BERMAN: Today we're here interviewing Tom Asher. He has agreed to do an interview for the Esther and Herbert Taylor Oral History Project of the William Bremen Jewish Heritage Museum. Tom, I would like to thank you for being here today. I'd like to begin by asking you to discuss a little bit about your memories of your family, how they came to be in Atlanta, how they came to Georgia, on both sides. Let's start with the Elsas side.

ASHER: My great grandfather was born in Württemberg, Germany, as I understand it.

BERMAN: His name was?

ASHER: His name was Jacob Elsas. 

BERMAN: His name was Jacob Elsas. Again, I’m not sure the exact date, but it must have been in the 1830s. I do have the dates. You could probably look those up. He had no father. Let me put it this way, he was a bastard, not literally. He was, literally, not figuratively. He was actually a very nice man. It's very interesting. My cousin, [Louis] Skip Elsas, did the research and found that his mother had four children, one of whom was . . . she was not married. He immigrated to America probably in the 1850s. [He] went to Cincinnati, where he had a relative who had been in the textile business in Germany. He was a peddler and worked his way down the Appalachians during the Civil War. 

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1 Jacob Elsas (1842-1932) was the founder of Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill, a business which opened its doors on Decatur Street in 1881, located in the Cabbagetown neighborhood east of downtown Atlanta. Elsas was an immigrant of German Jewish descent who had arrived in Atlanta from Cincinnati, Ohio. He is buried in Oakland cemetery in Atlanta.

2 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
He was apparently conscripted into the Union Army, much to the chagrin of my parents, who insisted for years when I was little that he was in the Confederate Army. That, apparently, was just not true. He then made his way to, I think he was somewhere in either Dalton or Cartersville [Georgia] when the war ended. He set up a store there, which turned out to be the first brick building in Cartersville. Actually, his partner, or his employee was . . . it was really a bag business, not unlike what his family had been in in Europe, selling bags, I think, for feed and flour. Again, I'm rough on those details. His partner was a black man named Mose [sp], who was a freed slave.

Going forward in history, he died I think in the 1950s in Atlanta as an employee of the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills.³ On the weekends, apparently Jacob came to Atlanta, as many people did, the great booming metropolis of Atlanta, which was a big city. He went to the Kimball House⁴ hotel bar where he was able to acquire, at some substantial premium because he was Jewish, a charter to open a mill. I guess it was really the charter. The name of the charter was Fulton Cotton Mills. Maybe it was Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills. That's how the name came to be. He subsequently opened the mill. I never knew him because he died in 1932, and I was born in 1936.

BERMAN: There was a [Isaac] May involved. Do you know who that person was?

ASHER: Yes.

BERMAN: And what his name?

ASHER: Yes. The Elsases and Mays had several businesses, one was a paper business. The May split off. They separated, and Elsa's went into the bag business. May went into the paper business, which subsequently became the Atlanta Paper Company, which subsequently designed the six-pack for Coca-Cola, and subsequently sold to Mead Corporation. That's my understanding of what happened. I don't know. There was a prominent May family, Jewish family in Atlanta.

³ 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 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.

⁴ Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills is a formerly operating mill complex located in the Cabbagetown neighborhood of Atlanta. The beginnings of the company can be traced to 1868, when Jacob Elsas, an immigrant of German Jewish descent who had recently arrived in Atlanta from Cincinnati, Ohio, and began work in the rag, paper, and hide business. Elsas soon recognized the need for cloth and paper containers for their goods. Within two or three years Elsas had switched to manufacturing cloth and paper bags and joined forces with fellow German Jewish immigrant Isaac May. Construction of the complex began in 1881 on the south side of the Georgia Railroad line, east of downtown Atlanta. The site now includes 505 loft apartments called The Fulton Cotton Mill Lofts and the Stacks Condominiums.

⁵ The Kimball House was built in in 1870 by northern railroad tycoon Hannibal Kimball. It was a lavish structure and a marker of Gilded Age sophistication and Atlanta’s cosmopolitanism. It was situated on Peachtree Street in Atlanta’s Five Points area.
I'm not sure. I don't know that.

BERMAN: The mill opened at its location where it still is today?

ASHER: I believe so. I think it opened somewhere else, but it moved over there and built what was then, and still is, an enormous complex. Obviously, Jacob was a very bright man. Self-educated. In the archives, we have letters that he wrote. The letters are carbons of letters that he had written in about 1898, I believe, somewhere shortly before the turn of the century. He was obviously very articulate, very bright, exceptional individual, considering we had no education. He married a woman by the name of Claire Stahl from New York.

BERMAN: That's S-T-A-H-L?

ASHER: Yes. They lived on Washington Street. They lived in a house which I guess was on the site of what is today the stadium because that was where the Jewish community was, somewhere in that whole area there. The Jews lived in that community. By happenstance, when the city was tearing down all the houses over there, my cousin, who is alive, Sinclair Jacobs [Jr.], went over to the house. There was a Tiffany glass chandelier hanging in the dining room because we had a photograph of the family sitting there. He insisted that the city workers take it down and put it in his car. Of course, it didn't belong to him. It belonged to the city, but they didn't know any difference. They put it in the car, and we've had it ever since, for the last 40 something years, which is really kind of nice.

BERMAN: That's unbelievable.

ASHER: Yes. Pretty amazing story because it could have just gone to either a junk heap or an antique store, technically. Maybe the statute of limitations has run on that. I really didn't know. My memories are of my grandmother. My grandfather, Jacob, my uncle knew him as a young man and worked in the mill.

BERMAN: Jacob had a lot of children, didn’t he?

ASHER: Jacob had eight children.

BERMAN: Do you know their names offhand?

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5 Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium served as the home ballpark for the Atlanta Braves baseball team for 31 seasons from 1966 to 1996. The stadium was built in Downtown Atlanta in what had previously been a residential area and the center of much of Atlanta’s Jewish community from the late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century. The neighborhood was razed in the early 1960s to make way for the Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium and its parking lots. In 1997, the Braves moved less than one block to Turner Field. It was built to serve the 1996 Summer Olympics. The Braves played their final game at Turner Field on October 2, 2016. In 2016, Georgia State University bought the ballpark and redesigned it for a college football stadium. The Braves played their first game in 2017 in their new home stadium, SunTrust Park, located in Cobb County, a suburb north of the city.
ASHER: Nettie, Jason, Louis, Oscar, who was the oldest. That was my grandfather. I have the list. I can give you the list of them. I'm drawing some blanks.

BERMAN: That's fine. What about Oscar?

ASHER: Oscar was the oldest and was my grandfather, my mother's father. I believe he was born in Atlanta because Jacob was here. I'll tell you what I know about him. Of course, he died well before Jacob. He died of a heart attack in 1924 when he was taking my mother to college. I'll tell you that story in a minute. He was apparently a very able guy and was the president of the mill, albeit the first son was the first one to go in it, but still, he was the head of the company and a very capable guy. [He] married Emma Ehrlich, who he must have met . . . I don't know the full details of how he met his wife. He went to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] for two years. In the interim of which, Jacob decided that the city of Atlanta and Georgia needed a textile engineering education. He, along with others, funded the creation of Georgia Tech [Georgia Institute of Technology]. Jacob brought his son, Oscar, back to Atlanta to finish his last two years at Tech. Oscar, my grandfather, became a member of the first graduating class of Georgia Tech.

BERMAN: I believe we have a picture of that first class that he was in.

ASHER: Yes, which is really kind of interesting because it's also [Robert] Bob Glenn, who was my business partner at Robinson Humphrey, Inc., for 25 years. His grandfather was in the class also. It was a small class. Nonetheless, he came back. I suspect he met Emma in Boston when he was up there. I suspect that. I don't know for sure, but they got married. My mother . . . that had to have been around 1894, because my Uncle Norman [Asher] was born in 1896. He was the older of the two children. My mother Helen [Elsas Asher] was born in 1906, ten years later. Norman was sent to Andover [College] for education and then on to Cornell [University], where he got his engineering degree. Came back and worked. Actually, he came back and he went in the [United States] Navy. He was a navy pilot. I remember as a little boy that I would visit their farm out in Decatur. In the summer, he would walk around bare chested, and he had navy wings tattooed on his chest. I thought that was pretty slick. In fact, I thought that was about the slickest thing I've ever seen.

BERMAN: Who was Norman married to?

ASHER: He was married to a woman by the name of Mildred [Hyman] or Mimi Danziger from New Orleans [Louisiana]. Norman, in the navy as I understand it, he was really kind of a swashbuckler guy. He was a navy pilot. In his words, he was the first person to fly off of a carrier
BERMAN: That's amazing.

ASHER: As a pilot. There were many that weren't successful, but he was the first one who did. He didn't see military action in World War I, but he was in the navy.

BERMAN: If we could go back a second to the mill itself. It's still there.

ASHER: Yes.

BERMAN: It's tremendously large. Do you have any recollections of going there as a child? Your impressions? It was still in business then.

ASHER: Yes.

BERMAN: Also, about the company town that surrounds it, Cabbagetown.

ASHER: I knew nothing about the company town. I do remember, as a child, the only memories that I have are . . . keep in mind the business closed. Excuse me, it changed hands in the late 1950s, early 1960s. I do remember staying with my aunt and uncle when my parents would be out of town, in Europe, or wherever they had gone on business trips. I do remember riding to the mill in his car, parking, going inside. I remember the offices and something about the looms and the . . . the memories. I was a child. I don't really have any memories of the town, itself. The memories that I have, which could be blurred with the past, are the ones that are contemporary.

BERMAN: What was he like as the president of the mill? What was the direction it went in under his . . .

ASHER: Apparently, it didn't do well because under his leadership, the company faltered and eventually . . . if it didn't go into bankruptcy, they ended up selling for pennies on the dollar to an investment group that attempted to turn it around. Of course, the entire American textile industry, as we know, has gone into a tailspin and has not really done well. I'm not sure what they would have done. But they didn't change. They stayed with burlap bags and that type of . . . when they could have gone to other . . . I suspect in hindsight. It did not do well. All the members of the family, the men, worked there. The women did not, which is why my mother went to work for Rich's [Department Store] as a lamp buyer. Of course, it was considered a male industry. By

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Rich's Department Store was founded on May 28, 1867, as M. Rich Dry Goods by 20-year-old Morris Rich with only $500 in capital. In 1877 Morris' brother Emanuel entered the business and the name of the store was changed to M. Rich and Brother, followed by Daniel in 1884, when the store was again renamed as M. Rich and Brothers. On January 12, 1901, the firm became M. Rich and Brothers Company. Morris Rich was elected president at a meeting of stockholders on January 18, 1901. Rich's Department Store retail chain operated in the southern United States from 1867 until 2005. Morris Rich is the anglicized name of Mauritius Reich, who was a native of Hungary.
coincidence, Clarence Elsas, who was a descendent as well, took over and was running the business with the new owners in the late 1950s and early 1960s, which was kind of interesting. I knew him pretty well. He lived on Habersham [Road], he and his wife. He married a woman by the name of Janet Levy, who happened to be, by coincidence, his stepsister. So, the parents married. He knew her in her teens. They fell in love and they got married. That's Betty and Sally Elsas' parents, who were great people. But my memories are almost none of the mill, except from a distance. I do remember, as a child, I say as a child, I remember the anguish of my parents because it was certainly a very . . . When my grandfather died in 1932, it was the largest employer in the state of Georgia. They had plants all over the country. I used to talk to my mother. She had Alzheimer's in her last two or three years, and the short-term memory is almost gone, at least in her case. So, one of my conversations would be, "Talk to me about the mill." She didn't know them all, but she knew where the plants were. She knew they were in Kansas City [Kansas]. They were in New York. They were in St. Louis [Missouri]. It was a huge operation.

BERMAN: Was it a slow demise then?

ASHER: I think it was probably steady, slow change in the textile [industry]. Imports from abroad and price competition. I remember that Norman, my uncle, was a very good friend of Elliott White Springs of Springs [Cotton] Mills. I know that all of them had had problems. It's nothing terribly unique to Fulton Cotton Mills. They simply went out earlier. They were a huge player.

BERMAN: Did Norman have children?

ASHER: No. No children. I do know, and you can always look back. One of the executives of the Fulton Cotton Mills was Frank [Henry Neely],7 who graduated from Georgia Tech. He went to work as an engineer with the mill and subsequently was recruited to go to Rich's. The rest is history. He was one of the great managers. He was a modern management expert. I remember the Hoover Commission. He was a man of enormous intellect and helped to lead the Rich's growth and expansion. What would have been, what could have been, in hindsight, had that same genius been applied in the textile business, don't know, but certainly benefited Rich's. And also benefited our family [laughs] traded one for the other. Going back to Boston, if I could for a

7 Frank Henry Neely (1884-1979), born in Augusta, Georgia, earned his BSc in mechanical engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology in 1904. After his graduation, Neely started his career in industry at Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In 1915 Neely joined Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills where he was production manager in plants of the company in Atlanta, Dallas, New Orleans, St. Louis, New York, and Minneapolis. In 1924, Neely became general manager in Rich’s Department Store in Atlanta.
BERMAN: Yes, that would be great. That's where I was heading too.

ASHER: Boston. The family there was the Ehrlich family. They were doctors. They were Harvard educated. They had various professions, one of which was on Harvard Square, called the Ehrlich Pipe Store, which is still there.

BERMAN: Really.

ASHER: It's not under their ownership. It sold back 25-30 years ago to somebody, but they retain it sort of as a landmark on Harvard Square. I say it's still there. It was there five years ago when I was there. It's one of these landmarks, the Ehrlich Pipe Store. How many people are buying pipes? I don't know what they sell there now, but we were there once. About five years ago, I was in an antique shop here in Atlanta on Peachtree-Dunwoody [Road]. I see two giant metal signs. Ehrlich Pipes. I said, “Oh, my gosh. I got to have those signs. I don't know what I'm going to do with them. I don’t even know if I can get them in my car, but I have to get them.” So, I bought them and paid an outrageous price. Had they known my need, my "emotional need" for that, they would have charged me twice as much. Nonetheless, I gave one to my brother and the other one I kept. It's really kind of an interesting thing. So, the Ehrlich Pipe Store was part of the family. My mother, who was born in 1906, they decided . . . the family had doctors. Very bright, capable doctors in Atlanta. They thought maybe, all things considered, maybe Boston would be a better place, so they shipped her . . . my grandmother, Emma, went up to Boston to have the baby.

BERMAN: Really?

ASHER: Yes. So, my mother was technically born in Boston Hospital.

BERMAN: A Yankee.

ASHER: A Yankee and brought back to Atlanta. I guess it's really hilarious when you think about it.

BERMAN: How did your mother meet your father? Then we can talk about some of your memories of your father.

ASHER: Right. My father got a job in Rich's. He was born in Midville, Georgia, in 1901. Excuse me, he wasn't born in Midville. He was born in Augusta.

BERMAN: Let's, for the purpose of the tape, say his name.

ASHER: Joseph F. Asher. Joseph Asher, born in Augusta. His father was named Julius.
don't know much about his family, quite frankly. They had all died, all of them, with the exception of a couple of sisters of his. His father, my grandfather, I never knew him. He died long before I was born. Had eight children also. Four girls and four boys.

BERMAN: I think they were here during the war. Didn't one of his ancestors fight for the Confederacy?

ASHER: One of his brothers, yes, did. Not one of his brothers, one of his uncles did, I believe. Anyway, they lived in Augusta. I think, as the story goes, he felt that Augusta, he wasn't going to really do very well. You need to get yourself geographically better suited. He decided the right place to be would be up in Burke County, in Midville, Georgia. Right in the middle, between the two biggest cities at the time, Savannah and Augusta. He was going to make it big. As we know, Burke County is not only still pretty rural but not . . . 15, 20, 25 years ago, when the Georgia Power Company decided to erect its first nuclear power plant, they looked all over the state, the largest state east of the Mississippi in square miles, and they landed on the most remote area they could, which is Burke County. That's where they put their first nuclear plant. If anything went wrong, nobody would get hurt. It would kill a little kudzu and a few alligators, but that would be it. But they lived there. He grew up there and went to Burke County High School, which he graduated from. We have some written documents about his memories of growing up there. He didn't go to college. He said he planned to go to college, but he got appendicitis and got sick. It took him apparently four, five or six months to recover. He came to Atlanta to get a job. He got a job working in [M.] Rich & Bros. dry goods. That's where he stayed for 55 years, at which he met my mother, who was a lamp buyer. Here's my mother, who is really very cultured. It's a shame we don't have her . . . well, we do have some oral history of hers, but she's just an exceptionally bright, cultured, artistic in many ways. She was a great dancer as a young girl. We have newspaper articles. You may have them here. They called her a young [Anna] Pavlova. She was a very, very talented artist and just terribly well read and bright. And here's this country boy from Midville, Georgia. But they fell in love. The family conflict, which can go on record now since everybody's gone to their great and glorious reward, is that my uncle was just furious. They weren't going to hire my dad at Fulton Cotton . . .

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8 Anna Pavlovna Pavlova (1881-1931) was a Russian prima ballerina of the late 19th and the early 20th centuries. She was a principal artist of the Imperial Russian Ballet and the Ballets Russes of Sergei Diaghilev. Pavlova is most recognized for the creation of the role The Dying Swan and, with her own company, became the first ballerina to tour ballet around the world. She toured South America and India.
BERMAN: This is Norman?

ASHER: Norman. Wouldn't hire him at Fulton Cotton Mills because he had no education. Certainly, he could never make, in my father's words, "Over $7,500 a year." That would be his maximum. He just wasn't good enough for the daughter of Oscar Elsas. Knowing all the parties involved, I can understand where that might come from. Nonetheless, one did quite well in business, et cetera. My dad and the other ran onto hard times. Somehow the irony of it is there is some poetic justice in there.

BERMAN: How did the rest of the family feel about the marriage?

ASHER: As far as I know, they felt very well. I was led to believe that it was Walter Rich, who was then running the business, who told my mother that this was the person for her. He was the right guy. "You need to marry Joe Asher." So, they got married. In fact, I guess, my parents' closest friends for their entire life were Virginia and Dick Rich, who was... he wasn't the son because his name really was Rosenheim, but he changed it to Rich from Savannah. He was a descendent. I guess he was the nephew of the family on the wife's side of the family.

BERMAN: One of the relatives.

ASHER: Yes.

BERMAN: What was it like being in the Rich's business all those years? It must have been really interesting to have your dad be with all the Riches, the Strausses, and the Weillers. Not Weiller, but Margaret Strauss [Weiller].

ASHER: Margaret Strauss, right.

BERMAN: Growing up with all of those, what I call, sort of the elite German-Jewish community here in Atlanta.

ASHER: It's sort of interesting. If you look at the genealogy, you can see going way back, four or five generations, several, five or six generations beyond me, there was Abraham Sartorius. He had children, and they got married. As you come down the tree, Atlanta was a small community. You can actually trace the roots that there is through marriage or relationship, between the Riches, the Strausses, the Elsases, and the Ashers. That's because the Atlanta German-Jewish community was a small community. I'm very fond... I loved the store. I

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9 Richard “Dick” H. Rich (1901-1975) was a grandson of the founder of Rich’s department store in Atlanta, Georgia. He took over as president of Rich’s in 1949 and under his leadership Rich's began expansion in the 1950’s. Richard's mother, Rosalind Rich Rosenheim, was the daughter of Morris Rich, founder of Rich's. Richard changed his name legally from Rosenheim to Rich because his grandfather wanted him to. Richard served in WWII in the US Army Air Forces.
thought everything about it was terrific. I guess the genes are there. I'm a salesman, and my dad was a salesman. Unlike Dad, I did not go into the retail business for a number of reasons, not the least of which, I was very intrigued by an offer that I got when I got out of the [United States] Army, and I took it. Nonetheless, I guess it was available. But I loved it. My dad, he was really, he was the kind of guy that just stuck to it. He just plodded along, year after year, day after day.

BERMAN: What were his different positions over the years?

ASHER: [He] must have started as a clerk. Of course, the store grew in the 1930s. Keep in mind, I guess he went to work there in the 1920s. The store went public sometime in the 1920, I believe, which probably fostered a lot of its growth. He was always in the menswear area. That was his strength. He was the buyer. Then he became, he had some corporate responsibilities. He became the corporate secretary. [He] went on the board. He was on the board probably for 40 years, so he was an early board member. He was part of the inner group of executives that were responsible for that. His strength was . . . he was a buyer. He understood the trade. He traveled. I remember as a little boy, they sent me to camp, my brother and I. We would go to New York. On those trips, you would have to stop in New York when you are going to Maine, where they sent us to camp. I can remember going into the AMC, Associated Merchandising Corp., which was the trade group that provided acquisition for all his goods, and the offices. That was his life. His company was his life and those people. It did well by him.

BERMAN: What kind of memories do you have of Dick Rich?

ASHER: Very fond memories. I was crazy about Dick. He was a charming guy. Lived on 27 West Andrews [Drive] the time that I knew him. They lived before that, as my parents did, over in Druid Hills. He lived on Fairview Road, right up the street from where Margaret lived. I was crazy about him. He was a great guy. Virginia. Ginny, or Virginia, his wife, was just a beautiful, charming, lovely woman with a fabulous sense of humor. My mother was crazy about her. They were just the best of friends. As kids, we would go over there. They had the pool and the tennis court. I didn't know anybody else with a pool or tennis court, but they did. I grew up with them, my brother and I did, with Sally, who was the oldest daughter, and Virginia, or Ginger, who was two or three years older than me, a couple of years older. Mike, who was a couple of years younger than me. I liked Mike a lot. The families pretty much did a lot of things together. I went to Marist [School]. We're getting off the subject a little bit.

BERMAN: No, that's fine.
ASHER: Marist. I was a discipline problem as a kid.

BERMAN: Really?

ASHER: Yes, I was. My mouth got me in a lot of trouble. I always said that thank goodness I find I could earn a living using my mouth. But I was a problem. I went to Highland School. Actually, if you want to go back.

BERMAN: Sure.

ASHER: I went to Mrs. Matthew's Nursery School. That was on Oakdale Road. I had a terrible stutter, which I guess, subsequently, I grew out of, although it's sort of interesting. I, technically, don't stutter. Every now and then, at my current age, I will get to a word or phrase that just won't come out. It just won't, no matter how hard I say it. I can tell you the words. I know that when someone asks me, "Where did you spend . . . ?" "We went on a trip to the Loire Valley [France]." I was careful to say that, but for the longest time, I couldn't say, "Loire." I don't know, a speech therapist will tell you why that was, but it just wouldn't come out. It's in the, last year, two years. Nonetheless. They sent me to a school over, it was still there years ago. It was at North Decatur Road near Oakdale-Oxford Roads. I can remember it was for a lot of kids with disabilities. Most of them had physical disabilities. I absolutely remember it.

BERMAN: What was the name of it? Miss Matthew's?

ASHER: No, it wasn't Miss Matthew's. It was there. The school went on for 50 years or more. My memories, I don't remember the age, but I probably was eight to ten years old. I remember we had the Three Wise Men. We were doing the Christmas pageant and the Three Wise Men. I remember everyone had a physical disability, a major disability, except me. I had this speech disability. I guess in those days, if you needed training of some kind, there weren't many resources. The state of the art was not very well known. I went from there to Highland School. The building is still there, but it's condominiums, on Highland Avenue right near North Avenue. I went from, I suspect, the first grade or kindergarten, first grade there, all the way through the sixth grade there with a lot of Atlantans who I still see, including Alfred Uhry, Harold Adair, Stanley

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10 Alfred Fox Uhry was born December 3, 1936 in Atlanta. Uhry is a playwright, screenwriter, and member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers. He is one of very few writers to receive an Academy Award, Tony Award, and the Pulitzer Prize for dramatic writing. Uhry's early work for the stage was as a lyricist and librettist for a number of musicals. Driving Miss Daisy (1987) is the first in what is known as his Atlanta Trilogy of plays and earned him the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. He adapted it into the screenplay for the 1989 film which was awarded the Academy Award for Writing Adapted Screenplay. The second of the trilogy, The Last Night of Ballyhoo (1996), received the Tony Award for Best Play when produced on Broadway. The third was a 1998 musical called Parade. The libretto earned him a Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical. Uhry wrote the screenplay not only for the film version of Driving
Daniels, and Sue Tancil [sp], who was then Sue Joel, and Gail Martin. Gosh, I mean, I have fond memories of that school. As usual, I got in a lot of trouble. I remember I got in a lot of trouble. The reason I do remember is because my parents took me out and sent me to the one school that hopefully would correct me. That was Marist, which was, of course, a military. I don't think it's military anymore, but it's Catholic priests, down on Pryor Street, downtown Atlanta.

**BERMAN:** There were a lot of young Jewish boys who went to Marist.

**ASHER:** There were.

**BERMAN:** I thought it was unusual when I first heard about that.

**ASHER:** There were only two private school opportunities for boys, Marist and GMA, Georgia Military Academy, which is Woodward Academy. Woodward Academy was in College Park. Marist was downtown. We would go in a car, a carpool. I remember that Lyons Joel's father had a Cadillac, I believe. It was a two-door. It didn't have a seat in the back. It had a wooden bench. You could stand up in the back, but you couldn't sit down. I remember as we got older, we were allowed to take the trolley from Springdale Road.

**BERMAN:** What other Jewish boys went to Marist with you?

**ASHER:** Richard Strauss was in the class with me. Jimmy Montag was in my class. Skippy Elsas went there, but he was a year younger than me. Most of us left there in the ninth grade. Only seventh, eighth and ninth grade there.

**BERMAN:** And they were very accepting because it's a Catholic school.

**ASHER:** Very. It's very accepting. There was no pressure on us to do anything religious. I remember we would have to just sit during the Catholic training class. As a result, I, by absorption, knew all the prayers. But, no, they were very, very nice. I mean, it was very accommodating. I really enjoyed those days. I remember very fondly. . . I do remember a number of things, including the fact that the military uniforms were horribly hot. I do have movies, which I gave you, of us. Had to be the ninth-grade prom, where I took Sue Tancil. Was Sue Gumble. Sue Joel. Excuse me. Stanley [Gumble] was her first husband. Jimmy Montag took Gail Martin. The four of us, I'm sure we have movies of that.

**BERMAN:** After Marist you went?

**ASHER:** Marist. My parents were not happy with my grades. My grades were actually too high. That was the first time in my life that I was getting, literally, and I'd never done this before.

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*Miss Daisy* but also for the 1993 film *Rich in Love.* He co-wrote the screenplay for the 1988 film *Mystic Pizza.*
I was getting like 95 to 98. They said, "No son of ours is that smart. We're taking him . . ." To go back on the discipline thing, I remember that the head of the Highland School, and I can't think of her name, but she was the head principal. She was a big Catholic. She was at one of the graduations or one of the ceremonies or something there. She was astounded that Tommy Asher could get those kinds of grades. It was just more than she could bear, considering I had spent so much time in the hall and had done very little studying. You know, what can you learn in the hall? That's where I spent most of my time. One of the few things I remember, the teacher was, "Asher, in the hall." From there, they sent me to the Asheville School for Boys, as it was called then. Founded around the turn of the century by Harvey Firestone. That was the head of the Firestone family. He was a friend of the Vanderbilt family. He would go to visit the Vanderbilt house there, the grand house in Asheville. Loved the place, but [he said], "We can't stay here year round. There's no place to educate our children." So, he founded the Asheville School. My dad had a partner, a fellow by the name of Joe Mead [sp], who was a great guy. I remember him very well, and his daughter still. His daughter died, but his son-in-law still lives here. A fellow named Craig Maher [sp]. He was from Asheville. His family was in the banking business there. He said, "We got a great school that he went to. You ought to send him up there." There we go. So, they shipped Norman, me, and Mike Rich. The three of us were taken out of Marist and shipped unceremoniously up to the Asheville School, which I just hated, every minute. I thought I was in prison. It was morose. It was difficult. Sure enough, as they predicted, my grades plummeted. It was a real academic burden.

BERMAN: You were there until your senior year?

ASHER: Right. I was there. Graduated from the Asheville School. I applied to two colleges. I applied to University of North Carolina and to Cornell. My uncle had gone to Cornell. My brother was at Cornell at the time. All the friends that I knew at the Asheville School, including my classmates, were going on to Carolina. I just wanted to go there because that's where they were going. I only knew one person at Cornell, and that was my brother. I hadn't visited. But my mother and father said, "That's where you're going." That's good enough for me. That's where I'm going. Sure enough, we got in our car in fall of 1954 and headed up to Ithaca, New York. Takes a couple of days to get there. Pull up, and that's the first sight I've ever seen of the

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1) Harvey Samuel Firestone (1868-1938) was an American businessman, and the founder of the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, one of the first makers of automobile tires.
campus. I thank the good Lord that that happened because it was the greatest experience of my life. I mean, I still look on my college days, not only as the most enjoyable, rewarding, and stimulating, I was in an academic atmosphere that was wonderful. The courses were fascinating. Teachers and everything. It was just state of the art in terms of . . . I found out that prep school was a lot tougher because it wasn't challenging, I suspect. I don't know what the motivation was, but I loved it. I was really very lucky. It's where I met my wife [Spring] and my son met his wife, so we have a lot to be thankful for there.

BERMAN: Was Norman a discipline problem as well? Your brother Norman?

ASHER: No, he was not. He was the good brother. I was the bad brother. There's no question about that. That's always been the case. No, he was the thoughtful one.

BERMAN: He's older than you?

ASHER: He's 21 months older. He was born on January 31, 1934. I was born October 14. He was born on Franklin [D] Roosevelt's\textsuperscript{12} birthday. I was born on Dwight [D.] Eisenhower's\textsuperscript{13} birthday. We went everywhere together. He went up to Cornell. It just shows you, you take it as it goes. I remember arriving on the Cornell campus. By the way, that summer before, I had gone to Europe. I was \textit{The Catcher in the Rye},\textsuperscript{14} I was Holden Caulfield. I believe I was 17, soon to be 18, and very naive. Alfred Uhry and I got on a tour, and we went to Europe. I'll leave all the X-rated stuff out, but it was an interesting experience for these two young boys who head off to Europe for the first time in their lives. We come back, and Alfred was going to Brown [University], where he wrote shows. Of course, he became enormously successful. And I headed off to Cornell. I arrived at Cornell. The first thing they did was put me up in a . . . they had World War II barracks then, literally, on the north side of the campus. I don't know if you've ever seen the

\textsuperscript{12} Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945) was the 32\textsuperscript{nd} President of the United States and a central figure in world events during the mid-twentieth century, leading the United States through a time of worldwide economic crisis and war. Popularly known as ‘FDR,’ he collapsed and died in his home in Warm Springs, Georgia just a few months before the end of the war. He was a Democrat. FDR was an avid horse rider and enjoyed an active early life. He was diagnosed with infantile paralysis, better known as polio, in 1921, at the age of 39. Despite permanent paralysis from the waist down, he was careful never to be seen using his wheelchair in public, and great care was taken to prevent any portrayal in the press that would highlight his disability.

\textsuperscript{13} Dwight David Eisenhower (1890-1969) was the 34\textsuperscript{th} President of the United States, serving from 1953 until 1961. He was a five-star general in the United States Army during World War II and served as Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, headquartered in Reims, France.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{The Catcher in the Rye} is a story written by J.D. Salinger, partially published in serial form in 1945–1946 and as a novel in 1951. A classic novel originally published for adults, it has since become popular with adolescent readers for its themes of teenage angst and alienation. It has been translated into almost all of the world's major languages. Around 1 million copies are sold each year. The novel's protagonist Holden Caulfield has become an icon for teenage rebellion. The novel also deals with innocence, identity, belonging, loss, and connection.
campus. Perfectly beautiful place. If you filmed a movie, you would say . . . there are several campuses where are prototypical, the dream campuses. Wellesley [College] happens to be one, where my mother went. I’ll talk about her in a minute. Cornell was the other. I remember these World War II army barracks where they put us up. They had these new buildings about to open, but they weren't ready yet for us freshmen. Fraternity rush comes around. They did that before school started then, literally. I remember we were there. I had an interesting experience. The first time we get up to Cornell . . . is this train of thought okay?

BERMAN: It's wonderful.

ASHER: This is James Joyce\textsuperscript{15} train of thought. When you showed up there in those days, they had a summer camp. They took us in buses. All the freshmen, everybody. This was two weeks before any classes or anything. You get in a bus, and you head off [for] two or three or four days, someplace in the Pocono [Mountains, Pennsylvania] into, literally, a camp. Cabins. The idea was . . . they had the cheerleaders there. They taught you the songs. It was really camp. About the history. During the day, you do camp stuff. I do remember sitting around that first time in my life, and as we were getting ready to go to sleep, a couple of the students started to talk about Christianity and how much Jesus meant to them. They were crying. I mean, I was really witnessing. It was for the first time, all of a sudden, “What is going on here?” This was an experience I had never seen in my life. Then I realized that I had not really spent a segregated life at all.

BERMAN: I'm so glad you mentioned that, because that was my next question. I wanted to talk about growing up in Atlanta and being within the kind of insular Jewish community and also the role that religion might have played within your family, and about the Temple\textsuperscript{16} and some of your recollections there. If we could first talk about . . .

ASHER: Okay.

\textsuperscript{15} James Augustine Aloysius Joyce (1882-1941), born in Dublin, Ireland, was a novelist, short story writer, poet, teacher, and literary critic. He is regarded as one of the most influential and important authors of the 20th century. Joyce is best known for \textit{Ulysses} (1922), a landmark work in which the episodes of Homer’s \textit{Odyssey} are paralleled in a variety of literary styles, most famously stream of consciousness. Other well-known works are the short-story collection \textit{Dubliners} (1914), and the novels \textit{A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man} (1916) and \textit{Finnegans Wake} (1939). His other writings include three books of poetry, a play, his published letters, and occasional journalism.

\textsuperscript{16} 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 approximately 1,500 families (2015).
BERMAN: There's a lot. [Laughs] Did you just associate within a small group of Jewish . . .

ASHER: Yes. To a large extent, yes. As a matter of fact, not only did we associate with a small group but we were members of the Temple. My parents were members of the Standard Club. We were the German Jews. We heard a lot about the difference. In fact, they really didn't approve of . . . I don't remember any outward disapproval, but I do remember some association with either Conservative or non-German Jews. That wasn't our crowd. It wasn't our kind. There is no question that in *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, Alfred Uhry captured it very, very well. It's really sad and unfortunate, but thank goodness those days are gone. The reality of it, was they wore their German Jewish heritage on their sleeve. The rest of the Jews were okay, but they were not . . . they were a little too Jewish. We did go to Sunday school where, as usual, we got into trouble.

BERMAN: But you didn't really associate with non-Jews, even at Marist?

ASHER: No, we did not. Did not associate with non-Jews. In grammar school I had some friends, but they really were . . . no, you're right. Our crowd was largely, the kids I grew up with and associated with were our parents' friends' children. That was who we played with. That's who we saw. They were in our neighborhood, and that was pretty much it. We were at the Standard Club, which was, of course, a German Jewish club.

BERMAN: By the time, in the 1940s . . .

ASHER: The Temple, which was a German Jewish synagogue. Ironically, it originally was Orthodox synagogue.

BERMAN: By the 1940s, didn't the Standard Club start to have some eastern European Jews?

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17 The Standard Club is a Jewish social club that started as the Concordia Association in 1867 in Downtown Atlanta. In 1905, it was reorganized as the ‘Standard Club’ and moved into the former mansion of William C. Sanders near the site of Georgia State Stadium (formerly Turner Field). In the late 1920’s the club moved to Ponce de Leon Avenue in Midtown Atlanta. Later, the club moved to what is now the Lenox Park business park and was located there until 1983. In the 1980s, the club moved to its present location in Johns Creek in Atlanta’s northern suburbs.

18 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).

19 *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* is a play written by Atlanta native, Alfred Uhry, that premiered in 1996 in Atlanta. The play is a comedy/drama, which is set in Atlanta, Georgia, in December 1939. From 1931 to late 1950s, Ballyhoo was a teen courtship weekend that took place in southern cities, which included Montgomery, Alabama’s ‘Falcon,’ Birmingham, Alabama’s ‘Jubilee,’ Columbus, Georgia’s ‘Holly Days,’ and Atlanta, Georgia’s ‘Ballyhoo.’ They were attended by college-age Jewish youth from across the South who participated in rounds of breakfast dates, lunch dates, tea dance dates, early evening dates, late night dates, formal dances, and cocktail parties, with the goal of meeting a “nice Jewish boy or girl” who might well become a spouse.

20 Orthodox Judaism is a traditional branch of Judaism that strictly follows the Written Torah and the Oral Law concerning prayer, dress, food, sex, family relations, social behavior, the Sabbath day, holidays, and more.
ASHER: I'm sure they did. I do remember going over there. I can remember, that was our time in the summertime, where we would go if we didn't go to camp. We went to . . . my parents first sent me to Fritz Orr Camp, which was on the Westminster property. Any vacation time in the summer, it would be at the Standard Club. Then the polio epidemic broke out.

BERMAN: What year was that?

ASHER: We were at the 50th anniversary. It's got to be in the late 1950s, mid to late 1950s. I'm guessing. Somewhere in there. Right around the 50th anniversary.

BERMAN: Yes, I think so.

ASHER: I can remember both being quarantined at home, literally, not being able to leave the house. I remember my mother used to bring games home to us. We'd be stuck on our property for weeks at a time. Then they figured when we got old enough, they could send us to Maine where there was no polio outbreak. Apparently, the outbreaks were confined to the South.

BERMAN: That's so interesting to me because I often wondered why so many young German Jewish kids from Atlanta went up to Maine for camp. I wonder, is that the reason?

ASHER: Yes and no. Yes, there was reason to get them out of the South. There were camps in the South. There is Athens Y[YMCA] and other camps that a lot of Jewish kids went to. Of course, the great German Jewish camps were in Maine. Kennebec, Nebagamon, and Wigwam. I don't know all the names offhand, but up there, you were with your kind. There was our crowd. The Goldmans and the Sachs were there. I can absolutely remember about two years ago, I'm at a meeting of the Community Foundation . . . we have an investment committee, which I've been on for a number of years. We had hired the son of Gus Levy. He was in his mid to late 60s, who was one of the founders of Goldman Sachs, one of the early, major partners. This guy is sitting at the other table talking about investments of the Community Foundation. I said, “I know this

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21 Fritz Orr, Jr. (1907 - 2015) Since the early 1930s and into the late 1970s, the Orr family owned and directed two summer camps, now Westminster’s Summer Camp located in Conyers, Georgia. Fritz owned and operated a farm in Palmetto, Georgia, for several years before serving as owner and director of Camp Merrie-Woode for Girls in Sapphire, North Carolina. He created a foundation to ensure that it could continue. Today, for more than 60 years, Westminster’s Summer Camps continue to educate children with more than 30 various camps for a traditional day camp experience.

22 Gustave "Gus" Levy (1910-1976) was senior partner of Goldman Sachs from 1969 until his death in 1976.

23 The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc., is an American multinational investment bank and financial services company headquartered in New York City. It also offers services in investment management, securities, asset management, prime brokerage, and securities underwriting. Goldman Sachs was founded in New York in 1869 by Marcus Goldman. In 1882, Goldman's son-in-law Samuel Sachs joined the firm. In 1885, Goldman took his son Henry and his son-in-law Ludwig Dreyfuss into the business and the firm adopted its present name, Goldman Sachs & Co. The company joined the New York Stock Exchange in 1896.
I've seen this guy, but it's been a long time.” I went up to him afterwards. I said, "Did you go to Kennebec?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Were you there in . . .?" I named the year. He said, "Yes." I said, "I remember you, but I don't remember you in long pants. I remember you in short pants." That was Peter Levy. A lot of them went on to Wall Street careers. That's where they were. That was the German Jews, which, as you know from Our Crowd, Stephen Birmingham's 24 story, they all headed off into restrictive investment banks because Jews were not allowed to be at Morgan Stanley. 25 They were allowed in Bache [& Company]. That was the other crowd because Jules Bache 26 was not of the "our crowd." It was Goldman, Sachs, Loeb Rhoades, 27 and Lehman. 28 These were all the great, wealthy industrialists, the investment bankers to much of America. They were there. They went to those camps.

BERMAN: Is that how you first got interested in . . .

ASHER: No, it really isn't. I knew zippo about the business. I knew nothing about the investment business. I was very blessed. I got in the business because Julian Hirshberg, who owned a broker-dealer here in Atlanta. Was a very successful over-the-counter broker-dealer. He was a friend of my parents. He offered me a summer job. I met a man there by the name of [Newell] Barnard Murphy.

BERMAN: Harden?

ASHER: Barnard. BAR-nard is the way it's pronounced. When I got out of the army, which

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25 Morgan Stanley is an American multinational investment bank and financial services company headquartered in Manhattan, New York City.

26 Jules Semon Bache (1861-1944) was an American banker, art collector, and philanthropist. In 1881, he started work as a cashier at Leopold Cahn & Co., a stockbrokerage firm founded by his uncle. In 1886, he was made a minority partner and in 1892 took full control of the business, renaming it J.S. Bache & Co. Jules Bache built the company into one of the top brokerage houses in the United States. In 1981, Bach was acquired by Prudential Financial.

27 Loeb, Rhoades & Co. was a Wall Street brokerage firm founded in 1931 and acquired in 1979 by Shearson Hayden Stone. The firm operated as Shearson Loeb Rhoades for two years. The firm would ultimately be acquired in 1981 by American Express to form Shearson/American Express and three years later Shearson Lehman/American Express.

28 The Lehman family is a prominent family of Jewish-German-American businesspeople who founded the financial firm Lehman Brothers which was the sixth largest investment banking house in the United States by 1950. The family traces back to Abraham Lehmann, a cattle merchant in Rimpar, Bavaria, who changed his Yiddish surname Löw (Loeb) to the German Lehman. Lehman Brothers was co-founded by brothers Henry and Emanuel Lehman. Other Lehman family members were New York Governor Herbert Lehman, for whom Lehman College is named; Robert Lehman, who donated his art collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art; District Attorney Robert Morgenthau; and a former ambassador to Denmark, John Loeb Jr.
was in the fall of 1950. Excuse me, early in the year, in March, February or March of 1959. When I got out of the active army, he called me up, and he said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm not doing anything." He said, "How would you like to be a broker?" I knew nothing about what a broker did other than a small amount of summer work. I didn't even know what they did. I said, "Well, that sounds good. Where are you?" He said, "I'm at a firm called Goodbody & Company," which is on Marietta Street. I went over for the interview, and he offered me a job, which was one job more than anyplace else has ever offered me. I guess the assumption was I could work at Rich's if I wanted to. I was really lucky. This guy was . . . first of all, it turned out I have an aptitude for selling, and I like the business. But more important than that, a lot of people do that. He was a wonderful leader. He was kind. He was interested. He was concerned, and he was a mentor. It's a tough business. The volume on the [New York Stock] Exchange is two million shares. That would be a busy day, quite frankly. It was anything but what we have today. He was great. He was one of the great people I've ever known in my life. I was fortunate enough to go from there to, without getting into the business history, on to Robinson Humphrey, where a second or third mentors were Justus [C.] Martin [Jr.] and [Alexander] Sandy Yearley, who were running the firm then. It was a small business. Probably had less than a hundred employees then. They were, same way, same type of personalities. They were terrific. Goodbody actually went out of business, which is where we separated. I needed to get a job, so went out interviewing for a job and found Robinson Humphrey would hire me. They were the same way, and so I've been lucky. Unfortunately, both of them have died, and the company has been sold. I'm still at Smith Barney, an LLC Citigroup. Nonetheless, in some 46 years in the investment business, going back to 1959, I've had . . . and most people don't have one, but I've had three people who were just brilliant, capable people who cared. That's a whole other story.

BERMAN: No, I think it's so interesting. Do you find yourself that you have taken on the role of mentor over the years to young people who have come in because of those experiences?

ASHER: I think so. I've tried to do that. I was a manager of two offices in Atlanta, one of which I started from scratch. Hired all the employees and bought all the furniture and bought the signs and did the advertising, and I still see those people. I tell people that in my 46 years in the business, I've only cried twice, and it wasn't when I retired. It was when I left those two offices. One of them was a big office. The small office, we had about 20-25 brokers and another 10 or 15 staff. The other one had about 50 brokers and about 35 staff. Yes, it really is your family. I still
see a lot of those people. Some have gone on and have been enormously successful, have made great fortunes. Whatever they've done, they've been successful. Yes, I really have. I still try to do that. That's why really the last four or five years, since I really retired, that's why I teach, mainly, in the investment business.

BERMAN: Where do you teach?

ASHER: I teach at Smith Barney. I go around the country. They have a training center. I spend probably, typically, two weeks a month there. I could never . . . I honestly contribute a lot of success was the encouragement of my wife, who said, "I know being on straight commission is hard, but you can do it." Secondly, to the people that were there. The attrition in our business is about 85 percent. Fifteen percent survive. Eighty-five percent say, "You know, what? I'd rather have my hand slammed in a car door than do this anymore. My life, it's awful." Anyway, that's probably more than you wanted to know.

BERMAN: No, no, it's not. Because we have lots of time. As long as you are ok.

ASHER: I've got time. Yes.

BERMAN: I want to get more to your wife in a minute. First, I want to go back again to the religious part and the Temple. What are your recollections? Do you have recollections, strong, of Rabbi [David] Marx?29

ASHER: I do remember him. But keep in mind, I was very young.

BERMAN: What did your parents think of him? Do you remember discussions about him? Because I didn't hear one way or the other.

ASHER: He was a neighbor. He lived . . . I shouldn't say he was a neighbor. His son turns out to be one of my dad's closest friends, David Marx. I grew up with their daughters, Mary Louise and Ellen, who lived right around the corner from us. We all lived within a block. We lived on Springdale, Oakdale, Lull Water. Those were the streets in Druid Hills. That's where they lived. We would carpool together to Sunday school. I remember. Again, I spent a little bit of time in the rabbi's office, not at my own <unintelligible> because I was a problem.

BERMAN: Was he stern?

ASHER: He was. I don't remember. It's sort of interesting. I remember [Rabbi Jacob] Jack

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29 Rabbi David Marx 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.
Rothschild very well. I had an incident with Jack Rothschild. I liked him a lot. I mean, I have seen some brilliant, articulate professors at Cornell, who I just was crazy about, who I found to be, just their minds were so good. When I got out of the army, which was in 1959, I became active in the Atlanta community. I became active at the Temple. I went on the board of the Temple early on. I used to go to adult education classes that Jack Rothschild taught. I thought he was terrific.

BERMAN: What was he like as an individual?

ASHER: Nice guy. One of the really nice people. He wasn't a hail fellow. I know he played golf in the Standard Club. He was very good friends with some of my parents' friends. To a certain extent, he was in their social circle, he and Janice. I really respected him. I thought he was terrific. My parents were not religious at all, and my father was almost a religious.

BERMAN: And yet they still only had Jewish friends.

ASHER: Only had Jewish friends. They really, unfortunately, sadly, were part of that group that were either assimilationists or to a certain extent, were ashamed of being Jews. Wanted to be accepted. It's not unlike what's read in the Philip Roth book. It's very similar. I thought it was unique to us. The one thing that was encouraging over the years is to find that there were other people who had similar families.

BERMAN: Why do you think they felt that way?

ASHER: Leo Frank possibly. I really don't know. I know that the community was, don't

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30 Rabbi Jacob Rothschild 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 Janice Oettenger Rothschild Blumberg married Rabbi Jacob Rothschild, a prominent and well-known rabbi of the Temple in Atlanta. Rabbi Rothschild died in 1974. Janice later remarried and moved to Washington, D.C. with her second husband, David Blumberg. She has held leadership positions in numerous organizations, including the B'nai B'rith Klutznick National Jewish Museum, and served as president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society. She has lectured at universities, synagogues, museums and academic conferences across the country. In addition to authoring and contributing to several books, she has written articles for the Encyclopedia Judaica, Southern Jewish History, The Atlanta Journal and Constitution Sunday Magazine. In 2012 she returned to Atlanta to live.

32 Philip Milton Roth (1933–2018) was an American novelist and short-story writer. Roth's fiction is regularly set in his birthplace of Newark, New Jersey and is known for its intensely autobiographical character, for philosophically and formally blurring the distinction between reality and fiction, and for its explorations of American identity. Roth's family was Jewish. His parents were second-generation Americans. Roth's father's parents came from Kozlov near Lviv/Lemberg in Galicia. His mother's family were from the region of Kiev.

33 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
forget, all the clubs were restricted. There was the German Jewish club, the Standard Club, the Mayfair Club, and the Progressive Club. Supposedly, the elite were in the Standard Club. I still have some friends of mine who jokingly say, "We knew you were goyim growing up." I didn't think in those terms. These were people who were in the other crowd. I don't know. It's really kind of sad.

BERMAN: Did you celebrate Jewish holidays?

ASHER: No, we did not. We didn't. The only Passover I can remember ever going to as a child was at... Frank was not Jewish. He converted to Judaism. His wife, Rachel Parker, Rae Parker, was Jewish, and her son was a rabbi. He fell in love with her. Of course, Frank Neely was god. He was head of Rich's. He was a community leader. He was everything. He was on a national plane. He was friends with President Roosevelt. He had this spectacular home, which is today known as the Neely Farm. I think the house is still there. It's a huge development, which you have films of. I gave you pictures of scenes of Frank Neely at his farm, which are really kind of interesting. I can remember going in his house. You have to bring me back on track. But seeing pictures of presidents. My only remembrances are Passover that he had at his apartment in Atlanta. We had no celebration. There was even sort of a cynical...

BERMAN: But didn't the rest of the German crowd go to services on Rosh Ha-Shanah or Yom

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.

34 The Mayfair Club opened in 1938 at 1456 Spring Street in Midtown Atlanta. The two-story club was a focal point of Jewish life in the city for more than 25 years. The club was founded in 1930 and first met at the Biltmore Hotel. Eleanor Roosevelt, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, mayors Ivan Allen and William Berry Hartsfield, senators Herman Talmadge and Richard Russell, and Governor Carl Sanders visited the club. Fire destroyed the Mayfair Club on December 4, 1964.

35 The Jewish Progressive Club was a Jewish social organization that was established in 1913 by Russian Jews who felt unwelcome at the Standard Club, where German Jews were predominant. At first the club was located in a rented house until a new club was built on Pryor Street including a swimming pool and a gym. In 1940 the club opened a larger facility at 1050 Techwood Drive in Midtown with three swimming pools, tennis and softball. In 1976 the club moved north to 1160 Moore’s Mill Road near Interstate 75. The property was eventually sold as the club faced financial challenges and the Carl E. Sanders Family YMCA at Buckhead opened in 1996.

36 Goy is a Hebrew word meaning “people” or “nation.” In common usage, it designates a non-Jewish or Gentile person. Goyim is plural.

37 Hebrew: Pesach. The anniversary of Israel’s liberation from Egyptian bondage. The holiday lasts for eight days. Unleavened bread, matzah, is eaten in memory of the unleavened bread prepared by the Israelite during their hasty flight from Egypt, when they had not time to wait for the dough to rise. On the first two nights of Passover, the seder, the central event of the holiday is celebrated. The seder service is one of the most colorful and joyous occasions in Jewish life. In addition to eating matzah during the seder, Jews are prohibited from eating leavened bread during the entire week of Passover. In addition, Jews are also supposed to avoid foods made with wheat, barley, rye, spelt or oats unless those foods are labeled ‘kosher for Passover.’ Jews traditionally have separate dishes for Passover.

38 Rosh Ha-Shanah [Hebrew: head of the year; i.e. New Year festival] begins the cycle of High Holy Days. It
Kippur\(^{39}\) or just on the High Holy Days?\(^{40}\)

ASHER: I think so.

BERMAN: But your family didn't?

ASHER: They did not.

BERMAN: Did you feel left out?

ASHER: No.

BERMAN: Did you go to Sunday school?

ASHER: I went to Sunday school, yes. We went to Sunday school at the Temple. Don't forget, I didn't get confirmed\(^{41}\) because I was sent up to the Asheville school before that. I remember going to the Asheville School, and there was a boy there that . . . a small class, 16-18 people in your class, the only other one Jew in the class. I remember they didn't like him. They wanted me to do something because it would be okay if I did it because I was a Jew. All of a sudden, this stuff is just starting to dawn on me. “What's going on here?” You know, you're a creature of your environment. You don't know. When I went to Cornell, my brother had joined . . . didn't join ZBT [Zeta Beta Tau].\(^{42}\) That was the German Jewish fraternity, as you know, and the kids from the west. He joined the New York Jews, much to the chagrin of my parents, Tau Delta Phi.\(^{43}\) In hindsight, probably some of the most extraordinary human beings in America today came out of that fraternity, including one of my classmates, is MacArthur Fellow, Emeritus Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader's\(^{44}\) husband [Martin D. Ginsburg] was a fraternity brother and

introduces the Ten Days of Penitence, when Jews examine their souls and take stock of their actions. On the tenth day is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The tradition is that on Rosh Ha-Shanah, G-d sits in judgment on humanity. Then the fate of every living creature is inscribed in the Book of Life or Death. Prayer and repentance before the sealing of the books on Yom Kippur may revoke these decisions.

\(^{39}\) Hebrew for ‘Day of Atonement.’ The most sacred day of the Jewish year. Yom Kippur is a 25 hour fast day. Most of the day is spent in prayer, reciting yizkor for deceased relatives, confessing sins, requesting divine forgiveness, and listening to Torah readings and sermons. People greet each other with the wish that they may be sealed in the heavenly book for a good year ahead. The day ends with the blowing of the shofar (a ram’s horn).

\(^{40}\) The two High Holy Days are Rosh Ha-Shanah (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).

\(^{41}\) Confirmation marks the culmination of a special year in the life of Jewish students between ages 16 and 18; a period of religious study beyond bar or bat mitzvah. In some Conservative synagogues the confirmation concept has been adopted as a way to continue and child’s Jewish education and involvement for a few more years.

\(^{42}\) Founded in 1898 as the world's first Jewish fraternity, Zeta Beta Tau (ZBT) prides itself on being an inclusive organization welcoming of any college man who understands and appreciates our mission. With more than 140,000 initiated men ZBT's can be found in all aspects of life: business, entertainment, media, politics, and much more. In 1989, ZBT became the first fraternity to abolish pledging from its organization and, in its place, created a brotherhood program that focuses on equal rights, privileges, and responsibilities for all members.

\(^{43}\) Tau Delta Phi was founded on June 22, 1910. First known as a local fraternity, Phi Sigma Beta, they started at the Community Center of the Greenwich section of New York as a fraternity for Jewish men who were otherwise barred from fraternity life at that time. The Alpha class was initiated on July 16, 1914.

\(^{44}\) Ruth Joan Bader Ginsburg (born 1933) is an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United states. Ginsburg
so many accomplished people. The head of Goldman Sachs. For the first time in my life, and I was the Southerner, and my brother. We were the only ones that weren't from either Westchester [County, New York] or New York City, came out of Horace Mann [School], came out of the public schools. As a result, they were super bright. We had 65 fraternities and 13 sororities on the Cornell campus. They had probably 10 or 12 Jewish fraternities. They would take all the grade scores of all the students in the entire campus, and they ranked the fraternities. My fraternity was always [receiving] the highest grade score, the smartest kids.

<End Video Tape 1>

<Begin Video Tape 2>

ASHER: I remember riding with her, with Margaret's chauffeur.

BERMAN: With Margaret Strauss?

ASHER: Yes, the grandmother, who was Ruby Strauss. They had this beautiful Neel Reid designed home there on Fairview Road, and Richard, her brother, was exactly my age. We were two days apart. I can remember they had a car with a window that went up, an electric window, that went up between the driver and the people in the back. It was either Springdale, Oakdale, Lullwater [area].

BERMAN: Did the chauffeur ever take all the kids to Sunday school?

ASHER: He didn't, but Alfred's grandmother's chauffeur, who was in a play, that would have been Will. Will, as it turned out, when we moved over to Nancy Creek in about 1970, they, Alene [Fox] Uhry and her mother were Miss Lena, Lena Fox, living over there, right behind us. Our property abutted to the back of hers. She was on Paces Ferry Road and Nancy Creek, but we were back-door neighbors. Will would drive up every day in a Cadillac. He was still there. It was right out of a movie. I remember Morris Hirsch. He was a great guy. He was on Lullwater

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45 Horace Mann School is an independent college preparatory school in the Bronx founded in 1887. Horace Mann is a member of the Ivy Preparatory School League, educating students from the New York metropolitan area from nursery school to the twelfth grade.

46 Joseph Neel Reid (1885-1926), also referred to as J. Neel Reid or Neel Reid, was a prominent architect in Atlanta, Georgia, in the early 20th century for his firm Hentz, Reid and Adler. Reid was born in Jacksonville, Alabama. Reid specialized in fine residential structures but also designed the 1908 Southern Railway passenger station (now Amtrak) and the Scottish Rite Children's Hospital in Oakhurst. Other examples of Reid's industrial designs include the Haas-Howell Building in Atlanta's downtown Fairlie-Poplar District. A number of his works are listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.

47 Lena Guthman Fox was Alene Fox Uhry’s mother. Lena was the model for the character ‘Miss Daisy’ in Driving Miss Daisy by her grandson, Alfred Uhry.
Road, a great big [guy]. He was probably about six four [6' 4""] He had Hirsch's clothing store, which had several stores here in Atlanta and one at Lenox [Mall]. He was downtown, the only one he had when I first got registered. I remember it was 1959. I'd gone out. I don't know anything. I'm a kid. I'm going out and go call on these people who my dad knew. I called Mr. Hirsch. I got my briefcase, empty briefcase. I got my suit on. I'm off. I go over there, and I remember walking up Peachtree Street and walking up and going into his store and walking up the steps and into his office. He stopped me. He said, "One minute. You need to know one thing." I said, "What's that, Mr. Hirsch?" He said, "I don't do business with anybody unless . . . " he said, "First of all, where is your hat?" I said, "I don't have a hat." He said, "Well, you need to know, I don't do business with anybody that doesn't have a hat." I said, "Mr. Hirsch, do you sell hats?" He said, "I do." I said, "I'll be right back." I went downstairs and bought a hat. That was before [President] John [F.] Kennedy. John Kennedy was the one who did away with, destroyed the hat business because he got inaugurated without a hat. I went back upstairs and I had my hat. First hat I'd ever owned. He said, "That's fine." He said, "Now, I've got one more question for you." I said, "What's that?" He said, "What's in your briefcase?" I said, "There's nothing in my briefcase. It's empty." I said, "That's what I thought you have to look like to be a broker." He said, "Let me give you some more advice. Don't ever call on anybody unless you got something with a briefcase that's got something in it for them." I said, "That's good advice." Years later, he died, and I'm on an airplane flying out of New York to Atlanta. I'm sitting next to a guy, and we were talking. I said, "What do you do?" He said, "I work for Jaymar-Ruby." They make men's slacks, the Sansabelt. Sort of a well-known pant. I said, "Really?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Did you ever call on a guy by the name of Morris Hirsch?" He said, "Yes, but you needed a hat."

BERMAN: [Laughs.]

ASHER: Isn't that great? It's true.

BERMAN: Really great story.

ASHER: You needed to have a hat.

BERMAN: Do you know, in the collection I have, I think, it's a Borsalino hat with the Hirsch label.

ASHER: Is that right?

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48 John F. Kennedy (1917-1963), commonly known as ‘JFK,’ was the 35th President of the United States, serving from 1961 until November 22, 1963 when he was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. He was a Democrat.
BERMAN: From Hirsch.

ASHER: That's a treasure.

BERMAN: It is a treasure.

ASHER: He was a sweet guy. I did business with his estate and all long after he died. But he was one of the really nice people. He was deadly serious, you know? You don't do business unless you wear a hat. I'm lucky in our business today. I see people going into the office wearing sport clothes. I don't particularly like that. I think they ought to dress and look like people . . . you manage money. You need to look like it. But what do I know? They have a casual life. You have analysts walking around. You can't tell the guy from the mail room from the senior research analyst now. But that's okay.

BERMAN: That's very true. I wanted to go back a little bit and talk about your mom once again. We had talked . . . she was very active in community organizations.

ASHER: She was.

BERMAN: I was just hoping you could elaborate on some of those.

ASHER: First of all, I think that she inherited her desire to work in the community from her father and her grandfather. Her grandfather, as you know, was one of the founders of Georgia Tech, Grady Hospital, the Temple, and many other institutions. He was very generous. She was very active. I know she was president of Travelers Aid. I don't know if Travelers Aid even exists today, but it used to have offices in the train station, the bus stations. Obviously, probably the genesis of . . . the large growth came during the war, when people were traveling, GIs\textsuperscript{49} and whatever. She was also very active in what is the equivalent of the United Way.\textsuperscript{50} She had a major role, major position in . . . it had a different name, which escapes me now.

BERMAN: Community Chest [now known as United Way].

ASHER: Community Chest, yes. She was very active and had a major role there. She was active in Council [now known as Atlanta Jewish Federation].\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{49} G.I. are initials used to describe the soldiers of the United States Army and airmen of the United States Army Air Forces and also for general items of their equipment. The term G.I. has been used as an initialism of "Government Issue" or "General Issue."

\textsuperscript{50} The Community Council, originally known as the 'Council of Social Agencies,' began in 1939 as an agency to coordinate all community services such as welfare, health, education and civic clubs. Over time the Community Council began to conceive, plans and start new agencies and task forces to meet community needs. It is made of up volunteers and professionals.

\textsuperscript{51} The Atlanta Jewish Federation was formally incorporated in 1967 and is the result of the merger of the Atlanta Federation for Jewish Social Service founded in 1905 as the Federation of Jewish Charities; the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Federation founded in 1936 as the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Fund; and the Atlanta Jewish Community Council.
BERMAN: It was Council back then. We've just processed all the records. I'm working on it. They were such community activists. They did so many... that's later. The Tay-Sachs\textsuperscript{52} testing.

ASHER: Yes, that's right.

BERMAN: But early on, working women and child labor. All of those issues.

ASHER: Yes. She was very active in the community. She did not work after she got married, or at least not for a while. She tells the story, and it is a true story. We have some black sheep in our family, too. Nobody gets away without it. When my parents got married in 1933, they were really on their honeymoon when they declared the bank holiday, when Roosevelt came in and tried to... subsequently all these laws were passed. The 1934 [Gold Reserve] Act, the 1933 Act.\textsuperscript{53} They came back to Atlanta, and their first place they moved to an apartment on Collier Road and Peachtree. It's still there. My mother pointed out where they lived, which is right where Piedmont Hospital is. There's a bar or something right next to it. They lived there for a while. I think when Norman was born in 1934, they moved to the Reid house, 1375 Peachtree [Street]. I think that's the right address. That's where they lived. One of our cousin's name is Elsas Phillips. One of the daughters married a man named Phillips and had two children. One was Elsas, and one was Claire. \textlt; unintelligible\textgt; a very good friend of the family. Cecil Phillips and some of the family still lives here. They're the ones who built, excuse me, Jacob, after his wife had died, Clara, put up the money to build what is now The Howard School on Ponce de Leon, on moved in there with the Phillips. Elsas, the son, was apparently a real problem, bad drinking and gambling. Never had any money. He would frequently call my mother. I can remember phone calls in the middle of the night, desperately looking for money, and my mother would always succumb. They lived in the Reid house in 1934, and he moved in there. She said they had to kick him out one time because he was firing a gun in the Reid house. Certainly not something that they needed to have anybody doing, so they threw him out of there. They sort of lost track of him over the years. I don't know really what happened. When I was born, I guess either when I was pregnant is when they bought a house on Springdale Road, which is where I was raised. I was born at Emory founded in 1945. The organization was renamed the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta in 1997.

\textsuperscript{52} Tay-Sachs disease is a genetic disorder. It causes a relentless deterioration of the mental and physical abilities that starts around six months of age and usually results in death by the area of four. It is caused by a genetic defect in a single gene. That gene has to be inherited from both parents. There is no cure or treatment. It is prevalent in the Eastern European Ashkenazi Jewish population.

\textsuperscript{53} Signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in January 1934, the Gold Reserve Act was the culmination of Roosevelt’s controversial gold program. Among other things, the Act transferred ownership of all monetary gold in the United States to the US Treasury and prohibited the Treasury and financial institutions from redeeming dollars for gold.
Hospital. I never knew any home other than Springdale Road, which was a great house.

**BERMAN:** They lived there the rest of their . . .

**ASHER:** No, they lived there until I went off to . . . I was off in college still. I've forgotten the exact year. They then moved over to the North Side, over to Blackland Road, into a house at 359 Blackland, which in the past week has been bulldozed to the ground. Not a speck left. I remember growing up in that house. It was a beautiful home. I knew it was a beautiful home then.

**BERMAN:** Is it still around?

**ASHER:** Still there. It's sort of interesting: I have these throw backs. I have these memories. I have these dreams and maybe others do. Maybe it's just unique to me. It must be a symptom of something you enjoy because for the longest period, until I faced them head on, I had two wonderful dreams, constantly. I was either back at Springdale Road in that house, in that yard, doing things with whatever. I don't exactly, I guess I knew I was a grownup, but I was still there. Wonderful memories. A beautiful house. A Neel Reid designed home. Great moldings and beautiful. The whole thing was just very nice. And college. The other was I found myself at college. Like a lot of people, I was heading for an exam, which I hadn't done any homework for. I've been told that that's because you're always, there's some anxiety there about never being prepared. But where is the exam room? I haven't opened a book, so what good does it do me? I was always back at Cornell. Those were the two great memories. I'm not back at the actual school. I'm not <unintelligible>. Those are my two. Until I went back to the both places, now they went away. It's sort of interesting. I don't know what the psychology of it is.

**BERMAN:** That is interesting.

**ASHER:** They disappeared as soon as I went back as an adult. I was active at Cornell on their council, which is an alumni thing where you go up for a weekend. It's very nice. They make a fuss over you, and you see it as it is. I think it's you see it as it is, not the dream existence, the idyllic existence. I looked on college, I still do, as just the most wonderful, every day was a wonderful day. I couldn't wait to get up. I couldn't wait to go to class. Everything about it was just a dream. It was just a wonderful place. The psyche of it was just . . . I think my childhood must have been the same, because I thought about that until three or four years ago. We went back, and somebody bought that house and had a major addition. We wandered the yards. I bored everybody stiff, telling them what things happened there. Like they could have cared less.
BERMAN: Should have had a tape recorder.

ASHER: That's right. No question.

BERMAN: Not many people can say that about both their childhood and their college years.

ASHER: Yes.

BERMAN: I think that that's a wonderful . . .

ASHER: My memories of the other house, where my parents moved on Blackland Road, it's a beautiful house. Only problem is, the only time I lived there was when I was in the army and I'd come home for vacations. Not much experience there.

BERMAN: I remember that house because I went through it with <unintelligible>.

ASHER: It's a beautiful house. The other time was when my wife and I got married. That's where we lived for about six months. I think three [months]. It seemed like six months. It may have been only six weeks, but it was some period of time. That was an awful experience. I would never wish that on anybody, that you want your children and their spouse to live in your house. I'm sure they loved it, but it was not good. That's probably why I don't have any regressive memories or positive.

BERMAN: Of Blackland Road?

ASHER: Right, of Blackland Road. It was a beautiful house, but after my parents died, it's really kind of sad. My mother lived. My dad had a heart attack. He was lucid, and his mind was fine up until about two weeks before he died. Mark Silverman, who is a cardiologist at Piedmont [Atlanta Hospital], is a very good friend. He called me. He said, "You better spend some time with your dad because it doesn't look like he's got maybe about ten days." I said, "He looks fine to me." He said, "I'm telling you." Sure enough, ten days, he was dead. Then my mother had Alzheimer's. She was stuck in that house in bed for two years. Just an awful way, isn't it? I didn't want my grandchildren to see this beautiful, charming, hilarious, great sense of humor, cultured, talented woman in this awful condition. But they did. It's just the wrong way to . . .

BERMAN: Remember someone.

ASHER: Wrong way, which is why I love having these movies that I recreated, because she was great. She just was a terrific person. That's the way that she ought to be remembered.

BERMAN: I'm glad we did this tape, because we'll give you a copy of the original recording so that they can hear it also. I want to thank you very much for agreeing to do this.

ASHER: You are very welcome.
<Interview ends>

Interview resumes the following day>

BERMAN: Today is May 11, 2005. This is part two of an interview with Tom Asher, who is taping for the Esther and Herbert Taylor Oral History Project of the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum. Thank you for coming back.

ASHER: My pleasure.

BERMAN: When we left off the last time, you were talking a little bit about some of your business endeavors. You told us a great story about your first client.

ASHER: Right.

BERMAN: Was going to Hirsch's men's store. I'd love to know if you have any other anecdotal stories about your years in business.

ASHER: My years in business were, I was very fortunate, quite frankly. Luck plays a large part in what you do. I really was lucky that I got the job that I did. I had no idea what a stockbroker did, quite frankly, but the man knew me through a summer job, named Barnard Murphy, who was managing an office then for Goodbody & Company, which at the time was one of the six largest brokerage firms in America and dated back to the days of Charles Dow.54 The Dow Jones55 founded it with a man named Goodbody. It was called Goodbody, Glenn & Dow, but then they changed the name when Mr. Dow decided to go into the newspaper business and stick with the Wall Street Journal.56 This guy called me up and said, "What are you doing" when I got out of the army. I said, "I'm not doing anything." "How would you like to be a broker?" That sounded fine to me, as I didn't have a job. It was on 55 Marietta Street. The building is still there, but the office is long gone. He was a wonderful mentor. I was really blessed. I said I've been blessed in business. I've been so lucky. If you wrote a script, it couldn't have been any better, because he believed in me. He is what every young, new person in business should have, someone

54 Charles Henry Dow (1851-1902) was an American journalist who co-founded Dow Jones & Company with Edward Jones and Charles Bergstresser. Dow also founded The Wall Street Journal, which has become one of the most respected financial publications in the world. He also invented the Dow Jones Industrial Average as part of his research into market movements. He developed a series of principles for understanding and analyzing market behavior which later became known as Dow theory, the groundwork for technical analysis.

55 The Dow Jones Industrial Average, or simply the Dow, is a stock market index that indicates the value of 30 large, publicly owned companies based in the United States and how they have traded in the stock market during various periods of time.

56 The first issue of The Wall Street Journal appeared on July 8, 1889. It cost two cents per issue or $5 for a one-year subscription. Charles Dow was the editor and Edward Jones managed the deskwork. The paper gave its readers a policy statement: Its object is to give fully and fairly the daily news attending the fluctuations in prices of stocks, bonds, and some classes of commodities. It will aim steadily at being a paper of news and not a paper of opinions.
who cares about you, likes you, believes in you and thinks that you're worthy of his attention. He's a coach. He's a great coach. I went to work at Goodbody. I was a commissioned stockbroker. I had no training to speak of. I just knew you would go out and you would call on everybody that could fog a mirror. You would call them and ask if they would buy stock. Of course, I ended up with a lot of people that I did business with, friends of the family, etc. It's sort of interesting. I learned then that the people you really end up doing business with at the end of two years were not those people. It was people that you met. I met some wonderful people and had some fabulous accounts. I already told the Hirsch story. I don't know if I told the Louis G. Sherman story. Did I tell that story?

BERMAN: No.

ASHER: I'll tell you. Louis Sherman, that's Sonny [Louis G.] Sherman's [Jr.] father, who's a great guy. Mr. Sherman appeared to be, on the surface, a very gruff guy. He owned a furniture wholesale. I think it was called Southeast Furniture Wholesalers. You may know the name. I can't remember exactly. I called him, Mr. Sherman. I went over there. Went in the store. He was tough. He was coarse, but he could not have been nicer. He gave me some business. I remember he wanted to know what I liked. I remember the stock. This has to be 45 years ago. I remember the stock I liked was Maremont. Maremont made mufflers. I don't know if they're in the muffler business anymore. But we loved the stock. We thought the stock was great, and it was going up. I figured, "You know what? I'm going to make a big hit with this guy." I bought that stock with Mr. Sherman. Went back to the office, and about three weeks later we had a big sell recommendation. Not working out. Get out. I said, "I can't believe this. This is the worst thing that's ever happened to me." I had to call Mr. Sherman. I can't tell him he's making money. I got to tell him he's losing money. By the way, I need to go back. He said, "Would you stake your reputation on this stock?" I said, "Mr. Sherman, I don't have a reputation to stake on anything." But you know what? I learned then I was very lucky. I learned that if you call people and tell them the bad news, it's better than trying to avoid it. He could not have been nicer to me. A couple of things happened when I was early on in business. One was the stock market collapsed.

BERMAN: What year was that?

ASHER: In the early 1960s. It couldn't have collapsed much because it was only trading about 800 when I went in, the Dow. Now it's at 10,200. But for the first 15 years I was in business, the market didn't go up. It went from maybe 700, 800 up to 1,000, and then it backed off.
If you look at a chart of the Dow for those years, it looks like a flat line. It looks like a possum on a freeway. It's just dead. There's nothing to compare it to now when we make these assumptions. I didn't know stocks went up, basically. I thought you just bought them, and you held them and got a dividend and life went on. I was lucky because when the market did collapse, I looked around at the people who were left standing. The brokers in the office were the ones who had bought quality securities. swore then that if I was going to stick this out, I need to buy quality securities. Otherwise, I'd be out of business. Anyway, I would say I was very fortunate in the business. I'll tell you who was very generous to me. I'm thinking about some names. Elliott Goldstein. Mr. Max Goldstein, Elliott’s father, was very nice to me. I met some very, very kind, decent, important people in this community. He was one of them. Elliott ended up being the counsel to Goodbody & Company in the Atlanta area. He made good friends with the regional director, a man by the name of Al Seaber [sp]. Elliott was very, very helpful to me personally. Mr. Max, his father, was very helpful to me. It turns out the reason why he was willing to see me was because Max had several children. I'm not sure how many, but Elliott had a sister, and his sister worked for my father. Was secretary at Rich's, so that was sort of the entree. You know, you call on everybody you can. He could not have been nicer. I also called on Dr. Alfred Weinstein. You might know the name. He was Hanna Weinstein's husband. He wrote Barbed-Wire Surgeon. He was apparently captured in the Far East during World War II and went on the Bataan Death March, I think. He survived it, of course, and he helped others survive. He wrote a book about it. He was dying. He called me up. He basically told me he was dying, but he loved my mother. He was crazy about my mother. I didn't find any human being on the planet that didn't think my mother was just the greatest woman in the world. Like so many people, he said, "If I can do something for your mother, I'd like to give you some business." Here I am a 22-year-old stockbroker. I would walk barefoot across Peachtree Street for 10 shares of stock because I was on commission like everybody else, but it was very interesting. Then I got a rude awakening. My wife was pregnant with Joey, our first child. I got a note . . . well, what was happening was things were heating up in

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57 The Bataan Death March was a 66-mile (106 km) march in the Philippines that 76,000 prisoners of war (66,000 Filipinos, 10,000 Americans) were forced by the by the Japanese military to endure in April 1942, during the early stages of World War II. During the main march—which lasted 5 to 10 days, depending on where a prisoner joined it—the captives were beaten, shot, bayoneted, and, in many cases, beheaded. A large number of those who made it to the camp later died of starvation and disease. Only 54,000 prisoners reached Camp O’Donnell, a former Philippine army-training center used by the Japanese military to intern Filipino and American prisoners. Though exact numbers are unknown, some 2,500 Filipinos and 500 Americans may have died during the march, and an additional 26,000 Filipinos and 1,500 Americans died at Camp O’Donnell.
Berlin [Germany]. John Kennedy had been elected president in 1960. In 1961, the tanks started to face off across Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin.\textsuperscript{58} The U.S. and the Soviets. They announced that they were calling up 250,000 reservists. I had been in the Army Reserves. I had been at Fort Eustis [Virginia] as my officer's basic, but I went every week to Reserve over here at the Ford [Motor Company] plant over on Ponce de Leon, which is now a condominium. It was next to the Sears\textsuperscript{59} store. We thought it was all a big lark. We didn't have anything else. Everybody was laughing about it. One of the big jokes was we would go over there every month. We took an oath. I can say it now because I really sort of improved my sanitation habits. We took an oath among us that we were all officers, that we would not have our army uniforms clean until we left the service. I'm not proud of it, but that's what we did. All of a sudden, it must have been . . . because sure enough, I get orders to report to active duty. I said, “Can you believe this? I'm going back in the army.” I got recalled in the service. Fortunately, I had probably several hundred clients. I don't remember the number, but a couple hundred clients that were mine. I had a fellow who worked with me, a fellow named Willis Everett, who was my partner, my friend, really. Same age in the business. We made an arrangement. The stock exchange rules permitted you to get half commission over a limited period of time if it was under a year. We were supposed to be called up. We hoped for no more than a year, and we'd split commissions. Fortunately, he's the best salesman that ever drew breath. I did so well by not even being there, but he's a great guy. He subsequently left us. I'll divert just a minute. He was founder of Invesco. Of course, he lived happily ever after. He's worth close to $100 million. He's a very wealthy, successful person. Having said that, he was a great salesman and was very helpful to me. Anyway, I head off to, I can't believe this. I head off to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in Fayetteville. I was assigned to the 117\textsuperscript{th} Transportation Company, 29\textsuperscript{th} Transportation Battalion. You never forget. Everybody I know who was in the army. Here it is, 30-40 years later, you never forget 05001822. You never forget your serial number. I do remember lying there the first night. Spring is back in Atlanta. I'm about to have a baby. I remember lying on the BOQ, Bachelor Officer Quarters, for single men. I

\textsuperscript{58} Checkpoint Charlie (or "Checkpoint C") was the name given by the West Allies to the best-known Berlin Wall crossing point between East Berlin and West Berlin during the Cold War (1947–1991).

\textsuperscript{59} The Sears Building was an eight-story building built in 1926 at 675 Ponce de Leon Avenue. It served as a warehouse facility and retail store for Sears and Roebuck for decades. It overlooked the grandstands and the baseball diamond of the Atlanta Crackers, predecessors to the Atlanta Braves. The City of Atlanta purchased the building in the late 1980s for office space and the building became known as City Hall East. After decades of declining occupancy, the building was sold to a developer who reopened it in 2012 as Ponce City Market, a mixed use residential, office and retail space.
was in a double-decker bunk. Fortunately, I was in the bottom bunk. Not very luxurious. I remember looking up at the slats and saying, “Why is this happening to me? Why me, Lord? What did I do?” I felt like Job [the Book of Job]. Twenty-four hours before, I was a stockbroker in Atlanta. Now I'm back in the army where I don't particularly want to be. Anyway, the first week of being in the army, do you mind if I continue on the army thing?

BERMAN: I love this.

ASHER: Okay. First week in the army, there's a party. I am not happy. I am not happy at all. I got to a party. They have a party there at the . . . or I got assigned to my unit, and I went to meet the company commander. I was a platoon leader. I went to meet the company commander. I couldn't find him because he was behind the company headquarters throwing firecrackers. A very poor example of what I thought I was going to be stuck with. They said, "We're getting ready to go out in the field. We'll go out in the field for about a month." I said, "What does that mean?" He said, "It basically means you pack up and you go out there.” We support the 82 Airborne [Division] or the 7th Special Forces Group, who were then shipping out to Vietnam as advisers. We weren't involved at all, of course. We were never going to be involved. We were just going to help the locals. They were flying out of Pope Air Force Base, which is right there at Fort Bragg. I'm invited to a party for the battalion. I'm sitting there. This very nice, attractive young man comes over. He's chatting with me. He asked me what I'm doing. I said, "I just got recalled." I'm one of thousands of reservists that had been called up. He could not have been nicer and a very attractive guy. We chatted. I told him I went to Cornell and I was a stockbroker and all this sort of stuff. In the meantime, a guy who was activated at the same time with me was Jerome Green. Jerome was from Atlanta. He played football at Georgia Tech. Jewish. Sadly, I think he died in the last couple of years. But Jerome was a great football player at Tech. He went on to play for what then was the Boston Patriots in the American Football League then. He got activated too. So, the two of us were up there. He said, "You know, it's easy. You don't worry about all those units. Just go get yourself another job." He said, "I'm living in the golf course shop." It was easy for him because in those days, the football teams of these military installations were critical. They had pro basketball players. Anybody that was any good, they treated them with kid gloves. Well, he isn't going out in the field. He isn't going to live in a tent. He's playing football for the Fort Bragg Bullets or Bombers or whatever we were called. The place where he wanted to live, he insisted on living in a nice place, so they put him in the golf shop. Other than playing football, he was in the
golf shop. I didn't have quite those skills. They took one look at me and my physicals and said, "I don't think you're ready for that." Anyway, about a week later, I get a notice from my commanding officer, who didn't particularly like me anyway, the guy who had been throwing firecrackers. Men didn't like stockbrokers. He was regular army. He was [in] a regular army unit. He said, "They want to see you at the battalion headquarters. The commanding officer wants to see you." This is the colonel. I said, "I don't know how I got in trouble. I haven't been here but three weeks. I'm already in trouble." I go up there. I'm waiting. I look in. They had a glass window. I do remember it. It was one of these wooden buildings with a glass window, and I'm looking there, and there's that guy, the commanding officer of the battalion is the young man that I met at this party. He's a military academy graduate. He comes in and asks everybody else to leave. He said, "Lieutenant, I understand you went to Cornell." I said, "That's right." He said, "I understand you're a stockbroker." I said, "Right." He said, "Well, the commanding general of Fort Bragg has asked for somebody. They're looking for somebody from a unit to be on the inspector general's staff. It would be very helpful if we had somebody from our unit because it can do nothing but help us. The inspector general is an important post." He said, "I'd like you to be a candidate." He said, "Do you know math?" Stockbrokers know a lot of math. I said, "I know my math." I said, "I know my numbers. Let me tell you something. I know those things backwards and forward." Sure enough, I went up for the interview, and I got the job. Like, two days before we were ready to ship out and live in Fort Bragg in the wilderness with paratroopers and running around with aggressors. I mean, it wouldn't have been a lot of fun. I became the assistant to the inspector general at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. There I am. It was really interesting because they didn't have an assistant. The I.G., himself, was a nice guy. He was a colonel. Right down the hall was the commanding general of the post. It was an unbelievable experience. I don't know what they have now because I haven't been back, but it was a big brick building for the office. Fort Bragg was an important military installation. As the assistant I.G. said, "Your job is to grade all of the inspections. You need to set up a grading system." I designed a whole system at that time for grading the troops that seemed to make sense to me. Wherever I went on the post, I was the assistant I.G. That was neat. Except for one thing, Berlin, of course, heated up. That's what caused me to go in when they activated 250,000 reservists. Unfortunately, at the same time, things were heating up in Cuba,\(^6^0\) and the revolutionaries were very upset. I didn't see that it had

\(^{60}\) The Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 was one of the high points of political and military tension during the Cold War.
anything to do with me except for the fact that I'm there in the main post, looking at you had a room full of news tickers, which looks like the old Dow-Jones, UPI [United Press International] news wires. I'd go down and just read the news, read the sports, read whatever. Sure enough, I see this confidential thing coming over, saying about the invasion of Cuba. Within the next day or two or something, they've hung cargo nets off of our balcony where we worked, down the hallway. There were two- or three-story balconies. They told us that they were going to start practicing by going over these cargo nets because that's what we'd have to climb down when we got off the ships in Cuba. I go home at night. Spring said, "How is everything going?" I said, "I got to tell you, we're getting ready to go . . . we ain't going to Berlin. We're going to war, but it ain't there. We're going to end up in Cuba." She says, "You got to be nuts." I said, "I'm telling you. We're going to Cuba." I didn't realize. Apparently, years later, it all came out this was top secret. What did I know? I'm telling everybody. I'm at the Burger King or the Dairy Queen. Anyway, I'm climbing down these cargo nets. I said, "I'm selling stock. I'm a stockbroker. They say, no I'm on active duty. Now I'm going to Cuba. I can't believe this is happening to me." Anyway, after about a week or so, I think this must have been the summer, June or July. I'm down there reading these news wires. There it says all reservists are being deactivated. Not all of them went out. The army got deactivated because the air force, I believe, had to stay in because there was the incident in Korea with Lt. [Lloyd M.] Bucher. Remember that? When the North Koreans captured a ship.

BERMAN: The [USS] Pueblo.

ASHER: The Pueblo. That's right, in international waters. They kept them in, but they let all go week later. We were supposed to leave. We were to go. I said, "Unbelievable. I'm going home" without any notification whatsoever. As I'm getting about ready to leave, I had done this all this inspector general stuff, which was pretty slick. By the way, the I.G. said, and he was a guy he loved the army. He said, "Look." I remember going back and saying, "You know what, one of us is going to get to go out in the field with the troops." He said, "Do you want to go?" I said, "Well,

The United States and the Soviet Union nearly went to nuclear war over missiles the Soviet Union had placed in Cuba. The Cold War ended with the fall of the communist system of government in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. The Korean War began when North Korean forces invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950. American troops entered the war in defense of the Republic of Korea to the south against the Soviet-backed Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to the north. Fighting ended on July 27, 1953, when an armistice agreement was signed maintaining a border between the Koreas near the 38th Parallel and creating the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between the two Korean nations that still exists today.

Lloyd Mark "Pete" Bucher (1927–2004) was an officer in the United States Navy, born in Pocatello, Idaho, who is best remembered as the captain of USS Pueblo (AGER-2), which was seized by North Korea on January 23, 1968.
do you want to go?" He said he'd love to go. I said, "Well, I tell you what, you go. I'll take care of everything back here. Don't worry about it." As I'm getting ready to leave, I don't know if I told you this story or not? Did I tell you the story about getting the letter from the commanding general?

BERMAN: Yes.

ASHER: As I'm getting ready to leave, my boss, who was the inspector general at Fort Bragg, says, "Asher, we're really proud of what you did. You did a great job over here, and you're going home. I want you to take this letter. Here's a letter signed by the commanding general of Fort Bragg, a letter of commendation of what a great job you did. I want you to take it back to your unit," which was the 117th Transportation Company, "and have them put it in the file." It's called a 201 file, I think, or something. That's your permanent record. I thanked him, and we left. I went back to the unit. I drove my car over there and stopped and saw the top sergeant, Sgt. Riddick. I'll never forget his name. Sgt. Riddick was the top sergeant. Been there for years. I said, "Sgt. Riddick, I'm leaving. I'm going back to Atlanta. I want you to put this in my file because it's pretty nice." He said, "Let me tell you, Lieutenant. Let me give you some advice." He said, "This is a wonderful letter. We don't get many of these. In fact, we get very few of them. In fact, we get so few of them, I strongly advise that you take this home and have it framed and show it to your grandchildren, but don't go putting it in your file because you know what? We're going to be calling up some more troops sometime, and you're the kind of people we want to call up." That was Sgt. Riddick. You know what? I still got that letter, and I have it framed. I have it sitting on my dresser because that was good advice. "Be careful about bragging about yourself," is what he said. "Somebody is liable to like you." Anyway, going back to Atlanta, I saw an opportunity to manage. I saw an opportunity, I was friendly with Charlie Ackerman. Charlie was a client. He was developing property around Lenox Square, which was then still an open-air mall. I thought, "We should have an office there." I went to my boss, who was great. I said, "I think we ought to have an office out here." He said, "That doesn't make any sense, but if you want to do a report." I did a report with Charlie's help. We studied all the businesses with a one-mile radius of Lenox, the opportunities there. They had a new office building going up at Lenox Towers directly across the street. I got approved to open a branch there. It was an incredible experience. I literally bought the sign, bought the furniture, signed the lease. The building owner was H. L. Hunt, not one of the most liberal-thinking people. Nonetheless, he signed the lease. I wish I still had the lease. Mr.
Hunt, Sr. signed it. We took over space on the first floor of Lenox Towers, a new building. We were the first tenant and opened a branch there. That was in 1966 or 1967 with the fellow who had worked me. He was my first broker. I hired basically everybody. We ended up with about 20. . . had a wonderful, wonderful group of people. We had the most fun. I got to say, in all honesty, in my career, the most fun, enjoyable group of men and women that I've ever been around. We were a very successful office. We did a lot of business, up to a point where . . . here's my picture. This was in my ad.

BERMAN: Why don't you hold that up?

ASHER: I don't know if you can even see this. I didn't have a lot of hair then, either. That's Lenox Square, Goodbody & Company.

BERMAN: I have a question for you.

ASHER: Sure.

BERMAN: Most of your contacts, you mentioned who you went to visit early on.

ASHER: Right.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Your connection with Mr. Ackerman?

ASHER: Right.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: It seemed like your initial contacts were mostly Jewish?

ASHER: Yes, they were.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You were to then branch out to have clients in the general community?

ASHER: I did.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Was it difficult?

ASHER: No, it really was not difficult. It was much more successful. Willis Everett, who was also in the office with me and worked as a F.C., a financial consultant, a stockbroker then, he was from the [Piedmont] Driving Club and the right fraternities at Georgia and went to high school. It wasn't Westminster then. He did business with a lot of the prominent Christian community. My focus was on the Jewish community. There were probably only two or three Jewish stockbrokers in Atlanta. Jerry Horowitz was very successful, of course. [Stanley] Stan

63 The Piedmont Driving Club is a private social club in Atlanta, Georgia with a reputation as one of the most prestigious private clubs in the South. Founded in 1887 originally as the Gentlemen's Driving Club, the name reflected the interest of the members to 'drive' their horse and carriages on the club grounds. The club later briefly used the adjacent grounds as a golf course until it sold the land to the city in 1904 to create Piedmont Park. The club's facilities include dining, golf, swimming, fitness, tennis, and squash. Well into the Twentieth century, the club unofficially did not allow minorities to have memberships. In May 2000, the club built an 18-hole championship golf course and Par 3 course several miles away on Camp Creek Parkway.
Firestone. Alfred Revson. That's about it. You can probably [count] on one hand people. My business was pretty broad based. My dad worked at Rich's, so I did business with a lot of people there. By today's standard, the business was different. I probably had at one time 400, 500, or 600 people I had done business with, but they were across the board. I remember going up to North Georgia. Willis had a house up on Lake Rabun. His father had a house, original development, going back to the 1920s. We would go up there on the weekends from time to time, which is why we have a house up there. As an aside, we decided that we would like to have a house at Lake Rabun. This is now fast forward in 1982 but gives you a sense of it. Spring was then a producer at Channel 2. She did a program called Noonday, which was a daily program on Channel 11. She had several experts that would come in from time to time, one of whom was Dr. Sandy Matthews, a pediatrician, who was very articulate and spoke on children's issues and matters. He said that he had a house on Lake Rabun. Spring said, "Gosh, we go up there with Willis Everett. We would love to have a house over there, but we understand it's restricted. They don't allow Jews." He said, "I don't know that, but I'll check, into it." He never called us back, but a real estate agent did call us and that told us that it wasn't restricted. It did have that image because it was the old. You know, a lot of the famous family names were the only people who could afford it. They would go up there to escape the heat in the summer, Tallulah Falls, and all that business. Anyway, Willis did a lot of business up there because his family had been there. He did business with people in Toccoa and all around those small . . . Clayton. He said, "You're crazy. There's nobody up here. There's a lot of money up here, but there's nobody giving advice." My thing was, I decided . . . I spoke to the Rotary Club in a little town. I'm trying to think of the name of it. It's right there where Piedmont College is. It's where Johnny Mize was from. Do you know Johnny Mize?

BERMAN: No.

ASHER: You don't. He's one of the great baseball players and played, I think, both National and American League. I went up there and I spoke to the Rotary Club. I got several speaking engagements up there with Rotary Clubs. I developed contacts up in the mountains with these people. They didn't know from Jewish, but they had a lot of money. There was a lot of wealth.

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64 John Robert Mize (1913–1993), born in Demorest, Georgia, was a baseball player who played for the St. Louis Cardinals, New York Giants, and New York Yankees. He played in Major League Baseball for 15 seasons between 1936 and 1953, losing three seasons to military service during World War II. Mize was a ten-time All-Star. Late in his career, he played with the Yankees when they won five consecutive World Series.
around there, just the fact it wasn't in Atlanta. The only thing I specifically remember about Piedmont College is that I did business with the coach up there. They had the longest losing streak in the history of basketball, I think, when he was coach. It said something about him. Nonetheless, I did business all around and still run into people occasionally who say, "You were my broker." I swear to God I don't remember them. That's just terrible that I wouldn't remember them. After I got back, I did go and open this office for Goodbody & Company. It was a wonderful group of people. They're still around. They are still very successful. They are just outstanding people. I got an offer in 1969 to move to New York. My company asked me would I move up there and become director of . . . not the director of marketing but number two in marketing. It was a big firm. I was flattered, and I was challenged. I said, "I'd like to do that." Spring said, "All right." Our kids were little. We said, "We'll fly to New York." We looked in New York magazine. [We said], "If we can find a place to live, we'll do it." They had a house for rent in Brooklyn Heights, 162 State Street. We went and looked at the house. It was one of these four story plus a garden apartment. The garden was rented, but the brownstone, built probably at the turn of the century. Twelve-foot ceilings. Stained glass windows. Elegant place. They wanted $600 a month for it. I looked at how much I was getting paid. I could afford that, so we rented it. We said, "We're moving." Upset my parents no end. They were terribly distressed to lose their grandchildren, of course I would be, too. I didn't sell my house. I said, "You know what? I'm not going to live there forever. But what an opportunity." So, I went up there. Unfortunately, the stock market continued to crash. After I was there about nine, ten, or twelve months, ten or eleven months, the company failed. It was the sixth largest firm. There was SIPC, Securities Investment Protection Corporation. No protection for investors. I can remember going to the meetings. I loved it. By the way, I had a wonderful experience. It was just one of the most fun experiences of my life, taking the subway one stop from Borough Hall to Wall Street and going to the office. It was just . . . I was pretty young. This was 1970. I was probably 35-36 years old. It was a real high being around Wall Street and seeing the things that I saw and meeting the people that I met, who were just terrific. It was just a very heady experience, for me, anyway.

BERMAN: And the company failed then.

ASHER: The company, unfortunately, failed. I remember going to a meeting where they called a meeting. The chairman of the New York Stock Exchange invited all the member firms to come in and look at the books, and somebody would rescue it. There was no insurance like there is
today. A firm can't fail today. They're self-insured. <unintelligible>. They also don't leave the securities laying around. They're all in street name or in . . . they're not in bearer form. They aren't physical securities issues. They are all kept electronically. The problem was the back offices got so bogged down, they lost so many securities. I remember going to the meeting where they would have a stock of P&L [profit and loss statement] for the Goodbody & Company. I was in a room with probably 50 other people from all these firms. Nobody went up to get any of the papers. So, the stock exchange was worried. This was a big firm that was going to fail. They arranged a merger with Merrill Lynch. It was a forced merger, so that the street basically . . . they paid nothing for the company. At least I had some capital in the company. That went to zero, went absolutely to nothing. Whatever I put up in 12 years . . . I had a salary, but everything I invested in the company was worthless. Merrill Lynch offered me a job. They didn't know me, but they were nice enough to offer me a job. Merrill Lynch took over and took over all the offices, including the one that I had started in Atlanta, which subsequently became the main office for Merrill Lynch at Lenox. By the way, there were no offices at Lenox doing business when I did the office there. I just thought it was a great opportunity. Of course, everybody is there now. Everybody was downtown. Nobody's downtown. They're all at Lenox.

BERMAN: Right. When did you end with Robinson Humphrey?

ASHER: On the weekends, I was looking for a job. I can stay at Merrill, but you know what, I didn't know these people. They were strangers. Everybody was having different points. I'm not going to stay in New York, so I made appointments all around Atlanta. I'd leave on a Thursday night and interview on Fridays. Be back in Merrill Lynch on Monday morning. I flew down. I didn't go to Robinson Humphrey, but through Lewis Holland, I was able to get an interview with the chairman, Alexander Yearley, Sandy Yearley, who was a member of the New York Stock Exchange, had been on the board of the exchange. [He] offered to meet me for lunch at the Stock Exchange Club. I said, "How am I going to know him?" He said, "Don't worry, you'll know him." Sure enough, there's no question. The most distinguished, royal, regal, imposing figure in that room. I figured, "Please, that's not him. That is him. It is him." It was Sandy Yearley.

BERMAN: How do you spell the last name?

ASHER: Y-E-A-R-L-E-Y. He was Alexander Yearley, IV. His brothers had been with Alex. Brown [& Sons]. He was a lacrosse star at . . . he was from Baltimore, at Johns Hopkins. Came down with First Boston and joined Robinson Humphrey. Was the chairman of the board.
Was a small firm. Probably didn't have 60 employees. Anyway, I figured, “I'm going to work for a small firm. I've worked for a big firm. I didn't know what was going on. I'll work for a little firm. I'll know everything that's going on. Nothing bad can happen with a little firm.” So, I joined the firm. It was very interesting. I came to Atlanta. That was in January of 1971. A number of people who worked with me at Goodbody came over with me. They basically said, "What are you going to do?" These were Atlanta people. I said, "I'm going to Robinson Humphrey." We didn't know much about it, but we knew that we were together. My partner, one of my dearest friends who I hired in the business, [Thomas] Tom Tracy, who subsequently became chairman of SunTrust Robinson Humphrey, the chairman of Robinson Humphrey. [He] was my first trainee in the office when I started. He is still one of my dearest friends in the world. So, we came over there. I learned very quickly that everybody was scared to death of Sandy Yearley. I mean scared. If he called you on the phone, you'd stand up and straighten your tie. If he came in your office, it couldn't be good. The truth of it is . . . so Tom Tracy came over with me. They offered him to manage Macon. He said he would go down. He went down to Macon right away to be the manager. We were all very young. Justus Martin, who was the president, the number two guy. He was very, very sociable, very easy to get along with. Both these men were just great. Justus said that we were going to have an opening party for Tracy down in Macon. I said, "I definitely want to go." This is my friend, and they're going to welcome him at the hotel, there at the Hilton, where it was in downtown Macon. I said I would go. But Justus said, "I'm leaving early, so you're going to drive Sandy Yearley back from Macon by yourself. Is that all right?" "Sure, it's fine." I then had thought about it for about two seconds. I said, “This is not fine. This is not going to be good. Everybody is scared to death of him.” I went home that night, and Spring said, "What's the matter? You don't seem the same." I said, "I got to go to Macon the next week, and I got to ride with Sandy Yearley for a couple of hours in the car," two or three [hours], whatever the time was. "I don't know what to talk to him about. Everybody is scared. I'm scared to death of the guy. I am scared to death of him." She said, "Here's a book. You need to read this book. It will tell you exactly how to deal with somebody like that." The book was Barbara Walters' book, How to Talk to Anybody About Anything [How to Talk with Practically Anyone About

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65 Barbara Jill Walters (born 1929) is an American broadcast journalist, author, and television personality. Walters is known for having hosted a variety of television programs, including Today, The View, 20/20, and the ABC Evening News. Since retirement as a full-time host and contributor, she continued to occasionally report for ABC News through 2015.
Practically Anything]. It's out of print now. But she had a developmentally disabled sister, and that taught her how to interview, to a certain extent. Her communication skills were honed dealing with this basically retarded sister of hers. In the book, she talked about these imposing, difficult people, from corporate leaders to kings and queens and presidential people, and what do you say to them and how you do it. I followed the rules exactly with that book. I was so well prepared that when we got into my car in Macon... I'm driving and Sandy is sitting on my right. I mean, this guy, I've known him for now maybe 30 days. All I knew was you want to stay out of his way. So, I asked him questions about his life. When we got into the First National Bank Building downtown, where he had parked his car, he had talked solid for about two hours. I knew about his hunting trips to Africa. I knew about the books that he read. I knew about his college days and his wife. I also found out that he was one of the most interesting, brightest, most delightful, charming human beings that could draw breath. I found he had the same birthday as my wife, March 21. From that day forward, we were very, very good friends, because he wasn't scary. He just looked it. If you saw him, you would say, "That guy is regal." He just was. But that just wasn't him. That just wasn't true. Nobody knew it because they wouldn't get close enough to him. We became really good friends. I wrote the obituary for him after he died. I wrote a tribute to him, which they published. I just loved the guy. He was wonderful to me. He was a very interesting guy. Anyway, I thought that was an interesting instruction because you can deal with people like that. I tried it again at a dinner party not long thereafter. In fact, Tom [Grady] Cousins was at the dinner party. He was sitting at our table. I figured, "I'm going to Barbara Walters him." That's our joke now with Martin. We Barbara Walters people. At the end of the dinner, I hadn't said one word. I remember his comment to me afterwards. We got up after dinner, were getting ready to leave. He said, "You know, you're a very interesting guy."

BERMAN: [Laughs]

ASHER: You know what? He didn't know anything about me, but you know what? He was so fired up, talking about himself. Anyway, over the years, over the next couple of years, they gave me... because Sandy and Justus Martin. I want to say a word about leaders. These are great leaders. You read the books about leadership. [There are] a lot of books written, but they talk about politicians and coaches and movie moguls and the famous people. The truth of it is, the real leadership done by some of these people is far more impressive because they impact people day to day, like me. Justus Martin was an interesting man, too. I lead up to all this by saying he was
deaf in one ear and so he was turned down for World War II. He was born in about 1930, maybe. I'm just guessing. I mean, in the 1920s. He had to have been born in the 1920s. He was turned down for World War II because of his inability to hear, so he volunteered for the British Ambulance Corps and served in North Africa. Among the people that were in his unit were these people from London merchant banks. When he came back to Atlanta, where he was a stockbroker with Thomson McKinnon and he joined Robinson Humphrey, he called on all these people in London who he knew through the war. They turned out to be among the Pilkington family, who invented automobile glass. He spent 1976, the anniversary of the founding of the U.S., on the queen's yacht. He knew everybody. He started calling on the Scottish trusts in Edinburgh. He went over there. What he would do is he would talk to them about Atlanta securities: Retail Credit, National Service. He became a very close friend of Erwins. C&S Bank, Rich's. He knew all these people because, first of all, he's a very gregarious guy. He's a great leader, a great guy. He knew all these people. When Spring and I went to London . . . gosh, I'd been in the firm two years. We were the guests of the Pilkingtons. Today, if you google the Pilkingtons, you will find they're major leaguers. We met some wonderful people over the years. The real money as invested in the world. The great money managers came from Scotland. The Scottish trusts were founded in the fifteenth century, so we're short-term capital gains in the U.S. compared to them. These people would come to Atlanta and we got to know some of these people. They were very interesting. They were with these firms, Ivory & Sime. Been around for 300 or 400 years. Longer than America's been around, these companies have been there. It was very interesting to know these people. Sandy suggested . . . we had a tiny firm. I felt we needed a number of things, from my view. I was the director of marketing. Also, I had responsibility for the branches. We needed to do a couple of things. We were an old-fashioned partnership. We need to modernize if we're going to grow. We needed to have more products. We needed to have more branches. To have that, we needed training. I started the training program. Then we were looking around for product. We had a great training program, which really intrigued me. I have sort of an interest in training. They agreed, Justus and Sandy. I said, "Look, our number one, two, and three competitors in every city we're in is Merrill Lynch. Merrill Lynch has salaried managers. They're not producing managers. That's a key ingredient to their growth." I worked for a salaried manager. I could tell you the difference between success and failure. Somebody who either looks after their clients or their books, or they look after you, as a broker. They agreed to that. That was a big step. I then went
to Sandy and said, "We need to advertise. Nobody knows us." We did a survey. They knew us at the Commerce Club. They knew us at the Driving Club. They didn't know us anywhere else. "If we're going to really grow, we need to do that." Sandy said, "What do you recommend?" I said, "We'll have a radio campaign." He said, "What's wrong with TV?" This is 1972, 1973. I said, "You know, I don't know." He said, "Let's do television." So, we did a major TV campaign that ran for almost 10 or 12 years where we were on the air every day. We did these educational ads that were great. Our agency was wonderful, Bowes/Hanlon which is Rod Hanlon. Do you know Louise Hanlon, by the way?

BERMAN: I don't think so.

ASHER: Nonetheless, she happened to be a wedding consultant. By coincidence, she did our wedding of our daughter. Anyway, Joel Babbit was there at the time as a young whatever, very creative. We designed a series of educational... people were so naive then. The market started to grow. We were the first advertiser on Wall Street Week. I really think we not only saw the future, but we had people in management who were willing to go for it, who did not say, "But that's the way it's always been done." The ads were very successful. We won a lot of awards for them. My friends still jokingly, Roby Robinson, who was a grandson of the founder. By the way, the firm goes back to the 1890s with Henry W. Grady and the Robinson family, etc. Anyway, we needed to have a spokesman for the television, so three or four of us went over there. I got chosen. They all jokingly say it was all rigged, but it really wasn't. I had never done anything like that in my life. But I was the spokesman for . . .

BERMAN: You were on television?

ASHER: I was on television every day, on the news. Our agency bought the right things. They bought the evening news, the morning news, the noon news. If news was on, we were on. We became really a household name. We did it throughout the state, to the point where I can remember walking... I can remember one time I was invited to... Let me just say that about two months ago, I'm in the Atlanta airport. We've been off the air now 15 years. We've been off at

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66 The Commerce Club is a private business and social club on Peachtree Street in Downtown Atlanta. Since 1960, the Commerce Club was located at 34 Broad Street in the Five Points area of downtown, where major banks, law firms and accounting firms were headquartered within walking distance. In 2010, the Commerce Club merged with the One Ninety One Club and the new Commerce Club opened on the 49th floor of the 191 Tower. Since the merger, the Commerce Club is also known as the ‘191 Club’.

67 Henry Woodfin Grady (1850–1889) born in Athens, Georgia, was a journalist who helped reintegrate the states of the Confederacy into the Union after the American Civil War. Grady encouraged the industrialization of the South but he also preached white supremacy.
least 15, 20. Pick a number. When we did our merger, we stopped it. A screener with TSA, Transportation Security Agency, says, "I know you. You were on TV. You did commercials." I said, "I got to tell you something. You date yourself badly." I also remember early on where I walked to a parking lot late one night, downtown. It was not the safest place in the world 25-30 years ago. A drunk comes up to me, a drunk. I thought he was asking for money. He said, "I know you. You sell insurance for the C&S Bank." I figured, "You know what? He knows television. He knows I sell something." We don't sell insurance, because it's against the law, but he came up with the C&S Bank. Another time, I was walking down to City Hall. We had a meeting there. It was a civic meeting. I don't remember what it was about. It could have been a Leadership Atlanta meeting or something. We were called. I'm walking down. It was also fairly late at night. It was getting dark, and darker. You know, you got to watch. You don't want to be stupid. You want to be careful and watch where you are. You stay in the street lights and everything. All of a sudden, I hear a guy right behind me. He's right behind me. I said, "This is it. This is it. I'm gone." He said, "Hey! Hey!" I finally turned around. I said, "You want me?" He said, "I want you." He said, "Aren't you the guy . . . are you with Robinson Humphrey?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I knew that was you" and he walked away. I said, "You know what? I don't know if anybody who has any money knows us, but the bums all know us very well."

Anyway.

<End Video Tape 2>

<Begin Video Tape 3>

BERMAN: You were in the same fraternity as your brother?

ASHER: Yes. Class had not even started. I'm coming out of this restrictive boy's school, where I barely got out with the skin of my teeth. I thought the work was terribly difficult. In hindsight, it was, to a certain extent, not unlike Westminster, which my daughter and son went to. They got Bs and Cs at Westminster. Joey, my oldest boy, was a cum laude at Cornell. My daughter was an honor student at Wellesley. There is no question these are good prep schools. Anyway, I was subjected for the first time in my life to people . . . Jews. We could not join a Christian fraternity. No way.

BERMAN: Was that shocking to you?

ASHER: To a certain extent, but there were so many Jews. I could tell . . . you go to these fraternities, rush parties. Rush luncheons is what they were. They were always at lunch, as I
recall. To a certain extent, Cornell, which has a heavy New York influence because a lot of colleges are state universities. These were kids from the South. They thought you were different. It's sort of like Hoke in *Driving Miss Daisy* when he wanted to get his raise. It was nice being fussed over. I enjoyed that. It came down to pledge time. On my hall was a guy, who I'm still friends with. He's a guy named Jerry Wedran from Cleveland, Ohio, who became . . .

**BERMAN:** Jerry what?

**ASHER:** Wedran. W-E-D-R-A-N. I knew all those guys from Cleveland and Shaker Heights because they were his friends. I didn't have any friends there, but we were all in the freshman hall together. It's sort of interesting. I got a bid to ZBT, but I'm not going there. I'm going where my brother is. I mean, how can I do that? I don't know anybody. So, I joined without knowing too many people. In hindsight, I was just so lucky because these were so gifted and so talented and so bright and so interesting people. They were anything but cut out of a mold. We had the first black member of a fraternity on our campus. We had so many talented people. It was just a wonderful experience. I remember in rush, now that you asked me the question. I remember in rush week, still class had not started. I think class had just started, but rush week, not rush week. Pledge week, when you pledge. There was the paddling and the hazing which went on. I'm sure it's minimized today, but it was classic. Goes back years and years. I remember we had a vow of silence. You couldn't speak to anybody during that week. If you spoke to them - I don't know what they would do to you. It was not smart. But I can remember they would call my room. They would call your room. Call the dorm and ask to speak to you. If they called to speak to Tom Asher, it's okay, but if they called to speak to Tommy Asher, that meant it came from my brother's fraternity. They knew me as Tommy, which was my name, and I knew it. Don't answer the phone.

**BERMAN:** That's funny.

**ASHER:** It is funny.

**BERMAN:** You told me a story once. I'd love you to repeat it for the interview, about going to Cornell and it was the first time you had ever heard of Leo Frank.

**ASHER:** Yes.

**BERMAN:** If you could just repeat that incident for me.

**ASHER:** It was my freshman year. The whole experience was so enlightening. By the way,
in that dorm next door to me was an Orthodox\textsuperscript{68} student, who I used to have to go . . . he would come in and say on the Sabbath,\textsuperscript{69} would I turn on the lights for him. All of this is so brand new to me. I go to Cornell, and a fraternity brother says to me, "You're from Atlanta. You must know all about Leo Frank." I said, "Leo who? Never heard of him." He said, "My uncle" or "cousin had written a book about it. Would you like to read it?" "Yes, I'll read it." So I read this. It was a short thing. I said, "My goodness, this is Leo Frank. He went to Cornell. He's from Atlanta. This whole story is unbelievable. How come I didn't know anything about it? I remember coming home for my first vacation. I don't think it was Thanksgiving because we would go to New York for Thanksgiving to the Biltmore Hotel. Again, my eyes are just open to this new world that I had never . . . In hindsight, I lived a very cloistered existence. At the Biltmore and the Roosevelt Hotel. I was just in a whirlwind. But I remember going home and coming in and saying, "Mom and Dad, you're not going to believe. Do you know anything about Leo Frank? This is unbelievable." They say, "What do you know about Leo Frank?" They were mortified. And a hush. It's not unlike what Alvin said in the video tapes, and others. It turns out, as I found out, that I knew the names. I knew the Haas family. Leonard Haas. Leonard, who was a member of the defense team. His son was one of our friends growing up. Of course, I knew the Selig\textsuperscript{70} family. I knew all that. I went back to Cornell, and my parents were just mortified that they send their son all the way up to Ithaca, New York, and what does he come back with but Leo Frank? Couldn't he come back with something useful, productive, rather than counterproductive? It starts to sink in. The anti-Semitism and all of it starts to take place. My mother then told me that she recalls standing on the balcony of the Biltmore Apartments,\textsuperscript{71} where she lived. Her first home that she recalled was . . . the building is still there. It's diagonally across from the Fox [Theatre]\textsuperscript{72} and seeing the crowds go out to Governor [John] Slaton\textsuperscript{73} go out to attack the governor

\textsuperscript{68} Orthodox Judaism is a traditional branch of Judaism that strictly follows the Written Torah and the Oral Law concerning prayer, dress, food, sex, family relations, social behavior, the Sabbath day, holidays and more.

\textsuperscript{69} 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.

\textsuperscript{70} Lucille Selig Frank (1888-1957), a native of Atlanta, was the wife of Leo Frank.

\textsuperscript{71} The Atlanta Biltmore Hotel on West Peachtree Street in Atlanta opened in 1924. The 11-story hotel and the 10-story apartment buildings were located in Midtown. There were towering radio masks on each end of the building, with vertical illuminated letters on them that spell out ‘BILTMORE.’ In 1967 it was sold to Sheraton Hotels and became the Sheraton-Biltmore Hotel. The building has now been renovated and turned into office space and condominiums and is still called the ‘Biltmore.’

\textsuperscript{72} The Fox Theatre is located on Peachtree Street in Midtown Atlanta. The theater was originally planned as part of a
when he commuted Leo Frank. She was probably seven years old, eight years old at the most, but she recalled that. We had some conversations, but they were not happy. Here's my dad, this country boy in Atlanta, desperately trying to be accepted. Desperately. No education. Family not particularly liking him. Wanting to assimilate, show that he's worth something. I can see all that now. I also can remember, sadly, I remember hearing snippets of phone conversations when Jack Rothschild was speaking out on behalf of civil rights. I didn't know what was going on, but I remember my father would talk to his friends, and they were hot. They didn't like that one bit. I knew it was wrong. Here I was in the Eastern establishment, very liberal, educational atmosphere, and then I saw the difference. I saw the environment that my father grew up in, and I understood it. That's where you have the conflicts. You say, "I know he's wrong, but that's my father."

BERMAN: And was it shocking, coming home after being at school? You're in school, and then coming home and it's still white only here. The buses, blacks in the back of the bus. Was it a shock either way, going up north and experiencing an integrated society and then coming back here?

ASHER: I don't know if it was a shock. Don't forget, I went in the army also. To a certain extent . . . also met my wife in college, and she was Conservative. Her grandmother had an accent and came from the old country. They were kosher, much to the chagrin of my parents. You know, why couldn't I go up there and marry someone like us? They soon saw through that. It was a large Shrine Temple as evidenced by its Moorish design. The theater was ultimately developed as a lavish movie palace, opening in 1929. The auditorium replicates an Arabian courtyard under a night sky of flickering stars and drifting clouds. The Fox Theatre now hosts cultural and artistic events and concerts by popular artists.

73 John Marshall Slaton, or Jack Slaton, (1866-1955) served two non-consecutive terms as the Sixtieth Governor of Georgia. His political career was ended in 1915 after he commuted the death penalty sentence of Atlanta factory boss Leo Frank, who had been convicted for the murder of a teenage girl employee. Because of Slaton's law firm partnership with Frank's defense counsel, claims were made that Slaton's involvement raised a conflict of interest. Soon after Slaton's action, Frank was lynched. After Slaton's term as governor ended, he and his wife left the state for a decade. Slaton later served as president of the Georgia State Bar Association.

74 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.

75 Kosher/Kashrut is the set of Jewish dietary laws. Food that may be consumed according to halakah (Jewish law) is termed 'kosher' in English. Kosher refers to Jewish laws that dictate how food is prepared or served and which kinds of foods or animals can be eaten. In a kosher kitchen and home, meat and dairy are kept separate, so a separate sets of dishes, cookware, and serving ware are needed. Food that is not in accordance with Jewish law is called 'treif.' The word 'kosher' has become English vernacular, a colloquialism meaning proper, legitimate, genuine, fair, or acceptable. Kosher can also be used to describe ritual objects that are made in accordance with Jewish law and are fit for ritual use.
such a silly veneer. She helped integrate our family, literally. She immediately insisted . . . don't forget, I grew up we had Christmas trees. My remembrance of Christmas . . . of course, my father was in the retail business, and Christmas is the fifth season. That's when they make all their money. Rich's was grand. There is still nothing like Rich's. The closest thing you can come to Rich's is if you go to Harrods. That's the closest. If you go to Harrods in London and you see this opulence and this beauty. I'm sure it wasn't the same, but in my eyes, that was what it was, and it's nothing like today. I can remember on Christmas Eve we would come out with the Christmas tree. We would buy a tree, and we would decorate it. We would sit around on Christmas Eve and sing Christmas carols.

BERMAN: Say the name of your wife again.

ASHER: Her name is Spring.

BERMAN: And her maiden name?

ASHER: It was Rosalie Spring Savitt. S-A-V-I-T-T. She was born in West Hartford [Connecticut].

BERMAN: What was her reaction to Christmas?

ASHER: She put her foot down and said, "We're Jews. What are you doing? Are you nuts?"
The answer was, "Yes, we are a little nuts. That's true. We're nuts." But she would not allow it. In fact, Justus Martin, who I love dearly. He was our chairman. He was just an exceptional human being. He used to send me a wreath every year for Christmas, the crown of thorns. I would think of some way. I just can't put it on my house. “I hope he doesn’t come by my house. I'm not going to have it up” because Spring wouldn't allow it. Of course, my parents had a wreath on the door, and they had a tree, and my brother did too. He was in the retail business. But she wouldn't allow it. She had Passover. She insisted on the High Holy Days. She grew up in a devout household.

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76 Harrods is a department store located on Brompton Road in Knightsbridge, London. It is now owned by the state of Qatar. It was founded in 1849 by Charles Henry Harrod. The store occupies a 5-acre site and has 330 departments covering 1.1 million square feet of retail space. It is the largest department store in Europe and lays claim to having its own unique postcode.

77 Hebrew: Pesach. The anniversary of Israel’s liberation from Egyptian bondage. The holiday lasts for eight days. Unleavened bread, matzah, is eaten in memory of the unleavened bread prepared by the Israelite during their hasty flight from Egypt, when they had not time to wait for the dough to rise. On the first two nights of Passover, the seder, the central event of the holiday is celebrated. The seder service is one of the most colorful and joyous occasions in Jewish life. In addition to eating matzah during the seder, Jews are prohibited from eating leavened bread during the entire week of Passover. In addition, Jews are also supposed to avoid foods made with wheat, barley, rye, spelt or oats unless those foods are labeled ‘kosher for Passover.’ Jews traditionally have separate dishes for Passover.

78 The two High Holy Days are Rosh Ha-Shanah (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).
BERMAN: When you were married, did you stay at the Temple?

ASHER: Yes. We always stayed at the Temple. The Temple has evolved too. It's a little later than it's evolved with our marriage. It was pretty obvious to me that we were wrong in the way we conducted ourselves, but that was it. It's all I knew. The solace was that Alfred wrote about it. I found out that all of a sudden, you find other people all over the country they experienced the same thing. I can remember going to see the first . . . it wasn't. I saw The Last Night of Ballyhoo. Of course, Alfred and I went to the last Ballyhoo together. We double dated to it. But The Last Night of Ballyhoo was the formal. It wasn't the last Ballyhoo, it was the last night of the weekend. I can remember Ballyhoo. Ballyhoo, as you know, was German Jews in Atlanta. It was Falcon. There were a couple of others. I don't recall the names, but there was one in Montgomery. The one in Birmingham was Jubilee. I can remember going to Jubilee, but most of those faded by the time I got into my late teens, so I missed most of that. That was a German Jewish event because it was at the Standard Club, to a large extent.

BERMAN: What year did you and Spring get married?

ASHER: We got married in 1959.

BERMAN: Here in Atlanta?

ASHER: No. We got married in Hartford.

BERMAN: Then did you move back here to Atlanta right away?

ASHER: Yes. Right away. I had gotten a job in the brokerage business at Goodbody & Company in March of 1959. We had been engaged since Thanksgiving of the previous year. We had met. It's interesting. My junior year in college, Spring's uncle, who went to Cornell also, he was a judge in Hartford. He was a Cornell Law [School] grad. He said that he was coming up to the Cornell Syracuse game in the fall and that he had a date for her. Don't get a date. It turns out the date fell through, and she ended up coming over to my fraternity house. I think that was the weekend . . . I did not have a date. My date, that was a whole other story, was a girl I was dating at the time was off at someplace else. The fraternity weekends were very interesting at Cornell. They were wild. I mean, a lot of drinking, a lot of partying, music. I mean, it was right out of, I wouldn't say Animal House. You worked very hard during the week, and if you didn't pass, you

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79 The Standard Club is a Jewish social club that started as the Concordia Association in 1867 in Downtown Atlanta. In 1905, it was reorganized as the ‘Standard Club’ and moved into the former mansion of William C. Sanders near the site of Georgia State Stadium (formerly Turner Field). In the late 1920s, the club moved to Ponce de Leon Avenue in Midtown Atlanta. Later, the club moved to what is now the Lenox Park business park and was located there until 1983. In the 1980s, the club moved to its present location in Johns Creek in Atlanta’s northern suburbs.
were gone. You were just out of there. There were bright kids, studying hard. Come Saturday, Friday night and Saturday and football weekend, it was right out of the movies. I met her at the fraternity. She had a date with a boy named Herbie Kaplan, who was a fraternity brother, and we met. She graduated from . . . she went to Loomis Chaffee School in Hartford [Windsor, Connecticut]. She graduated. Came up as a freshman. She's walking along the street on the campus and sees me, and she says, "Aren't you Tom Ashley?" I said, "That's because all Southerners are named Ashley. If you're from Georgia, it's Ashley. It was [George] Ashley Wilkes [Gone With the Wind]." I said, "Yes." She showed a greater interest than I did. Thank goodness. She pursued me a little harder than I did. That was my senior year. We dated all the senior year. It was interesting. Her father was very upset. She actually joined a Christian sorority, which she said was a big mistake. She was rushed hard. She had come out of Loomis Chaffee. It was an ecumenical, largely Christian prep school. She was rushed by somebody that knew her to join Kappa Alpha Theta. They didn't have any Jews. In those days, there were a whole bunch of sororities, and that was sort of one of the prized sororities. If you got a bid to Theta, you were something special. She called her father and told him. He was so upset. He wouldn't speak to her. It really was crushing to him that she didn't join one of the Jewish sororities. She said in hindsight that was a big mistake because that is your social group, good or bad, right or wrong. She was flattered but said that was a mistake. Nonetheless, she did join. Then when I graduated, I went in the army. We got engaged and got married. She left Cornell after that and came to Atlanta and got her degree. Not only got a degree, but she went to Atlanta Art Institute.

BERMAN: What was her reaction to moving to the South? Was that a difficult adjustment for her?

ASHER: Not really. She's a very adaptable person. I do remember that she used to baby sit for a professor by the name of Andrew Hacker, who was a very bright guy, who's a very accomplished writer, teacher and political science. I was a political science major. I liked Hacker. He's written a number of great books, Black and White [Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal] is one. He's written one just recently. He now teaches in New York at . . . I'm drawing a blank on the college. [Queens College, Flushing, New York] He's not at

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80 Kappa Alpha Theta, also known simply as Theta, is an international sorority founded in 1870 at DePauw University, formerly Indiana Asbury. Kappa Alpha Theta was the first Greek-letter fraternity for women and was founded by four female students.
Cornell anymore. She used to baby sit for him. He was just aghast. "You're going to Atlanta? What are you going to do in Georgia?" I can also remember that my brother-in-law, Spring's sister married a boy from Boston. They were very much into the Cape [Cod] and Hyannis [Massachusetts] and that sort of stuff. They just thought we were the biggest country bumpkins. Of course, we poured it on just so that it wouldn't . . . didn't want to disavow them of this of what we really lived like. It was pretty parochial comparatively, but to her credit, she, and I'm very pleased that she pointed out the value of Judaism and all the good of it.

BERMAN: Getting back to your parents' reaction to Rabbi Rothschild's stands on civil rights, was a lot of the Temple crowd like that? I've heard that he had a hard time moving the Temple crowd to his way of thinking.

ASHER: I'm not sure he ever really moved the Temple crowd. I'm sure the body language was there. I'm sure my parents were always socially very comfortable with him. I remember him coming to our house for some event or something. I also do remember him stopping me in the hall one time at the Temple. He said, "I want to ask you." This is classic Jack Rothschild in his own blunt, lack of diplomatic language. He was straight up. He said, "How do your parents feel?" I said, "What do you mean how do they feel?" "How do they feel about you being active in the Temple?" I've forgotten the conversation, but it took me aback. I knew what he was saying. "What are you doing here? Why are you active? Why are you interested in coming to these classes when you've got parents who are so . . ." I wouldn't call them antisemitic in the literal term. I think most of their crowd was anti- . . . I wouldn't say it was anti-Jewish. It's anti-active-Judaism. They not only didn't wear it on their sleeve, they often hid it.

BERMAN: Besides the Riches, who else did they chum with?

ASHER: They were very good friends with the Montags, Herbert Elsa, Clarence Elsa, Edith. Also, Ralph and Allie Uhry.

BERMAN: What about the Strausses?

ASHER: The Strausses. Later on, they were very close with the Sugarmans, the Frasers, and the Haas family. They were all very, very . . . they must have had 10 or 15 couples they were very close with.

BERMAN: It's so interesting to me that they only were with Jewish people.

ASHER: That's right. He had some association in the store with the Christian members of the community. He knew them from the board, so it gave him some credibility. There's no question
that that was the crowd. It was exclusive.

BERMAN: Jack Rothschild, he really just kind of coerced the congregation to follow his lead? He didn't have a lot of support?

ASHER: I think he was going there whether they followed or they didn't follow. That was his message. High Holy Days, I mean, his message on a regular basis was the unfairness of segregation and all of the problems. I can remember as a kid, one of the boldest things we ever did was go to the Wallahagee or the Royal Peacock. I can't remember, one of which may still be there. That's where, you saw the movie *Ray*, he [Ray Charles] played there. I can remember as a kid going there. It was right out of *Animal House*. You go in there. You're a white kid surrounded by 99 percent black. They were very nice. I mean, it was a nightclub. It was one of the great jazz nightclubs.

BERMAN: Where was it?

ASHER: It was on Auburn Avenue, I believe. It was one of the great historic sites where great jazz singers and musicians played. They couldn't play in, none of the other facilities were integrated. I can remember we would go there. I remember specifically going there at least once. Of course, you wouldn't tell your parents that you went because that would be too shocking.

BERMAN: What about when the Temple was bombed? Do you remember your parents' reaction to that?

ASHER: I don't. I think that was... 


ASHER: I was away at the time. I was not in town when it happened. All of that was happening at the time. Then I went in the army, where it was totally integrated.

BERMAN: Did you parents go to the [Martin Luther King, Jr.] dinner at the Temple?  

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81 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.

82 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
ASHER: No. For sure not.

BERMAN: Because I had heard it became a <unintelligible>.

ASHER: I would like to say it with a straight face, but I can't. No. I would say that my mother probably would. My mother, she understood. Don't forget, my father grew up in a middle Georgia rural community. That's just the way it was.

BERMAN: You were going to tell a story about your mother when she went to . . . when your father died. When you took her to college. If we could digress a little bit to that era.

ASHER: Yes. My mother was born in 1906. She was born in Boston, literally, but lived in, grew up in Atlanta. They sent her away to a school called Walnut Hill in Natick, Massachusetts, as a prep school. Actually, she started at Washington Seminary, and then they sent her away. When she graduated from Walnut Hill, that must have been 1924, she then went on to Wellesley, where she graduated in 1928. But in 1924, in the fall, I guess it was, her father, Oscar, drove her up there, and he died on the trip. I think he died in Boston. Had a heart attack. My mother never got over that. She adored him. She went on and graduated. In fact, my daughter, Juliet, went to Wellesley. I'm fortunate in that my mother was living when Juliet graduated from Wellesley. If you've ever seen the campus there, it's an exquisite place. We went over and found her dorm and her dorm room. She was pretty old at the time and not in the best of shape and pretty feeble, but she could open that gate of that elevator. She knew exactly what floor. She knew where her room was, and she was going to go see it, and she did. We left a note there. Spring is involved with Georgia Tech. She's going to a graduation here coming up. They said, "Do you have a robe?" She said, "Yes, I've got a robe, a hat, a gown, and a mortarboard." It's my mother's that she wore in 1928 and Juliet wore in 1986 when she graduated from Wellesley. There was a coterie of Wellesley women. Allie Uhry and Edith Elsas and some others. They weren't her dear friends.

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.

83 After Martin Luther King, Jr. won the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, an interracial celebratory dinner planned in Atlanta was almost cancelled due to opposition in the still segregated city. According to former Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young, J. Paul Austin, the chairman and CEO of Coca-Cola, and then Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen summoned key business leaders to a meeting. Austin and told them, “It is embarrassing for Coca-Cola to be located in a city that refuses to honor its Nobel Prize winner. We are an international business. The Coca-Cola Company does not need Atlanta. You all need to decide whether Atlanta needs the Coca-Cola Company.” Following the meeting, every ticket to the dinner was sold. Among them was Rabbi Jacob Rothschild of the Temple.
but they have been there too. Jane Montag, I think, was at Smith [College], but these were all . . .

BERMAN: Was she friends with Josephine Hyman?

ASHER: Yes. I'm not sure if she went there or not.

BERMAN: She went to Smith.

ASHER: Smith, yes.

BERMAN: She was in that age group.

ASHER: Yes. Very definitely. I'm really glad she was able to do that.

BERMAN: Didn't she also go on a world, a European . . .

ASHER: Yes. The year after graduation from, I think it may have been the year after she . . . I'm not sure what year, but it could have been while she was in college. I think she was in college. She went to Europe with her mother. I think it was the summer of going before college. That's what it was. It was the summer before she went to Wellesley. She and her mother and father went to Europe. That's where she was browsing the bins on the Left Bank [Paris, France], where they still are. Where you can buy books and pictures and paintings and what have you. She found a drawing that she liked. She brought it home. It was a Picasso, a signed Picasso, which we have, which has been in some books. It was obviously in his early period. I guess he was born, probably was 30 something years old by the time that was done in his 30s. He hadn't gone quite into the heavy, stark, modernist. He was still in his realist, very realistic drawing.

BERMAN: That's wonderful.

ASHER: Yes.

BERMAN: It's so interesting to me, and I'm sure it's probably interesting to you, that it was still the period when most Jews were trying to get out of Europe.

ASHER: Yes.

BERMAN: And here they were so affluent and being able to go on one of those world trips to Europe. What a life it must have been like.

ASHER: My grandmother, I assume she had some money. In those days she had plenty of money because the mill hadn't gone down, but her husband, Oscar, had died, who was president of the mill. They then moved, I think they moved either then or shortly before he died, they moved over to the Biltmore from the Ponce de Leon apartments into the apartment building, which is still there. It's the L shaped building off one of the side streets, whatever the street is. I can remember that. I remember vaguely that. I don't remember because he died before I was born, but I
remember going up there and seeing my grandmother and Riley. Riley was the chauffeur. They had a chauffeur, a uniformed chauffeur. In Alfred Uhry's *Driving Miss Daisy*, in the foreword of the book of the libretto, he makes reference to Riley Cobb. When he was a kid growing up was one of the chauffeurs of the family. That was right out of another era. His daughter in the movie, Hoke was teaching at Spelman [College]. Riley's daughter taught at Spelman. So, he took a lot of that . . . Then, when my grandmother died, Riley came over and worked for my mother. I knew him obviously there too. We have movies of him in the back yard in full uniform with shiny black shoes and a black uniform with buttons buttoned to the neck and a cap, sweeping leaves. You can't make this stuff up. It's a throwback to another era. It's just ludicrous by today's standards, but that was it on Springdale Road. Everybody lived comfortably. My grandmother died and I guess left my mother some money, but for all intent and purposes, the mill went to zero. The net result was that all of those fortunes were gone. I wouldn't say they were Enron and WorldCom, but more like Perm Central. It's a closer analogy because there was nothing dishonest that went on there. The industry changed, and it went out of business.

**BERMAN:** What happened to Norman, Sr.?

**ASHER:** Norman, Sr. He was a very bright guy. He had a number of inventions. He had a number of patents on machinery that was in the mill, which brought him substantial income. He was a very bright guy. In fact, in his 90s . . . it's kind of a sad situation since they're all gone. They could not stand his wife, Mimi. They just didn't like her. Didn't like being around her. She was tough, difficult to be around. Bette Davis in the worst moods. So, there was a great division there. They didn't speak for 10, 15, 20 years. He and I stayed in touch because he was interested in investing, and he had a wonderful mind. He called me for his investment ideas. We talked, and he did business with me. I would visit him. Even Joey went over and did an oral history with him. I liked him. I do know that he was known to be quite anti-Semitic. He associated with no Jews whatsoever. I don't know exactly where all that came from, but he definitely was difficult. But I liked him. I wasn't around him a lot, but a very bright guy. Shortly after he died, he must have been 98 when he died, Georgia Tech named the textile laboratories for him because for ten years or more, even in his 90s, he would be over there experimenting with textiles and fabrics and oils and ways to clean up oil spills.

**BERMAN:** Interesting.

**ASHER:** He was a very bright engineer with a good mind. It was sad. He was not a
manager, though. I think he was more of an engineer than he was a leader. Had they had his mind for the technology and Frank Neely for the management, it might still be going, but they didn't and it isn't.

**BERMAN:** What would you say is, it's kind of a difficult question, and you can take a minute if you want to think about it, but your best memory of growing up in Atlanta.

**ASHER:** My memories are of my neighborhood, Springdale Road. It was a beautiful neighborhood then. It was still beautiful. One of the requirements I used to . . . my kids always said, every time we got near, we had to drive by the house. I mean, that was a very nice existence. I remember I loved riding the trolley downtown. Alfred Uhry and I were good friends growing up. We would go to the movies on Saturdays. Our parents would either drive us or when we got old enough, we could take the trolley. The streetcar went straight up Ponce de Leon along the side of the park, the Olmstead Park.³⁴ that was designed there. It's sort of interesting, in hindsight it was a very cloistered existence. It was certainly conflict free. I remember Alfred. Al was a very interesting guy, Alfred Uhry. I remember he was very bright. He used to read as fast as he could turn a page. I always thought he was faking. Of course, he wasn't faking. He was just a bright guy. He was a voracious reader and obviously very interested in the theater. He wrote plays and musicals even in grammar school. He got me to be his sports editor of the fifth grade paper, which we wrote. I may have given them to you, *Harrison Herald*.

**BERMAN:** Yes.

**ASHER:** We had a reunion after he won the Pulitzer [Prize].³⁵ Mrs. Harrison came back to it. I remember walking in there and seeing Mrs. Harrison. This is not too many years ago, in the last 20 years, certainly. Seeing Mrs. Harrison there at this reception, I started to cry because, my God, all of a sudden I'm back in another . . . I'm sort of transported back to that because she really hadn't changed that much. We all had gray hair, but she didn't have any gray hair. She looked great. I was pretty amazed. Sadly, she passed away just a couple of years ago. My memories are going out to my aunt and uncle had a great farm.

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³⁴ Frederick Law Olmstead designed Olmsted Linear Park, which runs alongside Ponce de Leon Avenue in the Druid Hills area, an area developed by Atlantan Joel Hurt. In 1890, Hurt persuaded Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., then working at Biltmore Estate, to propose a plan for a park. Olmsted submitted a plan to Hurt in 1893 with the final plan in 1905. After his death two years later, Olmsted’s sons remained involved in the project. The park remains intact today. Olmsted is best known for his design of Central Park in New York.

³⁵ The Pulitzer Prize is an award for achievements in newspaper and online journalism, literature, and musical composition in the United States. It was established in 1917 by provisions in the will of American (Hungarian-born) publisher Joseph Pulitzer and is administered by Columbia University in New York City. Prizes are awarded yearly in 21 categories.
BERMAN: Where was the farm?

ASHER: It was past Decatur. It was due east of Atlanta, out towards East Lake, in that area. A beautiful farm with fields and crops and horses and cattle and a lake. My dad would go out there on the weekend. I remember sitting out there with Alfred's father, who was a wonderful artist, Ralph Uhry, a brilliant artist. Had an easel set up. We would be playing, and he'd paint. I can also remember going out to a place called Lazy River Farm. That was my cousin, Red Elsas, who was married to Janet. They bought a farm on the Chattahoochee River. I wish I knew where it was today. It was owned at one time by Robin Clay, who had been a governor of Georgia. The Clay family was a very wealthy family in the history of Georgia. I remember this place. It was one of the great Adirondack lodges. I remember a porch overlooking the Chattahoochee River with the big probably oak beams and oak pillars holding it up. It was just a throwback to another era.

BERMAN: Do you think it's still there?

ASHER: I would doubt it, but there's no way to know.

BERMAN: What was Red's real name?

ASHER: Clarence, who was really one of the nicest people I think I've ever known. I say that because I got registered in the brokerage business in 1959. I'm going out there calling on people. I was probably within a year or two of being registered. He called me up and said, "I want you to come by. We're going to have an underwriting." My company was not in the underwriting, but he had the opportunity to direct stock. He directed probably 30, 40, 50 clients to me that could only buy the stock through us. In those days, you could do that. Sure enough, he gave me a gift of 30 clients on day one. He didn't have to do that. I'm sure he had investment relationships that go way back. But he was a good guy, one of the even-tempered, nice people, and I've met and done business with a lot of them over the years. Many of them were not. You swallow a lot because they have money, but this was a good guy. Their house is still over on Habersham, where they lived for many years. Morris and Deanne Whitlock live there.

BERMAN: Tell me about your children. You have two?

ASHER: I have three.

BERMAN: Three.

ASHER: Joey is the oldest. He was born in 1961. Juliet is the middle child. She was born in 1964. Hugh is the youngest. He was born in 1966.
BERMAN: Are they all here?

ASHER: They're all here, knock on wood. They're all here. Juliet married Michael Golden two years ago. Hugh and Joey each have three children. Joey's got - the oldest is Ben, who was bar mitzvahed\(^{86}\) about a year and a half ago. Elliot is going to be bar mitzvahed next year. Then, Annie, who is eight now. Hugh's got three children: Andrew, Kallie, and Aaron Jacob, a little guy. Their ages are eight, six, and almost two.

BERMAN: Did the Jacob come from Jacob Elsas?

ASHER: Yes.

BERMAN: That's great.

ASHER: Yes.

BERMAN: So how many generations now have you been in Atlanta?

ASHER: It goes back to Jacob Elsas. It would Jacob, Oscar, my parents, me, my sons. That would be six generations.

BERMAN: Six generations. That's phenomenal.

ASHER: Yes. We have one photograph of five generations. I say five. No. I could be wrong. Four. My father was very active. Starting in about 1950, he was one of the founders of the Howard School for children with learning differences, learning problems. I became president of it, too, and went off the board just recently. But they named a gymnasium for him on their north campus.

BERMAN: Why did he get active in that? Was there a particular reason?

ASHER: His interest was really spawned by several people. They were all members of the Downtown Exchange Club. My uncle Norman, Mills Lane, Billy Mayer, Albert Mayer. All these guys were members. I think one of the projects was they met Marian Howard, who had MS [multiple sclerosis]. They were interested in children with disabilities because of her disability. She went to them to fund a school, so that sort of led to it. It ended up being solely learning problems.

BERMAN: It had two locations. It only has one now, correct?

ASHER: Right. It had two for years. Actually, had three. One in Macon for a while or

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\(^{86}\) Hebrew for ‘son of commandment.’ 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.
middle Georgia someplace. Had a north campus. It was pretty obvious that the mission was too difficult to run two campuses, so we basically sold the north campus, selling the other one, and merging into a new campus right near Bacchanalia [restaurant], about 10-15 acres there, so it would be a central, close to the expressway campus.

BERMAN: What ages does it serve?

ASHER: It goes all the way through from first grade all the way to high school graduation. The goal is to bring children in and have them mainstream back into their community once they deal with the learning. It’s a very interesting school that they, in hindsight, for all the right reasons. These kids were known, quote "losers" because they were pretty well restricted not for emotional problems but learning problems. They were losers, failures, can't pass, can't do math, can't do anything. The stigma has been with them all their lives. It’s not true that they're scholars. The school's whole emphasis is on what you do right. Most of them end up going back in their school, but some of them graduate. Some have gone on to become doctors. Some have gone to Georgia Tech and fine schools. Most of them go into where most kids go, to a normal job or college. Normal colleges. To their credit, they do an amazing job in building self-esteem. That's first and foremost. You know, school can be pretty cruel, very impressionable. It's very rewarding. I was president for a couple of years and have been on the board, just recently went off. I got to tell you, you go to graduation, and if you can sit there . . . first of all, they talk about every kid. They may have 10, 15, 18, 20 kids graduate. They talk about them. The teachers stand up. The whole thing with school is you can never say anything negative about yourself. If you say anything negative, you must then subsequently respond with something positive. You can't. They will stop you. You can't do that. There's no more negative thought. That's so meaningful in life. There a wonderful book out, just written, called The One Thing You Need to Know by a guy named Marcus Buckingham, who was <unintelligible> for 17 years. The essence of what he said is the problem with 360, you know, companies adopt the 360. I’ve been through 360. American Express did it. You emphasize your negatives. They would say, "These are things. But these are things you need to work on." First of all, this, this, this and this." Of course, you come out of there very down. You can't change those things. What they're saying is you need to take someone's strengths and build on those, not only in business but starting out. I got to tell you, if you're there for 15 minutes and you haven't cried in the first 15 minutes, you're not paying attention, because what they say about these kids and what their accomplishments and what they've overcome. Kids
going to Tech, going to Agnes Scott [College], who they said, "You'll never get out of school." That's what their teachers tell them. "You'll never do math." Well, the last I looked, you had to be able to do math to go to Georgia Tech and with scholarships. That's a free benefit that you didn't ask for in this interview.

BERMAN: No, that's wonderful. What are some of your other interests outside of work?

ASHER: Interestingly enough, mainly in the area of developmental disability. That's what's of most interest to me.

BERMAN: How about the Breman Museum?

ASHER: The Breman Museum, too, but I shouldn't say that. I'm really going back 20-30 years. My cousin, Skip Elsas . . . history has always been an interest. I'll get to the Breman Museum in a minute, but let me first go about this. My cousin is a geneticist and a very prominent one. He now heads a genetic project for the University of Miami, but he ran the one at Emory [University] for years. He had a clinic and a private practice business and a small for-profit business over there, which he asked me, along with the president of Emory and me and a couple of the associates who were . . . and it was really interesting. Juliet also ran the amino analyzer for him in his office that studied blood samples. He's the one that invented the newborn testing system for the state of Georgia in 1978. When we were kids growing up, one of my good friends, a guy named Harmon Bernard. You may know Susan Bernard.

BERMAN: I think so.

ASHER: She's written some books about Buckhead, etc. Anyway, she had a developmentally disabled child. We would take him to Sunday school. I would take him to the special school that they had, which was over at the center. Anyway, then Skippy comes along. That sort of interested me. I went to Leadership Atlanta. This is 1972. The head of the Atlanta Alliance for Developmental Disabilities, then called <American Association on Mental Retardation> Atlanta, said "We need you. Would you like to become active?" One thing led to another. I became active. It always just intrigued me because once I got into it, I realized the difficulty and the pain and the problems associated with mental retardation were just to the powers. The family is unable to cope. I was the first president that didn't have immediate, either a sibling or a child, who had a mental disability. But it always intrigued me. In 1977, Skippy came to me and said, "I

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87 Leadership Atlanta is the oldest sustained community leadership program in the nation. Its mission is to connect and inspire leaders to strengthen metro Atlanta’s communities.
know you're interested in the Atlanta Alliance for Developmental Disabilities. I know you are president." I remember sitting in my living room in Nancy Creek Road. He said, "I can test all newborns. I know a way to do it. We can stop at least 30 cases a year." Thirty doesn't sound like a lot, but 30 times $30,000 of institutional care. You multiply it out over the years, you're talking of millions and millions of dollars that's been sequenced out. I said, "How do you do it?" He said "There is six to eight tests". Of course, now they're up to about 15 or 20, but those are the main ones. Comes off a blood clot off the heel of the child and we can intervene. He said, "I can test. I can tell within 24 hours whether the child has got a problem that we need to intervene, and we can intervene with the diet. We can keep the brain from having a problem and causing mental retardation in those cases." I said, "Well, what do we do?" He said, "We need to get a law that says you got to do it." So, I went to our staff, and we went to the state legislature. That's a whole other story. We got [Robert] Bobby Dodd, Coach Dodd, who didn't know beans about it, but he was a good guy. We said, "Coach Dodd, we need to go to the legislature." He said, "Where do we need to start?" The guy at [unintelligible] said, "We need to start with Tom Murphy." He's the most powerful man in the state of Georgia. Governors are one thing, but this guy makes the laws." I remember going down the three of us. It was me, the executive director, and Coach Bobby Dodd, a great big foot 6 foot 3, 6 foot four, bow-legged, former coach at Georgia Tech. He was considered God around here. We walk into the halls of the legislature. You couldn't go five feet without somebody saying, "Coach Dodd! Coach Dodd!" We walk into Tom Murphy's office, and there he had an embroidered bulldog on the wall. He was a big [University of Georgia] Bulldogs [fan]. When Dodd walks in, the fact that they were archenemies, it didn't matter. This was Dodd. "In Dodd we trust" was the motto. We walk in. Tom is sitting on the couch. He said, "What do you want?" Bobby Dodd said, "I don't know. Let me let these boys here tell you what they want to do." We said, "Speaker Murphy, this is what we need. We got this law we want to pass in the state, in the House. This is what it will require. This is what the benefit. This is where the funding will be." We got Sidney Marcus in the Senate. No, the House. Whichever

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88 Robert Lee Dodd (1908–1988) was an American college football coach at Georgia Institute of Technology from 1930 and to 1966. He was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame as a player and coach.
89 Thomas Bailey "Tom" Murphy (1924–2007) was an attorney and Speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives from 1973 until his defeat in the general election of 2002, making him the longest serving House Speaker of any U.S. state legislature. He was a member of the Democratic Party. Murphy was born in Breman, Georgia, where his father was a telegraph operator for the railroad.
90 Sidney J. Marcus (1928-1983) was a native Atlantan and a prominent politician. Marcus was a Georgia legislator from Atlanta's 26th district, now the 106th district, who served in the Georgia House of Representatives from 1968.
one, I can't remember, and [Lawrence] Bud Stumbaugh, who's still around. Sidney, of course, passed away. We got them to lead it in the other legislature. Could not have been nicer, both of them. We passed unanimously in both houses. Can you imagine that happening today? It's set up. We became law in 1978, the first metabolic screening program in America. As a result, I and Tom Graff, we actually went up to Washington and met with the director of HEW [Department of Health, Education and Welfare]. I said the states ought to get on board here. Because what happened at the end of the first year, we're getting off the subject here I know.

BERMAN: No, no.

ASHER: At the end of the first year, all the border towns around the state, which we border at least five or six states, however many it is, where just the hospitals were flooded with potentially high-risk births because they knew that Georgia had a testing law that could intervene. They'd get these samples off the newborns and send them up to Emory. If there's a problem, they would actually airlift the child, but Skippy would intervene with it. Over the years, some of them stay on the diet, intervention, for life, basically until the brain matures instead of having a problem. That interested Juliet. That's why she went into medicine. She's a practicing physician. The end result was... we went out there the first time. I get choked up thinking about it. We walk out to Emory, and there is a Christmas party with all the kids, and they're fine.

BERMAN: That's amazing.

ASHER: Stop the tape for a minute. But seriously, is that rewarding? That's rewarding. I've stayed very active there, and I'm still active. That really intrigues me. That's how the learning differences came in. The whole area of mental disability, it still is a serious problem.

BERMAN: I think your brother was with the Howard School, too. Wasn't he active?

ASHER: No.

BERMAN: Because he gave me some records from the Howard School, so I thought...

ASHER: Oh, he did? No, he wasn't.

BERMAN: It must have been your dad's maybe.

ASHER: The end result is, you talk about things that have interested me? That interests me because it's a problem that can't be solved. It's not an illness. It can't be cured. It's a problem. So, I've been interested there. And history has always interested me. In 1999, I announced my retirement from Robinson Humphrey. Margaret called and said, "What are you doing? You've

until his death in 1983.
got to meet Jane Levy. I know you're interested in history." And I've always been interested in history. I was on the board then of the Museum of American Finance in New York, which my college roommate founded, which is a very, very interesting museum. I've been on the board of the High [Museum of Art], but that's art. I met Jane. I remember we went to Maggiano's [Little Italy] the first time I ever met her. We had lunch, and I liked her personally. I liked what the mission was. The whole area intrigued me. Of course, I like the Jewish history of Georgia. I honestly believe that this is a real jewel. As I've said before, we don't know where we're going to be 10, 15, 20 years from now, but I know where my vision tells me what it'll look like. I don't know how we're going to get there. Wherever we go, we go to museums. Have for years gone to museums in every city we go to. This one is different. It's not expressly a history museum. There is history, but there's more to it than that. I would say my real passion has always been history. By accident of fate, happen to get into the area of mental retardation. Spring knows. I mean, I cry at a McDonald's commercial. I'm a real pushover when it comes to those things. But I do see those areas. It's not popular. It's not something that you want to . . . It doesn't attract the society crowd, but it's not discriminatory. It doesn't matter who you are. You can be subject to . . . we don't know 95 percent of the causes. Some interesting experiences I've had, I'll give you one more, and then we'll get on another subject. We used to have a group called Project Rescue. It still operates under a different name, but it was out at Lakewood. You can imagine the area. It's a very, very poverty-stricken, low-income area, mainly black, but black and white. You know, when you get in poverty, colors disappear. It's when you get wealthy that the colors start to mean something, but they don't mean anything there. For years, we would have an awards banquet, pot luck dinner. I would come home from those, and I would tell my wife, "You just not going to believe what . . ." You can go to all the black-tie dinners you want to where they give out awards and auction off trips to Montana and whatever else, but you won't see anything like this, where they give the prize is a rose. It's for neighbors helping their other neighbors, black neighbors helping white neighbors because they have a child with a developmental disability. I said, "Somehow or another, these people got the message, the gift. It has nothing to do with education. It has nothing to do with wealth. There, in their heart, is the right thing to do for their fellow, for their neighbors."

91 The High Museum of Art in Atlanta is the leading art museum in the Southeastern United States. Located on Peachtree Street in Midtown, the High is a division of the Woodruff Arts Center. It was founded in 1905 as the Atlanta Art Association and renamed after the High family donated their house as an exhibit space in 1926. In 1983, a new 135,000-square-foot building designed by Richard Meier opened to house the Museum. In 2002, three new buildings designed by Renzo Piano more than doubled the Museum's size.
I said, "I'm telling you, you got to see this, because you live in another world if you don't think that's going on." When you go out and try to raise money from people to give checks . . . Federation. They're not going to do it. Or the United Way. Then you see what's really happening. Changes how you see the community. Those are the sorts of things that motivate me.

BERMAN: That's wonderful. Are you still active with the Temple?

ASHER: I've been on their nominating committee. I've been less active.

BERMAN: They have a new rabbi.

ASHER: Rabbi [Jeffrey] Salkin. I love the Temple. Spring and I have made probably the largest one donation we've ever made to any institution. It was to the Temple, their capital campaign. Spring said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "I tell you what, I can remember going in there. I was always in trouble. Bertha Freid was our teacher. We jokingly called her, I'm sure she didn't appreciate, not to her face, "Big Bertha." Big Bertha would take us into the main sanctuary on Sunday morning. The sun would shine through the stained glass and the purple light. I remember Richard Strauss would lie on the floor and grasp his throat as if he's . . . I said, "The only thing I can remember is that I want to give money. I want to restore those windows. That's what I want to give to." Sure enough, we were there last Friday night, and I said, "See? There's the purple on the floor." That was it. I told Margaret that, too. I said, "Margaret, you only really gave for one reason, because of your brother."

BERMAN: Why did he go on the floor?

ASHER: Because he and I we were bad, for no reason other than the fact that we were just basically bad children. Of course, we got in a lot of trouble, but that was one more way that a twelve-year-old could get in trouble. We thought we were very creative. That's why I gave. If I can help. We'll restore. Got to have that good rich purple in there. Sure enough, it's working.

BERMAN: That is fantastic.

<End Video Tape 3>

<Begin Video Tape 4>

ASHER: Just a quick aside is we would start on a Friday afternoon, when the markets were closed. I really learned . . . I knew nothing about it. They would come in with a crew, into our trading room, and they would take everything down, all the electronics, all the computers, everything down. Couldn't have a time stamp machine because they would click. They would lay down the track and

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92 Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin is now the senior rabbi of Temple Solel in Hollywood, Florida. (2019)
the lighting. They would work all night from five or six o'clock on Friday until seven o'clock on Saturday when they would get ready to shoot. We would be there, the members of the firm. We would have our lines. The star would be there and the teleprompter. We also did some wonderful outtakes. The group on Saturday Night Live, which was the one? Remember the one with the coneheads?

BERMAN: The coneheads.

ASHER: They brought in coneheads one time. We did a whole conehead. We didn't use any of that stuff. We had a lot of fun, a lot of laughs. Then we would shoot all day. I can remember that I have such respect for people who shoot, do these things because I remember at the end of the day, I was literally hoarse. They had the commissary people come in. At six o'clock on Saturday we were through. They would work all night long to get the trading room back up and running so that on Monday they can go back in business. They had the papers all exactly where they were, everything exactly the same. It was very interesting. We did over 40 commercials. Anyway, the people I worked for, Sandy Yearley and Justus Martin, were exceptional human beings. Sandy was the clinical, unemotional business leader. Both of them served on the board of the New York Stock Exchange. Sandy had been chairman of the NASD, National Association of Security Dealers, which is the self-regulatory body set up by an act of Congress, the Maloney Act, 1938. Very prestigious position. In those days, it was the equivalent of the head of the New York Stock Exchange. He had been asked to chair a commission on the study of the investment business called the Yearley Commission by the SEC Securities and Exchange Commission. These are major players. Justus, on the other hand, was the salesman. He was the fiery guy. He was the guy who said that everybody in the world knew him. Years later, after Justus sadly had died, we were in Italy, Spring and I, on a vacation. We were at a little hotel. It was really a bed and breakfast. It was an elegant place in Florence overlooking the river. We were sitting there, you sit there at breakfast, the only meal that is served is breakfast. There was a couple sitting there. Spring says, "Where are you from?" "We're from London, you know." <Tom uses a British accent> She said, "We're from Atlanta." He said, "Atlanta? What business?" "I'm in the investment business." "Oh, you're in the investment business. Do you know Justus Martin?"

You know, they all knew Justus Martin. Even after Justus died, I was in New York at a meeting honoring [Richard A.] Dick Grasso, who was chairman of the New York Stock Exchange, who has gone to some infame because he was tossed. You know, the problems that are . . . Justus loved the
guy. He said he was brilliant. He did a lot for the Exchange. I used to hear him say, "Dick Grasso is the greatest." So I went to this meeting. Five hundred people there. I figured. "Well, you know, Dick Grasso doesn't know me. He'll never know me." I figured, "You know what?" I walked up there. As soon as he . . . shaking someone’s hand. I said, "I just want to tell you one thing. You don't know me, but my name is Tom Asher, and Justus Martin was my partner, my boss, my mentor." He turned to me, and he got tears in his eyes. He grabbed both my elbows and he said, "You worked with Justus Martin." He said, "That guy." He said, "What are you doing tomorrow morning? "Well, I'm not doing anything." He said, "I want you to come down to the exchange and have breakfast with me." He said, "I just want to talk about him." Last summer, I'm in London for Eddie Elson's 70th birthday party. He had all these dignitaries from England and from Denmark. He was ambassador, so he had a guy from Goldman Sachs. He was one of the old partners from Goldman Sachs. I knew who he was, but he didn't really know me. But I knew who he was. I went up to him. I said, "I just wanted to say hello to him. My name is Tom Asher. I know you knew Justus Martin." Same reaction. He said, "I got to tell you . . . “ I don't know what he meant by this, but he said, "I got to tell you something about Justus Martin." He said, "I needed him. I needed somebody to stand up for me at one time years ago, and he was the only guy willing to do it." He said, "He was a giant." Anyway, Justus was a member of a . . . he was elected into a secret society in New York. No one's ever heard of it. I don't know the name of it, myself, but it's a men's good ol' boys club. Once a year, they initiate four or five people into this club, and they go to New York and they get bad drunk. I'm talking about the titans of American industry. Wall Street, the leaders of all the firms. They are required to have a skit, and they perform it. They rehearse it for a day, and then they perform it. Apparently, if they don't like you, they throw rolls at you and food at you. They're terribly drunk, apparently. I don't even know where they have this. It's really like a throwback to another era, like turning the clock back a hundred years. Still goes on, I think. Justus comes to me really shortly before he got sick and died. He said, "I'm going up there. I've been inaugurated. I'm being elected into this society, and I need a skit. Would you write one for me?" I said I would. I wrote a skit for him, which I still have. He has another family. He got divorced from his first wife, Julia, who ended up doing landscaping at our house on Nancy Creek when she was married to Justus. He then gets a divorce from her and marries his secretary, or a secretary up there. That will happen, you know. They had a daughter, who, interestingly enough, got . . . sadly, he didn't live to see it. She got a 1,600 on
her SATs. Early admission to Princeton [University]. Queen of everything. Just exceptional. It just breaks my heart that he didn't see it. He had this daughter, who was the same age of his grandchildren. Everybody knew it. Everybody on Wall Street knew that Justus had a daughter the same age as his grandchildren. I wrote a story about Justus. They assigned... you had to lampoon [James D.] Jim Robinson [III], who was our boss, the head of American Express. It was to Dr. Seuss,\textsuperscript{93} to the same meter as Dr. Seuss is written, and I had it in a Dr. Seuss book. I still have it. Anyway, it was a big hit. I remember him calling me at home on a Saturday. He said, "How you doing? I need that..." I said. "Justus, will you stop calling me? I can finish it. I'm working as hard as I can. I'm working overtime here." I've done a lot of that stuff over the years. It doesn't come naturally. Nothing comes really that naturally, but I knew what to do. I knew what to say. It was a hilarious skit. A couple of years ago, again, after he died, someone from Wall Street, I can't remember who it was. It was somebody I met at Citigroup and Smith Barney. He said, "You know, Justus" Martin. I was at that "... whatever the thing. "He had the best skit. We still remember that skit. It was the best of them all." Of course, I didn't say anything because I didn't want to say that. He was supposed to have written it himself.

BERMAN: Really?

ASHER: Anyway, I loved the guy. I went to Sandy, and I offered... I saw several trends. One was a very interesting trend. One was on munis. We were the first to package munis in the southeast in a trust format, which worked out pretty well. It worked out very well for our clients. The second thing was... well, first was advertising, which they agreed to do. Spend all this money, which was a big payoff. The other part that was just incredible experiences. One day they called me and said there was a guy out front in the lobby named Joe Sullivan, from Chattanooga [Tennessee]. He had a proposal, and would I be willing to listen? I was sort of the guy that any new products came to. We didn't have a very formal process. He was marketing a new system for selling options. He was employed by the Chicago Board of Trade. They wanted to take the option business and make it liquid. For 400 or 500 years, people had been buying options, starting in London, but they were not liquid. If you bought an option on a stock [and] it expired worthless, you couldn't do anything in the meantime other than exercise. You

\textsuperscript{93} Theodor Seuss Geisel (1904-1991) was an American children's author, political cartoonist, and animator. He is known for his work writing and illustrating more than 60 books under the pen name Dr. Seuss. His work includes many of the most popular children's books of all time, selling over 600 million copies and being translated into more than 20 languages by the time of his death.
couldn't sell. If the stock went way up in price, you could exercise and sell your stock, but you couldn't sell your option. I don't want to get too technical about it. I listened to him. I thought it sounded very intriguing, so I took it to our board. They said, "Well, look, how much is it going to cost?" I said, "Well, a seat on this new exchange called the Chicago Board Options Exchange" . . . I said. "I went up there. I went to Chicago. They took me down on the floor of the board of trade. They had an area off to the side, which was called the cafeteria, because it was. It was the cafeteria. They had the tray and food service and everything. He said, "We're going to take out these things, and we're going to put a trading room in here. We're going to trade eight stocks. IBM . . . " He named a bunch of them. I went back to the firm. I had to explain to them, number one, what an option was. Number two, they went to King and Spalding, who immediately gave the classical, pardon the expression, lawyer ruling, "They're illegal. Can't do them. Against the law. They're gambling." They were really not gambling. They were the exact opposite. Options or not options. Real estate for years. We fought through that. Fortunately, we had a chairman of the board who was no longer running the business, a man named Henry Tompkins, who had married Roby Robinson's daughter, the founder. I'm talking about 1894. Mr. Tompkins was an interesting man. He was a chess master. He was a scholar of all kinds. He took one look at it, and he said, "This is the best thing I've ever seen." He said, "You guys are crazy. You need to approve this." Old Mr. Tompkins said, "Do it." Of course, everybody else fell in. So, we bought a seat. It was in my name. I mean, the firm put up the money. Bought a seat on the soon to be opened brand new exchange. Wasn't in business. The Chicago Board Options Exchange, 1974, 1975, whatever year it was. I can't remember exactly. We paid $10,000 for the seat. Today, they're trading in millions of dollars. I said, "The only liability is $10,000. We don't have to put anybody up there. I'll go up to Chicago, and I'll find somebody that will clear our business. We've got to have somebody that will handle . . . To make a trade, you got to have an order go to somebody. You got to go to the floor. You got to execute. Then you got to do all the back office and make . . . I'll find somebody." I went up there. I remember getting on a plane with . . . They said, "Take our head of operations." We go out to the Atlanta airport, get on a plane. I'm sitting next to the guy, and he seems really nervous, head of operations. I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "I've never been in a plane before." I'm going to Chicago. We're buying a seat on the exchange nobody has ever heard of, and he's never been in a plane. We went up there, and we interviewed a bunch of firms. We selected A.G. Becker to clear our business for us. I came back
and wrote the manuals. I designed the order forms. How do you fill an order. Then I had to go around, all the branches, and tell them what an option was. It was an unbelievable experience. By today's standard, you think that's crazy. But it's huge. It's one of the biggest businesses on the open exchange all over the world. It was just a huge... every exchange now trades options on that same model. I thought that was really an eye opening from the ground up, having to do everything. Somebody's got to do it. Anyway, then I had an account. I'm reading the paper every day. This is about 1974 or somewhere around then. Again, same time. I see they have these money funds. Excuse me, there was a money fund. It was a coupon that said Fidelity Daily Income Trust. I remember they had a frog and he had <unintelligible>. It's like the Aflac duck, I guess. I sent him a check for $500 or something like that. I got a prospectus. It was a money market fund. They sent me a book of checks. I said, "This is a pretty good idea. Why don't we have something like this?" They said, "Brokers don't have them." You got to have a mutual fund. I looked up the list of money market funds. I don't remember exactly, but there were about four or five. Today, there are thousands, but there were four or five, one of whom, by coincidence, was run by a guy named [Joseph] Joe Reich, who was a fraternity brother of mine at Cornell. He was a very bright guy who had founded a firm called Reich & Tang. He had a fund called Daily Income Fund. I called up Joe Reich. I said, "Joe, any chance you'd let us... send you your money. We could use it. It looks like a good deal to me." He said, "No. We only want institutions. We don't want any retail customers." He said, "You need to call a guy named John Goldsmith in Cleveland, who is with Prescott, Ball and Turben [Inc]." I called this guy. Answered the phone, "John Goldsmith." It turns out to be one of the smartest guys I've ever met in my life. He was the CEO of Prescott. He said, "We have a small firm. We've just incorporated. We've put a lot of money in it. We don't know whether we're going to do anything with it, but if you want to talk about it, come on up here." I got on a plane. Flew to Cleveland. Stayed at one of those hotels, whatever it was. There was a couple of pretty crappy hotels before the Ritz in downtown Cleveland. I go over to his offices. I liked the guy a lot, and we got along real well. One thing led to another. He said, "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. We'll sell you have of our... would you buy half of the management company?" I said, "I have to go back to my partners and see, but how much does it cost?" He said, "We invested $100,000." It sounded like a lot of money to me. He said, "All the legal fees but it's all done. If you give us $50,000, you can be a joint owner of this business." Carnegie Capital Management Company Liquid Capital Income Trust was their one fund they had.
I went back. I remember getting our board together. I had to explain to our board of directors what a money market fund was, how they operate, what you invest in, and what our risks were. And our risks were none. Worst case, you let the money roll off, it all matures, and everybody goes home. The real risk was that nothing happened and your $50,000 didn't turn any money. Well, they approved it. We ended up with the first broker-sponsored money fund in America. That was Carnegie Capital Management Company. We then contacted five or six other regional firms. "We need to raise some money to make this thing profitable. You got to get it up over $30 million." It eventually wound up going over about $7 or $8 billion, $10 billion. It was huge. The money rolled in. I remember running, you operated with about three people. As long as your credits are good. It was a time of rising interest rates. When you have rising interest rates and you have short maturities, you can constantly . . . your new investments were always made at higher rates, so you look good. Now, the converse wasn't true, but in that period of time, rates were rising. As long as you stay with AAA credits, as long as you stay with famous names, you don't have a problem. The problems money funds have run into over the years is that they break that rule. Either they go long on maturities, without getting into details, or they were poor credits. And we've had some problems. Some of them have. So, we founded this business, and we were making so much money that it was embarrassing. I remember running into Joe Reich, the guy that was my fraternity brother, who I still see, who's a great guy, at the airport. I said, "Joe, can you believe? I'm embarrassed. We get these checks, they're so big. We don't do anything!" It was interesting. The objection from our firm was, "Look, we don't want to put our client’s money in a money fund because that means that we don't keep it here at our firm." Brokers kept the cash, paid no interest on it, and invested it themselves, so they accumulated the money. My point was, if it's good for our customers, it's got to be good for us. And, of course, it was. But I remember also having to go around and explain, “What is a money market fund?” We invited five or six other firms to come in, Rauscher Pierce Refsnes and the firm up in Seattle. I'm drawing a blank on the name. Dain Bosworth up in Minneapolis and Wheat First up in Richmond. I knew all these guys. I knew them through the business. We all had a meeting. We flew to Chicago, met in the lounge, the American Airlines lounge in the Chicago, O'Hare Airport. We laid out what it is, what it's going to cost you - almost nothing. Most of them said no. It's the stupidest idea they ever heard of. We didn't have any money in it at the time to speak of. Except, two of them said yes. Two of them said no. Actually, a third one actually said yes but stayed in only about a month and thought
it was a stupid idea. Money funds were a joke and couldn't make any money, so they go out. It's one of the great bonanzas in the history of investing. It's like having a toll booth on the freeway. This business got to be a huge business in Cleveland. We ended up with about a half a dozen or more different funds. It's still in business today, but we sold it back on a leveraged buy out to the management group, who's still in Cleveland. I speak to them all the time. I love those guys.

BERMAN: What's the name of it now?

ASHER: It's still called Carnegie Capital Management Company, in the Euclid Building, 1331 Euclid Avenue. What is the name of a building? Anyway, it was such a good idea that when we joined American Express, they also bought Boston Safe Deposit [& Trust Co.], which is one of the oldest trust companies in America. They took one look at it and said, "I got to tell you what, we're going to use Carnegie Capital to . . . we're going to take stuff away from Boston because it's so expensive to process and to hire people." They built a huge operation in Boston around Carnegie Capital Management Company. I flew back after the thing. They said, "We need a lawyer." I said, 'I'll get you a lawyer that would do this thing.' They were running out of their hip pocket in Cleveland. They were using Squire Sanders and Dempsey, but they didn't care. I said, "That's fine with me." They said, "Can you get us a lawyer?" I said, "Yes. I'll go back and I'll get one." I went back. David Baker is my friend. I called David. David said sure, he'd do it. David became the lawyer for Carnegie Capital. I got to tell you honestly, I just think about it. I was on the ground floor of two amazingly innovative, interesting, creative new business ventures that by pure luck, number one, I happened to stumble into. Number two, that my company said, "Want to do it? Great." I guarantee you, today if Smith Barney and these other big firms, you'd have committees, and you'd have reports, and you'd have McKinsey [& Co.], and they'd probably not do it because it probably wouldn't sound like it was any good.

BERMAN: But I think you need to give yourself a little credit on seeing that. Somebody else, it may have come across their desk, and somebody else, like you said, "Oh, this idea is crazy." You had to present the idea. I think this is something you have to give yourself credit for being . . .

ASHER: The only credit I take for me is that I really thought, honestly, that I thought it was going to be good. In hindsight, yes, it was great, but along the way I remember many times, "Why are we doing this? We're not going to lose a lot of money if it fails." I do remember going around to the branches and talking to them and talking to our people and saying, "You know, this is not a bad deal. This is a good deal." Eventually, they all . . . It's sort of interesting. In 1982, when we
sold our business to American Express, [Sanford] Sandy Weill was the CEO. He negotiated with us. He agreed. I got John Goldsmith to go with me to New York to say, "Can't we keep liquid capital income?" Because we were the first. In fact, at that time, they had one little dinky money fund. It really wasn't . . . you look today in Barron's, you will have a whole page of money funds. It's in the trillions of dollars. It's so big, it's staggering. Yet, we were among the first.

We were the first the first brokerage firm. When I think about it, yes, but along the way we didn't know. We did know that when we get together at Carnegie, in the quiet of the evening when we would have a couple of drinks . . . they put us up in Cleveland at this club. The Union Club.

BERMAN: The Union Club. I remember that.

ASHER: Union Club. It's an interesting club. It's like turning the clock back 200 years. No women allowed in the building. They come in sometimes in a special elevator, you know? But they weren't allowed to stay there. They put us up at Union Club. I'd never been to a place like that. They didn't lock the doors. Didn't have locks. They had skeleton keys like you could buy here at Richards [Variety Store] down here at the dime store. You can buy the same key to unlock the same door. They didn't have a door. They had like, a bar door, like you would see in a Western saloon. Had a little bulb in the ceiling. If you wanted to make a long-distance call, you would pick up the phone and Estelle would ask you what you wanted to do. I'd say, "I want to call Atlanta." "What's the number? Hang up, and I'll connect you." Still, they had spectacular art, spectacular sculptures. When you would go to the bar, I had never seen anything like this, you go to the bar and you sit down there, and the waiter would come over to you. He would say, "What will you have?" I would say, "I'll have a vodka." "What kind of vodka?" "I don't know, Stoli. Stoli's fine with me." Always brought you a brand-new, unopened fifth of whatever you ordered. If you ordered Johnny Walker Black, you got an unopened fifth of Johnny Walker Black. I've never seen that. I don't know what they did with all the opened bottles. We'd have one drink. But you're right, late in the evenings, we would sit around and say, "Can you believe it?" Quite frankly, we went out and hired the current management. We were really running it out of our hip pocket. The guy who we started with is a guy named Terry Glenn. Terry Glenn is at Merrill. He's got one of the top positions at Merrill in the mutual fund area. His brother is Scott Glenn. They both went to Yale [University]. Scott Glenn wanted to be an actor, so he went to drama school. Like any actor, he was desperately looking for jobs, so he goes and gets a job. He sees

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94 Barron's magazine is a weekly publication devoted entirely to investing.
this job requirement, a call for actors to go to the Philippines or someplace like that for this thing with a guy named Francis Coppola. He goes over there. He had been in *Midnight Cowboy*. He did. John Glenn. He played the role in one of those early . . . He got his start by willing to stay there for three or four or five weeks, six weeks in the Philippines with Francis Coppola in the one with Marlon Brando.

BERMAN: *Apocalypse Now?*  
ASHER: *Apocalypse Now.* Anyway, Terry, he's from Pittsburgh [Pennsylvania]. He came in to run the business when we got involved. We would sit around . . . he's one of the classiest, brightest guys I ever met in my life. I remember sitting around with him. Merrill hired him away from us, to their credit. That's when we went out and hired the current management that currently owns Carnegie. But, we would sit around say, "Can you believe that we stumbled on this business," which is one of the biggest businesses in America, but we were the first. It was, there is a lot of satisfaction being the first. I wasn't the first in the options business, but coming from Atlanta, I was the only regional firm that joined the CBOE. Nobody else would join. All the big firms, you had to throw them a bone, $10,000 from Merrill. They spill that out on Saturday night. What do they worry about? It's a rounding error. The CBOE, when they found it, they needed to have a nominating committee to nominate people, so they asked me. "Would I come to Chicago and be on the nominating committee?" "Sure. Why not?" I fly up there. They said, "Bring your wife." Spring and I flew to Chicago. We stayed at the Whitehall [Hotel]. I remember the name of the hotel. They put us up in a fine hotel. All expenses. Only one thing wrong, everybody else worked at the Exchange. We had nothing to do until four o'clock, five o'clock. They would meet from five until six, and they would go home. For five days straight, I had one hour, from five to six, to work and meet these people. That was a lot of fun. They looked on me as having . . . I came from Goodbody & Co. Goodbody was very big in the traditional options business. Merrill did no options at all. Today, they're the biggest player in the options business, because they took over Goodbody, but they didn't do it then. It was a very traditional business. I also remember, my college roommate was a guy named John Herzog. I may have mentioned that to you before, in the other one. He had this small firm. He had a guy that did options there. His name was Paul Sarnoff. Paul Sarnoff. Not Robert Sarnoff. Paul Sarnoff, who was the options guru in America. It turns he worked for Herzog. I told John, "I want to come up and talk to him about . . . I got to find out more about this business." I flew up, and he could not have been nicer. I
saved all the old option contracts that he showed me. They go back. They would be worth something to a museum. Nonetheless, it was great. There's no question. Robinson Humphrey, we also had great people. Among Robinson Humphrey today, we had the best people in every community in Columbus, Macon, Savannah, Montgomery, Huntsville, Birmingham, Nashville, Columbia, and Charleston. We had the best, the best people in their communities, largely because of the magnetism of Sandy and Justus.

BERMAN: I wanted to ask you about that just a little bit. They obviously were not Jewish.

ASHER: No.

BERMAN: And you were. Were you able to socialize at the same clubs? I know you belong to the Piedmont Driving Club today, but during the 1960s, that probably wasn't an option for you.

ASHER: Yes.

BERMAN: Business-wise, was that difficult?

ASHER: I personally, the only reason I'm a member of the Driving Club today is because of my partners, who are all members. Look, I was uncomfortable going there. I knew they didn't allow Jews in there. We had a major dinner there with Shearon and Peter Cohen, who was number two to Sandy Weill, who stood up at the Driving Club and said, "I knew the only way I could get in this building was to buy you." I wasn't a member then. I knew that, but these were my friends. I was a member of the Standard Club, and they were members of their club. I can remember sitting, I was on the board of the Standard Club. I can remember they were talking about... of course, we have Christian members, gentile members, but not then. Back then? They weren't happy if somebody that was not German Jewish, much less Christian. The prejudices and the lines cut both ways. I was never uncomfortable. I remember we had a group of sales managers, people of my peers at these other firms. Robert Baird had a guy named Bob Siegel. He was the only Jewish sales manager that I knew, I mean, other than me. We actually met once every three or four years, two or three years, whatever it was. Each one of us would host a meeting. The purpose was, we'd go with our spouses to a location, and we would talk about the business. We weren't competitors. We were careful not to talk about anything antitrust, but just, "What are you marketing?" We got to know each other. Bob Siegal, I remember, asked me one time, he said, "What's it like being a Jew at Robinson Humphrey?" All of a sudden, that struck me. To the outside world, it was a gentile firm, but there were Jews there. Sidney Smith was there. Louis Holland was there. Sidney was the biggest producer in the firm. He came from Clement A. Evans [& Co., Inc.]. But,
there wasn't anybody really in the senior management area who was Jewish. Everybody knew I was Jewish. They were all very nice to me. I did hear, after the fact, that one of our brokers, who left us, came from Thomasville, the Flowers family, his name was Flowers, used to make a lot of antisemitic remarks about me. Somebody told me, someone who was not Jewish. I suspect a lot of that went on.

**BERMAN:** Were you surprised after the fact?

**ASHER:** I was very surprised. Actually, I was shocked. I was hurt, but I wasn't surprised. Justus and Sandy, no. I mean, Justus definitely was very close to Erwin. When Justus died, his secretary called me and said, "I want you to please call Erwin right now. I want him to hear about it right away, and you're the one to call him." Justus, they were all of the manor born. But Justus was a mentor, he was a father figure, he was a brother figure, he was a friend. He loved my wife. They invited us to go lots of places with them. We had a company plane and we would travel a lot with them. He was not prejudiced. I mean, I heard things that I wouldn't say, but he was a creature of another generation. But they were both classy people. Justus was a great guy. I tell people, if you want to study leadership, study those people. I sort of wish there were movies and bios written about them. Justus was the kind of guy, when we had problems . . . we would have litigation, we would have big losses. Anything would go. Lots of things could go wrong in the brokerage business. Lots. And they involve big dollars. We would get sued. I'm proud to say I was sued for Petrol Louis [sp]. That was a deal we did as a firm. I'm proud to say that my name was on the same suit with Sandy Weill, Peter Cohen and Justus Martin, and me. I wear that with a badge of pride. Fortunately, the suit got dismissed. I remember Justus would get all upset. He would call you in his office, and he would go nuts. He would rant and rave, but you know what? He never finished a conversation without getting up from behind his desk and coming around and putting his arm around you and telling you how much he loved you and how much you meant to him and how much you meant to the company. All you want to do is kick the door down and go out there and work 24 hours until you just collapsed. We didn't make any money to speak of. I can remember years where if we made a $500 bonus at the end of the year, that was all the money we had, and that's fine. We didn't care. Knock on wood, we were lucky. We sold our business and got a long-term capital gain at the end of it, but it wasn't for money. It was really because people loved working for those people. We still talk about it among those of us who are still around. Some of us are. Mine is sort of an indirect, but some of the old-timers that, we were
there. Not talking about the products, talking about the company. We were there in the glory
days of maybe one of the greatest association of people ever in the investment business. That's
why I say I was blessed. I was so lucky that Goodbody failed. Sometimes one door closes
another one opens.

BERMAN: You said earlier that you felt blessed. It sounds like you feel like you were blessed
both in business, and you've obviously been blessed in your marriage and with your family.

ASHER: Yes, knock on wood here. I am superstitious.

BERMAN: It's wonderful to feel that way and to have those memories of all that.

ASHER: It is. It's wonderful. It really is. In business. That's the only reason I wanted to
do this second segment was I really felt like somebody needed to record what happened at this
investment firm, where somehow or another, every day the chemistry, the people, they were so
much fun. There was so much laughter. There was so much spirit. It's what you dream about
but doesn't happen in many places. I know people who work. They're miserable. Well, they
weren't miserable. They loved it. They loved working there. I still run into these people, and we
all think about, “How can we have been so fortunate?” I used to see Mrs. Yearley. He died.
They ended up buying a place down in Buford, South Carolina, some famous place that was
hundreds of years old. I used to see Mrs. Yearley at the Publix market because she lived right
there. She could walk there. Her daughter is still here, Fontaine Draper, married Frank Draper.
She's in charge of admission at Lovett School. I used to see Mrs. Yearley, and we'd both get real
teary-eyed. We both cried. I mean, in a grocery store. Because this was something special.
And it was. These were a lot of people. It wasn't just me. I went along for the ride. The
secretaries, the sales assistants, the traders. I don't think it's there anymore. I work for a big
company. I work for the largest financial services company on the planet. We have 265,000
employees. The brokerage firm has 70,000. I don't know any of those people. I don't know any
of them, and that's okay. In fact, I think that's good financially for everybody, but when you have
your own little family, it was really something. You could do anything, and they've sort of moved
around. The reason I joined the Driving Club, as I say, was frankly some of the . . . they
approached me and said, "Would you . . ." I'm sure what happened . . . I don't know for sure, but
my assumption is that they decided . . . They obviously opened the club. There are a lot of Jews
that are members. I wasn't the first. A year or so before . . . I'm sure what they're doing is looking
around the community. Look, we're smart. We'll get more members.
BERMAN: Do you think any of the old timers have been a little upset about it over at the Driving Club?

asher: I have no evidence of it, but my gut tells me yes. That's only because I think people are people. I think they probably would like to preserve the club the way it was.

BERMAN: It has always intrigued me so much because a founding member, Aaron Haas, was Jewish, so it always was so intriguing to me.

asher: I think that's true with the Capital City Club, too. I think there were Jews.

BERMAN: Yes. Victor Kriegshaber, who was a president of the Capital City Club.

asher: There was a man who was the . . . named Colonel Cohen at the Driving Club. His picture is on the wall. He was not Jewish, I don't believe.

BERMAN: Right. I think you told me about him.

asher: There are some Goldsmiths, not Jews. There are a lot of Ashers. I assume all Ashers are Jews because they're one of the twelve tribes of Israel, but I saw on the internet, there's a guy named Tom Asher. Every now and then I google. I haven't done it anymore because I'm not on the internet, but I googled Tom Asher one time. Sure enough, I knew there was Thomas J. Asher because shortly after we got married and moved back to Atlanta out of the army, I went to the Fox Theatre to pick up some tickets, and they gave me the tickets, but there were two sets of tickets, one for Dr. Thomas J. Asher and one for Thomas J. Asher. The doctor was head of the CDC [Centers for Disease Control]. I knew that there. There was the Asher Slack Company. There is Asher Candies, so there are plenty of Ashers. Whether they're Jews or not, I don't know. A couple of years ago, I googled Tom Asher. Sure enough, the guy shows up, Tom Asher, "the Sausage King." It said, "e-mail me." So, I sent him an e-mail and said, "I'm Tom Asher, too." He sent me back his response. It had quotes from John 3:2 and had lots of crosses and symbolism in there. I realized, "He ain't one of ours." I guess not. It's interesting. I really was in the center of the Christian investment community, more so than anybody else because obviously all the other firms were wide open. Historically, they weren't, but they were for the last 50 years. Yet, I never saw any antisemitism. I did see it from some people that didn't know who I was, like strangers, like a money manager. I'll never forget that. I know the money manager, and I've just

95 The Capital City Club is a private social club founded in Atlanta in 1883. It is among the oldest social organizations in the South. The Club presently operates three facilities, the oldest of which, the downtown Atlanta club. The Capital City Country Club, located in Brookhaven, was leased in 1913 and purchased in 1915. In the autumn of 2002 an additional club facility, the Crabapple Golf Club, was completed in the northern portion of Fulton County.
never liked him because of it, frankly. Not from here. In fact, he's from London, and he would visit us, and we put a lot of money with him. I really stopped after he made a real antisemitic slur. I could tell he didn't know who he was around. He was among friends. He was among gentiles. He wasn’t among gentiles. I've heard some of my partners, whom I love dearly, mistakenly talk about "Jewing them down." I asked them, "Please don't say that." "Why?" I said, "Because it hurts my feelings. That's why." "Oh, well, I'm very sorry. I didn't know." I said, "No big deal." Some of those things are old habits are hard to break.

BERMAN: It's very inbred. It's just a statement. It hurts us, but they don't even recognize the.

ASHER: I think that's true. No question. I know these people. The source was definitely not prejudicial. You know what, some people may have run across prejudice. I really didn't. I ran across, and maybe I told you this story. I think I did, about the analyst, who I saw just recently, I think since the taping. We were at Goldberg's. Did I tell you the Goldberg story?

BERMAN: I don't think so.

ASHER: This is the analyst who, when I invited him to go to Joey’s bar mitzvah, he didn't understand what it was and why would I be having a bar mitzvah. He didn't think I was Jewish. He said he'd never met a Jew before. This is an analyst with us. He had, but he didn't [realize]. That wasn't in his eyesight. He didn't look at people religious . . . we do. I do, in the sense that if you're Jewish, you got a common bond. The six degrees of separation. I promise you, if I meet somebody from Cleveland, Ohio, I know I can name five people that they know. Isn't that right?

BERMAN: That's absolutely [right].

ASHER: That's just the way it is.

BERMAN: I did have one question, and we're heading toward the end of this last tape, second tape. I know that you're friendly, have been friendly for years, with the Dorsey family.

ASHER: Yes.

BERMAN: I was just wondering if they have ever given you any personal insight into how they feel about Hugh Dorsey\(^6\) and the Frank case, if they've talked to you about it at all.

\(^{6}\) Hugh Manson Dorsey (1871-1948) was a lawyer who was notable as the prosecuting attorney in the Leo Frank trial of 1913. He was also a politician, a member of the Democratic Party who was twice elected as the Governor of Georgia (1917–1921), and jurist who served for more than a decade as a superior court judge in Atlanta. He oversaw numerous education initiatives, vehemently opposed mob violence against blacks, and condemned the state's practice of a political convention system. While Dorsey tried with some success to bring Georgia into a more progressive era, he will forever be remembered as the man who successfully prosecuted Leo Frank for the murder of Mary Phagan.
ASHER: They have.
BERMAN: Can you share that?
ASHER: Sure, I'd be glad to. Did I share any of it on the first tape?
BERMAN: No.
ASHER: Okay. When we first got married, we lived at this big, torn-down as we speak. This week, they started to tear down Ashley Hall. When we first got married, there was someplace wrote, "Tom Ashley living in Ashley Hall." They must have thought, you live in a big house with your name on it. It was right across from the Buckhead Y[MACA] on Roswell Road. We moved into an apartment upstairs, one bedroom, and one other bedroom across the hall, in one other apartment, and we knock on the door. It's Adair and Tom Sisk. That's who we became friends with, and really liked them a lot. She turns out to be Hugh Dorsey's granddaughter. Big Hugh. Then there was Hugh, who was the father. She had a brother, Hugh, and a brother, Rufus. We became very good friends. Shortly after we met them, I remember up there, saying, "You're Hugh Dorsey. I mean, you know the governor. Do you know anything about the Leo Frank case?" She said, "Of course I do." She shared, gave me books, some books that he had written in and some papers and stuff, which I had to give back, of course. I didn't have any interest other than just seeing them. Mrs. Dorsey, Laura Dorsey, her sister, Adair's sister became an ordained minister. They were very religious. Not prejudicial at all. In fact, she tried to get Spring to join the Peachtree Garden Club, but told her, in tears, that "you don't want to be someplace that you're not wanted." Subsequently, Spring did join the garden club because they decided that Jews weren't so bad. This was Spring Asher they all got to know, and "Yes, she's all right." But then they didn't know her. But she was a Jew, no matter who recommended them. Laura Dorsey was that way. These people are anything, they're just not prejudicial. They're just not. They have talked about it. They're very protective of Hugh Dorsey. They feel that he has been maligned, that they didn't have the... my personal opinion is that Parade didn't open here. The Rich Foundation was called on by the director of the Alliance Theatre. This was back when Parade was getting going,

97 Parade is a musical with a book by Alfred Uhry. Music and lyrics are by Jason Robert Brown. The musical premiered on Broadway in 1998 and won Tony Awards for Best Book and Best Original Score and six Drama Desk Awards. The show has had a U.S. national tour and numerous professional and amateur productions in both the U.S. and abroad. The musical dramatizes the 1913 trial of Leo Frank in Atlanta, the Jewish factory manager, who was accused and convicted of raping and murdering Mary Phagan, a 13-year-old employee.

98 In 1943, the Rich Foundation was created to distribute a share of the profits of the Rich's department store. Through the years, the Foundation has been a major supporter of Atlanta’s charitable and educational life. The Foundation’s purpose is to benefit non-profit organizations in the field of arts, civic, education, health, environment and social welfare in the metropolitan Atlanta area.
and they wanted us to give some money to some production. I said, "What about Parade?" They said, "We can't do that. It's too controversial. Besides, we don't want to be there." I think that they are still very defensive. I do know that when Parade came to Atlanta, Adair was very upset and just hoping that it would go away. They are very protective of him, right or wrong, good or bad, 100 percent solid behind Hugh Dorsey. I don't know whether that speaks to the guilt or innocence of Leo Frank, because I do know that the other, Tom Watson Brown, thinks that Leo Frank was guilty, from what I understand.

**BERMAN:** Have they ever discussed the guilt or innocence of Leo Frank?

**ASHER:** They really haven't. I know it's so sensitive to them that I just stayed away from it, quite candidly. I think we have talked about it over the years. Since we got married and we've gotten to know them, and Spring is still very . . . Spring calls her her longest-standing friend. They call her oldest friend, but she is her oldest friend in Atlanta. They are still very, very close. But, no, we really haven't talked about it. Subsequently, of course, he's been more proven to be even more innocent than he ever was by every . . . there's not been one shred of documentation which proves anything. In fact, it goes the other way. I don't think that's been so much the issue as it was . . .

**BERMAN:** Whether he was a good prosecutor or not.

**ASHER:** Right, right. Of course, he became governor. Mr. Hugh Dorsey, his son, wrote, was the reason why Joey went to Emory Law School, my oldest boy. He was a big benefactor at Emory, and made sure that he got in. It was just one of those . . . if Joey Asher wants to go to Emory, Mr. Dorsey is going to make sure he goes. That's the kind of people they were. They just were just very decent, good, people. I don't think there was any . . . but I do think that their feeling is solid behind the father, the grandfather.

**BERMAN:** I knew that you were friendly with them, so I just . . .

**ASHER:** Yes. The only reason I wanted to do this is I wanted to get on the record what I think is a special place that years from now people will say, "Yes, we heard of it." But I don't think anybody has done an oral history that talks about this extraordinary enterprise.

**BERMAN:** I don't either. This is the first one, I think, that we've really had, when someone has

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99 Tom Watson Brown (1934-2007) was the great-grandson of Thomas E. Watson, who was a lawyer, publisher, and the national Populist leader who lived a century ago (1856-1922). He published an analysis of the Leo Frank trial, which caused a surge in demand for the *Jeffersonian* newspaper. Tom Watson Brown was a lawyer and historian. He led numerous business, civic, philanthropic, and scholarly organizations.
really spoken about investments and the investment industry on tape. I'm really thrilled that you agreed to do that. Is there any other area that you'd like to speak about because we're heading toward the end of this tape. I want to make sure we don't miss anything. You were going to mention something about Leadership Atlanta?

**ASHER:** I'll say two things that I discovered. One of the things in the army . . . I've had, fortunately, some good leadership experiences. You join the army. Everyone did. You get your commission in college, and then you go to officers basic training. Then you get assigned to a unit. I didn't think I had any leadership skills at all. My first company that I was assigned to as a platoon leader was at Fort Eustis [Virginia]. As the youngest officer, you are given about five or six duties, ten duties. You're the fire officer. You're the safety officer. I don't know what else. But you had to give a lecture every . . . I remember the first couple of lectures I gave, the sergeant came up to me. He said, "That was awful. You were awful." I obviously needed some training. I took that to heed, and I got some training. I think that helped me a lot, in all honesty, in the jobs that I've had, the ability to communicate, to think through on your feet. Just to understand that. I think that being in the military is a great leadership experience that our kids didn't benefit from, probably for all the right reasons. I was a platoon leader several times, but I was also platoon leader in my offices, in my management. Sometimes I was a company commander, sometimes a battalion commander. But you learn those things. When I went to Leadership Atlanta, it opened the door to me to the rest of Atlanta in my class. That's why I'm so glad Juliet is in it this year. She just got out. She met people. When I went in in 1973-1974, it was very an eye opener because the people in my class, the black people, the African Americans were - they've been on the bus ride to Selma [Alabama].

**BERMAN:** I'm not sure what Leadership Atlanta is.

**ASHER:** Leadership Atlanta was founded in about 1970-1971. It was really in a way to bring 

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100 The Selma to Montgomery marches were three marches in 1965 that marked the political and emotional peak of the American Civil Rights Movement. Selma and Montgomery were the focus of black voter registration drives which were resisted on every front. The marches were to support voting rights for blacks. The first was on March 7, 1965 and came to be known as "Bloody Sunday" when 600 civil rights marchers were attacked by state and local police with billy clubs and tear gas. Several marchers, both black and white, were beaten or murdered over the course of the marches. The second march was on March 9, 1965. Martin Luther King Jr. led 2,500 protestors who were turned back after crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge. The third march started on March 16. The marchers marched along US Route 80 protected by 2,000 soldiers of the United States Army, 1,900 members of the Alabama National Guard under Federal command, FBI agents and Federal Marshals. They arrived in Montgomery on March 24. The marchers in the third march were fed by women volunteers who cooked the food in the kitchen of the Green Street Baptist Church after which it was delivered to the gathering point for the march by truck.
the races together initially in a civic educational forum, and it's been going in Atlanta and around the country. There is Leadership Georgia, Leadership Clayton, Leadership Rabun. They're all over. One of the early ones, it wasn't started in Atlanta, but it was one of the early ones. We met monthly and had speakers, not unlike with the way they do it today. Juliet told me in her speaker she had last month, they had [Andrew Jackson] Andy Young [Jr.].\(^{101}\) They had all these different, they had the best and brightest leaders. In our case, it was a civics lesson. Learn all about your community and the people who are in it. The criteria for joining and the qualifications were, you had to demonstrate some community leadership, I guess. I'm not sure exactly what got me into it, but I got in. Robinson Humphrey always carried a lot of clout, and I got in. But I did meet . . . there wasn't anybody in there that I knew before. People that I still meet, [Charles H.] Pete McTier, who runs Woodruff Foundation. I met him through that. Don Chapman, who is head of the Tech Alumni Association. Neal Purcell, who became vice chairman of Peat Marwick. These were all just . . . and a lot of people in the black community, too. Women in the white and black community. Emma Darnell [Fulton County Commissioner] and people like that. She hasn't changed any since then, without going on record about it. I can do that off the record. We met all these people who were really very open minded. I led a very sheltered life. I lived in this little German Jewish white community in Druid Hills and went away to prep school and then went away to college and came back and got in the most elite business there is, the investment business. Then I got in the most elite firm there was. I really led a cloistered life. It was very helpful. It opened my eyes to this community. I think what that did to me was I met people who asked me to help them. That's why I got really active in the field of mental retardation and that whole area, and education, because they have problems. These people say, "We need help, and we need it from . . . we can't do it by ourselves." Not a one-person job. That's been the beauty of Leadership Atlanta. I'm guessing that they have . . . it's changed now. In the past, you had to be under 35, I think, to get in the program. Today, they have people who have been in it, I think, in their 70s. I'm not sure what the value of that is, because in our case, the goals were: Become active, go out in the community, and help somebody. I've participated in a lot of community things, I'm sure, as a

\(^{101}\) Andrew Jackson Young Jr. (born March 13, 1932) is a politician, diplomat, and activist. Beginning his career as a pastor, Young was an early leader in the civil rights movement, serving as executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and a close confidant to Martin Luther King, Jr. Young later became active in politics, serving first as a U.S. Congressman from Georgia, then United States Ambassador to the United Nations, and finally Mayor of Atlanta. Since leaving political office, Young has founded or served in a large number of organizations working on issues of public policy and political lobbying.
direct result of . . . you see somebody there, and I still run across guys in the black community who, "Remember me from those days?" That was 35 years ago. Just like in college, when you see your classmates from college, you really don't change. You may look different, but just below the surface you are exactly the same, the same goofball that you were then. You're still a goofball, but you're a loving goofball. So it really it doesn't change at all. Just like when we had a fraternity reunion in college. We did a couple of years ago. I think I covered that <unintelligible>. We see these people. It just doesn't change. That's the only reason I wanted to mention that to you. Was there anything else?

BERMAN: I think that's it. I think this was really fantastic. I'm very appreciative of your sharing all these stories with us. I think it is truly an area that we haven't delved into very much with any other members. I'm really appreciative. I think it's going to be an interview that will be used by researchers for many, many years.

ASHER: Good.

BERMAN: Thank you.

ASHER: You're welcome.

<Interview ENDS>