, lawyer and author who served as the sixth President of Israel between 1983 and 1993. Between 1975 and 1978 he served as Israel's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, in which capacity he repudiated UN General Assembly Resolution 3379, the ‘Zionism is Racism’ resolution, and symbolically tore it up before the assembly. Herzog entered politics in the 1981 elections, winning a Knesset seat as a member of the Alignment. In 1983 he was elected to the largely ceremonial role of President. He served for two five-year terms before retiring in 1993.

50 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3379, adopted in 1975 by a vote of 72 to 35 (with 32 abstentions), “determine[d] that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination.” The resolution was passed with the support of the Soviet bloc and other then Soviet-aligned nations, in addition to the Arab and Muslim majority countries. The determination that “Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination” contained in the resolution, was revoked in 1991 with UN General Assembly Resolution 46/86.

51 Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1927 – 2003) was an American politician and sociologist. A member of the Democratic Party, he was first elected to the U.S. Senate for New York in 1976, and was re-elected three times serving a total of 24 years. Prior to his years in the Senate, Moynihan was the United States Ambassador to the United Nations and to India, and was a member of four successive presidential administrations, beginning with the administration of John F. Kennedy, and continuing through that of Gerald Ford.

52 An idiomatic expression signifying the impact of happenings in the United States on Canada.
with Cecil Alexander in his office at the Equitable Building in Atlanta, Georgia on November 10, 1980. I'm Leonard Leeds. I think it would be helpful if I read into this tape the biography of Cecil Alexander to give the listener a better idea of his credentials which I consider significant.

Cecil Alexander was born March 14, 1918 in Atlanta, Georgia. He graduated from Yale University in 1940. This resume was prepared for Yale University. He attended Harvard Graduate School of Design and received his masters in architecture in 1948. He had graduate studies in architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1940 and 1941. In connection with Yale associations, he was past president of the Yale Club of North, Georgia, was Chairman National Yale Meeting, Atlanta. past member Yale National Alumni Board 1963, member of the Yale Council 1975, 1980, Chairman Committee Yale school of Architecture 1975 1980, Honorary Fellow of the Pierson College, Atlanta Yale Alumni Schools Committee, he was on that for 20 years, coordinator Diamante [sp] Atlanta visit in February 1980. His other educational associations were past planning committee Atlanta University Center, past board member Lovett School Atlanta, Executive Finance and Building and Grounds Committees Clark College, Atlanta, the lay board Marist High School, Atlanta. Board of the Atlanta College of Art, teacher of design, Georgia Institute of Technology 1948 – 1951.

As to his professional and business associations, he was Chairman of the Board of Finch, Alexander, Barnes, Rothschild and Pascal Architects, Inc. He is now Chairman of the board of his firm. The significant work of the firm is the Coca-Cola Company International headquarters. When I say significant work of the firm, this would be their architectural commissions. First National Bank of Atlanta Office Tower, the Georgia Power Company headquarters, the Gulf States Paper Company headquarters, Southern Bell headquarters, that was an equal joint venture with others, Student Center at Georgia Institute of Technology, Chemical Engineering Building, Georgia Institute of Technology, Chemistry Building, Georgia Institute of Technology, student housing, West and South Georgia Colleges, Urban Life Center, Georgia State University, Riverfront Stadium, Cincinnati, Ohio, that was an equal joint venture with others as was the Atlanta Stadium and the Rich stadium of Buffalo, New York. The firm has recently won two national design competitions: the U.S. Pavilion at Expo 1982, Knoxville, Tennessee, and the Kentucky Justice Center at Frankfurt, Kentucky. That was also an equal joint venture. He is retired Chairman of the ASD, Inc., an interior design firm, the former member of the board of the First Georgia Bank of Atlanta.
As to his civic activities, they are substantial: past chairman of the Citizens Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal of Atlanta, past chairman Housing Resources Committee, Atlanta, past Chairman Atlanta Council for International Visitors, past acting chairman Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission, past vice president of the Temple, Atlanta, President Emeritus and founder, Resurgens Atlanta, that's a biracial civic club, past vice president the Atlanta Symphony, and past president Atlanta Chapter, American Jewish Committee. Presently he is a board member and founder of the Georgia Foreign Trade Zone Inc., executive committee Central Atlanta Progress, co-chairman Atlanta Chamber of Commerce Energy Task Force, vice Chairman World Wildlife Fund U.S., Building Committee, Martin Luther King Junior Center, Atlanta, board of the Grant Park Planning Committee, Atlanta.

In the military Cecil Alexander served to Lieutenant Colonel, United States Marine Corps Reserve, active duty in World War II, he was a dive bomber pilot in the Pacific, he served as Operations Officer, Executive Officer, Commanding Officer in various squadrons, and he was awarded the Air Metal and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

His recognitions are as follows: he was elected a Fellow, the American Institute of Architects, Brotherhood Award (two), National Conference of Christians and Jews, Ivan Allen Award (two), Service to the Community. When I say, “Two,” I mean he was given these awards these twice. He’s listed in *Who’s Who in America* and *Who’s Who in the World*.

As to his family, Cecil Alexander is married to Hermione Weil of New Orleans, 1943. Children: Therese Alexander Milkey, Wheaton [College—Norton, Massachusetts] graduate, Judith Alexander, Boston University [Boston, Massachusetts] graduate, Douglas Alexander, attending the University of Georgia. His family migrated from England and settled in Charleston, South Carolina in 1760 and came to Atlanta in 1848. Of course, his biography makes the mention that his religious affiliation is Jewish.

It was a great rewarding pleasure that I had talking to Cecil and recording his thoughts. I am delighted that I was given this opportunity to do this recording for the American Jewish Committed Atlanta branch. I’m Leonard Leeds and its November 10, 1980 as I speak. From small notes, he ranged at length from his origins and the origin of his family through the present and his philosophy. I’ll leave it to the listener to understand the warmth and the quality of Cecil

---

53 *Who's Who* is the title of a number of reference publications, generally containing concise biographical information on a particular group of people.
Alexander.

FIRST INTERVIEW ENDS

<End Tape 2, Side 1>
SECOND INTERVIEW BEGINS

<Begin 1990 Interview, Tape 1, Side 1>

Elaine: This is Elaine Levin interviewing Cecil Alexander on July 19, 1990 for the Jewish Oral History Project of Atlanta. It’s been ten years since your original interview in 1980. How has life changed for you?

Cecil: It’s changed dramatically because in 1983, I was in an automobile wreck. A drunk boy, 16, hit me head on. My wife, Hermi, was killed. She lived about two and a half hours. I was badly injured. Although I’m about 90 percent recovered physically, I haven’t ever totally recovered from that experience. I’ve also retired, which is a trauma. I’ve moved. I live in a different house. My son-in-law, who I valued very highly, Herb Milkey, was a successful young architect, died. I remarried to Eisemann\(^5^4\) and that has been a way out of the darkness. We, together, have seven children. I have three, she has four. All, but one, live in Atlanta. All but my son, who does live in Atlanta, are married. She has very talented children. One of them, Artie Harris who’s Arthur Harris’ son, works as a representative for The Washington Post in the south. He also is a freelance writer. He’s just gone on a program for CNN,\(^5^5\) which will be like 60 Minutes.\(^5^6\) Alex Harris is a fine photographer. He has a department of Documentary Studies I believe it is, at Duke [University–Durham, North Carolina]. Jill [Harris Brown], her first daughter, is married to a fine young man, George Brown, who specializes in foreign affairs, foreign relations, and teaches at Agnes Scott [College–Decatur, Georgia]. She’s a graphic artist. Sophie [Joel], who studied nursing but has really never practiced it, is married to Alan Joel. They have a beautiful little daughter named Helen, so there are two Helens in the family. My own children, Terri, who as I said lost her husband, has done a magnificent job of putting her life back together. She has two fine children, Alexander and Rachel. Alexander is 17 and wants to go to University of Virginia. Rachel, I’m not sure where she wants to go or to do with her life. Judith

---

\(^{5^4}\) Helen Eismann Alexander (1919-2014) was a social activist and actress. She helped found the Speech and Hearing Clinic for Atlanta’s deaf African-American children and was active in the American Jewish Committee, serving as president in 1968 and 1969. She had two sons and a daughter from her first marriage to Arthur Harris, and a daughter with her second husband, Marshall Mantler. In 1985 she married Atlanta architect and civic leader Cecil Alexander.

\(^{5^5}\) The Cable News Network [CNN] is an American basic cable and satellite television channel that is owned by the Turner Broadcasting System division of Time Warner. The 24-hour cable news channel was founded in 1980 by American media proprietor Ted Turner.

\(^{5^6}\) 60 Minutes is an American newsmagazine television program broadcast on the CBS television network.
is married to Ed Augustine, a lawyer here whose specialty is environmental concerns. They have a kid who’s name is Jed who is full of energy and enthusiasm and is a delight. Then there’s Doug, my son, who is in public relations working on his own. I guess that accounts pretty much for the children. The families grew up together, really. Helen and my first wife, Hermi, were good friends. We lived around the corner from each other. The children all knew each other. Jill and my daughter, Judith, particularly were friends. They even considered years ago going into business in graphic design together. Judith was in graphic design before she came back to Atlanta and worked for San Francisco Magazine, similar to Atlanta Magazine. She’s very talented. I guess that’s an overview. Helen is an actress. In her youth she was on Broadway. She was a Junior Miss.  She was in a Moss Hart production called Winged Victory that went all over the country during the war. A few years ago she decided to go back to it. She makes television commercials and print jobs, as she calls them, and also industrial films which are training films. Unfortunately, they always seem to cast her as somebody older than she is. She’s had every disease known to man in these commercials and print jobs. She’s been an alcoholic, she’s had Alzheimer’s, and so on and so forth. It shows what a fine actress she is, because it’s not Helen at all. Helen is a very vigorous, healthy, lively person. What else can I tell you?

Elaine: How has it been for you to shepherd a blended family?

Cecil: Shepherd isn’t the right word. They’re all adults. There were adjustments. Our families’ experiences have been so different, because I never really knew what it was to be single. I married in 1943 when I was 25 in service. Hermi and I were coming up on our 41st anniversary when she died. Helen, on the other hand, when we married had been single for 15 years. Of course, I admit, her children have had different experiences. My children had never known me except as part of a twosome. There are adjustments, but the fact that they’re all adults and they’re all fine people has made it a real, not easy, but responsive relationship among us. I think the family all enjoy being together, sharing experiences, bringing up their children, and that sort of

57 Junior Miss was an American program for young women that started in the 1920’s in Mobile, Alabama and eventually spread to all 50 states. Young ladies competed in pageant style competitions in a number of categories including interviews, scholastics, talent, and appearance. Winners were awarded scholarship money for college. Initially the program was open to young women in the summer prior to their senior year of high school and was expanded to those entering their junior year. Winners in their individual states would participate in a national competition. In 2010 the program was renamed Distinguished Young Women.

58 Moss Hart (1904 – 1961) was an American playwright and theater director.

59 Winged Victory is a play and, later, a film by Moss Hart, originally created and produced by the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II as a morale booster and as a fundraiser for the Army Emergency Relief Fund.
thing. I could go on and get into this deeper and deeper, but it’s always in flux. It’s always changing. Of course, the thing you miss most, when you’ve been with somebody as long as Hermi and I were together, were the shared experiences that are just a part of you. If something happens in real time today, it reminds you both of something that happened years ago. It just takes a look and you’ve communicated. That’s missing, of course. But Helen and I had such similar backgrounds, bringing up, and so forth. Of course, she’s a New Yorker but her mother came from Atlanta. One interesting thing . . . my great grandfather who came to Atlanta in 1847, they lived down on Whitehall [Street], I think, Marietta [Street]. He bought a lot on Peachtree which is where the south tower of Peachtree Center is now. He paid $150 for it. It was a hundred feet on Peachtree [Street] and went all the way back 400 feet to Ivy Street. The story in the family was that his wife and two sons set out to look at the lot. They got about where the Equitable Building is now and she said she wasn’t going to live that far out. He turned around and went back. They did live there. It wasn’t a Peachtree mansion. Helen and I discovered that her family bought this property from my grandfather around 1912 or 1913. It was the sight of the Norris Building. Her family was in the Norris Candy business. Her name was Lowenstein and of course, that’s a very well-known old name in Atlanta. Her mother was a Lowenstein. All of this has given us common experience.

Elaine: An inter-weave of experiences.

Cecil: One of the jokes in the family is that when my son Doug was a little boy his best friend was Kenny Goldwasser. They lived around the corner. They went by the Mantlers one day. One of them had a spade and they rang the doorbell. At this point Helen was married to Bud [Marshall] Mantler. Bud came to the door and he said, “Yes, boys, what do you want?” They said, “We want to kill Sophie.” He said, “Sorry, but she’s eating lunch. If you come back later maybe it can be arranged.” That’s been a family story that’s still told.

Elaine: Your career has made a big change in the last ten years. How would you describe it?

Cecil: You mean what I’ve done? I don’t understand . . .

Elaine: . . . you have retired.

Cecil: I guess to a certain extent I’m a workaholic. I miss the rhythm of going to the office and trying to accomplish something. It’s discouraging to me that Saturday and Sunday are not something to look forward to. They’re just part of the week. I do keep busy, but there’s not
that order in my life and I do miss it.

**Elaine:** What prompted you to retire?

**Cecil:** Some years back we decided that if we were going to keep good young people in there we had to release the control, so we did that. I think probably all of us original partners which included Bernard ‘Rocky’ Rothschild . . .

<phone rings, interview pauses, then resumes>

**Cecil:** He and I started together back in 1948 upstairs in his in-laws, the Haas’, house on Waverly Way. I would guess, I’m speaking now only for myself, that all of us regret somewhat having moved out as quickly as we did. The wreck I was in accelerated my wanting to withdraw. We merged the firm. It started before I was in the wreck and was finished after. I was involved in it. I had gotten back to where I could take part in it. We merged with a large engineering firm. It’s now Ross FABRAP standing for Finch, Alexander, Barnes, Rothschild and Pascal, and about three hundred people. I’m glad I don’t have to meet that payroll, but they’ve been very successful. They offered me a job, a position, whatever, for marketing with them. But as an architect I didn’t want to be a Willy Loman\(^\text{60}\) type. If I brought the work in, I wanted to be involved with it. I think clients expect that if an architect approaches them that he is somebody who’s going to keep tabs on the job anyway in the office. That wouldn’t have been my role, so I didn’t accept it. I had planned to go into partnership with Ted Levy, who I’d known a long time. We are distantly related somehow. Ted developed Park Place and the Plaza Towers. We were all set. I had obligations. I couldn’t do it for a certain length of time after I quit. Within a week of when we were going to set this thing up, Ted had a devastating stroke. That was a real setback for me. That was going to give me what I wanted in terms of some order, some rhythm. I have been working some now on projects that both of us are interested in with Joe Amisano\(^\text{61}\) who is a very fine architect who is with Henry Toombs.\(^\text{62}\) My first job when I came back to Atlanta was with

---

\(^{60}\) William “Willy” Loman is a fictional character and the protagonist of Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman*, which debuted in 1949. Loman is a 63-year-old travelling salesman whose career is on the decline after 34 years of experience with the same company. Loman is a symbolic representation of millions of employees who outlived their corporate usefulness.

\(^{61}\) Joseph Amisano (1917-2008) was an American architect born in New York. After working in New York, Europe, Central and South America, he joined the Atlanta firm that became Toombs, Amisano and Wells in 1954. The firm created Atlanta landmarks such as the original Lenox Square Mall, Fernbank Science Center, Woodruff Memorial Arts Center, Peachtree Center MARTA Station, Peachtree Summit and several buildings at the University of Georgia in Athens.

\(^{62}\) Henry Johnston Toombs (1913-1916) was an architect and sculptor born in Cuthbert, Georgia. In 1949 he established Toombs & Company, which later became Toombs, Amisano, and Wells Architects in Atlanta. He was the
Henry. So, why did we quit so early? I think part of it was not realizing the effect of quitting. I think part of it was the logic of turning the operation over to younger men that would give it new energy and new life. If I had to do it over again, I would have stayed in it longer, as a principal.

Elaine: It’s almost as if you created an institution that you took care of at the expense of yourself.

Cecil: Yes, that’s right. That’s a good thought.

Elaine: Cecil, there’s been a lot of shifts in the Atlanta community scene in the last ten years.

Cecil: Let me finish up this thing a little bit about my career. I am still holding myself out as a consultant. It used to be if you couldn’t do anything else, you taught. Now you become a consultant. I had an experience that I enjoyed of designing a house just recently that’s been moved into. I hadn’t designed a house in 30 years, but I’ll take all of those that I can get.

Elaine: Where is it?

Cecil: It’s out in Lost Mountain [Georgia]. That’s on the road between Marietta and Dallas, Georgia. It’s in the middle of the battlefields around Kennesaw Mountain\(^\text{63}\) for a very fine client, Jackie and Bob Silliman. Jackie really ran it. She knows what she wants. She makes up her mind and then she sticks with it. That’s great from an architect’s viewpoint. I’m doing that sort of thing. I was also consultant to the Standard Club\(^\text{64}\) when they were building their new building. That was what they call a design build project. I represented the club in dealing with the other architect and the builder. I’ve done things like that. The flow, though, isn’t there. That’s what’s nice to have a place to go. I do have an office by the way. I still have architect for a wide variety of buildings including residences for President Franklin D. Roosevelt at Hyde Park, New York and Warm Springs, Georgia (the Little White House), and numerous Atlanta landmarks including the original Lenox Square Mall, Woodruff Memorial Arts Center, Peachtree Center MARTA station, Fernbank Science Center, and the C & S Bank Building.

\(^{63}\) Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park is a 2,965 acre National Battlefield that preserves an American Civil War battleground. The Battle of Kennesaw Mountain was fought between General William Tecumseh Sherman of the Union army and Joseph E. Johnston of the Confederate army, took place between June 18, 1864, and July 2, 1864. Sherman’s army consisted of 100,000 men and 254 cannons, while Johnston’s army had only 50,000 men and 187 cannons. More than 5300 soldiers died in the battle, which resulted in a Confederate victory. The name ‘Kennesaw’ derives from the Cherokee Indian ‘Gah-nee-sah’ meaning cemetery or burial ground.

\(^{64}\) 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.
Elaine: Career-wise, you’re open to more design excitement for yourself?
Cecil: Yes. What I said to RFI when they offered me this job, “No, I haven’t really done what I studied to do, what I wanted to do for some years, and that’s to be a designer. What you’re offering me is fine and I certainly appreciate it, but it’s more of what I’ve been doing in the past and even more directed towards selling rather than being an architect.” If I had known that there wasn’t going to be a lot of work coming in, I might have hung around a little bit longer even in that job, but I don’t really regret that too much.

Elaine: I started to ask you about shifts you’ve experienced in the Atlanta community.
Cecil: They’re tremendous. I mean it’s obvious they’re tremendous. I grew up in a small southern town and I bought all the ideas of segregation. My father was a complete gentleman. He would never have used the term ‘nigger.’65 He would never have insulted someone to their face knowingly, but he was in the mold of that time that the Black was inferior. If he stayed in his place you could be good friends, but there were definite limits. I think one thing that hadn’t been given a lot of credit by the Blacks, the younger ones . . . one reason Atlanta went through its changes as well as it did was because so many of the leaders in Atlanta during those Civil Rights days had been raised by black women. And in some cases loved them, and were closer to them than they were to their own mothers. Contrasting that with New York and Chicago where there was no interplay, and certainly no love, I mean there was real love. I think that that had a tremendous impact on the Atlanta business community. The business community wanted the federal government to do what they did so they could excuse themselves to their peers. But underneath all that, in my opinion, they knew that what they were doing was just and right, and needed to be done, and had to be done, business or no business. I’m sure the business had an effect, the idea of the boycott and the idea of a city that was in turmoil like Birmingham [Alabama]. It was bad for business, but I also give them some ‘conscience credit,’ if that’s the word.

Elaine: Some moral integrity?
Cecil: Yes, now the changes. I was talking to Luther Alverson,66 the judge who I admire

65 In the present-day English language, the word is an ethnic slur, usually directed at black people. It originated as a variation of the Spanish and Portuguese noun negro, meaning the color black. By the mid-twentieth century, particularly in the United States, its usage became unambiguously a racist insult and is extremely offensive.
66 Luther Alverson (1907-2002) served in the Georgia House of Representatives from 1949-1953, as a Judge in the
very much and who actually, with Bill Rothschild, married Helen and me. We were talking about the changes, civil rights, and so on. He laughed and he said, “We wanted to share. We didn’t want to give it all up.” It hadn’t gone that way. Andy Young said once, “I never dreamt,” he said where I was present. “I never dreamt when I was a kid in New Orleans that one day I could be mayor of a large southern city like Atlanta.” I said, “Andy, do you know what? There are a lot of white kids in Atlanta who can’t dream that either.” He sort of grinned. I hope it becomes a balance. I think you’ve seen in this recent election that there are Blacks who are voting for the person rather than for the race. Ultimately, that would be a real fine, a real democracy.

<End Tape 1, Side 1>

<Begin Tape 1, Side 2>

Cecil: But the growth of the city . . . I’ve often stood downtown looked around, and thought about the numbers of changes in buildings. My father who died in 1953, if he were standing there with me he wouldn’t know where he was almost. The traffic here has gotten horrendous. The city has kept up in a major way with its problems of transportation, I think, with MARTA [Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority] which I played a hand in creating. I take some pride in that. The highway systems, the tremendous airport . . . I think we’re way ahead of most of this. If you’ve been to Houston [Texas], you know what a traffic mess that is. One of the great American developers, [Gerald D.] Hines who was developing here, pointed out that in his experience. Atlanta had more of the structure in place than any city in the world. He may have been exaggerating, but that’s what he said.

Elaine: Structure meaning . . .

Cecil: . . . the infrastructure. In his case, he was talking about transportation. We can have a water problem down the line, but the tremendous expansion of the suburbs, the Perimeter road [Interstate 285], all of that. The family owns some property at the corner of Wieuca [Road] and Peachtree [Road]. Frank Neely, who is married to a cousin of mine, who is chairman of

---

67 Andrew Jackson Young (b. 1932) is an American politician, diplomat, activist and pastor from Georgia. He has served as a Congressman from Georgia's 5th congressional district, the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, and Mayor of Atlanta. He served as President of the National Council of Churches USA, was a member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) during the 1960’s Civil Rights Movement, and was a supporter and friend of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Rich’s says, “What are you going to do with this property out here?” I said, “I don’t know. What do you think?” He said, “It ought to be a shopping center.” I said, “I thought Rich’s said they’d never move out of downtown.” This was around 1950, I guess. He said, “Well, that’s what we say now.” I drew up a scheme and showed it to him. Dick Rich looked at it. Dick said, “That’s ridiculous. We’ll never move out there. We’ll wait until it builds up out as far as Oglethorpe [University–Atlanta, Georgia]. Then we’ll go out there if we do anything.”

From the city downtown where the life was, where the movies were, where there were almost no Blacks on the street in downtown, it certainly has changed. At night, it’s not very lively although, Underground [Atlanta] is changing that. There’s a feeling of a white person in downtown Atlanta of almost being, at least on the weekends, of almost being an alien. I was in the car and somebody asked me, “This really must be a . . .” He knew I was from Atlanta. “A [unintelligible] you being in this all black city.” I said, “Oh, no. I’m used to it because Atlanta on the weekends and in the evening is a black city. I don’t feel threatened by it, but it is there. You asked me what had changed and that’s certainly it. Of course, what set it up were the Whites running. I gave a talk to the Rotary [Club] downtown some years ago and stated just that. I said, “If you want to keep your city in a balanced population, you need to stay. You need to stay with your businesses and you need to live here.” Incidentally, where we are right now is not in the

---

68 Rich’s was a department store retail chain, headquartered in Atlanta that operated in the southern United States from 1867 until 2005. The retailer began in Atlanta as M. Rich & Co. dry goods store and was run by Mauritius Reich (anglicized to ‘Morris Rich’), a Hungarian Jewish immigrant. It was renamed M. Rich & Bro. in 1877, when his brother Emanuel was admitted into the partnership, and was again renamed M. Rich & Bros. in 1884 when the third brother Daniel joined the partnership. In 1929, the company was reorganized and the retail portion of the business became simply, Rich’s. Many of the former Rich’s stores today form the core of Macy’s Central, an Atlanta-based division of Macy’s, Inc., which formerly operated as Federated Department Stores, Inc.

69 Richard H. ‘Dick’ Rich (1902-1975) was the grandson of Morris Rich, founder of M. Rich and Co. in Atlanta which eventually grew into Rich’s Department Store. Affectionately known as Dick Rich, he took over as president of Rich’s in 1949 and expanded the business to become the largest department store chain in the south. He was a philanthropist and civic and cultural leader active with many organizations including the Jewish Welfare Fund, the Jewish Community Center, and Camp Barney Medintz, the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, and the Atlanta Arts Alliance.

70 Underground Atlanta is a shopping and entertainment district in the Five Points district of Atlanta, Georgia. During the 1920’s, construction of concrete viaducts intended to relieve traffic congestion in downtown Atlanta elevated the street system one level. Merchants moved their operations to the second floor of their buildings, leaving the old fronts for storage and service. As Atlanta continued to grow above the viaducts, the original street level was raised by one-and-a-half stories, and a five-block area was completely covered up. The lower facades of historic buildings constructed during the city's post-Civil War Reconstruction Era boom remained relatively untouched until the area was rediscovered and opened as a tourist attraction in 1969.

71 Rotary is an international service organization whose stated purpose is to bring together business and professional leaders in order to provide humanitarian services, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and help build goodwill and peace in the world. It is a secular organization with about 1.2 million members worldwide.
City [of Atlanta]. Somebody who owned this house gerrymandered the line around it so they could put their kids in DeKalb [County] schools. I didn’t realize that until after I had bought it. It wouldn’t have made any difference, but I don’t like not being in the city. The thing that changed that’s sort of distressing to me is the trust between people. The feeling of the handshake being the same thing as a notarized, witnessed contract, which I grew up with here in Atlanta. It just isn’t there. You can see it in the architectural documents. Phil Shutze\textsuperscript{72} was one of the greater Atlanta architects. I saw his specifications. He wrote, “There will be some fancy brick work here and there.” Today if you said that, you would have nothing. You might have one fancy brick and that’s it.

The relationship, of course, between the Blacks who have made it and the Whites who have made it is entirely different. The acceptance of the gay population, not totally accepted by a long shot, but when I grew up here people would whisper about, “I think maybe he’s a homosexual.” I don’t think we used the word ‘gay’ then. ‘Fairy,’ that was the word. Now it’s open, it’s there. I guess I sound stuffy, but some of the things . . . I was thinking about this just this morning . . . that we took for granted when I was a young man here all being in a paternalistic, segregated society, but the feelings about family, the feelings about being a gentleman and a lady. The feelings about not taking, and I’m not saying across the board, undue advantage of other people. The concern for the poor, certainly again limited, but it was there even in the [Great] Depression.\textsuperscript{73} Without that, the people who were servants in the white houses would have starved because there were no back up programs, really, in the Depression. A sense of civility is missing. The younger people that come in here, since they don’t have that past to contrast it with, most of them I know think this is a magnificent civilization. It’s a great place to be. Nothing like it in the world. They’re probably right. I think also about their attitude, about what I consider daunting prices on things. They’ve never known when you could buy a candy bar for a nickel, and all this business about inflation running at five percent, six percent. You go and you buy something. You think back a few years and you think, “Five percent. Bologna.”

\textsuperscript{72} Philip Trammell Shutze (1890-1982) was an American architect born in Columbus, Georgia. He became a partner in 1927 of the firm Hentz, Adler & Shutze. He designed many well-known buildings in the Atlanta area including the Temple, the Swan House, the East Lake Golf Club Clubhouse, and Henry W. Grady High School’s original 1924 building and 1950 renovations.

\textsuperscript{73} The Great Depression was a severe worldwide economic depression in the decade preceding World War II. The time of the Great Depression varied across nations, but in most countries it started in about 1929 and lasted until the late 1930’s or early 1940’s. It was the longest, most widespread, and deepest depression of the twentieth century.
Elaine: Yes, it really comes home at the grocery store.

Cecil: Yes, or automobiles. My father bought me a Buick convertible my senior year at Yale. It was a special which was a bottom of the line, but a fine car. I drove it for 150,000 miles. I paid $1,000 for it and thought I was really laying it out. When I got my acceptance to Yale I got this notice that if I didn’t have $1,000 to cover room, board, and tuition for the year, I better not come. Now, it’s up to $22,000, $25,000. All of this I find very unsettling, very disturbing, as I get to a point in my life where I’m no longer productive. I remember my father talking about when you could do all sorts of things for ten cents that then cost a dollar. I suppose that’s a curse of getting older. Your money gets worth less.

Elaine: You remember when it was worth more.

Cecil: Yes.

Elaine: How have you seen shifts in the Jewish community?

Cecil: One of the major shifts, and I was off base in one session I had which was actually on video. I think I was romanticizing the relationship in the Jewish community when I grew up. There was a strong differentiation between the older Jewish families and the newer ones that had come in here.

Elaine: You mean, German versus Russian Jews, Sephardic?

Cecil: Then, of course, there were the Sephardic Jews who looked down on the Germans. The Germans looked down on the Russians, and the Russians looked down on the Lithuanians, I guess. I don’t know, but there was a real pecking order. My Uncle Harry, who was one of Leo Frank’s lawyers and really got involved in Jewish affairs, I think as a result of that, studied Hebrew, had Friday night services, and all that. He married a beautiful Russian who was over here. It’s always amazed me. I tried to get her to do what we had done. She came over here to study dentistry and he was a lawyer. He had a legal paper that was in Russian and he advertised that somebody translate it. Marian answered it. They eventually were married. He devoted a great deal of his time to getting her sister out of Russia, her brother and her father. It went beyond that. He worked at bringing Russian immigrants in back then in the 1920’s. He was very opposed to Israel. He felt a dual citizenship would be directed toward the Jew, that he would be ostracized as an American citizen. From having been ‘Man of the Year’ in the Jewish community,
when he died, there was absolutely no response from B’nai B’rith\textsuperscript{74} which he’d been president of, and so forth. Nobody came to the funeral which I really was angry about. I thought he had earned that right to have them honor him at his death, but it wasn’t done. I’ve sort of gotten afield from your question so you better give it back to me.

\textbf{Elaine:} It was how the Jewish community has changed in the last ten years.

\textbf{Cecil:} Now, I think these schisms . . . a lot of the older Jewish families, their children have married out of the faith. Incidentally, my uncle wrote a book about the family in Charleston and in Georgia. If somebody had married out of the faith he just left them out of the book. It was an interesting situation there that he felt that strongly about it. I think those schisms have broken down. Of course, you’ve got a new wave of immigration coming in. It remains to be seen how that will be handled. The “old” Jewish families here, they’ve certainly lost the standing they had when I was a kid in terms of the influence not only in the Jewish community, but the community at large. They were part of the then Atlanta power structure. Now it doesn’t . . . I mean an older member doesn’t matter. They’re accepted on what they are and what they produce, which is a much healthier thing and which our ancestors hadn’t had done. From that viewpoint, I think it is better. I think there’s still a strong division, unfortunately, among the various Jewish congregations, although there’s some movement in that direction. I remember when [Jacob] Rothschild was rabbi of the Temple. I was head of community affairs or something like that, and was bringing people in to speak. I said, “Well, Jack, one thing is this schism, between the orthodox and the conservatives and the reformed, is real. We’re talking about race relations, Black and White, and here in our own religion we’ve got these schisms. Why don’t we have a joint meeting on that?” “Oh, no, that would never work.” I don’t know how much that has changed, but it is an interesting comment on how a group who considers themselves the true believers will turn their backs more violently on believers that they don’t consider are genuine, than they would on the Catholics or the Protestants, or whatever. That certainly has changed in general. Certainly those schisms are still there and I think are growing actually, in some respects. In others, I don’t think as much. But yes, that’s where I am on that subject.

\textsuperscript{74} B’nai B’rith International (Hebrew: ‘Children of the Covenant’) is the oldest Jewish service organization in the world. B’nai B’rith states that it is committed to the security and continuity of the Jewish people and the State of Israel and combating antisemitism and bigotry. Its mission is to unite persons of the Jewish faith and to enhance Jewish identity through strengthening Jewish family life, to provide broad-based services for the benefit of senior citizens, and to facilitate advocacy and action on behalf of Jews throughout the world.
Elaine: How do you think antisemitism has changed? You talked earlier about “locker room antisemitism.” How would you evaluate where we are now in the community?

Cecil: I think that “locker room” business is still there. I think there’s “Black Semitism” now that didn’t exist before. I think that the Jew is accepted much more on his own talents and ability in the general community. I think Sam Massell broke the mold when he became mayor, but I don’t think that it’s gone by a long shot. I feel that what’s going on in Israel has influenced the feeling that the Jew has lost some of the sympathy and support that was due him as a result of what happened in Germany. Rightfully or wrongfully, I think that’s the feel. Back at the time of the Six-Day War there was a man named Jack McDonough75 who had been the CEO [Chief Executive Officer] of Georgia Power, one of our clients. When he retired I asked him if he would come with us, help us with management, and also help us get work. He looked at me. He was sort of a delightful guy. Two of his best friends were Jewish, Boolie [sp] Mayer and Frank [Weil] Ferst. They played football together at Georgia Tech. I’d never been in his home. I had never been invited for dinner. I had the feeling that he was one of these “locker room” types that I was talking about. The morning that it became obvious that the Israelis had really riled up the Mideast in the 1967 war, he was sitting there at his desk in our office. He’s got the paper. I walked in and he says, “Man, boy did we lick their asses.” “We.” That was a high point, I think, across the board, an American feeling about the Jews. There was all this business about the Jews being afraid to fight and being in the Supply Corps and so forth. I never ran into any antisemitism that I know of when I was in the service. I did run into some antisemitic statements. I went through a flight school that American Airlines set up for marines and the navy. A very fine pilot that was an instructor, a regular American Airlines pilot, made some antisemitic remarks which I called him on. Other than that, I just don’t remember running into it. It may have been that the marines were a special instance.

Elaine: You brought up an interesting point. The image of the Jew in today’s press is very different than it was. How do you respond to that?

75 John “Jack” Joseph McDonough (1901-1983) was a businessman, civic leader, and philanthropist born in Savannah, Georgia. He studied mechanical engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology and became quarterback of the school’s football team where he was called “Gooch” by his teammates. In 1957 he became the sixth president of Georgia Power Company, based in Atlanta, Georgia. During his administration, Georgia Power became the nation's tenth largest publicly owned utility company. He was vice chairman of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia from 1947 to 1957 and served on boards including the Atlanta Music Festival, Atlanta Arts Alliance and Atlanta Symphony Guild. He also was active with the Georgia Tech Foundation, the YMCA, Metropolitan Atlanta Community Services, the Georgia Society for Crippled Children and Adults, the Red Cross, and Easter Seals.
Cecil: With tremendous regret. I haven’t read it yet, but this week’s *Time* is talking about the Palestinians and their “Bloody Search for a Nationhood.” They said [unintelligible] and what’s going on in the Mideast and the argument that had the Arabs cared that much about them, they had many years they could have done something about it. If I lived in Israel, I don’t know where I would be on it. But living where I do, I just regret the image and the reality of the Jew as the peacemaker, the bringer of the highest level of culture, the regard for human life, and so forth, seeing that damage is very disturbing to me. I regret it and I hope some way, somehow it will come full cycle. For so many years, if you were not a hawk here in America on what was going on in Israel, you were a self-hater. You were a latent anti-Semite. Anybody who said, “Maybe there’s another way,” was rejected. I think some of that’s changed. I think the voices are speaking out. They’re saying some of it pragmatically. If you keep on this course, you’re going to alienate your source of support in the United States . . . maybe not in the Jewish community, but in the Congress. So, it has now become . . .

<End of Tape 1, Side 2>

<Begin Tape 2, Side 1>

<conversation in progress>

Cecil: . . . you’re considered some sort of a traitor or misguided ‘dove.’ As I said when Israel was first formed and I was right out of service, I wanted to go over there. I wanted to go fight. I didn’t, partially because I was just married. Hermi took a very negative view of having me away for four years and then going off again to fight in Israel. I just think it’s a fact of age, but there needs to be a resolution that takes care of humanity in this whole business in the Mideast, in my book. There would be some people that’ll hear this tape that will want to come out and hang me, I guess, over that.

Elaine: I think you’re voicing a widespread view, Cecil. You’re mentioning Hermi reminds me you were very active in the Civil Rights Movement with Hermi. Any thoughts about that? Where that is now?

Cecil: I quoted my conversation with Luther Alverson. I don’t know why I was naive

---

76 *Time* is an American weekly news magazine published in New York City founded in 1923. The article mentioned here is the cover story in the July 23, 1990 issue. The cover can be found here: http://content.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,19900723,00.html

77 Generally a “hawk” is a person who favors military action in order to carry out foreign policy and a “dove” is a person who advocates peace, conciliation or negotiation in preference to confrontation or armed conflict.
and expecting something different. I remember Helen Bullard.\textsuperscript{78} Do you know her?

\textbf{Elaine:} Sure.

\textbf{Cecil:} Helen Bullard, just for the tape, was one of the most brilliant strategists in politics that ever lived. She and I worked together very closely during Ivan Allen’s\textsuperscript{79} campaign. I took off three months and worked on it with her. We were having lunch together one day. She spoke very softly. You had to really listen. She said, “The people who are saying, ‘What do the negroes want?’” In those days they were ‘negroes.’ Now they’re ‘African Americans.’ You’ve got to keep moving. “What do they want?” she says. “It’s obvious. They want it all. They want to be full citizens with full access to the government of the country and the economic strength of the country. Anybody that thinks they want something short of that just doesn’t know human nature.” That, of course, is what happened. I said to some of my black friends when things like [Marion] Barry\textsuperscript{80} came up and so on, “You guys are acting too much like white folks. I expected better of you.” They laughed. But yes, it’s been a disappointment. I saw Martin Luther King’s\textsuperscript{81} dream of a united country where color really didn’t matter. In some ways it’s happening. The people who have ascended the scale are pretty close to being a part of the total mainstream of this country. The only thing that’s going to keep us from this separatism that I

\textsuperscript{78} Helen Bullard (1908-1979) was an American advertising executive and political adviser who founded the first female-owned public relations firm in Atlanta, Georgia. She served as an adviser to Atlanta mayors William B. Hartsfield, Ivan Allen, and Sam Massell. She was involved in a variety of civic projects and worked with the Atlanta Housing Authority to help improve race relations and was a member of the board of the Atlanta Urban League.

\textsuperscript{79} Ivan Allen, Jr. (1911-2003), was an American businessman who served two terms as the 52\textsuperscript{nd} Mayor of Atlanta during the turbulent civil rights era of the 1960’s.

\textsuperscript{80} Marion Barry (1936-2014) was an African-American politician who was the first prominent civil rights activist to become chief executive of a major American city. He served as mayor of Washington D.C. from 1979 to 1991 and from 1995 to 1999. He also served three tenures on the Council of the District of Columbia. In 1990 he was videotaped smoking crack cocaine and was arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) officials on drug charges and served six months in a federal prison. After his release, he was elected to the Council of the District of Columbia and then was elected again as mayor in 1994.

\textsuperscript{81} Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) is best known for his role as a leader in the Civil Rights Movement and the advancement of civil rights using nonviolent civil disobedience based on his Christian beliefs. A Baptist minister, King became a civil rights activist early in his career. He led the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott and helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957, serving as its first president. With the SCLC, King led an unsuccessful struggle against segregation in Albany, Georgia, in 1962, and organized nonviolent protests in Birmingham, Alabama, that attracted national attention following television news coverage of the brutal police response. King also helped to organize the 1963 March on Washington, where he delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. On October 14, 1964, King received the Nobel Peace Prize for combating racial inequality through nonviolence. In 1965, he and the SCLC helped to organize the Selma to Montgomery marches and the following year, he took the movement north to Chicago to work on segregated housing. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. His death was followed by riots in many United States’ cities. King was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day was established as a holiday in numerous cities and states beginning in 1971, and as a United States federal holiday in 1986.
worry about is the acceptance of the Black, not only in politics which he’s forced his way into by voter registration . . . force may not be the right word. I mean, I don’t mean that negatively. If in the next 25 years the Black can really become part of the economic structure, then the country is going to stay together, at least as far as Black and White are concerned. I say the same thing about the Hispanics. They need to become a part. I don’t feel Atlanta, at this point, has waked up to the fact that we are an international city. Not that we’ve got Arabs, not that we’ve got Japanese and Germans and Dutch and English investments in Georgia, but that we’ve got an international population. Garden Hills [Elementary School], the kids that went there, over a third of that student body were foreign, mainly Asiatics and Hispanics. They’re going to become a strong factor in Atlanta’s political life in the next 10 or 15 years. Somebody better wake up to that. 

Elaine: In terms of your Jewish identity, you’ve been active in the Jewish community in different aspects of it in the past. How do you predict you’ll be involved now and in the future? 

Cecil: Well, I’m 72. When you get to be 72, you take it a day at a time. I don’t know. I really can’t answer that question. I expect to always [unintelligible]. I expect always to have a chip on my shoulder about anyone who’s making or doing any Jewish things. I don’t feel particularly more drawn to the religion. I accept Judaism as a religion from my viewpoint and my exposure to it as being the most rational of the religions I know anything about. Therefore, it’s easier for me to accept. As my life expectancy grows shorter, I don’t see it as a comfort particularly. I sometimes regret that I don’t find more of that. I used to feel the Catholics were blessed in that they had such strong feelings, but I don’t believe the Catholics have that as much as the kids I grew up with. I was at Marist [School–Atlanta, Georgia] for two years surrounded by Catholics and taught by Catholic priests. They were absolutely certain that they were going to go to heaven. There was no question about it. There was a kid in my neighborhood and we were finding out ‘the facts of life.’ I told this Catholic kid how he came about. I won’t quote it exactly because this is for the ages, why he was there. He said, “I don’t believe it.” He says, “My parents are good Catholics. They wouldn’t do a thing like that.” There was a strong feeling of the Catholics I knew that if they had faith, the hereafter was assured. If they were good and confessed their sins, they would end up in heaven. I think the Jewish faith leaves that question open. I mean, one argument used to be that God brought me here. God has made a good life for me. I’m in his hands and whatever happens, I have faith that will, too, be good. But even that, when you think about the Holocaust, you think about antisemitism in Russia, and coming out in the
Eastern European nations . . . it’s always been latent in France, you’ve got to question that one. Has God been all that caring for people during their lifetime? But, whatever is, is. Ever since I was in that wreck, I lost my fear of dying.

Elaine: I wondered how the wreck impacted. That kind of a tragedy impacts your original saying that life is good and God will take care of us?

Cecil: It had a tremendous impact. I suppose some people going through that experience would go to faith and religion as a support. It didn’t do that for me at all. I was not able to go to Hermi’s funeral because I was in the hospital. In fact, I was operated on during the funeral. I did ask Rabbi [Alvin] Sugarman\(^2\) to come by and read some of the service to me because I needed a closure. I needed to accept the fact of Hermi’s death. It did do something for me, but when I think about it, the thing that did most for me in getting through that time was one of Winston Churchill’s\(^3\) statements. He said, “Never give in. Never, never, never, never give in.” That meant more to me in sustaining me than anything else that I came in contact with. He was hit by an automobile in 1937\(^4\) on Fifth Avenue [New York, New York]. He stepped off and looked in the wrong direction because he was used to traffic on the left. A cab going 35 miles an hour hit him, which was one hell of a blow. He was correspondent to the *London Times*. He wrote back and said, “Live dangerously, take things as they come, dread naught, all will be well.” I accepted everything except that ‘all will be well.’ I look for support in whatever people have felt and said. There’s some of that in Judaism that means a great deal to me, but I don’t know whether it’s prayer or what [unintelligible].

Elaine: It’s a Psalm.

---

\(^2\) Rabbi Alvin M. Sugarman is the Rabbi Emeritus of the Temple in Atlanta and currently serves with life tenure. He began his rabbinate at the Temple in 1971 and in 1974 was named senior rabbi. A native of Atlanta, Rabbi Sugarman received his BBA from Emory University and was ordained by Hebrew Union College. In 1988 he received his PhD in Theological Studies from Emory University.

\(^3\) Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill (1874 – 1965) was a British politician, historian, writer, and army officer who served as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1940 to 1945 and again from 1951 to 1955. As Prime Minister, Churchill led Britain to victory over Nazi Germany during World War II. His speeches were a great inspiration. One speech included the words: “... we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.” He won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1953 for his lifetime body of work.

\(^4\) Edward F. Cantasano (1905 – 1989) was an unemployed mechanic from Yonkers who, on December 13, 1931, accidentally hit Winston Churchill, while driving a car. Churchill was attempting to cross a busy New York City street and forgot that, in the United States, traffic keeps to the right whereas in his native United Kingdom it keeps to the left. Churchill suffered a serious scalp wound as well as two cracked ribs and was admitted to a hospital, where he later told police that the accident was entirely his fault. Nevertheless, Cantasano, who felt he was to blame, repeatedly called the hospital to see how Churchill was doing. Cantasano’s name was misreported by journalists at the time as Mario Contasino.
Cecil: Yes, but on the other hand, I arranged through Michael Lomax\textsuperscript{85} to have the bridge over the Chattahoochee [River], the old bridge, named for Hermi. We had a ceremony out there. The wife of the president of Spelman [College—Atlanta, Georgia] at that time, Isabel Stewart, I asked her to read \textit{The Song of the Chattahoochee}.\textsuperscript{86} She’d never heard of it. She read in a way that she wasn’t just talking about a river. She was talking about a human life. That really got to me more than what the rabbi had to say. You know, “Out of the hills of Habersham . . .”

Elaine: I have heard of that. It’s a beautiful metaphor for a life.

Cecil: I’m a sentimentalist. Most of my life I have expected the best from people and have often been disappointed. I keep coming back at it. I’ve found that there are a lot of good people out there. I think that what we’ve been through the last ten years, this has been sort of devastating to people who wanted to reach beyond making a buck and feeling like they’re suckers. Every now and then I feel like I’ve been a sucker, but if I had to do it over again in a different time, different place, I would work hard at making a bundle and then gotten into all the civic stuff. But I was an idealist about architecture. I thought it could save the world. I was an idealist, mainly through Hermi, about race relations. Race relations came when they came. If you didn’t do it then, there wasn’t going to be . . . where would they be 10 or 15 years down the road? I don’t regret having done it. I regret some of the ways it turned out, but I don’t regret it.

Elaine: I can understand the hopes that you, as part of the Civil Rights Movement, had for what could happen haven’t materialized, and that that would be terrifically disappointing.

Cecil: Two people, I think . . . one in particular that I worked for, I was one of his chairman. John Lewis\textsuperscript{87} to me exemplifies what I hoped was going to be the result of the Civil Rights Movement.

\textsuperscript{85} Dr. Michael Lucius Lomax (b. 1947) is, since 2004, the president and chief executive officer of the United Negro College Fund of the United States. Lomax taught literature at Morehouse College and Spelman College, Emory University, the Georgia Institute of Technology and the University of Georgia. For seven years he served as president of Dillard University in New Orleans. Lomax also served for 12 years as Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Fulton County, part of the greater Atlanta region. In 1989, he was an unsuccessful Democratic candidate for mayor of Atlanta.

\textsuperscript{86} \textit{The Song of the Chattahoochee} is a poem written by American poet Sidney Lanier. Written in 1877, he considered it one of his finest poems. Lanier was born in Macon, Georgia in 1842 and died in 1881 from an illness contracted during the Civil War.

\textsuperscript{87} John Robert Lewis (b. 1940) is an American politician and civil rights leader. He is the U.S. Representative for Georgia's 5th congressional district, serving since 1987. Lewis played many key roles in the Civil Rights Movement and its actions to end racial segregation in the United States. He was one of the leaders who organized the 1963 March on Washington, and in 1964 he coordinated efforts for Freedom Summer, a campaign to register black voters across the South. On March 7, 1965, a day that would become known as Bloody Sunday, Lewis and fellow activist Hosea Williams led marchers across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. They were met by Alabama State Troopers who charged the demonstrators, beating them with night sticks. Lewis's skull was fractured and he bears
Rights Movement. That you were going to have a man like Lewis, who was a representative of his people, but who didn’t stop at a chauvinistic, militant attitude towards the White, that the White was a devil. There’s a lot of that around. It’s going to grow. I think [Nelson] Mandela\textsuperscript{88} coming here, for all his heroism and all his good qualities, has probably touched a nerve in that respect. There’s going to be a real battle between the hawks and the doves. There are going to be the mainstream Blacks that want to move within the system, but the [Louis] Farrakhan\textsuperscript{89} type, and others not as able as he is, are going to be heard from. It’s going to be the same thing. You’re an ‘Uncle Tom’\textsuperscript{90} if you go along with ‘Whitey’ . . .

\textbf{Elaine:} . . . and work within the established system.

\textbf{Cecil:} Yes.

\textbf{Elaine:} I want to ask you a couple of your predictions of the future.

\textbf{Cecil:} Since I won’t be here, I’ll be glad to make them.

\textbf{Elaine:} How long do you think you’ll live?

\textbf{Cecil:} My father lived to be 75. My mother died at 55. My Uncle Harry lived to be 92. My mother’s sister lived to be 99 and five days, just died. So, who knows?

\textbf{Elaine:} You have a good shot at the future.

\textbf{Cecil:} I’ll tell you one thing. I sure don’t want to live beyond feeling productive.

Nobody does, I don’t think. I don’t want to be taken care of. That was one of the dismal things about being in the hospital was being totally unable to do for myself.

\textbf{Elaine:} I would think that dependency feeling would be awful.

\textbf{Cecil:} It was rough.

\textbf{Elaine:} What do you predict will happen to the Jewish family in terms of intermarriage and scars from the incident. Lewis has been awarded many honorary degrees and is the recipient of numerous awards including the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

\textsuperscript{88} Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (1918 - 2013) was a South African anti-apartheid revolutionary, politician and philanthropist who served as President of South Africa from 1994 to 1999. He was South Africa’s first black chief executive, and the first elected in a fully representative democratic election. Mandela served as President of the African National Congress party from 1991 to 1997. In 1962, he was arrested and convicted of conspiracy to overthrow the state, and sentenced to life imprisonment. Mandela served 27 years in prison. An international campaign lobbied for his release, which was granted in 1990 amid escalating civil strife.

\textsuperscript{89} Louis Farrakhan, Sr. (born Louis Eugene Wolcott, 1933) is the leader of the religious group Nation of Islam ( NOI). He has been criticized for remarks that have been perceived as antisemitic and anti-white. Farrakhan disputes this view of his ideology.

\textsuperscript{90} Uncle Tom is the title character of Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel, \textit{Uncle Tom's Cabin}.\textsuperscript{11} The term ‘Uncle Tom’ is also used as a derogatory epithet for an excessively subservient person, particularly when that person is aware of their status based on race.
feelings about intermarriage in terms of us maintaining our Jewish identity? How do you answer those questions?

Cecil: There are two tracks. One of it seems to be more and more solidity in the Jewish community . . .

Elaine: . . . following the separatism you were talking about.

Cecil: . . . and more and more the feeling of “You must marry within the faith or I’ll disown you.” I don’t know. I’m sure it goes that far in some cases. Then there’s the other track of the liberalized Jew, I guess, who finds love where it is. When they’re not near the girl they love, they love the girl that’s near. I don’t know who’s going to win out on that thing. I would regret very much the dissolution of the Jews. One of my daughters married a Jew. One of them didn’t. He was brought up as a Catholic, but really wasn’t a practicing Catholic. I regret that their children, I don’t think have any affiliation. They went to the Unitarian Church and they went to the High Holy Days at the Temple, but they don’t have that feeling of belonging. I think it’s too bad. I think there’s an awful lot to be proud of in the history of the Jew as a survivor, as a contributor to civilization. I’d hate to see it dissipated. But as predicting who’s going to win out, who knows? Twenty-five years from now, national alliance may not count for much. Ethnic and religious lines may be much more important. This is what’s happening in Russia right now.

Elaine: As you were talking, I was thinking about your son, Doug, or the woman that Doug might marry. If you were to be a mentor to them and tell them how to get into the power structure of Atlanta now, what would you advise them?

Cecil: I wouldn’t advise them to get into the power structure.

Elaine: What if they wanted to carry your values into the community?

Cecil: You mean as far as who they should marry?

Elaine: No, as far as your moral integrity, your social values, and want to continue your work with Civil Rights.

Cecil: I don’t really think I have to tell them. I think they grew up with Hermi and with me and it’s in them. I don’t know how you pass it on. How did I get it from Hermi? I had some of it. When I came back from the war, I looked around and I thought, “What the Constitution [of the United States] says is just a bunch of hypocrisy until the Blacks have equality with the Whites.” It was no particularly love for the people. There were individuals that I cared about. It was an anachronism that this country that said they were the world’s great democracy had this blemish. I
brought that to the table. Hermi brought much more personal feelings. She studied sociology. Her mother was a very open person, free of prejudice. Her father was not. Her father was like my father. Those kids, coming up in that and with us having Blacks in our home, rich and poor, it’s just in them. The other good thing they got is that none of them smoke.

**Elaine:** So they may live to your Uncle Harry’s age.

**Cecil:** Yes, but as to tell them what to do, I really don’t think you can tell your children what to do.

**Elaine:** I think you’re acknowledging that they reflect your values.

**Cecil:** Yes, but that’s from what we did and what we said.

**Elaine:** I’m also wondering how you would tell them how to do it. Given their values, how you see working within the system in Atlanta in a way that counts.

**Cecil:** I think what you’ve got to do is find something that you’re really convinced is right and something that is not too safe. Being involved in Civil Rights at the time I was wasn’t all that safe. That was part of the excitement about it. It was physical. There were certainly career dangers. I would say to myself, “Look, I was over there getting shot at for 18 months and survived that. If some punk wants to take a shot at me, well, I’ve been shot at.” The career jeopardy was something else because I was dragging my partners into it. They supported me most of the time. There’s one time they didn’t. Now, the guy that we couldn’t hire is mayor of Charlotte [North Carolina] and is now running for senator of North Carolina against Jesse Helms. Anyhow, I sort of lost my train of thought now.

**Elaine:** I’m aware of your time.

**Cecil:** I’ve got to be over to Piedmont Hospital in time to put on a bathing suit for 4:30, so I’ve still got a few minutes.

**Elaine:** Maybe my final question needs to be, what haven’t I asked you that I need to ask you? What part of you have I overlooked?

---

91 Harvey Bernard Gantt (b. 1943) is an American architect and Democratic politician active in North Carolina. The first African-American student to be admitted to Clemson University after attending Iowa State University, Gantt graduated with honors in architecture, earned a master's at MIT, and established a practice in Charlotte with a partner. Gantt entered local politics, where he was elected to the city council, serving from 1974 to 1983. He was elected to two terms as the first black Mayor of Charlotte from 1983 to 1987. In the 1990's, he ran twice for the United States Senate against Jesse Helms, losing both times.

92 Jesse Alexander Helms Jr. (1921 – 2008) was an American politician and a leader in the conservative movement. He was elected five times as a Republican to the United States Senate from North Carolina and was the longest-serving popularly elected Senator in the state’s history.
Cecil: I don’t know. I guess everyone has an image of themselves. Everyone has an image that the community has about them. Somewhere, different from either of those, is the true person. I don’t know whether I’ve ever found that guy. I’m not even sure I want to find him. I have a feeling that he’s not as strong, he’s not as nice, he’s not as either what I like to think I am, or what the community in general seems to feel. I think that probably everybody’s secret concern is, “Am I who I think I am?” I don’t think I am. I’ve enjoyed this. I haven’t been absolutely completely open, but I’ve tried to answer your questions. I think you’re a good interviewer.

<End of Tape 2, Side 1>

SECOND INTERVIEW ENDS