KREMER: Today is March 26, 1992. This is Ray Ann Kremer interviewing Jake Alhadeff, at his home on Breezy Lane. This is for the Atlanta Oral History Collection. It is under the sponsorship of the National Council of Jewish Women, the American Jewish Committee, and the Atlanta Jewish Federation. I’m going to start out by asking you how far back you can trace your family history and your family. Did you know your grandparents?

ALHADEFF: Yes, I did. We have a family tree which indicates that my grandmother was born in Turkey. My grandfather was also born in Turkey.

KREMER: Where in Turkey?

ALHADEFF: Istanbul.

KREMER: What were your grandparents’ names? And if you know your grandmother’s maiden name.

ALHADEFF: My grandmother’s maiden name was Julia Assa. A-S-S-A. My grandfather, of course, was Jacob Alhadeff. I was named after my grandfather. He also was born in Istanbul.

KREMER: Did you know of any great-grandparents?

ALHADEFF: No, I did not.

KREMER: You can’t go back that far. What did your grandfather do in Istanbul?

ALHADEFF: That, I don’t know. I believe he was a merchant in dry goods in Istanbul and in Cuba. He went to Cuba from there before he came to the United States.

KREMER: Do you know why he left?

ALHADEFF: Why he left Cuba?

KREMER: No, why he left Turkey?
ALHADEFF: No, I do not.

KREMER: Do you know why he went to Cuba? And was he married then?

ALHADEFF: He was married then. He was married in Cuba, at least that is my understanding.

KREMER: Do you know why they picked Cuba to go to?

ALHADEFF: No, I do not.

KREMER: But they knew each other in Turkey and they both went to Cuba and married there?

ALHADEFF: I believe they did. Yes.

KREMER: Because I think the population in Istanbul wasn’t real large as far as Jews, was it?

ALHADEFF: Yes, it was. You must remember that at the time Spain threw out all the Jews. Turkey reached out and welcomed them all. Welcomed as many as <unintelligible>. So, there was quite a number of Jews living in Turkey at the time.

KREMER: What would you guess, or have you any idea what the Jewish population in Istanbul was at that time?

ALHADEFF: I would not know.

KREMER: Were there many Jews leaving Turkey then to go to Cuba?

ALHADEFF: I would believe that most of them wanted to leave at that particular period, 1914 and thereabouts, because of the war [World War I]¹ because they did not want to do military service.

KREMER: So you think that’s why your grandparents left?

ALHADEFF: I think that’s why my grandparents left. Maybe I ought to retract this because my parents . . . my father left there in order to stay out of the service there. He was a young man. He went to Cuba. I think that is where he stayed with my grandmother. They had separated, I believe, at that time.

KREMER: Your grandmother was in Cuba and your grandfather was in Turkey?

ALHADEFF: I believe that’s where he was.

¹ World War I, also called First World War or Great War, was an international conflict that in 1914–18 embroiled most of the nations of Europe along with Russia, the United States, the Middle East, and other regions. The war pitted the Central Powers—mainly Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey—against the Allies—mainly France, Great Britain, Russia, Italy, Japan, and, from 1917, the United States. It ended with the defeat of the Central Powers.
KREMER: Then your father went to Cuba to avoid the draft?
ALHADEFF: Right.
KREMER: I see. Your mother went because your father went?
ALHADEFF: My mother was not even involved at that time. She was married here in the States. My father came over to this country and went to work. He came in 1914.
KREMER: Wait a minute. How long was he in Cuba?
ALHADEFF: He was in Cuba, I guess, several years. He came to this country in 1913 and married in 1914 in Atlanta. The way he met my mother was when he was working for my uncle, Victor Benator. B-E-N-A-T-O-R. My Uncle Victor showed him a picture of his sister. My father said, “If you would bring her over to this country, I will marry her.” So, He did. She came in 1914, and he married her.
KREMER: She came from Turkey?
ALHADEFF: She came from Rhodes.²
KREMER: She was from Rhodes. Right.
ALHADEFF: Yes, she came from Rhodes. They formed a union here. I was conceived shortly afterwards. I was born in 1915.
KREMER: That’s interesting because I have been led to understand that the Rhodes group and the group from Turkey had different cultures and different ways of doing things and that they weren’t necessarily real well integrated in the early years.
ALHADEFF: That’s true. There were differences.
KREMER: What were some of the differences?
ALHADEFF: Primarily, my understanding was in their attitude that one was more advanced than the other.
KREMER: Who was more advanced?
ALHADEFF: Each one thought they were. It’s like rivalry between siblings. You just think you know better than I do. There are many aspects of the culture. They were both Sephardim.³

² Rhodes is a Greek island in the Aegean Sea, off the southwest coast of Turkey. It is the largest island of the Dodecanese archipelago and serves as the capital of the Greek Islands
³ 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.
The Rhodeslis. The Rhodes from Rhodes. The Turkinos. The Rhodes from Turkey.

KREMER: How do you spell that? Those are Ladino ⁴ words, aren’t they?

ALHADEFF: I suppose you might say it is, yes.

KREMER: How do you spell Rhodeslis?

ALHADEFF: Rhodeslis are those that came from Rhodes. You would say R-H-O-D-E-S-L-I-S. Rhodeslis.

KREMER: What is the other word?

ALHADEFF: Turkinos. Those from Turkey. T-U-R-K-I-N-O-S.

KREMER: I just wasn’t sure.

ALHADEFF: Right. As a matter of fact, there is something here.

KREMER: You’ve got something there. What is this?

ALHADEFF: This is a <reading from a document> “At the turn of the 20⁰ Century, these descendants having found their lives under oppressive Sultans, Emperors, and assorted rulers to be a constant harassment and persecution, began to leave the lands which they and their ancestors had known for 400 years and to seek their fortunes in the land of the free. From cities of Salonika, Bodrum, Istanbul, Smyrna, the Isle of Rhodes came thousands of immigrants speaking Spanish as their native tongue to settle in the cities of America: New York, Rochester, Seattle, and Atlanta.”

KREMER: Did your parents come to Atlanta?

ALHADEFF: Yes.

KREMER: They didn’t go to Montgomery [Alabama] or anything? They came to . . .

ALHADEFF: Right. My parents came to Atlanta.

KREMER: Why Atlanta?

ALHADEFF: When they arrived in New York when they came by boat.

KREMER: They came from Cuba.

ALHADEFF: Yes, well, my father came from Cuba. I don’t know how he arrived in New York, but he came from New York to Atlanta. <reading a document> It says here in 1910, “Although few in numbers, the original settlers founded not one but two congregations in 1910.

⁴ Also known as ‘Judeo-Spanish,’ Ladino is a Romance language derived from Old Spanish originally spoken in the former territories of the Ottoman Empire (the Balkans, Turkey, the Middle East, and North Africa) as well as in France, Italy, the Netherlands, Morocco, and the United Kingdom. Today, Ladino is spoken mainly by Sephardic minorities in more than 30 countries.
The first Sephardic Jews to settle here were, namely, Victor Avzaradel and Ezra Touriel in 1906.”

KREMER: You’re talking about here in Atlanta?

ALHADEFF: Right.

KREMER: The two congregations were, the one was Turkish and one Rhodes.

ALHADEFF: Right. <Continues reading> “The two congregations, one was Ahavath Shalom [Lovers of Peace].”

KREMER: How do you spell that?


“consisting principally of the Sephardim from the Isle of Rhodes and the Or Hahayim O-R-H-A-H-A-Y-I-M [Light of Life] which consisted of immigrants from the mainland of Turkey. That culture and language were the same, and being practical, the two groups merged in 1914 into a single congregation entitled Oriental Hebrew Association Or Shalom.” That was later changed to Or VeShalom.\(^5\) They decided to form one congregation.

KREMER: Was your family involved in that?

ALHADEFF: My father was one of those that came in at that time, so he was involved. He was on the board of the synagogue Or VeShalom for many years. He also helped Rabbi [Joseph] Cohen\(^6\) later when Rabbi Cohen came to the city in 1934. He assisted him in conducting services at Or VeShalom.

KREMER: Was he a very religious man?

ALHADEFF: My father?

KREMER: Yes.

ALHADEFF: I think so, yes. He observed all the holidays. He wasn’t \textit{shomer Shabbat}\(^7\)

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\(^5\) Or VeShalom was established by refugees of the Ottoman Empire, namely from Turkey and the Isle of Rhodes. The Sephardic/Traditional congregation began in 1920 and was based at Central and Woodward Avenues until 1948 when it moved to a larger building on North Highland Road. The current building for Or VeShalom is on North Druid Hills Road.

\(^6\) Rabbi Joseph Cohen received his training for the rabbinate in Turkey and accepted his first pulpit in Havana, Cuba in 1920, where he was spiritual leader of the Congregation Union Hebraic de Cuba. In 1934, he moved to Atlanta, Georgia, and was installed as Rabbi of Congregation Or VeShalom three days after his arrival. In addition to his rabbinical duties, he served as the teacher and principal of Or VeShalom’s Hebrew school. Rabbi Cohen was also active at the Atlanta Bureau of Jewish Education, the Adult Institute of Jewish Studies, the Atlanta Jewish Federation, and was the first president of the Atlanta Rabbinical Association. Rabbi Cohen retired in 1969 and died in 1985.

\(^7\) Someone who is \textit{shomer} [Hebrew: to guard, watch, or preserve] \textit{Shabbat} observes commandments for the Jewish Sabbath from sundown Friday evening until sundown Saturday evening.
because he had to work Saturdays. Except for that, he closed all holidays and was a regular attending services.

KREMER: You said he was a merchant in Cuba.

ALHADEFF: No, that was my grandfather. My father was a shoe repairman. He used to repair shoes here.

KREMER: He learned that skill here?

ALHADEFF: Right.

KREMER: Your father was born in Istanbul also?

ALHADEFF: Right.

KREMER: How old was he when he went to Cuba again?

ALHADEFF: I assume he was a young man about 15 or 16 because he came to this country in 1913. He was in New York. He came here. He was married at 23. He was 23 when he was married. That was in 1915, so he must have been about 21 when he came to this country.

KREMER: Did he ever tell you any stories about growing up in Istanbul?

ALHADEFF: No, he didn’t. If he did, I surely missed it. It must have been an experience.

KREMER: You don’t know any stories about what life was like in Istanbul? Your grandparents didn’t talk about it?

ALHADEFF: No. My grandparents . . . I didn’t have a problem communicating with them in Spanish because I understood. We spoke Spanish at home, or Ladino. My grandfather was a very stern person. You couldn’t get close to him. He had the notion that you don’t show affection to children while they’re awake. They will take advantage of you. <Laughing> I guess he must of had a soft heart. But, we didn’t dare cross him.

KREMER: Did he live with you?

ALHADEFF: Yes, he did. He lived with us until he passed away. He lived at my father’s house.

KREMER: What about your grandmother? She stayed in Cuba?

ALHADEFF: My grandmother came to our house before my grandfather did. She stayed with us until she passed away. Towards the end of her life, my grandfather had come and was staying with his other son, my father’s brother. My Uncle Isaac. My Uncle Isaac had about six children. At that time, there might have been about four or five. As soon as my grandmother passed away, then my grandfather moved in. They had separated many years back.
KREMER: Did you have other relatives that came to Atlanta besides your father’s brother?
ALHADEFF: Yes. My mother’s brother came here. Two brothers, in fact. One is Isaac Benator. My mother was a Benator.
KREMER: What was her full name?
KREMER: Her other brother, Isaac and who?
ALHADEFF: She had a brother Isaac and Victor. My father worked for Victor when he first came to this country.
KREMER: What kind of shop did he have?
ALHADEFF: He had a shoe shop. That’s where my father learned his trade. When he saw my mother’s picture, he says, “Bring her over.” So, that’s how they met.
KREMER: They each had a lot of family here. You have a lot of relatives.
ALHADEFF: Oh yes. My uncle had six children. My mother and father had six. I’m one of six. My mother had three brothers. One of them passed away. He was a bachelor. She had Isaac, of course, and Victor. They each had five or six children. It was a pretty big family. I have numerous cousins. About 15 years ago, we heard from someone that was a daughter of my mother’s sister, who was in Rhodes at the time. Her name was Rebecca Acco. A-C-C-O. She was left an orphan, I believe. She wound up in Egypt and married someone from Egypt. She came to this country and is now living in New York. Her husband passed away about two or three months ago. We’ve seen her. We’ve been up to see her and she’s been here.
KREMER: Was she in Rhodes through the Second World War?\(^8\)
ALHADEFF: She probably was.
KREMER: Got out and went to Egypt then? Is that when she went to Egypt?
ALHADEFF: She went to Egypt, right.
KREMER: To escape the Nazis?\(^9\)

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\(^8\) World War II (often abbreviated to WWII or WW2), also known as the Second World War, was a global war that lasted from 1939 to 1945, although related conflicts began earlier. It involved the vast majority of the world's countries—including all of the great powers—eventually forming two opposing military alliances: the Allies and the Axis. It was the most widespread war in history, and directly involved more than 100 million people from over 30 countries. Marked by mass deaths of civilians, including the Holocaust (in which approximately 6 million Jews were killed) and the strategic bombing of industrial and population centers (in which approximately one million were killed, and which included the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), it resulted in an estimated 50 million to 85 million fatalities. These made World War II the deadliest conflict in human history.

\(^9\) The National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP), commonly known as the ‘Nazi Party,’ was a political party in Germany active between 1920 and 1945. The party’s leader was Adolf Hitler. Initially, Nazi political
ALHADEFF: I don’t know whether that was the time or if she went before, but I believe it was around that time. She would be about 60 years old, 60-64. It’s been something. You should really

<End Tape 1, Side 1>

<Begin Tape, 1, Side 2>

KREMER: Tell me a little bit about your family. You grew up here.

ALHADEFF: Right

KREMER: Where did you live?

ALHADEFF: We lived on Central Avenue. Our synagogue at that time was at Central and Woodward Avenue. I don’t suppose you’re a native of this city. Ahavath Achim synagogue was about two blocks up from ours on Washington Street. Most of the Sephardim, most of the Spanish Jews lived within about a three-mile radius of the synagogue, no more than that, surely.

We had about 10 or 12 families on Pryor Street, about 10 or 12 families on Central Avenue.

KREMER: Your family, were they close to people who came from Turkey, or did they mix in those days with . . . ?

ALHADEFF: No, we were all together.

KREMER: All the Sephardim.

ALHADEFF: Right. All of the Sephardim, like I say, you could cover the entire group with strategy focused on anti-big business, anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist rhetoric. In the 1930’s the party's focus shifted to antisemitic and anti-Marxist themes. Racism was also central to Nazism. The Nazis aimed to unite all Germans as national comrades, whilst excluding those deemed either to be community aliens or of a foreign race. The Nazis sought to improve the stock of the Germanic people through racial purity and eugenics, broad social welfare programs, and a disregard for the value of individual life, which could be sacrificed for the good of the Nazi state and the ‘Aryan master race.’ The persecution reached its climax when the party-controlled German state organized the systematic murder of approximately 6,000,000 Jews and 5,000,000 from the other targeted groups.

Ahavath Achim Congregation (often referred to as “AA”) was organized in 1886 as Congregation Ahawas Achim (Brotherly Love) and is Atlanta’s second oldest Jewish congregation. Organized by Jews of Eastern European descent, the congregation’s founding members felt uncomfortable in the established Hebrew Benevolent Congregation (The Temple) comprised primarily of Jews from Germany, who by the late 1800s had begun to liberal Ahavath Achim ize their Orthodox doctrine. Originally located in a rented room at 106 Gilmer Street, the congregation would make a succession of moves, to 120 Gilmer Street, to a hall on Decatur Street in 1895, to its first building in 1901 on the corner of Gilmer Street and Piedmont Avenue, to its second building on Washington Street in 1921, and finally, to its present location on Peachtree Battle Avenue in 1958. Four different Rabbis, Rabbi Mayerovitz (1901 – 1905); Rabbi Joseph Meyer Levine (1905 – 1915); Rabbi Yood (1915 – 1919); and Rabbi A.P. Hirmes (1919 – 1928) provided spiritual leadership for Ahavath Achim until 1928, when Rabbi Harry H. Epstein was hired as Rabbi. He retained that position for the next 50 years. Rabbi Epstein became Rabbi Emeritus in 1986 and was succeeded by Rabbi Arnold Goodman. During the early years of Rabbi Epstein’s tenure, he slowly made innovations and modifications in congregational activities. By 1952, Ahavath Achim joined the Conservative Movement, with the most noticeable shift from Orthodoxy being the gradual change to mixed seating. Today, Ahavath Achim Congregation is the largest Conservative congregation in Atlanta.
almost the size of a football field, a little bit larger perhaps. Within two to three miles, you would be able to cover all of the Sephardim that lived in the city.

**KEFIZER:** Did you just fraternize with each other or not . . . ?

**ALHADEFF:** Right. We went to the same schools. Fomwalt Street School was the elementary school that we all went to. There was Crew Street School. There were a few that went to Crew Street School. Most of us all wound up at Hoke Smith Junior High [School]. The senior high, some went to Commercial [High School]. Some went to Tech [Technical High School].

**KEFIZER:** Where did you go?

**ALHADEFF:** I went to Commercial High. Some went to Boys’ High [School]. Some went to Tech High. The girls either went to Commercial High or Girls’ High [School]. That was an all-girls school. The reason for going to Commercial was that very few went to college from there. They just got the business experience learning there. Shorthand, bookkeeping. Those that went to Tech High wound up at Georgia Tech [Georgia Institute of Technology] or some other technical school.

**KEFIZER:** Were you in clubs? What did you do for fun? What was your social life?

**ALHADEFF:** As far as the clubs, the Sephardics had a LOT Club [Light of Tomorrow].

Laugh Tomorrow. We also joined clubs at the [Jewish Educational] Alliance with DSI. Devoted Sons of Israel or Young Judean clubs. Various sources. We would play ball with them – basketball, baseball, or what have you. We participated in their activities. We would go to the Alliance social affairs like they go to the [Atlanta Jewish] Community Center now. I

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1 The LOT (Light of Tomorrow) Club was a social club for Sephardic youths in Atlanta.

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

3 Young Judaea is a peer-led Zionist youth movement founded in 1909 for Jewish youth in grades 2–12. Its programs include youth clubs, conventions, summer camps and Israel programs that provide experiential programming through which Jewish youth and young adults build meaningful relationships with their peers, emphasize social action, and develop a lifelong commitment to Jewish life, the Jewish people, and Israel.

4 Atlanta Jewish Community Center was officially founded in 1910, as the Jewish Educational Alliance. In the late 1940’s it evolved into the Atlanta Jewish Community Center and moved to Peachtree Street. It stayed there until 1998, when the building was sold and the center moved to Dunwoody. In 2000, it was renamed the ‘Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta.’
think that was a forerunner of the Community Center.

**KREMER:** Who were some of your friends? Who were some of the people in your class?

**ALHADEFF:** Those that I was at school with.

**KREMER:** I’m asking for names.

**ALHADEFF:** Those that I was at school with. There is Morris Benveniste, of blessed memory. B-E-N-V-E-N-I-S-T-E. We went out together. There is Joe Hazan. There are two Joe Hazans. One we called Little Joe, and one we called Big Joe. They’re cousins. One Hazan family lived on Central [Avenue] and Richardson [Street]. The other Hazan family lived at Woodward [Avenue] and Central. The boys were about the same age that I was.

**KREMER:** Is it H-A-Z . . . ?


**KREMER:** Did you speak to Spanish to each other at all?

**ALHADEFF:** Very little.

**KREMER:** You just did that at home?

**ALHADEFF:** Right. As far as outside . . . unless we wanted to say something that the other guy couldn’t understand. <Laughing>

**KREMER:** What is the difference between Spanish and Ladino?

**ALHADEFF:** The Spanish that they speak in Cuba or Puerto Rico, they don’t have the mixture of the Turkish words that come into play in Ladino. It’s a hybrid. It’s a mixture.

**KREMER:** It’s a mixture of Spanish and Turkish?

**ALHADEFF:** Yes. Like, *peron* is a Turkish word for fork. Don’t ask me what it is in Spanish because I don’t recall. Same thing, we’ll say *alhad* for Sunday. Spanish is *Domingo*. There are words that are just bastards.

**KREMER:** Did you teach it to your children?

**ALHADEFF:** No. I wish we had. They really should have learned some of it. When I married Mary [Esral], she was not Sephardic. Consequently, all our conversations were in English. She doesn’t understand. Of course, she picks up a word here and there at the synagogue, and she knows what they’re talking about. Since we didn’t communicate in that manner, then the children couldn’t unless they took a language.

**KREMER:** Tell me a little bit more about what life was like when you were growing up.
What made the Sephardic community a little different than, say, the Ashkenazi?\textsuperscript{15}

**ALHADEFF:** For one thing, I believe we were closer knit. We were so few. We were inclined to do our own thing. We would have our own activities. We would go to ballgames together. We would have our own teams. We participated in our activities in all the social and religious school. I suppose we were just family.

**KREMER:** You all kind of dated the girls of the group and that sort of thing?

**ALHADEFF:** Right.

**KREMER:** What happened when you started to date someone else? How did that come about?

**ALHADEFF:** When I met Mary, I was going to night school to study for examination to take a test, a civil service exam. Then I went to a party that they had at one of the Spanish girl’s. Then the LOT, the club I belonged to, was going to have a party, some dinner event. I wanted to bring Mary. There was an objection because the girls felt they were being left out because I was bringing an “outsider.” Anyhow, they finally relented and I brought Mary to the dinner. I guess that broke the ice. Then others started mixing, going with Ashkenazi girls and boys. Now we find that a lot of them in the synagogue crossed over and married Ashkenazi.

**KREMER:** Were you really one of the first ones to get married?

**ALHADEFF:** Yes. One of the first that Rabbi Cohen married. I understand that there was somebody else that married an Ashkenazi. She wasn’t married by Rabbi Cohen. My cousin, Julia Milt, her first marriage was to Jack . . . I can’t think of his last name now. Anyhow, she was married about a year before we were or six months before. Some other rabbi did it.

**KREMER:** When were the two of you married?

**ALHADEFF:** Mary and I were married in 1938. October 1938.

**KREMER:** Were you married at the synagogue?

**ALHADEFF:** We were married at my parent’s home on Parkway Drive. The service was conducted by Rabbi [Tobias] Geffen of Shearith Israel\textsuperscript{16} and Rabbi Cohen of Or VeShalom.

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\textsuperscript{15} Ashkenazi is an ethnic division of Jews which formed in the Holy Roman Empire in the early 1000’s. They established communities in Central and Eastern Europe.

\textsuperscript{16} Founded in 1904, Shearith Israel began as a congregation that met in the homes of congregants until 1906 when they began using a Methodist church on Hunter Street. After World War II, Rabbi Tobias Geffen moved the congregation to University Drive, where it became the first synagogue in DeKalb County. In the 1960’s, they removed the barrier between the men’s and women’s sections in the sanctuary, and officially became affiliated with the Conservative movement in 2002.
KREMER: How did they take to the aspect?

ALHADEFF: They loved it. We were married on Atzerat Sukkot. After the service and all the partying that went on, they had to break up and go to synagogue.

KREMER: Did you invite the whole congregation the way they did?

ALHADEFF: They were all there. They were all the way outside... the wedding was in the living room. People were all over the house and on the porch. I'll never forget, we went to Daytona Beach [Florida] on our honeymoon by bus. Greyhound Bus. <Laughing> That was some experience.

KREMER: What as your reception like? What kind of food? Music?

ALHADEFF: Spanish delicacies and also some Ashkenzi [food] because Mary’s aunts and cousins baked. My mother and cousins baked. My aunt baked. There was a lot of food.

KREMER: What were some of the things?

ALHADEFF: I couldn’t tell you.

ALHADEFF: I don’t remember.

KREMER: It was a typical kind of wedding?

ALHADEFF: I think so, yes. It was a big affair.

KREMER: Was the ceremony any different? The combined ceremony?

ALHADEFF: As far as the ceremony is concerned, we had the chuppah. The Sephardics have a custom when they have a wedding to put the prayer shawl over the bride and the groom during a portion of the ceremony. That’s the only difference that I could tell you as far as the wedding customs. They go through the same ritual of breaking the glass and passing the rings between one another.

KREMER: You got married. We skipped your college. Tell me about that. Your father must have been doing well to send to you [University of] Georgia.

ALHADEFF: He didn’t send me. I went to school after I married. I was working at CCC.

KREMER: You graduated from Commercial.

ALHADEFF: Right. In 1933. Then I went to work for the CCC. Civilian Conservation Corps. I was working in a film room, winding, re-winding, checking film and sending it to the

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17 Sukkot is one of the Harvest Festivals. It is seven days long and comes after the ingathering of the yearly harvest. It celebrates G-d’s bounty in nature and G-d’s protection, symbolized by the fragile booths in which the Israelites dwelt in the wilderness. During Sukkot, Jews eat and live in such booths, which gives the festival its name and character. Shemini Atzerat is one of the three sacred days of the festival.

18 Hebrew for ‘canopy.’ The canopy under which a Jewish wedding takes place.

19 The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was a voluntary public work relief program that operated from 1933 to
CCC camps where they had these boys who were beautifying parks, roads, benches, etc. Doing various and sundry things because there was very little work at that time in 1933. That was at the height of the [Great] Depression\textsuperscript{20} and before World War II. I was working in the office preparing films for shipment to go out. I went to work for CCC in 1936. I was working for a man named Sam Corolla [sp]. He was selling shoe bindings. I would try to sell items to use for preparing shoes. Rubber heels, soles, and things of that nature. When I got this job with the CCC . . . while I was there, I went to Georgia State [University] and talked to the president of the school and tried to get a scholarship. He suggested, he said, “Do you have available a 16 mm camera projector?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Do you have film? We have sciences classes that we need to show this film to these classes. If you will take the projector that you have available and run film for these classes, then I’ll give you a scholarship for the tuition, but you will have to buy the books.” I did that. That way, I could go at night. I worked at CCC during the day. I’d go to class three nights a week. I got my degree. At that time, Georgia State was under the University of Georgia. The diplomas had to come from Athens [Georgia]. I got my degree that way.

KREMER: Your degree was in . . . ?
ALHADEFF: I majored in accounting.
KREMER: I see here on your bio was education Command and General Staff College.
ALHADEFF: Right. I went into service. When I got out, I went into the Reserves.
KREMER: Let’s get to the service first. You were married. You went to college while you were working. Do you have any children?
ALHADEFF: I had Rochelle [Richman]. Right before I went into the service, I had one.
KREMER: When was that?
ALHADEFF: I went in the service in 1943. December 1943. Rochelle was two years old. Marilyn [Bernstein] was born July, 1944. My second child was born after I was in the service about seven or eight months. I got out of the service in 1946.

\textsuperscript{20} 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.
KREMER: Where did you go in the service?

ALHADEFF: I was at Fort Barrancas [Pensacola, Florida]. It’s in Florida. I went to Fort Pickens [Pensacola Beach, Florida]. They sent me to Fort Monroe, Virginia.

KREMER: Your family stayed here?

ALHADEFF: Right. Then I went to Fort Benjamin Harrison [Indiana].

KREMER: Were you an officer?

ALHADEFF: At that time, I was enlisted. Then our unit was transferred. I went overseas. They transferred me out of the unit and put me with the [United States] Corps of Engineers South Atlantic Division, which was in Atlanta, who then assigned me to the Mobile District Engineers in Mobile, Alabama.

KREMER: Why did you get separated from the unit?

ALHADEFF: The war was coming to an end. Germany was on its last legs. It was just before the invasion. They were searching for military personnel that had background in accounting. They were searching 201 Files for all those who served MOS [military occupational specialty]. They took me because I had a degree in accounting. They used me for contract termination cases because they were terminating contracts all over the country. I was assigned to the Mobile district of engineers. From there, I would go to Galveston, Texas; Savannah, Georgia; and various places and reach amicable settlement on contracts which were these contractors for the government.

KREMER: What is this Command and General Staff College?

ALHADEFF: When I got out in 1946, I went back to work with Federal Prison Industries. Since it was a government job, if you had had certain experience in certain fields, you could get a direct commission in Reserves. I applied, and they gave me an appointment as captain in the army reserves. I used it primarily to supplement my income. I was getting a day’s pay for two or three hours of duty. When I got in the Reserves, I got into a unit that was active. I took extension courses, and I went to Command and General Staff College.

<End Tape 1, Side 2>

<Begin Tape 2, Side 1>

KREMER: Continuing the interview with Jack Alhadeff by Ray Ann Kremer. You obviously got some more training and you had extra income from it.

ALHADEFF: Right.
KREMER: Where were you working when you came back to Atlanta?

ALHADEFF: When I came back from the service, I went back to Federal Prison Industries.<br>four or five industries. They had a camera shop, print shop, a clothing factory.

KREMER: What were you doing as far as your involvement in the Jewish community here?

ALHADEFF: Other than belonging to the social clubs, Community Center maybe, synagogue activities, that was it.

KREMER: How were you involved with synagogue?

ALHADEFF: I was vice president one time. I was on the board a few times, financial secretary. That’s about it as far as synagogue.

KREMER: Did Mary get involved?

ALHADEFF: Mary was involved with the Sisterhood quite a bit. For ten or more years, she was the goodwill secretary for the Sisterhood. She would send out cards to the sick. Helped with the bazaar cooking for the ladies.

KREMER: She became a Sephardim recruit?

ALHADEFF: Right. She was <unintelligible>.

KREMER: Your children were involved?

ALHADEFF: Yes, they were. My children Rochelle and Marilyn, I think they both taught Sunday school or taught classes there. I know Rochelle did when she was going to Emory [University], she would teach.

KREMER: Did your children marry other Sephardim?

ALHADEFF: No. My son [Dr. Norman Lewis Alhadeff] didn’t get married. He died. He was in an accident. My two daughters, Rochelle married. She graduated in May and married in September, 1964.

KREMER: She married someone and lives where?

ALHADEFF: In New Orleans, a suburb. They’re both active in their synagogues.

KREMER: What do you see as the future of the Sephardic people in the United States? There are not that many Sephardic congregations.

ALHADEFF: That’s right. Not only that, they are constantly being thinned out by intermarriages.

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21 A group of women in a synagogue congregation who join together to offer social, cultural, educational, and volunteer service opportunities.
KREMER: But some do gravitate and come into . . . like Mary.

ALHADEFF: Right, we do have a few. <Unintelligible> synagogue now, although it’s considered Sephardic. All our rituals and customs are observed. I would say, as far as attendance is concerned, it’s about more than 50 percent Ashkenaz.

KREMER: What are some of the customs that are different? You said, “Our customs.” What are some of them?

ALHADEFF: The method of prayer. That’s about it.

KREMER: What do you mean method of prayer?

ALHADEFF: Pronunciation in some cases.

KREMER: Of the Hebrew?

ALHADEFF: Of the Hebrew. Also the literature, the way it’s chanted is a little different.

KREMER: Is there a cantorial school that teaches that?

ALHADEFF: No, I don’t think so. As far as Sephardim is concerned, just follow the <unintelligible> on down. Just the way it’s been done.

KREMER: It’s just the way your congregation teaches each other and your children?

ALHADEFF: Right. Well, I can’t say that really because I suppose we rely on the rabbi. We don’t have a cantor as such. Our rabbi is our cantor. We don’t have a choir. It’s his tunes, but his tunes generally are the tunes that we have been accustomed to hearing in the synagogue for the past 50 years.

KREMER: He did it the same way Rabbi Cohen did it?

ALHADEFF: Right.

KREMER: Even though he came from a different place?

ALHADEFF: Right. Even though he came from [Tunisia] Africa [Rabbi Solomon Robert Ichay].

KREMER: Do you have any family left in Cuba, or did they all come here from Cuba?

ALHADEFF: My father had two stepsisters there and a stepbrother. Or, I should say half sister and brother.

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22 The chazzan (cantor) is the official in charge of music or chants and leads liturgical prayer and chanting in the synagogue.

23 Rabbi Solomon Robert Ichay (1929-2012) led Or VeShalom for 33 years. Upon retirement he was named Rabbi Emeritus. While leading Or VeShalom, Rabbi Ichay helped grow the congregation to more than 500 families, up from less than 200. He also helped lead the congregation into a new building in 1971, less than two years after he arrived in 1969. He was born in Tunisia and educated in England and Zimbabwe.
KREMER: From his father?
ALHADEFF: His father.
KREMER: Who was separated from . . .
ALHADEFF: He was married again to someone else.
KREMER: And they stayed in Cuba?
ALHADEFF: Right. Since that time, one has passed away, came to this country and living in Florida, but she passed away. Another sister, a half-sister, I think she may still be there. If so, she would have to be 90 years old or more.
KREMER: You have no contact with that part of the family? Their name is Alhadeff or whoever they married?
ALHADEFF: Yes.
KREMER: Do you know of any other family anywhere else?
ALHADEFF: No.
KREMER: Nobody left in Turkey?
ALHADEFF: In Turkey? No. He only had two sons in Turkey. They both came to Atlanta.
KREMER: You don’t know why they picked Atlanta?
ALHADEFF: When you stop and think, if a person comes into a foreign country, they want to migrate to a place where they know someone, right? There’s a Jewish community here, a Sephardic community. Not too many, but a few. So, they came here. They had a few in Montgomery. Some would go to Montgomery. Some in Seattle, Washington. Frankly, I believe what brought them here was climate as well as knowing others here.
KREMER: That brings a lot of other people here too.
ALHADEFF: Sure. I was just reading this. It indicated in 1910 how many . . . this was before my father got here. <Reading a document> “In 1910, there were 30 bachelors in the city of Atlanta, most of whom managed to send abroad for wives from the country of their origin.” So, you got 30 bachelors in 1910.
KREMER: Do we know who any of them are or who their descendants are?
ALHADEFF: They came from Salonika, Bodrum.
KREMER: Yes, you told me that. I’m wondering names. Do you know any of the people that are descendants of that group?
ALHADEFF: <Reading> “The first Sephardic Jews to settle here were Victor Avzaradel.” He
passed away a few years ago.

KREMER: How do you spell Avzaradel?


KREMER: That was his last name?

ALHADEFF: Right. Victor is his first name. My brother, Morris, who passed away in 1978, he married Victor Avzaradel’s niece, Becky Avzaradel [Alhadeff]. He was an uncle to Becky. Ezra Touriel, I think you said someone . . .

KREMER: Regina.

ALHADEFF: Regina is married to Ezra Touriel’s nephew.

KREMER: Ezra is one of the early ones?

ALHADEFF: That’s right. Those are the first Sephardic Jews. They came in 1906. The following year, they were joined by Isaac Hazan. H-A-Z-A-N. He’s the one I mentioned that lived at Central Avenue and Richmond Street. Asher Israel. I don’t remember him. I do know Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Amiel and family who came here. A-M-I-E-L. There is a Ralph Amiel here, I think, at the Community Center. He goes there and plays ball. He is a grandson of this Ralph Amiel who came in 1906. They were the first ones to settle here.

KREMER: Their descendants are still here?

ALHADEFF: Yes.

KREMER: Looking at the document> That has all kinds of goodies in it. What other special things can you tell me about the community?

ALHADEFF: The first generation that came here, they really had to struggle. It was a struggle. They bought a synagogue on Central Avenue. We had extreme difficulty getting a rabbi. Here is a picture of the rabbi that taught me when I had my bar mitzvah.24

KREMER: Tell me about your bar mitzvah. What was it like?

ALHADEFF: It was just like bar mitzvahs today except our main event is on a Thursday morning when they take the Torah25 out. I made my speech at synagogue. I went to school after

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

25 Torah [Hebrew: teaching] is a general term that covers all Jewish law including the vast mass of teachings recorded in the Talmud and other rabbinical works. ‘Sefer Torah’ refers to the sacred scroll on which the first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch) are written.
the *bar mitzvah*. That night we had a party at the house. What I remember about it was that it was hard for me to make a speech. *<Laughing>* I never thought I’d get through it.

**KREMER:** Was it something that everybody did, all your friends were having *bar mitzvahs*. You went to everybody’s party.

**ALHADEFF:** No, there wasn’t too many of us at that time. They were few and far between. I was born in 1915. This was 1928. There weren’t too many boys at that time. There were a few. You would have them in 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, you had them about every week or so. We didn’t have eight to ten a year because the population was so little. *<Looking at a document>* This is H-A-M-G-A-B-A-I. He was tough. He had eyes in the back of his head. We would snicker or something. He would be at the blackboard, and he could turn around and throw a ruler at you. He was a tough one.

**KREMER:** He had a hot temper?

**ALHADEFF:** Yes, he did. He believed in control . . .

**KREMER:** Where was he from?

**ALHADEFF:** He must have been from Turkey. You asked about a situation at that time when I say it was tough. Our parents couldn’t afford a full-time rabbi or teacher. They were coming and leaving just like a revolving door. Our Hebrew education was interrupted. I remember for a few months we went to AA to their Hebrew school [The Epstein School][26] because we didn’t have a rabbi or a teacher that would teach us at our school. Also, I remember that we had Birdie Benator’s mother who . . . . either she learned her Hebrew when she was in Israel or wherever. She was a young woman that taught us Hebrew. She was not a professional, but she knew her Hebrew just like you have Israeli’s now who come and teach us now at schools, at academy’s, etc. We had the same situation then except we didn’t have a rabbi for a good bit of the time. If we did, it was just a temporary basis.

**KREMER:** Do you remember any other rabbi other than the one you just showed a picture of?

**ALHADEFF:** Off hand, no.

**KREMER:** He stood out because he was so tough.

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[26] The Epstein School (also known as the Solomon Shechter School of Atlanta) is a private Jewish day school in the Atlanta area located in Sandy Springs. In 1973, Rabbi Harry H. Epstein and the leaders of Ahavath Achim synagogue wanted to create a Conservative Jewish day school. The first campus was housed at the synagogue. In 1987 the school moved to Sandy Springs.
ALHADDEFF: We had a number of them but, like I say, I can’t remember them.

KREMER: When Rabbi Cohen came, he must have been very special because everyone talks so highly about him.

ALHADDEFF: Right and he stayed until his death until Rabbi Ichay came along.

KREMER: How did the congregation through the years, could you see?

ALHADDEFF: The biggest change about when we left Highland Avenue. That’s when we had an influx of Ashkenazi that joined us. It might have been for reasons that were either close by or maybe because the like Rabbi Ichay.

KREMER: What year was this?

ALHADDEFF: In 1971 when we came to North Druid Hills. At Highland Avenue, we were limited as far as space was concerned. We couldn't function very well. When we moved in 1971 to North Druid Hills, we built a new synagogue there, we had more parking spaces. We could take care of the population.

KREMER: Were there any influxes of Sephardim coming in during different periods? Like, after the war, did you . . . ?

ALHADDEFF: A few.

KREMER: Not a lot, though.

ALHADDEFF: Those that came in, came from other countries. They came from South Africa, Rhodesia.

KREMER: When did you get them?

ALHADDEFF: In the last ten years, I would say.

KREMER: Many?

ALHADDEFF: Maybe eight or ten. We don’t have a tremendous population even now. I imagine your interviews with some of the others, they will probably give you a little better insight as to the numbers. I would say about 350 families and maybe another 100 or so of singles that might belong.

KREMER: I was just trying to see if there was a period of time when the congregation changed because of an influx of Sephardim.

ALHADDEFF: We never had too many Sephardim come in.

KREMER: Most of the population came between 1910 and 1925? They were coming from Turkey and Rhodes basically?
ALHADEFF: A few moved from one city to another because of their business. We had them come in from Washington and other places.

KREMER: So many of the Sephardim like your father had shoe shops. I find that kind of interesting. They learned the trade in the old country, and your father learned it here.

ALHADEFF: That’s true. We also had tailors, restauranteurs. I remember Mr. Franco, Mr. Benator, they had restaurants.

KREMER: Which Mr. Franco?

ALHADEFF: Morris Franco. He had a restaurant on Highland Avenue. He passed away.

KREMER: Which Mr. Benator?

ALHADEFF: He also passed away. That’s Leo’s father. Leo and Victor Benator’s father.

KREMER: He had a restaurant also?

ALHADEFF: Yes.

KREMER: Who was the third person you said?

ALHADEFF: <Unintelligible>. He passed away also. He had a place on Broad Street.

KREMER: What kind of restaurant was that?

ALHADEFF: It was a deli. It was a sandwich shop. He also had fruits. He served lunches there.


ALHADEFF: They may be Sephardic. I thought they were from Iran. They may be Sephardic. Most of them are. We have quite a few Iranians that have come in the past few years to the synagogue.

KREMER: Isn’t there an Iranian synagogue, a separate one?

ALHADEFF: Yes, there is. It is limited in number. They have, I understand 20 or 30 people that meet at Beth Jacob.27

KREMER: They chose not to join Or VeShalom. Was there a reason?

ALHADEFF: Unless they feel like they don’t want to ride up there. Some of them live up the

27 Beth Jacob is an Orthodox synagogue on LaVista Road in Atlanta founded in 1942 by former members of Ahavath Achim who were looking for a more Orthodox congregation. Beth Jacob is now Atlanta’s largest Orthodox congregation. The congregation first met in a rented grocery store on Parkway Drive. It moved to a permanent location on Boulevard when it purchased and renovated a two-story apartment building. In 1956, it converted the Tabernacle Baptist Church on Boulevard to a synagogue. It built its current synagogue building on a five-acre lot on LaVista Road in 1961. Rabbi Joseph Safra was the congregation’s first permanent rabbi in 1951, followed by Rabbi Emanuel Feldman from 1952 to 1991. Rabbi Ilan Feldman has been the congregation’s rabbi since his father Emanuel’s retirement in 1991.
street and they walk down here. It’s just a block or so. It may be for convenience.

KREMER: When did the Iranians come?

ALHADEFF: About the time the Shah [of Iran]\(^{28}\) left there.

KREMER: In your synagogue, how many?

ALHADEFF: We must have about 12 or 15. Maybe a few more. They’ve had their bar mitzvahs there. Baby namings, bris.\(^{29}\) They’ve had the works. They come regularly every Saturday morning. I see them there.

KREMER: Do you go to synagogue every Saturday?

ALHADEFF: Yes, when I’m not visiting my daughter in Orlando or New Orleans.

KREMER: What else can you tell me of interest about the community? Does anything else pop into your head?

ALHADEFF: The only thing I can say is it’s been great going back and over the years. I feel fortunate that I’ve seen so many of them. So many of them could give you a better insight. We’ve had great leaders.

KREMER: Who would you say, of all the people you know, would be the best person to give us some insight?

ALHADEFF: Someone like Regina Touriel. I would say that she could tell you because she’s worked in every step of the way from the time she was teaching Sunday school. Morris Russo, her brother, probably could tell you a lot. But she worked with so many, Regina, her mother.

KREMER: Anyone else? Regina came from Rhodes. What about from the Turkish community?

ALHADEFF: Ralph Touriel was from Turkey, her husband.

KREMER: Anyone else?

ALHADEFF: I was trying to think. Have you or anyone spoken to Isaac Hazan?

KREMER: Yes.

ALHADEFF: He really knows a lot. This, our niece, Joyce Alhadeff, wrote this for school,

\(^{28}\) Shah’ is the Persian word for “king” or “sovereign.” Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1919-1980), also known as the Shah of Iran, reigned from 1941 to 1979 until his overthrow by the Iranian Revolution. He is known for his policies of modernization and secularism. He died in exile in Egypt, whose president, Anwar Sadat, had granted him asylum. He is buried in Al-Rifa’i Mosque in Cairo, Egypt.

\(^{29}\) A bris, formally known as the ‘brit milah’ (Hebrew: Covenant of Circumcision) involves surgically removing the foreskin of the penis. Circumcision is performed only on males on the eighth day of the child’s life. The brit milah is usually followed by a celebratory meal.
her thesis.

**KREMER:** *Sephardic Community of Atlanta: A Brief History.* May I borrow that and read it?

**ALHADEFF:** Pictures don’t do justice, but as far as the rest of it.

**KREMER:** I’m going to thank you right here and stop this. I appreciate all your help.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**

<End Tape 2>